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Joining Forces: Necessary Steps for Developing the Comprehensive Approach

Ronja Kempin and Ronja Scheler

In June 2016 Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), will unveil the new EU Global Strategy. The document succeeds the European Security Strategy of 2003. One important concern associated with this initiative is to develop the EU's "comprehensive approach" into a "joined-up approach". For that to succeed, the EEAS and the Commission will have to formally define who sets the EU's priorities, makes decisions, and enforces these on the ground; regional strategies will need to be immediately backed up by action plans. The EEAS should appoint a representative for the implementation of regional strategies having the requisite authority with respect to all EU actors. Finally, the EEAS and the Commission should develop "strategic budgets" to fund the priority projects of EU external action in regions for which the EU has adopted strategies.

The outcomes of military interventions in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq in the late 1990s and early 2000s left no doubt that stable social and economic structures can only be restored after war if armed intervention is accompanied by reconstruction, development and state-building processes. Today the "comprehensive approaches" developed in response to that realisation enjoy a firm place in the foreign policy and security strategies of nation-states and international organisations.

The EU and the Comprehensive Approach

The EU is no exception in this respect. Its European Security Strategy of December 2003 already states that "none of the new threats is purely military; nor can any be tackled by purely military means". Ten years later, in December 2013, the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP) jointly outlined "The EU's Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict and Crises". This concept, which has come to be known as the "Comprehensive Approach", requires the EU to address "all stages of the cycle of

conflict or other external crises” – for which the Union has “a wide array of policies, tools and instruments at its disposal”. The central principle is the reciprocal relationship between security and development.

More broadly, the comprehensive approach is also supposed to be the central organising principle of the EU’s external action. In 1993 the Treaty of Maastricht divided responsibility for foreign and security policy between the Commission on the one side and the Council and the member states on the other. While the Commission continued to be responsible for development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and external economic relations, powers relating to foreign, security and defence policy were assigned to the member states. The fragmentation of responsibilities, budgets, capabilities and instruments associated with this division presents obstacles to effective action. The establishment of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (under the Treaty of Lisbon also Vice-President of the European Commission) and the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) were intended to improve the coherence of external action. They are expected to coordinate the interests and policies of the member states and EU institutions in order to guide comprehensive action to success.

Yet to this day it remains difficult even to define the broad outlines of the comprehensive approach. There is no generally agreed definition of the concept. The EU seeks to act comprehensively on foreign policy in both institutional terms and content. Institutionally the challenge consists in coordinating the actors and instruments of external action. Substantively, the policy areas of development and security need to be connected. The focus of the present analysis lies on the thematic and institutional interaction of the “Brussels” instances, the Commission and the EEAS. The willingness of member states to coordinate their national policies, on the other hand, is not

addressed. The EEAS and the Commission plan and fund EU foreign policy and implement it on the ground. But to date research has largely neglected their interactions. The present investigation compares EU actions in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, which have both been plagued by decades of crisis and conflict. In both regions the EU claims to have been pursuing comprehensive foreign policy since 2011. In response to growing security challenges, the EU has stepped up its engagement in both regions since 2008/09, using numerous instruments from various policy areas. It also published regional strategies – “Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel” and “A Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa” – in September and November 2011 respectively.

If the Commission and the EEAS succeed in cooperating with one another and in combining security with development when formulating their strategy (goals) and budget for action (means), they are acting coherently. As a consequence, this leads us to assess whether security and development aspects were adequately reflected and integrated in the formulation of strategy. Secondly, the question arises whether and to what extent the responsible EU institutions are included in this process and to what extent they exercise their coordinating functions. The same applies to the budget. Alongside institutional and policy coordination, it is also relevant whether development and security budgets are coordinated such as to be able to connect short-, medium- and long-term foreign policy initiatives. Finally, the institutions will be examined more closely as they implement EU foreign policy on the ground. The institutional coherence of the Commission and the EEAS will be measured by their ability to avoid parallel structures and establish clear reporting lines and responsibilities.

Strategy

The EU's "Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel" and "Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa" both tie together the policy areas of security and development. This is reflected in the "key issues" named in the documents. The Sahel Strategy aims (1) to promote development, good governance and internal conflict resolution in the cooperating countries and (2) to support them in cooperating more closely on matters of security and development. It also seeks (3) to build capacities to improve security and rule of law, and (4) to contain and prevent violent extremism and radicalisation. The "Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa" sets out to (1) assist the countries in the region in establishing "robust and accountable political structures". The EU will also (2) "work with the countries of the region and with international organisations ... to resolve current conflicts, particularly in Somalia and Sudan, and avoid future potential conflicts between or within countries". In the short and medium term, the EU aims (3) to ensure that "the insecurity in the region does not threaten the security of others beyond its borders, e.g. through piracy, terrorism or irregular migration". Finally, the EU wishes (4) to promote economic growth in the states of the Horn of Africa and (5) strengthen regional political and economic cooperation and the role of regional economic communities.

