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The European Union and global security: is the EU becoming the indispensable partner?

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Photo: HR/VP Ashton visits EU NAVFOR

Abstract

The European Union has developed new capacity as a security actor in third countries, in particular in the area of crisis management. Over the past two decades the EU has deployed numerous missions, both of a civilian and military nature. Moreover the EU has defined its ability to intervene all along the 'crisis cycle', (from prevention to mediation, from peace-keeping to post-conflict reconstruction) and using all tools at its disposal (taking a 'comprehensive approach'). However the EU is still not perceived as a major security provider globally and interventions remain limited to some geographic areas, mostly in its neighbourhood and Africa, with just a few examples further afield. The EU also tends to avoid taking direct action and seems to prefer partnership arrangements with other players. How can we explain the growing activism and number of EU's intervention with the low impact and lack of visibility? Can we expect the EU to become more active in the future, taking on more responsibility and leading roles in addressing conflict situations?

This paper will argue that the main reason for the EU's hesitant role in crisis management is to be found in the weak decision-making provisions for EU's security interventions, as one of the few policy areas still subject to consensus amongst 28 European Union Member States. Lack of a clearer delegation of competence or stronger coordination structures is closely linked to low legitimacy for the EU to take more robust action as a security actor. In order to overcome this legitimacy problem, and in order to facilitate consensus amongst Member States, the EU thus privileges partnership arrangements with other actors who can provide legitimacy and know-how, such as the UN or the African Union. As there is no political desire in the EU for tighter decision-making in this area, we can expect that the EU will continue to play a supporting rather than leading role in crisis management, becoming the partner of choice as it deepens its experience. However this does not mean that the EU is playing just a secondary role in the wider area of security, in particular when looking at non-traditional security.

Looking at the role of the EU in Asia, where the EU has deployed just two missions, this paper will offer a broader assessment of the EU as a partner in the area of security taking into account different types of actions. The paper will argue that in order to strengthen cooperation with Asian partners in the area of crisis management, the EU will need to define better what it is able to offer, present its actions as part of an overall strategy rather than ad-hoc and piecemeal, and enter into partnership arrangements with different players in the region.

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The European Union and global security: is the EU becoming the indispensable partner?

DR CESARE ONESTINI [1]

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the EU has developed its own civilian and military capabilities to react to international crisis and carry out crisis management interventions. EU treaties now contain the notion of a defence community, committed to the security of all its members, bound by a solidarity clause and ready to project a stabilizing reach around the globe. More recently, several decisions taken by the EU offered a glimpse into the efforts to raise the EU's capability to act in a broad area of security.

In December 2013 EU Heads of States and government took stock of the military capability developed so far and committed to closer cooperation in the context of the European Common Security and Defence Policy; they also focused on measures to stimulate a EU-wide defence industry and considered ways of pooling more national assets together through the European Defence Agency. In the December 2013 Council Conclusions, EU Heads of State and government underlined progress made but acknowledged the need to increase impact and visibility of EU crisis management actions. In particular they stated that

> *"The numerous civilian and military crisis management missions and operations throughout the world are a tangible expression of the Union's commitment to international peace and security. Through CSDP, the Union today deploys more than 7000 staff in 12 civilian missions and four military operations. The European Union and its Member States can bring to the international stage the unique ability to combine, in a consistent manner, policies and tools ranging from diplomacy, security and defence to finance, trade, development and justice".* [2]

At the end of last year, the High Representative and the European Commission issued a policy document pointing to a comprehensive approach to crisis management that the EU institutions want to promote[3]. This comprehensive approach would include mobilizing the economic and normative roles of the Union, and combining development and security to stabilize the EU's neighbourhood and around the world.

However, despite all these efforts, the EU is still not perceived as a global security provider, and most of its interventions are in support of efforts led by other organisations or in partnership with other security providers.

This paper will investigate the reasons behind the inability of the EU to become a more visible security provider, in spite of the growing number of EU deployments in crisis management situations. It will look at how the EU is deploying its assets and capabilities and will look at the rationale behind it. The paper then takes a closer look at EU presence and cooperation with countries in Asia to assess the current and potential role that it can play.

This paper will be divided in three sections as follows:

1. **The first section looks at those crisis theatres in which the EU is already active.** This engagement takes many forms, from deployment of troops or civilian experts to financial support to the intervention of other actors (notably the African Union or other regional organisations) to contributing to the elaboration and implementation of sanctions or other measures aimed at helping peaceful resolution of conflicts. These different types of EU's engagement in crisis situation will be considered briefly and will focus in particular on three key characteristics that stand out:
    - The EU's engagement is ***never unilateral***

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[2] European Council Conclusions, December 2013, paragraph 5.

