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EU Foreign Relations after Lisbon: Tackling the Security-Development Nexus?

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Abstract

The 2009 Lisbon Treaty sought to enhance the coherence of EU foreign policies by improving the conditions for collective action in the EU-level foreign relations system, including its interaction with member states. Several innovations aimed to facilitate collective action: the establishment of the European External Action Service, bringing EU institutions and member state officials together, is the most important. Policy-level innovations, in turn, have included a string of ‘comprehensive’, ‘joined-up’, and ‘whole-of-government’ approaches that have explicitly focussed on linking the various instruments in the EU’s tool box. Have these reforms led to improved policy coherence? We focus on a key domain that illustrates Europe’s engagement with the changing global context: the nexus of security and development policy. Drawing on post-Lisbon Treaty policy documents and interviews with officials from the EU foreign relations bureaucracy, we argue that collective action at the EU-level has improved somewhat since 2010. This has been accompanied by some improvements in the coherence of security and development policy. Nevertheless, decision-making is still affected by bureaucratic actors catering to specific constituencies and, accordingly, the coherence of security and development policies remains challenged. The EU institutions lack the strategic direction that would be provided by clear prioritisation of global policy objectives, but this is not possible in a system that lacks clear hierarchy. Without combining strategic direction with effective changes in the foreign relations apparatus, reforms aimed at improving collective action can only make a marginal impact on policy coherence.

Keywords: *EU external relations; policy coherence; nexus management; security-development nexus; European External Action Service; European Commission*

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I. Introduction

The 2009 Lisbon Treaty introduced profound changes to EU foreign relations,² a governance system that not only involves a vast number of cross-cutting policies but also institutional actors from the EU as well as 28 member states. In light of this ‘multi-level actorness’, it is no surprise that the scope and conduct of EU foreign relations are constrained by challenges of collective action. In contrast to previous attempts to improve collective action between the various components of the foreign relations machinery, the Lisbon Treaty forged entirely new bodies with the objective of bridging the intergovernmental and supranational realms of EU foreign policymaking. By combining the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and External Relations Commissioner in the new post of High Representative/Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP), by establishing the European External Action Service (EEAS), by reforming the European Commission directorates general (DGs) responsible for development and neighbourhood policy, by enhancing the European Parliament’s oversight role, and by reforming the EU delegations, the Lisbon Treaty aimed at drawing the policymaking systems for foreign and security policy, development, neighbourhood and humanitarian response much closer together.

Concomitantly, the Lisbon Treaty changes reignited the debate on how to turn the EU into a more integrated and comprehensive actor on the global stage. Underlying the strategy of institutional reform at the EU level was the assumption that improving collective action among actors with differentiated but complementary mandates, and creating new actors with multiple policy responsibilities, should also improve policy coherence. The intended outcome was not just a better functioning bureaucratic system at the EU-level, but also improved ‘consistency between the different areas of EU external action’ (HR/VP 2013: 2). Many observers echoed Simon Duke’s expectation that the EU would eventually become ‘a more coherent actor on the global stage’ (Duke 2008: 1; Holland and Doidge 2012: 123, M.E. Smith 2013).

But does improving collective action lead to greater policy coherence? This article discusses this question with reference to the effects that the post-Lisbon treaty reforms have had on how the EU handles the security-development nexus, where policymaking requires cooperation among actors with differing mandates, constituencies and capabilities. Existing accounts in the growing body of literature on policy coherence in EU external relations have sketched out normative expectations for policy coherence (Egenhofer et al 2006, Sianes 2013). We attempt to take this a step further based on empirical evidence, as called for by researchers (Zwolski 2012: 1002) and the EU foreign affairs council itself (European Council 2012). Five years after the inception of the Lisbon Treaty, we can begin to assess whether the innovations have triggered tangible results.