Deeper analysis of the two documents reveals an important difference: The Sahel Strategy focuses strongly on the issue of "security". Although noting at the beginning that security in the Sahel cannot be separated from development, it becomes clear that the strategy is fundamentally driven by security concerns. It explicitly focuses "primarily on the countries most affected by common security challenges", and the challenges named in the document are largely security-related. Any linkage with development or diplomatic questions is largely rhetorical and consigned to the preamble. Unlike the Sahel, the Horn of

Africa has been viewed through a "strategic lens" by the EU institutions already since October 2006. That was when the Commission proposed establishing an "EU regional political partnership for peace, security and development in the Horn of Africa" to the Council and the European Parliament. The EU's strategic focus was initially directed towards Somalia, identifying its symptoms of crisis as causal for volatility across the entire Horn of Africa. Brussels accordingly sought to tackle these. Over the course of time the scope has also expanded to address the problems of the region as a whole, giving equal attention to the issues of development and security. This prior involvement has benefited the Strategic Framework, which balances the areas of development and security. Since the publication of the text both have continued to develop symmetrically. In October 2015 the agenda was broadened. The "Horn of Africa Regional Action Plan 2015–2020" adds three challenges to the strategy: the influence of "the wider region", "violent radicalisation" and "migration, refugees and internally displaced persons".

Institutional cooperation between EEAS and Commission in drafting the two strategy documents can also be regarded as largely coherent. The Sahel Strategy was conceived under the auspices of the EEAS, in coordination with the Commission. It is a consequence of growing worries about the political, security and humanitarian situation in the region. The French Council Presidency placed the Sahel on the European agenda in 2008 and set the strategy process rolling. In 2009 and 2010 the EU sent fact-finding missions to Mali, Mauritania, Algeria and Niger, to investigate and identify the challenges and needs in each of these countries. The findings flowed into the document that the Council welcomed in March 2011 as a "Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel" and came into effect on 21 September 2011. The "Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa" was also prepared by the EEAS, under the auspices of its then Director for

Africa, Nick Westcott, and the Horn of Africa division. The document was preceded by two strategy papers: the Commission's Africa Strategy published in October 2006 and "An EU Policy on the Horn of Africa – Towards a Comprehensive Strategy" adopted in 2009 under the Swedish Council Presidency. Those two documents reflected institutional rivalries in the area of EU external relations, and it was not until 2011 that the EEAS and the Commission succeeded in uniting the diverse objectives. It appears that the EEAS's interfacing function played a particularly crucial role in bringing all the institutions involved in the EU's foreign policy into this process. One reason for the EEAS's engagement may have been that the regional strategies were welcome opportunities to establish the new institution's role and position.

All in all, the EU operates *largely coherently* on strategy formulation, both institutionally and substantively. The verdict for the "Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa" is the more positive of the two. Especially in the Horn of Africa, the EEAS and the Commission have succeeded in bringing together previously diverging priorities and giving equal weight to development and security. The EEAS's interfacing function has proven its worth. At the same time it is important to integrate the Commission closely into the process of formulating strategy. It possesses the financing instruments needed for implementation and contributes the development component that has been side-lined in the Sahel under pressure from the member states.

Budget

The analysis of budgetary coherence produces quite different findings. Here it is most noticeable that the funds supplied by the Commission and the EEAS for implementation of the goals agreed in the strategies flow from different sources. The two most important are the European Development Fund (EDF) and the Multian-

nual Financial Framework (MFF), which includes the budget of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Both run on seven-year cycles, currently 2014–2020.

