

UTOPIANISM, REALITY AND DEFICIT OF THE EU'S FOREIGN, SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLITICS

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Abstract

The paper presents some key issues and obstacles associated with forming and applying the EU's foreign, security and defense politics. The main emphasis is laid on the problems and shortcomings referring to functioning the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). The particular attention is paid to the post-Lisbon forming of the CSDP, traditional hesitance of the EU in defense and military acting, and to some barriers occurring in applying the CSDP.

Keywords: European Union, Lisbon Treaty, CFSP, CSDP, European identity, national mentalities, strategic culture

1 Introduction

The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), created by the Maastricht Treaty in 1991 as the second pillar of the European Union's structure, made an outstanding progress after the first revision of the founding Treaty of the European Union (EU) in Amsterdam (1997/9). First of all, its defense and military dimensions appeared on the scene and remarkably started to develop – the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) and, consequently, the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). The Union so acquired the formal prerequisite to become a more significant global player that should stimulate new thoughts and approaches in an international relations sphere. But some big problems in the EU's acting on the world's scene emanate from the fact that the Union is neither a super-state nor a political entity totally subordinated to sovereign states. The interplay between intergovernmental and supranational cooperation within the EU framework limits the Union's capacity for autonomous foreign or security policy action and it raises the old question of whether or not consensus can be achieved when crucial and maybe controversial policy issues come to the table.

Since the establishing of the ESDI after 1999 (and later the CSDP) the Union has taken some advantage of the NATO's and United Nations' rules and lessons learned to strengthen the readiness of European autonomous capabilities to plan and conduct military operations in the field of international crisis management and peacemaking or peacekeeping. Over the last decade, the Union has been coordinating comprehensively civilian and military crisis management together with the UN, NATO, OSCE, but also with the African Union and ASEAN. The EU has become a major sponsor for the African Union-led peace operations and a key supporter of African security organizations. (Sicurelli 2010: 33)

The Union so often appears to be a different kind of global actor, that particularly with respect to the use of military force in international politics, differs significantly from the US. This fact may also contribute to the globally prevailing image of the EU according to which it constantly tries to appear as a unitary and effective actor in the global scene. Up to now, the EU primarily continues to be a civilian power regarding its means to exert influence in international relations. It is frequently referred to as a normative power, a promoter of norms such as peace, liberty, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. (Terzi 2010: 3) From this perspective, the Union again appears to be a different kind of global actor that particularly with respect to the use of military force in international politics differs significantly from the US. This fact may also contribute to the globally prevailing image of the EU according to which it constantly tries to appear as a unitary and effective actor in the global scene. And the Lisbon Treaty (2007/09) provides the Union with a primary law basis to become a decisive global player also in key international security issues. However, it requires owning developed, powerful and flexible defense and military capabilities.

The Lisbon Treaty on the EU (TEU), in its Article 21(1), sets out the main principles of the CFSP and Article 21(2) refers to all areas of foreign and security policy and to its goals. On the basis of the principles and goals, the European Council (EuCo) identifies the strategic interests and objectives of the EU. However, corresponding decisions of the EuCo can refer to the EU's relations with a specific country or region, or can be thematic in approach. They define their duration, and the means to be made available by the Union and Member States.

The CSDP became an integral part of the CFSP and has served to support achieving the Union's foreign policy goals and ambitions. According to Article 42(1) TEU, the CSDP provides the EU with an operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets. The EU can use them on missions outside the Union for peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter. The performance of these tasks shall be undertaken using capabilities provided by the

Member States. If, according to Article 42(2) TEU, the EuCo decides unanimously, the CSDP can change its original nature by leading to a common defense.

The flexible and effective applying of the CSDP at the same time depends not only on the determined law frame in the Lisbon Treaty and on corresponding secondary acts of the EuCo and the Council (of Ministers) but also on behaving and mentality of the Union's States. These "character attributes" of Member States, manifesting outwards first of all through their different security and strategic cultures, often appear in their diversity as serious barriers mainly in the process of forming and engagement of armed forces for efficient external acting of the Union. The EU is primarily missing the common strategic culture coming out of the common European identity that has not been shaped yet. (On the European identity see in detail e.g. Hrivik 2010: 113-120) Existence of the European identity is one of the prerequisites for forming the Union as a political community, and consequently a strong political dimension of the EU is a basis for successful converging national mentalities and cultures of Member States into shaping the EU's efficient security and strategic cultures and other common attributes. And, just, various problems, obstacles and deficiencies in applying of the CFSP and CSDP have their origin in absence of European security and strategic cultures or, eventuality, in their insufficient forming. This fact negatively manifested in the EU's behaving and responding to the political and armed conflicts in its close neighbourhood, for instance in Balkans, the North Africa, the Middle East and, mainly, in case of the contemporary Ukrainian crisis.

