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Upstream of Future Crises

A Comprehensive Approach to European (External) Action

IAN ANTHONY AND LARS-ERIK LUNDIN
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■ The 2015 Action Plan taking forward the European Union's comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises describes a working method that should influence and permeate all EU external action. The comprehensive approach methodology should not be set aside or abandoned when a particular crisis is in close proximity to the EU—even inside its common borders—or when key interests of important member states are at stake.

■ Experiences from recent major crises inside the EU show the difficulties in achieving this ambition, sufficiently integrating both internal and external action into the overall response. The European Agenda for Security promulgated by the European Council in the spring of 2015 did not explicitly involve the European External Action Service. Likewise it is unclear how the launch of the consultation in September 2015 resulting in a Global Strategy in the foreign and security policy domain will engage those actors who focus on the internal security of the EU.

■ This paper is intended to provide some preliminary thinking about how the comprehensive approach might be applied within the institutional framework developed on the basis of the Treaty of Lisbon. It does so within the context of respecting the financial framework accepted for the EU in the coming years (including overall limits on staff numbers) and given the political constraint that member states will be reluctant to transfer new competencies to the EU—and may try to return some existing competencies to member states.

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Content

Executive Summary

The 2015 Action Plan taking forward the European Union's comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises describes a working method that should influence and permeate all EU external action. The comprehensive approach methodology should not be set aside or abandoned when a particular crisis is in close proximity to the EU—even inside its common borders—or when key interests of important member states are at stake.

Experiences from recent major crises inside the EU show the difficulties in achieving this ambition, sufficiently integrating both internal and external action into the overall response. The European Agenda for Security promulgated by the European Council in the spring of 2015 did not explicitly involve the European External Action Service. Likewise it is unclear how the launch of the consultation in September 2015 resulting in a Global Strategy in the foreign and security policy domain will engage those actors who focus on the internal security of the EU.

Upstream attention is required to achieve a consolidated approach in a serious crisis affecting many sectors of European action.

This paper is intended to provide some preliminary thinking about how the comprehensive approach might be applied within the institutional framework developed on the basis of the Treaty of Lisbon. It does so within the context of respecting the financial framework accepted for the EU in the coming years (including overall limits on staff numbers) and given the political constraint that member states will be reluctant to transfer new competencies to the EU—and may try to return some existing competencies to member states.

The paper is based on a discussion that took as its point of departure two hypothetical future scenarios: a major escalation in fighting in Ukraine and a major atrocity in Europe carried out by a violent extremist group. The latter might be either one high-impact attack or a campaign of linked attacks.

Many more such scenarios could have been considered, but the scenario approach is not intended to predict the course of action that might be taken in a given contingency, or to propose a specific course of action. The scenarios are an instrument to help think through what can be done now, upstream to prepare and facilitate the application of a comprehensive approach—should it become necessary.

The work was organized in three meetings that brought together small, but mixed groups of experts and officials from different parts of the EU institutions. The participants provided invaluable information and expertise, but the responsibility for the report lies with the authors.

Main recommendation: The role of external action upstream of future crises

To prepare for the creation of a strategic overview quickly under pressure:

1. Make the office of the HR/VP the landing point for information flowing in from various sources.

2. Make the HR/VP a catalyst and strategic coordinator, giving sufficient attention to understanding member state perspectives on the most pressing issues of the day, and engaging in strategic political dialogue with key external partners.

3. Recreate a policy unit at the direct disposal of the HR/VP with high quality diplomatic staff seconded from member states and the Commission.

4. Combine EU resources with informal clusters of member states that have the most relevant and greatest expertise to make a short-cut to a common approach on a given issue.

5. Empower personnel at working level to develop joint initiatives on the basis of simple and clear instructions from the EU leadership, without prior top-level agreement.

6. Use a common method for synthesis reports that incorporate analysis of key topics, but exclude excessive information that could obscure key messages or make documents difficult to assimilate quickly.

To promote convergence of views:

1. Leverage the legitimacy of the HR/VP in both the Commission and in intergovernmental frameworks by promoting joint initiatives. Mandate joint exercises between Commission and EEAS staff on various levels.

2. Use joint training strategies to develop a staff pool able to serve across the institutions comfortably, including in Delegations and able to digest complex information from other services quickly.

3. Instruct staff on horizontal communication using meaningful reports built on declassified and open information. Establish routines to increase the flexibility of rules on access to secure communications in a crisis.

To promote engagement with partners:

4. Focus the engagement of the HR/VP on policy dialogue with key world actors that will be engaged in almost all crisis and conflict situations and ensure that specific and systematic dialogue on crisis and conflict management is initiated with those actors.

5. Equip the HR/VP with Special Representatives of a stature that enables shuttle diplomacy. In order to enhance the multitasking capabilities of the EU, authorise the Special Representatives to represent the EU in policy dialogue with countries and institutions on the highest level where the HR/VP is not directly engaged.

6. Ensure that the Special Representatives have the necessary level of resources and logistical support. Link the Special Representatives to the trilateral coordination between the President of the Commission and the President of the European Council and the HR/VP.

7. Ensure that the HR/VP is represented with respect for continuity on the appropriate level in CSDP, including in meetings with defence ministers and NATO, as well as in the European Parliament. Support the HR/VP with adequate staff that would also help prepare her on the hard security aspects of a crisis and in digesting available military advice from CSDP structures.

1. The call for comprehensive approaches

There is no absence of threats and challenges to European and international security, as recently dramatically illustrated by the linked, politically motivated attacks in Brussels, Copenhagen and Paris, the refugee crisis, and by the on-going conflict in Ukraine. Moreover, the probability that there will be an atrocity of greater magnitude inside the European Union (EU), or that there will be an escalation of fighting in Ukraine, must be considered high.

