

Strategic Foresight in Foreign and Security Policy: Potential and Constraints

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Introduction: Art or Silence ?

There has been an ongoing debate on the nature of futures studies, its ambition to evolve into an autonomous field of research and application¹ and what might constitute the core concerns and features of futures studies². At the same time, there is an understanding that strategic foresight remains “an art as much if not more so than a science”.³

This paper is not aimed at resolving this issue, rather it assumes that this interstitial position of strategic foresight can be beneficial. While policy makers are usually keen to base their decisions in analysis and research, ultimately the key request is to translate theoretical findings into reality on the ground. In this respect a proper blend of science and art can serve the purpose. This applies particularly if we understand strategic foresight as an element of strategic thinking that, in turn, serves as an input into strategy-making.⁴

More important for the purposes of this paper, however, is to highlight those features that make futures studies and strategic foresight distinctive within the broader research landscape, and which enable them to reshape both mindsets and approaches to problem-solving by:

- confronting uncertainty,
- adapting to disruption,
- limiting surprise, and
- gaining a time advantage.

The academic literature uses a range of terms to describe the study of the future, reflecting the field's evolving nature. Sardar (2010) examined various terms and argued that *futures studies* best captures the plurality and diversity inherent in the study of future.⁵

In a study analysing the global futures literature over the last thirty years through bibliometric methods, Di Zio et al. (2023) conclude that the terms most commonly used today are *futures studies* and *strategic foresight*. According to their analysis, the former is associated primarily with research activities, while the latter refers more closely to the application of methods and techniques by public and private organisations.⁶

¹ Roberto Poli suggests that a futurist's toolbox requires organising methods according to future-based criteria, that is, according to futures literacy typology and identifies two such criteria: 1. elect specifically future-based methods, 2. state principles for organising previously selected methods according to the ways in which they address future. In: POLI, R. A note on the classification of future-related methods. *European Journal of Futures Research*. Vol. 6 (2018), No. 15, pp. 1-7

² SLAUGHTER, R.A. The Knowledge Base of Futures Studies as an Evolving Process. *Futures*. Vol. 28 (1996), No. 9, pp 799-812.

³ SUS, M. Dare scholars look to the future? Academia and strategic foresight for the European Union's foreign policy. *European Law Journal*. Vol. 30 (2024), No. 3, pp. 434-442. See also: SCHWARTZ, P. *The Art of the Long View*. Currency Doubleday, 1996: “Scenario thinking is an art, not a science. But the basic steps are the same – whether for a small business, an individual or a large corporation.”

⁴ VOROS, J.: A generic Foresight Process Framework. *Foresight: the Journal of Futures Studies, Strategic Thinking and Policy*. Vol. 5 (2003), No. 3, pp. 10-21.

⁵ SARDAR, Z. The Namesake: Futures; futures studies; futurology; futuristic; foresight—What's in a name? *Futures* Vol. 42 (2010), pp. 177-184

⁶ DI ZIO, S.; TONTODIMAMMA, A.; DEL GOBBO, E. and L. FONTANELLA. Exploring the research dynamics of futures studies: An analysis of six top journals. *Futures*. Vol. 153 (2023).

Similarly, Hichert and Schultz distinguish between *futures studies* as the “exploration of patterns of change over time from analyses of the pasts, through observations in the presents, to anticipations, explorations and aspirations for the futures”, and *foresight*, which “focuses on generating insight into how and why the future(s) may be different from the present; it is regarded as the competency and practice of futures studies”.⁷

In line with these concepts, this paper uses the term of future studies when referring to academic and scholarly work and the term of strategic foresight when referring to the practical application of these concepts by practitioners, particularly in the field of foreign and security policy.

The paper proceeds as follows. The first section examines the distinctive features of strategic foresight. The second section explores its use in international settings, both at the international level – focusing on the EU, NATO, and the OECD – and at the EU member states level, with particular emphasis on the embeddedness of strategic foresight in decision-making processes and its application in foreign and security policy. The third section addresses the principal challenges and limitations, while the fourth section sets out recommendations, with particular attention to two issues: visioning as a tool for reaffirming identity, and early warning as a means of strengthening resilience and preparedness.

The paper employs a qualitative research design combining document analysis, comparative case study, and the examination of selected foresight techniques. It also draws on empirical observations derived from an online survey conducted among members of the EU-wide Foresight Network, research interviews carried out in EU institutions and international think tanks, and the author’s own experience with strategic foresight at both governmental⁸ and non-governmental⁹ levels.

I. Why Foresight Matters

I Actively confronting the uncomfortable reality that there is no single future

One of the first things one usually learns about foresight is that strategic foresight does not predict the future. All the data available to us are from the past or present. There are no empirically observable data from the future. Therefore, there is not one, pre-determined future, but multiple possible futures. These

⁷ HICHERT, T. and W. SCHULTZ. Futures studies methods: a typology and guide to research design. In: POLI, R.. *Handbook of Futures Studies*. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2024, Chapter 23, pp. 329-359. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035301607.00030>

⁸ Foresight reports for the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak republic: Strategic Foresight for the Foreign and European Policy of the Slovak Republic <https://www.mzv.sk/documents/30297/15218988/Strategic-Foresight-for-the-Foreign-and-European-Policy-of-the-Slovak-Republic.pdf/235c6ca6-2bd8-5cb8-f084-dc896caf2c8a>; Europe at a Crossroads – Seeking Stability and Security in a Changing Global Environment: https://www.mzv.sk/documents/30297/15218988/Europe_at_a_Crossroads.pdf/e821685a-e6f7-51ce-a602-3ef8c84b45c0; Successful Slovakia in prosperous Europe – competitiveness in the times of global transformation: <https://www.mzv.sk/documents/30297/15218988/Successful%20Slovakia%20in%20prosperous%20Europe%20E2%80%93%20competitiveness%20in%20the%20times%20of%20global%20transformation.pdf/d0f1d2b3-9be2-4eao-baa4-232fc7fa6d84>

⁹ Foresight project in the Adapt Institute: Drone Futures: Road to 2040. Foresight from Central Europe: <https://www.adaptinstitute.org/drone-futures-road-to-2040-foresight-from-central-europe/16/10/2025/>; The Future of Drones: Strategic interregnum: <https://www.adaptinstitute.org/the-future-of-drones-strategic-interregnum/16/12/2025/>; Future of Software-Defined Vehicles: <https://www.adaptinstitute.org/future-of-software-defined-vehicles/>

are some of the central premises of futures studies. The active exploration of alternative scenarios lies at the heart of foresight methodology.

