

# The promotion of human security in EU security policies

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No. 7 / March 2010



Research for this Policy Brief was conducted in the context of Work Package 4 of INEX, a three-year project on converging and conflicting ethical values in the internal/external security continuum in Europe, funded by the Security Programme of DG Enterprise of the European Commission's Seventh Framework Research Programme. The project is coordinated by PRIO, International Peace Research Institute in Oslo. For more information about the project, please visit: [www.inexproject.eu](http://www.inexproject.eu)



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# THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN SECURITY IN EU SECURITY POLICIES

*INEX POLICY BRIEF NO. 7 / MARCH 2009*

INGER HELENE SIRA AND JONAS GRÄNS\*

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## **Introduction**

It has been widely argued that since the cold war, there has been a shift in the structure of international relations from a bipolar to a multipolar system. This transformation has in turn had an immense impact on the public policies created and implemented by the EU. In addition, the EU's approach to security has been influenced by the complex processes and outcomes of globalisation, which are themselves closely linked to rapid changes in socio-political, economic and technological developments. In practical terms, this transformation has resulted in a blurring of the classical divide between external security matters such as war, defence and international order, and internal security issues such as organised crime, terrorism, policing and public order. In other words, we have witnessed the emergence of a new kind of security continuum – linking the internal and external security dimensions. Consequently, important questions related to who is the main provider of security (the state, international agencies or transnational organisations), as well as who is the primary referent object of security (the state or the individual) have arisen. There have been several changes in the EU's approach in responding to both the contemporary threats and the present security continuum. Institutionally and in light of the EU's three pillars, these changes have been illustrated by the emerging integration of community affairs in justice and home affairs (JHA), along with external activities under the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and the European security and defence policy (ESDP), and vice versa. One essential change has been efforts to incorporate the dimension of human security. The overarching aim of this Policy Brief is to examine the possibility of overcoming the internal–external dilemma in the EU's CFSP and ESDP through the promotion of human security. First, the paper discusses the internal–external security dilemma and examines the increasingly blurred roles of the CFSP, ESDP and JHA. The paper then moves on to look at the concept of human security and analyse the EU security continuum in light of this concept. Finally, the paper offers a set of recommendations to guide future activities under the EU's foreign and defence policies.

## **Common foreign security policy and the European security and defence policy**

For the greater part of the last two decades, the CFSP and ESDP have constituted the main policy domains for the EU's engagement in the fields of safety and security. Through the CFSP and ESDP, the EU seeks to promote and maintain stability – not only outside its borders, but also in response to external threats and vulnerabilities that may penetrate the EU's borders. Consequently, the EU is often portrayed as a normative power in world politics, being a strong promoter of the normative principles generally acknowledged in the United Nations system.<sup>1</sup> These include the promotion of nine normative principles: sustainable peace, freedom,

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<sup>1</sup> More particularly, this refers to those stipulated in the UN charter.

democracy, human rights, the rule of law, equality, social solidarity, sustainable development and good governance.<sup>2</sup> The European security strategy (ESS) adopted in 2003 is a key document for EU security policy and the way missions are conducted and prioritised. This document clearly outlines a common focus on the promotion of peace, the rule of law and development as pivotal elements for the safety of EU citizens. The ESS recognises the present security picture as fundamentally different from the past by stating that “the post-Cold War environment is one of increasingly open borders in which the internal and external aspects of security are indissolubly linked”.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the EU has taken on a leading and responsible role in promoting peace and security – even beyond its borders and immediate neighbourhood. Over the years, the EU has been active in a plethora of military, but especially civilian missions under the auspices of the ESDP to achieve these ends. Today the EU is present in 16 missions on 3 continents, and has a substantial amount of personnel on the ground in these missions. The missions vary in terms of aims, scope, size and level of activity, and include those on policing, the rule of law, military missions, monitoring and planning, and security sector reforms. Counting those that are still active, the EU’s total contribution to date entails 26 separate missions.<sup>4</sup> With these commitments, the EU is viewed as a normative power, but also (and foremost) as a civilian power.<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding the high ambitions set out in the ESS and in the public discourses among EU policy-makers and member states, there has been widespread criticism of the EU’s lack of political strength. Importantly, critics highlight under-resourced missions as well as an absence of commitment and political will among member states to contribute to current and new missions taking place far beyond the EU’s borders.<sup>6</sup> This problem not only damages the strategic importance of the missions underway,<sup>7</sup> it also has the potential to harm the strength and meaning of the EU as a normative power.

