

Civil Society Dialogue Network

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Assessing EU response to conflict: military action, diplomatic capacity and normative power

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Introduction

This paper assesses the EU's response to conflict since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 and suggests areas for improvement. It begins with a discussion of conflict in contemporary international affairs, highlighting a number of key challenges to which Europe has to respond. The EU also has to overcome the traditional tension between weak military and diplomatic capabilities in the field of conflict prevention and resolution, and a considerable strength in normative power in this policy field. As the papers shows, there have been positive developments in the last six years in the restructuring of the EU's diplomatic and conflict resolution instruments, whereas its normative power, in the sense of its power as a model of conflict resolution for others to follow, has been weakened by domestic developments, including the erosion of basic democratic principles in some EU Member States, and growing opposition to enlargement. The EU exerts power through the use of its trade instruments to attract neighbouring countries and to create conditions for development, but this capacity has been undermined by financial instability, as well as by a lack of reflection on the way its trade policies affect conflict. The paper considers how the EU addresses tensions between the options of military action, diplomacy and normative power. It identifies positive developments and remaining challenges when it comes to an integrated or comprehensive response to international conflict by the EU.

The tendency for conflicts to be more complex and intra-state rather than inter-state persists, with their effects continuing to be increasingly globalised, spilling over into neighbouring countries, regions and even other parts of the world. There has also been a significant rise in the scale and deadliness of armed violence outside of politically-motivated conflicts.

Diplomatic tools for conflict management that are effective in some regions in the world are largely impotent in addressing conflict escalation in others, such as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Traditional means of conflict resolution are also less effective in more peaceful regions. The OSCE, in terms of membership by far the largest multilateral organisation involved in the provision of common security on the European continent, now has more difficulties in maintaining compliance with its Cold War-era treaties and mechanisms than during the Cold War itself.² The crisis of diplomacy in the traditional sense of the relations between states results from the fact that non-state actors – multi-national companies, transnational organised crime, non-state armed groups – have greater influence on events and act beyond the control of states, adding to the fragmentation of conflicts. These trends mean that conflict resolution has to be a central concern for the EU; violent conflict reduces the effectiveness of all EU external policies.

The proximity to the EU of some of the most deadly contemporary conflicts also means it is directly affected by migration of populations seeking refuge. Most asylum seekers in the EU in 2014 came from Syria and Afghanistan, and the largest relative increase compared to the previous year was recorded for applicants from Ukraine (and the EU still receives large numbers from the Western Balkans, where economic development was stalled or reversed by conflict).³

The EU's responses to conflicts must be tailored to their complex causes and effects, and internal and external policies must be deployed together. The paper assesses whether or not this is the case. It distinguishes between three types of response to current crises. First, military action, which is important for the EU even when it is EU Member States or NATO rather than

² 'Nato-Russia Ties Face Erosion', in *Financial Times*, Wednesday 17 February 2016.

³ See Eurostat, Asylum Statistics, available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics

the EU itself which uses it. Second, diplomatic capacity: a precondition for the EU to effectively address conflict is external affairs “capacity” meaning functioning institutions with sufficient numbers of appropriately-skilled staff. Third, normative power: the EU has considerable normative power for conflict prevention, transformation and resolution through diffusing, shaping and implementing rules and values in other countries and regions without the use of force.⁴ In particular, its trade policies can be used in this way as the EU is the world’s largest economy and its supranational competencies in the field of trade create substantial leverage for conflict transformation.

Each type of response constitutes a different method for the implementation of EU objectives.⁵ Debates on the EU’s role in providing European security are often about how to effectively combine these responses in an integrated or comprehensive approach. A traditional argument is as follows: the lack of military power, combined with an incapacity to act decisively in its foreign and security policy, has led to an overemphasis on normative power. According to an equally common counter-argument, in external affairs, the EU uses its capacity to set standards as a mechanism for conflict transformation and resolution that is actually more effective than military power. The paper contributes to this debate while taking into consideration the EU’s new security environment determined by the trends mentioned above. It also highlights the need to reflect on the potentially positive and negative effects of the EU’s trade policies, which are a part of its normative power.