Considerations of policy coherence can, nevertheless, never avoid normative considerations entirely. Policy coherence concerns the externalities that decisions in one policy area have for the intended outcomes of policy decisions in other policy areas (Nilsson et al 2012). ‘Coherence’ can, therefore, never be an abstract value existing in isolation from normative preferences for given outcomes. Policy coherence for development (PCD) is a long-running debate in the EU external relations context, both at the policy level in the several reports the European Commission has published, and in scholarly literature discussing the impacts of in

² Even the simple task of labelling what the EU does outside its borders is beset by coherence problems. We use the term ‘foreign relations’ to encompass ‘external relations’ (the activities of the European Commission outside the borders of the EU), ‘foreign policy’ (the CFSP), ‘security policy’ (the CSDP) and specific ‘external’ policy areas such as development, trade, neighbourhood and humanitarian affairs, which are managed by the responsible Commission directorates-general, often in cooperation with the EEAS and the EU delegations.

particular agriculture and trade policies on the outcomes of EU aid programmes (Carbone 2008, Young and Peterson 2013). From a collective action perspective, the defining feature of PCD is the identification of trade-offs and synergies across interacting policy domains that can contribute to achieving development objectives that cannot be realised solely with development aid (Picciotto 2005). This implies that policy coherence is best served when the actors responsible for policymaking in various domains engage in a process of designing and implementing comprehensive policy frameworks with strategic objectives in mind, and that both the objectives themselves and the processes by which they are pursued support rather than undermine each other.

We argue that improving collective action through institutional and bureaucratic reform cannot improve policy coherence in the absence of clear strategic direction. This is because strategic direction is necessary for enabling bureaucratic actors to prioritise, and thereby to organise themselves institutionally and allocate resources accordingly. However, strategic direction is in itself a collective action challenge in that it requires leadership and trade-offs among competing policy objectives. The Barroso II Commission, which oversaw the Lisbon Treaty's implementation between 2010 and 2014, was not able to provide strategic direction for reasons discussed below, but nevertheless prioritised collective action and laid important foundations for improving coherence. The Juncker Commission, which took office in late 2014, has taken further steps towards improved collective action and policy coherence, in particular through the EU strategic review process (EEAS 2015). To this end, the June 2015 European Council encouraged a 'process of strategic reflection with a view to preparing an EU global strategy on foreign and security policy in close cooperation with member states (European Council 2015: 6).

The rest of the article is organised as follows: the next section discusses the relationship between collective action and coherence at the level of actors and policies from a theoretical perspective. The third section details the main reforms aimed at improving collective action in EU foreign relations introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. The fourth section turns to the impact of these reforms on collective action and coherence with regard to EU policy at the security-development nexus. The final section concludes with some analytical and policy implications for EU foreign relations and policy coherence for development.

II. Collective action and policy coherence

Policy coherence in EU foreign relations has been widely debated by scholars asking what kind of international actor the EU is (Bretherton and Vogler 2006; Grimm, Gänzle and Makhani 2012). Some scholars have argued that the idea of 'normative power Europe' is in fact a smokescreen for old-fashioned *realpolitik* (Hyde-Price 2006). Others have noted that the EU's responses to complex regional and global processes are driven by a range of material and normative factors that require alternative analytical explanations or narratives (Youngs 2014). Ultimately, questions about whether the EU's foreign relations are primarily anchored in norm-based policies such as human rights and democracy promotion or whether its motives are primarily geo-strategic or economic are coherence debates (Kreutz 2015). In the EU, incoherence is magnified by the complexity of the multilevel system and the plethora of constituencies and diverging interests which are represented (Carbone 2008). Consequently,

policy incoherence is often the outcome of unresolved or partially-resolved collective action problems (Gebhardt 2011).³

Conceptually, the link between collective action and policy coherence is related to the public goods challenge of how the costs and benefits of policies are dispersed and concentrated. It is well known that when the benefits of a policy change are large and concentrated among a group of actors, the group has a strong incentive for acting collectively. On the other hand, when diffuse interests pull in different directions, incentives to act collectively are lower (Blouin 2007). The relationship between collective action and coherence is mutually reinforcing: when actors prefer different policy outcomes they are less likely to act collectively than when they prefer similar outcomes, and vice-versa. When the policy change in question is one that is expected to lead to more coherence between two or more policy areas, actors need to know that they will benefit from the change or they will have lower incentives to support it (Ostrom 2014).

Collective action problems become most apparent at the complex nexuses that link policy areas, where the effects of one policy affect the outcomes of another. For example, arms sales may benefit the defence industry and the local economy in a stable Western country, but are unlikely to benefit the constituencies of that same country's aid programme in a fragile developing country, namely the development policy community in the Western country and the recipient population in the fragile country (Hudson 2006). While improved coherence between defence industry policy and development policy may be possible through technical adjustments to the design and implementation of those respective policies, it is more likely that the core objectives of the two policies need to be identified and a decision taken as to which is more important. This requires a clear understanding of externalities and their impacts, and a hierarchy of goals in the context of the power relations between the two constituencies. Given that formal and informal rules governing policymaking and implementation are often shaped by interests that try to ensure that the rules serve to perpetuate them, changes require leadership and the legitimate regulatory authority to adjust the incentive structure for the actors concerned, or to force compliance.

