

Monika Sus

Hertie School of Governance (Germany) & European University Institute (Italy)

Member States as Strategy-Maker or Strategy-Taker?

Analysing Polish Involvement in the Development of the EU Global Strategy¹

Abstract: The drafting process of the EU Global Strategy published in June 2016 has differed distinctively from the formulation of the European Security Strategy in 2003 mainly because of its consultative character. The coordination of the process was ensured by the High Representative who brokered between interests of individual Member States. Looking through the lens of deliberative intergovernmentalism, the paper examines patterns and channels of the cooperation between Poland and the EEAS throughout the strategy-making process. It attempts to shed light on the officially repeated claims on the Member States' ownership of the document and their active participation in the consultations. The article argues that only with national diplomacies as strategy-makers, the document would have a chance to enhance the EU's 'will to project power' in its neighbourhood and beyond. However, the salience of the new strategy among the high political level in the Member States reveals to be crucial for a sustainable contribution to the deliberative policy formulation.

Keywords: *EU Global Strategy; High Representative; Member States, European External Action Service; deliberative intergovernmentalism, EU's foreign policy*

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Introduction

After the European Council commissioned the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) in December 2013 with the task of developing a new strategic vision for the EU's external action (European Council 2013), a heated debate about both the need for a new sense of direction for European foreign and security policy and the substance of the strategic document has started (Ciesluk-Grajewski, 2015, 2016 & 2016a). The need for a new strategic document was pressing since the previous one, the European Security Strategy (ESS), was formulated in 2003. The fundamental threats for the EU's security identified over a decade ago such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, states failure and organised crime still remain significant. However, they have evolved and become ever more disruptive causing further dangers. The challenge for the new Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy for the European Union (EUGS) lies not only in a sober assessment of dangers, but primarily in answering the questions how to use the instruments at the EU disposal and how to operationalize the strategic vision in an effective way. Already the ESS aimed at a better coordination across various actors and instruments in defining and executing EU's foreign policy interests but the delivery was lacking (Becher, 2004).

Considering the fact that the authority on the scope and character of the political aspects of the EU's external action as well as about recourses and instruments to be used lies in the hands of the Member States, their political will is crucial for the operationalization of the EUGS. Against this backdrop, the underlying assumption for this paper is the importance of the engagement of the Member States in the drafting process of the new strategy. The sense of ownership among the national diplomacies over the strategic vision could contribute to the development of political will to act externally and to the provision of national resources which are necessary for bringing the document into action. However, as this analysis will show being involved is not enough and it needs political salience and will from the highest political level to get involved actively and shape the drafting process sustainably. If the Member States stand back of the strategic vision, there is a chance to tackle the key challenge of EU's foreign policy-making: the persistent problem of reconciling the continuing capacity for national foreign policymaking with the declared aspiration and an evolving infrastructure, for a common and effective EU's external actions.

The overarching question of this paper is to what extent the Member States have engaged in the drafting process of the EUGS and how the consultation process between them and the EU level have looked like. This contribution focuses on Poland as one of the most ambitious foreign policy players (Szczerbiak, 2012, p. 40–107;

Buras, 2015). As such, it should be, by default, greatly interested in promoting its priorities to the European level and in fostering political and military dimension of EU's external action by a joint and substantive strategic document. Following the logic of the EU's integrative purpose, which implies that process often matters as much as the output, the paper focuses on the process and not on the content of the final outcome. Thus, it looks on both the patterns and channels of cooperation with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and HR – Frederica Mogherini on the strategy as well as the up-loading mechanisms of Polish national interests to the drafting process.

This article is structured as follows. Succeeding section reflects on theoretical approaches which can be useful while investigating the participation of the Member States in the drafting process. Next, the innovations of the EUGS drafting process will be outlined and the analysis of the Polish case follows. In the conclusion I return to the overarching question on the involvement of the Member States in the strategy-making process and reflect on the potential of this particular institutional environment to foster policy deliberation.

With regard to date and sources, the article is based on documents (non-papers) delivered by the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) to the HR and to Nathalie Tocci, special advisor to the HR on the EUGS as well as on secondary literature on EU strategy. In order to provide better understanding of the Polish engagement in the drafting process, I conducted anonymous semi-structured interviews with officials from the Polish MFA and with proven experts in this field². I also had the opportunity to speak with Sir Robert Cooper, the Director General of General Secretariat of the EU's Council who was one of the authors of the previous security strategy. Moreover, I took part in five seminars that were organized within the consultation process of the EUGS in Germany, Finland and Poland and talked to EEAS officials involved in the drafting.