2 The post-Lisbon forming of the CSDP

In the sphere of European security and defense, the Lisbon Treaty introduced the CSDP which aims to consolidate the image of a unified EU equipped with a coherent institutional framework that helps Member States to act jointly and swiftly on matters of common security and defense.

The Lisbon Treaty broadened the scope of the envisioned role of the EU in the maintenance of international security. Besides the enactment of humanitarian, peacekeeping, crisis management and peacemaking missions, the Petersberg Tasks were stretched to include disarmament operations, military advice and assistance tasks, and the deployment of combat forces to support post-conflict stabilization. In addition, these responsibilities extend to include the support of third countries in a fight against combating terrorism in their territories. These additional tasks reflect the Union's willingness to implement CSDP operations along a more comprehensive continuum of security related concerns. The new tasks indicate that the EU seeks to progress towards shouldering more complex situations. In particular, this refers to activities that border the military, police and judiciary areas of influence, such as combating terrorism or disarming former combatants in post-conflict societies. (Hrivik 2013: 4-30) Consequently, the Lisbon Treaty establishes a *solidarity clause* (TFEU 2010: Article 222), which makes it possible for Member States to use the CSDP framework to implement a military mission in the European region, if a Member State is the object of a terrorist attack or the victim of natural or man-made disaster. In such a case, the Union shall mobilize all the means at its disposal, including the military resources made available by the Member States to assist a Member State in its territory.

The Lisbon Treaty iterates the Union's commitment to developing a progressive common defense policy which will lead to a common defense, when the EuCo (acting unanimously) so decides (TEU 2010: Article 42.2). Building on this vision, the Treaty stipulates a *Mutual Assistance Clause* (or also a *Mutual Defense Clause*), which states that if a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power (ibid: Article 42.7). Member States, however, choose the means by which they help a fellow Member which is a consequence of the Union's continuing commitment not to prejudice the specific character of the security and defense policy of certain Member States. Thus, there are still no fixed operative resources at the EU's disposal which may be tapped in case of an attack on a fellow Member State (Karlberg 2013: 98).

The Lisbon Treaty did not radically change the EU's institutional framework and decision-making surrounding the process of implementing a military mission. The decision to deploy a EU military operation still requires a unanimous voting in the Council following a formal mission request by either a Member State or the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (High Representative) – a new leadership post established on the bases of the Lisbon Treaty for promoting a common approach to foreign, security and defense policies. Member States still preserve the right to veto a collective decision to deploy a military operation, or refrain from participating in a Council voting. When abstaining in voting, a Member State is not obliged to apply the decision, but shall accept that the decision commits the Union. If a vote fails to generate a support amongst at least two thirds of all Member States, the proposed decision is not adopted.

Although the EU does not have any permanent military resources, or a European army, the Lisbon Treaty demonstrates that the Union intends to proceed with the development of joint defense capabilities. Furthermore, it solidifies the Union's intention to put institutional functions into place that allow for joint military resources to become both available and deployable, and thus, the Union works towards establishing more usable and flexible battle-groups through an increased "pooling and sharing of resources" (Council of the ministers 2009). The establishing of the European Defense Agency in 2004 was an important initial step forward in this respect as it is

tasked with overseeing the bridging of the military “capabilities-expectations gap” in the EU security and defense organization (Blockmans and Wessel 2009: 272). The Lisbon Treaty introduced two institutional amendments that aim to enhance collaboration between Member States on defense arrangements – permanent structured cooperation between those Member States whose military capabilities fulfill higher criteria and coalition of the willing operations carried out by willing and able Member States within the framework of the CSDP. The Union can delegate to a group of Member States the task of implementing an operation within the framework of the CSDP. In such a case, the participating Member States agree among themselves on the management of the task in association with the High Representative. A newly established forum for cooperation in this respect is the Defense and Security Cooperation Treaty launched by France and the UK in November 2010. This document affirmed that the two states’ intentions to work more closely within the area of defense either through mutual dependence on each other’s industrial base and armed forces, or through pooling and sharing capability.