Almost 25 years after the Treaty on European Union (TEU) was signed, a more comprehensive or coherent EU approach to security challenges remains an objective, rather than accomplished fact. In a recent speech, Federica Mogherini noted that ›sometimes I say that the European Union is a superpower, and someone doubts, but we are a superpower if we combine our tools. Most of all, we need to realise unity is our greatest strength. We have to combine our assets and our international expertise, as we all head for the same goal‹.[1]

An EU response is now expected and demanded in any crisis situation, and this is testimony to the fact that it has become an important, established feature of international affairs. Even where the EU currently is *not* expected to be leading crisis management efforts (e.g. in Ukraine, where Germany and France have taken the lead) important instruments of influence in the hands of the EU are employed—both restrictive measures and the measures to enable Ukraine to better manage its economic and governance problems.

It is nevertheless still typical that during and after a major shock, or high profile event, there is acute awareness that a more integrated approach is needed. Is there, then, realistically, such a thing as a comprehensive approach which can be applied early, before crises and conflicts occur, and sustained until greater peace and stability has been achieved?

A discourse on a comprehensive approach methodology is under consideration inside the EU. The approach outlined in a joint communication on the comprehensive approach for external crises and conflicts in late 2013,

1. Keynote Speech at Chatham House By the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini, 24 February 2015, <http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150224-03-en.htm>.

and Council conclusions of member states in May 2014, is reflected in the 2015 action plan proposing a case study follow-up.[2] The approach will continue to evolve as the case studies are analysed and the results are applied.

Already, critics argue that greater attention should be paid to certain elements, such as working with key partners, and strengthening hard security capabilities that can be deployed independently. Others argue for a stronger differentiation to increase effectiveness (particularly where relations with neighbours are concerned), tailoring responses to specific contexts rather than seeking an integrating strategy.

The specific response in any given crisis situation, or after the outbreak of a conflict, will be decided by the leaders of the EU member states, including the scale and the balance between civilian and military instruments. However, the nature and effectiveness of this immediate response will be determined by the degree of **preparedness**.

Preparedness has several dimensions. One is the way in which specific actions taken in the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) to respond to a given situation combine with the continuous long-term actions that the EU is engaged in. The EU is active in its neighbourhood and in every country that is defined as fragile or conflict-affected. Any emergency action within a space that includes territories in parts of West and North Africa, the Middle East, South and Central Asia and Eastern Europe will take place in a country where the EU already has continuous, extensive engagement.

A second dimension of preparedness is equalizing levels of knowledge and understanding across the EU regarding conditions on the ground in all of the places where intervention is considered necessary, as well as past and current actions being undertaken. Improving the knowledge of what is being done by member states in national programmes undertaken in fragile and conflict-affected countries is an important element in improving preparedness.

Another dimension is enhancing the understanding of the links between the internal and external dimensions of issues of concern, notably on migration. Past actions

are known to have fed a radical narrative that was used to increase recruitment by terrorist groups. Harvesting and applying knowledge gained from past experience to avoid repeating mistakes is an important element of preparedness in this context.

The inter-connected nature of the problems calls for a security-related analysis of all actions taken in fragile and conflict-affected countries. This analysis should use a common methodology and draw on a body of information that is available across the EU institutions, and to member states, in order to promote equal levels of knowledge and understanding

2. The current context for developing a comprehensive approach methodology

In presenting an overview of work resulting from the December 2013 Council Conclusions on defence matters, the current High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) noted the deterioration in the security situation in the direct neighbourhood of the EU.[3] As the concurrency, intensity, frequency and complexity of conflicts and crises in the neighbourhood have increased, the likelihood of a number of crises landing on the table of the European Council at the same time has also grown.

More coherence and comprehensiveness in EU external action may have become an imperative. However, after a number of years in which the financial crisis has been addressed at the level of heads of state and government, the EU now has a crisis management capability on the highest level.

All of this takes place as new leaders take office and seek to define the way ahead for their work in the EU institutions. Important steps have been taken through the new leadership in the European Commission to clarify the line of command and to impose a stronger coordinating role of the HR/VP. The new President of the European Commission has taken the lead to reduce the distance between the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission. All new Commissioners have accepted

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2. Taking forward the EU's Comprehensive Approach to external conflict and crises – Action Plan 2015, Brussels, 10 April 2015.

3. Head of European Defence Agency Report ahead of the June 2015 European Council.

to work in clusters, including in a Commissioners Group on External Action.[4] It is important to stress that this does *not* mean that the EEAS as such or indeed the intergovernmental domain of the EU has been put in the lead of all EU external action. Rather it means that the double legitimacy of the HR/VP as intended in the Treaty of Lisbon may now be more fully exploited. As well as providing a structural underpinning for the development of a comprehensive approach, the commissioners group should also provide a natural partner for the Foreign Affairs Council—which should further contribute to policy coherence.

The new High Representative has already presented a **strategic review** of the EU foreign and security policy to the European Council in June 2015, and has been tasked by the Council to prepare a **Global Strateg**y document for June 2016. The consultation process underpinning the elaboration of this document will be dependent upon continuous political support from the Presidents of the European Council, of the Commission and the European Parliament.

The security strategy from 2003 was developed outside normal decision-making procedures in the EU, with little operational follow up. A Global Strategy should be linked to the operational follow-up from the on-going **review of the Neighbourhood Policy** and also the fate of the more concrete communications dealing with crisis areas such as the communication on Syria, Iraq and Daesh.

The recently proposed **European Agenda for security,** which is fundamentally linked to the internal security strategy of the EU with a focus on counterterrorism, makes reference to the strategic review. However, the development of internal security work in the EU has been largely decoupled from the external agenda to this point.

Against this background it is of course highly likely that the EU will *not* be able to move to a fully coherent, integrated response to external crises and conflicts in one jump. However, while in the past security related strategies have either been mainly intergovernmental or community-based, there is currently an opportunity to take some useful next steps that are of value in their own right, and also a contribution to creating a sense of shared ownership in the EU institutions as regards security related strategies.

