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TOTAL CHAIR of EU FOREIGN POLICY

Inaugural Lecture by Prof. Stephan Keukeleire (Bruges, March 9, 2011)

“EU Foreign Policy beyond Lisbon : The Quest for Relevance”

The objective of the TOTAL Chair of EU Foreign Policy is to analyse the development, relevance and effectiveness of EU foreign policy in a changing European and international context, with a new institutional framework since the Lisbon Treaty and the emergence of new structural powers and new types of foreign policy challenges. Another objective is to strengthen the analytical toolbox for studying European foreign policy by developing 'structural foreign policy' as a conceptual framework and by integrating non-Western perspectives and attention for the individual and societal levels in the analysis. Adopting an 'outside-in perspective' is considered a necessary counterweight to the predominant Western-centric approach in both the conduct and analysis of EU foreign policy. These themes are also reflected in the inaugural lecture held in March 2011: "EU Foreign Policy beyond Lisbon: The Quest for Relevance".

In his Inaugural Lecture Stephan Keukeleire argued that **the quest for relevance is the main challenge for the foreign policy of the European Union (EU)**. His analysis started from the observation that both the analysis of EU foreign policy (by scholars) and the practice of EU foreign policy (by EU politicians, diplomats and civil servants) are increasingly irrelevant as they are too Brussels-centred, too much focused on the political and institutional dimension, and too much using Europe's own developmental trajectory as the point of reference for other countries and regions in the world. The relevance of the EU as a foreign policy actor is indeed increasingly questioned. On a global level, the EU is confronted with the emergence of new constellations of power which are formed in Asia and the Pacific, including newly emerging powers and an increasingly dynamic China. On a regional level, the EU is increasingly challenged in both its Eastern and Southern neighbourhood. And on the level of individuals and societies in other parts of the world, the question remains what the EU is actually offering to people and societies, such as in the Mediterranean region, who pursue fundamental changes. There is indeed a remarkable gap between the widely developed set of foreign policy instruments of the EU and the capacity of the EU to actually use these instruments to realize changes that are considered relevant by people and societies in other regions.

Stephan Keukeleire advocated a **fundamental shift in the foreign policy paradigms** of the EU and the est. The EU's foreign policy should indeed go beyond the predominant foreign policy approaches which are still largely based on the Westphalian model (in which states and elites were at the centre of foreign policy) and on the late 20th century experience (in which the West was superior over other regions and could thus focus mainly on its own interests).

The Chairholder of the TOTAL Chair of EU Foreign Policy argued for an adaptation of Jean Monnet's motto after World War II, when he pointed to the need to "transcend the national framework, and conception of national interests" by adding a European dimension – which was also at the heart of the establishment of the College of Europe in Bruges in 1949. In the current 21st century context, we can revisit Jean Monnet's motto and point to the need to **“transcend the European framework, and**

conception of European interests” by adding a global dimension and incorporating the interests of societies outside the EU’s borders. In view of Europe’s relative decline and in order to be considered as relevant, the EU indeed has to take into account the interests of the others as well as their approaches, perspectives and priorities. In short, it requires thinking outside the (European) box. It requires a EU that is willing to accept “difference” and embrace an eagerness to learn.

A possible way to provide a remedy for the growing irrelevance is to adopt an outside-in approach, which can include various dimensions. The **geographic outside-in approach** implies that the analysis and assessment of the foreign policy of the EU should start from a thorough knowledge of the situation and problems in the ‘target countries’, ‘recipient countries’ or ‘beneficiary countries’ of the foreign policy of the EU (i.e. the Balkans, DR Congo, the Middle East, etc.). Such a preliminary knowledge of the countries or regions that are the subject of the EU’s foreign policy is essential in order to provide the touch-stones needed to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the EU’s foreign policy. This is also important in order to avoid the generally too large focus on the EU’s policy-process and policy instruments, which is to the detriment of actual policy-analysis and effect-analysis.

The **disciplinary outside-in approach** implies that scholars interested in EU foreign policy should incorporate much more the knowledge and analytical frameworks of other academic disciplines into their own analysis. The previously mentioned ‘geographic outside-in approach’ first of all points to the need of incorporating the insights and knowledge from ‘areas studies’ (Balkan Studies, Middle-East Studies, South-East Asia Studies, etc.) and from non-Western scholars in the analysis of the EU’s foreign policy. This is also related to the need for a linguistic outside-in approach: the need to use more formal documents and scholarly works written in other languages than the predominant Western languages. In addition, in view of the multidimensional nature of most problems and conflicts there is a need to more systematically integrate analysis provided by other disciplines such as security studies, international political economy, democracy studies, public policy, or anthropology.

The need for an outside-in approach also has implications for the EU’s new foreign policy architecture and the **European External Action Service (EEAS)** in particular. The question is indeed whether the new Service are ready for thinking outside the box. The question is whether the EEAS has within its staff a sufficient number of civil servants and diplomats that are real specialists in the various regions in the world, that know the various non-European languages, and that are able to go beyond the Brussels-agenda. In short: the question is whether the EEAS will indeed be able to prove to the world that EU foreign policy is relevant.

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