# THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A RISK COMMUNITY: NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR EUROPEAN SECURITY POLICY

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**Panel 3: Theorising European Foreign Policy**

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## I) INTRODUCTION[1]

Some years ago two well-known authors of the discipline stated "that community exists at the international level, that security politics is profoundly shaped by it, and that those states dwelling within an international community might develop a pacific disposition" (Adler/Barnett 1998: 3). Particularly the European Union (EU) represented a so called "security community". The master (dependent) variable to be explained by this research programme was "dependable expectations of peaceful change between states".

However, times are changing rapidly – in particular concerning the security problematique. Less military threats by states, but rather terrorist attacks such as 9/11 and Madrid or the potential proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are dominating the international security discourse. In contrast, "[l]arge-scale aggression against any Member State is now improbable. Instead Europe faces new threats which are more diverse, less visible and less predictable" (European Security Strategy 2003). Therefore, the security community literature might be right with their explanation, but the crucial question to be addressed today is rather: What can be the security policy of a security community?

Contrary to classical studies about *national* security, an analysis of European security policy has to take explicitly into account the inherent tensions between the institutional structures (*polity*) on the one hand and the operative security policy (*policy*) on the other. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to conceptualise the European Union as a *Risk Community*. The *community* perspective facilitates a conceptual access to the problem of the EU's status as an actor in international politics without applying the (even for nation states questionable) unitary actor asumption of some mainstream theories. As will be pointed out, the EU is rather treated as a multi-level governance system (Marks et al. 1996). However, the focus of this paper will be on the *risk concept*, and here particularly on the interrelationship between two aspects which have emerged as the central problems for European security politics:

Firstly, one can observe a transformation of the security agenda in the 21st century. As was partly predicted at the end of the 1980s, an increasing number of *risks* have emerged, such as the proliferation of WMD or terrorism. On the one hand, there are risks stemming from the transformative changes of the international system after the end of the Cold War as well as from well-known "limits of safety" (Sagan 1993). On the other hand, some risks have emerged from the process of globalisation. These two processes possibly enforce each other,

[1] This paper is based on a research proposal for a PhD. thesis that I will begin in fall 2004 at the International University Bremen.

when, for example, states fail, organised crime flourishes, terrorists – possibly striving for WMD – find a safe haven resulting in wide-spread migration (Daase 2002: 15-16).

The second aspect is due to the EU's new claim for responsibility concerning these issues, but at the same time her problem to tackle them effectively and the resulting inability to act:

> "So, EU foreign policy is subject to two major contradictory realities. The EU has experienced the biggest row over a major foreign policy issue in decades [i.e. Iraq; M.W.]. And yet a more credible EU foreign policy is slowly taking shape. (…) EU leaders are right to focus on terrorism, but they should also be wary of raising expectations they cannot yet meet" (Everts/Keohane 2003: 168/ 174).

For one decade, there was an increasing (formal) integration within this issue-area, but simultaneously the problem not to meet raised expectations (e.g. the Balkans) because the created institutions are not seriously used by the member states. Thereby, the EU is endangered to produce self-made problems of legitimacy.

The planned conceptualisation of the EU as a risk community appears heuristically fruitful mainly for three reasons. Firstly, it is possible to demonstrate that the International Relations (IR) discipline neglected one crucial aspect of the European security policy, namely the emerging paradigm of *risk security policy* (Coker 2002, Daase 2002). In order to explain the latest transformations of security policy, the risk concept shall be systematically elaborated and applied empirically to the EU because only an interdisciplinary perspective is able to analyse this pervasive change (Beck 1999).

Secondly, and contrary to the classical policy analyses, the social construction of security problems shall be taken into account. Classical policy analyses normally treat a social problem as a situation independent from its solution and only dependent on the political will and the range of the performances (Fuchs/Kratochwil 2002). However, the way security problems are discursively "framed" (Entman 1993) is not a neutral process but rather suggests a certain kind of *solution* (Connolly 1983: 1). In this way the genuine *political* aspect of security problems is not going to be lost, which is often the problem when the approach is technocratic or solely functional. In the footsteps of Max Weber we are *explaining* through interpretative *understanding*. By proceeding like this, new problems such as the general legitimization of military interventions, which *could* result from a (preventive) risk security policy, can be pointed out and critically evaluated.

