

CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

FOR EU RESPONSE TO CONFLICTS

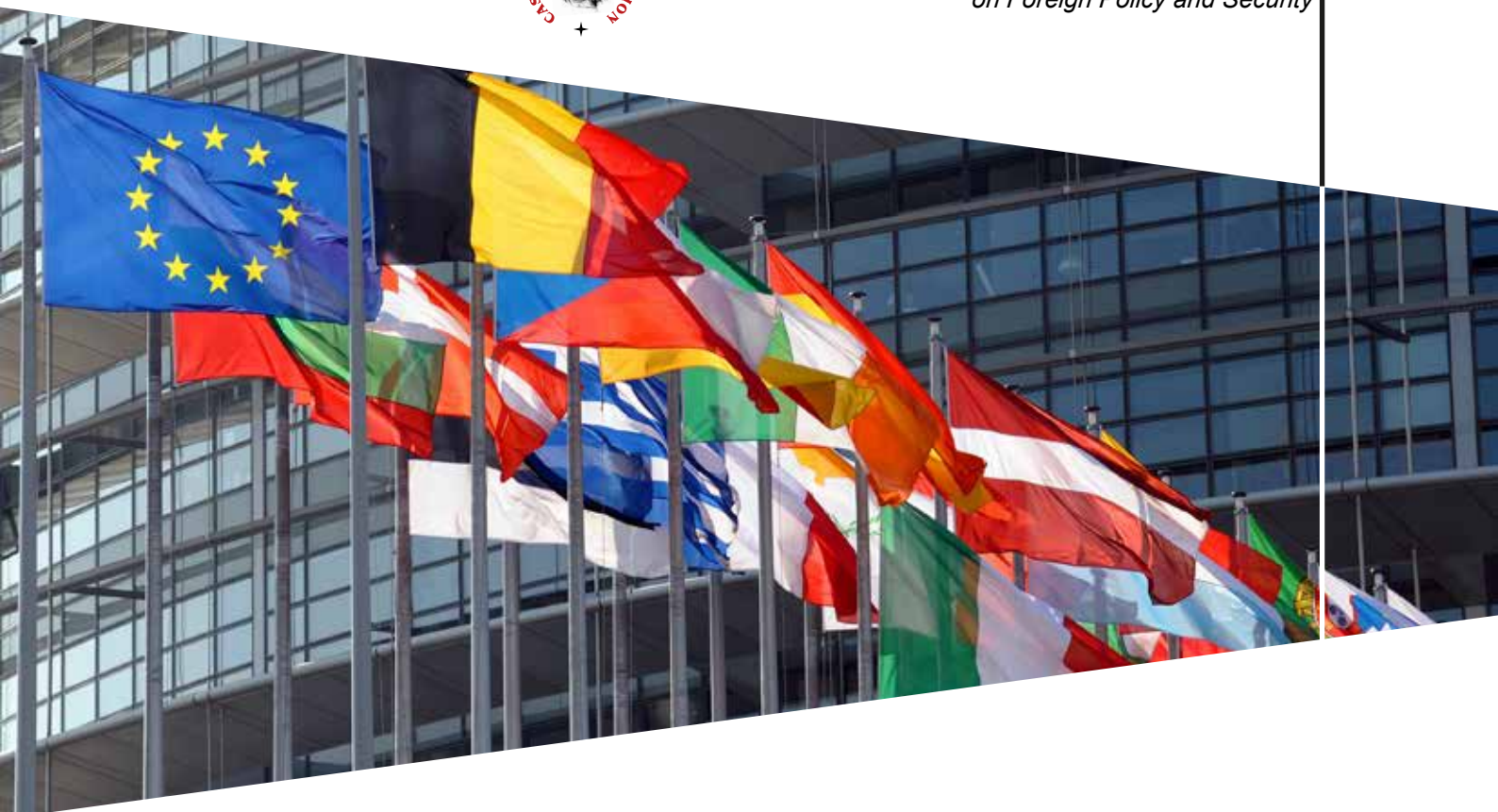
– TIME FOR A NEW STRATEGY?

PEACE & STABILISATION STRATEGIES SEMINAR



Casimir Pulaski Foundation

*Leading Polish Think-tank
on Foreign Policy and Security*



“Challenges and perspectives for EU response to conflicts in the European neighborhood – time for a new strategy?”

The Casimir Pulaski Foundation, in partnership with the European Institute of Peace, held a seminar inaugurating the Peace and Stabilisation Strategies Programme, hosted by the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to the European Union in Brussels on the 18th of May, 2016. The theme was, “Challenges and perspectives for EU response to conflicts in the European neighborhood – time for a new strategy.”