Theoretical Remarks

Institutional innovations brought by the Treaty of Lisbon to the EU's foreign policy institutional framework have not changed the main obstacles for enhanced external role of the EU – the divergent policy preferences among different stakeholders such as Member States, EEAS, European Commission, and European Parliament. Hence, the

² In order to maintain the anonymity of the interviewer, the author presents only the positions of the interlocutors and the data of the interview. The full list of interviewers is in the possession of the author.

process of reaching a consensus between the Member States who oppose the qualified majority voting (QMV) and between them and EU's institutions with regard to the priorities of the EU's external action remains crucial. A quick review of the literature reveals several distinct theoretical models which can be used to investigate process of achieving a collective definition of diplomatic objectives among EU's foreign policy stakeholders. The models include intergovernmentalism with veto threats, normative institutionalism with cooperative bargaining and entrapment, constructivist and sociological institutionalism with elements of elite socialization, Europeanization and collective identity formation.

A particularly inspirational approach for studying the relationship between the Member States and the EEAS during the strategy-making process is offered by new intergovernmentalism framework (Bickerton, Hodson & Puetter, 2015). Drawing on the integration paradox (EU countries pursue more integration but resist further supranationalism) the new intergovernmentalism implies the post-Maastricht tendency to delegate power to *de novo* bodies rather than traditional supranational institutions. The EEAS is an example of such a *de novo* body as it comprises elements of both the intergovernmental and supranational decision-making. The operationalisation of this approach proposed by the authors of this theoretical model, enables one to prove the arrival of the new intergovernmentalism in the current state of the European integration by looking at recent developments in various policy areas (Bickerton, Hodson & Puetter, 2015a). Since this paper takes the existing institutional framework in EU's foreign policy as a starting point and goes beyond it by investigating the dynamics of the interplay between the *de novo* institution – the EEAS and the Member States, this approach is not directly applicable here.

However, one of the main categories on which the new intergovernmentalism draws upon is the deliberative process of policy formation. The concept of deliberative intergovernmentalism traces back to the democratic theory and was first adapted to the EU studies by Eriksen (2000). Policy deliberation is considered to be a condition for successful EU policy-making both during the course of policy formation and its initial adoption and in all phases of the policy cycles (Puetter, 2012, p. 164). So far, this approach was mainly used to examine the processes in the Council and the European Council where the Member States have the lead. The prime example is offered by the consensus over the Eurozone crisis which was forged by Chancellor Merkel. This paper presents the approach in a slightly different light in order to assess the drafting process of EUGS. Once commissioned by European Council with the task of delivering a new strategy, HR decided to try a working method which has been not used before in formulation of strategic documents within EU's foreign policy. She opened up the process for extensive consultations with various actors in the Member

States and with other EU's foreign policy stakeholders such as think tanks, academia and non-governmental organisations: "We needed to hear the views of experts, of academia and of policy makers. But we also needed to hear the view of the broader foreign policy community and of all who have a stake in it – that is, all Europeans" (Mogherini, 2016).

According to the existing literature, the deliberative intergovernmentalism states that the appropriateness and legitimacy of policy decisions are derived from a reasoned consensus and open discourse. As Puetter puts it "deliberative intergovernmentalism provides an analytical framework for assessing institutional adjustment and changing coordination practices with regard to their respective deliberative quality. It is expected that deliberative processes evolve depending on the negotiation setting and the policy content discussed. Those settings which function as informal forums for policy dialogue are considered to be particularly conducive to deliberation. (...) As regards the content, it is expected that deliberative processes are fostered when actors interpret policy challenges as common problems and/or have to decide under uncertainty" (Puetter, 2012, p. 166). The consultation process of the new strategic document seems to correspond well with the conditions of the deliberative intergovernmentalism - joint authority and control over the process of both the Member States and Mogherini's drafting team, the shared wish of making the EU's external action stronger and more coherent as well as great uncertainty about the developments in the strategic environment of the Union.

The idea of this paper is to assess to what extent the consultation process between the EEAS drafting team and the Member States (based on the Polish case) can serve as an example for a variation of deliberative intergovernmentalism. Hence, in the case study I look for traces of joint control over the strategy-making of the national diplomacies and the HR, as well as I examine the institutional features of the negotiation setting in terms of its potential for development of policy deliberation.

Towards the EU Global Strategy

After Mogherini was appointed as a successor of Catherine Ashton, the formulation of the EUGS has become one of the most comprehensive challenges, she had to deal with. The expectations from different stakeholders towards both the process and the outcome were high. Mogherini undertook the task with strong determination making foreign policy experts believe that she wishes to build her legacy over the new strategy.

