

The European Parliament and the Common Security and Defence Policy: Does the Parliament Care?

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Obwohl die Kompetenzen des Europäischen Parlaments im Bereich der Gemeinsamen Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik (GSVP) deutlich eingeschränkt sind, findet dieser Politikbereich zunehmend die Beachtung durch das Europäische Parlament. Die thematische Bandbreite reicht hierbei von Fragen zur Finanzierung der GSVP oder zu den Battlegroups bis hin zur zivil-militärischen Zusammenarbeit. Nicht zuletzt hinsichtlich der demokratischen Ausgestaltung der EU insgesamt und legitimatorischer Aspekte europäischer Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik im Besonderen, nimmt das Europäische Parlament eine wichtige Rolle ein.

The European Parliament is the only institution of the European Union (EU) directly elected by the citizens of the Union. As such it has the strongest democratic legitimacy of all EU institutions. At the same time the interest in European Parliament elections is decreasing, a fact which is also linked to a growing scepticism and uncertainty of citizens towards the EU. This seems odd, because the power of the European Parliament has increased during the course of the European integration process and its role in the power constellation Council-Commission-Parliament has been strengthened with the Lisbon Treaty. The latter development is, however, not the case with respect to the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which still remains an intergovernmental policy. In this policy field the influence of the European Parliament, which is a supranational institution, is rather limited. But this does not prevent the Parliament from voicing its opinions in various forms. Matters related to the CSDP are usually discussed in the Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET) and in its subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE). Though the role of the EP in the CSDP is limited, it can influence the Multiannual Financial Framework, which could be perhaps

described as a multiannual strategic plan for spending, and it is fully involved in the creation of the EU budget. That is why the European Parliament's Committee on Budgets has also influence over the CSDP. Nevertheless, many expenses for the CSDP are not paid from the EU budget, therefore they are outside of the EP power. Against that background it seems worth looking at how the European Parliament discusses the CSDP. A number of specific topics can be identified.

Financing and scrutiny

The topic that is perhaps the most often discussed by the European Parliament is connected with the financing of the CSDP. As mentioned above, the Parliament can influence the Multiannual Financial Framework and it is fully involved in setting up the EU budget, but as for 2011 only 6.2 per cent of the budget is intended for heading 4 "The EU as a global player", which includes also the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of which the CSDP is only one part. The European Parliament has a certain limited influence on the financing of civilian missions, but it cannot control the spending side concerning military operations of the EU. The Treaty on

European Union states in article 41(2) "expenditure arising from operations having military or defence implications and cases where the Council acting unanimously decides otherwise", shall not be charged to the Union budget. Military operations are financed through the so-called ATHENA mechanism to which all the participating states contribute proportionately to their gross national product. This mechanism, however, usually covers only some 10 per cent of the expenses. The remaining 90 per cent is paid by participating states based on the "costs lie where they fall" principle, which means that the state that provides forces and capacities also pays for them. This naturally makes the state that provides most forces and other capabilities for an EU operation the biggest payer.

The European Parliament is naturally not satisfied with the way the CSDP is financed. In the early phase of this policy the Parliament demanded that the whole CSDP budget should be part of the EU budget. In such a way it would have control also over the expenditure arising from operations having military or defence implications. Nevertheless, in more recent documents it focuses more on the ATHENA mechanism demanding that it was a part

of the EU budget. The European Parliament also expects the mechanism to be reformed so that more costs would be covered by this tool rather than based on the “costs lie where they fall” principle.

The issue of financing is also connected with another topic the European Parliament focuses on, i.e. scrutiny. Even though the Parliament has the right to be informed about the development of the CSDP and its opinions should be taken into consideration, it complains that it is not informed well enough and demands its opinion have to be taken into consideration. The European Parliament has contacts with various institutions and assemblies, such as the NATO assembly, and it exchanges views about the security and defence policies with experts, but this naturally does not represent any real power. Members of Parliament can discuss the policy but they cannot control it. If the European Parliament could oversee all the CSDP expenses, its position with regard to military operations would be strengthened. National parliaments are in a better position because they can scrutinize their government’s expenditures on the operations, but they have no insight into the ATHENA mechanism. The European Parliament therefore supports interparliamentary cooperation, based on the conviction that the European Parliament is the legitimate body, which should conduct parliamentary scrutiny, monitoring and control of the CSDP.