[3] European Commission and High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. The EU's Comprehensive Approach to external conflicts and crises. Brussels, 11.12.2013. JOIN (2013) 30 Final.

- EU's engagement in crisis situations is ***always preceded, accompanied and followed by more long-term actions***

- EU's crisis management missions and operations tend to be concentrated in a few regions, whilst ***EU's stabilization and confidence building programmes have a wider geographic reach***.

2. **The second section discusses why the EU engagement abroad is limited by ability to reach internal consensus.** In other words, the need for internal legitimacy determines choices for external engagement. EU's wide-ranging involvement in crisis management around the globe is not as visible or reported widely as that of some other actors because the EU is struggling with its internal legitimacy when it comes to interventions in the area of international security. There is a stronger focus on consensus building amongst the 28 member states, than on the actions agreed at the end of the process. This is in part because there is still debate about the nature of the European Union acting simultaneously as a federation in some policy areas and as an intergovernmental structure in some others, notably concerning peace and security issues. EU's Member States remain ambiguous about the role that they want the EU to play on the global stage in the security sphere, and each crisis gives raise to new discussions and new options for action, often ending with a strong EU component.

- As a result the ***EU's interventions abroad are almost always in support of some other partner or in conjunction with more visible actors who have a clearer legitimacy for intervention***.

- EU internal decision making for crisis intervention remains anchored in inter-governmental bargaining and seeking consensus. As a result the ***EU tends to be reactive, and sometimes perceived as slow and focused only on a few geographic areas***.

- However, as the EU and its Member States gather more and more experience in crisis management, ***partnerships with other player become more consolidated*** (especially with the United Nations, African Union, OSCE, World Bank) ***and options for intervention become more standardized***.

3. The third section of the paper looks at Asia, an area in which EU's civilian and military crisis management intervention has been limited to Afghanistan and Aceh. The paper looks beyond formal civilian and military interventions, and elaborates on numerous areas in which the EU has been very active in cooperation with partners in South East Asia. Looking, for example, at the role of the EU in Myanmar's transition or the support of mediation efforts in the Philippines, the paper shows that the EU's role is far more articulated than usually portrayed. The EU has thus become a useful and desirable partner to support the resolution of tensions or conflicts – and this role will continue to evolve potentially making the EU an indispensable partner in conflict prevention and crisis management and post-crisis stabilization processes.

1. The European Union's involvement in Crisis Management

The EU is already active in many 'crisis' theatres around the world and has been engaged over many years. This engagement takes many forms, from deployment of troops or civilian experts to financial support to the intervention of other actors (notably the African Union or other regional organisations) to contributing to the elaboration and implementation of sanctions or other measures aimed at helping peaceful resolution of conflicts. In section one below we will consider briefly these different types of EU's engagement in crisis situation and will focus on three key characteristics: EU's engagement is never unilateral; EU's engagement in crisis situations is always preceded, accompanied and followed by more long-term actions*;* EU's crisis management missions and operations tend to be concentrated in a few regions, whilst EU's stabilization and confidence building programmes have a wider geographic reach.

After the manifest deficiencies in the EU's reaction to the conflict at its doorstep that tore apart Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the EU countries decided to develop an intervention capacity, capable of deploying both military and civilian assets. The European Commission with its offices in third countries already had a strong expertise in development and assistance programmes, often including security elements, such as support to Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes, border controls, and support to civilian administrations.

Progressive development of capabilities

These tools were complemented over ten years ago by new capabilities to deploy in crisis areas and in particular the following:

- Dedicated civilian and military structures to be deployed in crisis area and able to count on rapid reaction, clear chains of command and dedicated financial provisions.

- Unlike the assets managed by the Commission, the crisis management capacity of the EU was developed by Member States within the Council of Ministers, thereby transforming the Council Secretariat from a support structure for Council meetings and for the rotating presidency, into a body with responsibility for the preparation of all decision making relating to crisis management as well as for the conduct of missions and operations.

- Moreover, EU member states set up new bodies to accompany the full crisis cycle; the highest organ, the Political and Security Committee, is a permanent Brussels-based Ambassador-level body, with representation from all Member States, meetings regularly and presiding over all crisis management decisions to be taken by the EU. Political authority still rests with the Council of Ministers (Ministers of Foreign Affairs in this case) but preparatory and implementation duties where delegated to the PSC and its sub-committees.