The institutional changes following the Lisbon Treaty’s ratification have an impact on the Union’s ability to deploy military operation more efficient and deployable. But, the Treaty and its new institutional measures for enhancing cooperation in the field of security and defense also raise several issues. One such an issue relates to the status of inclusiveness of defense policies of Member States. For example, France and the UK together currently finance around half of all European defense spending, figures that are expected to increase further over the next couple of years. The use of permanent structured cooperation is perceived by some as potentially reinforcing the concentrated influence of militarily strong Member States within the sphere of the CSDP at the cost of excluding the majority of Member States. If this kind of cooperation leads to strengthening the dominance of a few Member States in realizing the CSDP and, in particular, in implementing military missions, they will have a negative impact on both the internal understanding of the CSDP as built on representativeness and coherency in the promotion of wider European interests, as well as it will challenge the international image of the CSDP as a pan-European endeavor (See in detail Jones 2011).

3 The EU’s traditional hesitancy in defense and military acting

There are some lessons to be learned in order to present complicated obstacles in shaping the Union as a defense and military community. We concentrate on the issues such as flexible creation of effective military missions, the providing of guidance to upcoming developments within overall security and defense framework and joint acting within the scope of the CSDP. These questions represent real pitfalls for the EU on the way towards a defense alliance. When juxtaposing the EU’s new strategic and operational framework for collective military operation with its actual experiences of military missions, there are indeed several lessons to be learned in order to increase the fruitfulness of future military operations and provide guidance to upcoming developments within the overall security and defense framework. In this context, it is easy to find some pitfalls of the EU’s military machinery. (See in detail Karlborg 2013: 100-101)

We can demonstrate this statement on several cases such as the Balkans, the Middle East, the Nord Africa (the Arab Spring with the wave of revolutions) or the Ukrainian crisis in 2014. But the most suitable one of these examples for simple demonstration could be the Libyan crisis in 2011 – in a year of brutal suppression of political protests against Gaddafi’s regime and its fall. When faced with the unfolding crisis, the EU took several collective measures to curb the deteriorating situation. Despite this fact, the EU was criticized for having acted too slow, too weak, too divided, and essentially incoherent, and for not having taken the lead of a military intervention that was performed in its own “backyard”. Why did the EU not intervene with its own CSDP mission in Libya? The EU had access to all necessary institutional capabilities, such as rapid reaction forces, which are well suited for launching a military operation of this kind at short notice, and had even prepared and adopted a decision mandating a military mission. Furthermore, only a few months prior to the Libyan uprising, the EU had reaffirmed its regional ties with North Africa in the *Tripoli Declaration* issued at the Africa – EU summit (held in November 2010 in Tripoli). Although the reasons behind non-intervention can be numerous, the EU’s response to the case of Libya illustrates at least two factors which represent generic pitfalls to the Union’s military missions – the dynamics of political incoherence and the lack of military capabilities. During the Libyan crises an internal split unfolded between the EU’s three military powers when France and the United Kingdom lobbied for a military intervention, whilst Germany demonstrated its reluctance to support such a mission and so Germany deviated from the EU’s collective stance on the issue, namely to deploy *EUFOR Libya*. This led the Franco-British coalition to bypass the EU military structures. Germany’s conflicting standpoint demonstrates that in spite of the joint security strategy and institutional capabilities comprised in the Lisbon Treaty, a single Member State still holds the power to significantly change the course of the EU’s collective military action.

Although the EU is becoming increasingly more visible in crisis and conflict management, and by now has partnered with many different international organizations and players in the field, there appears to linger a hesitancy regarding the military capabilities of the EU compared to other actors (primarily the US and NATO). A key reason for this is that previous military missions have made it clear that force-generating processes may

turn into lengthy procedures that, finally, will fall short without the substantial involvement and support by France and the UK.

