EU PEACEBUILDING IN THE CSDP FRAMEWORK: THE CASE OF EUBAM LIBYA

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Introduction

This article critically assesses the EU’s efforts to influence peacebuilding processes with reference to CSDP operations, using EUBAM Libya as case study. The case of Libya clearly shows the EU’s understanding of peacebuilding and it is also an exemplar of its limits, which mostly derive from the intergovernmental decision-making process in the CFSP and CSDP domains.

The principal aim of the article is to show at what stage of conflict the EU is likely to intervene (and how); and what peacebuilding activities it undertakes through CSDP missions: the analysis finds that, despite EU claims of adopting a ‘comprehensive approach’ to crises, CSDP missions operate in the post-conflict phase with a “targeted and carefully tailored [mandate] in contrast to large scale and comprehensive missions deployed by the UN”1, focusing on limited and specific issues of the vast peacebuilding activities that can give tangible and visible results. In most of the cases, these activities involve the Security Sector Reform (SSR) of the country of intervention.

In order to reach this conclusion, the article firstly defines what the EU understanding of peacebuilding is by analysing the most important EU documents related to peacebuilding, which is not an easy task, considering that there is neither a proper EU definition of peacebuilding nor a commonly agreed upon definition of the concept itself. The article then analyses the EU role in peacebuilding processes, using the ‘niche approach’ theory. The following section evaluates EUBAM Libya’s efforts to influence peacebuilding in the security domain by using the previously obtained definition of the concept as a benchmark. The last section illustrates the limits of EU peacebuilding, mentioning the EU management of the Libyan crisis since 2011, and highlighting decision-making-related problems and lack of capabilities that hinder a more comprehensive and successful role of the Union as conflict manager.
Defining Peacebuilding

The notion of peacebuilding has been defined by scholars, practitioners and international organizations in so many different ways that there is no universally accepted definition. Moreover, the concept has evolved over time. In order to define the EU understanding of peacebuilding, due to the EU’s strong faith in “effective multilateralism”, it is useful to briefly illustrate the evolution of the peacebuilding concept in the UN system. In fact, the latter had a major influence on the development of the former.

UN Conception of Peacebuilding

The term ‘peacebuilding’ first appeared in the famous 1992 Report by then-Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, “An Agenda for Peace”, in which peacebuilding is defined as “an action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to prevent a relapse into conflict”. The concept was then refined in following reports in which peacebuilding is indicated “not only as instrumental in achieving peace in the post-conflict phase, but also as central to preventive diplomacy”.

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In the 2000 “Brahimi Report” – officially known as “Report of the Panel on the United Nations Peace Operations” – the concept was used to describe “activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war”\(^7\) – a positive peace.

The evolution of the concept and its growing importance was reflected in the UN institutional reform that took place in 2005, leading to the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Support Office. However, the mandates of these new bodies do not offer a more precise notion of the concept itself.

Finally, more recently, two official UN documents expanded the definition of peacebuilding and provided a list of what concrete actions constitute peacebuilding activities. In the 2008 “UN Peacekeeping Operations: Principle and Guidelines” it is written that “peacebuilding is a complex, long-term process of creating the necessary conditions for a sustainable peace […] by addressing the deep-rooted, structural causes of violent conflict in a comprehensive manner”\(^8\). What emerges from this definition is the fact that peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding are closely linked to one another and “the boundaries between [them] are becoming increasingly blurred”\(^9\).

Regarding peacebuilding priorities, they are listed in the 2009 “Report of the UN Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict”. They include a wide range of activities that covers the whole spectrum of political, economic and social life:

- Security: protection of civilians, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR), strengthening of rule of law;
- Political process and social life: support for elections, inclusive dialogue, reconciliation, reforms of state authority, managing return of IDPs, humanitarian aid;

• Economy: rehabilitation, economic recovery, support for reforms and for the provision of basic services and infrastructures.\textsuperscript{10}

In conclusion, even if a narrow and precise definition of peacebuilding is still missing, “its goal, that of a sustainable peace, is clear”.\textsuperscript{11}

Having illustrated the evolution of the notion of peacebuilding in the UN system, the analysis can now move to the EU’s very own understanding of peacebuilding.

