From the Rapid Reaction Mechanism to the Instrument for Stability: The Empowerment of the European Commission in Crisis Response and Conflict Prevention

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) plays an increasing role in the field of international security with various instruments at its disposal, managed by several actors. This article analyses the underestimated role of one of these actors, namely the European Commission. Treating the EU as a form of security governance, it claims that the Commission has empowered its role in it from the Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) to the Instrument for Stability (IfS). The first section presents a review of the existing literature in order to clarify the theoretical framework, which uses the EU security governance approach with sociological insights; and to sketch the historical background of the Commission's role in crisis response and conflict prevention. Then, this contribution examines the Commission's position from a relational perspective to demonstrate its gradual empowerment in the European security field. Finally, it emphasises the challenges facing the Commission and the new practices structuring EU security governance post-Lisbon.

Keywords

European security has traditionally been described as an intergovernmental domain, mainly based on activities within the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). However, this policy is only one of the tools at the disposal of the European Union (EU) to manage crises, and much is in flux, such that European security can be said to have been subject to 'evolving meanings' (Tardy 2009: 4). Over the last decade, EU activities in security have indeed involved a growing number of actors, and been operating at many different levels with several instruments. This article analyses the contribution of one of these actors, the European Commission, and its strategy to shape the European security field.

Although the Commission has played an increasing role in external relations and has contributed to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (Wright and Auvinen 2009; Duke 2007; Kirchner and Sperling 2007; Cameron and Spence 2004), 'it is nonetheless often denigrated' in the academic literature (Spence 2006: 398). The Commission's decline is judged to stem from the period 1985 to 1995 when Jacques Delors was its president (Kurpas et al. 2008; Kassim and Menon 2004). It has been claimed that with the increasing role of the Council (Spence 2006), the Commission is slowly losing its room for manoeuvre and influence, particularly in crisis response (Pfister 2009). With the development of CFSP there has been a 'pescisation'[1] (Gourlay 2006b: 120) and a 'esdpisation' with the expansion of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), renamed CSDP[2] in the Lisbon Treaty (Pfister 2009: 115). According to some scholars (Puetter 2012; Stacey 2012; Dinan 2011), this treaty undermines further the role of the Commission, qualified as marginal in CSDP (Mérand et al. 2011).

However, it is necessary firstly to have 'a comprehensive understanding of European governance' (Kaunert 2010: 14) and secondly to take into account the role of EU institutions, even in domains where member states remain dominant: this contribution focuses its attention on the much maligned Commission. As argued in detail below, there is much evidence to suggest the Commission has reinforced its role of supranational policy entrepreneur and has contributed to shaping security policies (Kaunert 2010, 2007). Counter to those who argue (Nugent and Rhinard 2013) that, apart from CFSP/CSDP, the Commission's position in external relations remains essentially the same after the Lisbon Treaty, I argue that the Commission has actually gained influence as it has several instruments at its disposal which can be used for the EU's external action

purposes. By reason, therefore, of the underestimated position of the Commission, an examination of its instruments and its relations with other actors in this domain is crucial to building a comprehensive understanding of EU security governance, the aim of this special issue. This article argues that, despite the development of CSDP, from the inception of the Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) in 2001, and with the implementation of the Instrument for Stability (IfS) which replaced it in 2007, the Commission has consolidated and even strengthened its position in the field of European security. With this flexible external assistance instrument, the Commission has developed the capacity to respond quickly to crises (Art. 3 of the IfS) and to offer 'assistance in the context of stable conditions for cooperation' (Art. 4 of the IfS).

The argument is developed in three sections. The first section explores the academic literature in order to clarify 1) the analytical framework, which uses an EU security governance approach with sociological insights, i.e. taking into account the power struggle between actors, and 2) the historical background of the Commission's role in crisis response and conflict prevention. Then, this contribution analyses the Commission's position from a relational perspective to demonstrate that the RRM and then the IfS reinforce its standing in the European security field. Finally, it emphasises the challenges facing the Commission in this field with this Community instrument and the new practices structuring post-Lisbon EU security governance.

EU CIVILIAN CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICT PREVENTION: A CASE OF HORIZONTAL SECURITY GOVERNANCE

