

Renato G. Flôres Jr. is Director of the International Intelligence Unit (IIU), at FGV (Brazil), where he is also Professor at the Graduate School of Economics and Special Aide to the President. A member of the IISS, London, he seats at the board of several research centres and think tanks involved in international relations, and at the Enlarged Board of one multinational bank. He also served as a Brazilian expert at the WTO. A specialist in global political economy, Professor Flôres has significantly contributed to the international, particularly Asian dimension of FGV activities.

A EU Second Modernity Defence Strategy?

Renato G. Flôres Jr.

Ulrich Beck, starting with his pioneering book, Beck (1986), has called attention to a key characteristic of the “Second Modernity” (our times): the increasing number of problems created by the uncontrolled scientific and material development, leading to the paradoxical situation in which the possible solutions generate additional problems and risks, in an exponential progression. Ultimately, scientific progress and technological innovations, after having been a source of solutions, transformed the socio-ecological environment, generating themselves unexpected and uncontrolled damage.

In this context, risk management involves different disciplines and domains and remains an ever incomplete task, the unfolding of new issues and questions going ahead of each newly proposed solution. Credibility on institutions is lost, and reflexivity, from the technical to the daily social realm, something under control in the past, drastically changes the social dynamics.

Being defence systems fundamentally a peculiar risk management task in modern societies, it is somewhat surprising that in the analysis of such systems no use has been made of the original conceptual framework proposed by Beck.

This short essay outlines how approaches to the defence riddle could be examined under the above light. We do this by focussing on the post-Brexit EU case, taking as documentary evidence the recently launched

European Union Global Strategy (GS), EC (2016). It is important to say that what follows is not a detailed evaluation of this wide-ranging document, but rather a preliminary analysis of how it qualifies as a Second Modernity, Risk Society proposal. For this, selected parts and issues are discussed in greater detail, no room nor sense existing in covering all its topics and statements.

Emphasis is on the conceptual characteristics of the proposed system rather than on its specific, techno-military capabilities. A point essential in Beck's approach to the way to tackle the questions he himself posed is the need for interdependence and a cosmopolitan view, which will play a major role in our case.

The European Defence System

Though mandatory, the key issue concerning the objectives of a European defence system is seldom clearly posed and even less frequently properly answered. Equally or more absent is a proper analysis of the ensuing risk pattern, with priorities, connections and main characteristics well defined.

Which risks should be main focus of a European Defence System are a function of the vision the European Union has on itself and here lies the heart of the confusion. The loss of identity since the 2004 Enlargement, when a hurried solution to the still unclear world order being generated by the 1989 fall of the Berlin wall and the ensuing dismemberment of the Soviet Union interrupted the needed consolidation of the recently concluded Delors initiative, is greatly responsible for this situation. A schizophrenic European personality, oscillating between supposedly main security concerns and the difficult task of re-establishing governance patterns lost within a renewed set of 25 members, even more heterogeneous than the previous 15 one, was created.

The haste of the enlargement, and the state of flux it bore out, heightened the not always clear relationships between the EU and NATO, leading to a stronger predominance and dependence on the US logic, thanks to the lack of a well-defined position from the European side. The Defence Risk Management System in the years after the enlargement answers to an amalgam of (mainly) US concerns in Europe, with a zest of an European view, and, more unfortunately, is framed within a Cold War rationale, in utter dissonance with the true *Zeitgeist* and –as usual in inadequate solutions in the Second Modernity– is still heavily based on the views of individual actors, the more vocal members –both the big old ones and a few of the 10 new entrants–, lacking, and worse, blocking a true and united EU voice.

The situation is everything but aggravated by the 2008 financial crisis and its lingering and serious unfolding, which rendered apparent a major fracture between Northern, financially risk-averting and more developed members and the Southern, macro-economically more fragile ones. This divide, once again, in spite of positive efforts and a few selected measures to deal with the financial problem in a communitarian spirit, showed a predominantly nation-state approach to problem solving, undermining the spirit of any common project.

This text does not aim at producing a deep analysis of the above questions; in citing them, the objective is to highlight how nearly impossible, within this state of affairs, was to design a coherent European defence policy.

Moreover, if internally the situation was troubled enough, external developments were and have been far from giving a helping hand. The hardening of the situation in the Middle-East and the Levant, where the combined outcomes of the disastrous interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, together with the already existing open wound of the Israeli-Arab conflict, led to an unthinkable escalation of a generalised conflict, in a vast area roughly at the gates of Europe, together with a series of more frequent, daring and violent terrorist episodes. In more than one instance, had the EU had a more independent, clear, united and assertive position, at least some of the unfortunate developments might have been aborted.

In spite of this array of deeply adverse factors, and in the midst of the Brexit affair, the High Representative for External Affairs presented a new European Union Global Strategy, bringing an idea of order and stability to a chaotic situation.

