

A stylized world map composed of a grid of grey dots, with several dots highlighted in red to represent specific countries or regions.

# A Compass for the CSDP

**INTERNATIONAL SECURITY POLICY WORKING GROUP**

April 2012

- The European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is intended to enable Europe to actively pursue peace in its neighbourhood. From the beginning, it has been a key concern of the Social Democrats' policy on Europe. Emerging from EU impotence in the face of the violent break-up of the former Yugoslavia this policy instrument is supposed to enable effective European crisis management. Furthermore, with the Lisbon Treaty the idea of a joint European defence policy gathered momentum.
- However, the CSDP has thus far yielded only meagre results, functioning as a supplement to national policy and based on the lowest common denominator among the member states. Real integration of national security policies has not taken place. At the same time, EU member states are currently suffering from a deep economic crisis which will make it difficult for them even to maintain the current level of spending on foreign and security policy for the foreseeable future.
- A new attempt to bring into being a Common European Security and Defence Policy is therefore needed. The present paper formulates the long-term goal of a political union that would shape the framework of a joint European security policy. This goal is still some way off, however. For the time being, only small steps are possible within the framework of the existing treaties. This includes the joint formulation of European strategies, utilisation of Permanent Structured Cooperation, building up joint capabilities and close agreement with regard to national defence planning.





## Content

1. The Euro-crisis as a Crisis of Confidence.....	3
2. The CSDP Is Not in Compliance with Its Own Objectives.....	3
3. A Political Union Needs a Security and Defence Policy.....	3
4. What New Developments and Challenges Does the EU Face?.....	4
5. What Does This Mean for the CSDP?.....	4
6. Germany – CSDP a Necessity.....	7



## 1. The Euro-crisis as a Crisis of Confidence

The European Union now finds itself in its gravest crisis since its founding. Outwardly, the financial, economic and sovereign debt crisis has called into question the EU's very ability to solve economic problems. But it has also led to a serious crisis of confidence within the EU. How it handles the economic crisis will determine the EU's future. This has somewhat crowded out foreign and security policy as a focus of concern. The EU is – once again – going through an inward-looking phase, although in the present instance it is of vital significance.

The EU's very continuance has been put in jeopardy by the incessant economic tensions, for the moment driving security policy into the background. But the EU cannot afford to »take a breather« as regards security policy, given the current and recent events in Libya, Syria, Iran and elsewhere in the Arab world, as well as in the Pacific region. In all these cases, however, the basic problem of the CSDP – like that of the EU overall – is clear: the will is lacking to even discuss a common policy, never mind to formulate and then pursue one. Furthermore, the enormous cost of the European economic crisis has severely curtailed the resources available for European security policy.

## 2. The CSDP Is Not in Compliance with Its Own Objectives

A review of the CSDP's past 12 years shows that, although its ambitions are high, they have seldom been realised. As Catherine Ashton – the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy – has written, the CSDP underlines the commitment of the EU and its member states to become more active, consistent and capable. However, the EU has done little more than formulate this claim. This is particularly clear from the security strategy implementation report which identifies capability shortfalls even after five years. The Council's Conclusions of 1 December 2011 on the development of military capabilities are similar to other recent documents: urgent appeals to the member states to engage in closer cooperation in the development of military capabilities, now heightened by the shrinking budget.

The CSDP's 30 or so missions – military, civilian–military and purely civilian – have demonstrated Europe's global

presence. To date, however, they have always been part of a larger international commitment and have only rarely brought about a real improvement in the situation on the ground. Their function was more to indicate to NATO and the United States that the EU is in a position to take on security policy missions. Only in a few instances – off the coast of Somalia, in Georgia and in Macedonia – was effective crisis management achieved; many other missions merely served as proof that there is such a thing as European security policy and had no need of institutionalised form.

## 3. A Political Union Needs a Security and Defence Policy

The common security policy was laid down in the Maastricht Treaty as an integral part of a political union. This continues to apply and particularly so in view of changing international circumstances. A common defence policy within the meaning of the Lisbon Treaty's solidarity clause is part and parcel of this. In a multipolar world a European pole is feasible only if member states also combine in external matters. Accordingly, further deepening of the EU must encompass security policy – it can no longer be excluded.

Furthermore, the division of labour assumed implicitly by the member states – NATO for defence, Europe for crisis management – must be overcome. The two areas cannot be separated either at the planning stage or as regards the development of capabilities.

The current process must therefore be reversed: a clear definition of interests must guide capacity-building, always on the basis of feasibility and what can be put before the member states. This also means that, given dwindling resources, ambitions must be adjusted downwards in order to reduce the gap with reality. The security policy of a deeper political union must answer a number of key questions in detail and not operate in a vacuum:

- What purpose is the CSDP supposed to fulfil for Europe?
- What are the common threats and challenges Europe faces?

