

On decision-making, capabilities and the local dimension in EU operations

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Decision-making has been at centre-stage of contention in the development of the CSDP. The issue of member states' particular interests in the design of foreign policy decisions as constituting hindrance to progress, by lacking in a strategic and integrated approach has been much debated (the communitarian *versus* inter-governmental tension). However, reading the limits of CSDP based on unwilling member states is rather simplistic. The development of this policy has reflected convergence, which, despite limitations, has allowed for concrete achievements as the deployment of several operations with differentiated scope and in different geostrategic spaces demonstrate. Also, the building of the CSDP, both at the institutional level and in its operational dimensions, has demonstrated that there are niche areas where specialization might bring benefits to the EU's overall role in crisis management. These developments have, however, not been linear or without difficulties, as will be further analysed. This section aims therefore to debate the possibilities and limits of CSDP regarding the complex process of decision-shaping and -making, the instruments available, and how these are (or not) reflected in the field, at the level of EU operations.

The lessons-learnt from the Balkans, in the 1990s, in particular, led integration to become a priority in order to render the EU a relevant international actor. The Lisbon Treaty sought to respond to some of the identified problems with regard to disconnection within the EU structures and in its inter-relations with member states. The need to achieve institutional coordination capable of addressing the various security and defence challenges at the EU borders and further afield was recognized as fundamental. The Treaty of Lisbon clearly states, “[t]he Union shall have an institutional framework which shall aim to promote its values, advance its objectives, serve its interests, those of its citizens and those of the Member States, and ensure the consistency, effectiveness and continuity of its policies and actions” (TEU 2007, Title III, art.9).

The issue of consistency and effectiveness becomes a central one in the definition of the new institutional framework. The establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) bringing together the Commission's external relations and the Council's personnel, provides support to the newly created post of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who is also Vice-President of the European Commission (since 2009, Catherine Ashton). This double-hatted function, as it has been commonly labelled, envisages rendering EU foreign policy more coherent. To some extent, the establishment of the EEAS is responding to the goals stated in the European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003, particularly regarding the integration of "instruments and capabilities" (ESS, 2003: 13) in a setting where "greater coherence is needed not only among EU instruments but also embracing the external activities of the individual member states" (ESS, 2003: 13), along with the enactment of regional policies for responding to violence or for initiating preventive actions in the EU's neighbourhood and beyond it.

The context where decision-shaping and -making takes place is thus a complex one, involving EU institutions and 27 member states, and demanding a careful analysis of different intervening factors, including political willingness, material and human resources, legitimacy concerns, values-oriented decisions, which in the end reveal a combination of the different issues discussed in this paper, in both material and ideational terms. Additionally, there is an informal setting where bargaining and the building of consensus takes place, out of the formal institutional mechanisms. According to Juncos and Pomorska (2008: 501), there has been "an increase in communicative practices among CFSP officials", particularly noticeable after the 2004 enlargement, including "e-mails, mobile phone calls and frequent meetings with other colleagues in the corridors and 'over lunch' (...) [and the] practice of consensus-building". This practice includes careful management of pre-arranged agreements in order to avoid contradictions in institutional committees and meetings, including a cautious use of language.

The decision to deploy (or not) a peace operation encapsulates various factors that render it greater complexity than the mere national interest

factor – the “good will” factor. Though this is of utmost relevance, and the commitment of member states is crucial to the success of the CSDP, this commitment involves more than particular national interests as these are framed in complex international and transnational settings. In this regard, as Thierry Tardy notes (Vienna 2013), it is fundamental to clarify the strategy underlining CSDP linked to the self-definition of the EU’s identity as a security actor (see also Toje, 2008: 139). What kind of security actor does the EU want to be? The answer to this question is closely related to the issue of leadership and strategic outlook of the EU in security and defence terms. Specialisation in civilian crisis management has been noted as a way forward given accumulated experience; further hybridisation of interventions, through closer cooperation with other international organisations has also been claimed, though the issue of partnerships has also been a difficult one (the case of the Atlantic Alliance is a good example). In fact, the number of CSDP operations deployed (past and current) points to a dynamic policy, but this lack in strategy points to the limits it is subject to.

According to Hynek (2011: 87), the “increase of ambition has been, nevertheless, offset by the inability of the EU to formulate a clear strategy for crisis management missions, a fact caused by the combination of two factors: first, no long-term vision has underpinned operational planning; and second, divergence between different Member States’ interests has hampered any attempts to develop or formulate a common approach.” The decision-making structure envisaged at Lisbon retains various layers, from the EU structures to the member-states internal bureaucracies. This means, the combined “use [of military and civilian means] for comprehensive crisis management operations which incorporate genuine coordination of all planning stages – including advanced planning – is rather limited.” (Hynek, 2011: 90) If inside the EU problems of integration among the different stages and actors are found, when looking at cross-institutional collaboration other questions emerge.

The issue about EU’s comparative advantages with regard to other international organisations emerges in this context as a central one. The role and place of the EU regarding other international organisations, such as the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

(NATO) or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) need to be acknowledged. Turf wars among international institutions are widely acknowledged and concur to weakening the potential of each of them, as well as the potential for a collective effort towards addressing the challenges at hand. Duplication of tasks is commonly identified as hindering collaboration, along with the so-called 'specialisation approach' that should render these capabilities complementary instead of competitive.