How does the GS qualify as an adequate, Second Modernity solution, to the complex issue of European defence?

A Policy for a Risk Society?

Unavoidably, the document is still heavily dependent on the opinion of the member states. Maybe, in a future time, the policy could become the outcome of a joint European large group on the subject, where much less members' idiosyncrasies and constraints would have to be taken into account. In the present state, as outlined in the previous section, this is utterly unfeasible.

Notwithstanding, efforts towards a European standpoint exist, in particular, great emphasis on a unified view and concomitant actions, as well as manifest pledges for deeper, more integration. Indeed, Unity, Engagement, Responsibility and Partnership are the guiding principles for the proposed external actions, under the adopted 'Principled Pragmatism' global methodology.

The text also quite often refers to resilience, or societal resilience, but in many of its use of this (undefined) concept it is hard to see something more than a rhetorical figure.

The GS clearly supports the multilateral approach and the existing institutions functioning under it, notably the United Nations, all ruled by international public law. This is extremely positive, in times when the UN Charter is oftentimes bypassed if not bluntly violated. However, a policy for the Second Modernity should perhaps stress -or at least mention- the existence of other ways of achieving governance in the semi-chaotic present world (dis)order. Attention in 3.4 to 'Co-operative Regional Orders' attenuates somehow this neglect, and section 3.5 duly addresses 'Global Governance in the 21st Century'. But the style is unfortunately a bit too conservative -as perhaps befits

an official document that will be world widely scrutinised-, more room for innovative forms of governance being still missed.

Another remain of a reality that does not apply any more is the disproportionate emphasis on the 'Enlargement Policy' as a way to solve manifold security problems. This is a first-modernity conception that contributed to the ongoing crisis, where, as already mentioned, the 2004 Enlargement played a major role.

Explicitly mentioning Tunisia and Georgia ('Our Neighbours') as candidate countries is to re-enact a pattern of behaviour that can be a new source of trouble, while sadly testifying that a needed change of mind did not take place. Establishing 'Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs)', while thinking "creatively about deepening tailor-made partnerships further" are welcome, more modern and flexible approaches that should receive much more weight, in detriment of the blind and (to some extent) irresponsible enlargement policy.

Though not denying the nowadays acute management, economic and political crises in the EU, the GS oscillates between this position and that of trying to pursue policies the present state of flux makes totally unfeasible, when not catastrophe-prone.

Boldness however is not absent from the text, and the explicit statements in favour of a European Army ('Security and Defence', pages 19-21, notably the first paragraph) signal a welcome rupture with the accommodating, NATO-relying posture that until today characterises the European society behaviour towards its own defence. The whole 'Security and Defence' section is a well-conceived, preliminary analysis of the huge, and actually novel task of strengthening the EU as a security community, something also crucial "for the sake of a healthy transatlantic partnership with the United States".

As for two important Second Modernity dimensions, interdependence and cosmopolitanism the policy is half successful, though both are not forgotten in the GS.

Interdependence is thoroughly acknowledged, but mainly and mostly as regards the relationship with the US defence complex. Scarce or quite general mention is made to other major forces that might be helpful or complementary in a European risk management context.

Here, the subject is ticklish, but Turkish forces, armies in the North of Africa and in the Mediterranean coast are important candidates for closer co-operations. If Turkey is dealt with in the context of NATO, and the need for a quick fix on the painful process of its admission as a member state -one of the worst blunders of the EU external policy in the past ten years- is rightly stated, this is no excuse for still leaving it in a secondary position in a strategy supposed to tackle issues from a European platform, in a straight forward way.

The North of Africa has its existence acknowledged in 'A Peaceful and Prosperous Mediterranean, Middle East and Asia', via the co-operation strategy, encompassing

cross-border dynamics in North and West Africa and dialogue with several African institutions and regional endeavours. Lack of more concrete defence and military measures may be due to the absence of a European armed force, but should at least have been aired.

In the same vein, and outside the NATO umbrella, cross-dependence with key Atlantic powers must be pursued in more concrete ways. It receives only one paragraph (the last one) in 'A Closer Atlantic', which lists a set of broad, wishful thinking pursuits and completely overlooks the African Atlantic coast. The reactions raised by NATO's few attempts to play a more conspicuous role in the South Atlantic could be circumvented if such attempts are pursued by a European navy; something not exploited as an extra reason for a European force. And... probably as a typo, signing of the EU-Mercosul free trade agreement is still mentioned as a relevant policy...¹

The interdependence dimension is ticklish because it brings to the fore partnerships whose timing is not yet ripe or which raise unsolved questions in the EU foreign policy agenda. These cases are perhaps best considered in the light of the cosmopolitan dimension.

