# THE EUROPEAN UNION SHOULD STICK TO ITS PEACE-ORIENTATION

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For a long time, the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was a policy area in which there were no particular events to report. This undoubtedly has to do with the fact that defense policy is considered a bastion of national sovereignty. Security and defense are a central *raison d'être* for the nation state. Any substantial transfer of competences to the EU, and in particular any subjection of a security-sensitive policy area to the principle of majority voting, would have to be regarded as a loss of national sovereignty and as a further step toward the European Union becoming a state. This is highly controversial within Europe, and even those states which have so far been decidedly pro-European have shown themselves to be extremely reticent if not directly hostile on this issue. Therefore, the CSDP so far has not only been thoroughly intergovernmental in nature, but also characterized by a high degree of inertia. Despite various initiatives, programs and instruments, the essential aspects of security and defense policy are still under national responsibility, especially armaments policy and the core military areas.

## Europeans have only a limited power to act in terms of security and defense policy

In recent years, however, the security situation has changed considerably, not only on the global stage but also in Europe's immediate neighborhood. In this new context, it has become impossible to ignore that the EU Member States are not very well placed to act in security matters, particularly not in respect of their crisis intervention capability. Inefficiency, a lack of material and personnel, serious gaps in key military and logistical capabilities, little response capacity and slow coordination processes make the Europeans weak players, both individually and together. This has been seen in many cases – for example the Libya intervention, the Crimea crisis, and the civil war in Syria. For quite some time now, the United States has been pressing its European NATO partners to make considerably larger contributions to the NATO shield over Europe, and to also play a greater role in global crisis management. Russia

## Abstract

*The changed security situation and the EU Global Strategy formulated in response to it have led to new initiatives in the particularly sovereignty-sensitive area of security and defense policy. Christof Mandry's essay attempts an assessment of these developments that looks beyond overhasty euphoria or fundamental rejection.*

*Mandry's analysis is based on a consideration of the EU as a community of values. This has firstly an internal impact: The commitment enshrined in the EU's constitution and specific policy areas to human dignity, freedom, democracy and the rule of law is a lesson learned from the experience of two world wars in Europe. This idea has been successfully realized in a peaceful, democratic and social model of European society. In terms of the EU's external relations, the values-orientation implies refraining from the direct exertion of power, and strengthening global peace and the rule of law.*

*Mandry then examines the question of whether "greater coordination and cooperation, with operational strengthening [of the CSDP] through [...] PESCO" makes external action by the EU more consistent in keeping with such purposes – or whether it might lead the Union to act contrary to its values and pursue interest-driven policies, including by military means, under a cloak of humanitarianism. In fact, the author argues, this possibility cannot be totally dismissed, even if the current state of affairs offers little to support such scenarios.*

*While Mandry does not in principle reject a CSDP that includes a military capacity to act, in his view this misses the mark for the EU as a "force for peace." Instead of succumbing to the temptation of wanting to "create" peace through (military) intervention, it is essential firstly to revitalize the common value basis and oppose resurgent nationalism, authoritarianism and illiberalism by providing a "new plausibility" for the idea of European integration. Secondly, especially in view of the current crisis of multilateralism, it is important to support the maintenance and development of a "to some degree functional international framework", which as far as possible allows conflicts to be resolved peacefully and with respect for human rights.*

is causing concern among the eastern states of Europe. The trouble spots of Africa and the Middle East have literally come knocking on Europe's door, in the form of migration movements. The United Kingdom's exit from the EU will mean a further loss of importance for European security and defense policy. It really does seem likely that the times are over when the peace dividend generated in Europe under the protection of NATO – i.e. mainly the United States – could be enjoyed here, undisturbed by all global conflicts.

## Readiness for a substantial EU military policy?

It now appears that the changed circumstances have finally given the EU Member States a wake-up call and a new willingness to act in CSDP matters. The EU Global Strategy was published in 2016. Employing the term "strategic autonomy", it holds out the prospect of the EU at least partially emancipating itself from the United States, and developing its own, much more effective intervention capabilities. These are to be used mainly for stabilization in the eastern and southern neighboring regions, as well as in the context of medium and long-term regional partnerships. The Lisbon Treaty provides for the possibility of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)

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in security and defense. While this has not been implemented, it has gradually taken on concrete form since 2017 – and is celebrated as the kiss that wakes a "sleeping beauty" (President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker). According to the declared intention, such "ambitious" cooperation between capable and willing defense partners could lead to an EU army. That is what some hope and others fear.

