



# The EU and the Libyan Crisis – In Quest of Coherence?

Nicole Koenig

“Europe’s common security and foreign policy is in crisis.  
It has drifted away.”  
Top European diplomat<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the 2000s, Libya’s Col. Muammar Qadhafi signed friendship treaties and trade deals with major Western leaders and presented himself as an active partner in the fight against terrorism and illegal migration. While the dictator ‘camped’ in several European capitals, the European Union (EU) and Libya were negotiating a Framework Agreement aiming at “the full reintegration of Libya in bilateral and multilateral international relations”<sup>2</sup> and a fruitful political dialogue on issues of common interest. The events in February 2011 heralded the end of this period of international ‘Realpolitik’. On 27 June, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Qadhafi, accusing him of crimes against humanity (murder and persecution). In late August, the veteran tyrant reportedly fled Tripoli.

Riots in Benghazi were triggered by the arrest of human rights activist Fethi Tarbel on 15 February. Inspired by the unrest sweeping through much of the Arab world, the riots soon turned into a general uprising against Qadhafi, who had ruled the country for over 40 years. The regime responded with massive repression and violence against civilians. On 5 March, opposition forces established the Transitional National Council (TNC) in Benghazi, chaired by Qadhafi’s former

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<sup>1</sup>“Europe’s Foreign Policy in Line of Fire over Libya”, *DAWN*, 24 March 2011, <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/24/europes-foreign-policy-in-line-of-fire-over-libya.html>.

<sup>2</sup>European Commission, *Concept Note Libya*, [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/mid\\_term\\_review/final\\_concept\\_note\\_libya\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/mid_term_review/final_concept_note_libya_en.pdf).

Justice Minister Mustafa Abd al-Jalil, and presented itself as the sole representative of all Libya.<sup>3</sup>

On 26 February, the UN Security Council (UNSC) reacted to the outbreak of violence by adopting resolution 1970 referring the situation to the ICC and imposing an arms embargo as well as strong sanctions.<sup>4</sup> Faced with continued violence against civilians and something increasingly resembling an unbalanced civil war, the UNSC adopted resolution 1973 establishing a no-fly zone and authorising member states to “take all necessary measures (...) to protect civilians (...) while excluding a foreign occupation force”.<sup>5</sup> On 19 March, a multi-national coalition, spearheaded by France, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US), began a broad campaign of air strikes against pro-Qadhafi forces. By the end of March, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) assumed command of all air operations.

Under the NATO operation ‘Unified Protector’, the coalition<sup>6</sup> carried out daily air strikes targeting government ground forces as well as strategic and logistical targets, including military bases and ammunition storage sites.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, the rebel forces were fighting pro-Qadhafi loyalist forces on the ground in many parts of the country. In April, a military stalemate emerged. It was not until early August that a renewed rebel offensive, carried out from Libya’s western mountains, broke the months-long stalemate. On 22 August 2011, Libyan rebel forces finally took over Tripoli while Qadhafi reportedly fled the city. Though the whereabouts of Qadhafi are unknown at the time of writing, his flight has generally been equated with the rebels’ victory.<sup>8</sup>

The UNSC’s response to the Libyan crisis has been praised for its “unprecedented speed and unanimity”.<sup>9</sup> Despite a rocky start and some criticism along the way, the ultimate success of NATO’s intervention has provided for a rather positive record after all. The same cannot be said for the European Union. The EU’s reaction was criticized for being too slow, too weak, too divided and essentially

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<sup>3</sup> The legitimacy and representativeness of the TNC had been called into question, especially since some of its leading members were former members of the Qadhafi regime (K. Mahmoud, “Secret European Delegation to be Sent to Libya to Convince Gaddafi to Step Down”, *asharq alawsat*, 9 March 2011, <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=24439>).

<sup>4</sup> UNSC, *S/RES/1970 (2011)*.

<sup>5</sup> UNSC, *S/RES/1973 (2011)*.

<sup>6</sup> The operation’s air command included nine EU member states, Norway, the US, Canada, Jordan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

<sup>7</sup> From the beginning of the operation on 31 March until 29 August, the coalition conducted a total of 20,871 sorties, including 7,848 strike sorties (NATO, “NATO and Libya”, 29 August 2011, [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2011\\_08/20110830\\_110830-oup-update.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2011_08/20110830_110830-oup-update.pdf)).

<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, fighting continued over the loyalist strongholds of Sirte, Bani Walid and Sabha, and NATO extended its bombing campaign for another three months (K. Fahim and R. Gladstone, “NATO Extends Libya Bombing Campaign”, *The New York Times*, 21 September 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/22/world/middleeast/nato-extends-libya-role.html>).

<sup>9</sup> H. Morris, “Date with History as UN Acts over Libya”, *Financial Times*, 27 February 2011, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/75315bb4-42a2-11e0-8b34-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1YfoHilUD>.

incoherent.<sup>10</sup> Some have already mourned the death of the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP): "The CFSP died over Libya – we just have to pick a sand dune under which we can bury it."<sup>11</sup>

This article aims to analyse the (in)coherence of EU's response to the Libyan crisis. To what extent was the EU's crisis response coherent? Did incoherence stand in the way of an effective and timely crisis response? And how could the EU increase its coherence in the future? In order to offer a comprehensive picture and targeted recommendations, the article will distinguish the horizontal, inter-institutional, vertical and multilateral dimensions of coherence. Its focus is on the short- to medium-term crisis response of the EU.<sup>12</sup> It draws on insight from academic work, policy analyses by leading think tanks, press coverage, official documents and expert interviews.<sup>13</sup>

### **The EU's response to the Libyan crisis**

The EU disposes of a panoply of crisis management instruments including diplomatic measures, humanitarian assistance and civil protection, military and civilian operations, and migration- and trade-related activities. Diplomatic tools include standard measures like declarations, demarches, high-level meetings, participation in international conferences, conflict mediation, etc. Collectively, the EU is the world's largest humanitarian and development aid donor. Since 2003, the EU has conducted civilian and military crisis management operations in the framework of the European (now Common) Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), spanning from police and border assistance missions to more robust military operations. In 2004, the EU created the border agency Frontex to "coordinate the operational cooperation between Member States"<sup>14</sup> in securing the external borders of the Schengen area. Finally, the EU has different types of restrictive measures that it can impose in response to violations of international law or human rights.

