

[Mary Kaldor](#)

## Europe in an Asian century: visions for Europe: a European conception of security

### Report

**Original citation:**

Kaldor, Mary (2012) *Europe in an Asian century: visions for Europe: a European conception of security*. IDEAS reports - special reports, Kitchen, Nicholas (ed.) SR013. LSE IDEAS, The London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/46809/>

Originally available from [LSE IDEAS](#)

Available in LSE Research Online: October 2012

© 2012 The Author

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LSE Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the URL (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk>) of the LSE Research Online website.

# ➤ A European Conception of Security

Mary Kaldor

**There is general agreement that Europe has to go forwards or it will go backwards. There are concerns that a political union, which might be necessary to save the euro, would mean a further loss of national sovereignty, and that the European Union might become a new superpower. Within national capitals, politicians have for so long blamed Europe for difficult decisions, that they feel unable to mobilise political support for any new steps towards integration.**

There is currently much hand wringing about the decline of Europe. Of course, it is true that the rapid growth of China and India has shifted the economic centre of gravity.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Europe remains the biggest economic bloc and a continuing source of economic, cultural and political innovation. But its economic weight is not matched by an ability to act politically because of the widespread reluctance to further the European political project.

In this essay, I argue that fears about Europe becoming a superpower and overriding national sovereignty are unfounded because the European Union is a new non-state form of political authority, a new type of polity, that could offer a model for global governance. Going forward is, therefore, critical not just for Europe, but it could also contribute to the development of new political mechanisms capable of addressing the global challenges of our time. In particular, I suggest that Europe's distinctive security approach, if taken seriously, could help to establish a constructive European role in the world. Europeans invented the nation state model – a model that had huge advantages in terms of economic development, but which also culminated in two world wars and the Holocaust. The European Union has been developed through trial and error in reaction to that experience, and that is why it constitutes a new type of polity.

## THE EU AS A MODEL FOR GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

In a celebrated article in 2002, Ian Manners described the European Union as a normative power.<sup>2</sup> This term seemed to contain three meanings. First, the EU is a normative actor, acting in global affairs in support of norms rather than interests. Second, the EU relies, in Manners' words, on ideational power, what Joseph Nye calls soft power rather than material (economic) or physical (military) power. Third, and intriguingly, it refers to 'the ability to define what is normal in international relations.'<sup>3</sup> It is this third aspect that has most relevance in understanding the significance of the EU's role in global affairs.

The debate about norms versus interests is paralleled by the debate about geopolitics versus cosmopolitanism or, in IR terms, realism versus idealism. It can be illustrated by the debate about humanitarian intervention in the aftermath of the Cold War. Those who oppose humanitarian intervention on the left argue that concern about humanitarian issues is not motivated by universal values but is rather a way

---

1 Danny Quah, 'The Global Economy's Shifting Centre of Gravity' *Global Policy* 2(1), (2011), 3-9.

2 Ian Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in terms?' *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40(2), (2002), 235 -58.

3 *Ibid.*

to legitimise geopolitical interests.<sup>4</sup> This is an empirical claim about the way great powers behave. Those who oppose humanitarian intervention on the right make a normative claim that states ought to act in the national interest, that they should not interfere in the affairs of other countries unless doing so can fulfil some geopolitical goal. What the debate illustrates is the difficulty of distinguishing norms from interests, since interests are always framed in terms of norms. Thus the dominant US foreign policy narrative is expressed in terms of a moral story about the United States acting in support of freedom. Foreign policy may or may not be shaped by interests but those interests are given meaning in terms of what is widely viewed as good or evil. The question is therefore not norms versus interests but the rather way norms are defined.

Both the US and the EU share a commitment to democracy and human rights. Where the EU differs from the US in terms of norms is in its overriding commitment to peace and the spread of international law. This difference derives from different historical experiences. For the United States the victory in World War II was a foundational moment ushering in a golden age of American hegemony aimed, at least in theory, at the spread of democracy and prosperity. According to this view of the world, military power is an important instrument for the promotion of democracy and human rights. For most members of the EU, the Second World War is remembered with shame and horror. The founders of the EU were primarily concerned with the construction of a multilateral system that could prevent war, genocide and imperialism in the future. Hence the interest of the EU is framed in terms of preventing war and fostering interdependence and, as I shall argue, the dominant foreign policy narrative is cosmopolitan rather than geopolitical.

