

Has the EU become an Effective Crisis Manager?

Written by Ralph Rogobete

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Throughout the end of the 20th century, the European Union faced a plethora of foreign concerns including new and complex security and defence challenges. Although the Maastricht Treaty (1993) set up ambitious security and defence targets, it was not until the post-Balkan Wars that concrete steps began to emerge. An Anglo-French Summit at St Malo in 1998 recognized the importance of consolidating the EU's security and defence architecture. Hence, a number of policies and institutions have been drafted and implemented. The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), drafted in 1999 and operational in 2003 with the first concrete missions, became the primary policy in defining EU's crisis affairs. Its lack of efficiency, as it will be argued in this work, led to a significant restructuring under the Treaty of Lisbon (TL, 2007). Hence, ESDP became the Central Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Moreover, in its centralising tendency operated with the purpose of increasing efficiency, the TL also established the post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy by merging the two previous positions of High Representative for ESDP and the High Representative for External Relations.

This paper will first critically analyse some operations experienced under ESDP. This will be followed by a presentation of the main architectural changes brought by CSDP and an assessment of their efficiency. In doing so, one will be able to assess if the operationalization of CSDP has, indeed, enhanced the EU ability to act as an

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effective crisis manager on the international scene.

The ESDP came into place during a tumultuous period in history, demanding effective military interventions. Such places ignited on a wide global spread, from the Balkans to Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Boin, Ekengren & Richard, 2013, p.53). From the EU's first military intervention, Operation Concordia in Macedonia, the ESDP's shortage in military capabilities was evident through its deployment of only 400 personnel (Menon, 2009, p. 230). Such scarcity highlighted the ESDP's limited capabilities. Furthermore, the capacity for rapid intervention was very low. EUFOR Chad (2006) also delayed deployment by 16 months due to a shortage of 16 helicopters and 10 transport aircrafts. This led to widespread questioning of the EU effectiveness in managing crisis (Boin et al, 2013, p. 78). A primary example was the UN asserting that ESDP intervention 'addressed only the consequence and not the issues underlying the conflict in Chad' (Menon, 2009, p. 230). This also reflected the ESDP's lack of involvement in key foreign concerns, which was another indicator of its limited capabilities in crisis management.

The EU's failure to assist the UN forces during the 2008 DRC crisis can be largely attributed to its limited military capabilities (Menon, 2009, p. 232). Moreover, civilian shortages in the ESDP's defence sector have also undermined the Union's ability to act as an effective crisis manager. One such example was highlighted throughout the EU police mission in Afghanistan. While the US Secretary of Defence, Robert Gates, requested an estimate of 3,500 police trainers, the EU failed to provide the required number. This led Gates to label ESDP's effectiveness as 'disappointing' (Tyson, 2007).

Moreover, member states have been reluctant to share their sovereignty over aspects concerning national interests and security. Since EU foreign policy decision-making was based on consensus, advancing national interests took precedence over a common EU foreign policy. Competing views led to stagnation in the process of rapid and efficient decision making (Menon, 2009, p. 236). Lack of clarity and overlapping responsibilities was another reason for inefficient action. An example of institutional disputes worth mentioning was the decision of the European Commission to take the European Council to the European Court of Justice over the Council's choice to embark on a joint-action operation by financing the Economic Community of West Africa to aid in combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The Commission rightly argued that this matter lied within its remit under the EC Treaty stipulations on development cooperation policy, and such implementation required its approval first (Ooik, 2008, pp. 399-401).

Furthermore, issues over the funding of EU military operations have been largely due to the institutional clashes and contrasting national interests and capabilities. Economically feeble member countries regarded EU defence spending as expensive and detrimental towards their own ability to ensure national security (Menon, 2009, p. 238). This resulted in a large disparity in the EU defence financing sector, with France and the UK being required to cover approximately 45% of the total EU military spending (Norton-Taylor, 2010). Therefore, the weak financing of the EU Aceh mission set a precedent for the need to establish a 'formalized system' (Menon, 2009, p. 238). The concept of costs 'lie where they fall', meaning that participating countries are also responsible with the costs of deployment, and the Athena mechanism, which required member 'states to contribute to common costs according to a GNI based index' were perceived as two major attempts to mend the burden-sharing over EU defence budget (Menon, 2009, p. 239). Nevertheless, both additions have been criticized for further incentivising non-participation in interventions and thus, undermining the EU's efficiency in crisis management (Menon, 2009). Countries would be reluctant to favour participation, as it effectively charges the nations that are willing to 'volunteer assets and put their soldiers' lives on the line to protect EU interests' with having to also cover the financial costs (Barcikowska, 2013, p. 4). In addition, the concept of 'common costs', through the GNI- based Athena mechanism has been criticized for favouring some member states over another. Under the Athena mechanism, Germany was required to provide one fourth of the total common costs for the 2008 Chad intervention (Menon, 2009). As a result, the hefty financial requirement on Germany can be perceived as a contributing factor in comprehending its reluctance to approve the deployment of an EU battle-group to Chad (Menon, 2009).

So far one can conclude that the limited capabilities of the ESDP in dealing with crises can be viewed as a direct result of its ambiguous architecture, coupled with member states' attempts to advance/protect their own national interests. This has led to competing views over aspects such as when the ESDP should intervene, as well as the

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distribution of funding towards the EU defence budget. Having assessed the key limitations in the EU's ability to act as an effective crisis manager under the ESDP, this paper will proceed by analysing whether the innovations brought by the Treaty of Lisbon under the CSDP accurately addressed such limitations, thus rendering its operationalization more efficient.