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, H. Kundnani, and J. Vaïsse, "EU Foreign Policy: Moving on from Libya", *openDemocracy*, 15 April 2011, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/hans-kundnani-justin-vaïsse/eu-foreign-policy-moving-on-from-libya>; S. Namara, "The Crisis in Libya Exposes a Litany of Failed EU Policies", web memo, The Heritage Foundation, 3 March 2011, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/03/the-crisis-in-libya-exposes-a-litany-of-failed-eu-policies>; Nicoll, "War in Libya", <http://www.iiss.org/EasySiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=53935&type=full&servicetype=Attachment>.

<sup>11</sup> J. Benitez, "Diplomats Mourn 'death' of EU Defence Policy over Libya", NATO Source, Alliance news blog, 24 March 2011, <http://www.acus.org/natosource/diplomats-mourn-death-eu-defence-policy-over-libya>.

<sup>12</sup> The analysis focuses on the period starting with the beginning of the crisis (15 February) and ending with the rebels' takeover of Tripoli (22 August). Considering high volatility in the country at the time of writing and the uncertainty regarding future developments, it would be premature to assess the coherence of the EU's medium- to long-term response.

<sup>13</sup> This article draws on insights from eleven semi-structured interviews conducted in different languages with experts from academia, national diplomatic services, EU institutions and international organisations, held between 6 and 28 June 2011. Quotes were translated by the author.

<sup>14</sup> "What is Frontex", *Frontex*, 28 June 2011, <http://www.frontex.europa.eu>.

In response to the Libyan crisis, a broad range of these EU crisis management instruments were brought into effect.

On 20 February, the High Representative for CFSP Catherine Ashton issued a declaration on behalf of the EU stating that the Union was “extremely concerned by the events unfolding in Libya”<sup>15</sup> and urged the Libyan authorities to refrain from the use of violence. At the extraordinary European Council meeting on 11 March, the heads of state declared that Qadhafi had lost all legitimacy as an interlocutor and urged him to step down. They welcomed and encouraged the TNC in Benghazi, which, while not recognised as the sole representative of Libya, was henceforth considered “a political interlocutor”.<sup>16</sup> On 22 May, High Representative (HR) Ashton opened a liaison office in Benghazi in order to support “the nascent democratic Libya in border management, security reform, the economy, health, education, and in building civil society”.<sup>17</sup> On 31 August, a mission of the European External Action Service (EEAS) tasked to prepare the ground for the opening of an EU delegation and to liaise with the members of the TNC, arrived in Tripoli.

The European Commission reacted to the Libyan crisis by launching two of the major emergency instruments of its Directorate General (DG) for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO): the civil protection mechanism and humanitarian assistance. Activated on 23 February, the civil protection mechanism facilitated member state consular operations by pooling and identifying transport means for the evacuation of an estimated 5,800 EU citizens.<sup>18</sup> As of 29 August, the Commission and the member states had provided over €152 million<sup>19</sup> for humanitarian aid and civil protection, making the EU as a whole the biggest humanitarian donor to Libya.<sup>20</sup> Advance humanitarian planning provided for a quick reaction to the developments in late August: €10 million had already been set aside for humanitarian relief in Tripoli; humanitarian stocks had been pre-positioned in accessible zones of Libya, and a multidisciplinary team of humanitarian experts opened an ECHO office in Tripoli as early as 29 August.<sup>21</sup>

The massive influx of migrants from North Africa put the protection and reception systems of several EU member states, Italy and Malta in particular, under strain. On 20 February, the EU responded to Italy’s formal request and launched

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<sup>15</sup> Ashton, *Declaration on Events in Libya*.

<sup>16</sup> European Council, *Declaration – Extraordinary European Council*.

<sup>17</sup> T. Vogel, “EU Opens Office in Benghazi”, *European Voice*, 23 May 2011, <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/2011/may/eu-opens-office-in-benghazi/71147.aspx>.

<sup>18</sup> “Factsheet Libyan Crisis”, European Commission / Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), 21 June 2011, [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/libya\\_factsheet.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/libya_factsheet.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> As a comparison, the United States has provided around €56.7 million for humanitarian assistance in Libya as of 9 June 2011 (US State Department, “Fact sheet: US Humanitarian Assistance”, 9 June 2011, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/06/165315.htm>).

<sup>21</sup> European Commission, *Libya: EU Geared up for the Humanitarian Challenge*.

the Frontex Joint Operation Hermes 2011, mandated to assist Italian authorities in coping with ongoing and prospective migratory flows.<sup>22</sup> In response to the volatile situation in North Africa in general and Libya in particular, the EU extended the operational area of the Frontex Joint Operation Poseidon Sea to include Crete.<sup>23</sup> At the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 11-12 April, the interior ministers reaffirmed the “need for genuine and concrete solidarity towards Member States most directly concerned by migratory movements”.<sup>24</sup>

The EU both implemented the sanctions against Libya adopted by the UNSC and went beyond them. On 28 February, the Council adopted Decision 2011/137/CFSP implementing UNSC Resolution 1970 and imposing an arms embargo against Libya and targeted sanctions (that is, a visa ban and an asset freeze) on 26 persons related to the Qadhafi regime.<sup>25</sup> On 10 and 21 March, the EU extended these restrictive measures to key Libyan financial entities and another 11 persons. Following the adoption of UNSC resolution 1973, the EU imposed further sanctions on 24 March. Council Decision 2011/137/CFSP was amended with the aim of implementing the no-fly zone and extending the asset freeze to additional persons as well as to the Libyan National Oil Corporation and five of its subsidiaries. On 12 April, the Union extended the asset freeze to 26 energy firms accused of financing Qadhafi’s regime, thereby imposing a de facto oil and gas embargo.<sup>26</sup> The Council adopted further sanctions targeting Libyan port authorities on 7 June.<sup>27</sup> As soon as the rebels took over Tripoli, Ashton announced that the EU was preparing to unfreeze Libyan assets to the benefit of the TNC once the UN approved this move.<sup>28</sup> In a first step, the EU member states decided on 1 September to unfreeze the assets of 28 Libyan entities that had been subject to the EU’s autonomous measures.<sup>29</sup>

On 1 April, the Council adopted a decision on EUFOR Libya, a military operation to support humanitarian assistance operations in Libya. If requested by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), EUFOR Libya would have been deployed to Libya to secure the movement and evacuation of displaced persons and to support humanitarian agencies in

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<sup>22</sup> “Hermes 2011 Running”, *Frontex*, 22 February 2011, [http://www.frontex.europa.eu/newsroom/news\\_releases/art96.html](http://www.frontex.europa.eu/newsroom/news_releases/art96.html).

