4th Berlin Conference on Asian Security (BCAS)

Berlin, 28-30 October 2009

A conference jointly organised by Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), Berlin, Federal Ministry of Defence, Berlin, and Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Jakarta

Discussion Paper
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Session II: **European norms, concepts and capabilities for security cooperation**

The EU's concept of security: of use beyond Europe?

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1. Introduction

When it comes to Asian security questions, some observers argue the best Europe can do is to not get in the way – Europe, so this argument, does neither have the capabilities nor the political will to become involved in a significant way. This pessimistic view is somewhat reflected in the long-standing European attitude of happily concentrating on the expansion of the commercial relationship – at best, the almost exclusive focus on trade can be interpreted as benign neglect in the security realm. Asia is mentioned three times in the EU's security strategy (ESS),[1] once as a potential origin of WMD proliferation, once as a source of transnational terrorism, and once in a throwaway line about increasing cooperation with other actors. Even though the European Security Strategy says nothing specific about European interests in Asia and the capabilities to pursue these interests, it seems nonetheless clear that Asia matters.

The optimistic view of Europe's role in Asian security affairs is usually driven by the assumption that the European experience of regional security cooperation has something to offer to Asia. In other words, if Asian societies and governments are interested in transforming their conflicts into peace and prosperity through mutual independence and cooperation, the process of European integration, at heart always about security questions, is an interesting starting point. For example, French Defence Minister Herve Morin told the 2008 meeting of the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore: "I am convinced that...the history of peace in Europe merges with that of the slow but irreversible European building-process. This approach is an example for the whole world, through the message of peace and reconciliation that it conveys."[2] In his view, the process of European integration itself amounts to a "school of peace" worth exporting. A year earlier, then German Minister of Defence Franz-Josef Jung told the same audience: "The success story of the European states is essentially linked with the steady strengthening of multilateral political, economic and security organisations and consultations forums."[3] Related to this assessment is the view that, beyond Europe itself, the EU might have a comparative advantage over other multinational security frameworks in that it is perceived to be an effective actor in soft security matters but can increasingly reach into some realms of hard security questions as well. Thus, the EU's promise as a global security actor is comprehensiveness.

A slightly more presumptuous interpretation of the example provided by European integration implies that there is something about the way the EU is doing security that

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[1] Council of the European Union, 2003, 'A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy'.

[2] Speech available at: http://www.iiss.org/conferences/the-shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2008/plenary-session-speeches-2008/fourth-plenary-session-securing-energy-in-the-asia-pacific/fourth-plenary-session-herve-morin/.

[3] Speech available at: http://www.iiss.org/conferences/the-shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2007/plenary-session-speeches-2007/fifth-plenary-session--dr-franz-josef-jung/.

uniquely positions Europe to play a constructive role in global security questions. It is a non-threatening and altruistic actor which ultimately is pursuing the public goods of peace, prosperity and good governance. Because of its attempt to promote interests that are not exclusively European, so the argument, the EU is welcome as an outside influence in other people's problems. Against this background, this paper will seek to clarify from a general and abstract perspective whether the EU can be of use in Asia as a security actor.

2. What is the EU's concept of security?

The EU's concept of security is unsurprisingly not driven by the nation state as the referent object of security. Within the EU, sovereignty has been rethought and is in reality shared among member governments. It has not, however, been uploaded to a higher level in the sense of being recreated on the EU-level. The process of European integration as such has been driven historically by the attempt to contain the problems created by sovereignty; its origin in the sectors of coal and steel and their obvious links to armaments production at the time underline this point.

Key threats identified by the EU are global terrorism motivated by complex causes, WMD proliferation, regional conflicts – which are most important as a driver of other threats such as terrorism, state failure, organised crime or demand for WMD -, state failure which also is said to fuel terrorism, organised crime and regional instability, and organised crime as such. Hence, the most important aspect of the EU threat assessment is that it describes a continuum of connected threats that cannot be dealt with in isolation. In fact, it is their interconnectedness that makes them so dangerous. None of the major threats listed requires a purely or even mostly military response – rather, a comprehensive approach and a mix of instruments is key. The EU is assumed to be well positioned to provide such a mix. For the EU as an organization, the ESS lays out a four part challenge: in order to live up to its aspirations and its responsibility to global peace and stability, the EU would have to be more active across the spectrum of means, more capable, more coherent, and work with international partners.