- What are Europe's common interests and values – and how can they be jointly pursued?
- What competences are to be bestowed on the EU to pursue common interests?
- What is the EU's military level of ambition within this framework?

#### 4. What New Developments and Challenges Does the EU Face?

The economic and financial crisis, which has hit the EU hard, has permanently changed the basis of European security policy. The ability of individual member states to maintain the full spectrum of security policy tools, especially in the military domain, has been drastically curtailed. It therefore appears doubtful whether even larger countries – such as Germany, France or the United Kingdom – will be in a position to engage in military crisis management from their own resources.

The biggest proliferation risks arise in the European neighbourhood. In the medium term, Iran, as possibly spearheading a regional arms build-up, threatens the EU on its south-eastern flank. A nuclear arms race in the Middle East would pose a major long-term threat to the EU's security. In this policy area in particular, however, the EU has been unable to attain unity in recent years, although it has major diplomatic potential at its disposal. But a unified EU position is a key condition of agreement at the global level.

The United States is also affected by budgetary constraints and must prioritise its capabilities more carefully. It therefore increasingly regards the transatlantic region as less important for its own interests and is concentrating on the Pacific region. The summit in Hawaii sent a clear signal to this effect. Although this opens up more space for the EU it also imposes more responsibility. The operation in Libya showed the difficulties this entails for the European states – even though the two weightiest military powers were involved.

The rise of major emerging countries to become global players and the increasingly important role of regional powers, such as Turkey, Indonesia and Mexico, are creating a new, multipolar world order with new opportu-

nities for global peace. However, this can also lead to the weakening of international institutions such as the UN or to the return of geopolitics in some regions, such as Central Asia or the South China Sea. The chances of European states to influence these developments effectively and to assert their own interests will depend more than they do today on their ability to forge alliances and increasingly to bring these actors on board with regard to their responsibility for global governance. In this way, however, international institutions could attain broader legitimacy and a common front could be established in dealing with crises.

The upheavals in a number of North African and Arab countries has led to a new situation at the southern edge of the EU. The chances of a democratic awakening in this region have increased, but so too have the risks of instability arising from weakened governance structures. The EU's instruments have proved to be rather blunt in this instance and European neighbourhood policy was not in a position to influence developments on European terms. At the same time, the new social movements demonstrate the attractiveness of the European model. More advantage must be taken of this within the framework of European soft power.

Advancing digitalisation, technological developments both civilian and military and the increasing vulnerability of critical infrastructure are making security policy dangers more diffuse and less clear-cut. The distinction between security policy and defence is also becoming more and more blurred. The possibility of using cyber-attacks, remote-controlled weapons or targeted attacks to inflict major damage on a country's infrastructure call for comprehensive preventive security on the part of both nation-states and the EU's supranational structures.

#### 5. What Does This Mean for the CSDP?

The material bases for security policy in the EU are dwindling. This trend is likely to continue for a number of years and then reach a stable, but lower plateau. This means that the existing CSDP cannot continue as a mere decoration on top of national security policy and NATO; in any case, public acceptance of resource allocation for this purpose will increasingly diminish. The CSDP must become more effective, offering clear added value for the states concerned and the EU as a whole and with less

funding («doing more for less»). This is feasible if the potential synergies are exploited and superfluous dual structures reduced. The member states have a choice: they can take advantage of the CSDP and thus maintain their global effectiveness or even increase it in certain areas, or they can continue to act within the national framework, with some European accoutrements and consequently, in the medium term, be forced to adjust their national level of ambition to their declining capabilities.

Given the various challenges the EU member states must reach agreement on how they want the EU to adapt to them. For this purpose, the military level of ambition, as reaffirmed in 2008, must be discussed. Also, given the re-emerging differences of opinion, the Libya issue must be discussed in detail, as well as what form of military intervention the CSDP is to be used for and the extent to which the EU is willing to commit itself to the responsibility to protect internationally.

Conceptual foundations have already been laid down in the EU. There is no lack of papers outlining how the EU can improve its security policy. These ideas are to some extent obsolete, however, as well as somewhat detached from the strategic debate in the member states and not underpinned by the political will needed to implement them. In order that, in future, the CSDP lives up to its own requirements better than it has so far, the long-term goal of a genuine common policy must be maintained, although the road taken and the methods employed must change and small steps already under consideration must finally be taken. The current phase of stagnation and renationalisation must be brought to an end and the CSDP given fresh impetus to get it moving forwards again. In detail, that means:

#### More strategy!

Europe needs an **intensive strategic dialogue concerning interests, goals and resources**. This dialogue should be developed in the process of updating the EU's strategic documents: NATO's Strategic Concept and the process that led up to it can provide a model. The European Security Strategy of 2003 is obsolete, the product of a different political environment. A complete overhaul is needed, rather than fussing around the edges. Furthermore, the path from the Security Strategy to a security policy must be outlined more clearly. The member

states should thus discuss and reach a decision on three key documents, prepared by the European External Action Service.

