

The European Union's Security and Defence Policy: Is There a Future for Security Integration?

The European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy has the ultimate goal of integrating the security and defence policies of its member states into one overarching security and defence policy for the entire European Union. Article 17.1 of Title V of the Treaty of European Union established and set out the goals for the European Common Security and Defence Policy (ECSDP or ESDP). Of foremost importance was the establishment of a common security policy that "could lead to a common defence" of the European Union.¹ Yet the European Union has stumbled in their attempts to reach this goal and integration has proved harder than expected. Though steps have been made, the biggest roadblocks still lie ahead. The major challenges to the formation of a common security and defence policy for the European Union are the member states' unwillingness to give up control over national security and defence and the reluctance of European Union states to increase their military capabilities to a point that will support the goals and policies of the Common Security and Defence Policy.

The goal of a common security and defence of Europe is not a new one. As early as the 1950s there was an aborted attempt to create a common defence policy for Europe in the form of the European Defence Community (EDC). The Western European Union (WEU) was created in place of the earlier failed institution and was designed to facilitate Western European defence coordination. The Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), renamed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1995, sought to provide dialogue and cooperation for all the states of Europe

¹ European Union, "Title V: Provisions on a Common Foreign and Security Policy" From the Treaty of Amsterdam, 2 October, 1997, at <http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/treaties/selected/livre106.html>, Article 17.1

on security issues during the Cold War. Yet none of these institutions, aside from the first attempt in 1954, sought to integrate European defence under one common umbrella, as the European Union is seeking to do.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines integration as “the making up or composition of a whole by adding together or combining the separate parts or elements; combination into an integral whole: a making whole or entire.”² This is the central key to European integration. It is bringing the various different apparatus of the member states together to form one over-arching unit, erasing lines of national policy distinction in the incorporation process. Cooperation, on the other hand, is defined as “working together towards the same end, purpose, or effect; joint operation.”³ In the case of cooperation, distinct entities come together for a common purpose or joint operation without losing their individual nature. This is the prime difference between integration and cooperation, in one instance, the distinctive aspect of the integral parts is lost in the coming together, while in the other the distinctive, individual aspect is not. Though a somewhat subtle difference, the steps towards achieving one versus achieving the other within the European Union are very different. Further, one – integration – raises questions of sovereignty while the other does not.

The goals of the European Union in the area of security and defence do not reflect the reality of security integration in Europe. While the final vision is a common security policy for the whole European Union, in actuality security and defence policy continues

² Oxford English Dictionary, “Integration”, available at:
http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca:2048/cgi/entry/50118573?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=integration&first=1&max_to_show=10

³ Oxford English Dictionary, “Cooperation”, available at:
http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca:2048/cgi/entry/50049524?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=cooperation&first=1&max_to_show=10

to be set at the national level throughout Europe and states have proved unwilling to relinquish control over policies in the security and defence sector.

Part of the reason it has been so difficult to integrate security in the European Union is due to the fact that security and defence issues strike at the heart of what it is to be a Westphalian nation state. One of the primary rights of a state, as set out at Westphalia in 1648 and preserved in countless treaties since then, is the right of a state to defend itself. If nations cede this right to the supra-national institution that is the European Union, will this negate their sovereignty or strengthen the EU's right to claim sovereignty as a state in its own right? The interpretation of sovereignty that will be an outcome of these decisions on security and defence issues has made the member states reticent to make them.

Security integration is not like monetary integration. In the area of economic policy, states have been willing to sacrifice some of their sovereignty in order to gain the benefits of a common trade policy, and give up national currencies in favour of the economic benefits of joint policy. In these areas issue linkages have allowed integration to flow from one topic to another. This has not been the case with defence policy. Member states continue to act not under the directive of the European Union but based on their own national interests. In many cases, when national policies conflict, individual nations take action outside the auspices of the ECSDP. This has been seen recently in the British decision to send troops to Iraq, and the French bombing of the Cote D'Ivoire, and has been a pattern since the ECSDP's inception.⁴ Based on the patterns seen in the

⁴ For a more detailed discussion of this pattern, see John Peterson and Elizabeth Bomberg, *Decision-making in the European Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p 237.

actions of the member states, it would appear that the benefits are outweighed by what the member states will have to give up in order to pursue defence integration.

