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The Governance Gap in European Security and Defence

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Key points

This policy brief argues that a 'governance gap' explains the existential crisis of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The true causes of the EU's inertia as a security actor in its neighbourhood and beyond are not a lack of capability or even austerity measures, but the absence of a core group of states committed to driving integration forward. Member states are reluctant to set clear common strategic priorities and struggle to agree on a revision of the institutional rules. Their strategic cultures and interests differ significantly; they hold different visions of CSDP, and are unwilling to use the CSDP instruments at their disposal.

Recommendations

To effectively reboot the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), we suggest a roadmap based on four goals:

- SIMILARITY of strategic cultures. The EEAS should steer the development of a European Strategic Culture (ESC).

- SOLIDARITY and TRUST in common capacity-building. EU pooling and sharing should move beyond sub-regional clustered cooperation. The European Defence Agency's (EDA) mandate should be extended to encourage coordination and mutual trust in defence planning.

- CLARITY about Europe's strategic interests. The review process of the European Security Strategy should clearly define the interests CSDP needs to protect. The concept of *Naval Power EU* could be explored.

- UNITY, as the only alternative to strategic irrelevance. If the 'common' in CDSP cannot provide value for money, maybe a different system of governance – a defence union – could do so?

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1. Introduction

Let us take three assumptions: i) the demand for security provision continues to increase in Europe's fragile neighbourhood (notably following the 'Arab Spring'); ii) austerity restrictions have hit national defence budgets heavily; iii) the balance of power is shifting 'from the West to the rest' and the Americans are pivoting eastwards. Under these circumstances, it is no surprise that the EU is struggling to establish itself as a credible and effective security actor. The final report of High Representative Catherine Ashton, released in preparation for the December 2013 European Council on Security and Defence, admits that Europe "faces rising security challenges within a changing strategic context while the financial crisis is increasingly affecting its security and defence capability".[1] But these are not the true causes of CSDP inertia.

In the run-up to the European Council, a number of initiatives have been launched by member states and think tanks to chart the future of the CSDP and reset its strategic priorities.[2] The challenge is how to reboot the CSDP after a period of stagnation. Despite intense brainstorming and the floating of a numbers of good ideas,[3] it is still unclear whether the Council will succeed in giving new impetus to the CSDP. The agenda outlined in Catherine Ashton's report includes a long list of strategic objectives and concrete initiatives, yet two core deliverables are left out: the prioritisation of those strategic goals, in other words the definition of 'what matters for Europe' and the ways in which member states' commitment to an integrated European defence can be bolstered, relating to 'why Europe matters'.

This policy brief argues that the combination of poor strategic planning and low commitment reveal a 'governance gap' that ultimately undermines CSDP. A governance gap can be defined as a situation in which the actors (member states, institutional bodies) have not been conferred or are reluctant to assume the authority to shape the rules of the game and set strategic priorities. As long as the governance gap remains, the existential crisis of the CSDP will continue.

The next sections analyse the responses to this CSDP crisis and demonstrate that the lack of a core of committed member states, rather than capabilities or exogenous changes, has been the cause of poor performance.[4] The last section formulates recommendations to address the governance gap in the follow-up process of the European Council.

2. An existential crisis defined

Since the end of the Cold War, the EU's security and defence policy has developed through three phases, spelled out by Jolyon Howorth[5], as follows:

1) the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) (1994-1998), characterised by the recognition of the EU's incapacity to deal with the Balkan crises;

2) the introduction of the objective of European military autonomy at Saint Malo (1998) and the experimentation, throughout the first decade of this century, of the European Union's security 'actorness' by means of new institutions and decision-making procedures, common capacity-building and the deployment of crisis management missions;

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[1] "Preparing the December 2013 European Council on Security and Defence", Final Report by the High Representative/HEAD of the EDA on the Common Security and Defence Policy, Brussels, 15 October 2013, p. 2 (http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/131015_02_en.pdf).

