

European Movement International

The European Union's role in providing peace and security: challenges for the new EU team

The European Union's objective of promoting peace and security

The core of the European project is to ensure peace and security on the European continent. The founding idea of the European Union, a united Europe, should be understood against the background of a war-ridden European continent. Overcoming the division of the continent and preventing future war lay at the basis of the plans for European intergovernmental and supranational cooperation, as expressed in the famous 1950 Schuman declaration. The founding values of the European Union still form the core of European policy, specified in the treaties as: respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. The overall aim of the European Union is defined in accordance: to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples.

These aims and values are expressed both in the EU's internal policy of deepening the ties between the Member States, and in its external policy regarding enlargement and Europe's neighbourhood. Deepening the ties between the European Member States has resulted in an ever-closer Union. Enlargement, in turn, has steadily increased the area of peace, stability, democracy and prosperity that the European Union now constitutes. As Olli Rehn put it in 2009, when he was Commissioner for Enlargement: "We can pursue deepening and widening in parallel. This has been and still remains the best recipe to build a strong and united Europe."¹ Indeed, enlargement has often been called the most successful foreign policy of the European Union, due to its transformative power and effect on democratisation, peace and stability in the accession countries.²

The success of the European Union in consolidating peace on the European continent was noted with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012. The Norwegian Nobel Committee based its decision on the stabilising role of the European Union, transforming the European continent from a continent of war into a continent of peace, and its "successful struggle for peace and reconciliation and for democracy and human rights."³ Awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU in a time of economic and monetary crisis and social unrest could also invite critique and ridicule. However, according to the Committee chairman, the prize served as a warning regards how much the European Union Member States stand to lose if the European Union were allowed to fall apart.⁴ Many European politicians took a similar stance, commemorating the achievements of the European Union. Herman van Rompuy and José Manuel Barroso released a joint statement, saying that "This Nobel Peace Prize shows that in these difficult times the European Union remains an inspiration for leaders and citizens all over the world."⁵ Whilst the EU is clearly considered a success in bringing peace and security to the European continent, the success of the EU in promoting peace and security outside its member-, candidate- and potential candidate states is much more limited, as will be seen below.

¹ Speech Olli Rehn 28-04-2009 Berlin, European Commission: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-09-205_en.htm

² Frank Schimmelfennig and Hanno Scholtz, EU Democracy Promotion in the European Neighborhood: Conditionality, Economic Development, and Linkage, 2007 <http://aei.pitt.edu/8021/1/schimmelfennig-f-12b.pdf>

³ EU Nobel Prize awarded to the European Union: one year on, European Union http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/eu-nobel/index_en.htm

⁴ Wall Street Journal, Nobel Gives Peace Prize to Crisis-Ridden EU, 12 October 2012 <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10000872396390444799904578051960191363312>

⁵ Joint Statement by Herman van Rompuy and José Manuel Barroso on the award of the 2012 Nobel Peace prize to the European Union, 12 October 2012 http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/132807.pdf

Crises in Europe's neighbourhood

There is no doubt that the European Union is an increasingly important global actor. It is the largest economy in the world, the largest trading block as well as the biggest aid donor.⁶ But as a global actor in the realm of peace and security, the EU still fails to exert its influence. This is visible in its inability to speak with one voice on international crises, to agree on joint interventions in conflict zones, to set clearly defined European strategic priorities, and to use the treaty provisions that allow for closer cooperation in the field of security and defence. But it is most visible in the immediate neighbourhood of the European Union. To strengthen the stability, security and prosperity of its immediate eastern and southern neighbourhood, the EU has developed a European Neighbourhood Policy. Yet without the possibility (or 'carrot') of membership, the promotion of democratisation, peace and stability is much less effective.⁷

And it is precisely the neighbourhood of the European Union that is now full of both manifest and latent crises, and that poses the biggest threat to the peace and security of the whole European continent. In the southern neighbourhood, the Arab Spring brought a wave of demonstrations and revolutions. Though the revolutions brought to some the opportunities of democracy and freedom, it also brought civil war, and the region is still characterised by unrest and instability. The violent rise of the Islamic State (IS), active in Iraq and Syria, brings a new dimension to the instability of Europe's southern neighbourhood and presents new challenges and dangers for the European Union. One of these new dangers is the 'returnee jihadist'.⁸ European citizens join the Islamic State to fight, and there is a genuine risk that they will be sent back home to prepare and commit terrorist acts. Furthermore, the ethnic and religious violence by IS will result in a new influx of refugees and need for humanitarian assistance. But most important is the rise of a new actor in international politics that does neither recognise nor fit into existing international relations frameworks.⁹ Taking action to stabilise the southern neighbourhood, where the Israel-Palestine conflict is also flaring, is, however, not the sole responsibility of the European Union. In its Council Conclusions of 30 August 2014, the need for cooperation with the US and other partners in developing a coherent approach for the region is underlined.¹⁰ The IS poses a problem that not only the EU, but also the US does not have an immediate answer to, and a new internationally coordinated counterterrorism strategy will have to be developed to deal with this new threat.