Though the ECSDP may be used when agreement can be reached, it has certainly not bound the actions of the individual member-states when their national interests deviate from those of the rest of the European Union. The case of Iraq is a powerful example of this phenomenon in action. There was a clear division between the stance of the United Kingdom and that of France and Germany. This division would have paralyzed the Council and action within the European Security and Defence Policy would have been impossible for both domestic and international political and logistical reasons. Accordingly, instead of raising what was clearly a point of contention among the member states, the Council pursued a ‘lowest common denominator’ policy, agreeing on the condemnation of assassinations and attacks in Iraq, condemning the mistreatment of prisoners and looking forward to elections.⁵ When it was able to make some sort of agreement and take action, it was in an area that would support the political goals of all the members of the European Union that participated in the decision. There was no mention of the differing actions of the member-states, but an agreement that the pursuit of a “secure, stable, unified prosperous and democratic Iraq that will make a positive contribution to the stability of the region” was a good thing for the EU.⁶ This was an

⁵ General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, “Iraq: Council Conclusions,” in Council Conclusions of 2582nd Council Meeting: General Affairs and External Relations – External Relations – (Brussels, 17 May 2004), Doc 9210/04 Available at: <http://register.consilium.eu.int/servlet/driver?page=Advanced&typ=&lang=EN&fc=REG AISEN&srm=25&md=100&cmsid=639> , p.21.

⁶ General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, “Iraq: Council Conclusions,” in Council Conclusions of 2597th Council Meeting General Affairs and External Relations – External Relations – (Brussels, 12-13 July 2004), Doc 11105/04. Available at:

action that could be approved by all, but the decision to go to war or not was taken and remained outside the auspices of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Unilateral action is still clearly a normal tool in the pursuit of national foreign policy goals. The transition towards a security policy that is over-arching for the entire European Union will be a difficult one to make unless member states are willing to give up their power to take unilateral action, an outcome that is not likely to change any time soon.

The structure of the ECSDP is another example of the unwillingness of member states to relinquish control in the areas of security and defence. From the outset, the ECSDP has been set up for control by the member states and not by the bureaucracy of the European Union. The most international of the European Union institutions, the Council of Ministers, is the central player in security and defence issues. Unlike the other apparatus of the European Union, the Council is comprised of Ministers representing their national governments. The European Commission, the primary bureaucratic institution of the Union, represents the EU in security and defence decisions and has only one vote, the same as any of the member states. The European Parliament has even less to do in the areas of security and defence. They do not have a vote in these decisions. The most they can do is submit questions to the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) for review and debate questions of foreign and security policy in parliament.

To further ensure control over security and defence remains at the national level, under Title V, all decisions on security and defence must be made unanimously.⁷ The central documents that established the ECSDP all stress the prominence of the member states in the decision-making process. Aside from Title V, the documents establishing the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and the Military Committee, both under the auspices of the Council, emphasize the role the member states play.⁸ They talk of promoting cooperation, coordination and consultation among the member states, but there is no mention of the EU controlling the decisions they make, only acting as a coordinating mechanism.⁹ The Headline Goal 2010, which lays out capability goals for the European Union to achieve by the year 2010, highlights the importance of cooperation among the member states but does not discuss any sort of overall control for policy decisions by the European Union in the security and defence fields.¹⁰

As the impetus for integration is not coming from the member states, yet the European Union has still made steps towards security and defence integration, the push must be coming from the bureaucracy of the European Union itself. The Secretary General/High Representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy plays a large role in pushing integration forward. The Secretary General/High Representative's role

⁷ European Union, "Title V: Provisions on a Common Foreign and Security Policy" From the Treaty of Amsterdam, 2 October, 1997, at <http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/treaties/selected/livre106.html>, Article 23.2.

⁸ See numerous references to the 'cooperation' and 'coordination' of the militaries of the member states in: General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, Council Decision of 22 January 2001 setting up the Military Committee of the European Union Doc 2001/79/CFSP and: General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, Council Decision of 22 January 2001 setting up the Political and Security Committee Doc. 2001/78/CFSP.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, Headline Goal 2010 (Brussels, 4 May 2004) Doc 6309/6/04.

has grown exponentially in the past few years in the areas of foreign and security policy. The Secretary-General, Javier Solana, is also the High Representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. In 2004, he was named as the EU's first Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Secretary General oversees the Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers, the civil service of the European Union. The Secretariat-General is responsible for not only the day-to-day running of the European Union, the duty of the Deputy Secretary-General, but also increasingly for representing the European Union in matters relating to European foreign policy, security and defence. The Secretary General/High Representative helps both create and carry out Council decisions in the area of foreign policy (including the ESDP). The High Representative serves as a representative of the European Union outside the EU and has the power to negotiate on the Union's behalf. He is a member of the Troika, which represents the European Union in many summit meetings and affairs of foreign policy, and has the power to sign international documents for the entire European Union. The other members of the Troika are the governmental leader/head of state of the state holding the Presidency of the Council and the Foreign Minister of the state holding the Presidency of the Council.