There are several factors that distinguish the development of the ESS and the formulation of the EUGS. First of all, the external circumstances of the process differed. The ESS published by Javier Solana, HR for Common Foreign and Security

Policy (CFSP) was not a formal strategic vision as the term is commonly understood. Robert Cooper, who helped Solana to formulate this document, admitted that it was not their aim to deliver a strategy but rather a form of sticking plaster for the EU's Member States to help cover their own differences after the division over Iraq. With regard to the motives expressed in December 2013 by European Council which invited the HR to assess the impact of changes in the global environment, they were based on two main factors (European Council, 2013). The first one was the emergence of new security challenges such as cyber threats, maritime security concerns and energy security (European Council, 2013, p. 4). The second factor was the willingness of the European Council to explore the opportunities for increasing the effectiveness and impact of EU's foreign and security policy which were offered by the Treaty of Lisbon (European Council, 2013, p. 2).

Another difference lies in the organization of the drafting process and in aiming to include the Member States' views. Mogherini has proceeded in a two steps. First, in accordance to the mandate from the European Council, she drafted an assessment of EU's global security environment which was presented in June 2015 (EEAS, 2015). Then, after approving the review by the European Council, the drafting process of the EUGS has started. As Cooper noticed: "This is being done very differently now, and I think that is right. Mrs Mogherini seems to have created quite elaborate structures for debate and involving the national Governments all along (...). If you want to produce big changes in a big lumbering institution, you need to build up a consensus within the Member States and the institution itself, and you do that by having the debate" (Cooper, 2015). Opposite to that, the ESS was put in writing by first and foremost Solana and Cooper who consulted their ideas with other EU's foreign policy stakeholders but not in such a comprehensive way (Andersson et al., 2011, p. 18–20). The process proposed by Mogherini was open to national capitals, other European institutions and civil society via think tanks community. Within the expert outreach and consultation process that was initiated in October 2015 and run until April 2016, 38 seminars and workshops on EU's external relations took place across the EU countries. Both national ministries for foreign affairs and think tank communities were actively involved in organising these events in cooperation with the EEAS. Moreover, over 50 papers written by academics and experts from all around the world were delivered to the EU Institute for Security Studies which coordinated the outreach process (EUISS, 2016). The final outcome of the process is the strategy which is much more comprehensive in scope and rich in detail than the ESS.

Involvement of the Member States. The Polish Case

Already during the membership negotiations with the EU, Poland has tried to leave its footprints on the EU's foreign policy and focused mainly on the promotion of Polish ideas for the Eastern dimension of the neighbourhood policy (Pomorska, 2007, p. 36–42; Kowal, 2015, p. 34–350). In 2009, Warsaw succeeded in proposing the idea of Eastern Partnership which was officially announced as EU's regional approach towards Eastern neighbours. With time Poland has become an active player in the EU's foreign policy not only with regard to the East but also in defence matters and democracy promotion (Kaminska, 2014; Sus, 2014; Janning, 2016). This allows assuming that the country would be deeply interested and engaged in the formulation process of the EUGS. To examine this assumption both patterns and channels of cooperation with the EEAS and topic-oriented contribution will be analysed.

Patterns and Channels of Communication

The main communication channel between Polish diplomatic service and the drafting team was the National Contact Point (NCP) in the Polish MFA, within the Department for Strategic Planning. Polish representatives have been meeting the officials from the drafting team almost every month during the writing process and discussed different aspects of the strategy. According to the literature on the conditions for policy deliberation (Puetter, 2012, p. 165), such an intensive and frequent dialogue increases the potential of policy deliberation to develop since it offers room for interactive interventions and honest conversation. In addition to that, the document has been also regularly discussed at the level of ambassadors at COREPER and Political and Security Committee (PSC) as well as at the level of ministers at Foreign Affairs Council. Mogherini also discussed the Global Strategy with foreign affairs and defence ministers at the informal Council meeting (along the informal Gymnich formula) in Amsterdam in February 2016.

Polish officials from the MFA expressed their admiration for the hard work of the drafting team in keeping the Member States in the loop and taking their contributions into consideration. At the same time they communicated their regrets about limited possibilities to discuss the aspects of the strategy in a wider spectrum of countries and would prefer to have more discussions between the NCPs from different countries. To compensate this shortage, Polish MFA took part in consultations within the Visegrad Group which resulted in a common declaration for stronger Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) (Visegrad Group, 2015).

