

The EU's re-engagement as a security actor: Fresh start or still sleepwalking?

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With the eurozone still hovering on the brink of disaster and member states slashing their defence budgets, it is no surprise that the EU is struggling to revamp itself as a global security actor. These are the times when peacekeepers are being sidelined by stock brokers, and strategic doctrines overshadowed by bail-out plans. Yet the tectonic plates of global security are shifting. What is certain, however, is the demand for security throughout Europe's 'homeland', as indeed in its neighbourhood to the east and the south, and farther afield.

The heart of the problem resides in the supply side of European security. In the ten years of operational existence of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the EU has grown into a global crisis manager and has strengthened its role as a regional security actor, by serving as a partner for the United Nations. However, since the launching of EUNAVFOR Atalanta off the coast of the Horn of Africa in December 2008, the CSDP, acting as the 'hard' power projection arm of the EU, seems to have lost much of its *force de frappe*. Military and civilian capacity-building lags behind as operational requirements become more demanding: existing capabilities are neither smart, nor shared widely enough. Furthermore, on the operational side, 28 crisis management missions have been launched since 2003, but only one – the small-scale EU Training Mission in Somalia – since Operation Atalanta. EUFOR Libya, the EU's operation to support humanitarian assistance announced on 1 April 2011, was never launched, let alone a full-scale military intervention under the CSDP. The dust kicked-up by the Lisbon Treaty's institutional innovations in the realm of EU external action has needed time to settle. The European External Action Service (EEAS) is still trying to find ways and means to properly incorporate the military and civil-military bodies into its bureaucratic structures. In other words, in the operational sense – the *raison d'être* of the CSDP – the EU's security persona has been dormant for the past couple of years.

A lack of political will and low commitment on the part of the member states to provide the EU institutions with coherent strategic guidelines and operational punch have been regarded as the core problems. In the words of Jolyon Howorth, the British scholar of European politics and military policy, the CSDP is suffering from an "existential crisis": a debate about its ambitions and objectives – that is, a radical review of the European Security Strategy, adopted in 2003 – is urgently needed. Leadership in implementation (or the lack thereof) also matters.

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Recently, however, there have been two signs of revival. The first is the debate on pooling and sharing of military capabilities, sparked by the Ghent initiative in the autumn of 2010 and boosted by the NATO smart defence agenda endorsed at the Chicago summit in May. The recent CEPS Commentary “EU Defence Policy after Chicago: Going Smart?” traced this development. The second sign, and the subject of this Commentary, is a renewed engagement in crisis management, in the form of the launch of new missions and the extension of existing ones. Speaking at the European Parliament on 13 December 2011, HR/VP Catherine Ashton stressed that the EU needs to assume its global responsibilities whilst showing real value for money, highlighting the need for CSDP action to be “based on coherent and effective strategies” and for the EEAS to turn “comprehensive approach into comprehensive action”. The question arises as to whether the EU re-engagement in crisis management is enough to wake up the security persona of the EU on the world stage.

Following technical assessments, planning and recruitment undertaken in the first semester of 2012, three new civilian CSDP missions (see table, p. 3) are expected to be launched by the end of the summer:

1. EUCAP NESTOR – Regional Maritime Capacity Building (RMCB) for the Horn of Africa and the Western Indian Ocean. This civilian mission, enhanced with military expertise, aims at strengthening the maritime capacities of eight countries in the region, in support of the two ongoing operations in the Horn of Africa, EUNAVFOR Atalanta and EUTM Somalia. In the “Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa”, adopted by the Council on 14 November 2011, the mission has been designed to prevent and deter pirates from interrupting global maritime trade and enable regional states, through the build-up of maritime capacity, to control their territorial seas and exclusive economic zones through effective maritime governance, and take ownership of the fight against piracy.
2. EUAVSEC South Sudan – Airport Security Strengthening Mission, Juba International Airport (South Sudan). The purpose of this small-scale mission is to support the establishment of a National Civil Aviation Security Committee and the related development of civil aviation security programmes to improve security at the Juba International Airport to enable new passenger and commercial routes and boost the South Sudanese economy.
3. EUSEC Niger – To be deployed in Niger in the framework of the “Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel” (published by the EEAS on 23 March 2012), this mission aims to support police reform and law enforcement capacities and increase interoperability to fight terrorism and organized crime.