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the conceptual framework of governance has been particularly relevant to understanding the complexity of the EU as a fragmented political configuration. Scholarship (Héritier and Rhodes 2011; Cardwell 2009; Hooghe and Marks 2001) has underlined the activity of several actors who are involved at different levels with various instruments. Developments in security at the EU level have been such that it was apparent for some scholars (Wagnsson et al. 2009; Kirchner and Sperling 2007; Kirchner 2006; Webber et al. 2004) that this approach was also appropriate to understand the transforming configuration of European security. Treating the EU as a form of security governance enables a shift in emphasis from the traditional intergovernmental approach to that of a political system in which a broad variety of actors interact in EU policy-making processes through formal and informal institutionalisation procedures (Norheim-Martinsen 2010). This analytical approach more closely mirrors the reality of the EU security field, where governmental but also supranational actors coordinate, manage and regulate security issues with various instruments, and shape interests and identities through norm diffusion. Too often, security governance is studied as purely vertical in nature, whereas it is in fact also horizontal, and should therefore be considered in both ways (Schroeder 2011). There is a tendency to reproduce the EU's former pillar division, neglecting horizontal security governance. Instead, a 'double approach' is necessary to have a comprehensive understanding of European security because it takes into account the plurality and diversity of actors in a non-hierarchical perspective, their interactions and also the merging (as well as intermingling) of internal and external security. This dimension is especially important in the EU context where 'the need for better horizontal coordination and cooperation has become particularly obvious at two junctures: the interface between internal and external security policies and institutions, and interface between civilian and military security actors' (Schroeder 2011: 14), as I argue in detail below to demonstrate the way the Commission brings together different tools and actors in EU security governance.

This analysis therefore employs the concept of security governance from a relational perspective in order to go beyond the mapping of actors. The literature on security governance has neglected the power relations in the EU configuration which are

fundamental to underlining the practices (or 'usages') and to understand the logic of action (Saurugger and Mérand 2010: 9-10; see Kammel and Zyla in this special issue for an alternative explanation). 'Actors possess varying resources (Bourdieu calls these resources "capital") that determine their position in the field and thus their relations with each other' (Mérand 2010: 351) as well as their logic of action. EU security governance should therefore be considered as a field, i.e. as a social space, a configuration of relations, of power struggles and strategies among actors to influence policy processes (Bourdieu 2000). The notion of 'field' has been used and adapted by Bigo (2005) and Mérand (2008) to analyse both the EU's internal and external security challenges. Mérand (2010: 351), inspired by Bourdieu, mentions that in order to 'understand how a field operates and what motivates people to play a part in it, one must look simultaneously at power structures and the schemes of perception and action that they produce'. Hence, this article focuses on three interlinked aspects of the Commission's place in the EU's security governance, which can be seen as constituting its logic of action: i) an identification of the underpinning reasoning of the Commission as expressed through its rhetoric; ii) the concrete initiatives it undertakes as part of EU security governance; iii) its relations with all other relevant actors. These three foci clarify how this field operates and what the practices are that reinforce the position of the Commission within it.

Although social network analysis has demonstrated that 'state power is not diluted but reconstituted at the European level' (Mérand et al. 2011: 140), this contribution demonstrates that state representatives do not act alone but, rather, understand they need the support of the Commission to conduct certain actions, notably in crisis response. Moreover, at the EU level even CFSP/CSDP are regarded as cases of 'supranational intergovernmentalism' that necessarily translate the huge influence of supranational culture into the intergovernmental process (Howorth 2010). Actually, in practice, CFSP/CSDP (including EU civilian crisis management, as discussed in a moment) are the product of a mix of intergovernmental and community instruments, policies and programmes. The Commission plays an important role in CFSP/CSDP through budget management, training of staff or preparatory measures prior to missions (Wright and Auvinen 2009). In addition, in order to complement and support CSDP activities, the Commission has also increased its organisational capacity in the civilian aspects of crisis response and conflict prevention (Stewart 2008; Gourlay 2006a).

In fact, since the end of the Cold War, the European Commission has been keen to increase its role in EU external action, for instance through the enlargement process as well as cooperation, assistance and development programmes (Cameron and Spence 2004). In this respect, from the mid-1990s with CFSP development, the Commission has linked development and security first in the EU policy in Africa in order to keep what was perceived as its prerogatives in a privileged geographic area. 'From the early 2000s, the [European Commission] has thus been entering the African security field on tiptoes, through the politicisation and securitisation of its development policy' (Bagoyoko and Gibert 2009). The Directorate General (DG) of Development first played a role in conflict prevention; this was downsized by the creation of the Europe Aid Cooperation Office. Then, with the progress of the CFSP/CSDP, DG External Relations (Relex) became increasingly active, managing relations with every region of the world (Stewart 2008).