The difficulty, however, is that individuals and organisations are naturally inclined to prefer a particular future. This helps to explain the popularity of forecasts, whether in weather prediction, opinion polling, or financial markets. It also explains why frustration and surprise can be so intense when such predictions fail to materialise.

The first lesson of foresight, therefore, is that there is not one single future, but a plurality of plausible futures. The initial task is thus to persuade policymakers and institutions to accept this uncomfortable reality. Once such a shift in mindset – or, in some cases, institutional culture – has taken place, two paths open up.

One is to develop an image of a preferred future and, through backcasting, work backwards to identify the steps required either to bring it about or to avoid undesirable outcomes. The other one is to work across multiple scenarios in order to develop a strategy that does not depend on one preferred or supposedly most probable future, but is robust enough to ensure survival and, ideally, success across a range of plausible futures.

II Developing the ability to work with disruptions

Before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia appears to have assumed that it could bring the country under control within days. Many Western governments and analysts, by contrast, assumed that Moscow would stop short of a full-scale invasion because such a decision seemed strategically irrational. Both assumptions proved false. The result has been the largest war in Europe since the Second World War.

Similar failures of assumption have shaped other strategic choices. Policymakers and analysts assumed that economic rationality and the attraction of the status quo would prevail in the Brexit referendum¹⁰; that China's economic modernisation would eventually produce political liberalisation¹¹; that cooperation, institutional engagement, and economic interdependence would encourage Russia to gradually converge with European norms¹²; that state-building could be engineered from outside and

¹⁰ The centrepiece of the Remain campaign in the EU referendum was that Britain's economy would suffer if the country voted to Leave. Yet in the event that is precisely what a majority voted to do." See more in John Curtice article analysing the reasons why the economic argument did not convince the electorate. In Curtice, J. The economics of Brexit in voters' eyes (or, why the Remain campaign failed). NatCen Social Research. 2016. Available at: <https://whatukthinks.org/eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/The-Economics-of-Brexit-in-voters-eyes.pdf>

See also Buchanan's article, which analyses the reasons why the „status-quo bias“ did not work in the Brexit referendum. In Buchanan, T. Brexit behaviourally: lessons learned from the 2016 referendum. Mind Soc 18, 13–31 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11299-019-00214-3>

¹¹ The speech by US President Clinton at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, on March 8, 2000 made the case for granting China Permanent Normal Trade Relations and supporting its WTO accession. „The speech articulated in its clearest form Clinton's theory that economic integration would, over time, produce political liberalization in China.“ *Primary Sources from Post-Cold War Engagement with China*. Council on Foreign Relations. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/education/learn/resource-collections/primary-sources-post-cold-war-engagement-china/clinton-on-china-and-the-wto-2000?>

¹² „The European Council trusts that Russia will continue its action to promote stability, development, peace and democracy. It means to support its efforts. It wishes to strengthen permanently the ties between the European Union and this great country.“ Madrid European Council Presidency Conclusions, 15 and 16 December 1995. Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/00400-c.en5.htm

that authoritarian collapse would lead to democratic transition¹³. These are just a few cases, when assumptions appeared plausible, yet they generated serious strategic dilemmas at best, and major policy failures at worst.

The second lesson, and an integral feature of strategic foresight methodology, is the need to systematically test the assumptions throughout the foresight process.

III Limiting surprises by looking beyond the horizo

While there has long been debate about the scope of security, both in international relations theory – framed as a distinction between high and low politics,¹⁴ and in policymaking (hard vs soft security), strategic foresight addresses this issue, by default, through multidisciplinary lenses. Major horizon-scanning frameworks¹⁵ are designed precisely to ensure that weak signals of possible future disruption are examined across political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental domains. As Choo observed “Environmental scanning casts an even wider net and analyses information about every sector of the external environment that can help management to plan for the organization’s future. Scanning [...] includes technology, economic conditions, political and regulatory environment, and social and demographic trends.”¹⁶

Foreign and security policy is no longer the exclusive domain of cabinets and diplomatic salons. A narrow focus on “high politics” is often insufficient for understanding the complexity of the contemporary world, as it is captured in the “wide” versus “narrow” debate about security studies.¹⁷ The crises of the past decade have shown that so-called low-politics issues have often been just as consequential as traditional high-politics concerns, if not more so. Many of the shocks that have destabilised international relations in recent years have originated outside foreign and security policy in the strict sense, including in fields such as migration, public health, technological disruption, and the weaponisation of energy and supply chains.

The third lesson of strategic foresight is that surprises may and usually will come from areas beyond the organisation’s or individual’s own immediate field of experience or expertise. It is important to see the value of looking at a wider range of areas. “Insights will often come from thinking about things the organisation does not typically consider and discovering relationships or impacts that would otherwise have escaped notice.”¹⁸

¹³ The *What We Need to Learn: Lessons From Twenty Years of Afghanistan Reconstruction* report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction identified 7 reasons why the effort to rebuild Afghanistan, its security forces, civilian government institutions, economy, and civil society failed. Available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-S-PURL-gpo159506/pdf/GOVPUB-S-PURL-gpo159506.pdf>

¹⁴ “The traditional orientation toward military and security affairs implies that the crucial problems of foreign policy are imposed on states by the actions or threats of other states. These are high politics as opposed to the low politics of economic affairs. Yet, as the complexity of actors and issues in world politics increases, the utility of force declines and the line between domestic policy and foreign policy becomes blurred.” In Keohane, R. O. and J. S. Nye. *Power and Independence*. Longman, 2012 (4th ed.).

¹⁵ Basic strategic foresight horizon scanning frameworks, such as PESTLE or STEEP are based on multidisciplinary logic. PESTLE scans the external environment in Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental domains; STEEP usually does it through Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, and Political lenses.

¹⁶ CHOO, C.W.: The Art of Scanning the Environment. *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science*. February/March 1999.

¹⁷ BUZAN, B., WAEVER, O. and DE WILDE, J. *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Boulder, co. Lynne Rienner, 1998.