Military Action

The armed conflicts in Ukraine and Syria have had left deep scars on Europe’s consciousness. The origins and development of these two civil wars involve high levels of foreign intervention such that they are best described as internationalised internal conflicts, which have dramatic humanitarian consequences for the populations involved. They constitute threats to the proper management of the EU’s external – and internal – borders and to political stability in the EU itself. In Ukraine, Russia has challenged the EU with an irredentist policy. It justified the annexation of Crimea through reference to the need to protect Russian populations outside the Russian Federation. Moscow has promoted the idea of a unified Russian world, including in relation to Eastern Ukraine.⁶ This nationalist discourse has triggered strong fears among Russia’s neighbours and particularly in the Baltic countries, which have asked for security guarantees from their military allies. As a consequence, NATO’s efforts to increase its military deterrence and strengthen its response capacity have received a strong boost. Several EU Member States – including non-NATO members – have revised their long-term defence planning by increasing their military budgets. The talk is no longer of a peace dividend but, to the contrary, of a “new Cold War” and the need to increase military efforts. In combination with the sanctions imposed by the US and the EU, increased military capabilities are intended to support diplomatic efforts to stabilise Ukraine and to prevent conflict escalation in other parts of Europe.

⁴ See the description of this concept of normative power by Manners in : Nathalie Tocci, ‘Profiling Normative Foreign Policy: The European Union and its Global Partners’, in Nathalie Tocci (ed.), *Who is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor? The European Union and its Global Partners*, Center for European Policy Studies, Brussels, 2008, p. 2.

⁵ In relationship to normative power it is possible to distinguish between normative goals – such as democracy or the rule of law - and normative means – such as the mechanisms of conditionality or socialisation that the EU uses in relation to third countries. See Tocci, op. cit., pp. 5-11.

⁶ See Valentina Feklyunina, ‘Soft Power and Identity: Russia, Ukraine and the “Russian World”’ published online before print on 24 September 2015, doi: 10.1177/1354066115601200 in the *European Journal of International Relations*

The stakes for European security are just as high in the case of Syria. The effects of the conflict and reactions in Europe have a direct impact on the very nature of the EU, with tense political debates continuing about if and how the EU and its Member States should restore national borders and restrict the rights of refugees and migrants. The military police the streets of France, Belgium and other EU Member States in order to prevent terrorist attacks. In parallel, they play a greater role in policing borders in order to control refugee flows within the EU. At the external borders of the EU, NATO-led multinational forces are surveilling migrant flows over the Aegean Sea.

These developments are central to European debates on the need to become a hard power and to use its military capabilities more frequently, i.e. beyond the current use of the existing tool of military crisis management missions. Support for hard power Europe has come from Member States, parts of the European Commission (EC), members of the European Parliament (MEPs), the defence industry, think tanks and academics. Supporters of hard power Europe refer to the existence of new military threats and promote European military integration as a way to back up European diplomatic efforts. There are new reasons for EU Member States to unify their defence policies: more than ever, the crises in Ukraine and Syria made clear that a collective EU response is required as Member States acting alone are unable to tackle these challenges, particularly on the military level; common European defence is potentially more efficient than all European nations maintaining separate defence forces; and the development of a single market in defence goods could lead to savings by reducing protectionism and possibly corruption. The need for innovation and European integration are likewise used as justifications for channelling more EU research funds to the defence industry.

However, it is striking that the arguments for hard power Europe provide only a partial response to new security threats, even including the military threats deriving from countries in crisis such as Syria and Ukraine. The lack of willingness to intervene in these crises with large scale military action is not a consequence of declining military capability in Europe, but rather due to the traumatic experience of failed statebuilding projects built on military interventions, such as in Afghanistan and Iraq. European leaders are more aware than ever of the limitations of military responses to political crises. For this reason, the proponents of hard power focus on the containment of crises through military means, including deterrence and bolstering diplomatic solutions with military capabilities. Both in Ukraine and in Syria, the stated priority of European policies is to arrive at a political solution through diplomacy, which requires, above all, the strengthening of diplomatic instruments and the use of normative and economic power. In these two cases, hard power does not directly address core issues driving the conflicts. The same may be said of other security threats identified by the EU itself – such as climate change, terrorism and organised crime – where the EU’s relative military power is not a crucial factor in the equation or even a factor at all.