- A full-time High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy was also appointed by Member States to steer these preparatory and implementation processes, to advice and submit options to the PSC, to take responsibility for the conduct of operations and to represent the EU foreign and security policy in third countries.

Since the creation of these crisis management capabilities, the EU has deployed over 30 civilian missions and military operations , varying in length from a few months to almost ten years in Bosnia and varying in size from a relatively modest (for example with 40 military and civilian experts deployed to RDC providing advice and assistance for security sector reform) to over two thousand personnel in Kosovo (civilian) or numerous vessels and airplanes for the Atalanta naval anti-piracy operation (military).

All of EU missions and operations were deployed within an explicit UN mandate or as part of a strong international partnership and at the request of the receiving countries.

A stronger institutional setup since 2009

The latest streamlining and strengthening of EU's external action entered into force in 2009 with the appointment of Catherine Ashton as High Representative/Vice President of the Commission, taking responsibility for:

- the whole of the crisis management capabilities of the EU, including the existing civilian and military missions (with over 7000 personnel deployed);

- political steering of the work of EU Foreign Ministers;

- diplomatic, cooperation and assistance work carried out in third countries mainly by the European Commission;

- the network of over 139 Delegations (Embassies) in third countries.

To support her in carrying out these tasks, Catherine Ashton set up the European External Action Service, bringing together experts from the Commission, crisis management capabilities from the Council and diplomats from national foreign ministries.

The EU's engagement in crisis situation is not limited to military operations or civilian missions. As important and visible as some of these missions are in particular when a crisis becomes acute or tensions on the ground require quick intervention, the bulk of EU's efforts is to be found as part and parcel of its 'normal' activities in mediation and conflict prevention, in development and humanitarian programmes. Furthermore, partnerships and cooperation dialogues are being fostered with all of the major EU's partners to ensure coherence and cohesion of action.

A wide range of actions

Last December, the High Representative and the European Commission adopted a joint text on the EU's comprehensive approach to external conflict and crisis (JOIN 2013 – 30 Final). The aim of this policy is to make the 'EU stronger, more coherent, more visible and more effective in its external relations'.

The broad spectrum of EU's engagement in security can be seen in the variety of actions in which the EU takes part on a regular basis. These can be broadly characterized under three headings: (i) confidence building measures; (ii) focused political dialogues; (iii) targeted sanctions.

Confidence building measures

- **A more active mediator**. The EU especially in the last few years has developed a higher political profile in international mediation, as seen in the role played by the EU High Representative in the ongoing nuclear talks with Iran, or in the development of Kosovo/Serbia agreements.

- **International accountability**. The EU continues to be one of the strongest backers of the International Criminal Court promoting accountability for the most serious and heinous crimes, when such prosecution cannot be carried out in the countries concerned.

- **Stability fund.** The EU has a stability fund (instrument contributing to stability and peace) to support mediation and prevention, confidence building measures, generation of local capacity. These funds are subject to a quick disbursement procedure and often precede or complement civilian or military intervention. The instrument has been active for over ten years. Over the period 2007 - 2013, the instrument has supported some 294 crisis response and 124 crisis preparedness actions in some 70 countries or regions worldwide[4].

- **Financial support and technical assistance.** The EU provides regular capacity building support for peace and mediation operations of other international security providers, most notably the African Union; this support includes training in peace planning and operations, training for African Peace keeper, police and mediation techniques. For example the EU has funded the African Union's deployment in Somalia.

More focused political dialogues

- **Alignment with other international players**; the EU is becoming more and more engaged in arrangements with other international actors to face complex security situations. The EU has been a member of the Middle East Quartet since its creation, and it provides funding and support for its work. The EU is also a major contributor and participant in groups of friends or international compacts such as the UN Group of Friends of Myanmar, the Group of Friends for Yemen, or the anti-piracy working party.

- **Political Dialogues** are also part of EU's measures that can be activated to influence the positive outcome in a crisis situation: development funds include provisions for political consultations and for suspension of aid - and the EU is becoming less shy in applying these provisions (Fiji, Madagascar)

- **Security dialogues**. The EU has deepened in the last five years its security dialogues with major partners. In particular in the area of anti-terrorism, the EU carries out regular dialogues with numerous partners, exchanging information and policies, and providing support to enforcement and monitoring.