Thirdly, it is possible to distinguish three different risk dimensions within the EU. *Primary risks* are the new security problems or "global challenges" such as terrorism, state failure or proliferation of WMD (European Security Strategy 2003). The second dimension are *prevention risks* concerning first and foremost the policy options of the relevant actors. Risks are

inherent to the option of a cautious as well as a proactive policy (Coker 2002). In order to interrupt state failure, for example, a humanitarian intervention could cause new terrorist cells to emerge. However, it is also possible that terrorists use such weak states as safe havens, as al Qaeda did in Afghanistan. Then, it would be a greater risk not to intervene. Accordingly, a *political* decision becomes necessary how to judge and rank the different risks. While these levels of *primary* and *prevention risks* play a crucial role for every kind of risk community, the (institutional) *context risk* (Luhmann 1991) is added within the EU. This third risk dimension refers to the problem that the institutional context of the EU, in which risk appraisals are made, has not been stabilized yet and has hence quite a small degree of legitimacy. Facing all the time the risk of failure, the EU's institutional context of political decision has become itself a risk. Accordingly, the conceptualisation of the EU as a risk community facilitates a new access to the traditional tensions between the institutional structures (*polity*) and the operative security policy (*policy*), which links the current changes in security thinking with the unique characteristics of the European security policy.

According to this, security policy shall not be explained exclusively from the nation state and anarchy perspective, but from the background of globalisation. One can also observe major changes in administrative procedures and practices within all three pillars of the EU. Particularly, a general trend towards increasingly internationalised forms of security governance (as well as its legitimisation) is observable (Zangl/Zürn 2003). The necessity emerges to control risks, which resulted from globalisation and the discourse on it. Due to this, security policy is turning more and more into *risk management*, which is directed to the outside as well as to the inside (Bigo 2001).

This paper is structured as follows. Firstly, a short review of the literature is given in order to illustrate the shortcomings and to point out the necessity of conceptual innovation. Secondly, the emerging paradigm of risk security policy is put forward. It is necessary to illustrate the conceptual independence of risks. Based on these considerations, it becomes possible to develop an understanding of European security policy as risk security policy. Finally, some possible prospects for an analysis are made.

## II) THEORISING EUROPEAN SECURITY POLICY

The security policy within the EU is presently marked by massive changes. The initial institutional structures (*polity*) and the existing tasks in the field of security *policy,* as well as the thus resulting "crises" are marks of a new development. The decline of the bipolar world signifies the end of a *world of enemies* and the beginning of a *world of globalised risks*: If one

single event happening in whichever part of the world has inclinations for manifold far away places, then the security dilemma for Europe is distinct to the dilemmas in past decades (Robertson 1992, Coker 2002). This background gives rise to the important question, in how far contemporary theories of International Relations can deliver an adequate explanation concerning the changes and challenges of European security policy.

Within the discipline the discussion about European security policy was divided for many years. For most authors European security policy was too marginal and irrelevant to even bother. Those authors who nonetheless assigned any relevance to it, were mostly concentrating on the concept of civilian power (Dûchene 1973, Whitman 1998). Due to the recently beginning military build-up of the EU, this concept has to be questioned because the main criterion (i.e. the choice of civilian foreign policy means) is not met anymore or has at least become ambiguous. "The ESDP ends the age of 'innocence' of *civilian power* Europe" (Deighton 2002: 728). Moreover, the approach's focus on the use of force and the resulting discussion about foreign policy means concealed important aspects of the changing security policy context leading to a certain anachronism.

Similar problems arise for approaches based on the perspective of one of the three great traditions of IR. No matter whether they are rooted in the neorealist (Waltz 1979, 2000; Mearsheimer 1990), the liberal-institutionalist (Moravcsik 1998, Haftendorn/Keohane/ Wallander 1999), or the constructivist (Adler/Barnett 1998, Christiansen/Jorgensen/Wiener 2001) school of thought they are choosing the same (if to a different extent) starting point: Security problems are first and foremost defined through clearly separated communities, who are organised in *states* and who interact within *anarchic structures*. This "methodological nationalism" (Beck 1997: 44) leads to inter-state war as the central problem of international security policy. Hereby the background and context of the emerging approaches were of genuine importance. It was signified by the so called "national constellation" (Zangl/Zürn 2003 cited from Habermas 1998). In this constellation the political order is characterised by four elements, which are exclusively found at the nation state-level: (1) *National* problems were (relatively successful) dealt with by (2) *nation state governance* (i.e. government), because the most important (3) *resources* were concentrated on the nation state-level. This was viewed to be (4) *legitimate* from the inside (population) as well as from the outside (other states). However: "The societal denationalisation [or, globalisation; M.W.] provides the context, which facilitates the transformation from the national to the postnational constellation" (Zangl/Zürn 2003:155).