## **The internal–external security dilemma and the EU**

In a world characterised by interdependence as a consequence of globalisation coupled with a major shift in the power structure of international relations, the divide between external security matters such as war, defence and international order on the one hand, and internal security issues such as organised crime, terrorism, policing and public order on the other, is becoming less evident. In many ways, this divide has largely become nonexistent. Subsequently, there has been an emergence of a security continuum linking the internal and external security dimensions. Additionally, and as argued above, the EU approach to security has sought to respond to the processes and outcomes of rapid changes in socio-political, economic and technological developments. When the Treaty of Amsterdam entered into force in 1998, JHA matters such as asylum, immigration and border management were given greater attention on the EU governmental agenda. Moreover, the further integration of JHA issues continued with

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<sup>2</sup> See I. Manners, “The normative ethics of the European Union”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 84, No.1, 2008, pp. 45-60.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, *A Secure Europe in a Better World, European Security Strategy*, presented by Javier Solana, Brussels, 12 December 2003 (retrieved from <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>).

<sup>4</sup> G. Gya and J. Herz, *ESDP and EU Missions Update*, European Security Review No. 43, ISIS Europe, Brussels, March 2009.

<sup>5</sup> D. Korski and R. Gowan, *Can the EU Rebuild Failing States? A Review of Europe’s Civilian Capacities*, European Council on Foreign Relations, London, October 2009, pp. 7-98.

<sup>6</sup> See International Crisis Group, *EU Crisis Response Capabilities Revisited*, Europe Report No. 16, International Crisis Group, Brussels, 17 January 2005; see also Korski and Gowan (2009), op. cit., pp. 11-13.

<sup>7</sup> Korski and Gowan (2009), op. cit., pp. 11-13.

the European Council meeting in Tampere 1999, as well as the meeting in Santa Maria de Feira in 2000. The appearance of an internal–external security continuum, however, raises several important, interconnected issues.

First, since the events of 9/11 countering terrorism has become the key justification for the growing assimilation of JHA affairs and EU external relations. The 7/7 attacks in London as well as the Madrid bombings in 2004 further increased awareness among policy-makers and EU citizens of the seriousness of terrorism threats in Europe. Counter-terrorism measures are being applied by member states to detect networks and conduct arrests, in order to protect citizens and sensitive sites. Measures are also being applied outside the territorial boundaries of EU member states with the aim of resolving crises and easing frustration and violence in conflict-ridden regions. In conclusion, counter-terrorism activities are taking place across a wide range of levels and fronts, and perhaps represent the best example of the internal–external security continuum.<sup>8</sup>

Second, and to a great extent as a result of the above developments, there has been an increase in internal activities related to border management and control, immigration, counter-terrorism and organised crime. In addition, investments and resources are increasingly designated for developing new security technologies and intelligence measures that aim at safeguarding the EU's internal security. Instruments that have until fairly recently always fallen under the CFSP/ESDP umbrella, are now also used in the name of internal and homeland security. For example, the EU's Joint Situation Centre, which was initially set up to monitor and observe common foreign and security policy issues such as weapons of mass destruction, nuclear proliferation and terrorist activities outside the EU's borders, have since February 2005 incorporated a counter-terrorism unit (CT). The CT focuses on the internal aspects of countering terrorism – including the gathering and sharing of intelligence among national police forces about persons assumed to be a part of violent radicalisation and terrorist activities, and organised crime in European cities and suburbs. More broadly speaking, these are threats to social cohesion in European societies.<sup>9</sup>

With the internal–external security continuum, we have witnessed a potential internal–external dilemma for the CFSP/ESDP. This dilemma touches upon how security is best provided and what role the EU should undertake in this regard. The question is whether to accept following a path towards a union that actively seeks to close and safeguard its borders, control its population and those travelling into it by expanding surveillance and investing in security technologies, or to promote a security policy that concentrates more on enhancing the EU's role in providing peace building, peacekeeping and similar assistance abroad under the pillars of the CFSP and ESDP.