In June 1999, CSDP was officially launched as an intergovernmental policy during the Cologne summit. The next European Council (1999: Annex 2) in Helsinki agreed on an Action Plan on Crisis Management using non-military instruments. The plan aimed to develop rapid reaction capabilities, notably with 'Rapid financing mechanisms such as the creation by the Commission of a Rapid Reaction Fund' in order to ensure inter-pillar coherence with a comprehensive approach. For that purpose, the year after, the Commission created a Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management Unit inside DG Relex to coordinate activities among DGs involved and with the Council and CSDP structures. The definition of conflict prevention and crisis management remains quite ambiguous

because of 'the institutional split between the civilian instruments created under the [former] first and second pillars and the more complicated issue of competence-sharing in the civilian area of crisis management between the Council and the Commission' (Nowak 2006: 16). In its Communication on Conflict Prevention, the European Commission (2001: 4) made a first attempt to clarify this concept from a holistic approach, considering that the EU should 'address cross-cutting issues which may contribute to tension and conflict' with an appropriate mix of instruments for long term and short term action. The Commission divided the EU instruments between a long-term perspective for 'projecting stability' and a short-term one for 'reacting quickly to nascent conflicts'. This Communication, like many others, was an important step in the EU's foreign policy development, and it 'also contributed in terms of agenda setting, and putting "external policy" actions in a clear strategic "foreign policy" perspective' (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 90). Therefore, through its various communications (norm diffusion) and instruments, the Commission took up a position in EU security governance, playing a pro-active role to shape it, reflecting its own perceptions.

A decisive step was made when the Commission (2000) proposed to the Council and the European Parliament the creation of a Rapid Reaction Facility (RRF), resulting in the establishment of the Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) in February 2001. The next section emphasises the strategy of the Commission through the RRM, later the Instrument for Stability, to shape the European security field. An analysis of this external assistance instrument is relevant to understand the contribution of the Commission in the field of security. As academic literature is rare here, this article refers mainly to official documents and interviews conducted in Brussels in February and May 2012 with officials from EU institutions and actors from civil society.

THE RAPID REACTION MECHANISM: THE COMMISSION'S FOOT IN THE DOOR

Since its Communication on Conflict Prevention, the Commission (2006, 2001) has insisted on the need for an integrated approach which aims at coordinating all EU instruments, even if they are based on different decision-making procedures. This could be perceived as a strategy to ensure and even to enlarge its competencies in the EU's external relations despite the inception of CSDP. The CSDP was officially declared fully operational the same year the Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) was launched to conduct crisis management operations. However, during the December 2001 European Council summit in Laeken, conflict prevention and crisis management were explicitly recognised as cross-pillar areas, requiring an integrated approach in order to increase the EU's external action efficiency. The declaration on the operational capability of CSDP stated overtly that 'the balanced development of military and civilian capabilities is necessary for effective crisis management by the Union: this implies close coordination between all the resources and instruments both civilian and military available to the Union' (European Council 2001: 28).

The preamble of the RRM regulation recognised that both institutions, namely '[t]he Council and the Commission are responsible for ensuring the coherence of the external activities conducted by the European Union in the context of its external relations, security, economic, social and development policies' (paragraph 6). In this perspective, the Council and the European Parliament agreed to launch the RRM which empowered the Commission in the field of security. Although the Commission (2000: Article 8) proposed the committee procedure to assure the political control of the Council, the RRM regulation opted for more flexibility. It obliged the Commission only to inform the Council of intended actions and projects (Article 9) and to ensure close coordination with the EU member states (Article 10). 'In accordance with accelerated decision-making procedures', the Commission can mobilise and deploy quickly specific financial resources 'to respond in a rapid, efficient and flexible manner, to situations of urgency or crisis or to the emergence of crisis' (Council 2001: 5). The management of this funding

instrument was held by the Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management Unit of DG Relex. The Commission was authorised to 'conclude financial agreements or framework agreements with relevant government agencies, international organisations, NGOs and public or private operators on the basis of their ability to carry out rapid interventions in crisis management' (Council 2001: Article 6.2).

The RRM offered relative autonomy to the Commission even if its room for manoeuvre was clearly delimited by the member states. This external assistance instrument had a very limited annual budget of only 30 million EUR. It could be used only for operations of up to six months when 'the action is intended to be immediate and cannot be launched within a reasonable time limit under the existing legal instruments, in view of the need to act rapidly' (Council 2001: Article 2.2a). Moreover, the RRM did not include EU humanitarian aid which has been traditionally conceived as a neutral assistance tool rather than a crisis management instrument (Commission 2003: 10). It fell under the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) regulations, but the Commission could decide in 'particular security or crisis-management circumstances' that a coordinated action was necessary (Article 2.3). Despite these restrictions, the RRM gave an important degree of flexibility to the Commission (2003: 11), which could now act without any sectorial and/or geographical limitation. In view of the differentiation between short- and long-term conflict prevention introduced by the Commission (2001: 9), RRM worked 'both as an emergency instrument in its own right, and as a bridge to longer term assistance'.