There is a parallel here with the behaviour of what Asle Toje calls small powers. Small powers do not have the capabilities of great powers but are nevertheless 'system-influencing' states. Precisely because they lack the capabilities of great powers they define their interest in terms of international norms, or to put it another way, since they could never win in a war with a great power, their interest is the prevention of war. Small powers contribute disproportionately to the construction of international institutions, to peace building and global development; they favour the strengthening of international law. The European Union acts in a similar way, not so much because of lack of capability but because 'of fears of Westphalian sovereignty and balance of power and of the consequences they had for European stability prior to 1945.'<sup>5</sup> In other words, if US interests are expressed in normative terms, the EU promotion of norms is seen as being in the European interest.

A similar and related difficulty arises with the definition of normative power as communicative power (Habermas) or soft power (Nye) or power over opinion (E.H.Carr). Both economic and military power are forms of communication. The perception of American military power stems largely from the memory of the American victory in 1945. The huge military arsenal serves to remind us of that victory; it is meant as a signal. The concept of deterrence is a communicative concept. The actual use of military power in Vietnam, for example, or more recently in Iraq and Afghanistan, has hugely dented the perception of military strength and done great damage to the reputation on which American power rests.

Those who oppose the acquisition of military capabilities by the EU fear that the EU will become a superpower on the American model. This presupposes that military power consists of the type of capabilities possessed by the United States, designed for fighting a war against other states. But as I shall elaborate in the next section, there is a role for military capabilities in enforcing peace and upholding human rights that is very different from classic war fighting. In other words the issue is not military versus communicative power, even though there is a shift in the balance between coercive and persuasive instruments, but what kind of power, that is to say, what is being communicated through the use of military tools.

---

4 For example see Noam Chomsky, *Military Humanism*, (1999) and Mahmoud Mamdani, *Saviours and Survivors*, (2009).

5 Asle Toje, 'The European Union as a Small Power', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49(1), (2011), 55

A parallel argument can be made with respect to economic power. In the first two decades after World War II, the US used its massive economic power to spread markets and prosperity through its insistence on an open international trading system and generous aid. As the US began to lose its competitive edge, it increasingly began to act unilaterally, sucking in resources from the rest of the world through growing indebtedness made possible because of the privileged role of the dollar. Most of the world now considers that American economic power is used for the sole benefit of Americans, whereas earlier it had been perceived as a contribution to global development, especially in Europe, the recipients of Marshall aid.

So what distinguishes the European Union from traditional great powers is not norms versus interests nor hard versus soft power, rather it is the nature of its political authority and how this influences the way interests and power are framed. Manners calls the EU a hybrid polity, a new form of regional governance designed not to displace the nation-state but to constrain its dangerous tendencies for both economic and military unilateralism; it adds a new layer of political authority rather than establishing a new pole of political authority. It is a multilateral institution but goes beyond internationalism (between states) to possess an element of supranationalism (beyond states). This new form of authority necessarily acts in support of the spread of similar types of authority and therefore it has an interest in preventing wars and strengthening international law. This type of authority also depends more on economic and communicative tools than on military capabilities, because its interest is dampening down and preventing violence rather than winning. As Manners puts it, 'the different existence, the different norms, and the different policies the EU pursues are really part of redefining what can be 'normal' in international relations.'<sup>6</sup>

## THE ROLE OF CSDP

From the beginning of the European project, there was a tension between the conception of the EU as a future superpower, a bigger nation-state, able to challenge American hegemony and the conception of the EU as a new type of global actor. At the heart of that tension was the acquisition of military capabilities. The proposal to create a European defence community 1954 was defeated by a combination of those who wanted to preserve the nation-state and those who opposed militarism. This unholy alliance between old-fashioned nationalists and anti-war activists has been reproduced in recent years in the French and Dutch no-votes in the referendum on a European constitution.

