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Europe's Coherence Gap in External Crisis and Conflict Management

Political Rhetoric and Institutional Practices
in the EU and Its Member States

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Abstract

For most of the 20th century, it seemed sufficient for each government ministry or agency to do a good job on the tasks and competences assigned to it. In other words, foreign ministries nurtured friendly relations with other countries, defence ministries ensured national security, health ministries worked to provide good healthcare to the national population, economics ministries promoted trade, and so forth. What's more, there seemed to be no need for greater coherence and coordination between these different policies and the ministries or other bodies responsible for them. However, in today's increasingly interconnected environment, it has become clear that this arrangement is no longer sufficient to have an impact and to achieve the desired policy results.

Especially in the fields of foreign, development and security policy, the many crises and conflicts of the 1990s – such as those in Afghanistan, Africa and the Western Balkans – have shown that this kind of 'siloed' approach is no longer viable. Rather, the complex and inter-linked problems of human security, social and economic underdevelopment, and poor governance – factors that underpinned and kept fuelling many of these conflicts – prompted the EU and many of its member states to break new ground in their individual and joint policies for managing crises and conflicts. The general belief behind these efforts has been that greater policy coherence will be rewarded with better results. And to make this possible, the available instruments, which had previously been used individually and for the most part independently of each other – whether in diplomacy, defence or development cooperation – were to be combined into a new approach,

and new forms of cooperation between ministries involved in conflict transformation were to be introduced.

This book attempts for the first time to take stock of the development and implementation of such whole-of-government approaches (WGAs) – as they are referred to in organisation theories – to external crisis and conflict management in the EU and all its member states.

The 29 reports – one for each EU member state as well as one on the EU as a whole – examine the policies or strategies that have been developed to adapt to the increasing complex security challenges and to ensure better policy coherence. They deal with the question of how these policy frameworks have been institutionally and organisationally implemented, with the main question being: Do we see that words have been followed by deeds, and that new institutional forms of cooperation and coordination between different actors at the headquarters levels have been introduced both in the EU and its member states?

Methodologically, the research assumes that the organisation of political coherence through a WGA is a necessary though insufficient condition for success in crisis and conflict management. The project is also based on the assumption that any country that claims to have adopted a WGA must necessarily have undergone changes in its method of cooperation – both within and between its institutions on the national level as well as with the EU or other international organisations – and that these changes can be observed and described. The same, with a grain of salt, applies to the EU and its implementation of its ‘integrated approach’ (or ‘whole-of-governance approach’), which was introduced with the 2016 publication of the EU Global Strategy.

The final chapter attempts to provide an initial evaluation and synthesis of where the EU and its individual member states stand in comparison with each other as well as which best practices (or ‘enablers’) for the successful implementation of a WGA can be identified.

The book will be accompanied by a website offering applications that will enable users to quickly and easily obtain an overview of what has been achieved in the EU and its member states based on the questionnaire on which the reports themselves are based (see Annex). This questionnaire contains 31 questions divided into three sections: ‘what/why’ questions on political and strategic objectives; ‘who’ questions on institutional actors; and ‘how’ questions on the degree of interaction and instruments introduced.