<sup>23</sup> “Update Joint Operation Poseidon 2011”, *Frontex*, 26 March 2011, [http://www.frontex.europa.eu/newsroom/news\\_releases/art104.html](http://www.frontex.europa.eu/newsroom/news_releases/art104.html).

<sup>24</sup> Council of the European Union – Justice and Home Affairs, *Southern Neighbourhood Region – Council Conclusions*.

<sup>25</sup> Council of the European Union, *Decision 2011/137/CFSP*.

<sup>26</sup> “New EU Sanctions put the Squeeze on Libyan Oil Sector”, *EUbusiness*, 12 April 2011, <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/libya-conflict-oil.9ji>.

<sup>27</sup> Council of the European Union, *Libya: Six Ports Targeted*.

<sup>28</sup> On 16 September 2011, the UNSC unanimously adopted resolution 2009 allowing states to unfreeze Libyan assets for certain urgent needs, after notification of the UN and in consultation with the Libyan authorities (UNSC, *S/RES/2009 (2011)*).

<sup>29</sup> Council of the European Union, *EU Lifts Asset Freeze*.

their work. The Council decision on EUFOR Libya foresaw an Italian commander, operational headquarters in Rome, a budget of €7.9 million, and an initial duration of four months.<sup>30</sup> By May 2011, the EU's military planning process had produced four scenarios for action in case of a deployment of EUFOR Libya: "1) Escorting humanitarian convoys; 2) evacuating humanitarian aid workers; 3) securing the port of Misrata; and 4) ensuring the security of humanitarian aid provisions in the long-term perspectives (up to 30 days)."<sup>31</sup> Depending on the scenario and the respective military and logistical requirements, the deployment of EU Battlegroups<sup>32</sup> (or parts of them) was considered.<sup>33</sup> Planning for EUFOR Libya was not finalised, however, since UN OCHA did not request its activation.

### The coherence of EU crisis management

Having reviewed the different elements of the EU's response, an assessment of their coherence can now be made. The lack of coherence has repeatedly been identified as the main obstacle to an effective EU foreign policy. The European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003 stated that the EU can only live up to its full potential if it becomes "more coherent".<sup>34</sup> The challenge lies not only in bringing together the different internal and external EU policies and instruments, but also in ensuring coordination<sup>35</sup> with the respective policies and instruments of the member states. Increasing the coherence of the EU's external action is also one of the main objectives of the Lisbon Treaty.

The benefits of coherence are widely recognised in the broader multilateral governance context. There is general agreement that incoherence increases the risk of duplication, inefficient spending and ineffective policies.<sup>36</sup> However, pursuing coherence can also produce potential (unintended) negative consequences. Time and resources invested in long coordination processes geared towards increased coherence or consensus-building might, for instance, affect timeliness and effectiveness. In order to take account of the possible negative effects of pursuing coherence, this article analyses not only whether the EU's response

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<sup>30</sup> Council of the European Union, *Decision 2011/210/CFSP*.

<sup>31</sup> Bloching, "CSDP and EU Mission Update – June-July 2011", 2.

<sup>32</sup> For more information on the Battlegroups, see: EU Council Secretariat, *Factsheet – EU Battlegroups*.

<sup>33</sup> The Battlegroups would not have had a combat role. The use of force would have been restricted to the protection of humanitarian workers under threat and self-defence (I. Traynor, "Libya Conflict: EU Awaits UN Approval for Deployment of Ground Troops", *The Guardian*, 18 April 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/18/libya-conflict-eu-deployment-ground-troops>).

<sup>34</sup> European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> The terms 'coherence' and 'coordination' often appear together. In this article, and in accordance with relevant EU documents (e.g. Treaty texts, ESS, Report on the Implementation of the ESS), coherence is understood as a guiding principle or goal, while coordination is seen as an activity through which coherence is pursued (see also De Coning, "Coherence and Coordination", 5-9).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



to the Libyan crisis was coherent, but also whether incoherence stood in the way of a timely and effective crisis response.

Coherence is defined here as a) the absence of contradiction between different crisis management policies and instruments (often referred to as ‘consistency’), and b) the existence of synergetic effects between them.<sup>37</sup> Considering the nature of the EU as a multi-level governance system and the broader multilateral context in which EU crisis management takes place, this article distinguishes between four dimensions of coherence:<sup>38</sup>

- (1) Horizontal coherence denotes the extent to which the various EU crisis management policies are coherent with one another. Policies or policy instruments are horizontally coherent if the goals they pursue and the means they use a) do not contradict each other, and b) are mutually reinforcing.
- (2) Institutional coherence refers to the interaction between the different institutional actors that share responsibility for the EU’s crisis response. Institutional coherence implies a) an absence of contradictions, and b) synergies between the actions of different EU actors responsible for the EU-level crisis response.
- (3) Vertical coherence describes the degree to which member states’ national policies and activities are a) in line with, and b) reinforce the EU-level crisis response. This article takes a closer look at the French, German, and Italian national policies in the case of Libya.<sup>39</sup>
- (4) Multilateral coherence refers to the degree to which the EU’s crisis response is a) in line with, and b) positively contributes to the response of other international actors. The focus in this article will be on the UN, NATO and the African Union (AU).

### **Horizontal coherence**

Generally, the goals pursued through the different elements of the EU’s crisis response do not seem to contradict each other: diplomatic measures aim at peaceful conflict resolution, humanitarian aid is meant to provide emergency relief to the victims of violence, restrictive measures are intended to deprive Qadhafi’s regime of means for repression, border measures are to assist the member states in managing migration flows, and EUFOR Libya is designed to support UN OCHA in delivering humanitarian assistance. In some cases, however, the means used in the framework of one policy have been inadequate or

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<sup>37</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the terms ‘consistency’ and ‘coherence’, see: Missiroli, *Coherence for Security Policy*, 5-7.