The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), now the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), has been in existence since 2003. It was proposed at the Anglo-French summit in St Malo in 1998, during the Kosovo crisis, when the British withdrew their opposition to the acquisition of military capabilities by the European Union because of frustration at American unwillingness to commit ground troops. From its inception ESDP was different from a classic national security strategy. It was confined to the so-called St Petersburg tasks – humanitarian and rescue, peace-keeping and crisis management – as opposed to classic territorial defence, which was seen as the preserve of NATO and of individual nation-states. The European Security Strategy of December 2003 emphasised the multilateral approach of the European Union and insisted that in 'contrast to the visible threats of the Cold War, none of the new threats are purely military; nor can any be tackled by purely military means.'<sup>7</sup> Since its inception, ESDP has involved military-civilian cooperation; it established a military-civilian planning cell and it has pioneered civilian crisis management.

---

6 Manners, 'Normative Power Europe', 253.

7 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>

At the time of writing there have been 25 ESDP missions, of which 14 are ongoing. Roughly half of these have been purely civilian, involving monitoring (Aceh and Georgia) or rule of law and policing missions.<sup>8</sup> Where there have been military missions, the military have been used for the protection of civilians as opposed to war-fighting, for example in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where missions aimed at stabilisation, civilian protection and providing security for elections saw European forces consult widely with local citizens and act robustly to prevent attacks on the opposition, thereby establishing their neutral credentials.<sup>9</sup>

## THE HUMAN SECURITY DOCTRINE

In the Barcelona and Madrid Reports of 2004 and 2009, a study group composed of practitioners and scholars from all over Europe which reported to Javier Solana, the then High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, proposed that the European Union should explicitly adopt a human security approach. Instead of military forces on the nation-state model, the EU's external security capabilities would consist of combined military and civilian forces, under a civilian command, designed to contribute to global security and operating according to a set of principles that contrasted with the way classic military forces are used.

The concept of human security was originally put forward by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its Human Development Report of 1994, which defined security in terms of all life threatening harms and emphasised the importance of development as a security strategy.<sup>10</sup> Human security was defined in terms of the security of individuals and the communities in which they live rather than the security of states and borders. However there are widely different variants of the concept that depend on what is meant by security. The Barcelona and Madrid reports focussed on violent situations, in contrast to the original broad UNDP definition which defined security in terms of all life threatening harms and emphasised the importance of development as a security strategy. But in contrast to the narrower Canadian definition that focuses on political violence, they addressed a range of interrelated forms of violence (armed conflict, human rights violations, organised crime) as well as the ways in which these had to be understood in terms of economic and social factors.

What distinguished the study group's concept from other variants of human security was something specifically European – the notion that internal security is not so very different from external security. For the nation-state, internal security, based on the rule of law and policing was sharply differentiated from external security based on the defence of borders and interests using military capabilities. For the European Union, security among European states has been achieved through enhanced multilateralism and the extension of cosmopolitan law (international law relating to individuals) and this, of course, is what has made it this new type of non-state political entity. Essentially human security is the outward extension of the European Union's internal method of bringing about peace among European states. It involves enhanced multilateralism and the strengthening of cosmopolitan law. It requires capabilities that are more like domestic emergency services (police, firefighters, health services) than traditional military forces. But some military skills are required since what is known as robust policing is necessary if the EU is to contribute to the prevention and/or dampening down violence in other parts of the world.

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/eeas/security-defence/eu-operations.aspx?lang=en>

<sup>9</sup> Mary Martin, 'The European Union in the Democratic Republic of Congo – a force for good?' in Mary Martin and Mary Kaldor (eds.), *The European Union and Human Security: External Interventions and Missions*, (2010).

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report*, (1994).



## Six Principles of Human Security

### THE PRIMACY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

In human security operations, the goal is protecting civilians, not defeating an enemy. This means that human rights, including the right to life, education, clean water, and housing must be respected – even in the midst of conflict; so-called collateral damage is unacceptable.

### LEGITIMATE POLITICAL AUTHORITY

In the long run, human security can only be provided by local authorities whom people trust. The job of outside forces is to create safe spaces where people can freely engage in a political process that can establish legitimate authorities.

### A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH

In the end, it is the population affected by violence and insecurity that are the ones who have to solve their problems. That is why rather than working solely with international NGOs and exiles, outsiders must engage local experts and civil society groups.

### EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM

If outside forces are to have the consent of the local population, they must also be seen as legitimate, which requires them to operate within the framework of international law, usually under a UN mandate.

### CLEAR TRANSPARENT CIVILIAN COMMAND

In human security operations, civilians are in command. This means that the military operate in support of law and order and under rules of engagement that are more similar to police work than the rules of armed combat.

