European Border Conflicts: Failures and Inabilities of EU Foreign and Security Policy

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European Foreign and Security Policy

The EU represents one in a series of efforts to integrate Europe since World War II, and to achieve, *inter alia*, diplomatic stability and military security. In 1957 the Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community (EEC),[1] that was renamed European Communities (EC) by the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. A series of further international treaties and treaty revisions based largely on this model led eventually to the creation of the EU.

In the early 1970s the European Political Cooperation (EPC; renamed the Common Foreign and Security Policy by the Maastricht Treaty), consisting of regular meetings of the foreign ministers of each country, was established to coordinate foreign policy.

As part of the second pillar of the Maastricht Treaty, members undertook to define and implement common foreign and security policies. Members agreed that, where possible, they would adopt common defense policies, which would be implemented through the Western European Union (WEU), a security organization that included many EU members.[2]

The WEU, that run from 1955 until 2011, was made up of 10 countries, and operated as a forum for the coordination of matters of European security and defense.[2] The WEU became the primary defense institution of the EU in the 1990s, though it gave up that role in 2001.[2] The assembly of the WEU consisted of the delegates of the member countries to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).[2] The Council of Europe (CoE) is an older and wider circle of nations than the 28-member European Union — it includes, for example, Russia and Turkey among its member states.[3]

The WEU contributed to the creation of the NATO and worked in cooperation with the Atlantic Alliance. NATO and the EU currently have 22 member countries in common.[2] Relations between NATO and the EU were institutionalized in 2001, building on steps taken during the 1990s to promote greater European responsibility in defense matters. [4] The 2002 NATO-EU Declaration on a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) set out the political principles underlying the relationship and reaffirmed EU assured access to NATO's planning capabilities for the EU's own military operations.[4]

Finally, in 2007 the Lisbon Treaty consolidated foreign policy representation for the EU. Since the Lisbon Treaty entered into force in 2009, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is the chief coordinator and representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and *ex officio* a Vice-President of the European Commission.[5]

Presenting the European Security Strategy adopted in December 2003, then Secretary-General of the Council of the EU/High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, stated: "Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free. The violence of the first half of the 20th Century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history".[6] No statement was more wrong.[7,8]

All EU member states are at the same time participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the world's largest security-oriented intergovernmental organization, established in 1973 as the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), and renamed OSCE in 1995.[9] Since the beginning, the EC, and, since 1993, the EU have played a vital role in the work of the OSCE. Over the years, the scope of co-operation between the OSCE and the EU has both broadened and deepened, following development of the CFSP, and the launch of the first EU crisis management operations under the European Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the EU course of action in the fields of defense and crisis management, and a main component of the CFSP.[10]

Through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), that applies to Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine, the EU aims to strengthen the prosperity, stability and security of all.[11] The ENP includes ten Mediterranean countries, six post-Soviet states, and Western Balkan countries.[11]

European Border Conflicts Timeline

Regional conflicts that occurred at the doors of the EU since the end of World War II:

- Israeli–Palestinian conflict (1948-present)
- Cyprus conflict (1974-present)
- Post-Soviet conflicts — Georgia, Armenia, and Russia (1990-present)
- Post-Soviet 'Frozen Conflicts' — Transnistria (Moldova), Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), Abkhazia (Georgia), South Ossethia (Georgia) (1991-present)
- Yugoslav Wars — Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo (1991-2001)
- Chechen Wars (1994-1996; 1999-2000)
- Kosovo War (1998-1999)
- NATO bombing of Yugoslavia (1999)
- Turkey's authoritarian turn (2002-present)
- War in Ingushetia (2007-2015)
- Independence of Kosovo (2008)
- Russian-Georgian War (2008)
- Insurgency in the North Caucasus (2009-2017)
- Arab Springs (2010-2012)
- Libyan Civil War (2011-present)
- Syrian Civil War (2011-present)
- Egyptian coup d'état (2013)
- Donbass Conflict in East Ukraine (2014-present)
- Annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation (2014)

The EU: a Global or a Vain and Weak-Willed Actor?

Alongside non-international and international conflicts, a third category of armed conflict is emerging: hybrid, asymmetric, and transnational conflicts which involve state and non-state actors such as insurgents and terrorists.[12] Unconventional conflicts are among the trend topics of defense and security, and they pose a threat to the stability of international order.[12] Hybrid conflicts, involving state and non-state actors, characterize the post Cold War era.[12] These conflicts challenge the ability of international organizations to address them, and so far the EU was unable to settle them.

After the breakup of Yugoslavia (1990-1992) NATO started a military campaign in Kosovo and bombed Yugoslavia (1999). The independence of Kosovo is not recognized by all EU members: to date, 23 of the 28 member states recognize the authority of Pristina.[13] Spain, Slovakia, Cyprus, Romania, and Greece do not recognize Kosovo's independence, and, as a result, the EU itself refers only to 'Kosovo'.[13]

In 1992 The OSCE established the Minsk Group to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.[13] Since 2014, the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine (Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and the OSCE) is seeking he peaceful settlement of the situation in eastern Ukraine (i.e.,the Donbass).[13]

Conclusions

Since it was created by the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, the EU faces difficulties in addressing and settling crisis. So far, the EU has proved unable to solve alone the conflicts that arose at its doors, with long time running Israeli–Palestinian and Cyprus issue still unfixed.

Other international organizations – i.e., NATO and OSCE – intervened to resolve some of these conflicts. Despite the overlap of some of these organizations, that share theirs members with the EU, the Union is not able to achieve an ownership in the field of peace, stability and security at its borders, and and his claim to be a global actor proves weak-willed.

The reasons for this incapacity should be investigated: lack of a real and exclusive autonomy foreign policy making, lack of a European army, subjection to US-led NATO, or national interest of EU member states?

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