The lack of political coherence and deployable military capabilities in the case of Libya are interrelated and illustrate a key current tension within the Union, namely that between the EU's traditional role as a soft power and its recent steps towards acquiring the capabilities of a hard power that, if necessary, is both willing and able to use military force. (Karlberg 2013: 103)

4 Some serious barriers in the functioning of the CSDP

In the wake of EU's hapless response to the Arab Spring, the preoccupation of European leaders with matters of financial and economic governance and shrinking defense budgets, any discussion exploring the extent to which the Union is living up to its becoming a global security actor will sooner or later touch upon forming its own mentality and common security and strategic culture. For some experts, the EU mainly needs a common strategic culture in order to become a strategic actor in its own right. The Union thus needs to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention. It is clear that the assumption in the SDS was that such a strategic culture could make the Union into a more active player with a greater political weight. Other have argued that similarity of national strategic cultures is one vital precondition for successful European military "pooling and sharing" arrangements, which in turn look like one of the few solutions on offer for dealing with the defense budget crunch. However others suggest that a European strategic culture might be a result of the CSDP because the shared experience of continuous interaction will eventually be a driver of convergence and bring national strategic cultures into close alignment. Finally, some have argued that national strategic cultures are in fact so different and so persistent that they serve as a convincing explanation for why the EU cannot become a strategic actor anytime soon, and will not be able to generate capabilities commensurate with its aspirations. (B. Griegerich: 77)

Mentality and strategic culture help to understand policy preferences and expectations for appropriate behavior in different policy areas. Then, strategic culture focuses on security and defense policy and, in particular, on issues relating to the use of armed forces. National mentalities and strategic cultures, if they are aligned, can enable or facilitate the implementation of European goals, including in the areas of capability development and operational activity. The flipside is that, if they are not aligned, they will continue to be a major disruptive factor, like to make the Union look incoherent, confused and unable to live up to its aspirations.

In spite of different conceptions of which features make up strategic culture, there are four issue areas which do stand out as a dimensions in which an alignment on national preferences seem to be an important condition for cooperation in security and defense policy:

- Member States differ on the level of ambition they pursue in international security policy and correspondingly on the means they seek to make available to meet this ambitions;
- their formal and informal procedures afford their executives decision-making freedom;
- differences in foreign policy outlook mean that Member States regard different available frameworks for cooperation (e.g. the EU's CSDP and NATO) to have different comparative advantages;
- the respective attitudes towards the use of military force and the place of this instrument within the toolbox of all available means, as seen by Member States, leaves much room for disagreement.

As the EU Member States have different national strategic cultures, the key issue becomes convergence. A European strategic culture should in time emerge out of national level convergence. The EU should have a vision for its role as an actor, but it will not be able to implement this vision in full unless it becomes a state. In the absence of such a development, the best, the Union can hope for, is an issue of specific leadership by changing coalitions of the willing and capable Member States. The Union's vision should essentially be to remake the world in its own image without violating international law. This development might lead to the creation of a new "Concert of European powers" as only a consensus among the most influenced Members of the Union can have any hope of propelling the EU towards coherence. (Griegerich 2013: 78-79, Hrivik 2013: 4-30)

Chief among the issues mentioned above is that Member States still have very heterogeneous security and, mainly, strategic cultures. There is little convergence on fundamental questions such as what kind of armed forces nations want and for what purpose. In addition, Member States have vastly different legal and constitutional frameworks for the external deployment of their armed forces in place. These factors contribute to diverse levels of ambition across Member States and also affect trust among countries. Such political factors will become even more important if "pooling and sharing" includes deployable front-line capabilities. On the industrial side, pooling and sharing could lead to losses of job and skills in Member States that have a defense industrial and technology base. Hence, defense industrial interests may stand in the way of successful "pooling and sharing" as well. "Pooling and sharing" increases mutual dependence and reduces national autonomy. Thus, it raises the issue whether Member States can really rely on each other to make pooled capabilities available when needed. The necessary trust does not seem to extend across the Union yet.

The CSDP has not moved forward lately. The new crisis management structures and institutions, created by the Lisbon Treaty, have disappointed when confronted with the Arab Spring in North Africa and in the Middle

East (first of all in Syria). Yet, this test have come too soon, in particular for the European External Action Service, and the Union still has a chance to play a constructive and useful long-term role in supporting the transition processes in the above-mentioned regions. More worrying for the CSDP and the issue of whether it will shift to a new level of achievement in the next time, is that there are no signs of Member States governments, hampered by different national mentalities and strategic cultures, overcoming the central problem: the CSDP does not seem to be very good at generating much needed capability for crisis management tasks and the operations conducted through the CSDP, while useful and by and large successful, are not of strategic importance. Some Member States, vital to the credible CSDP, have become disillusioned as a result.