Coherence is not the natural state of affairs in bureaucratic political systems, whether a national administration or the EU-level. Different policy areas tend to be handled by bureaucratic actors that represent constituencies with different preferences for policy choices and outcomes. When the interests of the constituencies behind different policy areas clash, the bureaucratic actors mandated to design and implement policy find it difficult to act collectively. Ideally, the complementarity of policy orientations among different bureaucratic actors should be promoted top-down by a political strategy that defines priorities and common goals, and assigns responsibilities for addressing them. However, bureaucracies are not usually neutral political actors that simply implement directives from above, but tend to seek autonomy, leading to competition with other actors (Page 2012). The potential for bureaucracies to hinder the formulation of coherent policy responses has been emphasized in studies of 'whole of government' approaches, especially in response to security crises where effective engagement requires a combination of assets from defence, foreign affairs, and development bureaucracies (McConnell and Drennan 2006). Coherent cross-governmental action in these contexts requires clear overarching political guidance for engagement and

³ Although the term 'coherence' is widely used, its meaning has remained ambiguous. It tends to be used interchangeably with other concepts such as 'coordination' or 'consistency'. Coordination is an important pillar of coherence. While 'consistency' refers to the character of an outcome, 'coherence' goes further and specifies the quality of a process, in which entities join in a synergetic procedural whole that 'structurally harmonises' actions and actors (Gebhardt 2011: 106).

incentives internal to bureaucracies for encouraging the promotion of goals and investing in coordination processes (OECD 2006).

The promotion of policy coherence is, therefore, as much a political as it is a technical endeavour. Horizontal policy objectives do not always co-exist harmoniously but are often contested. Indeed, ‘coherence’ itself only makes sense with reference to the objectives that policies should be coherent with. Conceptualising policy coherence requires an understanding of goal hierarchies, while working towards more coherent policy requires trade-offs between objectives as incoherencies become apparent. Political constituencies with interests in particular outcomes are unlikely to accept unfavourable trade-offs easily, even when there is clear evidence of the negative effects of incoherence for others. The impact of institutional reforms on policy coherence is, therefore, likely to be marginal unless they are the result of a political decision to prioritise certain outcomes, reinforced by an adequate system of incentives that can induce actors to behave in a certain way.

III. The Lisbon Treaty, collective action and coherence in EU foreign relations

The EU has long linked collective action and coherence through the so called ‘triple C’ of coherence, coordination and complementarity (Picciotto 2005). Coordination, particularly at the EU-level, should lead to improved coherence, whereas complementarity has the potential to undermine coherence. This is because of the diversity inherent in the subsidiarity principle, whereby policymaking at the EU-level does not inhibit the member states’ bilateral prerogatives and international agreements (Craig 2012). Underwritten by the institutional autonomy of development policy at the EU level, the compartmentalisation of EU foreign relations among bureaucratic actors with differentiated but at times overlapping responsibilities became entrenched, for mostly intra-European reasons. The EU has tried to overcome this by engaging in strategic discourses on objectives to be achieved outside the Community method. EU strategic programmes have linked internal and external policies, such as the Lisbon Strategy and its successor Europe 2020. In foreign relations, the European Security Strategy (2003) and the European Consensus on Development (2006) aimed to provide clear directions enforced by soft instruments, such as voluntary harmonization and adjustment involving the concerned institutions and member states.

Given that the EU has a long-standing formal commitment to PCD, development policy could serve as the primary reference for coherence in EU foreign relations (Egenhofer et al 2007). Ever since the 1957 Treaty of Rome, external trade was part of the EU’s common commercial policy and therefore the European Commission’s supranational competence. European Political Cooperation (EPC), which was formalised in the early 1970s and became part of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, Europeanised aspects of member states foreign and security policies, which nevertheless remained under intergovernmental modes of decision-making in the European Council. With the emergence of a *sui generis* relationship to former member state colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) in the 1970s, foreign relations were divided thematically and geographically between different Commission DGs and between the Commission itself and the Council Secretariat. Development policy was added to the 1992 Maastricht Treaty as a ‘shared competence’ between the Commission and member states, and PCD became part of the EU’s legal framework in article 178 of the Treaty establishing the European Community and in article 3 TEU, which required consistency between all of the EU’s policies and its external activities. Politically, the EU commitment to PCD has developed further from the 1990s and was expressed in strategic policy declarations including the 2006 European Consensus on Development. These commitments also bound

member states to the PCD agenda. In 2005 the EU established a PCD unit in DG Development, increased the use of inter-service consultations, and started work on a biennial PCD report (EC 2009).⁴ The PCD agenda was further strengthened at the level of strategic direction by the Lisbon Treaty.⁵