The civilian dimension of EU interventions and the know-how it has gained in this area throughout the last decade should be highlighted in this context. To date, the EU deployed a total of 28 operations, 19 civilian, 8 military, and one civilian/military (operation Support to AMIS II Sudan/Darfur, 2005-2006). By June 2013, 16 were operational. These numbers reveal that in ten years the EU gained considerable experience in crisis management, through its involvement in different contexts, from Europe to Asia and Africa, and with different means, of a civilian and military nature as well as a combination of both. It should, however, be underlined the focus on civilian peace operations, which have clearly outnumbered military missions, and where the EU has gained substantial know-how and has been recognised as an active and effective actor, despite limits. The EU has, generally, managed through its civilian crisis management to affirm itself as a stabilising intervener in issues ranging from legislative adaptation and institutional reform, to police training and elections monitoring. The variations in strength, time and site of deployment reveals the flexibility of missions to adapt to differentiated contexts, though also potentially signalling resistance from member state(s) to send a more empowered presence in face of particular circumstances. Past historical relations of some EU members with states particularly in Africa, deserve mention here – both regarding the option to intervene (such as in the case of France and the recent crisis in Mali, for example), or not to intervene (as Belgium has opted for with regard to instability in Congo).

In the words of Amelia Hadfield (2006: 688), the CFSP is thus a real paradox. It operates because of a unique agreement among member states upon generic interests held in common at a national level, opera-

tionalised at the collective level which in turn can promote visible forms of foreign policy actorness. Equally however, member states' own particularist discourses demonstrate an ongoing desire to retain a genetic component of their national interest that cannot always be adjusted to fit within the perimeters of collective decision-making, as well as a desire to retain the right to exercise such foreign policy particularism in the first place.

The design of operations where the EU will potentially get involved seeks to respond to requests and needs-identification, demanding a careful dealing with what Christopher Hill (1993) termed the "capabilities-expectations gap". This refers both to the capabilities available at EU level in terms of human and material resources, as well as to how these match commitments in the field. Promising to deliver more than its actual capabilities will obstruct EU efforts, so a clear assessment of possibilities and limitations is fundamental. Additionally, the issue of integration, both inside an operation and with regard to Brussels and the field, has raised attention, since the lack of a structured line of action and communication might hamper the activities to be developed. This issue has been subject of much discussion particularly concerning the integration between the civilian and military dimensions of these operations, as chains of command and tasks' attribution reveals in instances difficult. This issue has been acknowledged as fundamental for avoiding duplication of tasks, assuring costs' effectiveness, and local perceptions about what the *international* means in an international intervention. To avoid the strains caused by difficult processes of bargaining at the political level, informal processes of communication have been developing, for example between the EU and NATO.

The field is therefore a fundamental scenario to assess how the whole process of decision-shaping and -making has been revealing of assistance or instead resistance. The way the operations taking place engage with the local dimension is fundamental, as assessment of success depends to a great extent on the matching of the expectations-capabilities gap at this level. Knowledge about the contexts of intervention, spaces where political, economic, social and other dynamics interact, is fundamental for the daily implementation of mandates (on this issue refer to

the work by Pugh, 2005a and 2005b). Linked to the local dimension of the functioning of an operation, the definition of exit strategies is part of the process of assuring a smooth downgrading of the EU's presence sustained on long-term peacebuilding goals. For that to occur, the definition of short-term goals of an intervention needs to be accompanied by a longer term strategy in terms of the sustainability of the efforts developed from that EU presence. The local dimension debate points to two main issues, on the one hand, concerning organisational matters on the ground, highlighting the perspective of missions' staff; on the other hand, regarding the impact these missions have on local dynamics including institutions, leadership, power politics and civil society. This type of impact requires an understanding of the difference between short- and long-term analyses. Consequently, beyond evaluating for the EU's internal dynamics sake it is crucial to evaluate for the mandates' broader objectives on the ground (Freire et al., 2010).

Additionally, how missions' personnel, be it civilian or military, engages with the local reality is also fundamental. The "capabilities-expectations gap" emerges in this context as key with regard to local (mis)understandings, and the missions' capacity to deliver. Knowledge about contexts of intervention and clearly defined lines of communication are fundamental to assure the linkages between all actors are pursued smoothly. An intervention that takes place detached from the locals becomes very much exposed to failure. Also the definition of exit strategies has been an issue debated and which has raised dissension about when and how downsizing should take place. The definition of criteria against which field operations should be dismissed has been a difficult issue. However, this is a central issue in peacebuilding and in assuring transition efforts are accommodated. In the process, the definition of short-term goals of an intervention needs to be accompanied by a longer term strategy in terms of the sustainability of the dynamics initiated and resulting from that EU presence.

The EU has, in fact, deployed a multiplicity of operations, but these have in all been small missions essentially with functional tasks within the civilian dimension component, such as legislative adaptation, electoral monitoring or police training. This means the level of ambition of the

CSDP seems to be overrated when compared to the whole range of formats and activities these operations could take in, revealing an inherent dilemma to the EU when comparing rhetoric to concrete action (Giegerich, Vienna 2013). In all, from words to action there are still many issues in need of refinement, so that the EU's role in crisis management might be acknowledged as a sustained and sustainable one, directed at the stabilisation of its neighbourhood and further afield, and with concrete added-value to offer in relation to other actors in the field.