3. Outcomes from simulating a political requirement to develop a comprehensive approach as a response to a major crisis

The method of developing thinking about the comprehensive approach by way of case studies (the same approach taken in the Action Plan) is perhaps most consistent with the main paradigm for EU external action as regards conflicts and crises.

The 2015 Action Plan will utilize lessons from four case studies: Afghanistan, the Caribbean region, the Sahel region and Somalia. However, it is also useful to consider the applicability of the comprehensive approach as a working method to high profile cases in the European Neighbourhood and to issues linking internal and external security of the EU. To that end, this paper discusses two such cases: namely **Ukraine** and the issue of **radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism**.

In cases such as these, **what absent capabilities for coherent action would be particularly regretted *ex post?*** In thinking about the capabilities that could be applied, it is assumed that certain constraining parameters cannot be modified quickly or easily:

■ The institutional framework developed on the basis of the Treaty of Lisbon.

■ The financial framework accepted for the EU in coming years, including limits on staff numbers.

■ The political constraints imposed in the current situation, where there is a reluctance to transfer new competencies to the EU, and some momentum to discuss which EU competencies might be returned to member states.

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4. The cluster system now set up in the European Commission with each cluster led by a vice president of the Commission is not an entirely new idea. A decade ago the external relations Commissioners met regularly, but mostly in the absence of the high representative for foreign and security policy (at that time, Javier Solana). When the practice is resumed under the chairmanship in the external cluster of the HR/VP new opportunities for coordination arise.

In discussing the two cases, therefore, three key questions were uppermost for each of them:

■ What ›low hanging fruit‹ could be harvested relatively easily to promote a *de facto* comprehensive approach?

■ What further improvements could be achieved through a change management programme, without significant financial implications?

■ What financial implications in terms of capacity building (through reallocation of resources) are deemed warranted in order to develop the approach further during the current financial perspective?

In thinking about the two cases, the approach takes as a point of departure the explanation in the 2015 Action Plan, that the comprehensive approach is ›not about »what to do«, but more about »how to do it« and how to make best use of the EU's collective resources and instruments, with a particular focus on conflict and crisis situations‹.[5]

In keeping with that approach, the case studies were an instrument to help pinpoint and illustrate actionable difficulties that will face the European institutions when undertaking such an effort. The intention was not to suggest what the EU could have done in the past, or should do in the future, in the specific cases chosen.

As part of the process, consideration was given to:

■ Whether the scope of the effort is broad enough to fit the ambition to be comprehensive, but specific enough to provide relatively simple instructions that can guide action at all levels of the EU system.

■ Whether there is sufficient capacity to link the different expertise available in relevant parts of the EU—including local and central EU institutions, in member states and in the non-governmental community. In particular, whether pathways exist to join together security-related expertise in a timely manner.

■ Whether a structure is in place to harvest information that can contribute to continuous improvements in the

effectiveness of EU actions. Given that the time frame would not allow a thorough impact assessment before an action is launched, what questions should be put that will allow an assessment of the action after the fact (building on earlier evaluations)?

For the purpose of this paper the focus of case studies was how to prepare the HR/VP to brief the European Council regularly on:

■ An enhanced comprehensive approach to Ukraine, focusing on external action aspects; and

■ An enhanced comprehensive approach to the external aspects of countering radicalization and recruitment leading to terrorist attacks against Europe and Europeans.

The cases highlight some common issues as well as having features that differ somewhat:

The EU has found it difficult to understand the full impact of its own actions in particular circumstances. For example, the Ukraine case has commanded enormous high level attention in recent years, resulting in a series of detailed action plans and progress reports. EU relations with Ukraine have explicitly been described as a part of a comprehensive approach to the European Neighbourhood. Nevertheless, the full impact on relations with Russia of the decision by Ukraine to sign an Association Agreement (AA) was not appreciated or, if it was, then the possible consequences were ignored. The EU was not prepared for the scale of Russian reaction.

The very high level of Russian sensitivity over Ukraine reflects not only the historical and cultural legacy of the past, but also Russian concerns about military security, the potential emergence of a Ukrainian government perceived as hostile to Moscow, the protection of the Russian language and ethnic Russians in Ukraine and the impact on Russian plans to develop a Eurasian Union. However, the Commission treated negotiations on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), as part of a wider agreement with Ukraine, as a technical issue. While Russia was aware in general terms of the process, the Commission had no mandate or framework to discuss the matter with third parties during negotiations.

At the point where Russian objections were made clear, they were dismissed as unreasonable and politically

5. Joint Staff Working Document, *Taking forward the EU's Comprehensive Approach to external conflict and crises: Action Plan 2015,* Council document 7913/15, Brussels 14 April 2014.

motivated. Russia made a choice not to participate in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) when it was launched in 2004, and was not considered within the Eastern Partnership (EaP), when it was launched in 2009 as the eastern dimension of the ENP. However, relations with Russia and relations with eastern partners are clearly intertwined, and the full impact should have been treated in a more integrated way, even though the decision not to participate was in fact taken by Russia.

The EU has found it difficult to understand and assimilate the security impact of rapid developments in technology. For example, the issue of radicalisation that may lead to violence has come back to public attention on a number of occasions since the mass impact terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001. However, the issue has not commanded continuous top-level attention, and as a result it has periodically fallen out of operational focus.

After the bombings in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005, the EU further developed an overall strategy to combat radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism, together with an Action Plan to achieve the objectives of the strategy.[6] The documents were prepared in 2004–05, before the growth of social media, which together with the rapid spread of information and communication technologies, combined to change the nature of the problem the EU was trying to solve. At the time the EU prepared its strategy, Facebook was newly invented and at an experimental stage with few users, while Twitter, Instagram and SnapChat did not exist at all. The response elaborated in 2005 heavily emphasized actions by member states in the field of law enforcement. However, the combination of social media as a form of communication and the development of smartphones as platforms for viewing and exchanging digital content has further eroded accepted boundaries between national and international security, and between military security and law enforcement.