Two further documents that are closely related to the ESS are the EU Strategy Against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) of 2003 and the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy of 2005.[4] The former states the EU's objectives as being to "prevent, deter, halt and, where possible, eliminate proliferation programmes of concern worldwide" (p. 2). It is clear that WMD and their delivery systems are included in this objective. The idea of effective multilateralism is seen to be central and would include expanding and strengthening treaties, agreements and verification regimes in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation. This involves support for the UN Security Council's role in this area, building support for verification regimes, coordinating export control

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[4] Council of the European Union, 2003, 'Fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction – EU strategy against proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction', 10 December, 15708/03; Council of the European Union, 2005, 'The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy', 30 November, 14469/4/05.

regimes with partners, enhancing the security of sensitive assets within the EU, and fighting illegal trafficking. A second pillar in the strategy is the promotion of international and regional stability because instability fuels several countries' desire for WMD. Hence, threat reduction programmes and making non-proliferation issues a part of EU activities in general feature prominently. Like the ESS, the WMD strategy also highlights the need for cooperation with key partners. In particular, the US, Russia, Japan, and Canada are mentioned. Finally, it is argued that the EU itself needs to build up adequate institutional capacity to address this challenge in a comprehensive and sustained manner.

The counter-terrorism strategy commits the EU to "combat terrorism globally while respecting human rights, and make Europe safer, allowing its citizens to live in an area of freedom, security and justice" (p. 6). The strategy is then build around four pillars: a) prevent that new recruits turn to terrorist organizations by addressing root causes of radicalization in and beyond Europe, b) protect citizens and infrastructure from attack through enhanced border, transport and critical infrastructure protection, c) pursue terrorists through the means of law enforcement and judicial and prosecutorial means, and d) respond by improving consequence management capacities in a coordinated fashion. While the strategy underlines that EU member states are primarily responsible for fighting terrorism, it carves out a role for the EU in contributing to the strengthening of national capabilities, the facilitation of European cooperation, the development of collective capability, and promoting international partnership.

In addition, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), proposed by the European Commission in 2003 and endorsed by the Council in 2004, is of relevance in the security field. The EU has an obvious interest in stable and prosperous societies in its vicinity. Hence, so a central assumption of ENP, if the EU supports political and economic development in surrounding states it will foster prosperity and thereby security and stability. The ENP approach includes relations with Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Moldova, Morocco, P.A., Tunisia, and Ukraine. In the future, Belarus, Libya and Syria are also to be included. The EU agrees individual action plans with these countries. Areas that are covered include political aspects, economic activities, trade, justice, liberty and security, sectoral policies such as transport, energy and the environment as well as civil society and direct contacts between individuals. The underlying mechanism is that partners are rewarded for progress with intensified dialogue and thus deeper interaction with the EU. The EU hopes to focus on the protection of democracy, common foreign policy priorities, the general promotion of multilateralism, and addressing common security threats. As a result the ENP is based on the assumption that the EU and ENP partners share a certain set of values and interests that can be expanded over time. Essentially, ENP tries to project the EU way of dealing with crucial policy changes to countries in its vicinity that are not membership candidates.

A more recent addition that adds to our understanding of the EU's concept of security is a paper presented by the HR/SG on climate change and security. The paper, presented

in March 2008, is jointly owned by the Commission and the Council.[5] The paper insists that the EU had to focus on the mitigation of and preparation for the inevitable effects of climate change as a part of its preventive security policy: "Climate change is best viewed as a threat multiplier which exacerbates existing trends, tensions and instability" (p. 2). Several forms of conflict are assessed to be at least in part driven by climate change: resource conflicts (over arable land, water, food); economic conflict caused by risks to coastal regions and critical infrastructure located there; border disputes and potentially also the loss of territory; environmentally induced migration; fragility because governments might no longer be able to meet basic demands of their citizens; and energy supply. Mechanisms for international governance will come under pressure as those causing climate change and those most affected by it will remain distinct groups for the time being.

The EU does indeed some to have a unique approach to security – however, this does not mean that it is actually useful beyond the European space. In the context of the European Union, security is focused on the well-being of EU citizens and global peace and stability. The concept of human security is thus of relevance. The security environment is characterised by a tension between the winners and losers of the ongoing process of globalisation and the increasing role played by non-state actors. The world is becoming increasingly interconnected which implies rising degrees of interdependence and hence vulnerability. Bringing diverse instruments across civilian and military spheres together into a coherent response is seen as the greatest potential, if yet only partially realised, comparative advantage of the EU. Furthermore, the EU's approach to security is based on what is referred to as 'effective multilateralism'. This includes a strong international society, strong international institutions and respect for international law.