Through the RRM, the Commission launched around 50 projects in 25 countries and regions which cost roughly 120 million EUR (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 221) and consolidated its position in EU security governance (again, despite the inception of CSDP). While in many respects the RRM was innovative, the need for reforms was obvious due to the limited duration of its projects and budget. Ultimately, it was unable to ensure the link between short-term crisis response and long-term development assistance. The Commission (2004) therefore took the opportunity of the financial perspective for 2007–2013 to reorganise the assistance and cooperation programmes. It notably proposed the creation of a new community instrument, namely the Instrument for Stability (IfS). In accordance with the co-decision procedure, the IfS regulation entered into force in 2007. It repealed seven regulations, including the RRM, to create a single financial instrument (Article 26.1 of the IfS regulation).

INCREASED COMMISSION COMPETENCE THROUGH THE INSTRUMENT FOR STABILITY

Compared to the RRM, the IfS constitutes a substantial improvement, giving more resources to the Commission (which again strengthens its position in EU security governance) as regards the budget, the link between short- and long-term, the duration of the projects and the room for manoeuvre (more flexibility and faster reaction times). Firstly, the IfS got endowed with a budget of two billion EUR for the period 2007–2013. This allows the Commission to finance far more projects than it could through the RRM (European Community 2006: Article 24). Moreover, its annual budget has more than doubled over the years from 139 million EUR in 2007 to 282 million EUR in 2011 (European Commission 2012b: 6). Secondly, the IfS is divided into two components in order to assure tangible links between short-term crisis response and long-term development assistance, and to complement geographic instruments.

The short-term component gives 'assistance in response to situations of crisis or emerging crisis' (Article 3 of the IfS regulation). Managed by DG Relex until its demise and the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) in 2010, it 'represents the bulk of the IfS', with a budget of 1.4 billion EUR (72 per cent of the IfS budget) for the period 2007–2013 (European Commission 2010: 2). Until the end of 2011, the

Commission (European Commission 2012b: 5) managed '670 million EUR for some 203 actions responding to crises worldwide' through this instrument. This increased budget allows for a significant augmentation of the duration of any IfS project of up to 18 months. The new duration is three times longer than it was under the RRM regulation with the possibility to extend for a further six months if necessary, i.e. up to 24 months on the whole. This is clear progress, even if post-conflict situations often need more time to reach a minimum level of stability. To increase the rapidity for exceptional assistance measures, the Commission can adopt and implement projects of less than 20 million EUR with accelerated procedures (European Community 2006: Article 6.3). 'An example of the IfS speed of delivery: it took just one week from the conclusion of a mission to Mauritius in September 2010 to design a programme and take a formal decision' (European Commission 2011a: 7). As was the case with RRM, the Commission can respond to crises without sectorial and/or geographical restriction. In this perspective, IfS measures adopted since 2007 have reinforced the EU's holistic approach towards conflict prevention and peace-building and have positioned the Commission more strategically in EU security governance. It covers a broad range of issues concerning emerging conflict and post-conflict situations. Furthermore, the European Commission (2010: 6–7), emphasising closely the link between security and development, can use the IfS in four scenarios:

> A major new political crisis or natural disaster […]; an opportunity to pre-empt a crisis, to contribute to the resolution of an existing (frozen) conflict, to establish preconditions for post-conflict resolution, to promote immediate post-conflict consolidation of peace or stabilisation process […] an urgent need to secure the conditions for the delivery of EC [European Community] assistance, in order to implement long-term assistance and cooperation policies and programmes; or to follow-up on a CSDP operation or Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) priority (Ricci 2010: 42).

In 2011,[3] the IfS was mainly used for crisis response in Africa (42 per cent of the annual budget), for instance to fund programmes to support piracy trials in the Horn of Africa in order to complement the EU's CSDP Atalanta counter piracy naval operation, to support the security sector reform in the Democratic Republic of Congo and to support the EU's Sahel Strategy (European Commission 2012b: 8). Then, in the particular context of the 'Arab Spring', the IfS responded to the crisis in the Middle East and North Africa (31 per cent of the annual budget), supporting elections and transition processes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya (ibid: 7). In February 2013, a crisis response and stabilisation package under IfS was announced with 20 million EUR to support 'Mali's law enforcement and justice services, the Malian local authorities, dialogue and reconciliation initiatives at local level, and the first phases of the upcoming electoral process' (European Union 2013a: 1). This IfS package reinforces the EU response to the crisis, completing a variety of ongoing actions: EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Niger as CSDP missions, the IfS long-term Counter-Terrorism project for the Sahel, EU humanitarian aid and development cooperation.

