

11. Aug. 2011

von gast

in Außenpolitik,
Bürgerkriege,
Sicherheitskultur,
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After Libya: Time to bury the EU's foreign and security policy?

von *Alexandra Jonas und Bastian Giegerich*

Europe's reaction to the recent upheavals in North Africa clearly exposed one thing: The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), including its Security and Defence branch (CSDP), were steamrolled by a multitude of overtly national policies. The resulting cacophony of views made a mockery of the aspiration to present a united European position to external players. It also thwarts the claim of the EU being a more credible security actor in the wake of the Lisbon Treaty reforms. While commentators have moaned about a CFSP and CSDP 'fatigue' for quite some time now, the likelihood that what used to be the most dynamic EU policy field of the last decade will enter a period of prolonged hibernation never seemed as high.

Signals for a looming re-nationalisation of foreign and security policy abound. The nomination of Baroness Ashton as the EU's High Representative, a post in which she has underperformed in the view of many observers, the bilateral Franco-British defence co-operation treaty and member states' palpable reluctance to accept reduced autonomy as a result of pooling and sharing defence capabilities with each other in times of austerity are cases in point. EU member states' fragmented response to the Libyan crisis in 2011 marks the most visible symbol of CFSP's travails.

The Bundeswehr Institute of Social Sciences (SOWI) currently conducts a project on the strategic cultures of all EU Member States as well as Turkey [[link](#)], allowing for comparison between the basic aspects of national foreign, security and defence policies in Europe. In order to develop a common understanding of what constitutes 'strategic culture', SOWI and the Research Project "Transformation of Security Culture" (Working Group "IOs") will host a workshop in Frankfurt/Main that will bring together the project stakeholders, i.e. the involved experts from all over Europe. In a final stage, an edited volume will provide a comparative analysis of strategic

Is it game over for CFSP then? Actually, without a thorough analysis of the present situation's root causes, events as such are a poor guide to figure out whether the EU's security policy aspirations will survive this period of re-nationalisation. Certainly, the current sovereign debt crisis and doubts about the future of the Euro have undermined the appetite for ever closer cooperation among many electorates in the EU and some heads of state and government. However, the root causes for the recent persistence of national prerogatives in foreign, security and defence policy are more profound. A stock taking of national strategic cultures in Europe – the

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cultures in Europe and open up possibilities to generate policy-relevant findings with regard to the EU's Common Foreign, Security and Defence Policy.

respective cultural, normative and historical foundations as well as the nationally shared values and practices in foreign, security and defence policy – is necessary not only in order to grasp

the reasons for the present situation, but also to assess the potential for continued cooperation on the EU level. For it is in times of (financial) crisis that the very basics of national foreign, security and defence policies come into their own and differences in strategic cultures prevail. But beyond an identification of divergences and congruencies in national foreign, security and defence policies, a thorough analysis of strategic cultures in Europe also allows analysts to detect gradual convergences, i.e. potential areas of closer cooperation between like-minded partners. Thus, a strategic culture approach can offer a useful map for scholars and practitioners alike, pointing out areas of conflict among partners, suggesting aspects where convergence is emerging and could be strengthened, and hinting at opportunities for cooperation among some or all member states.

While there's no blueprint for the analysis of strategic culture and academics worldwide have looked at rather varying items trying to pinpoint the concept's essence, the following four issue areas seem to constitute dimensions in which matching national positions are a prerequisite for close cooperation in foreign, security and defence policy: The level of ambition in international security policy; the scope of action for the executive in decision-making; the foreign policy orientation, e.g. between a European and a transatlantic focus and the respective attitude towards the use of military force. In particular with regard to cooperation on the EU level, convergence in one or more of the above mentioned dimensions has been, more than once, the catalyst for closer cooperation while divergence proved to be the source of stagnation.

In essence, the present deadlock in CFSP/CSDP is a result of existing, fundamental divergences between Member States' strategic cultures. Mapping those, while paying specific attention not only to persisting differences, but also to gradual convergences, will enhance our understanding of the pitfalls, challenges and chances of a genuinely European approach. But more importantly, it will highlight areas in which national strategic cultures match, display avenues for closer cooperation in foreign, security and defence policy and thereby offer opportunities to overcome the present slack in foreign, security and defence policy cooperation. Ultimately, however, studying the 'strategic cultures in Europe'-map can only highlight accessible ways ahead. It is up to member states to muster the necessary political will to choose and pursue them.

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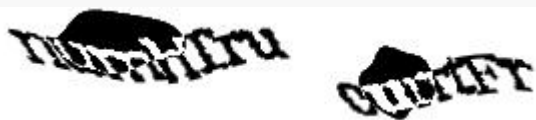
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