

The European Union as a Civilian Power: A Success or Failure?

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ABSTRACT

It appears that the European Union (the EU) has steadily transformed itself into a 'civilian power' in international scene. In the post-Maastricht phase, the EU has ascribed great importance to the non-military instruments and power of civilian values in its foreign policy. In line with this, objectives and policy instruments of civilian power have been progressively introduced in EU's legal structure and its external relations.

Keywords: *civilian power, Common Foreign and Security Policy, the European Union, economic incentives, multilateralism and power.*

Sivil Güç Bağlamında Avrupa Birliği: Başarı veya Başarısızlık mı?

ÖZET

Avrupa Birliği kendisini kademeli şekilde bir 'sivil güç' realitesine dönüştürmüştür. Maastricht sonrası Avrupa Birliği'nin dış politikasında, kimlik, sivil güç unsurları ve askeri olmayan güç mekanizmaları önem kazanmaya başlamıştır. Bu bağlamda, sivil gücün prensipleri ve unsurları AB'nin dış ilişkilerini düzenleyen yasal mevzuatın bir parçası haline getirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *sivil güç, Ortak Dış ve Güvenlik Politikası, Avrupa Birliği, ekonomik özendiricilik, çok taraflılık ve güç*

Introduction

The foreign policy has become an important factor affecting the politics of European integration. In this regards, the objective of this article is to assess the success and failure of the European Union in developing capacity to act an influential actor in international politics. Therefore, the first section of this study assesses the principles, institutional structure and legal basis of Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU. Then, the second section examines the concept of civilian power and addresses

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the question as to whether the European Union has been acting as a civilian power. Finally, the last section summarizes the finding of the study.

1. Common Foreign and Security Policy: A Failure of the EU?

The end of Cold War has compelled the EU to establish the Common Foreign and Security Policy (the CFSP). In fact, the CFSP has been developed in response to the post-Cold War security challenges for the EU. The CFSP has been also a reflection of EU's desire to '*assert its identity*' in international politics.¹ Consequently, member states had signed the Treaty on European Union (TEU) with the aim of advancing European integration in every aspect, including establishing the CFSP. In this context, the CFSP included a variety of objectives, ranging from protecting '*fundamental interests and independence of the Union*' to '*preserve peace and strengthen international security*.'² Furthermore, the CFSP set an ambitious objective to have '*the eventual framing of a common defence policy*'.³ Nevertheless, the CFSP did not seem to have provided efficient policy instruments and a solid legal base to implement CFSP. In other words, the intergovernmental structure of the CFSP had limited the EU capacity to act independently from the member states, due to unanimity rule in decision making procedure of CFSP. Obviously, as is seen in EU's involvement in the post Cold War Balkan conflicts, the EU had failed to act as an effective 'global actor' in conflicts occurred in European periphery. As Michael Smith puts it:

*"As was demonstrated in the post-Cold War crisis of 1990s Europe, not only was the EU handicapped by the intergovernmentalism of the CFSP; it was also still dependent on the muscle provided by the USA and its allies in NATO (many of them EU member states) for the measures entailed in 'hard security' and coercion beyond economic sanctions"*⁴

Since then, there have been some efforts on part of the EU member states to improve policy instruments and legal bases for the CFSP to make the EU more visible in international scene. In this regards, the Amsterdam Treaty had brought some developments in CFSP by introducing a new institutional post of High Representative for the CFSP⁵ and furthering the linkage between the Western European Union (WEU) and the EU.⁶ However, such developments in CFSP did not seem to have significantly improved the performance of the EU in international scene.⁷

The St Malo Summit between the French President Jacques Chirac and British Prime Minister Tony Blair in December 1998 had generated some optimism and

¹For this, see the Article B (paragraph 2) of Treaty on European Union, *Official Journal of European Communities*, No. C.191, Vol.35, 29 July, 1992.

² Article J.1 (2) of the Treaty on European Union, *Official Journal of European Communities*, No.C.191, Vol.35, 29 July, 1992.

³ Article J.4 (1) of the Treaty on European Union, *Official Journal of European Communities*, No. C.191, Vol.35, 29 July, 1992.

⁴ Michael Smith, "The framing of European foreign and security policy: towards a post-modern policy framework?", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 10:4, 2003, pp.561-562.

⁵ See Article J.8 (3) of the Treaty of Amsterdam, *Official Journal of European Communities*, No.C.340, 10 November 1997.

⁶For this, see the Treaty of Amsterdam, Article J.7 (1), paragraph 2, *Official Journal of European Communities*, No. C. 340, 10 November 1997.