Analysis of the EDF programmes shows that the priorities and recipients of EU development funding differ from country to country. Whereas more "classical" development projects (education, health and infrastructure) dominate in some states in both the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, elsewhere the EU directs a large part of its bilateral development funding towards strengthening and stabilising state structures. In both the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, the focus of bilateral EU development cooperation is slanted towards agriculture and food security. The security support measures vary. Here it is noticeable that the Sahel countries receive considerable financial aid for projects and measures in the areas of state- and peace-building and good governance, with EDF funds flowing to Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Chad. In the Horn of Africa only Somalia and Uganda receive European funding in the area of security. In parallel to national programmes, the EU also concludes Regional Indicative Programmes (RIPs) under the EDF. Here – in contrast to the priorities of bilateral EU development cooperation – most of the Brussels funding for the countries of the Horn of Africa is earmarked for regional cooperation in the area of "peace, security and regional stability". About half of the €80 million budget of the EDF's regional programme for Eastern Africa, Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean is dedicated to that complex. The RIP for West Africa contains €1.15 billion for sixteen countries. The funds are largely intended for promoting regional economic integration and supporting regional trade. The EU also maintains a separate budget for implementing the Sahel Strategy, with an additional €660 million for promoting security and development there.

The MFF for 2014 to 2020 provides €163.1 million for the Sahel, of which

about €40 million falls to the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) and €21 million to the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI); the civilian missions of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), EUCAP Sahel Niger and EUCAP Sahel Mali, are funded from the CFSP budget in the MFF. The shared costs of the only military mission in the Sahel, EUTM Mali, are channelled through the ATHENA mechanism and amount to €27.7 million for the 24-month mandate. The overall MFF budget of €250 million for the Horn of Africa includes about €26.6 million for the DCI and €3.8 million for the IcSP. The CFSP part of the budget primarily funds the missions and operations in the region (EUCAP Nestor, EUTM Somalia and EUNAVFOR Somalia – Operation Atalanta).

Responsibility for institutional steering of the financing mechanisms is shared in the planning (Commission and EEAS) and administration (Commission) of the EU development aid programmes. The crucial role played by the Commission in funding EU policies, however, raises questions as to how coherently the actors (can) act. The Commission is the decisive instance in planning and defining individual budget titles and is responsible for managing the budget, while the EEAS's function is exclusively preparatory. Although the EEAS was central in preparing both regional strategies, it possesses little in the way of resources for implementation. Instead the Commission oversees the priorities of bilateral cooperation with the states of the respective region and defines the financial framework for the corresponding measures. It manages the EU's collective EDF development aid without any participation by the EEAS. It is furthermore conspicuous that EDF and MFF projects are not coordinated, even though the Commission manages both budgets. That is all the more surprising given that the two main instruments pursue partly similar goals, with common points of reference and identical seven-year planning cycles.

But even within the funds there is a lack of coordination: In the MFF the budget for foreign policy is strictly separate from that for development (budget titles 19 "Foreign policy instruments" and 21 "Development and cooperation"). Moreover, in the sphere of peace and security the CSDP missions and operations are not connected with longer-term budget lines, such as the IcSP or the EDF security sector reform programmes. This division is especially surprising given the EU's widely touted comprehensive approach.

Finally, the analysis underlines that the EEAS and the Commission are not basing their practical measures in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa on the regional strategies. The foreign policy and development budgets do not conform to the EU's priorities as laid out in the two documents.

Here the EU is still a long way from its aim of coherent action. Four problems are especially obvious. While the EEAS is consulted over budget priorities for EU external actions, the negotiation of bilateral and regional programmes under the EDF takes place without it. Here the Commission alone interacts with individual states and regional organisations. Secondly, the EEAS possesses virtually no resources of its own, and thus lacks the ability to exert operational influence, for example in implementing regional strategy priorities in the Sahel or the Horn of Africa. Thirdly, the treaty arrangement under which the Commission manages the EU's most important foreign policy and development budgets means that they are dominated by development programme lines. There is no balance between security and development. Finally, the fact that as yet no coherence exists between EDF and MFF is also a problem: funded programmes and measures are often almost identical, while initiatives with short-, medium- and long-term effects are not sensibly connected or coordinated.

Institutional Cooperation

Numerous actors are involved in implementing policy in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Almost all the EU institutions maintain desks or posts dealing with the countries of these two regions. In the EEAS, the West Africa division is responsible for relations with the Sahel. A Sahel coordinator functions as the link between the relevant desks and departments. The EEAS has also established a Sahel task force for inter-institutional coordination, comprising the relevant EEAS desks, the relevant Commission services and the EU's counter-terrorism coordinator, meeting as required every four to six weeks. But rather than discussing concrete policies, this forum usually concentrates on fundamental questions of strategic and political orientation. Another instrument of institutional coordination is the so-called Crisis Platform, which is convened when urgent action is required. It is chaired by the HR/VP, the EEAS Executive Secretary General or the Managing Director for Crisis Response; meetings are attended as required by representatives of EEAS committees and departments, the EU Military Committee and/or the services of the Commission. Within the Commission several Directorates-General (DGs) are responsible for policies in the region: At DG Trade, Directorate D (Sustainable Development, Economic Partnership Agreements – African, Caribbean and Pacific, Agri-food and Fisheries) regulates EU trade policy towards African states. At the DG for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) Unit E2 (Development Coordination and Regional Cooperation West Africa) manages development cooperation with the region; finally, at the DG for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), Unit B3 (West and Central Africa) is responsible for the Sahel. Like the EEAS, DG DEVCO and ECHO also have Sahel coordinators.