### REGIONAL FOCUS

Human insecurity has no clear boundaries. It spreads through refugees and through criminal and extremist networks, through economic and environmental calamities. A human security strategy therefore needs to take a regional rather than nation-state perspective.

It is worth noting here that what is being proposed is a capacity to undertake St Petersburg tasks, including humanitarian intervention. But to carry out those tasks, it is argued, requires a new type of human security capability. To elaborate what such capabilities are supposed to be able to do and to show how different they are from classic military forces, the study group developed six principles of human security, which sharply differentiate the role of human security forces from classic military forces.

There is growing agreement that the European Union's 'security doctrine places 'human security' at its centre. In the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy in 2008, the Council of the European Union stated the EU has 'worked to build human security, by reducing poverty and inequality, by promoting good governance and human rights, assisting development and addressing the root causes of conflict and insecurity. Over the last decade, the European Security and Defence Policy... has grown in experience and capability... These achievements are the results of a distinctive European approach to foreign and security policy.'<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/documents/en/081211\\_EU%20Security%20Strategy.pdf](http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/documents/en/081211_EU%20Security%20Strategy.pdf) (italics added)

## THE EXAMPLE OF LIBYA

The recent Western intervention in Libya can be used to explain what might have been different had the EU rather than NATO taken the lead. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, pushed by the Arab League, moved the idea of 'Responsibility to Protect' beyond a Euro-American preserve. The resolution called on member states and regional organisations to 'take all necessary measures... to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack', but the means adopted – air strikes – are not appropriate to protect civilians on the ground. Because the United States initially took the lead and subsequently handed over the command to NATO, it was only possible to think in classic military terms. As in Kosovo in 1999 the international community relied entirely on air strikes and essentially became the military arm of the rebels. The air strikes did prevent an attack on Benghazi and helped, after six months, to lead to a rebel victory in Tripoli. But air strikes kill not only soldiers but also the very people that are supposed to be protected; however precise, military conflict causes huge suffering and polarises opinion and enables those with weapons to claim power.

A human security approach, as opposed to a war, would have focussed on protecting civilians throughout Libya and guaranteeing their right to peaceful protest. The first task should have been to declare Benghazi and the liberated areas a UN Protected Area or safe haven. Human security forces would have had to be deployed to help protect the liberated areas. Humanitarian and reconstruction assistance and support for a democratic political process would also have to be provided so that the liberated areas could provide poles of attraction for other parts of the country. The human security forces would have defended the protected areas robustly; they would not attack Gaddafi forces but, given the opportunity, they would try to arrest those indicted by the ICC. They would, of course, need air protection, but this is different from relying on military attacks from the air alone.

In Libya, an EU plan for a small ground force to protect humanitarian assistance in Misrata failed to get UN authorisation. The original UN resolution ruled out 'foreign occupation forces' but as Alvaro de Vasconcelos, Director of the European Union's International Institute for Strategic Studies, pointed out, a small force with a strict humanitarian mandate to protect aid and civilians and not to engage in war-fighting is very different from a foreign occupation force.<sup>12</sup> The idea is to dampen down violence and create space for a political solution; Vasconcelos was explicit that the strategy must 'not be predicated on a military solution'.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, human security forces, in such a situation, should be drawn primarily from African and Arab countries. The point is that the EU approach offers a possible alternative model either to engaging in a war or to doing nothing.

## IMPLICATIONS

One should not exaggerate the achievements of CSDP. It is still rather small scale. The total number of troops currently deployed represents less than a quarter of one percent of total armed forces of EU member states. While European member states account for one quarter of global military spending, a tiny proportion goes towards CSDP. Most CSDP/ESDP missions lack the capabilities required for this type of mission – helicopters, air transport, and satellite based communications as well as civilian personnel, particularly police and legal experts.<sup>14</sup> There are huge problems of coherence, not only with other international agencies, governments and NGOs but also within the EU; the appointment of Cathy Ashton in charge of both Commission and Council external policy is yet to solve the problem.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/18/libya-conflict-eu-deployment-ground-troops>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/save-misrata-and-help-libya-set-itself-free/> (italics added)

<sup>14</sup> See Alexander Weis, 'Improving Capabilities for ESDP's future needs' and Richard Wright and Juha Auvinen, 'What Ambitions for the civilian ESDP?' in Alvaro de Vasconcelos, *What Ambitions for European Defence in 2020*, (2009); Nick Whitney 'Reenergising Europe's Security and Defence Policy', *European Council on Foreign Relations Policy Paper*, (2008).