⁷ A further account on this, see Michael Smith, "The framing of European foreign and security policy: towards a post-modern policy framework?", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 10:4, 2003, p.562.

enthusiasm towards the establishment of a common European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) with the aim of reinforcing the military capabilities of the EU in international scene.⁸ In line with this development, the Cologne Summit of the EU in June 1999 and the European Council at the Helsinki in December 1999 had taken crucial decisions towards the establishment of the ESDP, as an important component of the Common Foreign Security Policy of the Union. The European Council at the Helsinki declared that:

“The European Union should have the autonomous capacity to take decisions and, where NATO as a whole is not engaged, to launch and then to conduct EU-led military operations in response to international crisis in support of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).”⁹

The Treaty of Nice accelerated the progress towards the establishment of a solid foreign and security policy of the Union with a strong defence component.¹⁰ Indeed, the Article 17 of the Treaty underlined the need for a comprehensive foreign and security policy of the EU to include *‘the progressive framing of a common defence policy, which might lead to a common defence.’*¹¹

Although, as illustrated in above, there had been some progress towards CFSP/ESDP, the EU had failed to take a common policy approach to Iraq and to other international issues, such as Israeli-Palestine conflict and post-Yugoslavian issue. As Brain Crowe stated that *“There was intermittent superficial discussion and the occasional minimalist declarations to show that the EU was at least aware that there was an Iraqi problem.”*¹² The failure of the EU to implement the objectives of CFSP in number issues, including Iraq had been in direct contradictions with its desire to extend its influence in World politics. Moreover, in some circus within the EU, there had been a growing concern about American unilateralism. In fact, the Iraq case and Global Strategy of George W. Bush administration after the terrorist attacks of 11 September offered a clear evidence for USA unilateralism in World affairs.¹³ As a result, the EU became more vulnerable to the USA unilateralism, and thus member states had realized that the EU needed a solid foreign and security policy with a defence component. As Mette Eilstrup Sangiovanni suggested that *“There is a growing sense among Europeans that if they wish to seriously influence US policy, they can do so only by building greater military*

⁸ A detailed analysis on European Security and Defence Policy, see Mette Eilstrup Sangiovanni, “Why a Common Security and Defence Policy is Bad for Europe”, *Survival*, Vol.45, No.3, Autumn 2003, pp.193-206.

⁹ European Council *Presidency Conclusions*, Helsinki, 10 -11 December, General Secretariat of the Council, Brussels, (Presidency Progress Report to the Helsinki European Council on Strengthening the Common European Policy on Security and Defence)

¹⁰ For a detailed analysis, see Harun Arikan, *Turkey and the EU: An Awkward Candidate for EU Membership?* (second Edition), Ashgate, 2006, p.215.

¹¹ Treaty of Nice, *Official Journal of European Communities*, Article 17, No.C.80, 10 March 2001.

¹² Brain, Crowe, “A Common European Foreign Policy after Iraq?”, *International Affairs*, Vol.79, No.3, p.535.

¹³ A detailed analysis on American unilateralism under the George W.Bush, see John Dumbrell “Unilateralism and ‘America First’? President George W. Bush’s Foreign Policy”, *Political Quarterly*, Vol.73, Issue, 3, 2002, pp.279-287.

capabilities.¹⁴ Indeed, the EU's credibility as an international actor had been a subject of debate after the Iraq war.¹⁵

A need for a strong Common Foreign and Security policy with a defence capability was reflected in a Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in that it established a EU Minister for Foreign Affairs responsible for foreign and security policy of the Union. The Treaty also had brought a new institutional setting in the areas of CFSP and ESDP to strengthen the EU's credibility in international affairs.¹⁶ In line with this, the Treaty had set up EU diplomatic service, consisting of representatives of the EU institutions and EU members, to formulate common policy approach towards regional and international issues.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe was rejected by referenda in France and the Netherlands in 2004.

Since then the EU seemed to take a more active policy stance towards the international issues: it launched a number of conflict prevention measures in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003 and in Chad and Central African Republic in 2008.¹⁸ Furthermore, the EU had actively engaged in peace building process in Western Balkans, including Kosovo throughout peace enforcement and peace keeping mechanisms.¹⁹

The Treaty of Lisbon that amended the existing treaties of the Union has furthered the EU's aspiration to strengthen its capacity as an influential actor in international scene within the framework of CFSP and the ESDP. For instance, the Common Foreign and Security Policy have been incorporated into the legal scope of the Union: It was not the case in the past, as it had a separate status in EU law. Article 24 (1) of the Lisbon Treaty stipulates that "*the Union's competence in matters of common foreign and security policy shall cover all areas of foreign policy and all questions relating to the Union's security*."²⁰ Furthermore, The Lisbon Treaty has widened the task and roles of a High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security with a responsibility of chairing the Foreign Affairs Council.²¹ However, it should be pointed out that the Lisbon Treaty does not seem to have provided a sufficient institutional framework and decision-making procedure to achieve the declared objectives of the

¹⁴ Mette Eilstrup Sangiovanni, "Why a Common Security and Defence Policy Bad for Europe", *Survival*, Vol.45, No.3, Autumn 2003, pp.195-196.