Diplomatic Capacities

The early years of the European External Action Service (EEAS) were beset with problems and it was easy to conclude that the situation was worse than before the Lisbon Treaty, with the new institution adding another layer to decision-making and the institutional imbroglio in Brussels and in EU delegations (EUDs). More importantly, during its first period of operation, the EEAS exacerbated the traditional focus on crisis response. At the same time, EU external action was already a low priority due to the demands of the financial crisis, which absorbed the resources and attention of Europe’s governments. And the domination of the agenda of the EU’s Foreign Affairs Council by immediate and short-term responses to crises, particularly those affecting the region bordering the EU, decreased diplomatic efficiency. The crisis response mode and attempts to coordinate EU response to crisis led to protracted battles

between the EEAS and the humanitarian sector; morale was low among EEAS diplomats, with a risk-averse approach and staff departures. A lack of political guidance, analysis and strategy was often mentioned, including by Member States in the various non-papers and letters to the High Representative that they produced.⁷

Difficulties in establishing the EEAS form part of a broader crisis in European diplomacy. Foreign ministries across the EU have faced cutbacks during the financial crisis, and diplomatic services question their own role.⁸ They have been squeezed out of the picture with important foreign affairs issues handled by heads of government⁹ and development ministries controlling funds and the power they represent.

While it is easy and sometimes correct to blame the “EU”, usually meaning the EU institutions or specifically the EC, many aspects of EU external affairs remain intergovernmental, with action requiring the agreement of all 28 Member States, often an impossible task. The EU institutions, and particularly the EEAS, need to be effective enough to inspire the trust of the Member States but in turn, Member States need to acknowledge their declining power and thus work collectively. Each Member State continues to run its own diplomatic service but often without the resources to do so adequately, given the increased complexity of international affairs. This means that while collectively Europe has the resources to be an effective foreign policy actor, the distribution of these resources is inefficient. However, foreign ministries will often not have an interest in supporting more action through the EU if it undermines their own position. For example, where foreign ministries have faced cutbacks during the financial crisis, they may be reluctant to see additional resources transferred to the EU institutions to bolster collective European diplomacy, however much that might benefit Europe as a whole. Decisions to improve EU diplomacy have to come from EU heads of state.

The EEAS review of 2013 noted as a weakness that European diplomacy lacked resources to work on “global issues” and what it does could be more effective.¹⁰ For example, the EEAS regularly convenes meetings of all Member States’ representatives on particular issues, including gender and security, climate change and the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) doctrine, which could develop to become stronger fora for EU policy-making under the auspices of an ambitious global strategy.

Regarding the question of leadership, there were a number of successes including the oft-referred to Kosovo-Serbia dialogue¹¹ and progress in the negotiations with Iran,¹² pointing to EU High Representative Catherine Ashton’s flair for mediation. The Comprehensive Approach¹³ was also due to be part of her legacy and a solution to the very real “coherence”

⁷ See ‘EPLO Statement on the EEAS Mid-Term Review’, July 2013, available at:

http://www.eplo.org/assets/files/2.%20Activities/Working%20Groups/EEAS/EPLO_Statement_EEASReview.pdf

⁸ The following IDEAS research paper on diplomacy in the UK is typical: ‘Investing for Influence: The Report of the LSE Diplomacy Commission’, 9 November 2015, available at:

www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/influence.aspx

⁹ Stefan Lehne, ‘Are Prime Ministers taking over EU Foreign Policy?’, 16 February 2016, available at:

<http://carnegieeurope.eu/publications/?fa=59070>

¹⁰ EU External Action, EEAS Review 2013, available at:

www.eeas.europa.eu/library/publications/2013/3/2013_eeas_review_en.pdf

¹¹ See Spyros Economides and James Ker-Lindsay, “Pre-Accession Europeanization”: The Case of Serbia and Kosovo’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 53 (September 2015), Issue 5, pp. 1027–1044 and Gëzim Visoka and John Doyle, ‘Neo-Functional Peace: The European Union Way of Resolving Conflicts’, published online before print in *Journal of Common Market Studies* on 9 December 2015 at DOI: 10.1111/jcms.12342

¹² See the EU External Action webpage on Iran available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/iran/index_en.htm

¹³ European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Policy and Security Policy, Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, ‘The EU’s Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict and Crises’, 11 December 2013, available at:

problem – the fragmentation of EU action. The problem of coherence was also addressed by her successor. The appointment of Federica Mogherini as the new EU High Representative in 2014 led to improved relations with the Member States, the EP and the EC, with a more experienced cabinet of advisors, and the development of a vision for EU external action in the form of the Global Strategy.¹⁴

Sanctions were increasingly used as a method to coerce nations into taking a more moderate stance in negotiations or to express the EU's dissatisfaction with the behaviour of particular states in crisis situations. They were effective in some cases, such as in exercising pressure on the negotiations on the Iranian nuclear programme. Despite their non-military nature, sanctions may have detrimental consequences for the welfare of affected populations. This could be remedied by a more selective approach, for example, a return to 'smart' sanctions (which stress the importance of the discrimination principle) as opposed to 'targeted' sanctions (which are focused instead on their success, in line with the proportionality principle). The monitoring of the unintended but predictable consequences of sanctions for local populations – such as their repercussions on poverty and public health - would also allow for redress.