There will never be a stable EU without fully squaring the relation with Russia, Flôres (2016). As briefly mentioned in section 2, things took an unfortunate, divergent path at the time of the 2004 Enlargement, suspicions having persistently grown since then, to eventually arrive at the present moderate-to-explicit tense situation, where the Ukrainian conflict is not the only nuisance.

More importance should have been given in the text to this fundamental contentieux, which must urgently become a partnership. Russia receives debatable attention and only once, in (just) a little more than half a page, where a Rooseveltian carrot and stick style is used. Nothing against assertions like "substantial changes in relations between the EU and Russia are premised upon full respect for international law", but we wonder whether the style adopted is the best and more constructive one. Equating the Russian relationship is mandatory, and a firm though friendlier, or better, more sympathetic stance would have been both more convincing and engaging. At least, the issue is put on the table, what is something.

Secondly comes the already mentioned Turkish side, also crucial in a zero-degree security policy. More and proper attention is given here, though again in a style that alternatively conveys a more determined and clear attitude, seriously concerned with the remaining and sour open question of the accession, and a more distant and less engaging one, in which Turkey is bundled with other Middle-East and Levant countries, even the Balkans, in a serious strategic mistake.

The approach to international trade, an undeniably cosmopolitan issue, is disappointing by its adherence to the standard, much US influenced, rhetoric on the

¹ For a realistic view on this zombie, whose periodic revival is a sad proof of how shallow and lacking priority is the EU-Mercosul, and broadly South America, dialogue, see Flôres (2013).

subject. A clear and open support to the TTIP – a venture still under negotiation and whose latest developments point to a rejection by the European side, while both candidates to the US presidency also show feelings mostly contrary to it- comes as totally unnecessary, beyond outside (the TTIP, not trade) the scope of the Strategy. The same as regards a related issue, regulatory convergence, a highly debated and explicitly geo-economic tool against the wide spread of the Chinese productive mesh. It is hard to find an independent thought here, when even South China Sea maritime security is included -at the same level as that of the Malacca Strait- in the European responsibilities for the deepening of the trade agenda; a misguided example of a cosmopolitan view.

Indeed, from the cosmopolitan viewpoint, the GS is close to flawed, be it by its ambiguity with respect to the two major points above, or by, in the overall balance, still giving too much focus to a state-nation narrative -no mention of novel forms in the world arena, like the BRICS, is made-, disregarding major flows and dynamics that would add a more modern, flexible and truly cosmopolitan flavour to its arguments. It does not, however, necessarily closes a door to several desirable endeavours.

A final point must be added: it has to do with risk. A Risk Management System for one of the main dimensions of a Risk Society that does not address risk is a strange, incomplete creation. Interests and principles, and priorities as well, are duly stated in sections 1 and 2, respectively, but no idea of the main and lesser, unique to the EU or global, key or not to society -though a threat to the Union- risks can be found.

It might be said that the risks are somehow embedded in the priorities (section 2), but these mix issues and methods, and the former receives a very general description. The whole text deals with too many situations -not all necessarily a risk- in which the GS, as a Risk Management System, wishes to act; something hardly possible, beyond extremely costly in funds, personnel and intelligence. Even if achievable, there is no idea of which are the top ones, needing tomorrow a principled pragmatism intervention, which could be addressed somewhat later and, in a context of limited resources, individually or in a concerted way, which demand a pre-emptive attitude, which a calibrated, aggressive one, and so on. A risk management system with no risk analysis looks at least odd.

Moreover, as in any Second Modernity solution there are its inherent risks.

Challenges and Risks

Beck persistently calls attention to the fact that Second Modernity solutions, given the complex, reflexive and ever changing environment in which they will operate, create new problems, usually with a heavily technological character. The biggest challenge in such times is try to devise encompassing solutions -and here the need for the integrative and cosmopolitan dimensions- that would bypass, minimise or ideally block this chain reaction of problems.

The GS is no exception to Beck's prediction, and a few convincing examples can be drawn from it. We shall address three, loosely related to its perhaps strongest proposal, the European Army.

Though not unfeasible, the idea of the Army poses several questions. The first is a governance-strategic issue, not devoid of involved managerial aspects. Given the nearly overwhelming existence of NATO, under strong US tutelage, how would functions be disentangled from it, and a new share of responsibilities be designed? This obliges changes and adaptations at both levels, the Union and the member states ones, as many countries will belong to both forces. How will the defence budget(s) be divided? And how far will the new European Army succeed in establishing its own identity?

At the individual members' level, it will mean a considerable additional stress on the EU governance, already stretched beyond bearable limits with the manifold 'civilian' conundrums, ranging from the impact on the EU organisations of the domestic political evolutions, passing through the unending Euro crisis and reaching the present Brexit thorny situation. Certainly, heated discussions can be expected on how far the Army will outstretch its activities, and, again, on priorities and the related risk analysis.