- **Global challenges.** The EU has taken a prominent role in fighting some of the new global threats, such as climate change or food insecurity. In doing so the EU has adopted provisions (thereby setting a standard at the normative level) and led international coalitions to bring about more coordinated policies with legally-binding targets.

Targeted sanctions

- **Sanctions**. Sanctions have become in the last few years a more visible part of EU's response to crisis; from Ivory Coast to Belarus, from Myanmar to Iran, sanctions are a central element of EU's action in crisis situation. EU's sanctions tend to be framed or refer to UN decisions, even if the EU does not refrain from using sanctions autonomously if and when required (and always as part of a wider political framework). Moreover EU sanctions are becoming more targeted and the range of options is becoming broader (from visa bans and

[4] For a recent overview of the activitiy of the stability fund see: European Commission. 2012 Annual Report on the Instrument for Stability. Brussels (2013) 563 Final, Brussels 26.7.2013.

suspension of some trade preferences to arms embargos).[5]

From this brief overview we can see that:

- EU's engagement is ***never unilateral***. The EU tends to act in close cooperation with other international actors, notably the UN.
- EU's engagement in crisis situations is ***always preceded, accompanied and followed by more long-term actions;***
- EU's crisis management missions and operations tend to be concentrated in a few regions, whilst ***EU's stabilization and confidence building programmes have a wider geographic reach***.

2. Action abroad requires internal consensus

The EU's wide-ranging involvement in crisis management around the globe is not as visible or reported as that of some other actors because the EU is still struggling with its internal legitimacy. There is still debate about the nature of the European Union acting simultaneously as a federation in some policy areas and as an intergovernmental structure in some others, notably concerning peace and security issues. EU's Member States remain ambiguous about the role that they want the EU to play on the global stage, and each crisis gives raise to new discussions and new options for action, often with a strong EU component.

As a result EU's interventions abroad are almost always in support of some other partner or in conjunction with more visible actors who have a clearer legitimacy for intervention.

EU internal decision making for crisis intervention remains dominated by consensus and inter-governmental bargaining. As a result the EU tends to be reactive, sometimes slow and focused on few geographic areas.

However, as the EU and its Member States gather more and more experience in crisis management, partnerships with other player become more consolidated (especially with the United Nations, African Union, OSCE, World Bank) and options for intervention become more standardized.

[5] For an assessment of EU sanctions see: Clara Portela. The EU's use of 'targeted' sanctions': evaluating effectiveness. CEPS Working Documents n. 391/ March 2014.

Ambitious goals

The EU has agreed on ambitious goals for its role in contributing to global security. To quote the EU Treaty Art 2.5:

> *In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.*

Moreover the Treaty also specifies that the Union's aim should be to

> *(art.21.2.c) preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter …*

The European Union see itself as a global security actor, going well beyond the UN Charter provisions for the roles of regional organisations in regional security (Chapter VIII of the UN Charter).

Weak decision-making

The EU continues to be work on progress. It has been defined by some as an integration process without an end goal. Treaties talk about an ever closer union, but leave open the question of what should be the final shape or nature of the Union.

This ambiguity on the role and nature of the European Union is not necessarily bad for the incremental progress that has been needed in key internal policy areas, from the internal market to the setting up of cohesion and regional funds. Indeed in these policy areas, Member States have agreed to delegate important powers to Brussels and majority voting means that decisions are not brought down to lowest common denominator.

Ambiguity about the nature of the EU however does not help in defining the external mandate of the European Union. And whilst Member States have

agreed to clear provisions for the EU to play a role in international trade negotiations (as an obvious corollary to the customs union and internal market they agreed to) they have not agreed to equally clear provisions for the role they want the EU to play in the maintenance of international peace and security. This is in part due to different expectations amongst Member States and the different roles they see for national versus European action; and in part due to the fact that some EU Member States are major actors in other security organizations such as France and UK in the UN Security Council, NATO or the OSCE and might prefer to take action in those settings depending on goals and the need for broader coalitions.

As we have seen above, Member States have unanimously agreed to clear language in the EU Treaties giving the EU a mandate for action in the promotion of peace globally, and providing for structures and capabilities for crisis management. Decision-making accompanying the deployment of these tools however remains based on consensus, on voluntary contributions (especially when it comes to committing military or civilian capabilities) and on explicit authorization by the Council of Ministers.

As a result, there is no standard operating procedure for how the EU will deal with a crisis; indeed there is a priori no criteria to determine whether the EU will intervene at all, depending on the evolution of national positions.