There has been some increase in the accountability and the impact of both civilian and military Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). This was achieved through tackling well-established challenges (cumbersome decision-making, rapid deployment, smooth procurement, identifying, training and deploying the right experts, etc.¹⁵) and emerging challenges (conduct of EU mission staff and personnel trained by the EU, including respect for human rights). This will improve the EU's capacity to respond to conflict. Ultimately, some of the weaknesses of the CSDP may simply be inherent in its intergovernmental nature: Member State involvement and "ownership" do not sit well with efficiency, and failure to get agreement to launch new missions will continue while Member States have different geographic priorities.

European policies for preventing and responding to conflict can further build on specialised capacities. The EEAS' Division for Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments (SECPOL2), has consisted of 13 to 15 staff members since its creation in 2009, many with specialist knowledge of peacebuilding and/or experience in conflict-affected regions. SECPOL2 (and the EEAS as a whole) has also benefited from secondments from Member States and, in a precedent-setting development, the secondment of an expert by a not-for-profit foundation, PeaceNexus. SECPOL2 has focused its work on providing operational support to EEAS colleagues in three areas: conflict analysis, mediation support as part of the EU's preventive diplomacy, and development of an Early Warning System as a risk management tool. The EC's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), the EU's development agency, also has specialists on security, crisis management and fragility in various units. Finally, the EP has established a new service working on mediation to channel the efforts of MEPs and to help ensure that it works within the overall comprehensive approach. These developments in capacity building allow for a greater awareness and identification of conflict risks, favour the incorporation of conflict prevention measures into country and regional strategies, and help to improve peace process design and mediation efforts. Institutional support to peacebuilding has also increased the access of peacebuilding non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to EU decision-making. Preventive approaches could be combined to enhance comprehensiveness.

http://www.eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/131211_03_en.pdf

¹⁴ See the EU's Special Representative's webpage (February 2016) on a Global Strategy:

<https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/global-strategy-foreign-and-security-policy-european-union>

¹⁵ EPLO, 'Statement on Reforming Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy', August 2013, available at: <http://eplo.org/activities/policy-work/peacebuilding-eu-institutions-policies/>

Regarding the assessment of conflicts, the EU now has good access to analysis of the causes of conflict and violence, as reflected in the documents it produces.¹⁶ The most comprehensive assessment of the EU's role is still provided by the 2011 Thematic Evaluation of European Commission Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding.¹⁷ The evaluation covered ten years of EC support to conflict prevention, finding “numerous” examples of the EU helping to prevent conflict. Although five years old, many of the actions it found to be effective continue and some of its recommendations have been implemented. In addition, the positive developments described below have also contributed to improved EU response to conflict.

It can, of course, be noted that the EU debate and decisions on responses often do not map onto threats identified; discussions of EU action (or “tools” or “instruments”) take place without reference to the threats they are supposed to address or to the effectiveness of responses. And there are also threats to peace that EU security documents do not highlight, such as EU countries becoming less democratic. Civil society plays an important role in peacebuilding. This includes facilitating peace processes, representing different social groups in peace processes and tackling causes of conflict, from institutional reform to reconciliation. Thus, the repression of civil society through restrictions on access to media and public opinion in EU Member States undermines European efforts to address conflict.¹⁸

In terms of evaluating its own impact, the EU's annual report on conflict prevention was discontinued in 2010. It would be useful to consider whether to revive it now, as a means to demonstrate the results of EU investment in prevention and resilience. Where the EU contributes to prevention, astute and regular presentation of these efforts serves to demonstrate the effectiveness of the EU, as well as of a preventive approach more generally, such as in its efforts to mediate between Serbia and Kosovo, and its role in the Iran negotiations and in conflicts in South East Asia.