EU Understanding of Peacebuilding\textsuperscript{12}

Starting from the 2000s with the launch of the first ESDP/CSDP missions\textsuperscript{13} “peacebuilding [has become] central to what the EU does externally”.\textsuperscript{14} However, despite the importance of the concept, “a working EU or EC definition of peacebuilding does not currently exist”.\textsuperscript{15} Not even the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009 – which was welcomed by many scholars and practitioners as the opportunity to precisely define the EU role in peacebuilding activities – has helped clarify the EU’s understanding of the concept. In fact, the Lisbon Treaty “does not include articles on peacebuilding”, but it just refers “to the Union’s ambition to preserve

\textsuperscript{12} The European Union itself “is, in essence, a giant peacebuilding project” See Ibid., p.13. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between internal and external peacebuilding. For the purposes of this article, only the external dimension is considered.
peace, prevent conflict and strengthen international security\textsuperscript{16}. Article 42, dedicated to the EU’s activities to maintain peace and security mentions peacekeeping and conflict prevention\textsuperscript{17}.

This lack of clarity and the problems it creates are quite evident to both scholars and EU institutions: most notably the European Parliament has called many times for an EU Peacebuilding Strategy that lays down concrete goals and sets the framework for coordination between EU institutions and between them and the Member-States. The Peacebuilding Strategy should be “a starting point that presents several ideas from which, in a later step, priorities can be deduced”\textsuperscript{18}. However, there have not been any follow-ups to these calls.

Therefore, in order to identify a proper EU understanding of peacebuilding, it is necessary to analyse the considerable amount of documents produced by EU institutions on conflict prevention, crisis management and related activities. In doing so, it is fundamental to keep in mind the dynamic structure of the European Union and its institutions: due to “the absence of any common [EU] definition, the EU institutions have had to find their own way of defining and understanding the term”\textsuperscript{19}, which means that the notion of peacebuilding can vary from one institution to another, and even within the same institution from one department to another. Moreover, as already mentioned above, due to the multilateral vocation of the Union “peacebuilding in the EU context cannot be considered in isolation”, but has to “take account of the direct links with the UN when it comes to representation (through the two permanent and the non-permanent members of the Security Council […] and to seeking legitimacy for a variety of peacebuilding tasks”, especially those that involve the deployment of military means\textsuperscript{20}.

A good starting point can be considered the 1996 Commission’s communication to the Council, “The European Union and the Issue of Conflicts in Africa: Peace-Building, Conflict Prevention and Beyond”, in which it is stated that “activities of conflict prevention in a wider sense should be summarized under the term

\textsuperscript{18} European Parliament, \textit{Towards an EU Peacebuilding Strategy?}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 10.
peacebuilding”.21 In the document the Commission also draws a temporal distinction between short and long-term activities that is then reinforced in the 2001 Communication on conflict prevention, which “is considered [...] as providing the ongoing strategic framework and intervention logic for the EC’s approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding”.22 Conflict resolution is a short term-activity, while conflict management/peacebuilding appears to be long-term oriented and therefore the latter is mostly identified as ‘post-conflict peacebuilding’.23

Another key document is the 2003 “European Security Strategy” (ESS), in which emphasis is placed on conflict prevention: “We should be ready to act before a crisis occurs. Conflict prevention and threat prevention cannot start too early”.24 This concept is re-enforced in the 2008 “Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy”, where “peacebuilding and long-term poverty reduction is [considered] essential” in “preventing threats from becoming sources of conflict early on”.25

In general, it is better to think about EU peacebuilding in terms of synergy instead of strategy, “since it links together different threads from conflict prevention, crisis management, peacemaking and post-conflict stabilisation”.26 From the documents, what emerges is that “peacebuilding in the EU context includes both the conflict prevention role as well as the ability to immediately respond to conflict and crises”.27 Thus, the concept can be better understood as a continuum that includes a wide range of activities. Moreover, due to the abovementioned peculiar institutional structure of the EU, this complex understanding of peacebuilding “implies formidable coordination between not only [the institutions] (institutional consistency) but also within the [institutions] themselves (horizontal consistency), as well as with the relevant