Seminar panelists discussed the obstacles and possible new strategies for EU in conflict resolution and stabilisation. A series of themes emerged from panelist discussions, including prioritizing and adapting current EU policies and actions, the scope for increased flexibility in intervention policies, the current dearth of effective early action and conflict prevention, as well as better coordinating actions among different actors. In addition, panelists discussed the need for a deeper understanding of the broad context of conflicts – specifically those that directly influence European communities and domestic policies – better planning of responses, better adapting of existing tools and finally, how to more effectively balance Member State interests in order to achieve EU stated goals and objectives. Some of the key observations are:

The need for smart prioritizing – balancing short-term with long-term objectives

- While the EU has had some success with crisis management, longer-term stabilisation efforts and peace-making remains a challenge. Mainly, this is because it is hard to keep the interest of Member States and politicians in these events once the initial crisis/emergency has passed.

- Sustainability needs to be at the heart of planning EU strategies toward conflict countries, including Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions and peace process support efforts. Peacebuilding needs to be viewed as going beyond a political agreement; it needs to include elements of economic sustainability, supporting state institutions and ensuring broader popular inclusion and support for human security.

- The sustainability approach to peacebuilding needs to involve all levels of society and not just the political elite. Fighting occurs at every cross-section (from the street vendor to the presidential advisor), and the neces-

sary agreements and reforms must be instituted at each one of these levels for peace to take root and last. This concept should be integrated directly into new strategies to achieve EU stabilisation interests in the longer term.

- Much more needs to be done to actively engage civil society in peace processes, – including schools, religious groups, etc. – in supporting widespread reconciliation and building resilience. It is an engagement that is long-term and hard to measure, therefore it may do poorly in scoring political points domestically in the short term. Compared to high profile “elite” deal making, it can be seen as dull and mundane, but should nonetheless be central in supporting peace processes. Formal peace talks and deals need to be viewed as the beginning of the process rather than the end.

- Achieving longer-term stabilisation will require changes in the approaches Member States take to generating the necessary political will to better or more frequently use all of the external influence tools the EU has at its disposal. For example, because one of the strongest leverage mechanisms the EU can exert with other countries is trade policy, economic development and economic opportunities should be a key element of long-term plans in the approach to conflict resolution.

- At the same time, current reality has demonstrated that compromises need to be made in order to bring about effects in the short term. This could be termed “hybrid peace” – a set of containment approaches and stabilizing solutions in the immediate and short term, with clearly stated longer term approaches for reform, as well as more inclusive and democratic societies.

Adapting responses to the realities of conflict countries

- It is important to view peace process support as a de-facto series of settlements on the ground among various warring factions. Syria is a recent example where this approach needs to be implemented. There is major international pressure for a political settlement, but there are many active parties with considerable political influence and engaging them all in the process remains a challenge. Yemen is another example; talks in Kuwait lack representation from a large part of the country – this will debilitate the injunction of any negotiated decisions.



- Working with the established elites of conflicted countries in order to implement transitions and recommended changes is inherently asking these elites to “reform themselves out of power,” which is unlikely to happen. This needs to be understood better early in negotiations, otherwise peace processes will end in sustaining the status quo. The conflict in Ukraine is an example in which much attention and policy has been geared toward top-level political dialogue, but there has been little engagement in grassroots peacebuilding support.



- It is also important to see how the EU can engage in the sensitive area of talking directly with blacklisted militants and parties (some included on lists of terrorist organizations), such as using fixers and intermediaries, with all the related risks that could bring with it. There are disagreements to the extent to which the EU should be dealing with militant factions accused of widespread human rights abuses, even though that could be key to successful conflict mediation.

- A significant impediment to the success of the EU in peace and stabilisation is that it is much too focused on instruments, administration, bureaucracy and funding mechanisms, than on the actual circumstances, environment and actors present on the ground. Instruments to solve the crisis become more important than the reality they are engaged for.

- Policies and actions need to be flexible and react fluidly to the characteristics of each conflict, in that every conflict, player, affected population, etc. is inherently different. It is critical to boost intelligence gathering and sharing capacities, including broad exercises such as mapping the parties to conflict, as well as their interests and perspectives on events.