¹⁸ HINES, A. Strategic Foresight: The State of the Art. *The Futurist*. Vol. 40 (2006), No. 5, pp. 18-21.

IV Getting the time advantage by moving from reaction to anticipation

The fourth distinctive feature of strategic foresight builds on the third, but extends it in temporal dimension. It concerns the ability to look further ahead in time and to identify future opportunities before they become visible or actionable to others.

As Hines observed, “Strategic foresight differs from competitive intelligence in that it is less about finding a piece of information no one else can find – and more about understanding and acting upon that information more quickly and creatively than competitors”.¹⁹

China’s rise in renewable energy industries and electricity-related supply chains illustrates this dynamic well. Its major share in the markets with photovoltaics or critical raw materials suggest how the timely recognition and capture of emerging opportunities can yield major strategic advantages.

The fourth lesson of strategic foresight, therefore, is that the objective should not be merely to exploit existing opportunities, but to identify and seize future ones before they fully materialise.

II. Strategic Foresight in Foreign and Security Policy: International and National Contexts

The European Union

The EU has used strategic foresight for many years. It was under the first von der Leyen Commission (2019–2024), however, that foresight was elevated to the level of the College of Commissioners, with responsibility initially assigned to Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič in the portfolio for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight. Under the second von der Leyen Commission (2024–2029), responsibility for strategic foresight was transferred to Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport Glenn Micallef.

Strategic foresight is now strongly embedded in the EU institutional architecture. Overall coordination in the Commission is ensured by the Secretariat-General, while the Joint Research Centre (JRC) provides methodological expertise and a broad range of foresight tools. Within the Commission, this coordination is supported by the internal Strategic Foresight Network. Beyond the Commission, it is complemented at the interinstitutional level by the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) and by the EU-wide Foresight Network linking the EU member states.²⁰

Emancipation of strategic foresight to the political (College of Commissioners) level was the moment when annual strategic foresight reporting became an integral part of EU planning and policy-making, with the ambition to use the foresight reports as inputs in the preparation of the annual State of the European Union (SOTEU) addresses. The first annual Strategic Foresight Report (2020)²¹ made resilience a new compass for EU policymaking and included the geopolitical dimension as one of the four dimensions of the analysis of resilience. The second Strategic Foresight Report (2021)²² placed geopolitics at the very centre of the foresight work by focusing on the EU’s capacity and freedom to act

¹⁹ *idem*

²⁰ See online: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight_en

²¹ 2020 Strategic Foresight Report – Charting the course towards a more resilient Europe: See online: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight/2020-strategic-foresight-report_en

²² 2021 Strategic Foresight Report - The EU’s capacity and freedom to act. See online: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight/2021-strategic-foresight-report_en

on the global stage, using a multi-disciplinary perspective including a broad range of trends and topics from climate change and digital hyperconnectivity to democratic governance and demography. The third report (2022)²³ turned the attention to two major sectors – green and digital transition, again in

the overarching geopolitical context. The fourth and last annual foresight report (2023)²⁴ of the 2019-2024 Commission was devoted to more intra-EU topics: focusing on social and economic sustainability and people's wellbeing. However, the broader framework for consideration was (as in 2021) included the EU's capacity and freedom to act (i.e. Europe's Open Strategic Autonomy) and the rise of geopolitics. Reconfiguration of globalisation was identified as the first of the six key intersections between social and economic sustainability challenges.

The geopolitical focus remained strong also in the second von der Leyen commission (2024-2029). The fifth and latest annual foresight report (2025)²⁵ revitalised the topic of resilience, introducing the notion of "Resilience 2.0". It identified "developing a coherent global vision for the EU" as the first out of eight areas of action. At the same time, this report, considered as a transitional one, set out the ambition to pave the way for the foresight process employing the full range of foresight methods and tools that will support the next editions from 2026 onwards, and envisaged that the upcoming 2026 Strategic Foresight Report will focus on the future of the EU in a changing world. In the meantime, in January 2026, the President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen announced plans to develop a new European security strategy²⁶. This concurrence may provide a unique opportunity to inform the future European security strategy by a proper foresight process.

In addition, the European Preparedness Union Strategy²⁷ released in March 2025 placed foresight and anticipatory capacity first among its seven action areas. It builds upon the Niinistö Report²⁸ (October 2024), which argued in favour of boosting and better coordinating situational awareness, anticipation, and foresight, but at the same time called for its improvement through "developing tools and frameworks to make our strategic foresight toolbox more actionable and solution-oriented".

NATO

In NATO strategic foresight work is driven by Allied Command Transformation (ACT), which is tasked to lead NATO's military transformation and provide future military estimates, perspectives and advice. ACT has developed a capability to meet this task through persistent foresight and future studies. An important part of this effort is the preparation of the Strategic Foresight Analysis (SFA), which identifies trends that shape the future strategic context and derives defence and security implications for the

²³ 2022 Strategic Foresight Report - Twinning the green and digital transitions in the new geopolitical context. See online: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight/2022-strategic-foresight-report_en

²⁴ Strategic Foresight Report 2023 - Sustainability and people's wellbeing at the heart of Europe's Open Strategic Autonomy. See online: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight/2023-strategic-foresight-report_en

²⁵ Foresight Report 2025 - Resilience 2.0: Empowering the EU to Thrive Amid Turbulence and Uncertainty. See online: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight/2025-strategic-foresight-report_en

²⁶ See online: <https://www.euractiv.com/news/von-der-leyen-announces-new-eu-security-strategy-for-2026/#:~:text=Aim%20is%20to%20%E2%80%9Ccollect%20all%20the%20knowledge,The%20European%20Commission's%20President%20Ursula%20von%20der>

²⁷ See online: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/526806b6-c4e1-43d1-81b7-947308efbab1_en?filename=Joint%20Communication.pdf

²⁸ Safer Together - Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness. See online: https://commission.europa.eu/topics/defence/safer-together-path-towards-fully-prepared-union_en

Alliance. The first Strategic Foresight Analysis (2013)²⁹ served as the foundation of the Framework for Future Alliance Operations (FFAO)³⁰, a strategy document which assisted with preparations for the future military capabilities of the Alliance and helped to inform the Alliance of opportunities to improve its defence and deterrence posture together with its ability to project stability. This document described

how NATO forces can keep the edge and retain the ability to defeat its potential adversaries on the battlefields of the future. Together, the SFA and FFAO provided military advice and informed the NATO Defence Planning Process, as well as other NATO and national processes that require an assessment of the long-term future.