Moreover, EU partners around the globe also hold different perceptions of the EU's potential or actual role in security matters. The latest changes of the Lisbon Treaty which have reinforced the role of the High Representative and the EU's ability to act are still being observed and digested. The more vocal and dynamic role of the EU in the UN since the Lisbon Treaty has also given a stronger voice and visibility to the tight coordination amongst EU Member States. But this process is just at the beginning and is not welcomed by all UN partners in equal measures – a position that is often to be interpreted more in terms of how they view the potential role of other regional organisations rather than reflecting directly on whether they welcome or not more EU engagement in these matters.

A preference for partnerships

The EU Treaty provisions for its external actions open with a statement of principle in favour of multilateral action in partnership with other organisations:

> *(art 21.1) The Union shall seek to develop relations and build partnerships with third countries, and international, regional or global organisations which share the principles referred to in the first subparagraph. It shall promote multilateral solutions to common problems, in particular in the framework of the United Nations.*

As the High Representative stated on the occasion of her annual dialogue with the UN Security Council in 2013,

> *The European Union's contribution (to peace and security) is three fold:*
>
> - *Our ability to marshall a wide range of instruments in what we call a comprehensive approach;*
> - *Our direct involvement in international negotiations, including mediation, on behalf of the international community;*
> - *By working closely with our international and regional partners, where only collective efforts can deliver results.*

As stated by the High Representative, and looking at EU interventions in support of peace and security, two trends can be observed:

- EU tends to move quickly to a declamatory stage to seek consensus and international mobilization. Often a lead Member States pushes discussions and others provide the support. Sanctions seem to have become a favourite method to signal EU's unity and disapproval whilst trying to influence facts on the ground; financial and other instruments managed by the Commission are often not 'mobilisable' in the short time-frames of a crisis, but the Commission tries to align its positions as close as possible to the ones adopted by the Council.

- The appointment of an EU Special Representative would usually follow as a second-wave measure, also to explore further mediating roles. Any such measure is framed and agreed by Member States,

but does not bind or limit national actions that might run in parallel. In this context, sanctions are becoming a tool of choice to give a clear indication of political unity, to encourage unity of the international community and to influence behaviour on the ground. It is only in the third stage, and in close consultation with the UN and other major partners, that the EU considers possible deployments;

- Even in cases where there is no explicit EU agreement on a specific course of action, and where Member States might initially prefer different tactical solutions, Member States continue to work closely with one another on EU measures that might contribute to a resolution of the crisis. In other words, even in case of an explicit disagreement over the use of force as in Libya in 2011[6] or faced with the situation where one Member State decides to intervene even without a formal EU endorsement as in Mali in 2013, Member States continue to value the option of EU action.

It has been argued in this section that the ambiguous nature of the EU as a security provider on the international stage is closely linked to the issue of internal legitimacy, to Member States expectations and to interaction with other bodies. As a result the EU prefers to act in close cooperation with other 'more legitimate' bodies, as a way of strengthening its internal mandate (with its own MS) as well as its external mandate (in the eye of the receiving country or other players on the ground).

It can be expected that this bias in favour of partnership will continue to become stronger. Indeed it is argued that the need for acting in partnership with other international actors is closely linked to the EU's weak internal legitimacy for interventions in foreign and security policy. On the positive side, the more the EU shows its ability to contribute in such partnerships the more its role will be sought out by others as well. The EU is already a strong partner (especially if measured in terms of contribution to crisis resolution of the EU and its Member States) for the UN, for numerous African sub-regional organisations and has dialogues and formal links with other groupings such as ASEAN as a partner in the ASEAN Regional Forum.
As the capacity of the EU to engage in crisis situation continues to grow and gather expertise and positive feedback, we can expect MS to be more willing to support this type of engagement – and in also considering the financial incentive of common action in today's complex crisis areas. However as the EU will continue to remain limited by consensus-based and iterative decision making for these types of interventions, we can expect a growing need to develop partnerships with other actors, national and especially multilateral. If the trend continues as we have been observing over the past ten years, the EU will move from the desirable partner that it is now to possibly an indispensible partner for crisis management around the globe.

3. The EU's contribution to security in Asia

Concerning Asia, EU's crisis management intervention has been limited to Afghanistan and Aceh. Looking beyond formal civilian and military interventions, we can discover numerous areas in which the EU has been active in cooperation with partners in Southeast Asia. The EU's role is far more articulated than usually portrayed and in many ways the EU has become a useful and desirable partner to support resolution of tensions or conflicts. This role will continue to evolve potentially making the EU an indispensible partner in conflict prevention and crisis management and post-crisis stabilization processes.