Most importantly, the political backing for EU operations remains weak and divided, which itself helps to explain both the shortage of capabilities and the lack of institutional coherence. Despite the Lisbon Treaty, the fact that both Cathy Ashton, the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and Herman Rompuy, the President of the Council were appointed behind closed doors greatly weakens their perceived autonomy and legitimacy. Even though they may pursue cosmopolitan objectives, they remained tied by the inter-governmental process. This is why there appears to be such a disjuncture between what the EU does at the level of what might be called low politics and what it does at the level of high politics. Background studies of individual ESDP missions undertaken for the Madrid Report found that ESDP operations were often thwarted by high level politics. This can be because of domestic politics or because foreign policy is shaped by other considerations.

In terms of high politics, the EU seems to veer between being a normative, civilian or cosmopolitan power; or being a junior partner of the United States; or being the mouthpiece of individual European powers.

A final question is whether and how much Europe's distinctive security policy contributes to global security. Can CSDP make a difference? The Human Security Report of 2009 attributed the decline of wars and one-sided violence involving states to the spread of global norms and to the greatly enhanced role of UN peace-keeping and peace-building.<sup>15</sup> Undoubtedly, the revolution in communications has been an important factor in explaining growing human rights consciousness. It can also be argued that the EU as well as individual member states have played a significant role both in promoting norms against war and human rights violations and in contributing to UN capabilities.

All the same, the trend towards increased low-level non-state conflicts is of considerable concern and likely to become more so as the effects of the economic crisis spread. While the Human Security Report suggested that such conflicts are very localised they do have serious implications for the increase in transnational crime, population displacement or humanitarian need that cannot be ignored. There is a need for global security capabilities that can address this type of conflict and it is for this type of violence that CSDP has been designed.

## CONCLUSION

The EU's CSDP represents a distinctive approach to global security that could potentially put into practice the kind of cosmopolitan norms that a hybrid political entity like the EU could be expected to promote. Such an approach has to be seen as part of a wider transition in economic, social and environmental fields that is necessary to address the multi-dimensional crisis that the world is currently facing.<sup>16</sup> These changes tend to be blocked at a national level where the policies and ideas that have predominated in the post-war period have been institutionalised. The EU as a new type of political authority has the potential to help guide those changes.

To do so, however, it needs to overcome its lack of internal coherence (among the member states and the different European agencies) and it needs to demonstrate publicly its relevance for and responsiveness to European citizens. CSDP would be enormously enhanced by effective political leadership. By the same token, a legitimate political leadership would depend on an effective CSDP. People trust their institutions if they believe that they keep them safe. Protection is at the heart of the social contract among citizens that is the basis of political authority. Military forces are no longer symbols of legitimacy; most people are aware of the

---

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.hsrgroup.org/human-security-reports/20092010/overview.aspx>

<sup>16</sup> David Held, Mary Kaldor and Danny Quah, 'The Hydra-Headed Crisis', *Global Policy Online*, 28/2/10. <http://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Held%2C%20Quah%2C%20Kaldor%20Hydra%20Essay%20Feb2010.pdf>

shortcomings of military power. Certainly since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Eastern threat, deterrence no longer has the same salience and the actual use of military power, as in Iraq or Afghanistan, has often made things worse. According to opinion polls, over 70 percent of the European population support CSDP.<sup>17</sup> Making it clear that the EU does not have an army in the classic sense, that CSDP is based on human rather than national security principles and that human security forces are civilian led rather than military led, could help.

If the EU were seen to make a visible contribution to global security understood as the extension of international law rather than the defence of borders that would greatly strengthen the EU's political standing at home and abroad. But that can only happen if an effective political leadership is seen to pursue a consistent normative politics. It is sometimes argued that the EU has the potential to be an important player in an emerging multipolarity along with the US and China. But what I am suggesting, more importantly, is that the EU has the potential to reshape multilateralism, which is critical if the world is to face up to the huge global challenges that currently confront us, not least in security terms. ■

---

17 Vasconceles, *What Ambitions for European Defence in 2020*.