¹⁵ Steven Everts and Daniel Keohane, "The European Convention and EU Foreign Policy: Learning from Failure", *Survival*, Vol.45, No. 3, Autumn 2003, p.167.

¹⁶ Daniel Thym, "Reforming Europe's Common Foreign and Security Policy", *European Law Journal*, Vol.10, No.1, 2004, pp.5-22.

¹⁷ Stevens Everts and Daniel Keohane, "The European Convention and EU Foreign Policy: Learning from Failure", *Survival*, Vol.45, No.3, Autumn, pp.172-173.

¹⁸ Gorm Rye Olsen, "The EU and Military Conflict Management in Africa: For the Good of Africa or Europe?", *International Peace Keeping*, Vol.16, No.2, 2009, p.246.

¹⁹ Emil J. Kirchner, "The Challenge of European Union Security Governance", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol.44, Number 5, 2006, pp.947-968.

²⁰ Article 24 (1) of Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, *Official Journal of the European Union*, No.C.83, 30.3.2010.

²¹ Steven Blockmans and Ramses A. Wessel, "The European Union and Crisis Management: Will the Lisbon Treaty Make the EU More Effective?", *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, Vol.14, No.2, 2009, p.295.

EU in the areas of foreign, security and defence. As Trevor C. Hartley rightly pointed out that:

“The CFSP still retains distinctive features: legislative powers are lacking; the jurisdiction of the European Court is largely excluded; and decision-making is based on the principle that no member states should be bound against its will.”²²

Basically, as is evident from the above analysis, although the EU has begun to take on new responsibilities for conflict management, peace-building and humanitarian intervention, it has not entirely been successful in developing consistent and effective Common Foreign and Security Policy with a strong defence component. EU's failure in this respect could be explained by the two main factors. The first factor could be attributed to the lack of strong desire of EU member states for CFSP: as most of EU member states seem to have perceived foreign policy and security related issues as *'high politics issues'*. Secondly, there seems to have been a serious disagreement over EU's military involvement in regions where EU member states had appeared to be in conflict with each other resulting from their colonial legacies.

2. EU as a Civilian Power: A Success Story?

The argument over the EU a civilian power has been a subject of debate in the existing literature on the politics of European integration. Francis Duchene described the European Community as a 'civilian power' in 1971.²³ Hedley Bull disagreed with the civilian power concept of the European integration and argued that the Europe, instead of focusing economic power, needed a more comprehensive policy to include 'military power', carefully designed relations with USA and Soviet Union, 'the regenerations of Europe' and an 'Europeanist strategic policy'.²⁴ In response to Hedley Bull's assumption over the issue, Ian Manner has also made contribution to the existing literature by conceptualizing the EU as a 'normative power'.²⁵ Instead of focusing on EU's military and economic powers, Ian Manner has focused to a large extent on the ideational aspects of EU's role in international system. As Manner argued that “...by *refocusing away from debate over either civilian or military power, it is possible to think of the ideational impact of the EU's international identity/role as representing normative power.*”²⁶ However, Thomas Diez has underlined the similarities between the concept of 'civilian power' and 'normative power': As Thomas Diez stated that “*civilian power can be read as one specific form of normative power in that at its heart lie particular kinds of norms (namely civilian)*”.²⁷ In this respect, the term of civilian power is used throughout this study, also referring to the term of normative power.

²² Trevor C. Hartley, *The Foundations of the European Union law*, Seventh Editions, Oxford University Press, 2010, p.33.

²³ A further analysis of for it, see Francis Duchane, “Europe's Role in World Peace” in Mayne Richard (ed.), *Europe Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead*, London, Fontana, 1972, pp.32-47.

²⁴ Hedley Bull, “Civilian Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol.21, Issue 2, 1982, pp.149-164.

²⁵ For a detailed analysis for a concept of normative power, see Ian Manner, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol.40, Number 2, 2002, pp.235-258.

²⁶ Ian Manner, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradictions in Terms”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol.40, Number 2, 2002, p.238.

²⁷ Thomas Diez “Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering 'Normative Power Europe'”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 33, No.3, 2005, p.617.