Apart from the consultations between EEAS and the NPC, Polish MFA contributed to the drafting process via three non-papers: one with solely Polish perspective (MFA, 2016), one joint paper of the V4 countries (MFA, 2016a) and one joint paper with Denmark, Rumania and Sweden (MFA, 2016b) as well as via questionnaire prepared by the drafting team and filled out by the NCP. In all documents a particular relevance of three topics was clearly defined and would be presented below.

Topics of Interests

From the Polish perspective, the EUGS should push for the revived multilateralism by drawing on existing institutions such as UN and OSCE and to defend the international order based on rule of justice as well as on the responsible behaviour by using all instruments at the disposal of the EU and the Member States: military, civilian and law capabilities. More specifically Polish proposal emphasized the importance of three particular areas: CSFP and its security dimension of CSDP, transatlantic partnership and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

With regard to the first topic, Polish security community was rather disappointed about the broader security concept introduced by Mogherini and wanted the strategy to be more focused on the further enhancement of CSDP. Poland proposed to explore the possibility to use Union budget for certain defence-related expenditures, to support the competitiveness of the European defence industry and to link the CSDP with other internal and external policies, mainly with the ENP. Special attention was also devoted to the ability of the EU to counter the hybrid threats which “can rapidly evolve into hybrid warfare” (MFA, 2016, p.2).

As far as the cooperation between the EU and the US is concerned, two Polish priorities were completion of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the enhancement of the coordination in planning and synergies development at the operational level between the Union and NATO. Polish MFA stressed that in 2015 only Poland, Estonia, Greece and the UK met the NATO commitment to spend 2% of their GDP on defence. Meeting the goal by other EU member of the Alliance would be very welcome from the Polish point of view and would contribute to the strengthening of the defence capabilities of the Union.

Regarding the ENP, the strategy should first and foremost focus on supporting the stabilization and prosperity of the neighbouring countries both in the East and in the South (MFA, 2016a, p. 3–4). At the same time Poland expressed its hope that the new strategy will reaffirm the EU’s commitment to enlargement policy and to future membership for all Western Balkan countries. From the Polish perspective the EU is not a global security provider but should focus on being a security provider in its

neighbourhood what is a prerequisite for EU's capacity to act globally. Effective EU's external action towards the wider neighbourhood, must be supported by clear political will and exercise of action by Member States. The EUGS should therefore prioritise the deepening of political association and economic integration with countries seeking close ties with the EU such as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. With regard to this particular point, officials from the Polish MFA stressed the difficulties to make the importance of the Eastern neighbours visible due to the great dominance of traditionally Southern oriented Italians within the drafting team³. My interlocutors have wished the composition of the team would be more balanced in terms of country of origins. Nonetheless, Warsaw has joined forces with Denmark, Rumania and Sweden and proposed in a non-paper the reinforcement of the EaP as "an effective instrument of the EUGS" (MFA, 2016b).

Despite the fact, that the communication between NCP in Warsaw and the drafting team was intense and that Poland has contributed to the strategy via three non-papers, most of the interlocutors emphasized the rather reluctant position of the high-level officials within the Polish government towards the strategy. While the presence of the political leadership in the deliberation process is crucial (Puetter, 2012, p. 165), Polish high-ranking diplomats seemed to take a 'wait and see' attitude and were not particularly interested in neither the process nor the outcome. In the view of most interlocutors, the reluctant position was caused by limited belief that the HR is powerful enough to take a lead and make the 28 national leaders to carry on the EUGS. As Solana once put it: "All we need is the political will" (2009) and there seems to be very little belief within Polish government in the willingness of the Member States to further enhance the EU's external actions. As one interviewer said "now we have an appropriate institutional framework with double-hatted HR and EEAS but due to the lack of will to act in some Member States, the EU might be not capable to deliver a strategy, which could be operationalized". Some of the interlocutors expressed their doubt whether the EUGS will not be overshadowed with other topics such as Brexit, which indeed happened at the summit of the European Council in June 2016 (Winneker, 2016). Another reason of the rather passive attitude of Polish high-level diplomacy in the strategy-making process was the anticipation that the language of the strategy will remain very general in order to include as many interests expressed by the Member States as possible. The officials from the MFA reported only a few controversies at the stage of drafting precisely because of the general language. The discussion over the

³ Apart from Frederica Mogherini and Nathalie Tocci, also Antonio Missiroli, the director of the EU ISS which played a central role in the EUGS outreach process as well as Alfredo Conte, the head of the strategic planning division in EEAS were Italian.

essential details was postponed to the sub-strategies which can become an object of a much more intensive struggles among the Member States (and the EU institutions) than the EUGS. Furthermore, despite it was not directly mentioned by any of the interlocutors and the interviews took place before and after Polish parliamentary elections in October 2015, one can assume that the internal concerns overshadowed the foreign policy issues and contributed to the limited interest for the EUGS. However, since the analysis of the change in the foreign policy priorities and instruments after the parliamentary elections would overrun the scope of this paper, it will not be further investigated here. Irrespective of the reasons, the strategy-making process has not proliferated up to the highest level of decision-making in Poland. In fact, contrary to the questions of economic governance during the euro crisis, it was not on the agenda of the EU's highest political institution – the European Council.