The long-term element is programmable to offer 'assistance in the context of stable conditions for cooperation' (Article 4 of the IfS regulation). This component is endowed with a budget of 484 million EUR, i.e. 23 per cent of the IfS budget to intervene in three main areas without geographical restriction (European Commission 2012a). First, it addresses security and safety threats in a trans-regional context, for instance to fight against organised crime, to prevent and combat terrorism and cybercrime (Article 4.1 of the IfS regulation). Second, it aims at risk mitigation linked to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials (Article 4.2), 'improving the safety and security culture by spreading best practices and raising the general level of security and safety awareness' (European Commission 2012b: 12). Finally, it works to develop pre- and post-crisis capacity building based on relevant expertise through the Peace-building Partnership (Article 4.3). For instance, in September 2012, in collaboration with Libyan

authorities and INTERPOL, the IfS started to fund a project to improve Libyan border security and support security sector reform (European Union 2013b). This project took place before the launch of the EU-CSDP Border Assistance Mission in June 2013. Due to the programmable nature of the implementation of assistance under article 4 of the IfS regulation, the Commission should regularly propose 'multi-country strategy papers, thematic strategy papers and multi-annual indicative programmes' (Article 7 of the IfS regulation) which are adopted in accordance with the committee procedure and in consultation with partners from international organisations, civil society and third countries.

The Commission has indeed strengthened its position in the field of European security with this multi-dimensional instrument which contributes to preventing and managing key security threats identified by the European Council (2003: 3-5) in the European Security Strategy (ESS). Its high political impact and its interdependence with other EU external policies and instruments have imposed a close collaboration with a series of actors which allow the Commission to bring together all actors involved in the field and to contribute to its cohesion. First, and in contrast to the RRM, the EU member state representatives in the Council can exert control through the committee procedure, excluding exceptional assistance measures of less than 20 million EUR (Article 22 of the IfS regulation). This has, unsurprisingly, provoked the reaction that most of the missions to date have been less than this amount in order to guarantee a quick response from the Commission (European Commission 2011d). For missions of more than 20 million EUR, the procedure has been used only once, a result of the extensive and obligatory consultations that take place necessarily right from the early beginning of the process (interview with an EU official in the EEAS in February 2012). According to the European Commission (2008: 4), this intensive consultation practice has made the IfS a politically responsive instrument which legitimates its role. With the intention of avoiding any blocking, the Commission cooperates closely with the Council and CSDP structures. The Political and Security Committee (PSC) is informed on a regular basis, as well as the geographic working groups and the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM). The CIVCOM has been expressly 'created in order to improve relations between the military and the civilian components, including instruments from the [former] first pillar' (Kirchner and Sperling 2007: 69). The Commission also works closely with the EU Delegations in third countries, notably for crisis response actions. They

> play a key role, providing early warning and developing concepts and options for responses. In 2011, the majority of new measures were "sub-delegated" for local implementation to EU Delegations […] responsible for 85% of commitments and 82% of payments under the IfS (European Commission 2012b: 9).

Moreover, representatives from the Commission with the EEAS discuss both IfS components with the Working Group on Conflict, Security and Development of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, established in the framework of the democratic scrutiny of the IfS. Besides closer political consultations with actors inside the EU institutions, the Commission is in touch with appropriate authorities in third countries, the international community and civil society, dialogue with whom 'is an important part of the decision-making process' (European Commission 2010: 3).

As regards the crisis-preparedness component (Article 4.3), the Commission (2007: 18) cooperates with NGOs through the Peace-building Partnership, consisting of 'a broad-based network of specialised European NGOs with expertise in early warning, conflict prevention, peace-building and post-conflict and post-disaster recovery'. Since the Commission has increased its contribution to conflict prevention and with a clear need for external expertise, we have witnessed a growing interest on the part of NGOs, think tanks and the academic world to provide information and analysis in this field (Stewart 2008: 235). In 2010, under the IfS, the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) 'was launched to facilitate dialogue with non-state actors with a view to providing input to the

EU's policymaking processes' (European Commission 2011a: 10). The CSDN is managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) which organised several meetings where all relevant actors informally exchanged ideas on peace-building in a holistic approach, i.e. beyond the IfS activities. Under the crisis-preparedness component, the IfS, in collaboration with EU member states, is also co-funding 'Europe's New Training Initiative for Civilian Crisis Management' which has been used for the training of the staff for CSDP missions since 2011.

On the ground, the Commission needs partners to implement actions. The United Nations (UN) is the key partner in conflict prevention, and nearly 50 per cent of 'IfS funds are implemented through UN agencies, which in many cases have existing field structures able to deliver first responses in crisis and conflict affected countries' (European Commission 2010: 4). For instance, in a long-term perspective, the European Commission (2011c) cooperates with the UN to develop national capacities for conflict prevention and conflict resolution. To be more effective, the Commission also works with NGOs. For many years, the Commission (2001: 28) has claimed that NGOs are the 'key actors in long-term conflict prevention' because they are on the ground with wide knowledge of local issues and contact networks. As a result, 'almost a quarter of all Instrument for Stability (IfS) funds […] is implemented by NGOs worldwide' (Ricci 2010: 41). Therefore, its coordination, consultation and cooperation with all relevant actors in the field position the Commission at the centre of their activities, allowing it to stimulate interactions and to contribute decisively to the shaping of EU security governance (Lavallée 2011).