The EU has found it hard to situate the need for a comprehensive approach against a backdrop of recent events. In this regard, both the cases of Ukraine and radicalisation illustrate the difficulty of bringing together empirical material from the recent past to inform

the internal EU discussion. Here the problem is not lack of relevant inputs, because (as noted above) the EU has been considering both radicalisation and relations with Ukraine in detail and for a considerable time. However, the material has often been produced by different parts of the EU system using reporting formats based on the specific needs of the producer. When a trigger event occurs, the response to dramatic events surrounding, for example, the Paris Charlie Hebdo attacks and the conflict in Ukraine, should draw on an information base that can rapidly place the events in a wider context, and it should use a format that can be shared across the EU system and quickly digested by those that use it.

The EU has found it hard to draw upon available research to supplement and support its own capacities. A great deal of expertise and material that is directly relevant to the issues the EU is addressing exists in the non-governmental community. This includes both the growing number of think-tanks in Europe, as well as the academic sector. Looking at the literature on Ukraine and on radicalisation, there are a significant number of reports that anticipate and describe the problems in ways that could have helped provide situational and context awareness. However, the material is enormous, unwieldy and in need of synthesis, and it is difficult to incorporate into the EU framework of analysis.

The EU has found it difficult to incorporate all relevant capacities when thinking about effective implementation. In this regard the question is which scope of action should be defined. Both cases are similar in the sense that there is a seemingly obvious focus, but also a necessary wider scope, which becomes obvious only after a thoughtful reflection. Many questions need to be explored in order to identify and address the causes, rather than symptoms and to adopt a long time perspective focussing both on prevention in time and end states.

The cases indicate that the EU has made an important start with the creation and development of a Conflict Early Warning System (EWS) to bring together a full range of actors, both in Brussels and from the field, and to incorporate perspectives from member states. However, the cases suggest that the EWS has to continue to develop its perspective on what modern conflict prevention and peacebuilding entails—including further synergies with actors that are engaged in promoting

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6. The European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism, Council document 14781/1/05, Brussels 24 November 2005.

and safeguarding internal security. Conflict analysis including assessment of risks for further escalation or widening of the conflict as well as identifying expertise necessary to be included in the inter-service consultation are issues that require upgraded attention. In this context the Commissioners Group on External Action should provide a new basis for a comprehensive approach to external crisis and conflicts that was not available in the past. The external action cluster should assist in meeting the expectation expressed in the Lisbon Treaty that institutions are now expected to work closely together on security issues. Any comprehensive approach endeavour would therefore need to include not only what could be done in the intergovernmental context, but also in the Community context and the link between internal and external security needs to be fully established. Both cases are highly relevant when discussing these dimensions.

A significant and noteworthy shortfall is the lack of security expertise, including military, which is largely missing from most EU delegations and from most of the Commission services. An issue that the case studies were not able to reach a clear view on with the available material was the problem of liaison between different types of expertise in the Commission and the EEAS on the one hand and member states on the other. It is clear that member states have diverse views on both the appropriate relationship between the EU and Ukraine, and also on the response to radicalisation. However, how serious is the problem of coherence in this dimension, and what can be done about it?

The ideal situation would have been one where all EU services and the member states are fully aware of the aspects that will need to be taken into account when developing policies relating to the two types of situations under discussion in the cases. The cases illustrate that in real life the situation is likely to be less than ideal with problems of resources, organization and lack of political will in order to pursue a really comprehensive analysis.

The totality of EU member state actions has to be considered not only in specific regions, but also globally and functionally. For example, a large part of the 2005 strategy for combating radicalisation and recruitment to terrorism was devoted to how the EU could work more closely with the United Nations in taking effective action. From a multilateral perspective there needs to be a discussion of who should do what in the international community. Should the EU try to enable others to do more?

The approach to radicalisation is one illustration of why capacity issues have to be looked at upstream from present concrete proposals. The primarily internal focus of the radicalisation agenda in the past did not take account of important external developments, or the rapid development of key enabling technologies. Moreover, once attention turned to the external dimension, the geographic limitations of current EU approaches (where separate strategies address Syria/Iraq/Daesh and Somalia/Sahel) are exposed. With whom should policy dialogues be pursued both on the level of global actors and also on the non-governmental level?

The cases illustrate the importance of the current EU focus on strategic communication, both from the point of view of understanding the issue and developing an effective approach to it. This appears to be a multidimensional issue, with the need to address sophisticated communication strategies aimed at altering or shaping opinion in Europe. These might be promoted by states or non-state actors, and may use both traditional mainstream media (including in its modern digital form) as well as the new social media. Strategic communication may target either elite opinion or the general public, and the instrumental use of strategic communication may also co-exist with the (more difficult to classify) generation and spreading of ideas and behaviour across the digital space—something that has been compared to the spreading of an infectious virus.[7]

The EU has not found a smooth interface between different kinds of intervention, including the sequencing of short-term and longer-term missions. This includes different EU missions, projects and instruments as well as closer integration with international partners. The wider framework provided by the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development has reinforced the perspective that the need for sustainable development is not limited to a sub-set of least developed economies.[8]

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7. Olivia Solon, ›Richard Dawkins on the internet‹s hijacking of the word »meme«‹, *Wired,* 13 June 2013.

8. United Nations, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN General Assembly document A/69/L.85, New York, 12 August 2015.

As a growing number of EU external programmes in the field of development assistance are implemented in fragile and conflict affected countries, understanding the security and development nexus has become an imperative. The projects financed by different EU instruments in fragile and conflict affected locations (of which there are many) and missions and operations carried out under the CSDP should be mutually reinforcing.