HR/VP Ashton attended the ShangriLa dialogue in 2013, a first ministerial-level participation in this pre-eminent security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific. On this occasion she summed up the EU's role in the region as one based on partnership:

> *"We believe we have a dual contribution to make to security in the region and beyond: first by offering to be a true long-term partner on security issues and second by being an effective and innovative one, through our ability to implement a comprehensive approach which is particularly suited to the new challenges we all face… . Today I am here to reinforce our deep commitment to promoting global security and prosperity, not as an Asian power, but an Asian partner."*

[6] Even if EU MS were not united on the merits of military interventions in Libya they then quickly agreed on an arms embargo and reviewed options for no-fly zones, started preparations for possible EU flanking operations to boost UN humanitarian activity, was one of the first international actors to open an office in Benghazi and started work with the new authorities on border control operations.

Numerous dialogue arrangements

The EU is a major trade and economic partner for countries in the Asian region. The new-generation of partnership and cooperation agreements concluded with Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, Mongolia and Singapore provide an ambitious framework for cooperation in fighting terrorism, human trafficking, and countering proliferation. Talks are underway to have similar agreements with Brunei, Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand.

Concerning anti-piracy in particular the EU has been co-sponsoring events with ASEAN partners to look at the EU's experience in combating piracy off the coast of Somalia through a comprehensive international mobilization that includes naval missions, support to stabilization inland, training of security forces and support to local regional anti-piracy capabilities.

The EU is also a partner in the ASEAN Regional Forum, exchanging views and working closely with all ASEAN partners on security issues affecting the region.
Last year the EU participated with more than 60 people in disaster and relief exercises with ASEAN and other countries under the ARF.

Taking a clear stance on growing tensions

The growing tensions in the region over contested maritime borders between China and some ASEAN members as well as between China and Japan, are of great concern for the EU.

The EU has made its position clear on numerous occasions, calling for diplomatic and pragmatic solutions, and doing so both publicly and privately.

- Publicly, the EU takes position on the most relevant developments, while avoiding taking sides on territorial disputes. The HR/VP issued a statement on behalf of the EU addressing the establishment by China of the East China Sea ADIZ (covering disputed islands and accompanied by a non-specific threat in case of non-respect) in November 2013. The spokesperson of the HR/VP also issued a statement on the visit of PM Abe to the Yasukuni Shrine in December 2013. The EU condemned both actions and called on both sides to do all they can in lowering tensions and building trust.
- Privately, the EU keeps raising the issues at the highest political level, in summit meetings with all major parties involved (just in 2013 the EU had discussion at summit levels with ROK, Japan and China).

EU and some countries in the Asia-Pacific region have also agreed on a framework to work together on civilian and military operations - a framework agreement with New Zealand has been signed and similar agreements are being finalized with Australia and South Korea for participation in EU-led missions. The EU encourages participation in worldwide missions from partners in the Asia-Pacific, opening new opportunities for partnership.

Transferring the EU's know-how

The EU has also accumulated over the years a lot of experience about furthering regional integration, aligning Member States policies and developing common projects. This experience has been applied over the past twenty years to the development of cooperation in crisis management through an institutional incremental approach; in doing this, the EU has tried to identify and mobilise all tools at its disposal, from the economic to the diplomatic, from sanctions to confidence building measures.

This experience can also be made available to partners, notably organisations such as ASEAN with an explicit aim of closer cooperation. As noted by Reiterer (2013)7:

> *"The EU's comprehensive approach on security with a strong soft power component to meet international challenges carries an appeal when the region's other major partners are stressing hard power. In the process of building a regional architecture the EU's expertise and experience in regional economic and political integration, including dispute avoidance, management and settlement, are assets in demand…"*

The EU-ASEAN bilateral cooperation programme, the Brunei Plan of Action, has been updated and adopted in 2012. This plan envisages that both parties will expand

[7] Reiterer, Michael. 'The EU's Comprehensive Approach to Security in Asia'. *European Foreign Affairs Review* 19, no. 1 (2014): 1–22. © 2014 Kluwer Law International BV, The Netherlands

cooperation on non-traditional security issues such as disaster response; border management; maritime cooperation. This will be complemented by support and peer exchanges on mediation with the emerging ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation where the EU can draw on it previous recent experience in Mindanao. Drawing on its experiences with Trans-European Networks, Single Market, the Schengen Area, public-private partnerships, the EU will support ASEAN goals on 'Connectivity', which is an important unifying concept for ASEAN.