The Treaty of Lisbon (2007, applied since 2009), expanded the EU's influence on the global scene by including new aspects of crisis management such as 'joint disarmament operations, post-conflict stabilisation, as well as the fight against terrorism' (Menon, 2011, p. 77). In an attempt to address institutional clashes such as the ones identified above, TL ratified two key innovations: the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the election of a new post of High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy (Menon, 2011, p. 78). Both decisions significantly change the EU architecture related to foreign affairs, security and defence issues. They both aimed at a more unified commanding point expected to lead to rapid and more efficient responses to crisis. Moreover, under the CSDP new Military and Civilian Headline Goals (2010) were set, also with a provision of unifying their actions. This included 'greater emphasis on civil-military cooperation,' 'making available 285 additional experts on transitional justice, dialogue, and conflict analysis' as well as creating 'Civilian Response Teams, a 100-person strong pool of experts prepared for rapid deployment' (Civilian Headline Goals, 2010).

Another correction brought by TL, particularly in the direction of improving policies within the defence spending sector, was the creation of a new mechanism called Permanent Structured Cooperation. This allows smaller groups of states to congregate and decide over interventions more effectively, through qualified majority voting (Menon, 2011). Hence, it can avoid such delays as the ones identified earlier in this work. Furthermore, the CSDP lead to significant architectural developments in regard to the support agencies existing in order to ensure effectiveness. For instance, the European Defence Agency (EDA) has new powers and roles (Council's Decision 2011/411/CFSP), having the right to review the performance of member states as well as the right to suspend, through qualified majority voting, countries failing to comply with the set principles of the permanent structured cooperation.

Nevertheless, the success of CSDP's operationalization in increasing the EU's efficiency in crisis management has been widely questioned. While the EEAS was implemented in order to 'combine as much of the EU foreign policy under one roof, and under the authority of the high representative', it has spurred a number of further clashes (Menon, 2011, p. 78). This was illustrated through the Commission's fears that the EEAS was implemented in order to limit its authority over decision-making. Hence, Commission President Barroso restricted the EEAS' influence by transferring key aspects of foreign policy such as climate change and energy issues over to new boards of executives (Menon, 2011, pp. 78-79). Furthermore, the election of Catherine Ashton as High Representative was based on political deliberations not on her expertise in the realm of foreign policy. Therefore, as Menon (2011) rightly asserts, some member states perceived the EU foreign sector more a hub for political competition than focusing on improving effectiveness.

Moreover, the innovations brought under CSDP are still not short of inherent ambiguities. This led to questioning on whether they successfully address EU's shortcomings identified above. For instance, the criteria employed by the EDA to assess performance of member states is unclear, largely due to the ad-hoc basis upon which the EU continues to approach crisis management. In addition, the conditions upon which member states can qualify for permanent structured cooperation are incoherent. Menon (2011) rightly highlighted three unclear bases for judgement: 'their willingness to cooperate with partners, progress in developing capabilities, or readiness to deploy these capabilities on missions?' (p. 81). Such incongruences can weaken possibilities to address issues of limited capabilities within the EU's ability to fund crisis management operations.

Nevertheless, while TL directly addressed issues of institutional coherence as well as increasing capabilities factors, it still failed to address the role of member states in the process of decision making within the CSDP. Article 3a (TL, 2007) reiterates this point by stating that the Union 'shall respect [member states'] essential state functions, including enshrining the territorial integrity of the State...and safeguarding national security'. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that decision making over CSDP operations continues to be based on unanimity, meaning that all 27 member states must be in accord with intervention (Boin et al, 2013, p. 64). Hence, differing national interests of member states still generate stagnation in making rapid, efficient decisions the EU's failure to intervene during the Libya crisis in 2009

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stands as a good example here. Germany's controversial decision to not intervene under CSDP can be perceived as a result of its reluctance to cover the costs of a mission which possessed no real benefit towards its own political national interest. The Union's failure to intervene in Libya, a neighbouring area of the EU, generated widespread criticisms against its effectiveness to address major crisis, with the USA challenging the CSDP's credibility (Menon, 2011, p. 86). In addition, feelings of frustration with the CSDP, specifically in the wake of the Libya crisis, were also felt amongst member states, leading to France and UK striking a bilateral defence agreement in 2010 (Norton-Taylor, 2010). Therefore, the overarching dismissive tone towards the CSDP adopted by both USA and major EU countries highlights the EU's limitations in effectively addressing crucial security threats. The striking similarity to the aforementioned inefficiency of the 2006 Chad crisis is a sign of the limited improvement brought under CSDP.

Has the EU become an effective crisis manager? One must start from acknowledging that the EU's crisis management architecture is a dynamic reality undergoing continuous adjustments in order to increase its efficiency. From its modest beginnings in the early 90s to the present complex apparatus, there are certainly significant improvements visible. As highlighted throughout this work, the changes brought under the CSDP architecture are undeniable. The creation of the EEAS, the creation of a unique coordinating point, are some important institutional changes expected to lead to a more efficient crisis management. The increase in flexibility in the process of decision-making is another positive aspect. However, problems still remain. Again as seen in this work, questions of sovereignty of the member states, their national interests still interfere, sometimes clashing with a common interest of the EU. Such clashes certainly hinder EU's capacity to offer rapid and efficient responses to crisis, thus rendering it as ineffective. Hence, if there is a place where work should be continued, it is in the area of identifying and perhaps defining those common EU values for which all member states will be ready to place their own interests on a secondary level. For that to happen, one may have to talk of a much stronger, more unified Union.

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