Pooling and sharing

Another topic that is connected with financing and which has again been discussed more intensively against the background of the financial crisis is the aspect of pooling and sharing of military capabilities. In the debate about the CSDP pooling and sharing is one of the central topics. The underlining idea is that the interconnectedness of national armies and the improvement of European military effectiveness and efficiency should be improved through pooling and sharing. There remains, however, always the ques-

tion of sovereignty of EU member states, which are in general reluctant to give up sovereignty in the area of defence.

The European Parliament suggests the member states of the EU should make a commitment to military expenditure over a period of time. It supports the development of a European armaments market and advocates for a more active role of the European Defence Agency (EDA) with regard to pooling and sharing. According to the Parliament the EDA currently does not have sufficient power for pooling and sharing and it calls for more studies conducted by the Agency that would focus on pooling projects. Pooling and sharing of military resources could free funds for new EU projects like a Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS), which would be similar to the NATO Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS).

Military operations and civilian missions

A tangible proof of the CSDP are military operations and civilian missions the EU is conducting all over the world. 24 CSDP missions have been launched so far. The role of the European Parliament in this area is limited especially in the case of the military operations. Nevertheless, the Parliament did not stop commenting on this issue from the very beginning. It has covered a rather broad scope of topics related to the operations ranging from the request of gender mainstreaming, i.e. more women involved in the CSDP, to the creation of a permanent Operational Headquarters (OHQ). According to the Parliament, more resources need to be provided for the operations and to overcome a continuous lack of personnel. It has urged that the EU should launch more operations to strengthen its position as a global player and it was even suggested that an EU operation could replace KFOR. Though the European Parliament is dissatisfied with the insufficient force generation for the operations, it also asks for more regulation of the Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs), which are

providing services for the EU in the operations. The Parliament has requested that it should be informed about the policy towards these companies and also points out that their services are rather costly. The European Parliament has also expressed its views about concrete operations. For example, there has been the warning that the EUTM Somalia (European Union Training Mission), which is preparing soldiers for the Somali Transitional Federal Government, could in fact unintentionally enhance military capabilities of possible recruits for militias in Somalia.

The Parliament has supported the Council decision on a possible future operation EUFOR Libya but is of the opinion that the mandate for the operation should be broader. In this context it is pointed out that the operations in general suffer from a lack of personnel, a lack of political strategy and unclear rules for cooperation on the ground. The latter issue was causing problems, e.g. in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the EU had both military and civilian/police operations. An unclear division of tasks led to a situation in which the military operation personnel was involved in police matters complicating the work of the police mission.

Civil-military cooperation

With the changed logic of international relations after the Cold War, new approaches to security have developed and military means are nowadays not necessarily the only and main tools in security operations. Security operations are increasingly interconnected with civilian aspects and the European Parliament is stressing this as a distinctive feature of the CSDP. Following the Parliament’s argument, civilian and military aspects will be increasingly interconnected in the future and it is important to develop their cooperation and coordination. This should be achieved not only on the level of civilian and military personnel working side by side but also on the level of commanding structures. Concerning the structure of command, the European Parliament has always supported the creation

of a permanent OHQ and it suggested that a further step could be to create a joint EU "Crisis Management Headquarters", which would be responsible for both military and civilian operations. It was also suggested that military and civilian personnel could receive some common training that would prepare them for future cooperation. The Parliament also supports the use of military assets for disaster response operations and suggests these could be deployed under the designation of a EU Civil Protection Force. According to the European Parliament, humanitarian missions in conflict zones have the support of EU citizens. The Parliament has suggested that the EU Battlegroups could be used for such operations. However, EU citizens are in general insufficiently informed about CSDP missions and operations and consequently the European Parliament argues that the public should be more efficiently informed about the security and defence policy of the EU.

Battlegroups

The European Parliament perceives Battlegroups as a tool, which could help the member states to transform their armed forces and create a common defence culture. In this context it regrets that mainly because of political reasons the Battlegroups have never been deployed and therefore they have not contributed to solve the force generation problem. Consequently, from the Parliament's perspective the Battlegroup concept needs to be reformed: Battlegroups should not be dissolved after the six month stand-by period but should exist longer. They could be trained to work along civilians or could even include civilian experts and units such as the Integrated Police Units (IPUs). In the eyes of the European Parliament one of the two stand-by Battlegroups should be specialised in capabilities suited for low-intensity conflicts entailing mixed civilian-military tasks.