However, civilian power seems to be an ambiguous concept as it involves many different aspects. Karen E. Simith has rightly discussed the difficulty of drawing the line between military power and civilian power.²⁸ Hanns W. Maul has argued that being a civilian power does not necessarily imply that that civilian actor must refrain from the use of military force: it could be used collectively for civilian purpose with a clear aim and with international legitimacy.²⁹ A similar contention has been supported by Stelios Stavridis: he suggested that the use of military can be regarded as civilian type if it supports civilian values, such as promoting human rights and democratic principles.³⁰ Similarly, Richard Whitman has argued that developing a military capacity, by providing the EU as an example, would not provide a sufficient evidence to 'validate' or 'invalidate' actor's credibility as a civilian power.³¹

As is seen from the above analysis, while differing in details, the existing literature on the concept of civilian power has provided a general framework for the principles and instruments of the civilian power. The existing literature on the subject³² has underlined the following characteristics of the civilian power:

- A distinctive role in international system as a means of using economic incentives and power of diplomacy through dialogue and negotiation;
- The power of civilian values and identity;
- Applying non-military instruments and approaches: avoiding the use of military force (not necessarily means to refrain from the use of power for the sake of civilian purpose);
- Multilateralism and the politics of cooperation;
- International legitimacy;
- Democratic liability in foreign policy-making process.

Albeit some shortcomings, the EU seems to have offered the clear example for the civilian power concept in international politics. Indeed, some principles of civilian power have become progressively significant determinant characteristic of the EU's legal structure. As an example, the Treaty of Lisbon has made explicit reference to civilian aspect of its identity: Article 2 of the Treaty clearly states that "*the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.*"³³ Article 3 (5) of the Lisbon Treaty has furthered the civilian aspect of EU in its external relations by referring to its objective to "*contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free*

²⁸ Karen E. Simith, "Beyond The Civilian Power EU Debate", *Politique Europeenne*, No.17, 2005, p.64.

²⁹ Hanns W. Maull, "Europe and the new balance of Global Order", *International Affairs*, Vol.81, No.4, 2005, p.781.

³⁰ Stelios Stavridis, "Militarising the EU: The Concept of Civilian Power Europe Revisited", *The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.36, No.4, 2001, p.49

³¹ Richard Whitman, "The Fall, Rise, of Civilian Power Europe", Australian National University, *National Europe Centre Paper*, No.16, 2002, p.19.

³² For the existing literature on the subject, see Francis Duchene (1972); Stelios Stavridis (2001); Richard Whitman (2002); Ian Manner (2002); Christopher Hill, (2003); Thomas Diez (2005); Hanss W. Maul (2005) and Karen E. Smith (2005).

³³ Article 2, A Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, *Official Journal of the European Union*, No. C83, 30.3.2010.

and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights.”³⁴ Furthermore, economic characteristic of civilian power has also been introduced into the EU’s external relations in the form of association and cooperation with third countries, including humanitarian aid and financial assistance.³⁵

From the implementation perspective, the EU has been, to a large extent, successful in acting a civilian power in its periphery. The successive enlargements of the EU to include Mediterranean Countries of Greece, Spain Portugal and the Central and Eastern Countries (the CEECs) have been a good example in that respect. Obviously, the EU has had a profound impact on social and economic transformations with consolidation of institutional democracies in those countries through enlargement processes.³⁶ Particularly, in the post-Communist era, the Central and Eastern European Countries had been treated constructively and generously by the EU on the grounds that post-communist transformation must be supported and encouraged in these countries for the sake of common interests in all aspects.³⁷ By implications, the EU has successfully used the civilian power instruments of negotiation and persuasion in the form of accession partnership to influence on policy developments in these countries.

A similar civilian power approach of the EU can be observed in its effort to establish a multilateral-centred of security cooperation in the form of stability pacts. In line with this, the Pact on European Stability was created in 1995 with the aim of promoting regional cooperation and resolving the border conflicts and minority rights related issues among the counties in Central and Eastern Europe.³⁸ Furthermore, similar characteristics can be seen in Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe to include Balkan states with the aim of attaching these countries to multilateral institutional structure and promoting diplomatic way of conflict resolutions among the countries in Balkan region. As is seen from the above analysis, the Pact on European Stability and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe have presented the multilateral level of participations since non-EU states and international organizations had taken part in the Pacts.³⁹ These Stability Pact initiatives of the EU have been to a large extent successful, due mainly to membership expectation of the involved countries in regions.