The Lisbon Treaty abolished the pillar structure that had hitherto put EU foreign relations into different ‘silos.’ The pillar system was regarded as a barrier to policy coherence, particularly in the realm of security policy where responses to multidimensional security threats demanded the availability of a range of instruments that could be mobilised in response (Deighton 2002). Symbolic of the end of the pillar system was the merging of the offices of CFSP High Representative with the External Relations commissioner into the HR/VP, and the establishment of the EEAS as an ‘interstitial organization’ hovering between classical diplomatic service and supranational Commission-bureaucracy (Bátora 2013). In organisational as well as institutional terms the ‘multi-hattedness’ of the HR/VP job description blurred the lines between supranational and intergovernmental competences as well as decision-making procedures. Following the Lisbon Treaty, the HR/VP conducts the CFSP, presides over the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) and – as first Vice-President of the Commission – coordinates external relations policies under Commission competence, including development, neighbourhood and trade (Erkelens and Blockmans 2012).

The design of the EEAS is a prime example of attempting coherence through bureaucratic innovation. Its staff members have been drawn from three different parent institutions, including Commission officials from the former RELEX DGs, staff from the Council secretariat as well as member state officials seconded to the EEAS. The establishment of the EEAS meant reforms to the Commission’s external relations bureaucracy as well, most notably the integration of the ACP country desks into the EEAS and the merger of the former DG Development’s policy units with the EuropeAid agency to form DG Development and Cooperation (DEVCO). The process brought new expertise, including both diplomatic and development project management competence, to the EU and enhanced connections between EU and member foreign and development policy bureaucracies.

The Lisbon Treaty also enhanced the decision-making and oversight role of the European Parliament in foreign relations. As Wisniewski (2013) has noted, the Parliament pushed hard for a greater foreign relations role and achieved more influence than the Lisbon Treaty intended. Although the Parliament has no role in the conclusion of agreements that relate exclusively to CFSP, the increasing practice of trilogues – involving the Commission, Council and member states – in legislative acts have made the Parliament an important interlocutor (Murdoch 2013). The Parliament also has increased authority over the CFSP and CSDP budgets, and holds debates on the two policies every six months. The Parliament receives regular visits and reports from the HR/VP. With regard to development policy, Article 209 TFEU requires that legislation necessary for development cooperation be adopted by both the Parliament and the Council, effectively placing both institutions on an equal footing. The Parliament exercised its powers in 2013 when the regulations governing the EU’s external financing instruments were negotiated in a strategic dialogue between the Parliament’s Development Committee and DEVCO. The Parliament does not control country-

⁴ Rather than assessing the EU’s performance on PCD, the reports have been used principally as a tool for communicating the agenda itself to member states and other partners, including the EU’s peers in the OECD-DAC.

⁵ Article 208 TFEU states that ‘The Union shall take account of the objectives of development cooperation in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries.’

level implementation, but can question the Commission if it considers that specific proposals promote causes other than development, such as European commercial or security interests.

The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty coincided with the global financial crisis and the accompanying Euro crisis, a significantly tougher political and fiscal context than the boom years during which the Treaty was drafted and negotiated. Although economic crisis had little impact on the substance of EU foreign policy, it affected both strategic direction and collective action. Much of Europe's attention was directed towards internal problems, in spite of momentous international events such as the 2011 Arab Spring and its aftermath. EU officials that took part in the post-Lisbon Treaty reforms lamented that the EEAS' roll-out process was hampered by budget constraints at the very moment when expectations on Europe to act were highest (interview with EEAS official, Brussels June 2014). A European Court of Auditors investigation found that the establishment of the EEAS was 'rushed and inadequately prepared, beset by too many constraints and vaguely defined tasks' (European Court of Auditors 2014: 4). The report's most important recommendations were to clarify the EEAS' tasks and objectives and strengthen its capacity for strategy and planning. Although the Court of Auditors criticised the EEAS itself for not being proactive enough in prioritising strategic thinking, the lack of strategic guidance from member states in the European Council meant that there was a narrow political space for prioritising the many tasks that the EU was expected to perform and the division of labour between EU-level and member state foreign relations activities.