Solana and the Secretariat General have been tasked with overseeing coordination of ESDP across the EU and providing coordination from one Council Presidency to the next. Further, as the head of the WEU, Solana has been charged with incorporating the WEU into the EU's ESDP apparatus. So far, the EU has incorporated two former WEU institutions, the EU Satellite Centre and the European Institute for Security Studies, into the EU apparatus. Solana has been very activist in his position, promoting integration in

security and defence whenever possible. For example, he spearheaded the release of the European Security Strategy in 2003, a document that sets out the broad goals for security and defence of Europe as well as gives direction for the future integration of the ECSDP.¹¹ As the head of the European Defence Agency (EDA) – the organization responsible for coordinating security and defence integration and supervising the improvement of capabilities – Solana has been granted even more power in the field of security and defence policy. If the European Constitution is ratified, he will also become the Vice President of the Commission, greatly strengthening his ability to push for security and defence integration through the Commission as well as the Council.

Over the past several years, the bureaucracy of the European Union has been able to create several different committees and agencies designed to support the integration of security and defence. The Political and Security Committee (PSC), the Military Committee (MC), the European Defence Agency, the European Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the Civilian Crisis Management Unit (CCMU) are only a few examples. Yet increased bureaucracy does not necessarily mean increased integration. In fact, the creation of these various institutions can serve as a smoke screen for a lack of progress in this area. Though the creation of these institutions has helped to facilitate security integration at some levels, they have also served to further complicate security integration in the European Union and their results have been mixed. In some cases, new institutions were created to replace existing institutions. The EDA is an example of this, having taken over responsibility from the Council for supervising the fulfilment of the

¹¹ General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union. European Security Strategy –Bosnia and Herzegovina/Comprehensive Policy, Available at: <http://www.eusrbih.org/policy-docs/?cid=1,1,1>

European Capability Action Plan (ECAP). Other organizations have created redundancy within the bureaucracy of the European Union. The PSC, for example, has many overlapping responsibilities with both the Political Committee and the Civilian Crisis Management Unit.¹² Further, many of these organizations have been pushed to the sidelines as new priorities are chosen. For example, the EDA was created to provide a top-down impetus for the member states to commit to fulfilling the capability requirements outlined as priorities by the ECAP, yet it has been argued that the push by the member states to create European Battlegroups has distracted from the mission of the EDA and the successful completion of the capability requirements necessary to support European crisis operations.¹³

European Union states have been unwilling to provide the equipment and personnel required to support the proposed policies and capabilities have barely changed in the past ten years, despite a strong push by policy makers within the institution of the European Union. The European Union still lacks a sizeable percentage of the equipment they have labelled as critical to crisis management, such as strategic airlift capabilities, even though crisis management is one of their prime areas of focus under the European Security and Defence Policy.¹⁴ Further, problems integrating command, control,

¹² The PSC and the CCMU both have responsibility over aspects of ESDP crisis management operations, which has left some doubt as to who is responsible for what in a crisis situation. For further discussion of this overlap, see General Secretariat of the Council of The European Union, Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) Concept for EU Led Crisis Management Operations. Brussels, 18 March, 2002. Doc: 7106/02

¹³ Centre for Strategic and International Studies, European Defense Integration: Bridging the Gap Between Strategy and Capabilities, Lead Investigators: Flournoy, Michele and Julianne Smith (CSIS, Washington: Oct 2005), 56-57.

¹⁴ Council of the European Union, Capability Improvement Chart 1/2005, Brussels, 11 May 2005. Doc: 8673/05. And Centre for Strategic and International Studies, European

communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) have further hampered logistical integration for the European Union.