EU's current involvement in crisis management, mediation, transition in Asia

The EU has also taken active part in supporting crisis resolution in different parts of Asia.

- By far the biggest engagement is in **Afghanistan** where as part of the wider international efforts, and in close coordination with NATO and the UN, the EU has been deploying resources to train Afghan police, to support the country's reconstruction – with a strong focus on health, education and agriculture – and has provided support to electoral processes and electoral observation.

- The EU also provided a leading contribution in **Aceh** through a monitoring mission, in partnership with five ASEAN countries, which was completed in 2006 and provided support to the peace process between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement.

- In **Timor Leste** – where the EU provided support to the UN mission, as well as a strong development package; moreover the EU provided support to the electoral process and provided electoral observation.

- The EU has been a constant supporter for a democratic transition in **Myanmar**: the EU has taken active part in the work of the Group of Friends of Myanmar chaired by the UN Secretary General and funded activities of the office of the UNSG Special Representative. Moreover, the EU had appointed its own special representative to focus its efforts concerning Myanmar. In the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, the EU worked closely with international donors and with ASEAN to open channels to provide assistance to the population in need. Moreover as soon as the transition process started, the EU made good on its commitment and lifted sanctions on the regime, provided political support with high-level visits and deployed a high-level political and economic task force to the country to deepen the engagement.

- Going further, the EU in Myanmar is offering support to a number of very concrete projects:

  - Direct support to the Peace Process: The EU has given 10 million euro to support the functioning and operations of the Myanmar Peace Centre's (MPC). In addition, the EU supports ethnic and civil society actors, enabling them to fully take part in the peace process and addresses other concerns as expressed by the ethnic groups, including the setting up of a civilian ceasefire monitoring mechanism and transitional justice measures addressing the numerous cases of forced labour during the conflict.

  - Support to reform of Myanmar Police Force: As demanded by the Myanmar Government and also supported by the opposition (Daw Aung San Suu Kyi), the EU is supporting the reform of the Myanmar Police Force (MPF) in the areas of crowd management and community policing with a 10m EUR package of support. So far the project has trained 1419 police officers in crowd management. In addition, this EU project supports reforming the police doctrine and legal framework and works directly with representatives of Parliament to ensure better accountability of the police.

  - EU support to pilot de-mining actions: With 3.5m EUR in funding, the IcSP supports pilot actions linked to alleviating the threat of mines.

- Another good example of partnership is our work on **disaster prevention and response with ASEAN** and individual countries. The EU provided €52.6 million to help the victims of natural disasters and is currently establishing a regional network of information-sharing and early warning systems for emergency situations with ASEAN. The EU is supporting the ASEAN Centre for humanitarian response. In this framework , in March 2013, the EU signed a joint statement 'Building a Lasting EU-Myanmar/Burma Partnership' that confirms EU's intention to work together with Myanmar/Burma

on preparedness, response and resilience to emergencies by building up a professional and effective response system and through sharing of experience and capacity building.

- The joint participation of the EEAS, the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), and EU Member States (Belgium, Austria and Luxembourg) in the ARF Disaster Relief Exercise 2013 in Thailand in May 2013 underlined the above mentioned comprehensive approach of the EU to security.

- In the **Philippines**, the EU is participating in support to the international organs established to assist the peace process and is providing resources for confidence-building measures in the south of the Philippines:

    - The EU contributes to the maintenance of a peaceful situation on the ground and to the improvement of the humanitarian and socio-economic situation of conflict-affected population, thereby helping establish an environment conducive to the successful negotiation of a Peace Agreement.

    - The EU supports peace keeping and monitoring work of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) and of the members of its Civilian Protection Component: both Parties are kept fully informed of this monitoring work done by EU experts, local NGOs and other International personnel on incidents particularly related to humanitarian and human rights law which are regularly addressed by the parties themselves.

    - In the peace negotiations facilitated by the International Contact group (ICG), the EU supports the work of an International NGO which as a member of the Group advises the Parties during their negotiations.

    - Confidence and Peace building action: the EU supports the parties in jointly addressing issues such as joint clearance of unexploded ordnances. Additionally through EU funds, both Parties benefit from the services of Eminent People and technical advisors who provide critical advice and assistance.

    - Finally, the EU funds workshops and dialogue meetings to raise awareness of the significance of the Peace process to the various sectors of the population and community and to ensure people are aware of the importance of their involvement and contribution to the public consultation.