The situation in Europe's eastern neighbourhood, however, seems to have an even more direct impact on the security and stability of the European continent, and demands more direct involvement of the European Union. The crisis in Ukraine started with protests against the refusal of president Yanukovich to sign an Association Agreement with the EU. The persistent and large scale protests resulted in the establishment of a new government. The subsequent annexation of Crimea by Russia, which did not recognise the new government, and the continued fighting of pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine slowly turned the crisis into a civil war. The alleged involvement of Russian forces fighting with the separatists might have even more extensive consequences. The Ukraine crisis touches directly upon the borders of the European Union, having an immediate effect on the sense of security of the Baltic States and Poland, who are reinforcing their border protections. Russia's food imports ban has a direct effect on European farmers, and the crisis could have more far-reaching effects on the European and global economies and financial markets as a result of European sanctions.¹¹ Furthermore, if Russia holds back energy

⁶ EU position in world trade, European Commission <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/eu-position-in-world-trade/> & Development and Cooperation, European Union http://europa.eu/pol/dev/index_en.htm

⁷ Kristi Raik, The International Spectator, Promoting Democracy in the Eastern Neighbourhood: The Limits and Potential of the ENP, 03-2006 http://www.eu-consent.net/library/deliverables/d82_raik.pdf

⁸ Marc Pierini, Carnegie Europe, Do Not Belittle the Islamic State, 10 July 2014 <http://carnegieeurope.eu/publications/?fa=56120>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Conclusions Special Meeting of the European Council, 30 August 2014 http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/144538.pdf

¹¹ Simon Kennedy, Bloomberg, Russia-Ukraine Crisis Threatens Europe Economy: Cutting Research, 21 March 2014 <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-03-21/russia-ukraine-crisis-threatens-europe-economy-cutting-research.html>

exports, or threatens to do so, Europe's energy security will be directly impacted.¹² The Ukraine crisis poses a serious risk of open and large-scale conflict, the first in many years that will have such direct implications for the European Union.

Despite this, the Ukraine crisis is not the first crisis in Europe's eastern neighbourhood, and certainly not the first that fuels tensions between the European Union and Russia. There are a number of so-called 'frozen conflicts' in Europe's eastern neighbourhood that all have the potential to turn into open conflict and destabilise the region, and/or EU – Russia relations, even further. Three of these 'frozen conflicts' can be found in the South Caucasus: South-Ossetia and Abkhazia as a result of the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia and subsequent mediation by the EU, and Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of the Armenian - Azerbaijani war and the 1994 ceasefire. The unilaterally independent declared Transnistria is a fourth post-Soviet 'frozen conflict' zone in Europe's eastern neighbourhood that can count on Russian involvement.

The freezing of conflicts results in a situation where a conflict is neither resolved, nor openly violent. The freezing of conflicts has been called "one of Europe's most important political innovations"¹³, but at the same time it indicates a failure to permanently resolve a conflict, and brings a risk to the security and stability of the European continent. The term 'frozen conflict' is misleading and provides a false sense of security, as a frozen conflict can last years without open violence, but easily will turn into violent conflict once triggered. The European Union recognises this and its 2003 European Security Strategy specifically refers to frozen conflicts on the borders of the EU, which "threaten regional stability ... destroy human lives and social and physical infrastructures; they threaten minorities, fundamental freedoms and human rights."¹⁴ Furthermore, they can lead to terrorism, state failure, and facilitate organised crime.¹⁵ In the case of Kosovo, the European Union has succeeded in normalising relations, substantially reducing the likelihood of open violence. But Crimea, recently annexed by Russia, will most likely "join South Ossetia, Abkhazia and others in the category of territories whose proclaimed status we do not recognize but also do not actively attempt to alter."¹⁶

An issue that plays a role in almost all of the conflicts in Europe's eastern neighbourhood is energy. The EU is aware of the role energy plays in the current crises and the necessity of addressing energy conflicts to ensure peace and security.¹⁷ Diversification and integration of European energy markets, in light of its vulnerability and dependency on Russian gas, is high on the EU's political agenda and one of the priorities of the new European Commission's president Jean-Claude Juncker.¹⁸ At the same time, cooperation in energy matters is in the interest of all and will have a positive effect on the current conflicts and tensions. Continuing to purchase Russian gas in addition to a diversification of Europe's energy market will for example put the EU in a stronger position vis-à-vis Russia, and have an effect on the stability of the continent.¹⁹

¹² <http://isiseurope.wordpress.com/2014/07/03/policy-briefs-european-energy-security-in-light-of-the-ukraine-crisis/>

¹³ Mient Jan Faber "Cold Wars and Frozen Conflicts: The European Experience", in: Kaldor, Mary (ed.). *Global Insecurity*. London, Wellington House, 2000, 54. http://books.google.be/books?id=LcDQtZfIX_MC&pg=PA53&dq=Frozen+conflicts+europe&hl=pl&sa=X&ei=0fP9U_2KC5Tbas_egRg&ved=0CCMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Frozen%20conflicts%20europe&f=false