3. EU security goals: of relevance outside Europe?

By and large the EU is driven by and seeks to promote rule-based international behaviour. In its dealing with other international actors it prioritises good governance, social, economic and political reform, trade and uninterrupted access to markets as well as respect for human rights and the rule of law. In essence, the EU is seeking to remake international relations in its own image.

Most clearly, we can witness this process being played out in the EU's vicinity. In the Balkans, the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) was driven by positive conditionality which promises rewards in exchange for a certain behaviour but was light negative conditionality which punishes compliance failures. The SAP is nonetheless highly interventionist and implies enormous political costs for the elites in those countries subjected to it. The strongest carrot the EU can dangle in this respective is of course the offer of membership. The logic of the SAP, however, cannot really be applied beyond the

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[5] High Representative and European Commission, 2008, 'Climate Change and International Security', S113/08, 14 March 2008.

Western Balkans. It already fails in ENP largely because ENP does not contain a membership perspective.

The Middle East Peace Process shows that the EU way of exerting pressure through positive conditionality is severely limited if simmering conflicts are involved. Actually, to be more precise, many current options underlying the peace process match principles promoted by Europeans since the 1980s (such as the two state solution) yet the direct influence Europeans have been able to exert has been very limited. The European Union is the biggest donor of financial assistance to the Palestinians. The EU is also the key donor to the Palestinians in the area of Trade Related Technical Assistance. The EU is Israel's largest market for exports and its second largest source of imports after the US. However, the EU is unwilling and unable to use both the tools of coercion and persuasion to make a difference – in other words, the EU refuses to act like a great power.[6]

The EU and its member states have to rely on the positive repertoire of action because this is where the consensual position of member states ends. Their governments do not ask what are likely to be the most effective and appropriate actions, but rather they ask what can we agree on? As a result, the EU is stuck in an approach that stresses incentives to all sides in this conflict and refuses to contemplate punitive aspects such as the use of its economic leverage. Europe may have a fairly unified voice in the peace process and has even made relatively coherent choices at least as far as principles are concerned, but it does not have a shaping influence on the Middle East Peace Process.

As indicated above, the EU conception of security revolves around the notion of effective multilateralism as the governing principle of a multipolar world logic. European policy-makers seem to spend astonishingly little time in trying to figure out whether this conception and underlying logic is actually seen as desirable in other parts of the world. Given that Asian countries have not engaged in the redefinition of sovereignty that EU member states have seen, given that in Asia, institutions are not recipients of an authority transfer from nation states, but, quite the opposite, are actually guarding national sovereignty, and, finally, given that Asian security relations are dominated by a web of multiple bilateralisms, would it be at all surprising if Asian governments have a completely different perception of multipolarity and multilateralism?

A multipolar world is not necessarily a multilateral world. The return of great power politics is a possibility and one that the EU might find difficult to deal with given that its conception of the international system and its self-perception is driven by the buzzword of effective multilateralism. Whether the emerging international system will be conflict ridden is unclear because economic interdependencies and the growth of international institutions can be expected have a constraining effect on great power rivalries. Giovanni Grevi has argued in this context that "the challenge lies, therefore, in finding a new match between power and governance."[7] He went on to suggest that we might witness the emergence of an interpolar system where interest based cooperation among major power

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[6] E. Aoun, 'European Foreign Policy and the Arab-Israeli Dispute: Much Ado About Nothing?; in European Foreign Affairs Review, 8, 3, 2003.

[7] G. Grevi, *The interpolar world: a new scenario. Occasional Paper No. 79*, (EUISS, 2009), p. 9.

centres under the condition of mutual interdependence has to be channelled into processes of multilateral cooperation.

Others have argued that the dominance of liberal democratic capitalist powers will come to an end, even though the US will retain a position of strength, because of the growing role played by powers, such as China and Russia, which combine authoritarian political systems with capitalist economic systems. Failure to integrate such powers might trigger a new form of bloc confrontation according to some.[8]

The important general point to make in this regard is that with power becoming more dispersed among actors with different views of the world, the international system, and key concepts such as sovereignty and multilateralism, those different attitudes will become more important. Ivan Krastev, for example, has argued that there exists a "fundamental political incompatibility" between Russia and the EU because their conceptions are radically different, pitting the postmodern entity that is the EU against more traditional concepts of the state in Russia.[9] Whereas for EU member states concepts such as autonomy and sovereignty have been altered through EU membership, their unabashed traditional promotion does also stretch to China and India. A telling example is the debate in the UN about the concept of the responsibility to protect which causes deep splits on questions such as when and how the UN should allow for intervention to protect populations from gross human rights violations, war crimes and ethnic cleansing.[10]