The Juncker Commission, which took office in November 2014 with a new HR/VP, former Italian foreign minister Federica Mogherini, declared its intention to provide more strategic direction, partly by building on reforms made under Barroso and Ashton and partly by setting clearer priorities for EU foreign policy. In his mission letter to the incoming HR/VP, Commission President Juncker asked Mogherini, to 'chair a Commissioners' Group on External Action to develop a joint approach' (Juncker 2014: 3f) and to move her headquarters from the EEAS building to the Commission building Berlaymont. This action seemed merely symbolic, and yet was clearly taken to improve collective action by reinforcing Mogherini's VP function and thus linking the EEAS and the Commission more closely. The Juncker Commission's intentions to improve policy coherence were also clear in its consultation paper for a comprehensive review to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2015, which devoted significant attention to 'priorities' and 'focus' (EC/EEAS 2015).

IV. Coherence through collective action: managing the security-development nexus in EU foreign relations

The nexus between EU security and development policies has long been recognised as beset by coherence problems (Hout 2010). Some difficulties have been attributed to collective action: Grimm (2014) argued that the EU's complex institutional system impedes conceptual coherence with regard to fragile states policy. Different areas of the security-development nexus (particularly defence, civilian crisis response, humanitarian affairs and development) have been managed by actors with very different mandates and goals. Defence has remained a national concern despite efforts to increase EU-level cooperation as an alternative to NATO. Most EU member states still consider that defence assets should serve national interests (Biscop 2012). Development policy is a 'mixed competence' area where the Commission and member states have parallel, sometimes overlapping and sometimes even competing policy frameworks and country-level engagements. These are not always coherent with other aspects of foreign policy, both at EU and member state levels. While several EU member states have

integrated development aid into their foreign ministries, in two (Germany and the UK) development ministries have had to manage contested turf, particularly in crisis response where mandates overlap with foreign ministries and other agencies. Humanitarian aid is managed at the EU-level by the Commission and in most member states, with the notable exception of the UK, by foreign ministries. It has remained a special area in which the tension between international neutrality principles and strategic policy processes for dealing with crises has long been noted (Macrae and Leader 2001).

A number of strategies launched in the first decade of the 2000s established normative guidelines, although not strategic priorities, for improving coherence between EU security and development policy. The European Security Strategy (2003), the European Consensus on Development (2006) and the EU's Communication on fragile states (2007) all called for EU-level and member state actors to work more closely together in a 'whole of EU approach' to addressing global security and development challenges. In 2010 the EU decided to focus on five priority challenges for PCD, including strengthening the links and synergies between security and development in the context of a global peace building agenda. Subsequent efforts to improve collective action under the Lisbon Treaty have attempted to improve coherence at the nexus of security and development policies.

Collective action among actors

As described above, the Lisbon Treaty abolished the pillar system that had encouraged EU-level actors to work in silos and it reformed the bureaucracy with the aim of improving collective action. The post-Lisbon Treaty reforms have led to increased cooperation among different services at the EU-level. One area of innovation has been the negotiation of new financing instruments, such as the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) where there has been greater attention to political and security issues; the Pan-African facility is a specific example of this (interview with EEAS official, June 2014). The civilian-military dimension has also been a core area for increased cooperation among EU diplomats, military staff and development cooperation officials in the context of certain missions and under the broader umbrella of the CSDP. Operations such as the EUFOR intervention in the Central African Republic have demonstrated the need for consolidation in the planning and execution of CSDP missions. Coordination in many cases has consisted of organising meetings and providing comments on proposals from other services. The EUFOR operation has been coordinated through weekly phone conferences, and civil-military coordination has also taken place at the field level, with ECHO's field offices and OCHA playing an important role (interview with EEAS official, September 2014).