<sup>38</sup> See Versluys, “Coherence in EU External Action”, 2.

<sup>39</sup> These three member states were chosen due to their specific role in the response to the Libyan crisis: France was the most proactive member state; Germany played the role of ‘reluctant power’; and Italy was most affected by the crisis due to its close economic ties and geographic proximity to Libya.



insufficient, and have thus fallen short of reinforcing the goals of another. Defined in these terms, a lack of horizontal coherence can be detected at the intersection of the Union's human rights and humanitarian policies and the measures used for migration management.

Specifically, in the past, Frontex had repeatedly been blamed for failing to rescue migrants at sea and to meet international human rights standards.<sup>40</sup> But Frontex's mandate is limited and the agency has no assets of its own. In fact, the Italian authorities themselves have provided all the naval assets and staff for joint operation Hermes. Furthermore, Frontex has neither a protection mandate nor particular human rights expertise.<sup>41</sup> Thus, Frontex's added value with a view to the EU's humanitarian aid and human rights policies can only be limited.

### ***Inter-institutional coherence***

The institutional innovations brought about by the Lisbon Treaty, most importantly the HR and the EEAS, were meant to enhance the EU's ability to speak with one voice and to ensure coherence and continuity in the EU's external action. The Libyan crisis was the first major security-related crisis after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. It broke out one and a half months after the EEAS had been declared operational and was thus an early test for the new institutional structure.

The first EU-level reactions to the Libyan crisis were the declarations by the HR on behalf of the EU.<sup>42</sup> These declarations, condemning the use of violence and calling on the Qadhafi regime to meet its responsibility to protect its population, were followed by similar statements by the presidents of the European Parliament, of the European Council, and of the European Commission.<sup>43</sup> Since these statements were generally consistent with one another as well as with other EU documents, they had few repercussions in the media.<sup>44</sup> However, as a European diplomat critically remarked, "[t]his is not what we understand by 'speaking with one voice'"<sup>45</sup>

But why should the EU speak with one voice? If each of the EU's highest representatives issues similar statements at his or her level, the result could be a

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<sup>40</sup> For more details, see Keller *et al.*, *Frontex Agency*, 10-22.

<sup>41</sup> M. Simone, UNHCR senior liaison officer with Frontex, "Q&A: Working for Refugees on Europe's Outer Borders", *UNHCR*, 10 May 2010, <http://www.unhcr.org/4bf29c8b6.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Ashton, *Declaration on Events in Libya; Declaration on Libya*.

<sup>43</sup> J. Buzek, "On the Situation in Libya", Warsaw, 21 February 2011, [http://proxy.ep-president.eu/president/view/en/press/press\\_release/2011/2011-February/press\\_release-2011-February-28.html](http://proxy.ep-president.eu/president/view/en/press/press_release/2011/2011-February/press_release-2011-February-28.html); H. Van Rompuy, "Statement by Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, on the Developments in the EU's Southern Neighbourhood", Prague, 23 February 2011, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/119450.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/119450.pdf); J.M.D. Barroso, "Message on the Situation in Libya", Brussels, 23 February 2011, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/11/121>.

<sup>44</sup> N. Busse, "Kein erkennbarer Gewinn", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21 May 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with a European diplomat, Brussels, 6 June 2011.

“constructive polyphony”<sup>46</sup> adding strength and coverage to the message at hand. However, if there are discrepancies between the statements, the credibility of the EU as a unified actor suffers. In the Libyan case, this became apparent when Ashton and Herman van Rompuy reportedly issued divergent statements on the goal of the military intervention in Libya. While the president of the European Council stated that the goal of the intervention was regime change, the HR subsequently contradicted this.<sup>47</sup> In such a case, the outside observer is confronted with a confusing rather than a constructive polyphony.

When asked about the role of the EEAS in responding to the Libyan crisis, a senior Commission advisor replied: “It had a limited role, at least initially. Humanitarian aid was supposed to be coordinated by the department for crisis response under Agostino Miozzo. Yet the relationship and coordination with DG ECHO still leaves much to be desired, in part due also to bureaucratic competition and battles for turf”.<sup>48</sup> This statement is symptomatic of the current dividing lines between the EEAS and the Commission. In several policy fields, the EEAS is responsible for strategic guidance and coordination while financial instruments and their implementation remain in the hands of the Commission. This division creates the need for continuous coordination between the two institutions. According to interviewees in Brussels, there are two obstacles to this coordination. First, the HR is said to be “often absent from collegial meetings (due also to her crowded agenda)”.<sup>49</sup> On top of that, she has not yet convened the dedicated ‘group of Commissioners’ on external relations created in early 2010. Second, there seems to be a lack of communication and interaction between the EEAS and the Commission. An official from the EEAS that had previously worked in the Commission complained about the bureaucratisation of the exchange of information with his former colleagues.<sup>50</sup> A French diplomat described the situation as follows: “Before, DG RELEX was part of the Commission. Now, there is something like an extra layer between the Commission and the EEAS.”<sup>51</sup>

Other dividing lines can be found between the EEAS and the Council Secretariat. An EU official described the EEAS as a Commission-dominated institution where “procedure overrules strategy”,<sup>52</sup> and in which crisis management structures, formerly located in the Council Secretariat, are being “marginalised”.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> M. Knigge, “Should Europe even try to Speak with One Voice on Foreign Policy”, *Deutsche Welle*, 6 July 2010, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,5753906,00.html>.