First, a **new Security Strategy** taking account of the changed security policy situation.

Second, a **European white paper** on security and defence policy. This should define what military and civilian tasks the EU will take on, where it will intervene, how the necessary capabilities will be provided and how member state resources can be combined for that purpose.

Third, **European defence policy guidelines** to provide a conceptual underpinning for the possibility laid down in the Lisbon Treaty for defence policy cooperation.

All three documents should be subjected to regular review in order to establish and maintain strategic dialogue in the EU. These EU documents should also link national defence planning with joint security projections and threat scenarios and prompt the effective implementation of European objectives at national level.

#### More arguments!

Besides the strategic dialogue, the EU needs to conduct a **political debate** and to **position itself** as regards security policy. Frequent regular meetings of defence ministers and foreign ministers within an informal framework could galvanise this process. Interests and intentions should be compared; current and future challenges should be put on the agenda and consideration given to European positions in international bodies. The aim of such meetings is less to adopt specific resolutions or to determine European positions in NATO, the UN or the OSCE, and more to stimulate an ongoing discussion on security policy issues within the EU framework that will also help shape national policymaking.

#### A more flexible structure!

The CSDP's stagnation in recent years demonstrates how unsatisfactory the current method of intergovernmentality and mandatory consensus is. In particular with regard to capacity-building it is clear that the appeals for voluntary efforts on the part of the member states have had

limited success. Further deepening of the CSDP will thus be possible only using a different method. The goal remains a common security and defence policy based on adequate resources. In contrast to the current conception, however, a genuine common security policy requires greater community competence on the part of the EU, which would also give more control to the European Parliament. This would require an amendment of the Treaty, however, and thus is something for the long haul.

The path to greater community competence leads via the implementation of smaller steps and thus an increase in the CSDP's effectiveness. This should be done by means of special provisions and pioneer groupings to enable a more flexible approach. In the short term, this would include:

- The **launching of an EU financing mechanism for military missions** in order to reduce the burden on member states with regard to developing military capabilities. This is also a matter of justice within the EU: Active member states should not have to commit themselves twice over.

- The inauguration of **permanent structured cooperation** by states willing and able to deepen defence-policy cooperation in the EU. It must involve member states that want to deepen security and defence policy in the EU and that recognise the current trend towards conceptual, constitutional and capability-oriented renationalisation and consider it a problem. Such a group should accumulate sufficient critical mass as regards states and capabilities. Besides Germany, France and the Benelux countries, therefore, a number of other medium-sized states such as Poland, Spain and Italy should be involved, as well as – if possible – the Scandinavian and Baltic states that have close regional links. German-French cooperation remains central here, however, which recently has suffered greatly as a result of British-French defence cooperation and disagreements about Libya. Given its role since St Malo, the United Kingdom will hardly wish to participate in this group, even if it means a significant diminution of capabilities. However, if cooperation brings about tangible results in terms of common capabilities London, is likely to get on board. Permanent structured cooperation, in the sense of intensified functional cooperation, is intended to consolidate European efforts in this regard, although at a qualitatively new level – and certainly more rapidly than hitherto. The fundamental openness of this perma-

nent structured cooperation to other interested member states is part and parcel of this approach, but it is also a basic condition of getting such cooperation off the ground, which would require a unanimous EU resolution.

- The project of a European planning and command capability should be implemented within the framework of this group, taking the form of a **European civilian-military high command** in Brussels. This is needed to give political impetus to raising the CSDP's profile at European level. Regular use could enable such headquarters to build up its own competences, which may lead to its becoming indispensable within the institutional structure. The currently agreed solution of a temporary headquarters should therefore be succeeded by a visible and permanent EU operational centre at the disposal of civilian and military operations. Close coordination with the structures of the External Action Service is essential for this purpose.

- As regards capacity-building, a **joint transformation concept** should be worked out within the framework of this cooperation which provides for pooling, sharing and specialisation from the outset. The Capability Development Plan can be used for this purpose. This should be closely coordinated with the European Defence Agency and NATO (OCCAR [Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation]), which would have to be involved in the transformation process. This transformation concept, as in the European Semester, should be regularly discussed and its implementation reviewed. States remaining outside permanent structured cooperation should have the opportunity to opt-in on an occasional basis, when they are willing to contribute the relevant resources. Numerous paths are open to member states to develop capabilities together: common ownership (for example, AWACS), national ownership (EATC), procurement (A400M) or joint performance of tasks and functions.

