Book Review

Eva Gross and Ana E. Juncos, eds (2011)

EU Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management: Roles, Institutions and Policies

London: Routledge

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After the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union (EU) is still consolidating its existing instruments and institutions, producing results which may vary according to the sensitiveness of policies. Eva Gross and Ana Juncos explore EU conflict prevention and crisis management, challenging the current research and aiming at pushing scholars to advance the level of the present analysis. Their volume collects articles presented during events promoted within the UACES-funded Student Forum Specialist Group on European Union Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management. Therefore, it offers a wide range of perspectives and ideas, while maintaining a homogenous theoretical background, based on International Relations and European Studies.

The book begins by clarifying the aims and methodology. The main point is that, over the years, the EU has turned its initial role, based on aid and assistance, into a more structured and politicised strategic role, as witnessed by the 25 peace missions deployed even outside the EU. This can be seen particularly through two main aspects that contributed to enhance the EU crisis management capacity: firstly, the coherence of policy instruments used by member states; secondly, the increasing linkages with other international organisations, in the context of multilateralism, and the necessity for coordination on the ground for avoiding overlapping and duplications. The book is organised around three themes: the roles, conceived as "a pattern of expected or appropriate behaviour determined both by an actor's self-image and the role of expectations of other actors" (p. 8) to analyse the nature of the EU as an international player; the institutions, in order to examine the EU foreign policy as "process rather than substance" (p. 10); the policies, aiming at stressing how the EU uses "different policy instruments in different geographical scenarios" (p. 12). As a whole, the book proposes an enriching platform for debates and improvements.

The first theme includes two chapters, discussing the EU identity as international actor and its capacity to promote effective multilateralism. Kurowska and Seitz (chap. 2) use a heuristic perspective for studying the role played by the EU towards other actors. They first explore the role approach, focusing on the expectations made by other actors; then introduce the concept of multilateralism, which has changed the meaning of cooperation into a structured set of shared norms, principles and practices. This led the two authors to

consolidate their assumption that the EU and other actors (the UN, but essentially the US) have different roles and agree on a division of labour. Since there are many fields dealing with state-building in which the EU and the US show significantly different approaches, the problem here is understanding whether the division of labour can be best established and how the EU can manage to balance the imperialistic view, which is still present in any external intervention.

Stewart (chap. 3) continues in analysing the cooperation with European security organisations, namely OSCE and NATO. Given the fact that the EU conflict management capacity has been shaped by internal and external factors, the authors analyse both relations and appear very pessimistic about final outcomes. The EU-NATO cooperation is too military-based and lacks a long-term strategy, while the EU-OSCE dialogue is more focused on civilian tasks, but fails in being pragmatic. A reorientation of both relations towards a more prominent role of the EU as a security provider could enhance conflict prevention in the whole pan-european area.

The second part presents three chapters that emphasise the importance of institutions: based on a strong institutionalist perspective, they all affirm that institutions matter and are essential for understanding the EU security policies. Petrov (chap. 4) adopts an historical perspective for explaining how the EU foreign policy has been characterised by institutionalist change and path dependency implications. Also, he envisages some specific critical moments and junctures, like the Maastricht Treaty and the St. Malo Declaration, which contributed to create strong opportunities for policy change. By using this perspective, the Lisbon Treaty is expected to be another turning point, even though it is still not clear how the institutions could manage new mandates. Klein (chap. 5) uses rational choice for clarifying the impact of institutions on EU civil-military coordination. Based on principal-agent and agent-agent relationships, her analysis demonstrates that it is the result of the interplay between member states and the Council Secretariat and the Commission as agents. Also, through this model, she adds that the level of delegated authority and the structure of competences are influential in the formulation of civil-military practices, by producing bureaucratic competition and overlapping or duplication, both in Brussels and in the field. Lastly, Juncos (chap. 6) espouses sociological institutionalism for describing how institutions shaped military missions deployed by the EU. She affirms that institutional isomorphism, organisational routine, and a socialisation process are the factors that mostly contributed to the preparation and performance of interventions. By using the case study of EUFOR Althea, deployed in Bosnia, she describes how institutions fail in being effective because they may differ from original mandates and mission designs. Therefore, the institutionalist environment, in which other actors like epistemic communities are involved, appears to be extremely important.

The third part of the book focuses on policies and affirms that different tools are used in different geographical scenarios. Gilbert (chap. 7) shows one more time that, in Africa, the EU has developed a quantitative set of policies, based more on aid and assistance than on effective diplomacy. Some enhancements appeared through the first peace missions deployed in the continent, but "the EU remains an essentially developmental actor in Africa" (p. 114). In Afghanistan, as described by Gross (chap. 7), the EU had to share competencies and responsibilities with other actors – mainly the US – and this limited its visible impact on the global level. However, the potential contribution in post-conflict reconstruction had been recognised, also at the transatlantic level. The more the EU is involved in conflicts outside Europe, the greater the challenge which should be managed. In the last chapter of this part, Bosse analyses the Georgian case (chapter 8). In this area, there are additional troubles provided by the presence of other actors, mainly Russia, and by expectations regarding regional policies, like the European Neighbourhood Policy, already concerning this country. As the author suggests, the EU is still working on topics

included in the Action Plan and obtained a good result in promptly replying to the last conflict, but it still lacks a coherent and long-term strategy and depends on "ad hoc commitment of the member states" (p. 144).

In the conclusions, the two editors confirm the will to enhance the discussion on these topics and particularly on the concept of global actorness. The EU should undoubtedly continue to work on its own presence in the world, provided that it should be more effective, more multilateral and more turned towards a grand strategy in humanitarian action.

The book tackles a topic on which scholars and policy-makers have already expressed several and sometimes opposite opinions. Therefore, it has the merit to launch and renew some research questions which still need a serious debate concerning both theoretical assumptions and practical implications.

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