Though the GS outlines in different points what could consist a starting strategy, ways to shape this new Gestalt will differ and be varied: a Pandora box has definitely been open.

A connected question, very close to Beck's worries, that goes beyond the Army discussion is the ever increasing and urgent European need for technological upgrading. The EU funds its own and buys foreign technology with the resources generated by its trade surplus and positive growth dynamics. Both are progressively decreasing, entailing a vicious cycle in which, with less funds, less top technology and innovation are generated, lowering the competitiveness of the Union, decreasing the number of funds amassed, and so on. It is not evident how the EU will countervail this process which, though slowly, is already in full motion.

In the case of modern armies, technology upgrading is a must, and the GS hints at its full awareness of this in two instances: at the end (pages 20 and 21) of the key section on 'Security and Defence', and at the bottom of page 44, with the explicit proposal of a collective commitment of allotting 20% of defence budget spending to the procurement of equipment and research and development². There is no certainty that the above will be implemented, not to say feasible. If members like France and Spain, and to a lesser extent Germany, are able to sustain all these ideas, bringing also much needed innovation, in a EU-wide perspective it does not seem the case, particularly in an internationally competitive way.

Under the NATO umbrella, technology was not unfrequently supplied by the US forces; how long, sustainable and encompassing this help will be is also an unknown.

² The text says 'Research and Technology'.

The third problem relates to energy. Energy dependence is the Achilles heel of the EU; energy being afforded via the same funds that sustain a competitive rhythm of innovation. This dependence -which could be rendered less painful if a frank, positive relation with Russia were in place- will continue for the foreseeable future, and sets limits to any new ambitious initiative, unless the additional amounts of energy to be required have been clearly and previously secured. The European Army is just one example.

Recent attempts to change the energy matrix, like the locally based *Energiewende* by Germany, where the daring decision to abolish nuclear sources -an idea not at all shared by its close neighbour, France- is being implemented, cannot be considered successful yet. Mentions to the problem in the GS, like in pages 22-23, under the very heading 'Energy Security', are too general, and do not offer anything concrete.

All the above signals that energy will ever more be a dangerous impediment to varied EU actions, one of the least ones a fully functioning, self-sustaining European Army.

Conclusion – why to be modern?

Throughout this text we have repeatedly praised the rupture with a unidimensional, backwards looking attitude, that could make sense in the First Modernity times. It is then natural to ask, why? Why is it important to be modern, in tune with the new needs, shapes and forms of the Risk Society?

The central point is that, in spite of its plethora of current problems, the EU is still nowadays the most advanced experiment towards alternatives to the standard nation-state. Will it succeed? It is difficult to say, but the trend -in a long term perspective- remains (nearly miraculously) positive. As a corollary, the EU is the most qualified political entity to fully project its outside image in a smart power mode -in the original meaning coined by Nye (2011)-, or even better than this, especially in its security and defence activities. A smart power entity requires a modern, Risk Society-adapted strategy. Blurred contours of such appear on page 45, while the first statement of 'A Responsive Union' undeniably recognises the unavoidable Risk Society character of the times ("We live in a world of predictable unpredictability"); both confirming our point.

From this, it stands out that the European Union Global Strategy can be analysed from at least two perspectives. One, is the standard, linear evaluation grid, taking into account the present status and trying to encompass a multitude of questions in a reasonably coherent fashion, guided by a few broad principles and objectives. The GS surpasses this scope.

It would be thus unfair to the significant effort made by the GS to break with a linear view, anchored on First Modernity concepts -apparent in a number of points in the document-, not to demand more; more modernity, more audacity, more risk management concerns and tools, more ruptures.

The serious, and oftentimes subtle, ouvertures to a game change, spread along the text, deserve a criticism up to its significance: the possibility to change the modus operating of the Union in its external relations.

It is not perfect, it shows the unavoidable coexistence of the two modernities, either in the minds of its authors, or constrained by nearly unavoidable reality forces; it has up and downs, it hesitates sometimes too much, it has ambiguities.

No worry, it is by far the best, sincerest and more enticing piece produced by the Brussels establishment in the past few years. It brings hope to all those who have faith in the European endeavour.

References

- Beck, U. 1986. *Risikogesellschaft – Auf dem Weg in eine andere Modernität*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Beck, U., A. Giddens and S. Lash. 1994. *Reflexive Modernisation: Policy, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- EC. 2016. *European Union Global Strategy*. Brussels: European Commission, High Representative of the Union for External Affairs and Security Policy.
- Flôres, R. G., Jr. 2013. *In search of a feasible EU-Mercosul free trade Agreement*. CEPS Working Document n. 378. Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies.
- Flôres, R. G., Jr. 2016. *EU Global Strategy: Expert Opinion 38*. EUISS. Paris: European Union Institute for Strategic Studies.
- Nye, J. 2011. *The Future of Power*. Washington, DC: PublicAffairs.