

The European Union as a Global Conflict Manager: From Pragmatic Ad-hocism to Policy Coherence?

A SEMINAR SERIES SPONSORED BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH COUCL OF THE UK

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1. Aims and objectives

This series of six seminars brings together expert scholars carrying out cutting-edge research on the development and deployment of EU capabilities of conflict management (understood to include also conflict prevention and resolution) in seven different cases: the Western Balkans, the post-Soviet periphery (South Caucasus and Moldova), the Middle East (Israeli-Palestinian conflict), Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan) and Indonesia (Aceh).

The series will generate new empirical knowledge (on the cases chosen individually and by means of comparison), enhance the methods of scientific enquiry (by comparing and contrasting different approaches to the study of the same subject among scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds), contribute to training and further qualification of young scholars (by involving doctoral students and recent graduates into all seminars), and provide an input into policy formulation (by communicating findings on the factors determining EU policy effectiveness to policy makers in relevant UK and European user community).

2. Background

In April 2001, the European Commission adopted a "[Communication on Conflict Prevention](#)" which set out four main objectives, including targeting root causes of conflict through the systematic and co-ordinated application of existing EU instruments, improving the effectiveness of policies aimed at specific factors that trigger or prolong conflict, enhancing the Union's ability to react quickly to emerging conflict situations, and promoting international co-operation with all partners. Nowhere is the subsequent transformation in capabilities more obvious than when comparing the feeble and eventually disastrous efforts to prevent and subsequently manage the violent disintegration of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s to the EU's significantly more widespread and successful efforts in the Western Balkans since the late 1990s, in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 2003, and more recently in Aceh, Indonesia. At the same time, however, the Union has made little if any progress in relation to conflicts in the post-Soviet region, such as in Georgia and Moldova, and its contribution to lasting peace in the Palestinian-Israeli crisis and in Sudan so far also remains negligible.

The EU now occupies a central role in a new international security architecture characterised by task- and burden-sharing between a range of international and regional organisations equipped with mandates, instruments and policies that enable them to face existing and emerging security challenges. The Union's increased international weight is a result of its enlargement to 25 member states in 2004 and its improved diplomatic and military capabilities which are a consequence of the development of its security and defence identity and policy, as well as more recently the agreement on the first European Union Security Strategy, which emphasises the EU's priority on multilateralism.

3. State of the Field

Scholarly investigation of the role of the EU as a global conflict manager is a relatively under-developed area of academic enquiry, and there is a disjuncture between an emerging policy domain for the Union and the development of appropriate methods and frameworks of analysis to assess the evolution and implementation of policy:

- work on both the EU-internal policy processes related to the development of CFSP and ESDP and the application of these policies to specific countries and regions has been undertaken, but these two literatures remain relatively unconnected;
- there is virtually no work that comparatively assesses the EU's role as a conflict manager in different parts of Europe, let alone beyond the boundaries of its immediate neighbourhood;
- to the extent that existing scholarship is focussed on the role of the EU as a conflict manager, it offers comparative insights in relation to other international and regional organisations or examines conflict management as part of other, broader EU policies, most recently and most significantly enlargement;
- studies of the EU and its CFSP/ESDP also remain largely detached from the field of conflict management as a distinct sub-discipline of Political Science and International Relations.

The scientific programme of the seminar series will consist of two phases, each with several distinct elements to them and designed to address the existing disjuncture between an emerging policy domain for the Union and the development of appropriate methods and frameworks of analysis to assess the evolution and implementation of policy.

Papers for the seminars will employ an identical framework for analysis, based on a levels-of-analysis approach adopted for the specific nature of the conflicts. This analytical model initially uses four distinct, yet interrelated levels of analysis focussing on the behaviour and impact of both actors and structures on the onset, duration, and termination of conflicts. In addition to structures and actors, we consider it worthwhile to examine the impact on conflicts of a range of issues that cannot easily be classified as either actor- or structure-related and that straddle the boundaries between several levels of analysis. The framework is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: The Levels-of-Analysis Approach

| | State Structures and Actors | Non-state Structures and Actors | 'Issues' |
|----------|---|--|---|
| Local | local elites/leaders, authorities and representatives of the central government, established institutional arrangements and socio-economic structures | locally resident communities/ethnic groups/religious groups and their elites/leaders and locally operating NGOs, rebel forces, private sector interest groups, and criminals | environmental degradation, resource scarcity, energy security, food security, communicable diseases, etc. |
| State | national elites/leaders, central government, established institutional arrangements and socio-economic structures | communities/ethnic groups/religious groups and their elites/leaders and state-wide operating NGOs, rebel forces, private sector interest groups, and criminals | |
| Regional | neighbouring states and their institutions, regional powers, and regional IOs, as well as their respective elites/leaders; established structures of political and economic cooperation | cross-border/trans-national networks (ethnic, religious, civil society, business, organised crime, rebel groups, etc.) and their elites/leaders | |
| Global | powerful states and IOs of global reach and their elites/leaders | INGOs, diaspora groups, international organised crime networks, and TNCs, as well as their respective elites/leaders | |

Based on the empirical element of the programme in the first two seminars, our third seminar will evaluate the internal development of EU policy in relation to its external effectiveness, examining three sets of capabilities in the area of the EU's conflict management policy:

- (1) Capabilities to act: political will, personnel and hardware as well as institutions and instruments;
- (2) Capabilities to fund: long-term and short-term;
- (3) Capabilities to cooperate and coordinate: among EU member states and institutions, as well as with third parties (individual states and international/regional governmental and non-governmental organisations)

In Phase 2, the proposed research seminar series will facilitate knowledge exchange on the comparative dimension of our analysis. We will compare, contrast and synthesise the findings from the seminars in Year 1, including the development of a set of concrete policy recommendations pertaining to EU capabilities and policies.

These seminars and the papers presented at them will be a key legacy aspect of the entire research seminar series as they will provide a set of knowledge-bases that can be used in future by research group partners individually and in possible collaborative activities. Importantly, they are also intended to be used beyond the research group and are aimed at both an academic and practitioner user community to form the core of frameworks for future conflict analysis and serve as an indicative basis for successful future conflict management by the EU.

In parallel to the scientific work in Phases 1 and 2, the research group will also focus on dissemination of results and policy transfer. Specific activities will include:

- a website with information on the research group and on which all seminar papers and reports will be posted;
- dissemination of abbreviated seminar papers in the form of briefing papers to the academic and policy user community;
- production of summary reports of all individual seminars and their distribution to the academic and policy user community;
- production of an overall summary report on the seminar series and its distribution to the academic and policy user community;
- an edited collection of revised papers incorporating feedback received during seminars;
- invitations to policy practitioners to each seminar;
- presentation of findings at relevant conferences and submission to peer-reviewed journals;
- engaging with print and electronic media on a case-by-case basis to communicate findings to a broader audience.