In the renewed foresight cycle, the Strategic Foresight Analysis 2023³¹ provided a shared understanding of the evolving security environment to 2043, thus establishing the context for Allied futures thinking. It was meant to serve as a baseline for the Future Operating Environment report to address the military problem sets for Allied Warfare Development and for further conceptual and strategic thinking.

Thematically, NATO strategic foresight analyses are primarily focused on future global strategic contexts, but at the same time are characteristic for their broad, multidisciplinary approach. The first Strategic foresight analysis (2013) and its 2015 and 2017 iterations researched trends in five broad thematic areas: political, human, technological, economic and environmental. The latest analysis (2023) slightly changed the structure – it identifies all together 171 trends divided into six domains (climate, resources, technology, geoeconomics, human, commons) with international order in transition being the central element.

Strategic foresight is also well embedded in the work of NATO North Atlantic Council, through its subsidiary body, the NATO Science & Technology Organisation (STO)³². Its latest Science and Technology Strategy³³ identifies the need to promote systematic foresight analysis as one of the objectives under its Strategic Goal 1: Anticipate and Invest.

OECD

OECD has been a champion of strategic foresight for a long time. Its pioneering futures work dates back as far as the 1960s and 1970s. Foresight work accelerated in the organisation following the 2014 OECD Ministerial Council Meeting, which encouraged the OECD to strengthen its strategic foresight capabilities. Currently, the OECD's Strategic Foresight Unit is considered as a highly respected international hub for government foresight. Its mission is, like in the case of the EU, focused both internally – to strengthen foresight capacity and practice within the OECD, and externally – to support government foresight capacity by leveraging networks such as the OECD Government Foresight

²⁹ Strategic Foresight Analysis 2013 Report. See online: <https://espas.secure.europarl.europa.eu/orbis/document/strategic-foresight-analysis-2013-report>

³⁰ Framework for Future Alliance Operations 2018. See online: https://www.act.nato.int/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/180514_ffao18-txt.pdf

³¹ Allied Command Transformation Strategic Foresight Analysis 2023. See online: https://www.act.nato.int/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SFA2023_rev2.pdf

³² The NATO Science and Technology Organization (STO) is a NATO subsidiary body to the North Atlantic Council (NAC). Its Mission is to deliver cutting-edge research and timely, evidence-based advice to maintain NATO's military and technological edge in a rapidly changing security environment See online:

³³ NATO Science & Technology Strategy - Defending the future, today! NATO Science & Technology Organisation. 2025. See online: <https://www.nato.int/content/dam/nato/webready/documents/sto/STO-strategy-2025.pdf>

Community³⁴ or through bilateral cooperation³⁵. The OECD Foresight Unit also brings foresight to bear on OECD priorities and global policy debates.

Its topical focus is directed to four areas – climate futures, geo-economic uncertainties, emerging global transformations and intergenerational perspectives. Nevertheless, the geopolitical dimension is very much present also in OECD foresight work. In its Global Scenarios 2035³⁶ geopolitical developments played a central role both in terms of defining the drivers of change and the design of the three presented scenarios. Likewise, the OECD's Strategic Foresight Toolkit for Resilient Public Policy³⁷ enumerates geopolitics among the major 6 possible future disrupters.

EU Member States

The situation at the national level presents a somewhat different picture. An online survey conducted among the sherpas of the EU-wide foresight network revealed a slightly less optimistic assessment.³⁸ Among those who participated, 90% of respondents stated that their national foresight processes are bottom-up and expert-driven. Correspondingly, most participants characterised foresight work as informal or decentralised: used by multiple actors on an ad hoc basis, without formal rules regulating the use of strategic foresight.

While there are notable examples of good practices of foresight driven governance in the EU – for example, Finland has a well-established and elaborated foresight governance structure³⁹, while Spain created a dedicated National Office of Foresight & Strategy⁴⁰ in 2020 as a unit within the Presidency of the Government – survey respondents generally characterised their experience with translating foresight outcomes into decision-making as limited (i.e. either missing or with few examples of foresight use).

This reveals a paradox, as almost 80% of the survey respondents saw decision-making support as the main purpose of their foresight activities. The reasons for this paradoxical situation appear to lie in limited demand from policymakers, cited by 67% of respondents, and organisational constraints, including a lack of staff and/or foresight expertise, cited by 44%. Problems with implementing foresight results are mostly associated with a disconnect between foresight and decision-making, reported by 67% of respondents; the absence of clear ownership and follow-up of foresight results (67%); and short-

³⁴ The OECD Government Foresight Community (GFC) brings together public sector strategic foresight practitioners and leads to exchange information and content on the latest foresight developments in government for better policy making. See online: <https://www.oecd.org/en/networks/oecd-government-foresight-community.html>

³⁵ The first ever *Strategic Foresight for Foreign and European Policy of the Slovak Republic* was prepared with support and methodological guidance by the OECD Foresight Unit. See online: <https://www.mzv.sk/documents/30297/15218988/Strategic-Foresight-for-the-Foreign-and-European-Policy-of-the-Slovak-Republic.pdf/235c6ca6-2bd8-5cb8-f084-dc896caf2c8a>

³⁶ Global Scenarios 2035 - Exploring Implications for the Future of Global Collaboration and the OECD. See online: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/global-scenarios-2035_df7ebc33-en.html

³⁷ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/foresight-toolkit-for-resilient-public-policy_bcdd9304-en.html

³⁸ The online inquiry, conducted among the sherpas of the EU-wide foresight network, took place from July to September 2025 under conditions of anonymity. The goal was to gain perspectives on foresight embeddedness in policymaking, utilisation of strategic foresight, and foresight enablers and barriers. One third of the member states participated, providing a geographically and politically relevant sample: 4 from Central and Eastern Europe, 2 from Southern Europe, 1 from the Northern Europe, and 2 from Western Europe; 1 large, 4 medium-sized, and 4 small member states; and 5 pre-2004 and 4 post-2004 member states.