22 Bayne and Trolliet, Stocktaking and Scoping of the Peacebuilding Partnership. Study for the European Commission, DG RELEX A/2, p. 15-16.
27 Ibid., p. 13.
international partners” and Member-States. This coordination is fundamental for the success of every EU activity in the conflict prevention and management domain: as the Council has already recognised, “the EU already has conflict prevention tools at its disposal. Successful use of these tools relies on strengthening and combining them more effectively”.

**EU Role in Peacebuilding**

In order to gain a clearer understanding of what the EU conceives as peacebuilding, it is fundamental to look at what activities the Union undertakes in order to achieve the ultimate goal of peacebuilding – “to build peace” – and how these activities are conducted. For the purpose of this article, the focus will be mainly on activities carried out by CSDP missions, but other activities conducted by the Commission have to be mentioned because of the close interplay between the two.

What can be inferred by the official documents on the matter is that the CFSP domain seems to have the role of “creating the conditions in which peacebuilding can flourish”. While “CSDP crisis management instruments and crisis response measures under the Instrument for Stability pursue mostly short-term objectives,” the Commission is more active in areas that require a long-term commitment in order to succeed, like development cooperation, political dialogue, mediation, and external trade.

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28 Ibid., p. 3.
31 Ibid., p. 30.
by using instruments such as external assistance programmes, humanitarian aid, actions on human rights.\textsuperscript{34} Also, conflict prevention seems to be a task for the Commission.

Thanks to the combination and coordination between these two aspects of EU intervention that focus both on short and long-term measures, the EU claims to have developed a ‘comprehensive approach’, which “covers all stages of the cycle of conflict or other external crises; through early warning and preparedness, conflict prevention, crisis response, and management to early recovery, stabilisation and peacebuilding”.\textsuperscript{35} This comprehensive approach also refers to the EU’s ability in the CSDP domain to deploy what is conceived as a continuum that ranges from civilian to military capabilities.\textsuperscript{36}

To sum up, the phases of peace/crisis prevention and peacebuilding should mostly be prerogatives of the Commission, while in the escalation and conflict phases the main activities should be conducted through CSDP missions, as Figure 1 shows.

\textsuperscript{34} For more on the Commission’s external actions and instruments see Duke and Courtier, \textit{EU Peacebuilding: Concepts, Players and Instruments}, p. 16-29.
\textsuperscript{36} Even if the EU formally distinguishes between civilian and military CSDP missions, in practice the two components are difficult to separate because “when the Union acts militarily, it is only within a broader civilian approach”. See Nicole Koenig, "Between Conflict Management and Role Conflict: The EU in the Libyan Crisis,” \textit{European Security} 23, no. 3 (2014), p. 257.
Figure 1 also illustrates some of the peacebuilding activities undertaken by the EU. In the CSDP framework, four priority areas can be identified: SSR, strengthening rule of law, administration reform and civil protection.\(^{37}\) Despite the fact that these seem more abstract goals rather than specific strategic priorities,\(^{38}\) they are already narrower and more precise compared to UN goals and activities in peacebuilding. Again, it is fundamental to stress that the Union’s objectives “in securing peace and stability are not achievable in isolation”\(^{39}\) but only through an effective cooperation with international organizations, primarily the UN. Multilateralism can therefore be considered the first guiding principle of the EU’s peacebuilding activities.

On this basis, the core argument of the article is that the Union has developed a ‘niche approach’ to peacebuilding: it prefers to launch CSDP missions with very limited mandates that operate on sectors that can give tangible and visible results, sectors that are left ‘free’ by UN missions, in order “to avoid the well-known flaws of UN operations such as mission creep, taking on high risk operations in seemingly hopeless conflicts, deploying never ending missions and suffering from overly ambitious mandates”.