<sup>47</sup> M. Banks, “Barroso Leaps to Defence of EU Foreign Policy Chief”, *The Parliament*, 5 April 2011, <http://www.theparliament.com/latest-news/article/newsarticle/barroso-leaps-to-defence-of-eu-foreign-chief>.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with a senior Commission advisor, Brussels, 8 June 2011.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Interview with an EEAS official, Brussels, 9 June 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with a French diplomat, Brussels, 8 June 2011.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 7 June 2011.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

This view prompted some officials from the crisis management structures of the Council Secretariat to move to different departments within the Secretariat before the crisis management structures were transferred to the EEAS.<sup>54</sup> Others that have been transferred are frustrated due to the aforementioned marginalisation, and are trying to return to the Secretariat. This phenomenon might also explain the EEAS' current lack of expertise in the field of crisis management.<sup>55</sup>

The European Parliament (EP) has been a fervent critic of the response of the HR/EEAS to the 'Arab spring' in general, and to the Libyan crisis in particular: "We would like to see from you a more proactive approach" or "Your job is superfluous, it's money thrown out of the window" were amongst the critiques that emerged from the EP.<sup>56</sup> Although the EP has no formal competence on matters related to CFSP, its budgetary power provides it with a certain degree of control over the EEAS and its activities. The EP's criticism provided the HR with an opportunity to defend the EU's response to the Libyan crisis publicly.<sup>57</sup> However, new inter-institutional tensions may arise when the time comes to approve future budget increases for the EEAS.

### **Vertical coherence**

On 20 February, the same day the HR expressed the Union's grave concern over the unfolding violence in Libya, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi told the press that he had not called Qadhafi because he did not want to "disturb" him.<sup>58</sup> Some argued that this statement resulted from Berlusconi's personal ties to Qadhafi; others emphasized Italy's strong economic interests in Libya,<sup>59</sup> while still others justified this "cautious approach"<sup>60</sup> in that Italy initially feared that the rebels were aiming at the creation of "some kind of Islamic mini-state".<sup>61</sup> Regardless of the reasons, the statement was clearly not consistent with the diplomatic wording agreed at EU level.

Another diplomatic issue subject to vertical incoherence was the approach towards the TNC. One day ahead of the extraordinary European Council on 11 March, France recognised the TNC as the sole legitimate representative of the Libyan people and announced the exchange of ambassadors. According to

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with a French diplomat, Brussels, 28 June 2011.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with a European diplomat, Brussels, 6 June 2011.

<sup>56</sup> "Europe's Foreign Policy in Line of Fire over Libya", *EUbusiness*, 23 March 2011, <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/libya-conflict.986>.

<sup>57</sup> "Ashton Defends EU Unity over Libya", *Euronews*, 22 March 2011, <http://www.euronews.net/2011/03/22/ashton-defends-eu-unity-over-libya/>.

<sup>58</sup> "Berlusconi Under Fire for not 'Disturbing' Gheddafi", *Reuters*, 20 February 2011. For more on Berlusconi's response to the Libyan crisis, see the article in this issue, p. 31.

<sup>59</sup> In 2010, Libya provided 22% of Italy's oil imports and 13% of its gas imports ("Facts on Libya: Oil and Gas", International Energy Agency, 21 February 2011, [http://www.iea.org/files/facts\\_libya.pdf](http://www.iea.org/files/facts_libya.pdf)).

<sup>60</sup> Interview with an Italian official, Rome, 15 June 2011.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

diplomatic sources, other EU member states were displeased with this unilateral move, arguing that it prevented the EU from developing a common strategy towards the TNC.<sup>62</sup> When asked for the reasons behind this unilateral move, a French diplomat explained that this was “la diplomatie électrochoc”,<sup>63</sup> aimed at pushing the other member states to position themselves on the issue. But even if this was the intention, it failed to deliver, as the European Council then merely recognised the TNC as “a political interlocutor”.<sup>64</sup> On 4 April, Italy recognised the TNC as the “sole legitimate interlocutor for bilateral affairs with Libya”.<sup>65</sup> Commenting on this, an Italian official stated: “We followed the same path as France a couple of weeks later. If others don’t play by EU rules, we have to find our own way. But this should have been decided at EU level.”<sup>66</sup>

The migratory consequences of the Arab spring also soon became a bone of contention within the EU. Well aware that most Tunisian refugees were headed for France, Italy decided on 5 April to issue temporary residence permits to refugees granting them free circulation in the Schengen area. At the Justice and Home Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 11 April, a number of member states, led by France and Germany, accused Italy of violating the ‘Schengen spirit’ and threatened to restore border controls. Italian Interior Minister Roberto Maroni in turn accused his counterparts of failing to show solidarity: “Italy has been left alone,” he said, “I wonder whether in this situation it makes sense to remain in the European Union.”<sup>67</sup>

Franco-Italian divisions culminated on 17 April, when French authorities temporarily blocked trains at the border station of Ventimiglia in an attempt to stop North African migrants from entering the country. The Italian Foreign Ministry said the French move was “illegitimate and in clear violation of general European principles”.<sup>68</sup> These Franco-Italian divisions over immigration are to some extent due to domestic factors.<sup>69</sup> Both Nicolas Sarkozy and Berlusconi are under right-wing pressure from the opposition National Front and coalition partner the Northern League, respectively. Hence, both felt the need to bolster their right-wing credentials, especially since Italian municipal and provincial elections were held in May, and French presidential elections are scheduled for 2012. Domestic right-wing pressure was also the driving factor behind the Danish decision (May 2011) to restore controls at the borders with Germany and Sweden.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with a European diplomat, Brussels, 6 June 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with a French diplomat, Brussels, 8 June 2011.

<sup>64</sup> European Council, *Declaration – Extraordinary European Council*.

<sup>65</sup> “Italy Recognizes Libyan Rebels’ Interim Council: FM”, *Xinhua*, 5 April 2011.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with an Italian official, Rome, 15 June 2011.

<sup>67</sup> J. Pawlak, “Italy Quarrels with EU Partners over Libyan Migrants”, *Reuters*, 11 April 2011.

<sup>68</sup> “France Blocks Italian Trains Carrying Migrants”, *BBC Europe*, 17 April 2011.

<sup>69</sup> A meeting in Rome between Sarkozy and Berlusconi and their respective interior, foreign and economy ministers on 26 April silenced the diplomatic row.

<sup>70</sup> “Schengen State Denmark to Re-impose Border Controls”, *BBC Europe*, 11 May 2011.