³⁹ See online: <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/foresight-activities-and-work-on-the-future>

⁴⁰ See online: <https://futuros.gob.es/en/our-work>

termism, reported by 56%. Interestingly, even though strategic foresight is well embedded in the EU institutions and a foresight mindset is now an established part of EU work, similar concerns emerged in a series of research interviews conducted in EU institutions in spring 2026. In particular, the ability to translate foresight results into policy remains one of the central challenges.

As regards the use of foresight in the foreign and security policy domain, the survey results are more encouraging. Overall, 88% of respondents supported the use of strategic foresight in the EU's work at the current level or even more systematically, and two-thirds saw merit in applying strategic foresight to foreign and security policy. Indeed, when respondents were asked about foresight priorities for the EU in the coming period, security and defence ranked second, with 56% support, behind economic competitiveness.

III. How Can Foresight Be a Part of the Solution?

As the previous section shows, strategic foresight has a broad range of applications and use cases in geopolitics and geoeconomics. This shifts the focus from *whether* to *how*. In a foresight project conducted by Adapt Institute on the future of drones for the NATO Chief Scientist Office⁴¹, a Delphi survey was used as part of the methodology. When respondents were asked, “*What will differentiate winners from losers in the technological arms race?*”, foresight emerged as one of the top priorities. However, in subsequent Delphi rounds designed to refine the judgement, foresight dropped to the bottom of the shortlisted set of priorities. This anecdotal experience illustrates one of the central challenges of applying foresight: while it is generally regarded as strategically important, it is often sidelined in comparison with other priorities. As one interviewee observed during the research interviews conducted for this paper, the approach of the political leadership is often: “*We will do foresight when we have time for it.*”⁴²

The question, therefore, is not whether foresight is needed, but how it can be made both relevant and respected.

This requires a proper appreciation of the distinctive nature of strategic foresight: its purpose is not to predict the future, but to enhance preparedness for it. By the same logic, in the field of foreign and security policy, strategic foresight should not be conceived primarily as a means of predicting tensions, conflicts, or wars, but rather as a means of helping to prevent or avert them.

Richard A. Slaughter in the Introduction to *The Knowledge Base of Futures Studies 2020*, observes that “As long as human civilisation continues along its present destabilising course, the world will be ‘out of balance’.”⁴³ Responding to this warning invites a further question: can foresight help to rebalance the global trajectory? The most plausible answer is that strategic foresight can make a meaningful

⁴¹ Future of Drones: Strategic interregnum. See online: <https://www.adaptinstitute.org/the-future-of-drones-strategic-interregnum/16/12/2025/>

⁴² The research interviews were conducted in March 2026 during a study visit to Brussels undertaken as part of the Think Visegrad in Brussels Fellowship, organised by the EUROPEUM Brussels Office. The research employed anonymous, qualitative semi-structured interviews with representatives of EU institutions, Brussels-based think tanks, and the permanent representation of an EU Member State. In total, nine interviews were conducted, involving fifteen participants. The interviews were designed to elicit expert perspectives on the trends in using foresight, its embeddedness in decision-making, topical focus, best practices and obstacles in foresight practice.

⁴³ SLAUGHTER, R. and A. HINES. *The Knowledge Base of Futures Studies*. Association of Professional Futurists and Foresight International, 2020.

contribution to such an effort. The more pertinent question, however, is what must be done to enable it to fulfil this role.

The first step is to generate **demand**. In “Strategic Foresight for Better Policies”⁴⁴ the OECD identifies demand as the first of five elements required to build effective foresight systems. This emphasis is well placed. The research interviews and online survey conducted in preparation of this paper⁴⁵ suggest that demand for foresight and its outputs remains a central challenge for practitioners. Particularly significant in this respect is the capacity to translate foresight into actionable outcomes, whether in the form of legislation, policy, or institutional practice. One might reasonably argue that the quality and value of foresight should not be judged solely by the extent of political follow-up, since implementation ultimately depends on other levels of authority. Yet it is equally difficult to deny that, if foresight is to retain relevance and secure sustained support, its translation into actionable outcomes is highly desirable, if not indispensable.

The remaining elements identified by the OECD – capacity, institutions, embeddedness, and feedback – are equally important, however, the following section of the paper concentrates on those issues that emerged most prominently in the empirical part of the research and have a special relation to foreign and security policy. These observations may be grouped into **four principal areas**:

First, the **present-bias** encompasses a range of challenges from the strategic to the operational level.

At the strategic level, it takes the form of the familiar tension between short-term and long-term thinking. Foresight practitioners often express frustration with policymakers’ tendency to adopt a “we will cross that bridge when we get there” approach. Policymakers may, in turn, become impatient with the long-term orientation of foresight in circumstances that demand immediate responses. The central challenge, therefore, is to preserve long-term thinking without becoming detached from the pressures of the present.

At the operational level, this tension is amplified by the volatility and high dynamics of contemporary developments in foreign and security policy, where today’s worst-case scenarios can become tomorrow’s mainstream realities. Ensuring that long-term considerations continue to inform analysis and advice requires sound insights and, at times, a degree of courage, since more far-reaching assessments may entail reputational risk. A key skill lies in defining the time horizons and in responding to the contraction of time gaps between emerging risk and the actual crisis.

Finally, at the working level, in an international environment marked by high conflict potential, the pressure translates into accelerated demands and expectation of immediate reactions, while the luxury of longer-term reporting steadily narrows. This, however, calls into question the very nature and professional rigour of foresight work.

Preparedness, which has recently become something of a buzzword in security policy, illustrates the ambivalence of this trend. On the one hand, preparedness explicitly recognises anticipation and foresight as integral to this concept. On the other hand, if reduced to a vehicle for short-term fixes, preparedness can drain foresight of its strategic value. The challenge, therefore, is to shift the essence of preparedness from a reactive to an anticipatory mode.

Second, the **discrepancy of mindset** is linked to the question of how to reconcile out-of-the-box thinking

⁴⁴ Strategic Foresight for Better Policies - Building Effective Governance in the Face of Uncertain Futures. OECD, 2019.