¹⁴ European Union, A Secure Europe in a Better World, European Security Strategy, 12 December 2003 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Sven Biscop, Egmont Institute, Game of Zones: The Quest for Influence in Europe's Neighbourhood, June 2014 <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/ep67.pdf>

¹⁷ Council of the European Union, Press Release 3332nd Council Meeting Foreign Affairs, 15 August 2014 http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/144316.pdf; European Commission, Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2013: Regional Report Eastern Partnership, 27 March 2014, http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/2014/regional/eastern_partnership_report.pdf; European Union, A Secure Europe in a Better World, European Security Strategy, 12 December 2003 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>

¹⁸ EPP, Jean-Claude Juncker, My Priorities, 2014 <http://juncker.epp.eu/my-priorities>

¹⁹ Sven Biscop, Egmont Institute, Game of Zones: The Quest for Influence in Europe's Neighbourhood, June 2014 <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/ep67.pdf>

The European Union to take up its role as security provider

In light of the European Union's objective to promote peace and security, both on the European continent and beyond, the current situation in Europe's neighbourhood urges the EU to take up its role as the principal security provider on the European continent. The US 'pivot' to Asia announced in 2012, involving a rebalance of the US foreign policy and strategic interests towards Asia at the cost of its involvement on the European continent, already forced the European Union to reconsider its role in securing peace and stability in Europe. But the current crises in its neighbourhood reveal the limited capacity of the European Union for diplomacy and crisis management.²⁰ The policy framework exists, but both the Neighbourhood Policy and Common Security and Defence Policy lack the instruments and the political support to form an adequate response to the ongoing crises, as is again and again concluded in studies and reports.²¹ The main determinants of the EU's role in peace and security are identified as its capacity to undertake missions, its willingness to devote resources to security purposes, and its acceptance of the EU as a leading actor in peace and security.²² The EU will have to make an effort in all of these areas – to increase its capacity, its willingness to act, and accept its role as a security provider – in order to be able to stabilise its neighbourhood.

Such conclusions are not new, and correspond to the suggestions and recommendations laid out in various EU documents, including the 2003 European Security Strategy, its 2008 update, the 2010 Headline Goal and the 2014 Joint Communication on the Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy. But the EU and its Member States have not lived up to what was agreed in these documents, and the majority of its recommendations have not been implemented. There are several calls for the development of a new European Security Strategy²³ – not to write down the next enumeration of what the EU should do, but to streamline the existing strategies and policies, to set top priorities and to facilitate implementation of policy recommendations. Or, as is concluded by the Egmont Institute: "The key, as ever, is strategy: setting clear objectives and choosing instruments and allocating means in function of those priorities."²⁴

The new EU team – European Council president Donald Tusk, High Representative Federica Mogherini, the new European Commission headed by Jean-Claude Juncker – must rapidly develop a response to the security challenges in Europe's neighbourhood. They have the opportunity to take a new approach towards the crises that are destabilising the European continent and are having a direct effect on the peace and security of Europe and its immediate neighbours.

²⁰ Stefan Lehne, Carnegie Europe, Time to Reset the European Neighbourhood Policy, February 2014 http://carnegieendowment.org/files/time_reset_enp.pdf

²¹ See, amongst others: Stefan Lehne, Carnegie Europe, A Window of Opportunity to Upgrade EU Foreign Policy, May 2014 http://carnegieendowment.org/files/external_relations_paper.pdf; Stefan Lehne, Carnegie Europe, Time to Reset the European Neighbourhood Policy, February 2014 http://carnegieendowment.org/files/time_reset_enp.pdf; Sven Biscop, Egmont Institute, Game of Zones: The Quest for Influence in Europe's Neighbourhood, June 2014 <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/ep67.pdf>; European Parliament, The implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy, 2013 [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/workshop/join/2013/433712/EXPO-SEDE_AT\(2013\)433712_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/workshop/join/2013/433712/EXPO-SEDE_AT(2013)433712_EN.pdf); Jan Techau, Notre Europe, Will Europeans Ever Agree on the Use of Military Force?, 13 February 2013 <http://www.notre-europe.eu/media/usemilitaryforce-techau-ne-jdi-feb13.pdf?pdf=ok>; European Commission, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Neighbourhood at the Crossroads: Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2013, 27 March 2014 http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/2014/joint_communication_en.pdf

²² EU-GRAPS, The EU as Global-Regional Actor in Security and Peace, 2012 <http://i.unu.edu/media/unu.edu/publication/27154/Final-Integrative-Report3.pdf>

²³ See, amongst others: Margriet Drent and Lennart Landman, Clingendael, Why Europe Needs a New Security Strategy, 9 July 2012 http://www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/20120706_research_policybrief9_llandman_mdrent.pdf; Sven Biscop, International Affairs, Peace without money, war without Americans: challenges for Europe's strategy 10 September 2013 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-2346.12063/abstract>

²⁴ Sven Biscop, Egmont Institute, Game of Zones: The Quest for Influence in Europe's Neighbourhood, June 2014 <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/ep67.pdf>