As far as the Horn of Africa is concerned, inter-institutional cooperation in Brussels is less developed. The EEAS and the Commission naturally have departments for the Horn of Africa. The EEAS has a Horn of

Africa, Eastern Africa and Indian Ocean desk; in the Commission, DG ECHO Unit B2 (Eastern and Southern Africa, Great Lakes) and DG DEVCO Units D1 (Development Coordination Southern Africa and Indian Ocean) and D2 (Development Coordination East Africa and Regional Cooperation in Eastern and Southern Africa) deal with this region. But so far there is no inter-institutional coordinating task force for EU activities in the Horn of Africa. The establishment of such a body is proposed in the Horn of Africa Regional Action Plan 2015–2020.

Policies and projects are implemented on the ground by EU delegations. Originally under the Commission's DG for External Relations (RELEX), organisational responsibility for the delegations shifted to the EEAS and the HR/VP in 2011, after the Treaty of Lisbon came into effect. This has seen them acquire new tasks and functions; their traditional focus on development questions has now been expanded to the areas of security and peace. Their staff are composed of Commission officials and national and European diplomats. The "Working Arrangement between Commission Services and the European External Action Service (EEAS) Services in Relation to External Relations Issues" of 13 January 2012 regulates relations between the EU delegations, the EEAS and the Commission. The heads of delegations receive instructions from the HR/VP, from the EEAS and from the Commission, and report to the HR/VP, the President of the Commission, the Commissioners involved in foreign policy matters, the Commission services and the EEAS.

Working relations between the EEAS and the Commission are also formally regulated. The Council's so-called EEAS Decision contains additional rules and measures designed to enhance coordination. Finally, there is also a vademecum intended to facilitate cooperation between Commission officials and their EEAS counterparts. But the existence of these documents cannot prevent the duplication of structures, nor

ongoing lack of clarity in reporting lines. The call of the cited Working Arrangements to include all involved actors in all coordination processes creates considerable work and effort. The details remain unclear, and lie in the discretion of the involved instances. The greatest doubts concern what occurs in the event of conflict of interest.

The role of the EU Special Representatives (EUSRs), which are active in both regions, also remains unresolved. The task of EUSRs Angel Losada and Alexander Rondos is to guide and coordinate European efforts in their regions, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa respectively. They may make proposals for improving the coordination of the various EU instruments, for example in the form of sub-strategies and action plans. The SHARE initiative in the Horn of Africa, which supplied substantial added value, was a proposal by EUSR Rondos. The EUSRs owe their freedom to launch weighty political initiatives to their unclear institutional position. They report directly to the HR/VP, but are not part of the EEAS. Instead they are one of the most important foreign policy instruments of the EU member states. This configuration creates parallel structures, impedes the coherent implementation of policies, and generates tensions. In the Sahel, for example, the member states preferred to bypass the responsible EEAS coordinator and instead work with the special representative, who did not have to coordinate with the institutional structure. Nor are the relationships between EUSRs and EU delegations clearly regulated. There is neither a division of tasks, nor a hierarchical relationship between the different positions.

Conclusions

The EU will only be able to live up to its ideal of coherent action if the EEAS and the Commission formally define responsibility for setting the priorities of EU action, making decisions and implementing them on the ground. Our findings suggest three measures for developing the comprehen-

sive approach: Firstly, it would appear sensible to back the regional strategies with immediate action plans. Although such documents exist for the investigated regions, they appeared four years after the strategies. Secondly, in parallel to the obligatory preparation of action plans, the EEAS should appoint an “EU Representative for the Implementation of Regional Strategies” having the requisite authority with respect to all EU actors. Finally, the EEAS and the Commission should develop “strategic budgets” to fund the priority projects of EU external action in regions for which the EU has adopted strategies. These budgets should be detached from the rules governing the MFF and the EDF, and would be used to fund short- to long-term multidisciplinary programmes prepared and managed jointly by the EEAS and the Commission.

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