

Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.)

Europe's Coherence Gap in External Crisis and Conflict Management

Political Rhetoric and Institutional Practices
in the EU and Its Member States



MIND THE GAP

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Introduction

Stefani Weiss

The end of the Cold War initially relaxed the security situation in Europe and enabled the European Union to press ahead with its effort to peacefully unify the continent. Almost everywhere (with the exception of the Balkans), hopes were flying high that a new era would dawn in which human rights and democracy could triumph and usher in a lasting era of peaceful, prosperous development. The EU, in particular, was confident that its soft power would enable it to export its own ‘peace-through-integration’ model. In fact, nothing less was expected than that the EU would soon be surrounded by a ring of well-governed democratic states that shared its values of rules-based, non-violent conflict resolution in internal and foreign affairs.

Today, we know that history took a different course. Geopolitics is back, and the growing superpower rivalry between the United States and China – not to mention Russia’s new hegemonic policy – do not bode well. In response to these developments, many democratic reform processes that the EU and its member states were engaging in slowed down, suffered setbacks or failed to materialise at all. Accordingly, intra- and inter-state crises and conflicts continue to haunt international affairs – and this worrying situation is only exacerbated by climate change. In fact, the 2019 annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees says that there was a record number of forcibly displaced persons worldwide in 2018, a staggering figure of over 70 million.

The impact of the deteriorating security environment is becoming increasingly tangible in Europe itself, and threatens both security and political stability within the EU. As with 9/11 in the US, the large-scale attacks by Islamist-motivated terrorists in Brussels, Paris, Lon-

don, Berlin and elsewhere have left European citizens feeling extremely vulnerable and insecure. Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and the hybrid warfare it is engaged in in eastern Ukraine have broken with the post-Cold War security order that the EU has trusted in and relied upon. Furthermore, hundreds of thousands of people who were seeking refuge in Europe following the still-ongoing war in Syria and the wider region have heightened Europeans' anxieties about cultural alienation and a loss of social status, leading to increased support for extremist parties.

Given these circumstances, the EU is being called upon – and perhaps even more so than ever before – to maintain its influence as a force for peace and to become the responsible global actor it expressly desires to be. Unfortunately, we repeatedly see that both the EU and its member states are failing to live up to their aspirations. In sad fact, more often than not, the EU's response to crisis is 'too little, too late'. For example, the Union is largely absent from Syria and the rest of the Middle East; France and Italy have torpedoed each other's and the EU's policies in Libya; and only France and Germany have been making overt efforts to persuade Russian President Vladimir Putin to end the war in the Donbas region. What's more, though they are all well-intended, EU crisis- and conflict-management missions in the Sahel region and other parts of Africa often lack the military clout needed to have a significant and/or lasting impact.

Arguably, the EU is the only instrument that its member states – and even the biggest among them – have at their disposal to make a difference on the international stage. Nevertheless, we see that the EU rarely speaks with one voice, and that national interests prevail over joint actions. This results from the fact that the EU's foreign and security policy has predominantly remained the domain of its member states. In principle, this could only be changed if member states were to transfer the exercise of their sovereign powers and allow for foreign and security policy to be (to use a good EU word) communitarised. Unfortunately, the chances that this will happen anytime soon are exceedingly slim.

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Loes Debuysere is a Researcher in the Foreign Policy Unit of the Centre for European Policy Research (CEPS), a Brussels-based thinktank. Her expertise and publications are situated at the intersections of conflict studies, democratisation theories and gender politics. She has worked extensively on the EU's integrated approach to external conflict and crisis, for example as a Researcher in a H2020 project on the EU's conflict sensitivity in external crisis response. Loes was previously a Schuman Trainee at the DG for External Policies of the European Parliament and holds a PhD in Conflict and Development Studies from the University of Ghent.

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Tomas Valasek is the Director of Carnegie Europe, where his research focuses on security and defence, transatlantic relations and Europe's Eastern Neighbourhood. Previously, Tomas served as the Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to NATO for nearly four years. Before that, he was President of the Central European Policy Institute in Bratislava (2012–2013), Director of Foreign Policy and Defence at the Centre for European Reform in London (2007–2012), and Founder and Director of the Brussels office of the World Security Institute (2002–2006). Between 2006 and 2007, he served as Acting Political Director and Head of the Security and Defence Policy Division of the Slovak Ministry of Defence. Tomas is the author of numerous articles in journals and newspapers, including the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Financial Times*. He has advised the Slovak ministers of defence and foreign affairs, the UK House of Lords, and the Group of Experts on the new NATO Strategic Concept

Slovenia | *Milan Jazbec*

Milan Jazbec has been the Slovene Ambassador to the Republic of North Macedonia since September 2016. He is also Professor of Diplomacy at the University of Ljubljana and teaches diplomacy at the Faculty of International and European Studies of Nova University in Nova Gorica. Milan served as the Slovene Ambassador to Turkey from 2010 to 2015, and was also accredited to Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. He has been Director of the Policy Planning and Research Department (2006–2010), the Department for European States (2015–2016), and the Consular Department (1996).

He was also State Secretary for Defence Policy at the Ministry of Defence (2000–2004) and the first Slovene Consul in Klagenfurt. He has published more than 50 books in nine languages, one-third of them on diplomacy. He is a Member of the Slovenian Association for International Relations, Editor of the academic journal *European Perspectives*, and a Member of the Slovene PEN since 2017. In 2019, Milan received the Racin Award for his achievements in literature and, in 2005, the Grand Decoration of Honour in Gold with Star for services to the Republic of Austria.

Spain | *Felix Arteaga*

Felix Arteaga currently serves as Senior Analyst for Security and Defence at the Elcano Royal Institute, a Spanish thinktank based in Madrid. Previously, he was Professor of EU Common Security and Defence Policy at the University of Navarra and the Instituto Universitario General Gutierrez Mellado of the Open University (UNED) and the Ministry of Defence. Before that, he was a Lecturer at the Universidad Carlos III of Madrid, the Universidad Autónoma and the Universidad Complutense, as well as Senior Analyst at the Instituto de Cuestiones Internacionales (INCI) and the Instituto Universitario de Seguridad Interior (UNISCI). Between 1999 and 2001, he directed the European Commission's Security Sector Reform Programme in Paraguay. A former Military Officer (retired), Felix holds degrees in Law (Open University) and Political Science (Complutense University of Madrid), a PhD in International Relations (Complutense University of Madrid), and a diploma in National Security (National Defence University, Washington, DC).

Sweden | *Lars Niklasson*

Lars Niklasson is a Senior Researcher at the Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies (SIEPS) as well as Deputy Professor of Political Science at Linköping University. Before joining SIEPS and Linköping University, Lars was a Policy Analyst for several Swedish ministries, agencies and consultancies. He is also a National Expert for the OECD. His research focuses on the global role of the European Union, including its relations to Africa and its role in the global implementation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. He teaches International Political Economy and Comparative Politics with a focus on global challenges and governance. Lars earned a PhD at Uppsala University in 1992, and has been a Visiting Researcher at a number of European and American universities, as well as at the University of Nairobi. His latest book is *Improving the Sustainable Development Goals: Strategies and the Governance Challenge* (Routledge 2019).

United Kingdom | *Laura Cleary*

Laura R Cleary is the Director of Oakwood International Security. Prior to establishing her own business in 2019, she was Head of the Centre for International Security and Resilience at Cranfield University. Laura joined Cranfield University in 2002 to head its Defence Diplomacy Education programme 'Managing Defence in the Wider Security Context'. As the programme's Academic Director, she taught 150 nationalities across four continents and acted as a Consultant and Adviser to MODs and parlia-

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