To resolve this dilemma, this Policy Brief suggests that it is necessary to integrate fully the concept of human security in the overall EU security approach. In developing this argument, a short overview of the concept itself is given below.

## **Human security**

The concept of human security can be seen as a response to three major changes in international relations after the end of the cold war, namely 1) the introduction of a wide range of new threats (or at least perceived as new by policy-makers), 2) a slow, but steady change and growth of global norms, and 3) the processes and outcomes of globalisation. As argued above, in the post-cold war era we have witnessed a significant change in world politics from being a bipolar global order to a multipolar global order. This means that we are exposed to a whole new range

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<sup>8</sup> N. Gnesotto (ed.), *EU Security and Defence Policy: The first five years (1999-2004)*, Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Statewatch, "EU: 'Anti-terrorism' legitimises sweeping new 'internal security' complex", Statewatch, London, 28 January 2005 (retrieved from <http://www.libertysecurity.org/article121.html>).

of threats, including international terrorism, organised crime, energy security, cyber security, environmental degradation, climate change, natural disasters, the spread of weapons of mass destruction and so on. Furthermore, the international community has seen a plethora of so-called 'universal norms' crystallised in the framework of international law. Finally, these developments have been fuelled by the processes and outcomes of globalisation. As noted above, the state is no longer perceived as the key (or at least only) referent object of security. Other contemporary theoretical and practical approaches also consider individuals and communities as referent objects of security. In other words, we have seen the introduction of human security in the wider security agenda. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the conceptual debates on human security have influenced its efficacy when applied as a tool in policy-making.

The concept itself was coined in the UN Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report* of 1994,<sup>10</sup> and since then its definition and meaning have been widely debated. The UN Commission on Human Security defines human security as "the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and fulfilment".<sup>11</sup> A more exhaustive definition of human security is offered by Liotta and Owen (2006), who argue that "in ethical terms, human security is both a 'system' and a systemic practice that promotes and sustains stability, security and progressive integration of individuals within their relationships to their states, societies and regions. In abstract but understandable terms, human security allows the individuals the pursuit of life, liberty and both happiness and justice."<sup>12</sup> Yet, it has often been argued that if all components of well-being are included in a definition, the concept will lose its meaning.<sup>13</sup> In other words, by narrowing the definition of human security, it becomes easier to develop effective policies in practice. King and Murray (2002) include the notions of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" – two terms introduced in the UNDP's 1994 report.<sup>14</sup> Arguably, a problem in finding a coherent and accepted definition affects the applicability of the concept to the respective policy-making. It is thus recommended to take a narrower approach in applying human security to policy, rather than a holistic one.

## **The EU and the promotion of human security**

In a study undertaken by Kaldor and Glasius (2005), it was argued that there are three underlying motives for the EU to adopt the concept of human security in the CFSP and ESDP: morality, legality and self-interest.<sup>15</sup> These three motives function in a conceptual and practical symbiosis, and are mutually inseparable. The first motive for adopting a human security approach is based on an assumption of morality. The basic idea is that the EU and its citizens are morally committed to helping states, regions, communities and individuals who are lacking basic security or are experiencing threats to their security. These are threats linked to universal needs and are therefore naturally shaped by universally accepted norms. Kaldor and Glasius state that "it may be necessary and should be acceptable, based on the equal worth of all human

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<sup>10</sup> See E. Athanasiou, "Human Security at Test: The United Nations Peacekeeping Operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo", *Human Security Journal*, Vol. 5, Winter 2007, pp. 72-80, and UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

<sup>11</sup> See P.H. Liotta and T. Owen, "Why Human Security?", *Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, Winter/Spring 2006, pp. 37-54.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> G. King and J.L. Murray, "Rethinking Human Security", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 4, 2002, pp. 585-610.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> M. Glasius and M. Kaldor, "Individuals First: A Human Security Strategy for the European Union", *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, 01/2005, pp. 62-82.