Conclusions

The idea of this paper was to trace the involvement of the Member States in the strategy-making (based on the Polish case study) and to assess to what extent the consultation process can serve as an example for a variation of deliberative intergovernmentalism.

With regard to the first issue, the analysis shows a mixed picture. On one hand, the NCPs as a communication channel with the drafting team as well as the possibility to contribute to the text via non-papers were much appreciated, even though a more intensive debate among Member States (or at least in a groups of some of them) came too short. But on the other hand, both officials from the MFA and experts reported limited interest for the EUGS within high-level decision-makers due to the reasons presented above. There was no public debate about priorities for the EU's foreign policy at the national level. This disinterest partly explains the very weak participations of Polish think tank community in the outreach process of the EUGS. Only one seminar was organised by Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) and none of the leading Polish think tanks contributed to the written outreach process carried out by EUISS. This is quite surprising given the fact that PISM was involved in a significant project on the development of a European Global Strategy in 2012–2013 (EGS, 2013). Asked for the reasons for the non-participation, think tank experts admitted to rather follow the agenda of the MFA and defence ministry and to focus on the NATO summit and issues linked to the defence capacities taking into account the precarious situation in Ukraine.

As far as question on the EUGS drafting process as an example of a deliberative intergovernmentalism is concerned, one of the main prerequisites of the model seems

to be missing - the involvement of highest political level. The consultation process took part mainly between the drafting team and lower level bureaucrats (NCPs and policy planning units in national ministries for foreign affairs, PSC) whereas the senior level of EU's foreign policy making – the national leaders within the European Council had not devote greater attention to both the process and the content. Either the strategic review of the security environment presented by Mogherini in June 2015 or the final text of the EUGS was subjects of discussion within the European Council. The EUGS was 'welcomed' by the heads of states and governments who invited the HR together with the European Commission and the Council to take the work forward (European Council, 2016). It can be understood as a strong call for follow-up action but the assessment of the operationalization of the strategic vision is currently premature. So far, the actors who exercise political leadership and enjoy the decision-making competence within the political aspects of EU's external relations were mainly absent in the process what made the shared authority and joint control over the EUGS drafting process unfeasible. One could risk the assumption that the issue at stake – the formulation of the EU's strategic vision was not significant enough for the national leaders to get involved into deliberation process. The EUGS was not expected to be a binding document and to be 'adapted' by the national leaders in the European Council who "waved it through and then moved on" (Techau, 2016). In sum, the strategy-making process does not offer a good example of a deliberative process of policy formation. However, taking into account that in October 2016 the Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on the EUGS and started herewith the implementation process, the deliberative process of decision-making might take place during the operationalization of the strategy. The Member States' participation is indispensable for the process.

Concluding the analysis, it is to be noted, that the involvement of Polish high-level diplomacy as well as security community in the process seems to be limited and so is assumedly the ownership over the document. Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski referred to the announcement of the EUGS in the light of Brexit as "pointless" (Waszczykowski, 2016). The consequences of this development for the EU's foreign policy remain. Yet, the single case does not allow generalizing its findings. An investigation of the participation of other countries in the strategy-making would be needed in order to deliver a more comprehensive picture which would allow to verify the official claims on "Member States' ownership and involvement throughout the process" (Council of the European Union, 2016, p. 2). So far, as the Polish case shows the opportunities and expectations of drafting process in terms of bringing more coherence to the EU's foreign policy and enhancing its will to project power could be difficult to accomplish.

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- Interview with an expert from Centre of Eastern Studies, November 2015
- Interview with an official from Polish MFA, November 2015
- Interview with an official from Polish Bureau for National Security, December 2015
- Interview with an expert from Polish Institute for International Affairs, June 2016
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Author

Dr Monika Sus

Hertie School of Governance & European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. Contact details: Friedrichstraße 180, 10117 Berlin, Germany, or Via Boccaccio 121 50133 Firenze, Italy; e-mail: monika.sus@eui.eu or sus@hertie-school.org.