

The EU and Conflict Prevention: a ten year assessment

By Dr Simon Duke (European Institute of Public Administration, Maastricht)

This is a good moment to pause and reflect on the last ten years of conflict prevention (CP) and the European Union (EU). The period is bracketed by the lessons drawn from the traumatic events in the Western Balkans in the 1990s and especially the Kosovo war, instability and mass-killings in sub-Saharan Africa, the dramatic events of 9/11 and, more recently, the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. All of these events placed the onus on conflict prevention since the economic and political costs of crisis management, often U.S. led, were readily apparent. For the EU the Kosovo war was arguably the main catalyst that led to the adoption of a number of policy papers at the end of 2000 and the first half of 2001 that would frame the Union's subsequent approach to conflict prevention.

The main policy paper of relevance is the European Union Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts, otherwise known as the Gothenburg Programme, adopted a decade ago and which should have been subject to review in 2010-2011. It is primarily in this context that the current observations are offered. It should, however, be noted that this restricted time horizon does not encapsulate the entire experience of the EU and conflict prevention. Indeed, it has been argued that the EU itself is, by conception, fundamentally about conflict prevention (See Wouters/Naert, p.33)

A mixed score card

As we look back over a decade of the Gothenburg Programme the score card is mixed. On the positive side the programme has raised awareness of CP and, at least at the rhetorical level, engendered widespread support in the EU institutions and among the Member States to boost efforts to prevent conflict. The desire for an 'integrated' approach to CP has met with partial success in terms of conflict indicators being routinely considered in Country and Regional Strategy Papers for various parts of the world (with an emphasis upon the ACP countries). The Gothenburg Programme has also been bolstered by other policy documents, such as the December 2003 European Security Strategy, where it was observed that 'conflict prevention and threat prevention cannot start too early', the European Neighbourhood Policy (2004), the European Consensus

Content

1. A mixed score card	1
2. The Lisbon Treaty: a game changer for conflict prevention?	3
3. Conclusions and Recommendations	6

2001: A crucial year for the EU and CP

[Improving the Coherence and Effectiveness of European Union Action in the Field of Conflict Prevention](#)

Joint Report of the Commission and of the Council of 30 November 2000

[European Commission Communication of April 2001 concerning conflict prevention](#) COM (2001) 211 final

[EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts](#)

Stockholm, June 2001, adopted at the European Council meeting 15-16 June 2001

on Development (2005), the EC communication on security and development (2007) and the EC Communication on situations of Fragility (2009) – to name but a few. The weaknesses of the Gothenburg Programme which have become apparent over the last decade relate to the lack of specification about who should assume prime responsibility for CP and the lack of accountability for any failure to reach the goals specified in the document. Beyond the generalities of the programme itself, four more specific issues are worth noting.

First, one of the obvious challenges encountered, and not fully resolved, over the last decade has been the very meaning of CP in the EU context. It is, to use Michael Lund's term, a 'multifaceted action' that includes active/passive, long/short term, economic/legal/political/military, and internal/external, aspects. The expansive nature of CP led the Commission to suggest that 'all relevant institutions of the Union will mainstream conflict prevention within their areas of competence'. [*EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts*, 2001, p.3]. Although driven by the European Commission, it was evident that CP should include 'second pillar' (the Common Foreign and Security Policy or CFSP) instru-

ments as well. The expansive nature of CP has led to concerns on the one hand that it is too all-enveloping and is thus difficult to implement on a coherent basis and, on the other, it has also met criticism for not being expansive enough, most notably when it comes to gender sensitivity and awareness. [Fraser Cameron]

Second, the 'pillarization' of the EU proved to be a further hindrance. CP capacities were developed under the (former) Community guise, as well as in the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) context. Often these efforts were inadequately coordinated. The emphasis within ESDP, which emerged in 1998, but only really became operational in 2003 with its first mission, emphasized the military dimensions of crisis management (due, largely, to the EU's experiences in the

Western Balkans) and only more recently were the civilian aspects of crisis management developed. This had one important knock-on effect for the development of CP. By definition effective CP assumes early warning and although the Commission was not bereft of early-warning sources (primarily the delegations), much of the more sensitive analysis of intelligence and open-source intelligence work was being done on the ESDP side to support crisis management. CP, like EU external action more generally, thus suffered from being largely responsive instead of pro-active. In those instances more proactive tools were developed, such as the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) or under its current guise the Instrument for Stability (IfS), they proved to be much in demand but essentially limited by funding and timeframe.