Outside of the formal structures of inter-service consultations, some flexible working methods are emerging especially related to crisis response. The Crisis Management and Planning Directorate within the EEAS has started to coordinate EU-level responses to crises in specific country contexts, such as the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Egypt, Nigeria, Syria and Libya. Although there is no template and all processes are shaped by the issue, the configuration of actors and the issues raised by the crisis, the EEAS calls the meetings and circulates the policy documents, often with 'place holders' for ECHO, DEVCO, NEAR or other services to include their competencies and perspectives. Officials in the responsible EEAS unit edit the draft and it goes to inter-service consultations, where any issues between the Commission, the EEAS and other services that have not been resolved at the working level are discussed. The final draft is then circulated among member states for comments and sign-off. The European Parliament has mostly been excluded from crisis response strategies,

which have been considered CFSP and therefore European Council competence despite their increasing overlaps with community policy areas.

Overcoming different institutional cultures and ways of thinking about problems has, nevertheless, not been easy. Most EEAS officials regard their organisation as a ministry of foreign affairs and defence, not foreign affairs and development. This helps with broadening perspectives by bringing foreign policy and defence perspectives into development discussions, but it does not imply more coherence. As one senior EEAS official noted, ‘the fact that we’re not the Commission creates tension: development versus foreign policy tension, but also institutional tension.’ Institutional tensions have their roots in the fact that the Commission remains responsible for most of the EU’s financial instruments, and the DGs with external budgets have looked to preserve their decision-making autonomy. As the EEAS official put it, ‘the Council PSC wants to tell DEVCO what to do, but they’re not the Commission. The PSC is comitology in the CFSP world, and for the IfS, but not for the EDF. This is a clash, we’re solving it slowly, but it will create tension’ (interview, Brussels June 2014). The EU’s legal framework has not evolved as fast as the policy and institutional frameworks. Another EEAS official noted that ‘more and more you don’t just have a CFSP process, but you also have the communitarian process. Competencies are clear, but we haven’t established a one-size-fits-all process. There is a gap between the Commission and the Council and we’re trying to bridge the gap with the EEAS’ (interview Brussels July 2015).

Efforts to improve collective action in civil protection have had an ambiguous impact on policy coherence, largely because of the strong desire of humanitarian aid agencies to protect the independence of their mandate. In the context of the reorganisation of the Commission, DG ECHO assumed responsibilities related to disaster preparedness inside and outside of the EU and therefore a coordination role with respect to aid for disaster relief. The increased emphasis on disaster resilience – which has a longer-term logic than humanitarian response – has implied closer work between DG DEVCO and DG ECHO, for example on the Horn of Africa and the Sahel where efforts to better combine development aid and humanitarian assistance have been prioritised. The position of ECHO within these discussions has been to try to avoid blurring the lines (especially military versus humanitarian) and to preserve the independence of humanitarian aid. The EEAS and ECHO have placed similar emphasis on crisis response, but ECHO officials have voiced a strong desire to keep humanitarian aid from becoming overly politicised, whereas EEAS officials see it as de facto and important political tool (interview with Commission official, Brussels June 2014).

EU-level cooperation has not always been seamless. A recent study of the EU’s engagement with the Central African Republic since the Lisbon Treaty found that decision-making has remained compartmentalised rather than comprehensive (Orbie and Del Biondo 2015). In addition to the legal aspects, collective action at the EU level has had to cope with ‘pillar thinking’ that has prevailed despite the Lisbon Treaty’s abolition of the EU’s pillar structure. The Commission’s approach has continued to be more technocratic, where officials talk about instruments, the external dimension of internal policies, programming and budgets. EEAS officials want a more political, quid pro quo approach (interviews with EEAS and Commission officials, Brussels, June 2014 and July 2015). While the bureaucracies and their officials have become more socialised in different kinds of thinking, there have been many instances of misunderstanding between different organisational cultures.

Policy coherence: the comprehensive approach

Since the Lisbon Treaty the EU has stepped up its efforts to improve the coherence of its security and development policies. In spite of differing competencies and organisational cultures, there is widespread agreement on the necessity of a comprehensive approach to the security-development nexus across the Commission, the EEAS and the European parliament. In 2009, The Commission recognised that the EU's security policymaking had side effects which impacted on developing countries (EC 2009). The European Council (2009) resolved to strengthen links and synergies between security and development in the context of a global peace building agenda, emphasizing strategic planning. The OECD-DAC praised the EU for its efforts to bring security policy into the PCD agenda, and called upon the EU to finish conceptual work on security, fragility and development "to ensure that European objectives for development co-operation, humanitarian assistance, and international security are mutually reinforcing" (2012: 15). The 2011 Agenda for Change called for the EU to ensure that its 'objectives in the fields of development policy, peace-building, conflict prevention and international security are mutually reinforcing', and that 'the EU's development, foreign and security policy initiatives should be linked so as to create a more coherent approach to peace, state-building, poverty reduction and the underlying causes of conflict' (European Commission 2011: 6–11).