Ensuring flexibility in policy planning and implementation

- In general, EU response time to conflicts (especially escalations) can best be described as mixed. There are examples of rapid response – for instance support to maritime operations in the Mediterranean and deployment of CSDP missions in Mali and CAR show clear examples of quick action in circumstances of severe crisis. To continue with these timely reactions, conducting more thorough analyses of previously successful peace and stability interventions and rapidly making adjustments to current intervention tools and strategies is imperative.

- There is a need to begin looking into better combinations of external policy tools used in conflicts, including economic, military, and social agreements and policies among others. For example, financial support of military efforts is currently not possible under EU agreements. However, funding police training or funding non-lethal equipment is a feasible way for the EU to have increased hard power. In addition, one of the most influential tools the EU can use is economic and trade policy, for which it may be easier to garner internal consensus among all or most Member States.

- Broadly, Europe is still favorably looked upon by some countries, and their populations could be more amenable to the EU responding to internal crises and supporting peace efforts rather than others (such as the U.S., Russia or regional powers). This is an advantage for EU activities in peace process support, and a testament to what has already been accomplished and what the EU is uniquely poised to accomplish. This should also be used as a strategic argument to raise internal political support in Member States for external EU action.

- The EU has already been successful (to a degree) with the use of soft diplomacy tools. The EU can quickly respond to the need for dialogue and negotiation assistance, with positive results. However, though these skills are present and successful, they also need increased flexibility in order to provide timelier results. This increased flexibility is necessary for success in prolonged negotiation and peace process support, but is also imperative when it comes to increased and quicker access to resources – including rapid expertise deployment, flexible funds to support mediated settlement opportunities and to sustain talks until implementation.



- The EU has to be more effective in using current instruments at its disposal. Delegations and EU External Action Service need to be strengthened – the EU global strategy can provide a set of policy options for which the right instruments will need to be adjusted. Delegations need increased resources and capacity to respond. Giving delegations more authority would be a positive change in the way the EU addresses crises, allowing for more prompt and apt intervention. However, this is not what Member States want – they want to retain control of delegations, creating a long bureaucratic decision-making process focused on Brussels central institutions that impair prompt and flexible response.

- New policy options should also be created to address complex emerging issues, such as hybrid threats and violent extremism. These new policy options would also serve as a reminder to the parties to a conflict and spoilers in peace processes that European response can come quickly and could potentially be harsh; that there is a set of forceful pre-agreed means to respond to those specifically hindering peace negotiations and that they will be used to ensure peace talks move forward.

Effective early action and conflict prevention

- Prevention efforts are hard to prove and measure, though the EU has had some successes. For example, on various occasions high level exchanges between EU and Member State officials with local political leaders during disputed elections have contributed to those parties accepting election results and preventing potential conflict escalation and eruption of violence.

- Reaching quick political agreements among Member States for prompt action remains a challenge. In some instances of conflict escalation (in Caucasus, in Africa) early information was available, but the proposals put forth for swift and strong responses (such as immediate deployment of monitoring missions and a diplomatic offensive) failed to get approval from Member States.

- In order to further long-term EU security interests in conflict countries, more endeavor and training needs to be focused on conflict prevention. Prevention is hard to sell to Member States and their electorates because it is hard to quantify and qualify the results of an effort into an event that has not yet happened. However, prevention is essential to successfully promoting peace and stabilisation.

- The EU is currently ineffective in conflict prevention partly resulting from a weakness in promptly implementing follow-up to early warning systems. A clear set of tools and systems for quick response to early warning (including at the highest political levels) – and the sequencing and coordination of these tools – as well as adequate training, are what is needed for improving EU performance

in crisis prevention.

- The EU should continue to strengthen delegations with highly skilled staff. They have become veritable assets and should be empowered to continue to establish relations with partners. They will contribute real insight to conducting relevant political analyses and have valuable information about realities on the ground.

Coordinating responses and balancing interests

- Political will and clearly identified interests are imperative to successful engagement in conflicts. This has been demonstrated by a number of interventions deemed successful, including those in Mali and CAR. In both instances one country (in this case France) took lead, there was legal endorsement from the Security Council (SC) and explicit agreements among permanent SC members to act.

- The “big three” (France, Germany, UK) do not perceive conflicts as primary EU concerns when they are not in their immediate neighborhood and when their effects do not imminently threaten their citizens. Therefore, they may be unwilling to expend political capital on these issues. Mobilizing their engagement in a more strategic approach is needed to make the required policy changes for successful peace and stabilisation interventions.