Third, a further significant impediment lay within the Commission itself. The responsibility for developing CP lay primarily within Directorate-General (DG) External Relations (Relex) although many of the most potent tools lay beyond, especially in DG Trade, DG Development (Dev) and DG Enlargement. A conflict prevention and crisis management unit within DG Relex was given responsibility for coordinating CP efforts within the Commission, as well as for liaising with their CFSP counterparts. The unit managed, with some success, to 'mainstream' CP concerns into Commission policies and, more importantly, into the programming instruments. Hence, CP was included as an integral aspect of the Commission's Country Strategy Papers as well as through specific instruments such as rule of law missions, support to civil society, security sector reform and many others. This success was, however, tempered by some more structural deficiencies within the EU. In particular, the ability to ad-

Policy Papers

[European Security Strategy](#) | 2003

[European Neighbourhood Policy](#) | 2004

[European Consensus on Development](#) | 2005

[Council Conclusions on Security and Development](#) | 2007

[EC Communication: „Towards an EU response to situations of fragility“](#) | 2007

dress longer-term policies aimed at addressing the fundamental causes of conflict were often compromised by the concentration on short-to-medium term goals early warning and crisis management mechanisms.

The most serious institutional deficiency from a CP perspective was the relationship between the Council (General Affairs and External Relations), DG Relex and DG Dev. DG Relex traditionally paid attention to the geopolitical aspects of its external relations. The Council mirrored this outlook and, generally speaking, did not pay much attention to development-related issues. Yet, as noted, many of the longer-term instruments for addressing the causes of conflict were to be found in DG Dev and the European Aid Cooperation Office (AIDCO) where there was palpable resistance to any hint of 'politicizing' let alone 'securitizing' development policies, most notably by the ACP states themselves. The sensitivities surrounding the potential use of a small portion of the European Development Fund (EDF) funding to promote local solutions to local crisis, in the form of the €250 million African Peace Facility established on 19 April 2004, was symptomatic. So too was the dispute between the Commission and the Council regarding competences over Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the ECOWAS context that erupted at the end of 2004 [Judgment of the Court (Grand Chamber) of 20 May 2008]. The details of the case are beyond this review but it nevertheless sensitized all parties to pillar competences and to extant political and legal 'boundaries', thus making the pursuit of inherently inter-pillar policy areas, like CP, all the more difficult. It is also worth noting that the resources tagged for CP, not only in the APC context, have remained rather low both in financial and human resource terms.

Finally, the Gothenburg programme was clear that effective CP would involve the EU engaging with a wide variety of governmental and non-governmental actors. The UN was in this regard considered to be a 'key partner' of the EU in CP. The EU has developed extensive links with the UN in the CP context, although they require further bolstering. In normative terms the mutual support for CP was helpful for developing the 2003 and 2007 Declarations on Cooperation in Crisis Management [[Joint Declaration on Cooperation in Crisis Management](#)]. Notwithstanding the growing collaboration on crisis management, there is further work to be done on expanding EU-UN cooperation specifically on CP. Relations with other bodies, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe have also developed fairly rapidly during the last decade or so, but in both cases they are far less developed than in the EU-UN case.

The Lisbon Treaty: a game changer for conflict prevention?

The Lisbon Treaty introduces CP formally as part of the Petersberg Tasks, referring to the earlier tasks inherited by the EU from the Western European Union in the Amsterdam Treaty. CP is further integrated into the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) – the revised name for ESDP – and is also referred to in the context of permanent structured cooperation [See PROTOCOL (No 10) on Permanent Structured Cooperation established by Article 42 of the Treaty on European Union]. Other changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, such as the elaboration of the EU's aims and objectives in the wider world to include 'eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights', also strengthen the profile of CP in the EU's external action.

The introduction of a number of new positions with the overall aim of enhancing the coherence of the EU's external action, such as the President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy, and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, Catherine Ashton, are also of potential significance. The emergence of the European External Action Service (EEAS) is of particular significance since it offers the potential to bring together hitherto disparate bodies dealing with CP-related issues

in the Commission and the Council Secretariat. The greater involvement of national diplomats on temporary assignment to the EEAS may also promise further positive synergies between EU and national level CP efforts. The efforts to enhance general coherence in EU external action have particular saliency when it comes to CP since, as observed above, effective prevention of conflict draws upon many different policy areas and instruments. The eventual aim should be to aim towards 'structural conflict prevention'. The key idea behind the term is that it emphasizes 'influencing or shaping the structures which are at the basis of a potential conflict or which provide a fertile breeding ground for a conflict' [Keukeleire, p.153]. The term also has political and institutional underpinnings, since it assumes the coalescence of the political will of the Member States alongside the necessary internal coherence within the EU to reach the goal. The analysis in the previous section argued that the EU is clearly not there yet, but raises question of the extent to which the Member States and the EU are prepared to meet such a challenge now that the Lisbon Treaty is in place.