Has the EU achieved this? The Barroso Commission's most important policy-level security-development nexus initiatives that followed the Agenda for Change were the shelved action plan on security, fragility and development and the comprehensive approach to crisis response communication, which was published in December 2013. Two regional strategies, for the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, were also launched. Under the Juncker Commission the EEAS has developed comprehensive crisis response strategies for Syria and Iraq and for Libya. The common theme of all of these documents is their call for different EU-level agencies to work more closely together, and to combine the EU's various policy tools in pursuit of specific sets of objectives.

Work on the draft action plan on fragility started in 2010 based on experiences in six pilot countries: Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Timor-Leste and Yemen. The plan was intended to clarify what role the EU level of Brussels institutions and EU delegations would have in relation to the EU's member states, particularly those with large presences in fragile countries. Discussion among member state ministries, the Commission and the EEAS stalled in late 2010 after senior officials in DEVCO and the EEAS were reportedly reluctant to commit to the text and the political will to push it through dried up (interviews with EEAS and Commission officials, Brussels January 2013). Its shelving went mostly unnoticed outside expert circles (Görtz and Sherriff 2012). The fact that the action plan draft was not publicly released did not prevent the responsible units in the EEAS, DEVCO and the EU delegations from incorporating its most relevant and sensible provisions into policy and operations. Indeed, several issues that arose in the context of the action plan discussions remained in focus, as attention turned to the 'Comprehensive Approach' to external conflict and crises.

The comprehensive approach formulation process faced significant collective action challenges. Some member states felt that they no stake in EU-level discussions and could not formulate a common position. There was further resistance in parts of the Commission, because at the beginning the comprehensive approach processes was conducted by the EEAS in parallel to the fragility action plan and it was unclear what the relationship between the two processes was (interviews with EEAS and Commission officials, Brussels June 2014). The Communication was drafted using a combination of Community and intergovernmental methods, which officials involved in the process considered hard to reconcile (interview with EEAS official, January 2013). The exercise of formulating the policy document nevertheless

brought people together from the military, security and development policymaking areas at the EU level who had hardly spoken in the past. Despite different backgrounds, one thing these officials had in common was crises response experience, and with this the realisation that the tools under their purview, whether military, civilian, technical or financial, were not on their own capable of resolving a crisis.

The Council Conclusions on the Comprehensive Approach stressed collective action: ‘The EU’s policies and priorities should follow from common strategic objectives and a clear common vision of what the EU collectively wants to achieve in its external relations or in a particular conflict or crisis situation’ (European Council 2014: 2). As one Commission official put it, ‘we now have a good policy document that instructs member states, the EEAS and the Commission to work together, although it is still difficult to get the military and development people to work together’ (interview, Brussels June 2014). The Communication was written to reflect joined-up thinking, but existing structures were not efficient enough to promote this. The European Parliament was largely sidelined.⁶ Perhaps because the process was driven by the EEAS, the outcome was heavily shaped by the dynamics of crisis response rather than development, with the outcome that the development perspective was – at least rhetorically – subsumed by security concerns (Faria 2014).

The comprehensive approach has been called into action under the Juncker Commission in the form of two crisis response strategies: the Syria-Iraq strategy and the Political Framework for a Crisis Approach (PFCA) for Libya, both formulated by the EEAS. The first PFCA, circulated in September 2014, was not tasked by the Council but emerged as an EEAS initiative. The process started with a meeting called by the EEAS with all interested services, including DG Home Affairs (for counter-terrorism and migration aspects), DEVCO, DG NEAR, and the EEAS mediation unit. There was also consultation with the sanctions and weapons proliferation colleagues in the EEAS and the EU Delegation to Libya (interview with EEAS official, July 2015). The European Parliament was not consulted as the PFCA is a restricted document to share with the member states. In April 2015 the EU Foreign Affairs Council asked HR/VP Mogherini to update the PFCA to focus on the way forward for Libya once a government of national unity was formed. The document called for things like stronger EU support for the UNSMIL mission and outlined the appropriate EU policy tools for engagement (EEAS 2015).