The EU will have to develop effective responses to important issues that are of indirect relevance to the comprehensive approach. An issue such as the security of supply and continuity of service as regards important flows—such as secure access to energy at an acceptable price for EU member states—is an example of an important, but indirect, dimension of a comprehensive approach in the Ukraine case. The perception that EU policies may have contributed in some way to the dete-riorating conditions of people living in the Middle East may be an indirect contributing factor in the mobilisation and radicalisation of insurgents and terrorists. The cases illustrate the growing need to pay close attention to the security of European staff deployed in missions and pro-jects through the EU, as well as the security of staff from member states and international organisations (such as the Organisation fo Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE). The security and integrity of information is an important aspect related to political reporting.

4. Harvesting ›low hanging fruit‹: recommendations for short-term implementation

Against this background of the information revealed in the case studies, the relevance of the three questions above (low hanging fruit, change management options, and the need for reallocation of resources) was again considered on a more general level.

4.1 Creating a strategic overview under time pressure in order to harvest the most obvious ›low hanging fruit‹

The cases clearly illustrate the need for a strategic overview that incorporates both short- and longer-term perspectives, presented in a way that allows senior management to set priorities on the basis of the objectives adopted by the European Council. Only in this way will it be possible to harvest the most obvious low hanging fruit: clear and strategic messages from the top hierarchy to staff and the outside world.

Creating this strategic overview at short notice would probably not produce the best guidance unless there was already preparation to assimilate potentially very large amounts of information, to understand the current status of actions that are already being taken, and to put that information into a structure that can inform decision-making. Without this preparation there is a high risk that lack of awareness would lead to duplication of existing efforts or repeating past efforts that produced no (or negative) results.

Finding the appropriate landing point for information generated inside the EU system is a challenge, partly because of the quantities of data that could be involved and partly because assessment would require staff with a range of different skills and disciplines. Moreover, unlike issues related to Ukraine (which has been the subject of sustained attention over a long period in country strategy papers, as part of the Eastern Partnership and through the Neighbourhood Programme) attention to the issue of radicalisation has been episodic, with periods of intense top-level attention interspersed with periods where the issue has not been in operational focus.

In the first instance, the landing point will be the office of the HR/VP, who has a double legitimacy in the community and in the intergovernmental domains. However, without a minimum of order and clarity in the agenda of the HR/VP no plan to develop a comprehensive approach for the EU is likely to become a reality. The HR/VP cannot engage personally in the details of specific negotiations and processes, or become excessively engaged in bureaucratic processes around operational procedures for human resources.[9]

The HR/VP must be a catalyst and strategic coordinator. That includes giving sufficient attention to understanding member state perspectives on the most pressing issues of the day, and engaging in strategic political dialogue with key external partners. The office of the HR/VP must be supported by a sufficient quantity of staff, that should be equipped with a range of inter-disciplinary skills.

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9. Andrew Sherriff and Volker Hauck, *Will the Action Plan to Implement the EU's Comprehensive Approach Have Any Bite?* ECDPM, 23 May 2014

The logic of making the HR/VP a strategic coordinator breaks down if all decisions have to be taken or blessed at the highest level. The development of joint proposals for submission to the cluster of Commissioners should be possible without prior agreement at the level of the cabinet. This is the only way to produce integrated and creative proposals without delay.

At working level, personnel should be empowered to take joint initiatives on the basis of simple and clear instructions from the EU leadership, without prior top-level agreement.

An early priority would be a **process for information triage,** assigning priority to the information that can be assimilated most easily, is most needed, and is most likely to help achieve success. Information triage would be made easier if the format and content of reports received from inside the EU system were more uniform.

The information streams that would need to be tapped include conflict analysis, analyses of flows (positive and negative) at stake that could impact on EU security, country and regional assessments, assessments of functional issues (such as progress in governance, economic development, human rights and freedom-related issues), the status of hard power factors (including not only relevant military and paramilitary capabilities, but also developments in restrictive measures and sanctions) and the institutional capacities that can be brought to bear on the problem from the EU side.

In addition, since the end of the 1990s (when a European security policy started to take shape in earnest) there has been an explosion of public source information, which can now be easily harvested because it is available via the Internet. The enormous amount of information is both an advantage, and also a concern because it lacks synthesis and is rarely subject to quality control.

At present, reporting does not always appear to highlight the critical factors from a security perspective. For example, in spite of the huge amount of information about Ukraine generated from engagement at many different levels and under many different frameworks, the EU was heavily criticized for lacking conflict sensitivity in its policies and actions. Information related to Ukraine did not give sufficient attention to the conflict risk factors associated with various policy choices.

Enhanced information exchange and policy coordination, which is proposed here, will generate a demand for additional briefings, including on complex topics. Therefore, there is a need for rules about when reports are necessary and how they are written.

To the extent possible, reporting within the EU system should follow rules that generate synthesis reports incorporating analysis of key topics. The reporting should not include excessively detailed information that could obscure key messages or make documents difficult to assimilate quickly.

To help **identify necessary expertise to be included in the inter-service consultation** the approach of the new Commission to work in clusters can provide a new basis for managing the issues noted above, and an external action cluster led by the new HR/VP is already part of this setup. In order to ensure that there is a joint EU and member state effort, the application of the cluster approach could be considered in other contexts. The member states are likely to have varying degrees of expertise on given issues, depending on their national priorities and interests. There are examples where this has been used for instance in the implementation of Instrument for Stability projects but much more could be done in this direction.

Combining the EU resources with those of clusters of member states that have the most relevant national capacities and the greatest expertise could be a short-cut to a common approach.

To **achieve full awareness,** authorities cannot assume that the sources they control directly have the best available information, or that they have it first. Therefore, the process has to draw on information from elsewhere, including the media, the business community, think-tanks and from civil society. The available information base (a significant part of which may have been generated through EU-financed projects and activities) is large, unwieldy and requires synthesis.