In fact there are still many unresolved questions. Their answers will determine how ambitious, how efficient and how effective in terms of action PESCO will really be for the EU's effective security and defense policy, or whether the giant snake that is the EU has not simply grown longer,

fatter and more unwieldy. At any rate, there are signs that efforts are being made to overcome the CSDP's slowness of action, and that the EU is tending to be more proactive in the fields of security, armaments and armed forces, and thus adopt a more perceptible intervention role. These new activities are essentially to be welcomed, in so far as they represent progress by the EU on the path of integration in a particularly sovereignty-sensitive area – a path which could lead to something like an integrated common EU defense policy. But beyond the euphoria at the fact that Europeanization seems to be continuing at all – which one has to feel happy about, in view of Brexit and widespread euro-skepticism or even euro-antagonism in the member states – there is no getting round the double question of how we should evaluate the direction that Europeanization has taken here.

## The European Union is a community of values

The EU is rightly seen as a European project that does not primarily derive its motivation and legitimacy from the interests of European states in securing a position of power for themselves in the global concert of great powers. On the contrary, European integration is the consequence of the bloody failure of such a view of politics. The EU should be understood from the ground up as a peace and reconciliation endeavor, by which Europeans learn a fundamental lesson from the bitter experiences of the 20th century. Never again war in Europe. Never again ruthless striving for power. Never again disregard for human dignity. For these reasons, the EU expressly characterized itself in the Lisbon Treaty as a community of values, and committed both its constitutional structure and its specific policy to a value basis. Article 2 of the Lisbon EU Treaty states: "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail." Article 21 of the EU Treaty commits the Union's action on the international scene to these values and other principles.

It was certainly with some justification that the EU received the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize. Since the end of World War II, Europeans have lived through a historically unparalleled period of peace, security and prosperity – an achievement which after 1990 was extended by and large to wide regions of the now undivided continent. Of course, peace in Europe is to an appreciable and perhaps decisive extent due to European integration having taken place under the protection of NATO and the United States, as the West's guarantor power. But this is true mainly if we primarily regard peace as being the absence of war. The great achievement of European integration, meanwhile, is to have used the protection against external threats to shape a peaceful, democratic and social model of European society internally. Peace can be shaped too – a political task that goes beyond border security externally and police work at home. European integration succeeded because it was possible to bring about reconciliation between former European enemies, through political trust-building, through economic and cultural cooperation. The EU represents a political model which realizes peace, the rule of law, democracy, human rights, freedom and justice as fundamental values and principles. These values are by their nature universal. In EU politics, they are realized in a specific way that reflects the particular historical experiences and traditions of the European nations. The legitimacy of the EU depends on these values. If they were to be given up, the EU would be a purely interests-oriented, special-purpose political organization, which its members would use or ignore according to their perceived national interests. The current EU crisis is therefore mainly an internal crisis. Member states which vote to turn away from democracy, the rule of law, human rights and peace-orientation are at the same time declaring themselves to be against European integration, and undermining the legitimacy of the EU. It is undeniable that the constituent basis for a united Europe is currently being called into question just as much from the inside as it is under threat from the outside.

## The EU – a foreign policy force for peace?

As a community of values, the EU is committed to its fundamental values in its external relations, too. It cannot regard itself as merely a power player for pooling European interests. Rather, it must pursue those interests within a value-based framework, in such a way that global peace and the rule of law are not harmed but ideally strengthened. What this means more precisely is discussed in the political debate using terms such as "force for peace," "soft power" or "ethical power." A basic idea behind the concept of normative power is that through its for-

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eign policy action, the EU changes internationally accepted ideas of what constitutes legitimate policy and legitimate institutions. In this way, without directly exerting power, it has a positive impact on international systems of governance. In 2016, the Global Strategy reaffirmed the EU's support for peace, democracy, human rights, prosperity and a rule-based world order. At a time when unilateralism and contempt for international law appear to be in vogue, this is an important and valuable normatively based conception of the EU's role. Without a doubt, one can rightly argue that in reality the EU has not sufficiently lived up to this commitment so far, and that there have been quite a number of occasions on which it has acted to the contrary in external affairs. The often-stated lack of coherence in external policy is surely due in part to the opposing interests of member states and the nature of the CFSP, which in the end comes down to a policy of the smallest common denominator.