What next? Options for closer partnership

The overview of EU engagements and contribution to security in Asia shows that whilst there are numerous avenues for dialogue and many ongoing projects, they are not part of an overall strategy. This lack of strategy is perceived on both sides

On the EU side,

- There is a clear offer available to support new initiatives and there is willingness to get more engaged. However, there is no overall offer that would make it easier for countries in the region to identify avenues for closer partnership with the EU.

- For example, the EU could define better what it is ready to do along the crisis cycle and define more in detail the instruments and tools that can be mobilized for mediation and preventive action; for confidence building and consolidation of post-crisis transitions; and for capacity building.

- Moreover the EU needs to spell out to what extent it is willing to get involved in peace-keeping operations or civilian deployments in Asia (beyond the current involvement in Afghanistan). Would the EU be willing to provide support similar to what it does in Africa with the Africa Peace Facility?

- There is growing interest on disaster preparedness in many Asian countries, notably in South East Asia. The EU has considerable experience in coordination of multinational efforts and in monitoring and early intervention. Building on the cooperation projects already launched with ASEAN and some of its members, the EU could explore the possibility of working on specific initiatives

- Crucially, is the EU willing to consider more systematic involvement in confidence building type of measures, including track II diplomacy, teaming up with Asian countries willing to take more initiatives in the area of prevention, mediation, and addressing 'fragile' situation through international cooperation.

On the Asian side,

- It is difficult to identify multilateral interlocutors for joint initiatives. There is no Asian security organization similar to the OSCE in Europe or the African Union in Africa. ASEAN remains a partner, but one that is still searching for its own mandate, limited as the organization is by the basic principles of non-interference in members' internal affairs and with no mandate to act outside of its member's area. The ARF initiative is a good framework for wider dialogue that the EU will continue to participate. The East Asia Summit is building up into a comprehensive organization addressing security issues at the highest political level, but has no real operational dimension and the EU's request to participate in its work is still pending.

- The EU is still not perceived as a security partner. The actions mentioned above are often seen as accompanying the most substantial role of the EU as a trade or development partner. Asian partners could look at the EU as a possible source of mediation or support to multilateral mediation efforts to address some long-standing issues (claims over Sabah, or ethnic conflicts and separatist movements in south Thailand, or the Rohingya in Myanmar)

Both sides could also explore cooperation on some global issues of common concern, creating coalitions of the willing rather than mere region to region dialogues, to address for example the issue of critical sea lanes of communications, or freedom of over-flight or cyber-security, all issues on which both sides have clear interests in common.

4. Some Concluding Remarks

The EU will continue to develop its capabilities for crisis management interventions. As agreed by Heads of States and Government in December 2013, strengthening will affect both the EU's capacity for civilian and military deployments as well as the capacity to act more 'comprehensively' when dealing with conflicts and tensions in third countries, bearing on all the confidence-building, incentives and sanctions at its disposal. However, the unanimous decision making required for EU's deployments and the search for consensus will continue to limit the ability of the EU for rapid autonomous interventions. As a consequence the need for partnership and joint interventions with other actors is expected to remain the main framework for EU's involvement in crisis situations.

Looking at Asia, the strength and weaknesses of the EU's current role in the area of security become more obvious. On one hand, the EU is active in a number of crisis situations and it plays a supporting role to transition and mediation processes. It has a know-how and access to resources that can be mobilized. And the EU can promote international coalitions using economic and political incentives. However the EU's is not perceived as a natural security partner for countries in the region.

The EU as a global security player will need to develop its role in Asia keeping pace with its economic and trade presence. From the short overview offered in this paper, it can be expected that developments will follow three dimensions:

- ***The EU will strengthen its offers for partnership*** and joint action with countries in the region. Bilateral action (between the EU and individual countries) like in the Philippines or Myanmar now, will become more visible. Such partnerships will continue to depend on the willingness of the countries in the region to involve and cooperate with the EU;

- ***The EU will continue to pursue a multilateral agenda***, with a stronger focus on global challenges such as the implications of climate change for security, the fight against maritime piracy, or cyber-security. In order to promote global action, the EU will need to develop closer international alliances; the contribution of Asian countries to the need for international coalitions will be necessary for the success of multilateral action;

- ***The EU will be ready to engage in the development of Asian regional dialogues for security***. The Asian Regional Forum, ASEM and eventually the East Asia Summit will offer further opportunities for closer EU-Asian engagement.

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