⁴⁵ See footnotes and 38 and 42.

with the need to maintain credibility and plausibility. In foreign policy, diplomacy, security, and defence, professional norms have traditionally emphasised loyalty, political consistency, and the preservation of

the status quo. In such settings, a core challenge is to be sufficiently provocative and intellectually disruptive, able to move beyond established comfort zones, while remaining credible and respected within hierarchical and often conservative institutional environments typical for foreign and security policy establishments.

Third, there is the **dilemma of demonstrating results**. The growing pressure to produce actionable outcomes can be particularly problematic in foreign and security policy. These fields are less easily captured through econometric or other quantitative forms of analysis than social, economic, or sector-specific policy domains. An increase in diplomatic contacts or communication, for example, may signal either improving relations or attempts to manage rising tensions; similarly, a high volume of trade may reflect strong cooperation, but equally a high degree of exposure and vulnerability.

There is also a deeper difficulty, captured by Nassim Taleb's notion of "a new kind of ingratitude."⁴⁶ Many of the most valuable outcomes in foreign and security policy consist precisely in the prevention or avoidance of crises and conflicts. Yet the success of such efforts often renders them invisible, because what has been prevented leaves little tangible trace.

Fourth, **confidentiality** remains a defining feature of foreign and security policy, and it operates in two distinct dimensions. On the input side, it concerns the quantity and quality of information available for foresight work. Limited access to insider information or confidential sources may constrain the scope and depth of analysis. At the same time, the information age introduces a further complication: the problem is often not the absence of information, but the ability to manage abundance and to distinguish what is relevant, reliable, and strategically meaningful.

Paradoxically, however, the more difficult issue may lie on the output side. The formulation of findings intended for publication must take account of the sensitivities of international relations, security policy, and defence. If conclusions are drafted too cautiously, they risk becoming overly general and of limited practical value; if expressed too openly, they may prove diplomatically delicate or reveal internal thinking to rivals and adversaries.

Both dimensions of this problem can, to some extent, be mitigated through in-house approaches to foresight. Such arrangements, however, may also limit one of foresight's defining strengths, namely its participatory character and suffer from distortions such as conformity pressures, bureaucratic culture or reduced cognitive diversity.

These tensions may become even more pronounced in international organisations and supranational settings, where the confidentiality of inputs and the sensitivity of outputs are more difficult still to manage. The essential task, therefore, is to strike a workable balance between confidentiality and openness, so that foresight can be conducted with both methodological rigour and the caution required by the field.

⁴⁶ „Everybody knows that you need more prevention than treatment, but few reward acts of prevention. We glorify those who left their names in history books at the expense of those contributors about whom our books are silent“ in: TALEB, N.N.: *The Black Swan – The Impact of the Highly Improbable*. Penguin Books. 2008.

IV. Recommendations

Strategic foresight has numerous applications in policymaking in general and, by extension, in foreign and security policy: from inspiring policy options and setting priorities to strengthening anticipatory governance and testing the robustness of policies.

At the same time, while a holistic approach has clear value, it may also invite criticism if it generates too many options, offers overly comprehensive solutions, or results in excessive ambiguity. For this reason, the present paper adopts a narrower focus and highlights two areas that may prove particularly useful for foreign and security policy under current circumstances. These areas have been selected on the basis of three criteria:

- answering the call from the Niinistö Report to develop tools and frameworks to make strategic foresight toolbox more actionable and solution-oriented;
- responding to the political needs of the current times and offering policy makers an agenda to develop in their further work
- focusing on foreign and security policy elements by interconnecting strategic foresight with the theory of international relations

For the sake of analytical embeddedness in current developments, the European Union serves as the principal framework for recommendations, although the underlying principles and motivations are applicable, by analogy, in other national and international contexts.

I Forming a Shared Long-Term Vision as a Tool for Reaffirming Identity

The recent period has been characterised by permacrisis⁴⁷, and polycrisis⁴⁸. From the global financial crisis and the Arab Spring to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the migration crisis, global terrorism, Brexit, hybrid warfare, climate change, technological transformation, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the wars in the Middle East, international relations and security policy have stood at the centre of global turbulence and uncertainty.

These developments, however, have not only unsettled geopolitics and geoeconomics. They have also undermined broader global structures, values, and beliefs. In everyday political life, this is reflected in the growing fragmentation of societies, visible in increasingly polarised and tightly contested elections in which foreign and security policy often play an unusually central role. At the international level, these dynamics are accompanied by the erosion of international institutions and norms.

⁴⁷ Pernacrisis is an extended period of instability and insecurity, especially one resulting from a series of crisis or catastrophic events, as witnesses since the global financial crisis of 2008, followed by a series of major crises such as the Arab Spring, Russian invasion to Ukraine, migration crises, global terrorism, Covid19 etc. Collins dictionary declared permacrisis the word of the year 2022.

⁴⁸ Polycrisis refers to a situation in which multiple crises occur simultaneously and interact with one another, producing combined effects greater than the sum of the individual crises. It is difficult, if not impossible, to identify one root cause of the polycrisis, and hence the means of resolving it. An example could be the year 2022, when there was an accumulation of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the energy crisis, and significant inflation, alongside ongoing climate change and the challenges of the technological revolution. See RAKOWSKI, et al. Characterizing the Global Polycrisis: A Systematic Review of Recent Literature. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*. Vol. 50 (2025), pp.159-183. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-environ-111523-102238>

What is unfolding is likely a period of profound transformation in the international order. This broader picture aligns well with Ringmar's distinction between normal times and formative moments, the latter being periods in which new meanings become available and new identities can be made and established⁴⁹. In such formative moments, crises of identity constitute a central element of the problem, and their reaffirmation and recognition become, consequently, an essential part of the solution.

This is precisely the kind of moment in which strategic foresight can become especially valuable. The formation of new identities would ordinarily unfold spontaneously, often amid turbulence, dispute, hostilities, and not infrequently through upheaval, revolution, or war. Strategic foresight, however, offers a more conscious and structured way of addressing long-term questions. As a participatory process oriented towards the exploration of alternative futures, it is well placed to provide a framework for strategic thinking on the redefinition of identities in the twenty-first century.

This argument is also consistent with the “practice turn” in EU studies described by Sus⁵⁰, which builds on the “normative turn” in political science and the conviction that public policy research should contribute to the construction of desirable futures and thereby enhance the relevance of scholarly work for policymaking.