In addition to this renewed activity, the EU has prolonged the mandate of three of its major ongoing missions. On March 23rd, the Council decided to extend the mandate and area of operation of the EUNAVFOR Atalanta until December 2014. The extension includes the Somali coastal territory as well as internal waters: it allows strikes against pirate onshore infrastructures up to a limit of 2,000 metres inland (with some caveats, such as the prohibition to use missiles and deploy ground troops), a mandate which has already been used. Following a Council decision on June 5th, the EU’s rule of law mission in Kosovo (EULEX), currently the largest civilian crisis management mission, has been prolonged by two more years, until June 2014, with a €111 million budget allocated for the first year. The mission, currently the largest civilian deployment, has also been reconfigured so as to entail a significant (circa 25%) staff reduction. Finally, the rule of law mission in Iraq (EUJUST Lex), launched in July 2005, was extended until December 2013. Conversely, the longest-running CSDP mission to date, EU Police Mission (EUPM) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was closed on 30 June 2012.

Overview of the new CSDP missions

Mission	Initial mandate	Budget (€ mil)	Mission strength	Expected deployment	Activities
EUCAP Nestor	2 years	22.8	200+	August/September 2012	Strengthen the seagoing maritime capacity of Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania and the Seychelles Strengthen the rule of law sector in Somalia by training and protecting judges. Train, equip and support the set-up of a coastal police force in the regions of Puntland and Somaliland
EUAVSEC South Sudan	19 months	12.5	64	September 2012	Training, supervision and mentoring of private and public entities on security awareness Provision of technical equipment to strengthen aviation security capabilities
EUSEC Niger	N/A	N/A	N/A	September 2012	Capacity-building civilian mission with a focus on the reform of the police forces and the training of prosecutors/judges to enhance law enforcement capacities

Sources: For EUCAP Nestor and EUAVSEC South Sudan: Interviews with EEAS officials, COUNCIL DECISION 2012/312/CFSP on South Sudan (12 June 2006), EEAS factsheet (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/eeas/security-defence/eu-operations?lang=nl>). For EUSEC Niger: B2 (www.bruxelles2.eu).

Has CSDP finally woken up?

At first sight, it looks like the EU has woken up from its CSDP power nap. Yet, the new operational impetus offers a reality check on EU security policy. On the one hand, the EU will face the unprecedented situation of simultaneously operating 15 missions (12 existing ones plus the 3 in the pipeline). On the other hand, the high-risk operational theatres will test the comprehensive approach and the focus on civil-military cooperation and coordination. Such an integrated approach to EU external action writ large is demanded by the Lisbon Treaty and thus also constitutes the strategic blueprint of the CSDP. The fight against piracy in the Horn of Africa/West Indian Ocean is a case in point, with the interlinks and complementarities between EUNAVFOR, EUTM and EUCAP. EUSEC Niger will constitute the first concrete step in the broader regional strategy for the Sahel, where insecurity has soared as a result of the degenerating crisis in northern Mali. It potentially paves the way for a long-term engagement drawing on a wide range of EU external action instruments. Political resolve to engage in post-conflict Libya beyond border management, for instance through security sector reform (SSR) and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), would compensate for previous inaction (cf. the April fools' joke of EUFOR Libya). Nevertheless, political sensitivities within member states and the deepening instability and chaos in the country are major factors inhibiting a decision.

Political resolve among member states is precisely the heart of the matter. Apart from that, CSDP needs important operational deliverables if the EU is to somehow rehabilitate its reputation as a security actor. The newly created institutional structures (e.g. the EEAS) and procedures (e.g. early warning capacity) could benefit tremendously from a new set of learning experiences, and so could interoperability on the ground. With only 10 years of

operational experience in the field of CSDP,- it should be acknowledged that the EU is still a young security institution compared to, for example, NATO, the UN or the OSCE. Therefore, learning by doing remains a crucial element of policy evolution. The post-Lisbon institutional format has not yet been tested on that front.

Yet the new CSDP missions do not seem to offer a steep curve for such learning requirements. Their scale is too narrow, their scope and mandate too limited for the EU to re-assume a global security role. The integrated approach foreseen by the Lisbon Treaty and crafted by the EEAS is a step in the right direction but must be beefed up by more substantial operational deployments. This, in turn, heavily depends upon political will and strategic underpinning. Like the build-up of military capabilities through pooling and sharing, crisis management missions need to be backed by a shared 'rationale' justifying common - and comprehensive - actions. The formulation of a new European Security Strategy that takes account of the new elements of the EU's integrated civil-military crisis management as well as the profound changes in the global security environment can no longer be postponed if the EU no longer wants to be seen sleepwalking through today's changing geostrategic landscape.