A structured pathway to promote rapid interaction with certified expert partners should be based on certified expertise that goes beyond existing arrangements that focus on conflict analysis to include other functional aspects of ›hard‹ and ›soft‹ security.

When **identifying essential capacities** for effective implementation, deciding which of these essential capacities is available internally and which has to be found through partnerships is closely linked to the scope of action. Both cases that formed the background for this paper are similar in the sense that there is a seemingly obvious scope of immediate action, as well as a wider scope of action that is necessary, but only becomes obvious after a thoughtful reflection.

Even as the immediate priorities are addressed, a comprehensive approach has to create a space in which there can be thinking about causes, not only symptoms, where long-term action to prevent the loss of short-term progress can be planned, and where actions to prevent the recurrence of the same problems in other locations can be considered.

As an example of a limited staff reallocation measure the following stands out as perhaps the most important. The policy unit existing during the period in office of Javier Solana should be recreated using one high quality diplomat seconded from each of the member states and from the Commission. With a policy unit of this size attached directly to the Cabinet, and properly staffed, the HR/VP would benefit from an enhanced capacity for strategic planning.

A strategic assessment and long-term planning capacity has to form part of the support infrastructure to the office of the HR/VP.

4.2 Promoting coherence at four levels

While there are many issues of coherence on the table when it comes to EU external action (such as effective multilateralism and policy coherence in development policy), there are four that seem to be central in crisis conditions. It is these, therefore, that require particular attention in the framework of the comprehensive approach. They can be visualised as formats of coordination on four levels:

■ Create the greatest possible sphere of common action by the EU, the United States, the Russian Federation and China;

■ Ensure that the EU and its member states develop and deliver the same messages;

■ Ensure that the long-term actions and the immediate crisis response of the European Commission and the intergovernmental bodies in the Council served by the EEAS are compatible; and

■ Align the efforts of the actors responsible for internal and external aspects of security for the EU.

4.3 The EU and its member states should deliver the same messages

The entire common foreign and security policy is in itself an effort to create a common understanding between member states and EU institutions on important topics, although the intergovernmental domain in the EU has limited budgetary resources compared to the operational budgets handled mainly by the European Commission. However, looking at the totality of resources available for external action in the EU, the lion's share are in the hands of the member states, supporting activities implemented directly or through international organisations other than the EU—first and foremost, the United Nations system of organisations, NATO and the OSCE.

Clearly, coherence between EU and member states policies must be key for effectiveness. In this sense the focus at the highest level is on the European Council, with its regular meetings of heads of state and government in the EU. To what extent will this body be able to focus not only on the financial crisis but on threats and challenges in wider domains of security?

There is clearly, therefore, a **policy dialogue requirement:** meaning a mechanism for reaching agreement on clear and agreed messages to inform EU actions and that can be transmitted through the activities of all EU member states and institutions in different formats around the globe.

The most important role of the EU may not be its formal status in international organisations. It is important and useful that the EU is now represented with its legal personality in most countries around the world. It is also important and useful that the recognition of the EU has been somewhat enhanced in many international

organisations, although for the most part it is still an observer in these organisations. It's real role and influence is informal. It is the extent to which member states accept to harmonise their policies in the EU framework, and to work together inside international organisations, to enable those organisations to perform better, which makes the real difference.

4.4 Promoting convergence among EU institutions

After the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, **EU institutions are now expected to work closely together on security issues**. To that end, the cases suggest that a comprehensive approach will have to combine three different paradigms into a unified framework, since the EU is never likely to rely exclusively on one of them.

A *soft power paradigm,* based on convincing internal and external actors that EU objectives are valid and useful to them, involves the engagement of diplomatic and political resources in various frameworks (international and multilateral, regional, national and local).

An *enabling paradigm* relies on applying programmes and projects in a consistent way over an extended period in order to build the capacities that will help partners take effective action in future on their own initiative, and using their own resources, to address issues of mutual concern. This means that where capacity building is undertaken through different frameworks at the same time, or undertaken in sequence, the capacity building effort has to build towards a common goal.

A *coercive or hard power paradigm* uses instruments to change the balance of advantages for an adversary, shaping their thinking when contemplating actions that are contrary to EU interests.

To this point, actions have not been able to combine the policy approaches within a single framework, and the comprehensive approach communication itself was not coupled with an impact assessment to analyse the implications of applying each of them, or applying them in different combinations.

To fully leverage the double legitimacy (in the community and in the intergovernmental domain) of the HR/VP it

needs to be clearly established that favouritism is not being practiced and attention and resources are not being steered by the personal priorities of the HR/VP. It also requires that initiatives are seen from the outset as joint, rather than driven by the Commission or the EEAS with the other invited to be a participant.

To a certain extent problems of coordination and coherence in crisis situations are a matter of **lines of command** and the way different platforms are set up in order to create the necessary sense of ownership. However, more fundamental issues relate to the differences in approach and culture that are barriers to natural cooperation and the unequal knowledge and expertise at the disposal of the various institutions.

A relative disconnect between different types of expertise will be a barrier to joint initiatives, because one or other actor will feel that they are at a disadvantage in the dialogue. Knowledge of countries, which is available across the system, needs to be supplemented with a minimum level of thematic expertise, sufficient to allow institutions to feel that they are contributing to joint processes rather than spectating.

The types of thematic expertise are changing with the evolving security environment, and knowledge of issues like cyber security or energy security may be in short supply and difficult to develop quickly. Similarly, the absence of military and security expertise in the Commission and in the EU delegations becomes a major problem when business continuity is threatened by crisis.

An element of preparing the ground for a comprehensive approach is the upstream promotion and development of **epistemic communities** or **communities of knowledge** inside the EU institutions and with a strong participation of member states experts. These communities can only be created through horizontal, rather than vertical, initiatives.