- The **civilian component of the CSDP is crucial and a »unique selling point«** of an integrated European security policy. However, this also suffers from a lack of expertise on the part of the member states and a failure to implement existing strategies. Crisis-prevention elements should therefore have a stronger presence in the Financial Perspectives. The EAD should also make this more of a priority because otherwise it will get lost between the existing bureaucratic cultures in the Council and the Commission.



■ The hitherto underdeveloped **parliamentary control of the CSDP** should be carried out by the European Parliament and national parliaments on a cooperative basis. For that purpose, following the current proposal of the Polish Parliament, an interparliamentary assembly should be established comprising representatives of national parliaments and the European Parliament. This should be closely involved in the CSDP and require reports by the High Representative, the EAD and national decision-makers. Parliamentary control would thus be ensured by national parliaments. The strategic dialogue between national parliaments on the goals and resources of the CSDP, however, would be shifted to European level.

## 6. Germany – CSDP a Necessity

From a German perspective the weaknesses of the CSDP as an effective framework are particularly regrettable. German security policy is dependent on multilateral institutions for reasons of legitimacy and effectiveness, but also because of a ruling of the Constitutional Court in 1994, which made deployment of the German army conditional on the existence of a multilateral framework. For this reason, German hesitancy as regards further progress with the CSDP is surprising. Particularly striking is the combination of fervent rhetoric and a failure to attempt to tie armed forces reform to the chance of further Europeanisation. The German government has proposed the so-called Ghent Initiative on pooling, sharing and specialisation. At the same time, the armed forces are undergoing major reform. The two processes are separate, however. This deprives the Ghent Initiative of the chance of real implementation and the German armed forces of establishing forward-looking links with European partners. If the Bundeswehr were to favour closer integration with European partners, however, that would send an important signal as regards progress with European integration.

The current reticence with regard to security policy cooperation is not commensurate with a credible integration-friendly policy. Germany must make a stronger commitment, particularly in order to get the CSDP political process going again. Germany should therefore cooperate especially in the establishment of permanent structured cooperation and help to shape it with France, Poland, Spain and, at some point, Italy.

The German government would suffer from a major handicap in any discussions. Its stance on Libya and generally perceived hesitancy as regards security policy in the EU has resulted in a loss of confidence. Germany tends to be regarded as a follower rather than a frontrunner in this domain. Combined with its brash leadership in economic affairs and accompanying fears that Europe will increasingly dance to Germany's tune again this represents a difficult basis from which to launch German security and defence policy initiatives. The road must therefore go via Paris. Fundamental revitalisation of Franco-German relations, if possible within the framework of the Weimar Triangle, could point the way out of the dilemma. However, this requires a robust consensus on the part of the three countries that cannot be further diluted by political intervention or even threats from London. An agreement between Berlin, Paris and Warsaw on the above-mentioned, undoubtedly radical process would establish three necessary conditions for giving new impetus to the CSDP:

- France and Poland could assume conspicuous leadership roles in this key area of the EU and thus correct the caricature of a Europe decisively influenced by Germany.
- The three states of the Weimar Triangle provide the necessary basis for properly functioning structured cooperation, which other interested countries could link up with.
- Within the framework of such a group Germany could underpin its readiness to make a long-term defence policy commitment in Europe and, at the same time, dispel doubts concerning its capabilities and assumption of responsibility.



### About the authors

The **International Security Policy working group** is a Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung forum for the exchange of views on current security policy issues. It draws its members from the Bundestag, federal ministries and academic institutions. They include: Franz H. U. Borkenhagen, Hans-Georg Ehrhart (IFSH), Roland Kästner, Niels Annen (FES), Christos Katsioulis (FES), Gero Maaß (FES), Detlef Puhl, Sammi Sandawi, Michael Schäfer, Axel Schneider and Oliver Thränert (SWP).

### Imprint

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung  
International Policy Analysis  
Hiroshimastraße 28 | 10785 Berlin | Germany

Responsible:  
Dr. Gero Maaß, Head, International Policy Analysis

Tel.: ++49-30-269-35-7745 | Fax: ++49-30-269-35-9248  
[www.fes.de/ipa](http://www.fes.de/ipa)

To order publications:  
[info.ipa@fes.de](mailto:info.ipa@fes.de)

International Policy Analysis (IPA) is the analysis unit of the International Dialogue department of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. In our publications and studies we address key topics of European and international politics, economics and society. Our aim is the development of policy recommendations and scenarios from a social democratic perspective.

This publication appears within the framework of the working line »European Foreign and Security Policy«, editor: Christos Katsioulis, [christos.katsioulis@fes.de](mailto:christos.katsioulis@fes.de); editorial assistant: Nora Neye, [Nora.Neye@fes.de](mailto:Nora.Neye@fes.de)

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung or of the organization for which the author works.

This publication is printed on paper from sustainable forestry.



ISBN 978-3-86498-107-4