Yet, the most blatant manifestation of vertical incoherence may be the military intervention in Libya itself. On 18 March, Germany broke ranks with its EU and NATO partners and abstained in the vote on UNSC resolution 1973. Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle officially justified the decision stating that the risks of German participation in the military engagement outweighed the benefits.<sup>71</sup> The fact that important federal state elections were held two weeks later might also have been factored into this cost-benefit analysis.

Germany's abstention "surprised"<sup>72</sup> the Italians and "disappointed"<sup>73</sup> the French, but also slowed down crisis management efforts at EU level. Germany was not the only EU member sceptical of military involvement. According to a European diplomat, "some member states were not in favour of a CSDP operation. (. . .) The only possible result was a minimum role for the EU. This was EUFOR Libya."<sup>74</sup> But the design of this 'minimum role' was far from undisputed. At the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 12 April, Sweden – traditionally wary of blurring the lines between military operations and humanitarian assistance – blocked the adoption of the concept of operations for EUFOR Libya.<sup>75</sup> For Sweden, this issue was particularly sensitive since it was the framework nation of one of the two Battlegroups on stand-by, whose deployment was being considered in the context of EUFOR Libya.<sup>76</sup> In case of a deployment, Sweden would have had the operational command of the Nordic Battlegroup to which it contributes around 1,600 soldiers.<sup>77</sup>

### ***Multilateral coherence***

Despite initial internal disagreement, the EU managed to implement the sanctions adopted at the UN level rather swiftly, and extended them autonomously, thus going beyond the UN sanctions regime. In addition, the EU agreed on and offered EUFOR Libya, an operation expressly designed to reinforce the UN's efforts in the humanitarian field. However, EUFOR Libya is a symbolic gesture more than a real response to UN needs. When asked on 20 April whether the UN needed the assistance of EU troops, UN humanitarian chief Valerie Amos expressed concerns

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<sup>71</sup> G. Westerwelle, "Official Declaration on UNSC Resolution 1973", Berlin, 18 March 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CB9L-mp62Oc>.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with an Italian official, Rome, 15 June 2011.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with a French diplomat, Brussels, 8 June 2011.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with a European diplomat, Brussels, 7 June 2011.

<sup>75</sup> The concept of operations (or CONOPS) is the first step in the planning of a CSDP operation involving military assets. The CONOPS has to be approved by the EU Military Committee, the Political and Security Committee and the Council.

<sup>76</sup> Bloching, "CSDP and EU Mission Update – April 2011", 1.

<sup>77</sup> "Nordic Battlegroup", Swedish Armed Forces, <http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/Organisation/Nordic-Battlegroup/>.

on blurring the lines between military and humanitarian action and said that EUFOR Libya was considered as a measure of last resort. The fact that Qadhafi threatened to respond to a humanitarian operation with “armed resistance” seemed to confirm her point.<sup>78</sup>

Due to the Cypriot-Turkish impasse, EU–NATO cooperation has long been limited to Berlin Plus operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The EU–NATO ambassadorial meeting on Libya on 6 May was thus good news in terms of multilateral coherence. However, Turkey and Cyprus insisted that the meeting be informal. No formal decisions were taken and no follow-up meeting was agreed.<sup>79</sup> According to a senior NATO official, “this is also because the EU did not propose anything that required more intense cooperation. (...) The UN repeated several times that they did not need this humanitarian operation – and NATO knew that.”<sup>80</sup> Within the first two weeks after the outbreak of the Libyan crisis, NATO had already prepared four different operational plans, one of which was for a humanitarian operation. “But there have been no discussions with the EU on this subject.”<sup>81</sup> EU–NATO cooperation thus remains seriously wanting.

Finally, cooperation between the EU and the African Union has fared no better. “Cooperation between the EU and the African Union was ... difficult,”<sup>82</sup> a European diplomat said. The AU was opposed to the no-fly zone and strongly favoured political mediation. While the EU and NATO called on Qadhafi to step down, the AU sought a political solution, which would have included Qadhafi. Accordingly, the AU also rejected the ICC’s arrest warrant against Qadhafi. On 23 August, the AU’s Peace and Security Council reportedly refused to recognise the TNC unless fighting ended and a unity government including Qadhafi loyalists was formed.<sup>83</sup> The AU position has to be seen against the backdrop of the strong financial and political support that Qadhafi had provided to it in the past: he was one of its founding fathers and provided about 15 percent of its funds, thus paying the dues of poorer African states.<sup>84</sup> The differing positions of the EU and the AU and the strained relationship between the latter and the TNC stood in the way of close inter-organisational cooperation.

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<sup>78</sup> “Europe Planning For Libya Force Despite UN Concern”, *Agence France-Presse*, 22 April 2011.

<sup>79</sup> N. Busse, “Eine Sensation, die ohne Folgen bleibt”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 May 2011.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with senior NATO official, Brussels, 9 June 2011.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Interview with a European diplomat, Brussels, 6 June 2011.

<sup>83</sup> The AU’s position was not united and partly incoherent: when the AU refused to recognise the TNC on 23 August, 20 of its members had already recognised it as Libya’s legitimate government (R. Hall, “African Union Refuses to Recognise Libya’s New TNC Government”, *The Independent*, 27 August 2011, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/african-union-refuses-to-recognise-libyas-new-tnc-government-2344675.html>). Despite little progress in the formation of an inclusive government, the AU as a whole finally recognised the TNC on 20 September.

<sup>84</sup> “Gaddafi Calls in Favours from Africa”, *Financial Times*, 27 March 2011.

## Overall assessment

The analysis of the coherence of the EU's response to the Libyan crisis leaves us with a patchy picture. The EU's crisis response has been horizontally consistent, but the instruments of one policy have not always been adequate to support the goals of another. There have been few inter- or intra-institutional contradictions. However, this has not meant that the EU is speaking with one voice, nor has it implied real synergetic cooperation. The HR has been one of many actors issuing statements on the Libyan crisis, and the EEAS has taken a backstage role, making it look like just another administrative layer in the Brussels jungle. The EU's role in the context of multilateral crisis management has been described as "business as usual".<sup>85</sup> The EU has implemented decisions taken by the UN and has offered to support UN humanitarian aid delivery, even though the need for such an offer has been contested. The Libyan crisis has not broken the ice between the EU and NATO: while the organisations' approaches have not been inconsistent, the broader political impasse between the two has prevented synergies in the Libyan context. Meanwhile, diverging views of the EU and the AU have inhibited synergetic cooperation.