life, to risk lives in order to restore the security of others”.<sup>16</sup> Second, there is a legal motive for the EU’s commitment to adopt a human security approach. Based on the norms crystallised in international law, the EU is legally obliged to ensure human security for all peoples, not just its own, through its security policies. The contents of public documents and treaty texts<sup>17</sup> indicate that the EU seeks to implement the concept of human security through its continuous obligations to a legal framework. Finally, there is a case for the EU to adopt a human security approach as part of actively seeking to protect its own interests – a point that Kaldor and Glasius call “the enlightened self-interest”.<sup>18</sup> In other words, there is a belief that Europeans cannot be safe as long as other states and peoples are living in insecurity. Here, the key logic is that as long as people outside the EU are exposed to insecurity issues, the EU itself cannot be safe. ‘External insecurity’ will ultimately affect European democratic values and institutions. Hence, insecurity penetrates national borders and is exportable and importable across geographical domains. For example, when a society in Africa is hit by a natural disaster or civil war, the EU will be substantially affected in terms of (il)legal migration and thriving terrorist or criminal networks (or both).

Although it can be maintained that there are several reasons why the EU should respond to the internal–external security continuum, it should be noted that there is a fine line between ensuring security for people within and outside the EU (regardless of the motives for doing so), and abusing or compromising the civil liberties that are entrenched in the very norms the EU seeks to promote and protect. Consequently, EU policies that instead aim at addressing security issues by promoting investment in and development of security technologies and surveillance and so on could become counterproductive in several ways. They invoke and contribute to insecurity, by fuelling the perception among EU civilians that they are constantly under threat. Furthermore, these policies can at best function as a tool for combating the effects of a current problem, rather than serve the purpose of a solving it. Third, we have increasingly witnessed a trend in which security measures have compromised the rights and liberties of the people they are trying to protect. It is therefore important that the potential and ambition of the EU in countering such insecurities and human suffering around the world is given greater emphasis relative to the trends towards securing the territory of the EU with technologies and surveillance mechanisms. That being stated, putting excessively high expectations on the EU – which is ultimately comprised of 27 different member states – has at times proved unrealistic. Yet with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and its establishment of an EU foreign affairs minister, along with measures to further merge the policies and institutional pillars of the Union, there might be a golden opportunity to formulate future EU foreign and security policies in line with the genuine promotion of human security.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

This policy brief has argued that since the cold war and the fall of the bipolar power structure, the EU security agenda has been shaped by 1) the introduction of a wide range of unconventional threats; 2) a slow, but steady change in and growth of global norms; and 3) the processes and outcomes of globalisation. These factors have in turn led to a blurring of the internal and external dimensions of security, which has had major implications for EU security practices. In this context, this Policy Brief offers the following conclusions and recommendations:

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>17</sup> See European Commission (2003), op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> See Glasius and Kaldor (2005), op. cit., pp. 62-82.

- If the EU's security approach continues to develop in the direction of a closed and securitized<sup>19</sup> Union, it could fuel the perception of insecurity among Europeans and jeopardise the position of the EU as a normative power in international affairs.
- The concept of human security needs to be further promoted in the practices of EU foreign and security policy. And with the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU is to a large extent doing so. Still, the EU will have to tackle the numerous issues of implementing the concept of human security with all its aspects, without actually compromising important elements of the concept itself.
- It will be crucial that security concerns are addressed in a way that they may be resolved through ways of conducting EU policies. As the EU has the chance to speak increasingly in line with the famous anecdote of *one voice*, it is vital that what it says is consistent with the values attributed to European Union project. With the adoption of a strategy towards human security, this may become achievable.
- By committing to promote human security, the EU member states need to step up their efforts in the civilian missions taking place far from the EU's borders. A greater contribution of appropriate personnel for conducting police and military missions, providing development assistance, and offering diplomacy and expertise in human rights, rule of law and justice, is desirable.
- It remains essential to recognise that the efforts made under the headings of cooperation and coherence regarding homeland security should not be discarded. Indeed, these activities might be successful in countering organised crime and certain terrorist behaviour, but the key issue is to find a balance between policies that can address the internal–external security continuum, and at the same time understand the complexity of security issues.
- Finally, it is only when the root causes of security are seriously addressed and tackled that the safety of EU citizens will ultimately be safeguarded and the internal–external dilemma will be reconciled. Importantly, these root causes exist both within and outside the EU, and call for a comprehensive approach to ensure that security is achieved.

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<sup>19</sup> The term 'securitized' here refers to the heavy increase in surveillance, technology and industry for the purpose of security.

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