The accusation that the peace-and-values orientation of EU foreign policy ultimately has a mainly rhetorical significance, and falls substantially short of expectations, is in our context of course only one side of the criticism. Supporters of the new impetus in the CSDP could argue that greater coordination and cooperation, with operational strengthening through instruments such as PESCO, give the EU exactly the tools to enable more consistent and more

efficient action on the international scene. But a different criticism raises doubts about precisely this point: namely, that the orientation to peace and the rule of law in the Union's foreign policy is due precisely to its inefficiency. Precisely because the CFSP and especially the CSDP have not been communitized to any great extent, and are largely the result of complicated compromises among member states, the EU is deemed to be an international player with a limited ability to act, tied to a peace- and rule-oriented policy style. In short, the EU is considered to be a power for peace because its very constitution makes it completely unable

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to pursue power politics. Hence, so the argument goes, the increased ability to act in security and defense policy should be viewed highly critically from a peace ethics perspective. Won't the EU increasingly switch over to interest-driven power politics, now that PESCO has given it the possibility to do so? Will an EU army encourage an abandonment of the peace-orientation? Is the CSDP in danger of going down the wrong path? This criticism also highlights a tension within the values of the Union. Not only does it pursue peace, it also supports the implementation of liberal values such as democracy, human rights, equality and freedom. Yet to enforce democracy and human rights may necessarily require the use of military force, and therefore stands in potential conflict with the peace-orientation.

### Will an EU army lead to an abandonment of the peace-orientation?

The argument should be taken extremely seriously. It evidently alludes to the problematic, in some cases disastrous, history of humanitarian intervention in the recent past. The reasons given for military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, for example, in both cases included protecting human rights, liberation from tyranny, and the establishment of democracy. Yet this intervention has produced con-

flicts that remain unsolved to this day. In the minds of many observers, there is now a general suspicion that human rights policy is ideologically driven. Indeed, there is no way in principle to prevent new scope for action under the CSDP from being used in ways that conflict with the values of the Union. First of all, this risk could materialize if PESCO became a blueprint for EU member states opposing European values: They could use the possibility to form clusters provided in the Lisbon Treaty for their own individual purposes. PESCO forms a legal and political framework for binding, "ambitious" cooperation between states that can muster the corresponding political will, next to military and other capacities, for a defined cooperation of this kind. The internal and external situation for the EU could produce a risky mix if governments politically skeptical of Europe and human rights banded together to counter a threat they perceived at the borders – whether migrants or another state – by means of joint operations. No scenario like this is in sight at the present time. The first projects set up under PESCO have tended to be less ambitious; they relate predominantly to the armaments industry or to logistics. It also seems that the possibilities for clustering by selected member states have not been used so far. This could change, admittedly. By providing in principle the framework for cooperation at different levels of intensity by individual member states, PESCO helps to make the previously sluggish CSDP more dynamic. On the other hand, this brings the danger of creating divisions among member states. If military operations by a subset of EU states were to set a precedent and also be questionable in respect of their compatibility with fundamental values of the Union, they could jeopardize not only the CFSP but also the cohesion of the EU as a whole.

### In peace policy, the goal cannot be separated from the means

Even if such scenarios do not come to pass, skepticism toward the vision of an EU army is appropriate on grounds of peace ethics. There is a suspicion that the expansion of security policy and in particular of military capacities to act will lead to a conflict with the EU's present peace-orientation even if the Union's liberal values are respected. Indeed, it is precisely the self-imposed commitment to values such as democracy, free trade and human rights

that puts the peace-orientation at risk, because it provides the legitimization for military intervention. Wouldn't increased efficiency and effectiveness in the CSDP field lead to an interest-driven policy that pursues expansion of the European sphere of influence, under the cloak of spreading human rights and democracy – just because it can? This objection should be taken seriously, too. It is based on a widespread misunderstanding. As a matter of fact, in peace and human rights policy, goals and means cannot be considered independently of one another. Peace cannot be brought about through violence, nor can human rights be established by unethical means. Instead, both tend to be delegitimized by the use of force. This can be seen most convincingly if peace and human rights are not regarded as specific events, like the end of a civil war, nor the collapse of a dictatorship as a result of military intervention. Peace and human rights should instead be seen as the organizing principles of a just and humane society and state. They require implementation in government and societal institutions – for example, in institutions of law and politics – and they are dependent on mentalities, attitudes and opinions among citizens for their existence and functioning. For this reason, they cannot simply be made the object of instrumental external actions. Peace, security and human rights cannot therefore be spread or supported by measures that do not themselves live up to these values, but which instead can only make these values appear a cynical pretext for implementing completely different interests.