[2] See, for instance, the European Global Strategy (EGS) process; the November 15th 2012 Paris Declaration of the Foreign Affairs Ministers and Ministers of Defence of France, Germany, Poland and Spain; or the Italian non-paper "More Europe".

[3] Such as the concept of "strategic neighbourhood" included in the EGS Full Report, p. 3 (http://www.europeanglobalstrategy.eu/nyheter/116470).

[4] The present analysis leaves aside an assessment of the CSDP institutional set-up (e.g. the EEAS), which also affects the governance gap.

[5] L. Simon, "Interview with Jolyon Howorth", in European Geostrategy, 4 September 2012 (http://europeangeostrategy.ideasoneurope.eu/2012/09/04/interview-with-jolyon-howorth/).

3) since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (1 December 2009), a period of 'existential crisis' has marked CSDP operations, demonstrated by the debacle in Libya in 2011 and exacerbated by three factors: American disengagement from Europe and the 'pivot eastwards', the eurozone crisis and doubts about the future of the European project.[6]

During this third phase of the crisis, the Union's performance in crisis management missions has been poor. In an increasingly unstable neighbourhood, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, CSDP deployments have decreased in the four years following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.[7]

The lessons from Libya, Mali and Syria show that the EU is politically and militarily impotent whenever a response to a major crisis is needed and the deployment of large-scale, high-intensity operations is called for. The table below shows the positions of France, the UK and Germany towards four major military interventions (Iraq 2003, Libya 2011, Mali 2013, Syria 2013; the latter considered in terms of willingness to launch an operation had Assad refused to cooperate with UN inspections). The results speak for themselves as to the EU's inability to build a united front when the use of force is required.

Figure 1. EU's 'BIG 3' (France, UK, Germany) involvement in major crises

	FRANCE	UK	GERMANY
IRAQ 2003	No	Yes	No
LIBYA 2011	Yes	Yes	No
MALI 2013	Yes	No (support)	No
SYRIA 2013 (willingness to intervene)	Yes	No	No

Against this backdrop, use of 'coalitions of the willing' has become a trend, at the expense of CSDP. In fact, while on the one hand these coalitions make it easier to reach consensus and become operational, they also allow the use of NATO assets outside the Berlin Plus framework, hence bypassing EU involvement. As long as European states keep on sidelining the EU in the response to crises, their ability to learn and develop common strategic planning and capacity-building also decreases.

Responses to the existential crisis of CSDP in recent years have come in three forms:

1) a re-engagement in crisis management missions, with the emergence of a clear strategic focus on the Sahel and the Horn of Africa to strengthen conflict prevention and counter-piracy efforts;

2) the launch of new pooling and sharing initiatives sponsored by the European Defence Agency (EDA) under the Ghent framework;

3) the two European Commission's Directives (43/EC in late 2008 and 81/EC in early 2009) to simplify procedures for moving military goods among member states and increasing the amount of defence procurement open to competition across the EU.

These responses constitute the blueprint for the December European Council's agenda and, presumably, the defence roadmap that is to uplift CSDP and usher in a new phase of security and defence integration. However, as the next section shows, diagnostic errors lead to incorrect treatment.

3. In search of the right diagnosis

Preparations for the December European Council have created high expectations. The Ashton report includes ambitious recommendations on key deliverables for the summit, namely the setting of strategic priorities to enhance *operational effectiveness;* the launch of *flagship capability projects* (through pooling and sharing), and the creation of a *European defence market.*

Critics of the report contend that the agenda fails to specify important factors. Some of them include a strategic narrative for Europe's role as a security provider; the level of ambition

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[6] Cf. also J. Howorth (2012), "CSDP and NATO Post-Libya: Towards the Rubicon?", Egmont Security Policy Brief No. 35, July 2012, p. 3.

[7] For an analysis of CSDP deployments since 2009, see G. Faleg and S. Blockmans (2012), "The EU's re-engagement as a security actor: Fresh start or still sleepwalking?", CEPS Commentary, July.

defining what means should be committed to attain strategic goals and the role of EDA as guarantor of convergence in defence planning. As the European Council session approaches, there is growing concern in the expert community that the Heads of State and Heads of Government may not live up to expectations and that member states may fail to ensure the implementation and the follow-up process.