NATO

The EU does not operate with its CSDP in an international vacuum. The European

Parliament accepts the importance of NATO as a defence alliance for most of its members and has always supported cooperation between the Alliance and the EU. In principle, the Parliament does not support any duplication of NATO structures. Nevertheless, at the same time an independent EU OHQ is advocated by the Parliament and it is further stressed that EU operations should have a more civil-military approach than NATO ones. From the Parliament's perspective NATO and the EU should not compete but rather cooperate and divide labour in crisis-management operations. Strategic airlift could be an ideal area for cooperation. In context of a division of labour the European Parliament wishes that NATO limits its development of any civilian capability in order to avoid duplication with the EU's CSDP. Complications in the EU- NATO relations are caused mainly due to the difference in membership of the two organizations. This is also one of the reasons for limited and complicated use of the Berlin plus agreement, which allows the EU to use NATO assets.

United Nations

The European Union regards effective cooperation with the United Nations as a vital part of its foreign policy. The cooperation of the two organizations in the security area already exists as could be seen e.g. in the case of the EU military operation EUFOR RD Congo, which was launched on request from the United Nations. So far, CSDP military operations have been launched if a resolution by the Security Council of the UN made it possible. The European Parliament supports EU – United Nations cooperation and suggests that the EU should benefit from the experiences of the UN's activities. In this respect the Parliament suggests that a Common Security Agenda between the EU and the United Nations would help to strengthen the efficiency of the multilateral system. Regular meetings of representatives from the EU institutions and from the United Nations would be desirable. Joint framework rules and procedures for crisis management

should be created so that the EU and the United Nations can cooperate as well as share and pool their resources more efficiently. Among other recommendations and comments with regard to this topic the European Parliament also suggested that the EU could one day become a full member of the United Nations.

Further topics

For efficient management in any field there is a need for a strategy. This is also the case of the CSDP. The European Security Strategy of 2003 has to be seen as a reaction to fundamental changes in the world and in light of the terrorist attacks of 9 September 2001. In this document threats and strategic objectives for the Union were identified. It has been criticized that the European Security Strategy is insufficient and that there is need for a White Paper (sometimes also called White Book) on European defence. Such a White Paper could contain suggestions on future actions in certain areas, define aims and goals and describe solutions for security and defence political problems. While such a document is desired by experts as well as by members of the European Parliament it is rather far from being put into reality. The European Parliament has raised a number of suggestions for a White Paper. It believes the document should include e.g. articles concerning space policy as well as the security or regulation of private security and military companies. It could deal with the harmonizing of national caveats and it also should define European security interests and criteria for launching CSDP operations. A stronger role of defence ministers within the Foreign Affairs Council configuration and questions like the pooling of resources at EU level should also be addressed in such a document.

As concerns terrorism, the European Parliament stresses that prevention should be the priority and points out that it is important to tackle the cash flow that supports terrorist organisations. Consequently, it is regarded as important to fight money laundering. The Parliament also

recommended to increase the power of the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator. The Coordinator and the Commission should then provide the European Parliament with an annual report on their terrorism related activities and take into account the Parliament's suggestions. Linked to the topic terrorism is the topic of arms proliferation, including Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). The European Parliament supports nuclear disarmament and disarmament in general. However, it does not see the WMD as the only danger. The proliferation of small weapons is also considered a risk. Exports of these weapons from the EU have the potential to fuel regional conflicts. To decrease this risk the European Parliament suggests a tougher control of arms trade and also recommends to make disarmament an integral part of CSDP operations. Continuously it issues documents supporting anti-mine action. A further topic discussed by the European Parliament concerns space and the creation of a European Space Policy. The Parliament supports closer cooperation of involved parts and stresses the importance of satellites for CSDP operations.

Conclusion and perspective

As a supranational institution the European Parliament is supportive of the CSDP in general and calls for its further development as well as a more flexible use of the tools that are available. The most vocal recommendations concern the financing of the policy and the control over the funding. Nevertheless, it should be recalled again that nation states are reluctant to transfer their sovereignty in defence and security matters to supranational institutions. Therefore it seems unlikely that the European Parliament will get more power which could strengthen its influence on the CSDP in the near future. An option for more parliamentary involvement in the CSDP could be found in context with an interparliamentary scrutiny of the policy. A kind of interparliamentary scrutiny used to be conducted by the Assembly of the Western European Union. With the dissolution of the Western European Union

in 2011 the question has become important whether another body could take over such a form of responsibility. From the European Parliament's perspective it was often expressed that the Parliament should be responsible for the scrutiny of the CSDP and cooperation with national parliaments is supported.

To sum up, it could be argued that the European Parliament cares about the CSDP, its voice is heard but its influence is limited. A possible future for the Parliament's involvement in the CSDP can be the cooperation with national parliaments, which could give the European Parliament a bigger role in the scrutiny of the intergovernmental policy.

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