- The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) needs continued significant reforms in order to reflect the framework of shared interests between Member States and countries in the broad neighborhood. It has allowed for increased flexibility in programming, that previous stringent Member State oversight made impossible. However, while there is much less top-down design, allowing for this flexibility, activities can only go so far without the direct support of MS – therefore, a balance must be struck between Member State guidance and a fluid and adaptable intervention.

- The key to successful EU engagement in conflict is for the Union to act as one and not with divided positions. While in some instances special negotiation formats that do not include all parties (like the Normandy format for the Ukraine talks) may be a short-term necessity, they should not be a default. United stances and collaborative efforts allow for heightened political influence in crisis response and success in longer-term engagement in peacebuilding.

- Consideration should be given to strengthening the role of EU Special Representatives, who also respond to regional and thematic issues, and engage in conflict prevention and resolution. There are ongoing issues with potential conflicts of interest and clashes of authority between the EUSRs and Delegations. The EUSRs are seen as “belonging” to Member States, they are appointed by the Council and report to it – thereby making them more attractive to MS as a means of intervention.





Panellists: **Maciej Popowski**, Deputy Director-General, Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission, **Martin Griffiths**, Executive Director, European Institute of Peace, **Fredrik Wesslau**, Director of the Wider Europe Programme, European Council on Foreign Relations

Panel moderated by **Peter Brorsen**, Director - External Relations and Europe, European Institute of Peace



Panellists: **Antonio Missiroli**, Director, European Union Institute for Security Studies, **Jan Techau**, Director, Carnegie Europe, **Sonya Reines-Dijvanides**, Executive Director, European Peacebuilding Liason Office, **Roland Freudenstein**, Deputy Director, Martens Centre

Panel moderated by **Marcin Buzanski**, Director of Peace and Stabilization Strategies Programme, Casimir Pulaski Foundation



Peace and Stabilisation Strategies Programme

The Peace and Stabilisation Strategies Programme has been established to contribute to global policy and practice in the field of international conflict resolution. With a focus on international institutions, it aims to review actions of state and non-state actors and develop recommendations for effective stabilization and peace process support.

Main objectives of the Programme:

- Reviewing policies that address international and intrastate conflicts, and developing recommendations for the stabilization of violent conflict zones and reaching peace settlements, with particular emphasis on the role of international institutions, and interests of their members.
- Promoting cooperation and building partnerships among institutions and experts engaged in peace and stabilization worldwide, exploring timely recommendations for comprehensive approaches to stabilizing conflicts and reaching peace settlements.
- Promoting the engagement of Polish experts and supporting Polish activities in the area of analysis and developing innovative policies designed toward stabilization and peace process support.

One of the main priorities of the programme is to critically analyze the policies of international organizations and their member states towards conflicts within the broad European neighbourhood and beyond, with a view to developing comprehensive strategies for supporting stabilization efforts and reaching political agreements.

The programme aims to distill the salient components of successful executions of peace processes as well as peace process support strategies – specifically the combination of adequate political, diplomatic, military and economic resources for achieving peace settlements and stability. The programme will address a range of policy and organizational recommendations toward developing such strategies.

The programme will also examine the relationships and cooperation between the European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations (UN), as well as other regional actors, in forming a peace and security architecture, and specifically the variety of stabilization and peace process support measures and instruments such as peace operations. The programme will also work towards better understanding of realities of contemporary conflicts, and their regional dimensions.

Recent events have been signaling changes in policies regarding conflicts. The 2016 NATO summit conclusions, the UN peace operations and peacebuilding architecture review, and the development of the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy are all examples of a shift to more strategic comprehensive approaches. The Casimir Pulaski Foundation will actively contribute to the current debates accompanying these shifts by conducting analyses and developing practical recommendations for peace processes support, stabilization and crises response policies. The Programme will also monitor global events, conducting initial rapid analyses as well as detailed analyses through collaborations of in-house staff and international experts in the field of peace and stabilization.

Within the framework of the program, a series of seminars will be held. The aim of these seminars is to analyze the policies of the most important institutions in the field, specifically the UN, EU, NATO and OSCE, with particular emphasis on how they relate to and collaborate with each other before, during and after responses. These seminars will provide a platform for the exchange of ideas between government and international organization officials, experts on security and foreign policy, and representatives of think-tanks and other non-governmental organizations.

At the conclusion of the series of seminars, a final report will outline the main conclusions of the discussions. Finally, during the 2016 Warsaw Security Forum, which will take place the 26th through the 28th of October 2016 (<http://warsawsecurityforum.org/>), the results and recommendations for comprehensive strategies for peace and stabilization support will be presented. The main findings will be discussed in dedicated panels.





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