The EU's response to the Libyan crisis was not generally weak or ineffective. The EU has been praised for its quick and substantial delivery of humanitarian aid and for its far-reaching sanctions regime.<sup>86</sup> However, these accomplishments have been dwarfed by the lack of vertical consistency and coherence in other policy fields. Unilateral actions or inactions, mutual accusations and ensuing tendencies of disintegration mainly account for the EU's perceived incoherence.<sup>87</sup>

## How to be more coherent?

The Libyan crisis has once again revealed that interests, national specificities and domestic electoral horizons often guide the unilateral actions of the member states in the short term. These unilateral actions either prevent a common European response or deprive the EU-level response of credibility. In addition, vertical coherence conditions other forms of coherence: if the member states agree on a common strategy and follow through with it, administrative obstacles or inter-institutional divisions can be overcome; if they follow their own, domestically-inspired strategies these obstacles continue to stand in

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<sup>85</sup> Interview with an Italian official, Rome, 15 June 2011.

<sup>86</sup> Consensus view of several interviewees.

<sup>87</sup> The external perception, often conveyed by the media, may give a distorted picture: while abstract forms of horizontal incoherence or behind-the-scenes institutional struggles might pass unperceived, unilateral actions or diplomatic rows between the member states tend to receive disproportionate media attention (e.g. "Libyan Crisis Exposes North-South Divide on EU Response", *monsters&critics*, 21 February 2011, [http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/africa/news/article\\_1620914.php/Libyan-crisis-exposes-north-south-divide-on-EU-response-2nd-Lead](http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/africa/news/article_1620914.php/Libyan-crisis-exposes-north-south-divide-on-EU-response-2nd-Lead)).



the way.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, the EU can only provide credible and substantial support for another organisation if the member states stand behind this decision.

So what lessons can be drawn from the Libyan crisis? What could the EU do to increase the coherence of its crisis management in the future? Taking “the reality of 27 member states who are sovereign, who believe passionately in their own right to determine what they do”<sup>89</sup> into account, the EU should aim to: (1) increase its ‘leadership for coherence’; (2) Europeanise responses in the medium term, and (3) prevent divisions in the longer term.<sup>90</sup>

### ***Increase ‘leadership for coherence’***

The key function of the HR/EEAS is to ensure the consistency and coherence of the EU’s external action. Notwithstanding the HR’s difficult job description and the ‘tender age’ of the EEAS, they should gradually increase their leadership for coherence. This leadership has a horizontal and a vertical dimension. Horizontally, the HR/EEAS should ensure smooth inter-institutional cooperation in order for the EU to remain operational despite vertical divisions. Vertically, the HR/EEAS should increase the output of policy analysis, providing the member states with different options for coherent crisis management.<sup>91</sup>

In the coming months, the internal structure of the EEAS needs to be clarified. One of the priorities should be to set up the Strategic Policy Planning Department. This department has the potential to “play a key role for facilitating coherence and identifying forward looking foreign and security policies”.<sup>92</sup> In order for it to play a role, staffing should receive careful consideration. It should be composed of national senior diplomats and EU officials with experience in drafting political concepts. This could provide the strategic guidance that currently seems to be lacking.<sup>93</sup> A European diplomat deplored that the EEAS does not have enough specialists who are able to draft conceptual papers in the field of crisis management.<sup>94</sup> This could be compensated by the temporary recruitment of external crisis management experts.<sup>95</sup>

Furthermore, the HR/EEAS should work on its cooperation with the Commission. “The artificial division between strategy and implementation needs

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<sup>88</sup> Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 7 June 2011.

<sup>89</sup> C. Ashton, quoted in “Europe’s Foreign Policy in Line of Fire over Libya”, *EUbusiness*, 23 March 2011, <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/libya-conflict.986>.

<sup>90</sup> See also H. Kundnani and J. Väisse, “EU Foreign Policy: Moving on from Libya”, *openDemocracy*, 15 April 2011, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/hans-kundnani-justin-vaisse/eu-foreign-policy-moving-on-from-libya>.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with a European diplomat, Brussels, 6 June 2011.

<sup>92</sup> Lindstrom, *The European External Action Service*, 5.

<sup>93</sup> Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 7 June 2011.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with a European diplomat, Brussels, 6 June 2011.

<sup>95</sup> Lindstrom, *The European External Action Service*, 5.

to be overcome.”<sup>96</sup> The HR should increase her presence in the Commission and convene regular coordination meetings with the Commissioners for external action. This would not only promote inter-institutional coherence but also enhance the potential to create horizontal synergies. The apparent alienation between the EEAS and the Commission should also be countered at lower levels. Officials of both institutions have to ensure smooth communication with one another and invite each other to relevant meetings.<sup>97</sup> Without this working culture of mutual trust, administrative hurdles and ‘bureaucratic resistance’ will continue to stand in the way of coherent EU external action.

### ***Europeanise responses in the medium term***

If early crisis response is subject to internal divisions, the EU should work out and consolidate consensus in the medium term. The fact that, despite the divisions on the approach towards the TNC, the HR managed to open an EU office in Benghazi in May, was a good sign. The EU was also quick to establish an EEAS presence in Tripoli after the rebels took over the city. Furthermore, the EU appointed Bernardino León as EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the Southern Mediterranean region in July 2011. Together with the EEAS delegation, the EUSR should actively promote member state cooperation on the ground and ensure the systematic exchange of information and analyses, thereby fostering ‘bottom-up coherence’. According to an EU official, “[t]he perspective on the ground is often more pragmatic. People want to work together. And this can have repercussions at the top level as well.”<sup>98</sup>

If the EU member states are divided on the use of military force, the HR/EEAS should start early to explore possible (less controversial) options for an EU engagement on the civilian side. In doing this, they should closely coordinate with the Commission and take advantage of the institutional memory of the Council Secretariat in terms of best practices and lessons learned from the first ten years of CSDP. This would also be an opportunity to raise the HR’s profile in the field of crisis management, as called for by Germany, France and Poland (the ‘Weimar triangle’) in a letter of December 2010.<sup>99</sup> Timely preparations for medium-term crisis response should be carried out in close consultation with the relevant international organisations and local actors to make sure that the EU’s contribution is of real added value in the multilateral division of labour and corresponds to the needs on the ground.