The first and most obvious point is that the attainment of structural CP will require consensus on its prioritization. The emphasis in the previous decade had been more upon crisis management which tended to push CP into the back seat. The prioritization of CP will therefore require the stewardship of both Van Rompuy and Ashton, as well as the President of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso. The promotion of CP by all of the senior EU external action posts is imperative.

At the implementation level the obvious bridge spanning the various structural components of CP is the EEAS. Within the EEAS there are two components addressing peace-building, conflict prevention and mediation, and security policy, under Richard Wright (transferred from DG Relex IA). It is obviously imperative that the linkage between CP and security policy should be strengthened (and, beyond this, to strategic planning, public diplomacy and strategic communication). This, in turn, is part of a division addressing Global and Multilateral Issues. Within the division there are other offices that are of obvious importance to CP, such as non-proliferation and disarmament, human rights and democracy, multilateral relations and global governance. It is worth noting that in the case of the three offices mentioned, their areas of concern dovetail with the relevant working groups (COARM, COHOM and CONUN respectively). In the case of CP, there is no such ready linkage due to its pervasive nature, which also risks CP not being given the attention it deserves. The Foreign Policy Instruments Service, which among other things addresses IfS operations, CFSP operations, public diplomacy as well as election observation, is also of relevance.

There are three shortfalls that will have to be addressed in order to move towards the structural CP. First, the linkage between the multilateral division and the five geographical desks is not entirely obvious. Are the former responsible for 'mainstreaming' their particular responsibilities through the geographical desks and the delegations? Although CP is already somewhat 'mainstreamed' (as in the case of Country Strategy Papers), further efforts are required to integrate the CFSP and national (Member State) dimensions more consistently. If, alternatively, the multilateral division is a specialist resource for advice and counsel for the geographical desk officers, the mainstreaming task may be more difficult since much more will depend upon the officers themselves. In either case, the coordinating role and the

Links & Literature

Jan Wouters and Frederik Naert, '[The EU and Conflict Prevention: A Brief Historic Overview](#)', in Vincent Kronenberger and Jan Wouters, *The European Union and Conflict Prevention: Policy and Legal Aspects* | 2004

Fraser Cameron, '[The European Union and Conflict Prevention](#)', Background Paper Prepared for the Project European 'Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Explosive Remnants of War' | 2003

Stephan Keukeleire, "EU Structural Foreign Policy and Structural Conflict Prevention", in Kronenberger/Wouters | 2004

promotion of structural CP will depend heavily upon the Policy Board, consisting of the Managing Directors of the six divisions, a number of other senior EEAS officials, and the Corporate Board.

The second issue area is the lack of much apparent linkage between the specialist CSDP bodies, such as the EU Military Staff, the Crisis Management Planning Directorate and the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability, and the bodies referred to above. This is important since any effective CP depends upon a continuum. Aside from Ashton herself, the only obvious link is through the Managing Director Crisis Response and Operational Coordination, Agostino Miozzo. Since his position can, if need be, involve reporting to the Corporate Board, part of the responsibility for promoting structural CP must also fall on his shoulders.

The first two shortfalls may well be addressed as the EEAS evolves, but a third issue will call for longer-term efforts to ensure coherence. Structural CP will depend upon the necessary linkages being strengthened within the EEAS as well as those between the Service and the Commission. In particular DG European Aid Development and Cooperation (DevCo), DG Trade, DG Environment, DG Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy and DG International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response. Others could be added, but these represent the core external relations DGs. Although there are formal links at the highest level, through the Group of External Relations Commissioners, the existence of the necessary linkages at lower-levels is far less obvious. Indeed, in some cases like DG Trade, they are worryingly unclear. The point at which CP should be woven into the relations between the EEAS and the relevant parts of the Commission should be in the first three stages of the programming cycle – where policy meets instruments. Programming for the largest funds, predominantly in the development area, illustrates tensions between the Service and the Commission with the latter often demonstrating its determination to claw back key responsibilities rather than cooperate with the new *sui generis* EEAS. In part this reflects the traditional sensitivities that surround the use of development aid and assistance, but it also reflects Brussels bureaucratic politics and turf consciousness.

Links & Literature

[Thematic Evaluation of European Commission Support to Conflict Prevention and Peace Building](#) | Concept Study | 2010

In order to begin to address such concerns and to help the EEAS find its 'space' in the EU's architecture, the Policy Coherence on Development (PCD), which was drawn up in April 2005 and links together twelve associated policy areas, should be emulated in the form of a Policy Coherence for Security (PCS). The PCS should include CP as a central part and links should be made to the PCD since there is obviously no development without security and *vice versa*. The PCS could usefully be drawn up as an inter-institutional exercise, involving the relevant desks and Strategic Planning from the EEAS, the pertinent Commission and Council Secretariat bodies, as well as the European Parliament. Although the PCS need not be as extensive as the PCD, it should at least link together the five main CP dialogues: the humanitarian aspects; the poverty focussed development agenda; the CP and peace-building agenda; the crisis management agenda; and the renewed security agenda [See „Thematic Evaluation“, p. 8]. This would not only assist in the mainstreaming of CP and move towards structured CP, but would contribute to the fostering of a culture of CP within the EEAS and the delegations.