In this context it is interesting to observe that the EU's power of attraction, its soft power, is actually rather limited as shown by a study that looked into the level of support EU member states receive from other governments on human rights positions the EU countries take in the UN general assembly.[11] Support is here measured as the frequency with which other states have voted with the EU, China, Russia and the US expressed as a percentage. The study finds that the level of support for positions the EU members adopted dropped from 72% during the 1997-98 general assembly session to 55% in the 2007-08 session. EU cohesion on these matters is high but the changing international context apparently creates a legitimacy crisis for the EU in this matter. In the 2007-08 session China and Russia enjoyed much higher levels of alignment with other governments achieving scores of 74% and 76% respectively. Thus, support for the EU's positions and its effectiveness in organizing support for its positions within the diplomatic system that is the UN are dwindling. It emerges thus a stark difference in the EU's ability to sway global public opinion and effectively engage governments from across the world. In part this will have to do with different interpretations of sovereignty.

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[8] A. Gat, "The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers", in *Foreign Affairs,* Vol. 86(4), 2007; R. Sakwa, "New Cold War or twenty year crisis: Russia and international politics", in *International Affairs,* Vol. 84(2), 2008.

[9] I. Krastev, "Russia and the European order: Sovereign democracy explained", in *American Interest,* Vol IV(2), 2008, quote p. 24.

[10] N. MacFarquhar, "When to Step In to Stop War Crimes Causes Fissures", *New York Times,* 23 July 2009, www.nytimes.com.

[11] R. Gowan and F. Brantner, 'A Global Force for Human Rights? An Audit of European Power at the UN', London, 2008.

The impact of the structure and power distribution in the international system is likely to be mediated through what can best be described as the nature of relations among major powers. If, as the result of the rise of several countries to great power status, the role of multilateral institutions and global governance structures diminishes and at the same time great power rivalries increase, the decline of the potential for influence of EU member states can be expected to be magnified because the guiding principles of EU foreign and security policy are based on effective multilateralism and the idea of cooperation rather than confrontation, on rule-based interaction rather than the aggressive assertion of military and economic power.

However, effective foreign and security policy, especially in the context of a changing international system driven by notions of multipolarity and interdependence, will need to be pursued through cooperation with the governments of other major powers. Unfortunately, on this count, the EU still seems much less effective which seems to be the result of a mix of relative hard power decline, a difference in worldview vis-a-vis other major powers, and inefficient external EU representation and policy-making processes.

4. Are EU capabilities adequate?

Charles Grant has recently quoted a Chinese academic as saying that "a power needs guns and guts."[12] The inability of EU governments to produce either useable military forces, the guns, or enough political will to engage in political behaviour beyond positive conditionality, the guts, would make it seem as if Europe just cannot play a role in Asian security matters. In fact, it might look as if EU security policy tries to reduce the role of guns and guts to the absolute minimum and ideally would like everybody else to follow suit. However, the reality is more complex and the question of whether the EU's capabilities are adequate has to be answered by another question: adequate to do what?

Certainly, the EU does not currently possess the capabilities to pretend to be a major global power in the security realm. The ESS expresses an aspiration that EU security policy should have a global reach: 'The European Union has the potential to make a major contribution, both in dealing with ... threats and in helping realise ... opportunities. An active and capable European Union would make an impact on a global scale.' [13] It furthermore states that the EU needs 'to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention'[14] in crisis situations, including with military means. The implication of this is that the EU should have the military capability, through its member states, to be able to confidently handle conflict situations and the tasks covered by the ESDP.

The ESDP has already undergone significant development in the field of operations. In terms of the increasing diversity and geographical reach of missions, this development has

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12   C. Grant (2009): Is Europe doomed to fail as a power? London, p. 11.
13   Council of the European Union, 'A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy', p. 14.
14   *Ibid.*, p. 11.

been largely positive. However, the EU's potential for robust engagement and the strategic gain that its missions represent for European security and for the regions in which missions have been conducted remain as yet unclear.

The Union is building up credibility and experience – and thus political weight – in the security realm through its ESDP operations. Yet there is a contradiction between the image of an increasingly self-confident actor and the quantitative and qualitative limitations of ESDP missions to date, a contradiction that is due in part to restrictions on resources. The limited interest shown by European governments in international crisis management ought to ward off any complacency about the EU's potential in this area. Furthermore, ESDP missions have not yet been confronted with significant opposition in an area of operations, and there is a risk that their comparative success thus far could lure mission commanders and personnel into a false sense of security, leaving them unprepared for any major confrontation. In terms of the sheer number of EU-led missions and personnel deployed through EU-led missions, the Balkans and Africa emerge as the clear focal points of engagement.