There has recently been much discussion about the end of the post-WWII order⁵¹, yet there appears to be a lack of vision about what might succeed it. Policymakers may therefore benefit from a tangible vision capable of informing political action and guiding further development. As Voros notes in his generic foresight process framework, it is important to distinguish between strategic thinking, strategy development and strategic planning⁵². Consequently, strategic foresight is best positioned as an element of strategic thinking, providing an input into strategy-making, but not replacing strategic planning.

Strategic foresight can therefore be particularly valuable through the use of visioning techniques aimed at developing a compelling image of a preferred future and fostering a shared understanding among stakeholders of its key features. It can help identify an aspirational goal for where society wants to be in the long term. In this way, strategic foresight can support policymaking efforts to reaffirm or reconstruct identities weakened by the geopolitical and geoeconomic turbulences of the early twenty-

⁴⁹ RINGMAR, E. *Identity, Interest and Action: A Cultural Explanation of Sweden's Intervention in the Thirty Years War*. Cambridge University Press, (1996)

⁵⁰ Sus argues, that there is the ‘practice turn’ in EU studies, in which scholars bring, among others, Bourdieu's approach regarding the purpose of the social sciences to be able to explain practices, with the goal to rethink both theoretical considerations on which scholars based their studies and widen the range of methods they employ. This trend builds on the ‘normative turn’ in political science in general and the conviction that especially public policy research should contribute to creating a desirable future and thus enhance the relevance of scholarly output for policy-making. In SUS, M. Dare scholars look to the future? Academia and strategic foresight for the European Union's foreign policy. *European Law Journal*. Vol. 30 (2024), No. 3, pp. 434-442.

⁵¹ World's rules-based order 'no longer exists' according to the Germany's Chacellor Merz; see: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy4wpvowx430>; Canada's Prime Minister Carney: We are in the midst of a rupture, not a transition; see: <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2026/01/davos-2026-special-address-by-mark-carney-prime-minister-of-canada/>

⁵² „**Strategic thinking** is about exploring options, **strategy development** is about making decisions and setting directions, and **strategic planning** is about implementing actions... foresight and strategic thinking tend to resonate with the question “what might we need to do?”, . In contrast, strategy development asks the question „what will we do?”, and strategic planning the question „how will we do it“? in VOROS, J.: A generic Foresight Process Framework. *Foresight: the Journal of Futures Studies, Strategic Thinking and Policy*. Vol. 5 (2003), No. 3, pp. 10-21.

first century, which have generated TUNA⁵³ conditions and created space for a formative moment in international relations. By doing that in broader multilateral settings, strategic foresight can be useful as a diplomatic tool to overcome current differences by directing focus and attention towards the shaping of a common future. Rather than reinforcing existing conflicts and tensions, it can encourage stakeholders to identify possible shared future interests and opportunities.

In the EU context, the latest Annual Foresight Report 2025 has already moved partially in this direction. In introducing the notion of “Resilience 2.0” it stated that “this is the time to develop a vision of a resilient EU 2040” and even identified three fundamental elements of such a vision.⁵⁴ Moreover, the report indicates that the 2026 Strategic Foresight Report will focus on the future of the EU in a changing world. This effort, combined with the intention to develop a new European security strategy⁵⁵, provides fertile ground for reflection on the EU’s desirable future.

At the same time, important work has been undertaken under the auspices of the Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport, who is also the Commissioner responsible for strategic foresight in the current European Commission. The Strategy for Intergenerational Fairness represents another step towards articulating a long-term vision for the EU – “presenting a new intergenerational ‘contract’”.⁵⁶ Its purpose is to embed long-term thinking in EU policymaking and the EU’s overarching goal is to guarantee that current decisions are made with the future in mind, ensuring a fair balance of benefits and burdens across all generations.⁵⁷

II Early Warning for Better Resilience and Preparedness

While visioning can provide states, as well as broader international and supranational frameworks, with long-term trajectories and a basis for reaffirming their identities, early warning represents a more operational instrument aimed at strengthening preparedness and resilience of foreign and security policy as part of a coordinated risk-management cycle.

In its European Preparedness Union Strategy⁵⁸, released in March 2025, the EU identified foresight and anticipation as the first of seven key areas of action and the latest annual Strategic Foresight Report

⁵³ In her *Strategic Foresight Primer*, Wilkinson uses the term ‘TUNA’ conditions to refer to Turbulence, unpredictable Uncertainty, Novelty and Ambiguity). She argues that such conditions „show that, while data-rich, model-based forecasting, is the foundation of evidence-based policy, it cannot be relied on for decision- making in situations characterised by TUNA condition. Yet societies across the world are facing a growing list of globally connected ‘TUNA’ challenges.“ See WILKINSON, A. *Strategic Foresight Primer*. European Political Strategy Centre (2017). see online: <https://espas.secure.europarl.europa.eu/orbis/document/strategic-foresight-primer>

⁵⁴ Foresight Report 2025 - Resilience 2.0: Empowering the EU to thrive amid turbulence and uncertainty. European Union. 2025. See online: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/bdba60fo-abb3-42f8-b5be-fd35d693b289_en?filename=SFR2025-Report_web.pdf. The report identifies three fundamental elements of a vision of a resilient EU 2040: Peace through European security; the values of democracy, human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights; people’s well-being.

⁵⁵ See the briefing from the European Parliamentary Research Service: „The European security strategy“, envisaging the development of a new security strategy for Q3 2026. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2026/789381/EPRS_BRI\(2026\)789381_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2026/789381/EPRS_BRI(2026)789381_EN.pdf)

⁵⁶ Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness, European Commission. 2026. See online: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/intergenerational-fairness-communication/intergenerational_fairness_strategy_layout.pdf

⁵⁷ Press Release: Commission presents first ever Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness. See online: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_26_535

⁵⁸ See online: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/526806b6-c4e1-43d1-81b7-947308efbab1_en?filename=Joint%20Communication.pdf

2025⁵⁹ introduced the concept of “Resilience 2.0”.

Both resilience and preparedness play a crucial role in foreign and security policy. To make them truly effective, however, they need to shift from a predominantly responsive mode to a more anticipatory one. **Four steps** may be particularly relevant in this regard.