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with an EEAS official, Brussels, 9 June 2011.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 7 June 2011.

<sup>99</sup> “France, Germany, Poland on EU’s Common Defence Policy”, Civic Platform, 13 December 2010, <http://www.platforma.org/en/about-civic-platform/art958,france-germany-poland-on-eus-common-defence-policy.html>.

### **Prevent incoherence in the longer term**

Part of the incoherent image that the EU projected during the Libyan crisis had to do with the member states' different understandings of concepts like burden sharing and solidarity, and divergent views on broader security issues. In order to prevent incoherence in the longer term, the EU should take measures to restore trust between the member states and work towards a common strategic culture.

It almost seems that 'solidarity' and 'burden sharing' have become synonymous with intra-European divisions lately. Different understandings of these terms have put one of the EU's major achievements, namely the possibility of moving freely across borders, at risk. The Libyan crisis was certainly not the only or last trigger for migratory pressure unequally affecting the EU member states. At its meeting on 24–25 June, the European Council therefore proposed to introduce an emergency mechanism to "assist a member state facing heavy pressure at the external borders".<sup>100</sup> It also emphasized the "need for genuine and practical solidarity towards the Member States most affected by migratory flows".<sup>101</sup> In order to prevent mutual accusations and animosity among member states, the EU should work on clarifying the practical meaning of these terms. It should specify what is meant by "heavy pressure", translating this vague formulation into numerical thresholds. Likewise, the meaning of "practical solidarity" in the field of border and migration management should be clarified. Providing Frontex with a broader mandate, its own assets, and human rights experts would be a good step in this regard.<sup>102</sup>

The lack of coherence in the field of crisis management is indicative of the fragility of the European strategic consensus: there is no agreement on the nature and future of the CSDP. There is no agreement on its institutional set-up, that is, whether the EU should have its own permanent civilian-military operational headquarters.<sup>103</sup> Other divisive issues include the role of NATO and the use of force for humanitarian purposes. If the EU is serious about progressively framing a "common Union defence policy",<sup>104</sup> it should promote an EU-level dialogue on these issues. In the longer term, these discussions could feed into a new European Security Strategy, which would take account of the lessons learned and new security challenges facing the Union. These top-level discussions should be complemented by bottom-up measures fostering a common strategic culture. The EEAS should

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<sup>100</sup> European Council, *Conclusions of the European Council – 23/24 June*.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> N. Busse, "EU stärkt Grenzschutzagentur Frontex", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23 June 2011.

<sup>103</sup> In July 2011, Britain reportedly blocked a secret proposal tabled by Ashton for a permanent operational civilian-military headquarters (B. Waterfield, "Britain Blocks EU Plans for 'Operational Military Headquarters'", *The Telegraph*, 18 July 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/8645749/Britain-blocks-EU-plans-for-operational-military-headquarters.html>).

<sup>104</sup> Art. 42 (2) Treaty on European Union.

organise regular EU crisis management exercises,<sup>105</sup> bringing officials from EU-level institutions together with staff from the member states' defence and foreign ministries.

## Conclusion

While the EU's response to the Libyan crisis has been multifaceted, nearly every aspect of it was marked by vertical incoherence. The recent institutional reshuffling and the EEAS did not contribute to inter-institutional coherence. Although the EU's crisis response was in line with that of the UN, there was no synergetic cooperation with NATO and the African Union.

The member states' unilateral actions or inactions stood in the way of a common EU crisis response. But did they also stand in the way of a timely and effective crisis response? With the benefit of hindsight and in light of the apparent success of the military intervention, one might think that the contrary is true. Had France and Britain engaged in finding a coherent response in time-consuming consultations with their European partners instead of taking the lead by immediate military action, their support for the rebels may well have come too late. A French diplomat put it this way: "The question of coherence is a double-edged sword. Sometimes, the procedure is not coherent but there is an approach with leadership, and dissensions are overcome ex post."<sup>106</sup> And indeed, dissent was soon overcome: France and the UK were quick to bury their row over the operation's NATO command and after a little push from his Liberal Party leader Philipp Rösler, even German Foreign Minister Westerwelle acknowledged the merit of NATO's military intervention in ousting Qadhafi.<sup>107</sup> The Libyan crisis thus showed that the violation of the principle of coherence can be acceptable under exceptional circumstances, namely when immediate military action is required to save lives or prevent imminent human massacres.

But, even if time constraints, the absence of a strategic consensus and of adequate military planning structures led to an incoherent crisis response in the short term, the EU should aim to re-establish coherence as soon as possible. In the medium to long term, the benefits of coherent EU crisis management prevail. The EU has long-standing experience and valuable expertise in civilian crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction. It has the potential to bundle resources towards commonly agreed goals, thereby minimising the risks of duplication and inefficient spending. Finally, a common EU approach is less likely to be perceived in the light

<sup>105</sup> H. Kundnani and J. Vaïsse, "EU Foreign Policy: Moving on from Libya", *openDemocracy*, 15 April 2011, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/hans-kundnani-justin-vaïsse/eu-foreign-policy-moving-on-from-libya>.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with a French diplomat, Brussels, 8 June 2011.

<sup>107</sup> "Westerwelle lobt Nato-Einsatz jetzt doch", *Zeit online*, 27 August 2011, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2011-08/westerwelle-nato-einsatz>.

of national (strategic or economic) interests and therefore enjoys a higher degree of legitimacy.

The Libyan crisis showed that while it is still business as usual if the EU fails to deliver in the field of ‘hard power’, it is expected to step in when it comes to ‘soft power’. The famous metaphor on the transatlantic division of labour comes to mind in which NATO (that is, the US) ‘prepares dinner’ while the EU ‘washes the dishes’. But Libya was also exemplary of the US’ growing reluctance when it comes to preparing dinner in Europe’s backyard. If the EU wants to be a credible actor on the international stage, it should not only maximise coherence in the field of soft power, but also work on the strategic consensus and capabilities that will prepare it for a more coherent crisis response in the field of hard power.

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