It is not yet apparent how much strain ESDP operations can take. Its operational achievements to date have presented the EU with a dilemma: success so far has bred high expectations, which the EU can only satisfy by accepting greater risks than it has in the past. Equally, though, a major setback in the field is likely to have wide political repercussions. The question is, therefore, whether the EU will in future seek out crises appropriate to the instruments it has available, or whether it will actively seek greater resources to be able to tackle more challenging situations.

Notwithstanding the clear progress of the past five years, it seems probable that the reality of the EU as a global security actor will continue to diverge from its aspirations. In spite of its high abstract level of ambition, operationally, the EU has preferred to tread very carefully, and there is little sign that this will change in the near term. It is difficult to disagree with Nick Witney's assessment that 'the issue with the operational record as a whole is its lack of ambition'.[15] So far, ESDP operations have been so limited in their objectives and size that their relative success should not come as a surprise. Their achievements, while clearly marginally useful, have been nowhere near commensurate with the Union's stated ambition to be a major global-security actor. Furthermore, the fact that even the modest missions conducted so far have encountered embarrassing commitment problems during force generation, with implications for mission objectives and duration, underscores the serious practical limitations that exist on EU action in this area.

While the limitations are thus clear, the EU and its member states are nonetheless more than capable of limited and temporary crisis management activities around the globe. It is in fact much less important whether such contributions are organised through the EU, through some other multilateral framework or some coalition of the willing. For example, in the aftermath of the 2004 Tsunamis that killed some 200,000 people and left some 1,7

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[15] N. Witney, 'Re-Energising Europe's Security and Defence Policy', London, 2008, p. 41.

million people homeless or displaced, EU member states were actively engaged in disaster relief contributing 4 transport aircraft, 23 transport helicopters, 8 ships, 3 medical teams, 2 engineering teams and one water support team. Austria, France, Germany, Spain and the UK were the nations involved. They provided capabilities in the field that time and again prove critical in disaster relief situations: strategic and tactical air and sea transport, medical, logistical and engineering.

In this context the EU also conducted its first Disarmament, Demobilisation & Reintegration (DDR) mission in the Aceh region of Indonesia. The catastrophe of the Tsunami created a window for a political process between the GAM rebel group and the government in Jakarta. In September 2005, some 250 unarmed, but mostly drawn from the armed forces, observers of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) monitored the disarmament of GAM and supervise the destruction of their weapons. The mission is exemplary for the blurring of civil and military boundaries. It also underlined the credibility of the EU because the operational involvement of other actors, including the UN, proved inacceptable to the parties in the conflict. Thus, only the EU proved to be able to play the role of neutral external facilitator through this joined EU-ASEAN mission.

5. Conclusion

It is often said that the EU lacks capabilities and political will. It is important to remember, however, that the EU is not a state in its own right, and that both its capabilities and the will to use them ultimately come from its constituent states. Most of the reasons for the disconnect between the EU's ambition and reality can be found in the capitals of member states, not in Brussels. Together, member states' ambitions for and performance in crisis management – their crisis-management profiles – determine the EU's capacity for action. These are, in turn, shaped by domestic factors, several of which exert strong countervailing pressures on governments to those exerted by the international security environment and the demands of the ESDP. As a result, overall, commitment to making the ESDP a success is weak.

The Asian security environment is still driven by the very real possibility of domestic and international conflict. Unresolved territorial disputes, nuclear proliferation challenges, terrorism, fragile states, and maritime security issues dominate the risk assessment. Conflict prevention remains a fundamental task. However, the dominance of bilateralisms in the security realm seems unable to provide the complex answers that today's multifaceted problems demand. As Asia's regional security architecture continues to evolve, the occasional glance to Europe might indeed yield interesting lessons that, if adapted to Asian circumstances, can be of lasting importance. However, beyond inspiring such steps, Europe's role seems destined to be limited for the time being. On the one hand, the EU is not able to generate a security policy that reaches further than the lowest common denominator of EU member states and hence is unlikely to make the means, including political will, available to get involved in Asian security affairs in a significant manner. On the other hand, Asia is still very different from the kind of international

environment that the EU seems to encourage and for which its security conception works best. Thus, for Europe to significantly expand it contribution to Asian security, either Asia has to become more like Europe, or EU efforts have to be driven forward by a relatively small group of capable and willing member states.