First, the future needs to be **interconnected more systematically to the past** to overcome a lacuna in foresight methodology, as pointed out by Poli⁶⁰, namely the difficulty of linking future-oriented analysis to historically grounded patterns. One of the basic premises of foresight is that all available data we have are necessarily drawn from the past. The ability to identify recurrent political, social, and economic dynamics in earlier developments can significantly strengthen early warning in foreign and security policy. Theories of international relations provide a rich source of such patterns⁶¹. What is needed, therefore, is a more systematic embedding of this knowledge in strategic foresight. This could shift horizon scanning away from a relatively “blind” search for weak signals towards a more deliberate exploration of patterns associated with heightened crisis or conflict potential.

Second, early warning should **move beyond short-term monitoring** towards longer-term anticipation. The design of early warning mechanisms needs to extend beyond the monitoring and assessment of ongoing developments to include the anticipation of plausible future trajectories. Processes such as preventive diplomacy, crisis preparedness and resilience-building can only be effective if there is sufficient time to activate them. By contrast, a system focused primarily on short-term monitoring is likely to reinforce a reactive mode of operation and perpetuate cycles of crisis management loops as we have witnessed since the fall of Lehman Brothers and the subsequent sequence crises lasting until today.

Third, early warning needs a **deeper analytical framework**. The crises of the past two decades suggest that their full logic cannot be understood solely through hard data, material interests, official narratives, or observable behaviour. In cases such as the Arab Spring, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Brexit, the rise of the MAGA movement and related currents elsewhere, and conflicts in the Middle East, factors such as identity, recognition, worldviews, and national myths have played at least as significant a role as socioeconomic grievances or strategic interests. In this respect, causal layered analysis⁶² with its four

⁵⁹ Foresight Report 2025 - Resilience 2.0: Empowering the EU to Thrive Amid Turbulence and Uncertainty. See online: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategic-foresight/2025-strategic-foresight-report_en

⁶⁰ „No foresight method able to intercept the future by focusing on the past has been developed so far.” POLI, R. A note on the classification of future-related methods. European Journal of Futures Research. Vol. 6 (2018), No. 15, pp. 1-7

⁶¹ See for example: Kissinger’s concept of “revolutionary powers” taking inspiration from the Napoleonic period – in: KISSINGER, H.: A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace in 1812-1822. Houghton Mifflin, 1957. Ringmar’s Narrative theory of action inspired by the Thirty Years War – in RINGMAR, E.: Identity, Interest and Action: A Cultural Explanation of Sweden’s Intervention in the Thirty Years War. Cambridge University Press, 1996. Walt’s Origin of Alliances based on diplomatic history of the Middle East between 1955 and 1979 – in: WALT, S. M.: The Origins of Alliances. Ithaca, 1987. Allison’s Thucydides’s trap based on 16 historical case studies – in: ALLISON, G.: Destined for War. Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap? Houghton Mifflin, 2017.

⁶² Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) is a futures studies method developed by Sohail Inayatullah to unpack complex issues across four layers of causality and explore alternative futures. The first layer, **litany**, captures observable, quantitative trends translated into official narratives and news headlines. The second layer, **social causes**, examines economic, political, cultural and historical factors. The third layer, **discourse/worldviews** is concerned with deeper social structures and assumptions (such as economic, religious or cultural) that shape how the issue is understood. The fourth layer, **myth/metaphor**, studies the deeper stories, collective archetypes, symbols, and emotional narratives beneath the worldview under inquiry. INAYATULLAH, S. Causal layered analysis: Poststructuralism as method. *Futures*. Vol. 30, Issue 8, (1998), pp. 815-829. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-3287\(98\)00086-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-3287(98)00086-X).

layers of inquiry offers a useful source of methodological inspiration. If one accepts that the contemporary world is passing through a formative moment, as argued above, then early warning must move beyond the level of litany and immediate social causes and engage more systematically with deeper discourse/worldviews and myth/metaphor layers. This may present a methodological challenge for futures studies, but also a necessary advancement if anticipatory capacity is to become both more accurate and more genuinely long-term.

Fourth, **opportunity assessment** should become complementary to risk assessment. Early warning has traditionally focused on threats and vulnerabilities. Yet recent experience suggests that the capacity to recognise and seize opportunities may be equally important. Securing access to critical raw materials, maintaining a technological edge, ensuring reliable energy supplies, and preserving economic competitiveness are all central to national safety, resilience and maintaining balance of power.

CONCLUSION

Strategic foresight is well positioned to contribute to the achievement of the objectives outlined above. However, its meaningful integration into foreign and security policy – whether in the two areas identified above or more broadly – depends on a wider institutional and political environment conducive to its success.

Central to this is open-minded leadership capable of generating **demand** for foresight, a sine qua non without which even the most sophisticated foresight efforts are unlikely to bear fruit. Beyond demand, three further areas warrant strategic attention.

First, there is a need to cultivate an organisational **culture** receptive to foresight. Foreign and security policy institutions are often particularly resistant to unconventional thinking. If foresight is to become embedded in the day-to-day functioning of these organisations, sustained encouragement and support from the political level will be essential.

Second, institutional **embeddedness** is of critical importance. Although foreign and security policy are fields in which foresight is unlikely to be extensively outsourced, it remains crucial – even when conducted in-house – to ensure that foresight units enjoy the greatest possible degree of intellectual independence and freedom of inquiry, while preserving the internal character of both the process and its outputs.

Third, **strategic patience** is indispensable. An approach centred on short-term key performance indicators misses the very logic of strategic foresight. When conducted properly, foresight yields results over the long term, and such results may, by their nature, be difficult to discern. Indeed, the more successful foresight is, the less visible its impact may appear. When a crisis is averted, a strategic balance of power preserved, or a technological edge and secure supply chains maintained, such outcomes may be perceived as the natural course of events rather than as the product of deliberate long-term strategy.

About EUROPEUM

EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy is a non-profit, non-partisan, and independent think-tank focusing on European integration and cohesion. EUROPEUM contributes to democracy, security, stability, freedom, and solidarity across Europe as well as to active engagement of the Czech Republic in the European Union. EUROPEUM undertakes original research, organizes public events and educational activities, and formulates new ideas and recommendations to improve European and Czech policy making. We are the recipient of institutional funding from the European Commission under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme.



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