The document that sets forth the terms of EU-UN cooperation on peacebuilding activities is the EU-UN Joint Declaration of June 2004, in which 5 scenarios for EU deployment are illustrated, as summarised by Table 1.

| Scenario 1 | Clearing house approach: the EU facilitates and coordinates the bilateral contribution of its member states to UN peacekeeping |
| Scenario 2 | Stand alone mission: under political and strategic control of the EU but mandated by the UN |
| Scenario 3 | Modular approach: the EU provides specialised support in a confined area |
| Scenario 4 | Bridging model: foresees a limited temporal but rapid deployment of EU troops until the UN takes over the main responsibilities within a larger mission |
| Scenario 5 | Standby model: EU provides for an ‘over the horizon reserve’ force which intervenes at the request of the UN |


Every CSDP mission deployed by the EU so far can be placed in one of these 5 scenarios – sometimes moving from one to another. Interestingly, the clearing house approach (scenario 1) can be considered ‘out-dated’, since according to the current growing trend, EU Member-States are more willing to deploy troops within the EU context instead of in the UN system. This is mainly because in the CFSP framework Member-States can exercise greater control on the missions, in particular on their mandate. However, this greater control has meant that due to the intergovernmental decision-making process and the consequent great difficulties in reaching “broad based member state support”, the missions’ mandates have to be narrow and limited in scope.

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Therefore, the ‘niche approach’ adopted by the EU can also be considered the outcome of the lack of political consensus among Member States.

A closer look at the four priority areas for peacebuilding activities in the CSDP framework reveals the second key concept at the core of EU peacebuilding: ‘local ownership’, a concept that “seems to be almost holy to the EU”. The Union’s external action is characterized by the preference for bottom-up approaches towards a just and durable peace, by empowering local actors but at the same time influencing them with its values. This is what has been called ‘fourth-generation approach’ or ‘post-liberal’ peacebuilding.

‘Support’ is thus the keyword used in the official documents: “the EU action shall cover [...] peacebuilding by seeking to support initiatives for containing violent conflict and to prepare for, and sustain, peaceful solutions to such conflicts” and the preferred way to do this is through funding and training of local actors – which is particularly evident for the Security Sector Reform.

EU and SSR

Many authors have stressed that the “majority of [EU] operations follow a capacity-building approach, engaging in security sector training activities.” As a matter of fact, it can be said that SSR has become the EU’s favourite ‘niche’: the Union “has emerged as a worldwide leader in Security Sector Reform.”

As many other peacebuilding activities, “given the EU’s understanding of the relationship between security and other EU priorities such as human rights, human

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41 Marlene Gottwald, Options for EU Engagement in Post-Conflict Libya (Brussels: TEPSA Brief, 9 March 2012), p. 5.
42 On the four approaches to liberal peacebuilding see Oliver Richmond, Annika Björkdahl and Stefanie Kappler, ”The Emerging EU Peacebuilding Framework: Confirming Or Transcending Liberal Peacebuilding?” Cambridge Review of International Affairs 24, no. 3 (2011), 449-469.
security and development, SSR is considered a ‘cross-cutting’ issue for all EU institutions.” Despite the fact that civilian CSDP missions are now “the main instrument used by [the] EU for its SSR action,” there are still coordination problems with the activities undertaken by the Commission. One of the most striking problems is that, notwithstanding the attempt made in the 2006 “Council Conclusions on a Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform,” the actions carried out by the Commission and those carried out by CSDP missions follow two separate frameworks.

