



Framing the EU global strategy: A stronger Europe in a fragile world

Arantza Gomez Arana

To cite this article: Arantza Gomez Arana (2018): Framing the EU global strategy: A stronger Europe in a fragile world, *European Security*, DOI: [10.1080/09662839.2018.1517117](https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2018.1517117)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2018.1517117>



Published online: 06 Sep 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 6



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

BOOK REVIEW

Framing the EU global strategy: A stronger Europe in a fragile world by Nathalie Tocci, Cham, Switzerland, Springer, 2017, 168 pp., £12.99 (ebook), ISBN 978-3-319-55585-0

The central topic of this book is the development of the new European Union Global Strategy (EUGS) by the author, Nathalie Tocci, while holding two roles at the same time. Tocci works as a scholar at the Istituto Affari Internazionali *and* is the Special Advisor for Federica Mogherini, the current High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Vice-President of the European Commission (HRVP). The purpose of this book is not just the delivery of a discussion of the background of the EUGS until its announcement a few days after the Brexit referendum in June 2016. The author wants to share her experience of having access to an area traditionally reserved for officials and representatives of countries and Institutions, while drafting the most important strategy in EU Foreign Affairs since the development of the European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003. This is certainly an innovative and particularly welcome contribution to the literature on the topic.

Across the different chapters, Tocci develops a clear comparison between this EUGS and the ESS, which was developed under the supervision of the then HR, Javier Solana, and drafted by Robert Cooper¹ applying three criteria. First, the dividing positions taken by several member states in the area of foreign affairs which could threaten the possibility of a united and cohesive EU foreign policy, and even the future continuation of the European Union. In 2003, Solana wrote the ESS, as a way of moving from the crisis that the intervention in Iraq of 2003 brought to the European Union (EU). While in 2015, the EU was facing not just one divisive issue, but several: Russia, the migration crisis, and the responses to the financial crisis in some countries of the Eurozone.

The second element was the different type of EU which Solana and Mogherini faced. Solana worked with a European Union of 15 countries as the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Secretary General of the Council of the European Union. While Mogherini works with almost double the amount of members (28), and since the Lisbon Treaty, the HR also became the Vice-President of the European Commission. The final element is the role of populism. This was almost inexistent in 2003, however, in the last few years, different anti-EU political parties across member states have attracted more voters than previously seen as the case of Brexit demonstrates. In fact, the author explains how the decision to launch the EUGS a few hours after the outcome of the referendum in the UK, took into consideration the decision of the voters.

Apart from comparing both strategies, the author also discusses the explanation behind Mogherini's decision to divide the development of the EUGS into two parts: *the European Union in a Changing Global Environment*, which is considered a strategy assessment and the *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*, which is considered the Strategy. Both documents are included in the book as Annexes. The reasons for that decision were again influenced by internal issues, including the limited mandate given by the European Council in December 2013, and the request in that mandate to cooperate closely with the Commission. Tocci also explains how other reasons influencing that decision were of a more political and strategic nature: Mogherini's appointment as an HRVP was questioned to some extent at the time and by splitting the process, she would achieve more time to build trust, consensus, and a

working method. Finally, the author explains also the need for time to think strategically about the external environment, because the world is more connected, contested and complex, than ever before.

From the point of view of inclusiveness, Tocci explains the efforts that took place to include external views in the EUGS, including the views of academics, experts, officials from the United Nations and NATO, NGOs, trade unions etc. Anecdotally, Tocci recalls how EU member states explained that they would not scrutinise the draft proposed line by line, when in reality, every single word and comma was actually discussed. In fact, the discussion continued until a few minutes before it was formally circulated to the Member States on the 25th of June of 2016, the day after the outcome of the Brexit referendum was announced.

The rest of the book is dedicated to the discussion of *what a Strategy is*, including a discussion of the EUGS four main interests (security, prosperity, democracy and a rules-based global order) and the EUGS four principles (engagement, responsibility, unity and partnership). Tocci engages with the literature on EU normative power (Manners 2006) and explains why the HRVP moved away from the discussion of values and favoured the discussion on interests to avoid a discussion of values versus interests. She ends that section with the discussion of the EUGS' five priorities - *the Security of the Union, the Resilience of States and Societies and Our Surrounding Regions, and Integrated approach to conflict and crises, Cooperative Regional Orders and Global Governance* – before ending the book with a summary of the next steps. These include the launching of the strategy in a post-Brexit scenario, the discussion of EU Defence, and Tocci's final reflexions on current anti-EU feelings.

Overall this book helps the reader to understand key EU External Relations issues that took place during the last few years. It is written for a large audience who will benefit from the hybrid approach: the discussion of the author's experience as an academic and advisor to the HRVP discussing EU foreign affairs issues with key actors while drafting a strategy for them. Through several quotations from EU officials, we can appreciate how the author highlights attitudes and perceptions inside the European Union, and how honestly she responded to some of them. This not only reflects her unique position as being part of the process without being an insider, but also how she had an influence on the process and on the outcome to some extent. For example, Tocci explains, how both the HRVP and herself resisted the suggestion of having an Editorial Committee of "several (male) retired diplomats" (...). Her reflection is very clear on this issue: "with the backing of the HRVP of course I resisted the attempt of being surrounded by a group of experienced men that would control my work" (p. 4). At the same time, the author reflects on her privileged experience for two years. Moreover, the author provides enough quotations and reflections to demonstrate how internal politics and the legacies of past turf wars within the European Union require excellent diplomatic skills to reach a successful outcome. The author demonstrates also with these quotations and her own reflections, the distance sometimes between EU officials and the rest of the society. The deconstruction of the language used by the Council when responding to policies, is also enlightening (p. 89).

The book benefits from the comparison with the ESS. However, it would have been perhaps also convenient, to compare it with other policies or strategies that were drafted or discussed within the European Union to analyse the relative importance of the EUGS at that time, and how it fitted within the general picture of the EU. Overall, the development of the EUGS considering how divisive some of the external threats can be for member states – Russia, Syria, migration crisis, and the rise in populism – seems like an extraordinary task, particularly with the pressure of finishing it after the Brexit referendum. Perhaps the author could take more credit for this achievement.

Note

1. Director General for External and Politico-Military Affairs at the General Secretariat of the EU/ Council of Ministers.

Reference

Manners, I., 2006. Normative power Europe reconsidered: beyond the crossroads. *Journal of European public policy*, 13 (2), 182–199.

Arantza Gomez Arana
Lecturer, Birmingham City University, Birmingham, UK
 arantza.gomezarana@bcu.ac.uk

© 2018 Arantza Gomez Arana
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2018.1517117>