One example of the lack of development in increasing the capabilities available to pursue security and defence policies is seen in the progression of the European Union's Capability Charts since their inception in 2001. Though somewhat skewed to highlight the positive changes in security policy (there is no way to note decreases in capabilities), if the documents are examined closely, they demonstrate that there has been no real change in capabilities in many important areas, including strategic air, land and sea-lift capabilities, and support elements including fuel and personnel distribution capabilities for the past several years. Shortfalls are both qualitative and in readiness. It is also important to note that the lists only note improvements in 'essential' capabilities that the European Union would require to successfully carry out 'crisis operations'.¹⁵ These are the need to haves, not the nice to haves. Without the improvements listed on the charts, European Union operations will be severely hampered. Yet national governments have been unwilling to foot the bill for the necessary increases in capabilities for the European Union. Spending on defence in almost every European country has decreased over the past five years.¹⁶ Further, scholars have pointed to demographic trends that are expected to curtail defence spending in Europe even more in the future.¹⁷ Finally, where nations

Defense Integration: Bridging the Gap Between Strategy and Capabilities, Lead Investigators: Flournoy, Michele and Julianne Smith (CSIS, Washington: Oct 2005), 20.

¹⁵ Council of the European Union, Capability Improvement Chart 1/2005, Brussels, 11 May 2005. Doc: 8673/05, pg 1-2.

¹⁶ For a breakdown of spending by country, see: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, European Defense Integration: Bridging the Gap Between Strategy and Capabilities, Lead Investigators: Flournoy, Michele and Julianne Smith (CSIS, Washington: Oct 2005), 21.

¹⁷ Ibid., 23.

are willing to pay for transformation costs, the European focus on military transformation to meet the goals of the ESDP has been haphazard and lacks coordination.¹⁸

At the same time that the European Union faces critical shortfalls in many areas, they are facing gluts in others. Lack of coordination, as well as interoperability problems, have led to excesses in several areas. Currently the European Union has an overabundance in bases, training and command and control locations and is lacking in other areas such as rapid response units and logistical support capabilities that will allow them to sustain expeditionary operations.¹⁹ If the European Union wishes to integrate their militaries to support a common security policy, they will need to rectify this situation to allow the various components of the European Union to work together without costly overlaps. Though the EDA was created in part to rectify this situation, competing institutions, such as NATO's Allied Command Transformation have helped to cause more confusion and overlap.

An even more fundamental impediment facing the creation of a European Union security policy that is truly common is the wide variation in military strength and structures among the various member states. Britain and France are nuclear powers. Though the most powerful economically, Germany's past has prevented it, thus far, from taking any steps in this direction and constricts them from taking military actions seen as aggressive. Many of the newer member states have faced problems re-orienting their militaries in the post-Soviet period. Different countries have different societal relationships with the military. Ireland, Sweden and Finland, for example, are officially neutral countries. These varying capabilities and military outlooks have, and will

¹⁸ Ibid., 30-41.

¹⁹ Ibid., 20.

continue to, cause problems for the unification of European Security Policy. Until Britain or France is willing to allow Poland to set their nuclear policy, full integration will be difficult.

This is not to say that the European Union has had no success in working together in the areas of security and defence. Since the inception of the European Security and Defence Policy with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the European Union has made great strides forward in member state cooperation. In the early 1990s, the European Union did not have the capabilities to do more than offer a diplomatic solution after the breakdown of the former Yugoslavia. Since then, they have improved their ability to cooperate enough that they are now acting in a peacekeeping role in Bosnia, the European Union's third mission under the auspices of the ECSDP. The other two military operations were FYROM (Operation CONCORDIA), in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and DRC (Operation ARTEMIS), in the Democratic Republic of Congo.²⁰

The EU has focused on peacekeeping and policing missions, as first steps in the ECSDP and areas of common ground between the member-states. For example, as well as the military operation – ALTHEA – there is currently a policing mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, (Operation PROXIMA) aimed at aiding and training police officers to support and uphold peace and the rule of law, and a political mission under the control of the EU Special Representative to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lord Paddy Ashdown.²¹

These missions, though signs of success on one level, are also indicative of the true nature of the current ESDP. Cooperation has been limited to certain types of military

²⁰ For more information on these missions see: The Council of the European Union, ESDP Operations at http://ue.eu.int/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=268&lang=en&mode=g (Council of the European Union, c. 2000-2004)

²¹ Ibid. And the EUSR's website: <http://www.eusrbih.org/>

operations, such as peacekeeping, human rights and rule of law missions. These areas of cooperation allow the member states of the EU to cooperate on missions that support their shared values and at the same time do not raise important questions of sovereignty or conflict with national defence policies.