However, given that the Commission does not act directly on the ground and needs partners at all stages of its programmes, there are relations of interdependency that reflect the varying and complementary resources of each actor in the field. The cooperation between state representatives, European institutions and civil society is primarily about sharing expertise, ensuring coherence, efficiency and cost reduction. It would be pointless to deny that there is also competition between different positions, visions and perceptions about the goals, priorities and strategies of all actors (interviews with officials in EEAS and the Commission, February and May 2012). At the same time, the Commission is in a delicate situation – one of dependence. Its activities depend on the support of the member states, which, through the European Council, determine its competences. In addition, its programmes and budgets are renewed through the Council in cooperation with the European Parliament, for instance in the next multi-annual financial framework 2014–2020.

The current IfS regulation expires on 31 December 2013. In the wake of the presentation of the proposals for the multi-annual financial framework 2014–2020, the Commission had therefore adopted the proposal for its external instruments. This package was prepared over 2011 in close cooperation with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP), Catherine Ashton, and based on the result of a public consultation on future funding for EU external action. It was submitted for evaluation and adoption to the European Parliament and the Council. It proposed particularly to renew the IfS regulation. In the current economic context, the European Commission (2011b: 2) asks for a minor augmentation of the budget to reach EUR 2.8 billion. The priority of the Commission is, rather, to simplify the current procedure,

> Flexibility has been improved by expanding the maximum length of crisis response measures up to a maximum of 30 months and the deployment of a second Exceptional Assistance Measure in cases of protracted conflict to build on the results of a previous one. In addition, in exceptional situations of urgency, the Commission will be empowered to adopt Exceptional Assistance Measures for up to €3 million without prior information to Council. This improvement in speed of deployment will allow the EU to respond to crises within a period of 48-72 hours (European Commission 2011b: 8)

Despite CSDP developments in crisis management, the Commission has consolidated and has even strengthened its position in EU security governance from RRM to IfS with more budget and flexibility to act. The Commission has justified its role by referring to the integrated approach of the European Security Strategy to support the progress of CFSP/CSDP and to increase the efficiency of the EU's external action. The legitimacy of the Commission depends on its capacity to base its work on appropriate expertise and the right players to run the projects on the ground. The current negotiations for the financial perspectives 2014–2020 seem to consolidate and even reinforce the IfS regulation towards more flexibility and rapidity for Commission action. However, according to the new dispositions of the Lisbon Treaty (see Carta in this special issue) new actors are involved in the management of the IfS, challenging the position of the Commission in EU security governance post-Lisbon.

THE POSITION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION IN CRISIS RESPONSE AND CONFLICT PREVENTION POST-LISBON

The European Council confirmed in the ESS the necessity of a comprehensive approach to security, civilian and military, as well as the merging of internal and external security. The ESS emphasised strongly the added value of the EU as a global player with a wide range of instruments at its disposal to respond to multi-faceted situations on the international stage. It presented conflict prevention as a central theme. Moreover, the ESS linked security closely with development, noting that 'security is a precondition for development' (European Council 2003: 2). In 2008, after the ESS review process, the European Council adopted the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy. It 'emphasises the security-development nexus', arguing that '[i]n order to be most effective, the EU has to deploy the right mix of instruments, ranging from targeted military to civilian crisis management operations to conflict prevention, peace consolidation, mediation, humanitarian measures, [etc.]' (Wright and Auvinen 2009: 117). The ESS is now omnipresent in EU discourses, and 'functions as a reference framework for daily decision-making in all fields of foreign policy' (Biscop 2008: 8).

However, the application of an integrated approach is still a work in progress, but the efforts to increase cohesion within the EU have confirmed that the EU's tools in conflict prevention and crisis response are not limited to CFSP/CSDP (Nowak 2006). In this respect, with the Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) ruling,[4] the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), considering the broad objectives of the European development cooperation policy, agreed with the Commission on the links between security and development. It confirmed the contribution of the Commission in this field and the delimitation of the competencies of the Council under the CFSP, even though the Court dismissed this specific case (Eeckhout 2012).

Some scholars (Dijkstra 2009; Stewart 2008; Gourlay 2006b) have pointed out the challenges of inter-institutional coordination concerning EU civilian crisis management. As stressed by Schroeder (2011), many initiatives to increase synergies were proposed, such as common structures, action plans and the civilian headline goal. However, the comprehensive approach is not easy to put into practice. Within each institution, there are still different visions and understandings of the notion of security, different backgrounds and cultures. Therefore, differing priorities and strategies are evident when the time arrives to decide on which of the EU's external instruments to rely on to intervene. Through the IfS, the Commission fills the gap or complements CSDP with the risk of competition without proper consultation with member state representatives who are less involved in the process of IfS than in CSDP (interviews with officials in EEAS and the Commission, February and May 2012). Without agreement, the cross-pillar coordination has remained informal and this situation seems the optimal option for both the Commission and the Council (Schroeder 2011).