Regarding funding, the EU uses the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) – previously known as the Instrument for Stability (IfS) – to provide funding for peacebuilding, crisis response and to address the security threats identified in the current (2008) European Security Strategy. While oversubscribed and positively-evaluated, the IcSP is a relatively small EU funding programme and efforts are made to ensure that it acts as bridge, connecting to development funding.

Normative Power

The concept of a normative power builds on Joseph Nye's notion of ‘soft power’ of the late 1980s, and its non-coercive mechanisms of co-operation, co-optation and integration through

¹⁶ For example, the 2015 European Agenda for Security (the updated Internal Security Strategy). It identifies tackling terrorism and preventing radicalisation, disrupting organised crime, and fighting cybercrime as cross-border security issues for the EU to prioritise. See European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: The European Agenda for Security, 28 April 2015, available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/news/2015/04/20150428_en.htm. A large part of the EU reports on security are not available to a wide public, such as conflict analysis on specific countries.

¹⁷ ADE (*Aide à la Décision Economique*), ‘Thematic Evaluation of European Commission Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding’, October 2011, available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/documents/thematic_evaluation_of_ec_support_to_pb_and_conflict_prevention_2011_en.pdf

¹⁸ The negative consequences of severe restrictions on human rights for sustainable peace are strongly highlighted in EU external policies however. See the EU Action Plan on Democracy and Human Rights, 20 July 2015, available at:

http://eeas.europa.eu/factsheets/news/150720_eu_action_plan_on_human_rights_and_democracy_2015-2019_factsheet_en.htm

the power of attraction. Ian Manners has reconceptualised this approach by focusing on the process of determining and shaping the standards of what is appropriate in international affairs, including the standards of appropriateness in the use of power itself.¹⁹ Means of exerting normative power include persuasion through socialisation mechanisms such as the use of political channels and official contacts through to the promising of rewards such as market access within conditionality mechanisms.

With the prospect of membership, which provides considerable economic and political benefits, the EU is able to combine an important incentive with tough conditions in a managed process to support peaceful development. The mechanisms of conditionality and socialisation were successfully used within the EU's enlargement policy in order to promote peace, including through institutional reform, minority protection, and engagement of elites (although, in the long term, developments in Hungary and Poland may yet lead to a revision of this assessment). In contrast, the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), its approach to countries unlikely to join the EU in its eastern and southern neighbourhoods, has been widely criticised, including for a lack of conflict sensitivity, and has been recently revised.

The EU's real power beyond the membership perspective lies in its trade policy but this has not always been used to promote peace and in some cases may have exacerbated conflict. The EU's trade negotiation was one of the triggers of the regime crisis in Ukraine, largely due to a lack of reflection on its geopolitical implications and on its potential political consequences on the domestic divide within Ukraine. The philosophy behind EU trade relations has often been a simplistic version of the liberal peace theory: trade is by definition in the general interest and thus will not generate conflict. The causes of conflict are then sought elsewhere, such as in geopolitics. Little thought is given to questions concerning the conditions under which a positive relationship implied in interstate trade relations may be broken, such as perceptions of threat, competition between projects for economic integration and asymmetrical trade relations.

There are specific institutional reasons for the lack of reflection on the relationship between trade and conflict. The EC's DG for Trade, the EU's trade arm, has tried to keep its work separate from broader EU external affairs – perhaps understandably, as the involvement of the EEAS and Member States would complicate the development and implementation of policy without being legally necessary²⁰ or obviously beneficial. Safeguards put in place to ensure that trade agreements do no harm, such as human rights clauses, are frequently weak, being poorly-drafted and unenforceable. The Ukraine crisis highlighted Europe's responsibility for exacerbating conflict risks through abstaining from tackling upfront the question of poor governance and corruption. Ukraine may create change as it is now impossible to argue that trade does not affect conflict dynamics.

The relationship between conflict and development is, to some extent, analogous. The EU's development assistance at the level of policy and practice is now more conflict-sensitive than it was six years ago and more funds are devoted to activities in conflict-affected countries.²¹ There is greater awareness of the links between conflict and development, given the evidence now available on the subject.²² But awareness alone is not a sufficient condition for

¹⁹ Tocci, *op. cit.*, p. 4-5.

²⁰ The Lisbon Treaty provides, however, that trade should be used to promote the overall goals of EU external action, including conflict prevention.