The EU’s strategy for the Syria-Iraq crisis and the Islamist D’aesh threat was formulated in response to the events of the summer of 2014 and published in March 2015. As with the PFCA for Libya, the EEAS was in the lead for preparing the strategy. The Commission’s DG NEAR had a major role as well, particularly in bringing knowledge about processes and projects. Informal consultation with member states took place in December 2014 and EEAS officials included their initial concerns and recommendations before the document template was circulated at the EU level (interview with EEAS official, Brussels June 2015). The Communication posed three objectives: first, to ‘counter the threat posed by Da’esh and other terrorist groups to regional and international stability’; second to ‘create the conditions for and inclusive political transition in Syria’ and regional stability, and third to alleviate ‘the human suffering caused by the ongoing violence and displacement’ (EC/HRVP 2015: 6). From a PCD perspective the strategy appeared heavily securitized with its emphasis on ‘the D’aesh threat.’ It nevertheless represented a comprehensive effort to bring all of the EU’s tools to bear on a crisis situation, and was accompanied by the launch of a new instrument, the €40 million Madad trust fund for addressing the refugee crisis in Syria’s neighbours.

⁶ The Parliament’s one success was in changing the name of the ‘Instrument for Stability’ to the ‘Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace.’

V. Conclusions

Since the Lisbon Treaty there have been major efforts to address the security-development nexus both in actor and policy terms at the EU-level. Development and CFSP capacities have been brought together in the EEAS creating an 'institutional' locus that has helped reduce compartmentalisation. Policy coherence certainly gained a higher profile after the Lisbon Treaty. Collective action has started to result in more coherence, based not just on institutional reforms but on a (slowly) emerging set of norms regarding the most appropriate and effective role for the EU. There has been convergence at the level of discourse and rhetoric, towards a strategic culture of comprehensiveness in foreign relations, which has been reflected in the increasing number of joint actions and policy statements. The EU has been able to produce a comprehensive approach communication focussing on crisis response, and several crisis response strategies that outline the EU's collective engagement in specific situations. Its failure to finalise the much more ambitious fragility action plan bringing together the entire peacekeeping, peacebuilding, statebuilding and development process indicates that policy coherence at the security-development nexus is still a work in progress.

Systemic incoherencies, such as unclear or overlapping mandates, have only been partly resolved. There are still differences between the EEAS and the Commission with regard to engagement with crisis countries. DG DEVCO has maintained its emphasis on development priorities and its implementation practices have generally not changed. The EEAS has tried to take a more overtly political approach. Policymakers in the EU institutions have shown awareness of these problems and their potential impact on policy coherence, and have taken informal steps to work around some of the inconsistencies in the system. A good example of this is conflict analysis, where the EU had long professed to the principle of joint analysis but fell short on delivering. This has changed as conflict analysis has been conducted more regularly as a joint exercise involving member states, meaning that information has been shared. This has contributed in particular to joint programming, where conflict analyses have shaped division of labour at the country level (interview with Commission official, Brussels June 2014).

Despite the institutional underpinnings of nexus management, the role of leadership is clearly important. As first HR/VP, Catherine Ashton not only had to build her service from scratch, she also had to deal with huge expectations. Her time in office was consequently perceived by many as failing to further collective action and policy coherence. She was side-lined by the Presidents of the Commission and the European Council on some issues, and her office was overwhelmed by the multitude of tasks it was assigned. As a result, Ashton focused on her role as an envoy and chief negotiator in key processes in EU foreign relations, such as the Iranian nuclear weapons talks, the Western Balkans peace process, and the Egyptian revolution and its aftermath. Her VP role as coordinator of other commissioners was mostly neglected. The Juncker Commission has taken steps to encourage the EU foreign policymaking system to function more collectively. HR/VP Mogherini has announced her intention to produce an overarching EU global strategy which is to set objectives for the various components of EU foreign relations.

The EU is often considered to have a comparative advantage because of the range of policy instruments at its disposal, but at the same time a disadvantage because the many components that give it its wide range also make it very difficult to coordinate. This is only partly true. The EU does have a wider range of assets than many international actors, especially its array

of civilian and financial policy tools and its global network of delegations. This certainly sets it apart from multilateral organisations and most small to middle-sized nation states, but not from large nations like the United States, China, or even more importantly its own member states France, the UK and Germany where security and development policies are also often contradictory.

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