The implementation of the Lisbon Treaty should help to clarify the process with new dispositions aiming at formalising coordination among the EU institutions and their instruments. In this respect, the hybrid institutional position of HR/VP was created. Baroness Ashton is assisted by the EEAS to conduct CFSP/CSDP as HR and to manage community instruments for external action as VP. On the one hand, HR/VP and EEAS should strengthen the trend whereby formulation and implementation of CFSP/CSDP are done in Brussels, making contacts easier between actors involved in European security (Missiroli 2010). On the other hand, the EEAS' heterogeneous team and combined resources should increase the synergies among the EU's external instruments, moving further towards a strongly integrated approach in crisis response and conflict prevention. To that extent, DG Relex has effectively been integrated into the structure of the EEAS, in the geographical departments. After many years of rivalry between the Commission's Crisis room and the Council's Situation Centre (Boin et al. 2006: 490), both have been included in EEAS to increase coherence and complementarity of information.

Problems, however, remain. The Treaty of Lisbon introduced new ambiguities about the management of security issues and hence challenges the position taken by the Commission so far in EU security governance:

> The paradox of the relationship between the CFSP and the other EU external action […] is that the CFSP is intended to cover *all areas* of foreign and security policy. […] Within the supranational context of other EU policies it creates concerns about contamination by the CFSP' (Eeckhout 2012: 269).

Article 21 of the Lisbon Treaty synthesised and enlarged further the principles and objectives which guide the EU's external action and reinforced the comprehensive approach to European security. The pillar logic was originally created specifically to insulate the community instruments (supranational) from CFSP/CSDP logics (intergovernmental). While Lisbon abolished the pillar system, it did not completely abandon the logic on which it was based. It did not establish a prioritisation system. Instead, it left such a degree of ambiguity that the involvement of the CJEU has become a necessity. Even though the SALW ruling has created a precedent, some vagueness remains.

Further to this, the hybridity of the institutional structures of the HR/VP and EEAS oblige the Commission to redefine its strategy in order to reinforce its position in the new power structure. The EEAS organisation chart confirms the link with the Commission to ensure coherence. However, in respect of the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), the Commission is also in a grey zone. While many insiders affirm that in practice the FPI is virtually integrated in the EEAS (interviews with officials in the Commission and EEAS, February 2012), legally it cannot be part of the EEAS, in accordance with its budget prerogative. Over time, the management of the EU budget became the real technical expertise of the Commission which is responsible to the European Parliament. Moreover, it is its main resource ('capital') which positions itself strategically in the field in relation to the other actors. The Treaty of Lisbon did not modify this competency which explains why the FPI is linked directly to Ashton as VP. The FPI includes the budget unit, stability instruments operations (in charge of the IfS), CFSP operations and public diplomacy, as well as election observation. All these units are located in the same building of the EEAS, namely the Capital complex, in order to make contact easier among all actors involved in the EU's external action.

According to the decision establishing the organisation and functioning of the EEAS, the management of the Instrument for Stability is now shared between the EEAS and the Commission under the authority of the HR/VP (Council 2010: Article 9). In the EEAS, the Department of Security Policy and Conflict Prevention is responsible for the long-term component of the IfS. In close consultation with the Commission and the member states, it prepares the decisions regarding strategic papers and multi-annual programmes within the programming cycle adopted by the Council and the European Parliament. It also

manages the Peace-Building Partnership. While for EPLO, the main partner, this does not change anything because the partnership is still managed by the same people (interview with EPLO, February 2012), for the Commission it could be perceived as a loss of expertise even if the FPI is part of the joint steering committee of the Civil Society Dialogue Network. Although the EEAS is now involved in the IfS management (Article 4), the balance of power with the Commission is not obvious: the EEAS has a very limited budget, and the Commission is still involved in the long-term component. Moreover, the Commission remains in charge of the short-term component which constitutes 72 per cent of the budget. Furthermore, it is highly political due to its nature (non-programmable) and scope (without geographical limitation) and from the beginning of the process demands consultation on a huge scale with HR/VP, the PSC and all departments and units concerned in the EEAS.

The power struggle between the Commission and EEAS is therefore unsettled. First, many former colleagues moved from DG Relex to EEAS, thus each one knows each other well, which makes daily contact and coherence between both components of IfS easier (interviews with officials in the Commission and EEAS, February and May 2012). Then, and especially in accordance with article 9 of the Council decision, they are physically located in the same building. Due to the nature of IfS, the FPI also cooperates with all relevant actors and units in the EEAS depending on the topic. For instance, to prepare a response to a crisis in a specific region under article 3, the FPI asks for the expertise of geographical departments. This consultation helps to facilitate the policy process, avoiding any blocking and increasing cohesion.