Further, there is a great deal of precedent for multilateral cooperation between states in peacekeeping missions that the EU can draw on. NATO and the UN have brought together vastly different states to successfully pursue a common interest in peacekeeping. In fact, over eighty percent of the troops currently active in Bosnia under the auspices of the European Union Operation ALTHEA were also part of the NATO Stabilization Force there.²² They are a perfect example of a ‘velcro force’, switching badges as the name of the operation changes, but remaining the same in their duties, the command structure and every other aspect of the mission. Participation in the mission is entirely voluntary. States contribute as they see fit.

Though these missions they may be important first steps, they are a far cry from an integrated defence of Europe. Even with these advances in cooperation, the member states have not yet been able to cooperate in ‘hard’ military issues such as military policy or defence of the European Union against an outside threat, whether a conventional military one or otherwise.

This multilateral cooperation has not brought the nations that participate in it closer to a common military or security policy. It is simply one field in which it has been relatively easy for a wide range of states to find common ground. This is not the case in

²² Lord Paddy Ashdown (High Representative of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina), “Interview: Lord Ashdown: Bosnian High Representative,” in NATO Review (Winter 2004) Available at: http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/issue4/english/interview_a.html

other areas of military cooperation, nor will it be the case in moving towards a combined military policy. Cooperation in a peacekeeping mission does not translate into cooperation or cohesion in military strategy and offensive or defensive action. Nor does it bring the member states closer to integrating military strategy under the banner of the EU. At this point, each nation would still draw up its own defence plan and pursue its own strategies if attacked, regardless of what others in the European Union decided to do. Without significant change to the international system, this will not change in the foreseeable future.

Is security integration possible? The answer is a very qualified yes. In order for security integration to work, states must be willing to give up their sovereignty in areas they have historically held as central and synonymous with national sovereignty and the structure of the Westphalian nation-state. Thus far, states have been willing to cooperate on security and defence issues but as yet have not ceded any of their sovereign powers in these areas to the European Union. Though the European Union has made progress in security and defence cooperation and should be able to move forward with cooperative efforts among the member-states in certain areas such as peacekeeping, the step from cooperation to integration will be a difficult one for the member-states of the European Union. The easy work is over. Now states must make the decision to integrate further and begin to sacrifice sovereignty or remain at their current level of cooperation and work to streamline their efforts to cooperate without further integrating their policies.

The issue of integrating security and defence cuts to the heart of the debate on exactly what the European Union is. If the European Union is creating a new form of state, then a security and defence policy that pulls together all its constituent parts is a

necessary condition. If, on the other hand, the European Union is to become a quasi-international institution or something else altogether, then a shared security and defence policy may not be necessary. Member states would, in this case, be able to continue to cooperate in specific areas and in a form similar to an international organization. If this becomes the case it is likely that they would work to cooperate more closely, though never give up their control of security and defence policy at the national level in favour of security and defence integration within the EU.

The desire to further integrate in the field of security policy seems to lie not with the national governments of the member states but with the bureaucracy of the European Union. The bureaucratic impetus has not been enough to push the member states into closer integration. The issue linkages that have fuelled integration in many other areas of European Union policy have not worked in security and defence. Unless there is a radical change in the mindset of the member states, security integration is likely to hit an impasse in the near future. If member states are willing to go to the next level of integration, the impact on the European Union will be large and dramatic.

What are the indications for the immediate future of security and defence integration? The European Constitution sought to streamline security policy in the European Union and give the creation of a common European Security and Defence Policy a push by declaring that it would, not could as in earlier treaties, lead to the framing of a common defence.²³ With its failure to be ratified in both France and the Netherlands – two very different states representing both the larger and smaller powers in

²³ The European Union, “Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe,” Official Journal of the European Union 310(47) (Brussels: 16 December 2004), Part I, Article 41.2 Available at: http://www.unizar.es/euroconstitucion/Treaties/Treaty_Const.htm

Europe – the integration of European security and defence policy has been thrown into further uncertainty. Without the streamlining that the European Constitution offered, security integration is stuck in limbo, neither integrated nor separate enough not to concern all the members of the European Union. Further, the failure to ratify the Constitution may severely damage any forward momentum security integration has gained. It is with the immense challenges facing security integration and the uncertain environment of European integration in general that the European Union seeks to push forward with security integration. It is yet to be seen if they can overcome these obstacles.

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