There is no doubt that the relationship between peacekeeping and human rights policy is extraordinarily complex. It is probably unconvincing to rule out the use of military force in principle for all situations. Hence an EU CSDP is not in principle unreasonable or illegitimate. Yet the experiences of humanitarian military and non-military intervention over past decades show that it is incomparably easier to intervene militarily and stop acute violence and human rights violations, than it is to restore a functioning, stable and democratic social order once it has been seriously damaged. Moreover, the following question has not been satisfactorily answered at international level so far: How can international conflicts, regional destabilization and gaping development disparities be prevented or contained in time, so that they do not develop into supra-regional and global security risks – while simultaneously respecting fundamental human rights and values? How should the international order function to ensure that security risks become

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less likely, or that their respective importance diminishes? And what role could the European CSDP play in this? Moreover: Would it even be able to play this role, given how the EU is internally constituted?

### The EU should give attention to its internal condition

Delight at progress in the CSDP arena should not lead us to overlook the fact that the internal state of the Union is worrying at the moment. Views on the purpose of European integration and what its essential foundations consist in are widely divergent. This is likely to be reflected in the CSDP also, where it has to be seen which common situation assessments and action decisions the European partners are willing to agree on. If a hard Brexit takes place in 2019, if anti-European parties win a majority in the European elections, if even more Member States adopt skeptical or hostile positions toward the EU, the unity of the Union could be seriously at risk. Even if such a gloomy scenario does not arise, a consistent CSDP could still be a real challenge. The actual task for the EU – ultimately the task of Europeans – is to overcome the fundamental crisis of the EU. The Union's crisis is not only an institutional one, it is also a crisis of democracy and the rule of law in Europe. If it is not overcome, Europe itself, as it is feared, might become a trouble factor. The resurgence of nationalism, which was thought to have disappeared, and policies driven by ethnocentric interests, do not make the European states predictable actors. The value of the CSDP will also have to be measured by whether and to what extent it helps to prevent foreign policy irrationalism. Democracy and European integration have spread hand-in-hand across Europe since 1948. Today they should be defended together. The EU and the political vision behind European integration require a

new plausibility. This means that answers will have to be found to the security needs and interests of European citizens. They see their security threatened not only by Russian great power politics and unregulated migration, but also by the pressure of economic, social and cultural transformation they are exposed to in their societies. There are good reasons to assume that the challenges of social transformation can ultimately be better managed within the European framework than by every nation going it alone. However, this point of view has to become plausible in a new way.

## Current tasks for the EU as a force for peace

The changed foreign policy security situation, to which the EU is responding with its Global Strategy, has many aspects and causes. Some of these are rooted in genuine conflicts of interest between great powers, others in regional problems, others again are ideological in nature. The EU would no doubt be overstretched if it wanted to tackle the causes of these conflicts. And in any case its present role conception as a force for peace has set a completely different emphasis. Since there will always be international conflicts, it is important to develop and strengthen a resilient and to some degree functional international framework, within which these conflicts can be resolved in a way that is as constructive, consistent with human rights, and little harmful as possible. The United Nations' system of governance, which for a long time shaped the post-war period, evidently has its best days behind it. It requires fundamental reform, for example to do away with the veto powers' mutual blocking capabilities. Something like a global rule of law is beginning to emerge in various fields, but this still requires considerable development. It will depend on convincing international actors once more of the purpose of multilateralism, and moving them to participate in reform of the international order. It is not just a "task of the century", requiring determined and sustained effort, but also one of the key forms that peace work assumes today, and is appropriate for a peace power. The challenge is all the more urgent since hardly any important powers are currently addressing it: The United States is currently counting on a policy of unilateral pressure, Russia and China have little interest in arrangements that do not directly serve their interests – which really leaves only Europe as a player important enough to take on responsibility for the future of the international order. This sounds utopian, given the current state of the Union. Ultimately, it would also require intra-European differences to be overcome, such as those between members or withdrawal candidates (France and the UK) who currently have a permanent seat on the UN Security Council as victorious powers in the Second World War, and those without such a seat. Accordingly, attitudes to reform of the UN or the international order in general are likely to differ a great deal, and go in different directions. But in any case the EU will have no choice but to mobilize the trust between Member States gained over the course of its history to date, for its current and future foreign policy. After all, the CSDP, which is currently taking on a new form, also works on the basis of mutual trust – or it will remain ineffective. It is to be hoped for the Union that Member States' overall commitment to a common policy gains new impetus. This will not be possible without revitalizing the value basis. But by doing this, the EU would put the conditions in place, among its members and in its own policy-making, for a more consistent attitude towards the fundamental values of peace, freedom, human rights and democracy – both internally and externally. That certainly would be a truly substantial contribution by the EU to global peace.

## The Author

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