All actors clearly cannot internalize every kind of expertise, and enhancing **analytic capability** quickly in a crisis situation may require a shared pool of experts available on a short-term framework contract basis with external entities. The Joint Research Centre would be a potential hub supporting epistemic communities available across the institutions, including for non-technical topics that may not normally be seen as security issues, but which

can be very important in specific situations. There are also a variety of past and present experiments with the creation of research consortia, expert groups and non-governmental networks that should be properly evaluated.

4.5 Promoting coherence between internal and external security

As regards the internal and external aspects of security for the EU, this is perhaps the area where there is least clarity and most work remaining to be done.

The effective management of flows into and out of the EU requires an approach that spans multiple regions of the world. The **EU Maritime Security Strategy** is perhaps the clearest step in the direction of a comprehensive framework that explicitly links internal and external security issues in a cross-sectoral approach. While it is too soon to say how the strategy will be implemented, this process will produce a lot of information of relevance to the comprehensive approach more generally.

While procedures are now in place to coordinate the work of external action Commissioners with the HR/VP, coordination with thematic Commissioners whose work has a heavy focus on internal policies (which would have been helpful to avoid mistakes in the past) would certainly help in the future. A key aspect here is also whether in the domestic political debates in the member states a clear link is being made between external aspects of security and the internal situation in each member state and whether a clearer analysis of this would have been helpful to avoid mistakes.

The Commission proposal for a **new European Agenda on Migration,** incorporated internal and external dimensions, and proposed both immediate measures to respond to the current crisis situation in the Mediterranean and steps to be taken to better manage migration in all its aspects. However, member state reaction has been to promote collective actions on selected elements in the integrated package while reserving the rest of the elements for action at national level.

Thus, in one key test case, coherence is still lacking in a number of key dimensions. The 2014 Joint Communication laying out ways to strengthen the EU

efforts to **prevent radicalisation to terrorism and violent extremism** is perhaps also a case where thinking appears to be at a fairly early stage. Working more closely with partner countries to prevent and counter radicalisation both inside and outside the EU is one of ten identified priorities. The activities under this priority focus on capacity building in countries and regions outside the EU, making the external action appear to be a discrete issue. In fact, the other nine priorities should all contain joint initiatives that include participation by actors inside and outside the EU.

5. A change management process could promote mobilization and exchange of knowledge

A limited **change management process** could be set in motion internally in the EU institutions to prepare better for those occasions where staff need to work together across normal administrative boundaries. The elements of a change management system would include creating space for joint activities as a matter of routine, as well as modified staff training based around an integrated curriculum.

The change management process should be led from the Cabinet of the HR/VP, with her double legitimacy in the intergovernmental but also community domains. A responsible officer should not be perceived to be imposing the culture and practices of one institution onto others.

In order to cooperate with each other, the **staff in different services need a necessary minimum level of knowledge** about the perspectives of colleagues elsewhere in the system. Only in that way can they understand and benefit from advice that is received from other services.

During the last five years the European Commission and the HR/VP have put forward a number of joint communications on key thematic and geographic issues, but in almost every case the capability of the EEAS to liaise with Commission services on complex thematic issues has been close to non-existent. On cyber for instance only one single national expert in the external action service was available to do the coordination with the Commission on this enormously important topic. On

energy policy the Commission moved the energy cell, which normally would have moved over to the EEAS, away from the units to be transferred. Significantly for crisis management, the EEAS is still not a part of the overall crisis response coordination system established in the European Commission. Regarding a functional issue such as combating radicalisation leading to extremist violence, the EEAS organisational chart gives no indication where relevant expertise could be found, and one strongly suspects the same issues will arise.

Training strategies should raise the capacity of staff on key issues and, over time, build a pool of deployable staff that can function effectively in different parts of the EU (including in Delegations). A training strategy for development of human resources with a focus on issues of fragility and resilience is one good example of an issue where a common language and understanding could be developed across institutions.

This paper is not based on the proposition that budgetary resources in external relations need to be increased, either for development or security purposes—although there may be a lack of flexibility in the use of funds. However, there is a critical issue surrounding the availability of staff, and the availability of administrative budgets to allow for training, missions, better logistics, better communication tools, etc.

In the absence of a positive assessment of what the EU can do together with the member states in support of security, a generic trend to seek budgetary discipline will dictate resource allocation. Innovations like the establishment of clusters, or a change management process, will increase the need for budgets to support training and travel, and the explanation of why dedicated resources are needed should be one part of making the case for necessary changes.

When discussing concrete cases, it is noteworthy that the way European leaders encourage staff to work together in a new way can make a real difference. A strategic communication should cascade down from top to senior management from senior management to middle management and from middle management to staff, and include time to be set aside for training in mixed groups where different types of staff can meet and learn from each other.

Effective **policy coordination** requires a significant capability to make sure that information is also spread horizontally in a format that can be read and understood, and notably respect the information security requirements in place.

When the response to a crisis is being crafted at short notice, the importance of **security of information** procedures is likely to be heightened. In a crisis situation there will be an enhanced *need to know* on the part of many in different places in the EU structures, but at the same time a more cautious approach to the risk of information leaking.

The possibility to mobilise coherent EU action would be enhanced if habits of information sharing and crisis communication (both horizontally and vertically) are developed in advance. To further strengthen common understanding of institutional positions, a dedicated training module could be introduced to instruct how to communicate horizontally using meaningful reports built on declassified and open information.

Nevertheless, in certain situations (for example, where critical infrastructure is affected) a comprehensive response will require opening access to secure communication tools for parties that are not normally authorised. A process to make rapid derogations from information security routines should be in place prior to a crisis, and lessons learned from the financial crisis could provide useful ideas in this regard.