There should also be adequate staffing and the necessary training to support CP efforts in the EEAS headquarters – which are currently very limited. In addition, delegation based staff could form part of specialist regional CP teams who could be dispatched to a particular country or region to provide specialist support to the EEAS headquarters and, if applicable, to the Special Representative. This will not be an easy task given the view towards 'budget neutrality' under which the EEAS is operating until 2013.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The EU's efforts regarding CP in the last decade have been far from negligible but they nevertheless display some consistent weaknesses. This essay has suggested that a firmer strategic vision for EU CP, built on an inter-institutional foundation in the form of PCS, would help define more precisely what is understood by CP, to whom it principally relates and the instruments and processes that support it.

The Lisbon Treaty offers the potential, through the new senior positions in EU external action and the EEAS providing a common support structure, to overcome some of the results of the pre-Lisbon 'pillarization' that have stymied the development of CP. The role of the EEAS will be critical but there is the danger that its inevitably slow development and the ongoing institutional tensions may squander this potential.

This brief overview has suggested that two parallel courses need to be undertaken. On the one hand there is the need for a strategic outlook which can frame subsequent CP efforts. It has been suggested that this should be an inter-institutional document, with support from the top offices, in the form of a PCS. Although likely to be a complicated process, it would enable many of the concerns raised above to be answered and would support the mainstreaming of CP in a more structured and coherent manner. The second, related, course should consist of efforts within the EEAS and the Commission to link the PCS to enhanced early-warning mechanisms and to prioritize CP in the programming cycles of the financial instruments.

Naturally, these suggestions will require effort and resources. If CP is built structurally into the EU's external action it will make demands of the existing resources and expertise and, in all likelihood, will entail more concentration on training and preparation for CP-related activities as well as personnel. This influx of temporarily assigned national diplomats into the EEAS may well prove to be an opportunity since many will possess the necessary skills which, when combined with the EU officials grasp of how things work and the funding bases, could help pave the way for a new decade of reinvigorated EU CP.

The above arguments have a number of implications for national administrations whose support and active participation will be required for effective conflict prevention. It is evident that Germany, as an influential actor in this realm, can do much to promote conflict prevention at the EU level, both as exemplar but also by working with key allies in Europe. With this in mind the following ten suggestions might be considered:

1. Promote a national dialogue on conflict prevention between governmental and non-governmental groups in order to reinforce strategic dialogue at the EU level and to promote the primacy of conflict prevention;
2. Promote national support for the reinforcement of EU conflict prevention efforts, especially through the targeted use of the Union's economic tools;
3. National administrations should ensure that they make conflict prevention a 'fixed priority' (as per the *European Union Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflict*). National administrations who do so will be in a far stronger position to encourage the EU to promote conflict prevention in this manner;
4. Conflict prevention can only be made a strategic priority if it is matched with appropriate funding and resources. This applies equally to the EU and the national levels;
5. Effective conflict prevention depends heavily on early warning mechanisms. The national providers of analysis of intelligence (of which Germany is one) and the EU, notably the delegations, should provide mutually reinforcing early-warning mechanisms and analysis;

6. Encourage, through example, the EU to improve its conflict prevention efforts where they have been identified as in need of strengthening (the gender dimensions being a case in point);
7. Support EU conflict prevention efforts through national diplomacy and, in particular, by promoting common positions pertaining to conflict prevention in national level political dialogue with third parties;
8. Support EU conflict prevention through multilateral institutions (most notably the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations);
9. Actively promote national training schemes, most notably those relating to new conflict prevention methods, and open them on a reciprocal basis to EU officials;
10. Engage with key strategic partners in Europe to promote a holistic approach to conflict prevention at the EU level.

Imprint

Working Group on Peace and Development (FriEnt)
 c/o BMZ, Dahlmannstr. 4
 53113 Bonn
 Tel. +49-228-535-3259
 Fax. +49-228-535-3799
friend@bmz.bund.de
www.friend.de

Responsible under German Press Law: Natascha Zupan

Author: Dr Simon Duke
 Editor: Marc Baxmann

The contents of this Briefing Paper reflect the views of the author, not necessarily the opinions of the FriEnt member organisations.