Scepticism is justified. The brainstorming debate over the revision of the European security strategy has exposed fundamental divisions among member states; the same divisions that blocked an EU response to major crises, such as the interventions on Libya and Mali, or a strong common position towards Syria. As a matter of fact, the European Council is not in a position to open that Pandora's Box with so little guarantee of reaching a common – or meaningless – position. At the same time, the absence of strategic thinking could condemn the EU to irrelevance on the international stage.[8]

As a recent COST-GRIP-CEPS publication shows, member states want different things from CSDP and advance their national interests in significantly different ways. Despite the existence of some common denominators,[9] states, particularly the 'Big 3', fundamentally disagree on the willingness to use military force, originating in their strategic cultures; and on the expectations towards the role of CSDP in the broader European integration process, which essentially defines their vision of European security and defence.

The first point of disagreement is not only the result of the lack of a common strategic culture.[10] Strategy-making in Europe today shows a dangerous lack of clarity and method in the way member states define their strategic interests.[11] Since national strategic documents are abstract and ambiguous, a constructive debate on European defence integration is struggling to emerge. Furthermore, those states traditionally willing and able to use military force when required are increasingly reluctant to use the CSDP as a multilateral framework for intervention in large-scale crises. France's 'enter first' and the UK's exclusive bilateralism are an example of that.[12] The British approach has evolved from integrative milestones to remarkable steps back (see below). France's national interest overshadows the European dimension in France's security policy, especially when the EU proves sluggish and impractical in crisis response, as in the cases of Libya and Mali. Neither Sarkozy nor Hollande have been willing to take on responsibility or a leading role in defence integration.

The second point indicates that while some of the member states (Italy, Germany, France, Spain) still conceive of a stronger CSDP as a means to achieve the broader goal of EU political integration, other countries, in particular the Nordics, Poland and the UK, are more inclined to pursue their national agendas through the CSDP, with less focus on the final destination of integration.[13]

Recent proposals for an upgrade of the CSDP have thus fallen short of constructive debate about the basic rules of the game, on the construction of a European strategic discourse, as well as on the actors' commitment to agree on

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[8] See J. Howorth (2013), "The December 2013 European Council on Defence: Avoiding Irrelevance", e-International Relations, 15 October.

[9] The COST-GRIP-CEPS study identifies the following common denominators: i) geographic priorities, namely the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, corresponding more or less to the EGS' report definition of "strategic neighbourhood" (cf. note above); ii) thematic priorities, namely democracy, human rights and the rule of law; iii) partnerships with international organisations (UN and NATO); iv) strategic resources, such as the need to secure maritime routes and access to the natural resources of the Arctic. Cf. F. Santopinto and M. Price (eds) (2013), *National Visions of EU Defence Policy: Common Denominators and Misunderstandings*, COST, GRIP, CEPS, Brussels, p. 157.

[10] See C. Meyer (2006), *The Quest for a European Strategic Culture: Changing Norms on Security and Defence in the European Union*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

[11] See M. Muniz (2013), "Strategy and Its Role in the Future of European Defence Integration", IAI Working Paper No. 13:30, October.

[12] Cf. chapters by Manuel Muniz on France ("France: The Frustrated Leader"), and by Giovanni Faleg on Italy ("Italy's Third Way to European Defence"), in Santopinto & Price (2013).

[13] Santopinto & Price (2013), p. 161.

these basic rules. This deficit can be defined as a 'governance gap'. The gap reveals the lack of a strong core of states driving integration forward as well as the absence of an agreement on a model of governance that would satisfy common operational requirements (effectiveness) and national interests (unity). A core is defined as a group of like-minded member states committed to deepening functional integration among themselves. They hold the political leverage and material (e.g. financial, natural) resources to pave the way for the processes of Europeanisation that affect other member states' preferences. [14] CSDP is currently lacking that core, without which governance dynamics cannot steer policy evolution or initiate serious strategic debate. The deficiencies of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the Battlegroups and the UK's role in CSDP are three cases in point.

Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, PESCO allows a group of willing member states to deepen cooperation in security and defence, within the Treaty's legal framework and making use of the existing institutional structures. The mechanism is specifically designed to foster pooling and sharing of resources/capabilities and facilitate the coordination of defence planning processes, with the aim of harmonising national defence efforts. However, while many experts have emphasised PESCO's added value for military integration,[15] no member state has thus far championed its activation. The debate has instead entered a stalemate, despite the apparently strong incentives to deepen cooperation to cope with the austerity measures that have hit defence budgets.

Since 2007, the Battlegroups provide the Union with multinational stand-by military forces of 1500 soldiers ready to be deployed in response to a crisis. Member states send soldiers following a

half-year rotation. As rapid intervention teams, their task is to intervene in high intensity situations and prepare the ground for long-term, stabilisation missions. Quick deployment, however, does not mean quick decisions, let alone political willingness. As in the case of PESCO, no champion of the use of Battlegroups has emerged, showing that a lack of commitment, rather than capability, is preventing the EU from acting globally as a security provider.[16]

The role of the UK as one of the engines of European defence integration offers another interesting example. CSDP would not have come into being without British commitment at Saint Malo. At the same time, the British approach to European defence has experienced a shift from the Labour government's assertiveness to a return of exclusive bilateralism with selected worthy partners (e.g. France)[17] and a growing malign neglect vis-à-vis the EU. The British quasi-withdrawal has slowed down CSDP, with significant operational implications. The intervention in Libya for the first time saw the use of the NATO command structure by an ad hoc coalition (the 'Paris-London Plus') rather than under the Berlin Plus agreement for a Europe-driven operation.[18] The characterisation of the UK as 'the elephant in the room' of CSDP makes it difficult to predict Europe's future as a security provider. Given that it would not be in the UK's interest to quit, its reluctance to commit to deeper CSDP integration would nonetheless block any future collective European effort.

Without core member states being committed to setting out the strategic rules of the game, the scenarios for CSDP are grim.

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[14] N. Tocci and G. Faleg (2013), "Towards a More United and Effective Europe: A Framework of Analysis", Imagining Europe Series No. 1, Istituto Affari Internazionali, October, p. 11.

[15] See S. Biscop (2011), "Permanent Structured Cooperation: Building Effective European Armed Forces", Paper presented at the 12th EUSA Biennial Conference, Boston, 3-5 March.

[16] Jan Techau speaks about "Battlegroups' state of coma" (see http://www.dw.de/eu-common-defense-strategy-still-long-way-off/a-17238185).

[17] Cf. the signature of the Lancaster House Treaties for defence and security cooperation on 2 November 2010, by President Sarkozy and Prime Minister Cameron.

[18] S. Biscop (2012), "The UK and European defence: leading or leaving?", *International Affairs*, 88:6, p. 1311.

4. Recommendations

While the main deliverables of the December European Council on Security and Defence focus on the CSDP infrastructure (capabilities and industry), it is paramount that the follow-up process considers ways to enhance the system of governance that are designed to control it.

Closing the governance gap is not on the European Council's agenda, however. The main deliverables for the summit have to do with the 'hardware', through a relaunch of the CSDP infrastructure composed of capabilities and industry,[19] in order to achieve better operational effectiveness. Although an agreement on improvements in the hardware may contribute to a more capable EU, it may just not be enough to ensure its relevance on the international stage. What is missing on the agenda is a new 'system software' designed to operate and control that hardware. It is therefore paramount that, in addition to the implementation of the European Council's guidelines as indicated in the interim report, the follow-up process takes into account three goals, and related actions, to improve CSDP governance. The goals are:

Similarity

A major obstacle to defence integration is differences in strategic culture. Member states' attitudes towards the use of force struggle to converge. Institutional structures (e.g. the EEAS) are created to foster convergence, through socialisation and Europeanisation processes. The EEAS should receive an explicit mandate to forge a European Strategic Culture (ESC), and be given the instruments to fulfil this task. An EU handbook on strategy-making could be issue to explore common methodologies shaping the emergence of European strategic thinking. Increased similarity in European strategic cultures must become a goal, not a justification

for a set of pooled, yet separable or cluster-based models of cooperation.