Economic incentive constitutes one of the main characteristics of the concept of civilian power. In this respect, the EU has shown a keen interest in applying an economic incentive to influence on political, security and economic policies of the involved parties in its external relations. The European Neighbourhood Policy (the

³⁴ For this, see Article 3 (5) of a Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, *Official Journal of European Union*, No.C 83, 30.3.2010.

³⁵ For this, see the provisions of Associations of the Overseas Countries and Territories, and the Union’s External Actions of the Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, *Official Journal of European Union*, No. C 83, 30.3.2010.

³⁶ A further analysis on the subject, see Harun Arıkan, *Turkey and the EU: An Awkward Candidate for EU Membership*, Ashgate, 2006.

³⁷ Harun Arıkan, *Turkey and the EU: An Awkward Candidate for EU Membership?*, p.245.

³⁸ James Sperling and Emil Kirchner, “The Security Architectures and Institutional Futures of post-1989 Europe”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol.4, No.2, 1997, p.160.

³⁹ Lykke Friis and Anna Murphy, “Turbo Charged Negotiations: The EU and The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol.7, No.5, 2000, p.773.

ENP) offers a clear example for the above contention: The ENP has been designed to mitigate ‘side effect’ of the 2004 enlargement. It has also provided an institutional framework for greater political security economic and cultural co-operation between the EU and non-EU states in European periphery.⁴⁰ By using ‘sticks’ and ‘carrots’ instruments of civilian power, the EU seems to have an objective to promote civilian values and to encourage co-operation with the countries in European periphery.⁴¹ However, it appeared that instruments of the ENP have not been sufficient to achieve the declared objectives of the EU, due largely to the lack of accession commitment and the EU’s failure to provide the necessary financial and technical instruments for the involved countries.⁴² Furthermore, the ENP has attracted criticism from some participant countries on the grounds that they had been treated unfairly with regards to border management, conflict resolution and financial resource allocation.⁴³

The EU’s development cooperation policy presents another civilian power aspect of the EU. The EU has signed a number of trade and cooperation agreements with counties in Africa and Latin America and Asia. It should be noted that EU’s development and co-operation policy has been subject to debate on the grounds that the development policy of the EU in the form of trade and cooperation agreements have to, a large extent, served the interests of the EU.⁴⁴ It has also attracted criticism from the involved parties on the grounds of strong conditionality and insufficient financial support. However, as Stephen J.H. Dearden suggested that “*collectively the European Union (EU) is the world’s larger provider of Official Development Assistance. In 2005 the EU 25 provided €43 billions of aid, with 20 per-cent of this administrated by the European Commission (EC) through its General Budget and the European Development Funds.*”⁴⁵ Despite some criticism, the EU’s development and cooperation policy represents a characteristic of civilian power.

Conclusion

This article, as is evident from the analysis through the study, has suggested that the EU has developed a distinctive capacity to act as a civilian power in international scene. Despite some shortcomings, the EU has, to some extent, succeeded in developing military capacity under the framework of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). However, EU’s military power can be used for civilian purpose, due to principles of CFSP and the

⁴⁰ Commission of the European Communities, *European Neighbourhood: Policy Strategy Paper*, COM (2004), 373, final, Brussels, 12.5.2004, p.3.

⁴¹ Esther Barbe and Elizabeth Johansson-Nogues, “the EU as a modest ‘force for good’: The European Neighbourhood Policy”, *International Affairs*, Vol.84, No.1,2008, p.81.

⁴² Roland Dannreuther, “Developing the Alternative to Enlargement: The European Neighbourhood Policy”, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol.11, No.2, 2006, pp.183-201.

⁴³ A detailed analysis about some criticism over ENP, see Esther Barbe and Elizabeth Johansson-Nogues, “the EU as a modest ‘force for good’: The European Neighbourhood Policy”, *International Affairs*, Vol.84, No.1,2008, pp.81-96.

⁴⁴ An analysis of the EU’s development and cooperation policy towards Latin America, see Christian Freres, “The European Union as a Global Civilian Power: Development Cooperation in EU-Latin American Relations”, *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol.42, No.2, 2000, pp.63-86.

⁴⁵ Stephen J.H.Dearden, “Introduction: European Union Development Aid Policy- the Challenge of Implementation”, *Journal of International Development*, Vol.20, 2008, p.187.

ESDP. Hence, the EU's effort to develop a military capacity does not necessarily imply that it has undermined EU's position as a civilian power. The distinctive basis of EU's civilian power appears to be its ability to use of non-military instruments, such as economic incentive, negotiation and multilateralism in international politics. However, the sustainability of the EU's civilian power in the long run seems to be questionable: it will mostly depend on developments in international system.

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