But what is SSR in concrete terms and why is it at the core of EU’s peacebuilding activities? First of all, Security Sector Reform can be considered “a holistic concept that includes all those activities aiming at supporting and monitoring the process of restructuring the armed forces, the police force […], the judiciary system […], in countries in a post-conflict situation in order to facilitate the respect of human rights and international humanitarian law […], good governance and transparency”. Within the CSDP framework, SSR covers many areas:

- “Support in reforming the Defen[c]e Sector”
- “Support in reforming the Police Sector”
- “Support in strengthening Justice/Rule of Law elements in Security Sector”
- “Support in strengthening the border and customs sector”
- Support for financial reforms and training local actors for better working methods

The stress on the term ‘support’ underlines again the relevance of the principle of local ownership, the implementation of which is not always easy. Other challenges to the Union’s SSR activities are: coordination (between EU institutions, Member-States,

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51 Ibid., p. 186.
and other relevant international actors); “tensions between global norms and local practices; and […] financial challenges”.52

Going back to the reasoning behind the importance given by the EU to SSR, it has to be said that its relevance “in the external action of the Union is based on the ‘security-development nexus’, which is considered a key concept of the EU foreign policy”.53 Moreover, the European Security Strategy considers SSR at the heart of institution-building/state-building,54 a concept that is strongly connected to peacebuilding, according to the prevalent liberal model of intervention. In fact, SSR can be considered the first step towards state-building, which “appears to be a more straightforward task for the international community”, because the community has a clear idea of how a “well-functioning, liberal state […] should look like”.55 Thus, the focus on SSR can be explained by the fact that appropriate security mechanisms and structures are essential elements in maintaining stability and good governance. In addition, the security sector “is considered as a fundamental component of human security”.56

EUBAM Libya

The European Union Integrated Border Assistance Mission in Libya is a civilian CSDP mission launched in May 2013 “with the aim of supporting the Libyan authorities in improving and developing the security of the country’s borders”.57 The Council decision establishing the mission indicates as precise objectives “to support the Libyan authorities to develop capacity for enhancing the security of Libya’s land, sea

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and air borders in the short term and to develop a broader IBM\textsuperscript{58} strategy in the longer term”.\textsuperscript{59}

According to the definition of EU peacebuilding and the theoretical framework developed in the first part of the article, the mission should have a capacity-building approach, a limited mandate focused on a specific sector in which tangible results can be achieved, preferably the security sector. In addition, the two core principles of multilateralism and local ownership of the peacebuilding process should be respected. Regarding multilateralism, the mission should fall into one of the five deployment scenarios illustrated in Table 1. Finally, the mission should operate in the phase of escalation or conflict – as suggested by Figure 1 – and being part of a broader ‘comprehensive approach’.

First of all, looking at the mandate, it clearly appears that it is absolutely narrow, focusing not even on SSR in general, but dealing with one specific aspect of it that is border management. The narrowness of the mandate is also reflected by the number of personnel that participate in the mission: 100 members at the beginning, but since October 2014, only “17 international mission members”\textsuperscript{60} Regarding capacity-building, the term is explicitly mentioned as the adopted approach.

Second, multilateralism is fundamental for EUBAM Libya: the mission was established after the Paris Conference on Libya in September 2011, where different stakeholders – UN, EU, EU Member States, IMF, Libyans – coordinated their efforts by choosing the preferred sectors of intervention.\textsuperscript{61} Border management was attributed to the EU – considering the closeness of the country to EU soil. Therefore, the EU ‘niche approach’ is confirmed also in this case. Moreover, the mission operates in close relation to UNSMIL – the United Nations Support Mission in Libya – which was first launched in September 2011 with a mandate of six months that has been extended

\textsuperscript{58} Integrated Border Management.


\textsuperscript{60} European External Action Service, EUBAM Libya Factsheet, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{61} Gottwald, Options for EU Engagement in Post-Conflict Libya, p. 2.
multiple times, lastly in March 2014.\textsuperscript{62} UNSMIL’s mandate focuses on four main areas: democratic transition, rule of law and human rights, security sector and international assistance coordination.\textsuperscript{63} As a consequence, EUBAM can surely be considered as falling into scenario 3, the so-called ‘modular approach’, according to which the EU mission provides specialised support in a precise area – in this case a specific aspect of SSR, border management.