Solidarity and trust

Another obstacle to integration, and to cooperation in general, is a lack of trust. As defence integration inevitably entails a loss of sovereignty, states are afraid of partners' cheating, free-riding or unreliable behaviour. This is particularly relevant in the case of pooling and sharing of military capabilities or joint procurement programmes. While the emergence of sub-regional clusters of like-minded countries, or "islands of cooperation"[20] is one answer to this problem, it may forestall future integrative efforts and produce a 'spaghetti bowl' defence architecture. The EDA should therefore engage in confidence-building and promote inter-cluster cooperation, for instance through creating interdependency between countries that have a different sense of identity, such as northern and southern European member states. In this regard, EDA should become the guarantor of trust in common capacity-building by providing stronger impetus to achieve convergence among national defence planning processes. It should also develop a framework for the definition of directions, priorities and binding rules. With a mandate similar to the European Monetary Institute (EMI) before the creation of the European Central Bank, EDA's tasks should be extended to encourage coordination in defence planning, with the aim to increase mutual trust across regional clusters.

Clarity

Member states are ambivalent in their intentions and in their strategic interests.[21] So is the EU. In a world that is changing fast, a review of the 2003 Solana Doctrine (the European Security Strategy) is a prime concern. However, neither the EU nor its member states can afford to produce a shopping list, or have an 'apple pie'-style global

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[19] According to Linnekamp and Molling, debate on the hardware should lead to a European defence review that would bolster the European Defence Agency and agree on a small number of bold and realistic flagship projects. Cf. H. Linnenkamp and C. Molling (2013), "A Doable Agenda for the European Defence Council 2013", SWP Comments No. 28, August.

[20] T. Valasek (2011), "Surviving austerity: the case for a new approach to EU military collaboration", Centre for European Reform, April, p. 29.

[21] Muniz (2013).

strategy. [22] A review of the security strategy should therefore be crystal clear as to what interests CSDP should protect, with what means and level of ambition, and define attainable long-term scenarios for a more secure European Union in a peaceful multi-polar world. In this regard, the geographical areas where security provision is needed (the Mediterranean, the Horn of Africa), the increasing operational importance of maritime security for CSDP[23] (cf. EUNAVFOR Atalanta) and the prospects of a capability-driven consolidation of the EU naval industry [24] create a window of opportunity: a focus on the strategic value of the concept of EU naval power could be explored. It is also important that the review process follows the adoption of the handbook on strategy- making and be steered by the EEAS' corporate board.

Unity

Last, but not least, providing new impetus to CSDP cannot go without a reassessment of what CSDP means within the broader EU integration project. We have come to a point where a 'less than supranational, more than intergovernmental' CSDP is of little use, if not counterproductive, due to complex bureaucratic mechanisms. As the collapse of CSDP is not foreseeable (it would weaken member states' defence and lessen their security), the goal of a European Defence Union may just be what Europe needs under the present historical circumstances, and perhaps the only way to close the governance gap. The only alternative to disintegration and strategic irrelevance is a new system of governance resulting from deeper integration. If a common policy is too expensive and ineffective, maybe it is time to consider that a new type of Union could provide better value for the money invested?

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[22] K. Raik and H. Ojanen (2013), "European Global Strategy: no such in sight, yet", Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 31 May (http://www.fiia.fi/se/blog/415/european_global_strategy_no_such_in_sight_yet/).

[23] See G. Faleg and A. Giovannini (2012), "The EU between pooling & sharing and smart defence: Making a virtue of necessity?", CEPS Special Report No. 61, May, p. 22.

[24] See V. Briani (2013), "Armaments duplication in Europe: A quantitative assessment", CEPS Policy Brief No. 297, 16 July, p. 5.

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