To sum up, before the creation of EEAS, the elaboration of the IfS process involved mainly CSDP actors (the Council and its structures). Now, with the EEAS, the coordination involves all EU actors concerned with crisis response and conflict prevention (interviews with officials in the Commission and EEAS, February and May 2012). Amongst those actors, the Crisis Response and Operational Coordination (CROC) Department of the EEAS aims at creating a crisis platform in favour of a mass coordination between all actors involved in crisis response through a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention. However, this coordination remains informal and creates tensions inside EEAS because CROC has no legal mandate, no legal basis and no official link to justify its authority over the other EEAS departments and units (interviews with officials in EEAS, Brussels, February and May 2012). Moreover, institutional divisions between the former DG Relex, now integrated into EEAS, and the FPI, co-located in the EEAS building, and the other DGs and agencies of the Commission concerning development, humanitarian aid, trade and enlargement can create conflicts. This creates difficulties for Ashton, involved equally as HR and VP, and has already raised some criticism about her limited commitment to Commission activities (Blockmans and Laatsit 2012: 145; interviews with officials in the Commission and EEAS, Brussels, February and May 2012). Furthermore, the creation of EU Delegations (which replaced the Commission Delegations) could be perceived as a loss of power for the Commission, but on the other hand its staff is still part of the EU Delegations and so far remains quite influential (interviews with officials in the Commission and EEAS, Brussels, February and May 2012). The post-Lisbon reorganisation transforming practices demands time for adjustment of actors and before a conclusive evaluation can be delivered of how the Commission is positioning itself in this new and changing configuration.

In summary, notwithstanding the challenges facing the Commission in the European security field, it has consolidated its position through the IfS. The Commission gives added value by virtue of its resources, the budget and network of partners, and its approach. Its competence to manage the Union's budget, its experience and expertise in conflict prevention and crisis management, notably in election observation and professional training, for example of policemen in stabilisation missions, is still missing in the EEAS. The Commission, through Article 3 of the IfS, has the budget as well as flexibility and rapidity that other actors do not yet have. The integrated approach of the

Commission through the IfS helps to reinforce the link between the short- and long-term perspectives, to work across the conflict cycle – crisis response, conflict resolution, early recovery and long-term peace building. Through the IfS, the Commission can link community instruments and intergovernmental policies with CSDP missions, for instance, and be the interface between the different actors involved in crisis response, management and conflict prevention. This has served to strengthen the Commission's position in EU security governance so far, despite the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and the new configuration of actors put in place.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has shifted the perspective on European security from CSDP to the EU's external action on the whole in order to understand better how EU security governance works in practice. The CSDP should not be studied in isolation from the international institutional environment, given the fact of an institutional overlap (Hofmann 2011). The timing of the parallel development between CSDP (intergovernmental policy) and RRM/IfS (a Community instrument) should be considered together from an integrated approach. Despite the growing role of the Council through CFSP/CSDP in this field, the Commission has increased its activities and has even contributed to the structuring of EU security governance, notably through the huge consultation process prior to the launch of any project. While this role has evolved over the last decade in parallel with intergovernmental policies, mainly CSDP, this article has demonstrated that in practice there is a tendency towards convergence and complementarity between them despite the inevitable competition which also structures the field.

The next step will be to evaluate to what extent the new IfS over the upcoming financial perspective 2014-2020 will affect the Commission's position in EU security governance. Despite the democratic scrutiny clause of the Lisbon Treaty and the improvement in the dissemination of information in recent years, the Commission could increase much more the credibility and visibility of its actions through the IfS, giving access to further details about the evolution of the funded projects, as the Council does with CSDP missions. The external challenges facing the EU as a global security actor require, however, increasingly more close coordination and an efficient use of expertise and resources among EU member states, institutions, structures and tools. In many respects, the European Commission appears as the key actor for that requirement because it has so far succeeded in legitimating its role and positioned itself at the centre of EU security governance.

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[1] According to the French acronym of CFSP which is PESC: 'Politique Étrangère et de Sécurité Commune'.

[2] To facilitate the reading and avoid any confusion, this article will only mention CSDP – even when referring to the period before the Lisbon Treaty in 2009.

[3] At the time of writing, the 2012 annual IfS report, containing data on activities for the year 2011, was the most recent one.

[4] The SALW case 'concerned a Council decision implementing a joint action with the view to an EU contribution to ECOWAS in the framework of that organization's Moratorium on Small Arms and Light Weapons. The Commission claimed that the joint action […] fell within the shared competences on which the Community development policy was based' (Eeckhout 2012: 270).

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