Third, the principle of local ownership clearly emerges as fundamental to EUBAM’s activities: the mission’s tasks are to “train”, “mentor”, “advise” and “support the Libyan authorities”.\textsuperscript{64}

The first discrepancies between the notion of peacebuilding obtained from official EU documents and the actual praxis emerge from the analysis of the stage of conflict in which EUBAM has been deployed. The EU, instead of deploying in the escalation or conflict phase a CSDP mission that focuses on short-term security – a ‘comprehensive’ mission that uses both civilian and military capabilities – as expected, has opted for a fully civilian operation that “supports the Libyan post-conflict reconstruction”.\textsuperscript{65} Due to the quickly deteriorating situation on the ground – starting from 2013 Libya has rapidly moved to a new escalation phase – this type of mission has proven ineffective: the mission’s staff has been relocated outside of Libya (in Tunis and Brussels) and its training activities have been severely hindered and even suspended.

What is the rationale behind the choice of this type of mission? There are two primary reasons: the well-known lack of political consensus among Member-States and the lack of adequate capabilities. In addition, constraints deriving from the principle of local ownership further limited EU action. In order to gain a clearer understanding of these issues, it is useful to briefly analyse the broader EU response to the 2011 Libyan crisis.

\begin{itemize}
\item[65] European External Action Service, EUBAM Libya Factsheet, p. 1.
\end{itemize}
The Libyan crisis was the first occasion to test the renewed EU foreign policy after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. The crisis had the perfect features for a ‘comprehensive’ EU intervention: there was a UN mandate (UNSC resolution 1973), the US were not willing to take the lead in the operations because they did not have real interests at stake – even NATO was asking Europeans to assume their responsibilities – and “the region supported Western-led intervention”. Moreover, considering the difficult relations between the EU and Gaddafi – “Libya was the only Mediterranean country not to become a member of the EU’s Barcelona process, launched in 1995” – Europeans saw the opportunity to strengthen and deepen their relations with Libya.

However, no CSDP mission was launched, mainly due to lack of political consensus among Member-States. As a matter of fact, there were striking differences in the positions of the EU’s Big Three – Germany, the UK, and France – and even between EU institutions: France pushed for a strong and comprehensive EU role and was supported by the European Parliament; the UK took the lead in calling for military intervention, but only through NATO; while Germany – in line with High Representative Ashton – opposed any form of military intervention. Due to these opposing views, it soon became clear that reaching the consensus required to launch an effective CSDP mission was impossible. As a consequence, France and the UK started the air bombing campaign on their own, but the operational command was soon transferred to NATO due to the complexity of the operation and because the capabilities it required exceeded by far those possessed by France and the UK, the EU biggest military powers.

Even if on the 1st of April 2011 an agreement on the establishment of a military mission in support of humanitarian assistance in Libya (EUFOR Libya) was reached, its mandate was so watered down by the need to ‘make everybody happy’ – the Member States – that the resultant mission was completely inadequate. EUFOR Libya followed

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the ‘stand-by model’, serving as an ‘over the horizon reserve’ “in response to a possible request from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)”\textsuperscript{68}. This type of mission did not meet the needs of the UN and was not even welcomed because of “concerns on blurring the lines between military and humanitarian action”\textsuperscript{69} under the UN flag; as a consequence the deployment plan was never finalised and the UN call never came.

Nevertheless, the EU did play an active role in the crisis: the paralysis in the CFSP domain was ‘balanced out’ by a leading role in its humanitarian dimension, in imposing sanctions on and freezing assets of Libyan leaders close to Gaddafi, and in coordinating the evacuation of EU citizens.\textsuperscript{70}

Thus, what can be inferred from the EU’s behaviour in dealing with the crisis is that “the Union still acts in line with its traditional role as a civilian power. The inability to go beyond [this role] stemmed from internal dissonance on a potential hard power role and a corresponding lack of material capabilities”.\textsuperscript{71}

These problems also affected the phase after the end of NATO-led intervention, in which the principle of local ownership put further constrains on EU action: in fact, the “Libyan authorities opposed foreign intervention with ground troops”.\textsuperscript{72} Consequently, poorly trained militias – armed by the West – with unclear chains of command benefitted from the absence of security providers and effective DDR processes by partitioning Libya in areas under their control.\textsuperscript{73}