6. Engagement with partners

Apart from a representational function that promotes the corporate identity of the EU, in almost every crisis the EU will work with partners. The partners are almost certain to include other institutions, notably **multilateral organisations** such as the UN, NATO, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and a host of sub-regional organisations. Partners will also include key partners—in virtually every case the United States, and in many cases also Russia, and (with increasing frequency) China.

Staying true to the idea of the HR/VP as catalyst and strategic coordinator, it is not possible to engage with the multitude of potential partners constantly and in detail. The HR/VP would **prioritise political dialogue with a**

few strategic international actors and try to pursue this dialogue on a continuous basis, leaving others to complement this action with other interlocutors and in other contexts.

Taking the initiative to pursue a comprehensive, continuous and systematic policy dialogue with the United States, Russia and China, and in the future possibly with global actors such as India, is a major and very painful decision. It is painful in the sense that it requires the HR/VP to set negative priorities; to decide what she is not going to do in order to make space for systematic contact with global actors.

Part of preparing the cooperation in a crisis situation will be building on preparations made as part of **political dialogue,** where the EU delegations and hierarchy on different levels in the institutions could already do much more in order to promote continuous exchanges with external partners. In addition to the perspectives from world actors that will be relevant in virtually all cases, what happens on a country level is likely to be critically important in a specific context.

It is also painful in the sense that it forces a **decision on the proper role of EU Special Representatives,** including the number of high-level, political figures that can work on behalf of the HR/VP, the specific portfolios of issues that they might occupy, the authority that could be delegated to them, and the resources needed to support them.

To this point the Special Representatives, who have been senior officials, have not been able to engage in different settings at the necessary level. Moreover, it creates a potential confusion related to the division of tasks *vis-á-vis* Heads of Delegation. Senior political figures could, as Special Representatives with the appropriate authority, play a key role in shuttle diplomacy in crises—in particular with countries and bodies that are central to the outcome but not among the major interlocutors where the HR/VP would of necessity be the dialogue partner.

The most useful contribution of Special Representatives might be made before a crisis has escalated, and therefore proper support would have to provide for continuity in their work. If the background assumption of working within the existing financial framework was to be respected, a reallocation of resources would be needed

in order to make this logistically possible. Logistical support would be needed on a level far beyond what has been possible so far to facilitate effective shuttle diplomacy.

To this point, Special Representatives have focused on countries, regions, functional issues and diplomatic processes. The flexibility of tasking could be an important aid to facilitating political dialogue around a functional case (like the problems of combating radicalisation that leads to extremist violence), where the internal and external dimensions of the problem need to be brought together at the highest levels in the EU.

To play their full role Special Representatives would have to be a resource on which the President of the European Council, the president of the European Commission and the HR/VP could draw. The test question as regards the policy dialogue requirement is whether a Special Representative authorised to represent the EU and engaged in close dialogue with the three major interlocutors would have helped significantly to avoid mistakes in the past, and whether such a dialogue is likely to help in the future.

6.1 A Special Representative on CSDP matters and the need for dissemination of available security and military advice

The HR/VP report prepared in advance of the December 2013 European Council on Defence and Security included proposals to make the EU an autonomous actor in its neighbourhood, and to be able to project power and back effective multilateralism with military capabilities.

An autonomous response to a crisis cannot be excluded—for example in the Balkans, where unresolved security issues remain—and the EU has developed its own concepts of rapidly deployable forces of different kinds that could contribute directly to crisis management operations. Examples include Civilian Response Teams, Integrated/Formed Police Units and Battlegroups. In the December 2013 Council Conclusions, however, the main emphasis is not placed on what strategic autonomy might mean for the EU, but rather on how to support partner countries and regional organisations, through providing training, advice, equipment and resources

where appropriate, so that they can increasingly prevent or manage crises by themselves.

The idea of better empowering partners through a more systematic and long-term approach has become a priority, with a focus on both train-and-equip and enhance-and-enable initiatives that build on lessons learned from past training missions. While operational experience has been gained from missions in Africa and in the Balkans, the concept of enabling partners to take responsibility for their own security clearly has wider applications in the Middle East, in parts of Europe and elsewhere.

The case of Ukraine has exposed the problem of how to thoroughly assess the implications of various kinds of military assistance within an overall support package. Security sector reform has been identified as a topic where the EU can play a role in assisting Ukraine. However, in spite of the shared assessment that Ukraine has been the victim of an external aggression and should be assisted, and in spite of Ukrainian requests, the EU has not been able to reach a shared view on the kinds of military assistance that could be appropriate within a comprehensive support package.

Determining the kinds of measures that can be of assistance to partners, assembling the necessary elements of an assistance package of the appropriate scale and content, and making sure that the assistance is delivered in crisis conditions requires a specialized capacity that cannot be improvised or created at short notice.

At least one dedicated person to address security and defence capabilities, supported by an adequate staff, would help the HR/VP prepare properly for potential crisis conditions. An important part of the task would be constant networking with the defence ministers of member states and key external interlocutors on defence capability issues. Currently this task falls on the shoulders of the EEAS leadership, but again as a part of many other responsibilities. The fact that the Commission also deals with a number of issues of relevance to security and defence speaks in favour of situating this post on the higher level directly attached to the HR/VP. A dedicated person would also be a key support to the work of the HR/VP as Head of the European Defence Agency, and in cooperation with European Commissioners responsible for issues of key relevance to defence and security in the areas of trade, cyber, industry, energy, research and home affairs.

7. List of acronyms

AA	Association Agreement
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EEAS	European External Action Service
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union
EWS	Conflict Early Warning System
HR/VP	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
TEU	Treaty on European Union
UN	United Nations

About the author

Dr Ian Anthony is Director of the European Security Programme at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

Dr Lars-Erik Lundin is Distinguished Associate Fellow at SIPRI. In his diplomatic career he was EU Ambassador to the International organizations in Vienna and Deputy Political Director of the European Commission.

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