The impact of the financial crisis on European security and defense is still unfolding. Further fragmentation and decline of national capabilities is a real danger. Such a development, which could further undermine the CSDP, becomes more likely if governments of the Member States treat cooperation as an afterthought, only to be contemplated when gaps and holes created by national defense cuts need to be filled through capabilities of partners. It would be pure coincidence if uncoordinated national adjustments led to a coherent and useable European capability. "Pooling and sharing" will be one important element of the solution. Without leadership from key defense powers, the CSDP will not simply fall over. (Griegerich 2013: 85-86)

5 Conclusion

To make the more powerful CSDP on the present, the EU's policymakers should take into account at least three elements as they consider future or new interactions of the CSDP including the present security strategy (issued in 2003 and modified in 2008 and 2010). (See e.g. Lindstrom 2013: 59-63) A new security and defense strategy (SDS) of the EU should include European interests because the present strategy does not clearly specify them. A possible way ahead is to identify vital interests of a general nature – those that are likely to be of interest to a majority of Member States and their populations. Thus, rather than combining the security interests of the EU-28, the goal could highlight a select number of EU-level vital interests such as e.g. defense against any military threat to the Union's territory, open lines of communication and trade, a secure supply of energy and other vital natural resources, manageable migration flows, sustainable environment, the maintaining of international law and universally agreed rights or preserving the autonomy of the decision-making of the EU and its Member States.

So far the EU has had no flexible formal mechanism for reviewing or updating the SDS. The Union does not have any system for deciding when it is suitable time to revise or renew its security strategy. Ideally, a system needs to be created to guide the review process. One option could introduce a time limit for the strategy, after which it is either updated or a new strategy is released. With respect to the length of the time limit, a suitable variant might be five years to adequately reflect global trends and changes. Another option for reviewing or releasing a security strategy might be connected with the change of the High Representative. With term lengths of five years, this would ensure a periodic review of the strategy and also give the incoming High Representative an opportunity to set his imprint on it. In this manner, the establishment of a review or update process makes the SDS a more "living" document that can adapt more effectively to global trends, changes a challenges.

To maintain the relevance of European security and defense, there is a need to continue linking it with sub-strategies and existing security documents that detail how the strategy will be practically implemented, e.g. in the sphere of counter-terrorism, effective multilateralism, internal security of the EU, the 2011 European Neighborhood Policy or Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The purpose of the sub-strategies and corresponding documents is to provide guidance on how the EU will address such challenges. Finally, the SDS should be also consistent with relevant sections of forward-looking documents such as the Long Term Vision and Europe 2020 which outline the EU's growth strategy for this decade in areas such as innovations, climate, and energy.

After a decade in the business of international crisis and military operations, the Union has to-date-launched around 24 missions in some places of its external world. With ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and the launch of the CSDP in 2010, the EU made progress towards solidifying a comprehensive institutional framework guiding collective military involvement. However, this new phase in the development of the Union has raised important issues pertaining to the EU's reason for existence, and its role in international crisis and conflict management in particular. Although some specialists predict that the Union is turning into a new military superpower, many others take a critical stance on its progressive process of converging national military capabilities within an overarching EU framework. A key criticism put forward identifies the Union's emerging military persona as a potential threat to European diplomacy, which historically has been rooted in the identity of a peaceful and key political and economic actor. (Karlberg 2013: 88) The EU is revealing its new military role in international conflict management, first of all, in connection with its implementation of collective military operations. The undertaking of military interventions is an important litmus test of the Union's collective military capabilities because it represents the EU's most robust security policy instrument (Missiroli 2003: 496).

The most serious issues connected with the achieving of flexibility, effectiveness and efficiency of the CSDP are mainly: the reducing of the differences of national mentalities of the Member States for common military purposes, the mutually converging of the national security and strategic cultures towards the common European

security and strategic ones, and the creating of a powerful defense and military potential of the EU based, first of all, on “pooling and sharing” of resources. The inevitable supposal for successful fulfillment of the mentioned goals and ambitions is shaping the common European identity as a precondition for creation of a political community within the EU. This is indeed a long-term goal. However, if the Union is not able to find common “mental” support for the flexible, effective and efficient CSDP in the near future, so its defense and military ambitions will soon become illusion and consequently turn to utopia.

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