In light of all of this, EUBAM Libya can be considered as a compromise on two levels: at the EU level, because EUBAM is the only mission that Member-States were able to agree on; and as a compromise between EU interests and local ownership.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} Koenig, \textit{Between Conflict Management and Role Conflict: The EU in the Libyan Crisis}, p. 258-259.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 250.
\textsuperscript{72} Gottwald, \textit{Options for EU Engagement in Post-Conflict Libya}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{73} Gaub, \textit{The EU and Libya and the Art of the Possible}, p. 47-51.
Conclusions: Limits of EU’s Peacebuilding

This article has analysed the EU’s understanding of peacebuilding, focusing on EUBAM Libya. Although there is no official definition of peacebuilding in the EU system, the term is used to define a wide range of activities towards the goal of establishing and consolidating peace, including both short and long-term measures, and two principles have been identified as fundamental: multilateralism and local ownership.

Due to the institutional structure of the Union, activities undertaken by the Commission and within the CFSP framework are complementary and require good coordination. CSDP missions are more focused on short-term actions in specific limited sectors, mostly SSR – in conformity to the ‘niche approach’ theory. These missions would be required to have broader scopes and be deployed in the stage of hot conflict, but the discording views between Member-States on security priorities and the use of CSDP missions and its limited capabilities constrain the EU in its role of civilian power, preventing it from becoming the ‘comprehensive power’ it claims to be.

There is nothing inherently wrong in the EU’s understanding of peacebuilding. However, the absence of a precise definition can create too high expectations, especially on the role the Union can perform through the CSDP, thus widening the well-known ‘capability-expectations gap’.74 The lack of preciseness also affects the effectiveness of the coordination between EU institutions.

In addition, even the two principles of multilateralism and local ownership – which are essentially positive – can have tricky implications: the first one implies that “the EU’s impact on the ground [is] determined by partner organizations and not [by] the EU alone”;75 while the second, if applied too extensively, can lead to a ‘hands-off’ approach.

There is also nothing wrong with the EU remaining a civilian power, but pressure for assuming a stronger and really comprehensive role is increasing. The EU needs to perform as conflict manager and have the necessary means to protect its interests, especially in its neighbourhood. In the Libyan crisis, “for all the talks of the US ‘leading from behind’, the Americans provided more than double the personnel made available by the next higher contributor,” not to mention the dependence on key enablers of modern warfare like strategic airlift and air-to-air refuelling. The economic crisis and the stubbornness of some Member-States in using their consequently decreased defence budgets for national projects instead of favouring pooling and sharing is making Europeans “even more dependent than in the past on the US military protection”.

This is quite problematic because NATO can be used for European defence as long as NATO’s (i.e. American) and EU’s interests coincide and “Libya clearly showed that the Americans have no desire to intervene in Europe’s backyard”.

In conclusion, if one of the main tasks of EU foreign and security policy is to “promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean,” the Union needs to have a full range of capabilities and the ability (i.e. consensus among Member-States) to use them. Otherwise, the EU’s response to challenges and threats – and peacebuilding is a response – will be limited and ineffective as in the case of EUBAM Libya.

Interestingly, despite migration, terrorism, and drugs and arms smuggling were considered “serious threats to EU security interests” already before the launch of EUBAM, only in the light of the recent events – the rise of the Islamic State in Libya.

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77 Fabbrini, The European Union and the Libyan Crisis, p. 189.
78 Koenig, Between Conflict Management and Role Conflict: The EU in the Libyan Crisis, p. 265.
80 Council of the European Union, Revised Draft Concept of Operations "Plus" (CONOPS PLUS) for the CSDP Mission EUBAM Libya, 18 April 2013, p. 31.
and the tragedies of migrants in the Mediterranean\textsuperscript{82} – Member-States were able to agree on stronger EU involvement in the area.\textsuperscript{83} This confirms the depressing perception that “only an exogenous shock can alter the logic considering a European good as the sum of specific and self-defined national goods”.\textsuperscript{84}


\textsuperscript{84} Fabbrini, \textit{The European Union and the Libyan Crisis}, p. 180.
References


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