²¹ See, for instance, the website of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/fragility-and-crisis-management_en

²² See the World Bank's seminal World Development Report 2011 'Conflict, Security and Development' which collates the evidence on the topic. Available at: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/EXTWDRS/0,,contentMDK:23252415~pagePK:478093~piPK:477627~theSitePK:477624,00.html>

effectiveness. While the EU and European governments have been central in getting a goal on peace included in the Sustainable Development Goals in Agenda 2030, cuts in development assistance by key European donors and its diversion to specific humanitarian concerns, including support to refugees arriving in the EU, may jeopardise implementation of the new framework. Cutting development assistance, however, is likely to prove to be a false economy.

In the MENA region, the EU responded to the Arab Spring with its “More for More” policy, based on rewarding reforms with additional funding or other benefits such as mobility or trade agreements.²³ The policy has not really worked, partly because it involved a more sophisticated form of conditionality than the EU was able and willing to use, and partly because the challenges in the region were simply too great for the EU to provide an effective response through the ENP. Peace, security and conflict were not prominent in either More for More or the broader ENP. EU officials argue that the policy is about conflict prevention because it is based on support for reform, but, with the exception of Israel/the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT), EU aid is such a small proportion of GDP that it does not provide an incentive for reform; again, the EU’s power lies in its economic and trade capacity, with investment funds also significant enough to serve as incentives in some cases. In any case, the idea of peace conditionality has not been part of EU thinking.

The revised ENP includes substantial new sections on security.²⁴ Given the proliferation of actors already providing support to security sectors in the region, the EU needs to be clear what it brings to the table. A focus on genuinely reformist security sector reform (SSR), through work on the accountability of and anti-corruption within security institutions would be one area to explore. In order to be effective at supporting peace in the MENA region, the EU has further to grapple with broader challenges including working with domestic reformist constituencies. Another challenge is the improvement of the relationship with civil society. This continues to be fractious due to complex funding mechanisms and previous support for repressive regimes. The EU also needs to develop a stronger political-diplomatic role – it remains a technical provider of funds in many cases, in part due to contestation over its role: producing analysis and strategy is difficult within the EU system and not always welcomed by the Member States, which may also object to the EU playing a political role in countries where they have interests and significant bilateral engagement.

Outlook: A question of balance

Overall, the picture is complex. The EU uses different sources of power to promote its interests and values in varying proportions. The EU’s military power is weak. It also has to improve its diplomatic capabilities. The EU’s normative power as a community that others want to join is still high, even if it is challenged by a shift in the public opinion away from enlargement. The EU’s normative power in the sense of being a model for others to follow is hard to measure but very likely to be declining given events in recent years, such as the crisis in the Eurozone, especially in relation to Greece, the Brexit drama and the lack of effective response on refugee and migration issues. The EU has some power in its development assistance but that depends on the country and the extent to which it is dependent on the EU (and thus susceptible to the use of leverage by Europe).

²³ See EPLO, ‘Using More for More: Incentivising Peace in the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy’, July 2011, available at: http://www.eplo.org/assets/files/2.%20Activities/Working%20Groups/EEAS/EPLO_Statement_Incentivising_Pea ce_in_the_ENP.pdf

²⁴ See the various documents on the European Neighbourhood Policy available on <http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/>

The EU must prioritise responding to conflict in its external affairs. Notwithstanding the inability of the EU – or any other actor – to prevent or then to manage the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine, the EU has contributed to prevention and resolution of conflict, and continues to do so. CSDP missions contribute to conflict management and in some cases prevention, and more serious attempts to evaluate the missions are developing²⁵, including strategic reviews of missions that now include a wider range of EU stakeholders and consultation with independent experts and even people from the host countries in some cases.

The EU cannot be judged by its failure to prevent or contain conflict in its near neighbourhood alone. It is contributing positively to conflict reduction. Overall, rather than treating civilian versus military responses to violent conflicts as a zero-sum game, whereby any focus on the former is seen as being to the detriment of the latter, or arguing that the EU will only be effective if it starts spending more on military hardware, the answer may lie in a better understanding of the complementary nature of the three types of means to address conflicts described above and the steady reform of instruments that have already proven their efficiency. Given the nature of the causes of contemporary conflict, strengthening capabilities in the field of European diplomacy and normative power are more likely to enhance the EU's effectiveness in conflict prevention, transformation and resolution than a strong focus on the EU's military power.

²⁵ Thierry Tardy, 'CSDP in Action: What Contribution to International Security?', Chaillot Paper No 134, May 2015, available at: www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Chaillot_134_CSDP_missions.pdf