The four constitutive elements have meanwhile spread out to different levels. Particularly within security policy, one can observe a "transnationalisation of security problems" (EU Security Strategy 2003). Firstly, the roots of security problems often lie outside the EU, but are influencing her inside (e.g. organised crime). Secondly, the responsible groups for these problems are increasingly private or societal groups acting transnationally rather than opposing states.

Therefore, within this issue-area as well, a system of multi-level governance (Zangl/Zürn 2003: 16) is emerging, including supranational institutions as well as transnational processes of legitimisation. However, the resources remain largely concentrated on the level of the nation state. According to this, some elements of the "national constellation" as the contextual precondition for traditional security policy are beginning to change. Therefore, it becomes increasingly questionable, whether IR-approaches, which argue exclusively from the nation state and anarchy perspective, are able to provide plausible explanations for the latest developments of the European security policy. Neither inter-state war nor solely national governments are the exclusive elements of contemporary security policy. However, taking into account the general world political transformations, a revision of mainstream IR theories becomes necessary. The dominant methodological nationalism as conceptual basis for most theories has to be questioned and partly overcome (Zangl/Zürn 2003: 155).

This opportunity arises by a conceptualisation of the EU as a risk community because it facilitates to distinguish between the different levels of the emerging postnational constellation, thereby taking into account distinct actors in different settings as well as to leave behind the static distinction between security problems stemming from the In- *or* the Outside (Bigo 2001). Hence, it does not only reflect a debate about new strategies. Rather, due to the transformations of the EU-polity as well as EU-policy, the necessity for conceptual innovation becomes obvious.

## III) European Security Policy as Risk Security Policy:

This paper will no longer conceptualise the EU solely as a "security community" (Waever 1995, Adler/Barnett 1998), but rather as a *risk community*. The main reason for this shift is the exclusive focus of the former approach on the inter-state war of the national constellation. However, facing the "transnationalisation of security problems" the EU is not only a security community but rather increasingly a risk community which has to manage proactively risks inside (1st and 3rd pillars of the EU) as well as outside (1st and 2nd pillars). For example, the planned establishment of a common 'capability agency' could be seen as an indicator that in

the meantime the idea of a security community is firmly rooted. On the other hand, it is also an indicator for the ambition (or necessity) to pursue a pro-active risk management in the future.

Besides, the EU not only interacts with states, but with private and international actors as well. Therefore, European security policy has to be understood as a kind of multi-level-governance system (Marks et al. 1996, Jachtenfuchs/Kohler-Koch 1996). Moreover, thinking about security is itself characterised by global risks, which can neither be limited spatially nor temporally. Security becomes increasingly conceptualised as risk (Coker 2002). However, what exactly are international risks and how can we distinguish them from classical military threats of the Cold War? In order to answer this question, firstly, the concept of international risk is articulated more explicitly. In a second step, the emerging paradigm (and resulting problems) of risk security policy is developed.

***The concept of international risk:***

Generally speaking, a risk can be understood as the probability of a future damage which can be influenced by present action (Daase 2002: 12). The literature in IR normally distinguishes between three different security problems (Zangl/Zürn 2003: 173):

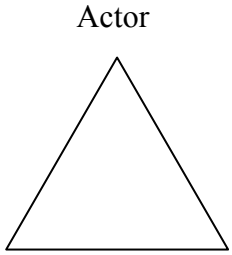
(1) *Threat*: Insecurity by a responsible decision of a (visible) social actor (e.g. the Soviet Union during the Cold War).
(2) *Danger*: Insecurity without a decision of a social actor (e.g. earthquake).
(3) *Risk*: Insecurity by a decision of a social actor, but problematique of an ambiguouos responsibility. Risks also include non-intended consequences of social actions.

For security policy this means that risks are a genuinely *political* problem. Contrary to dangers, risks are based on human decisions. This results in a different mode of problem responsibility and, therefore, in different political "solutions". Security under the conditions of risk does not "happen". Rather it becomes "producable". Contrary to threats, however, the unambiguouos strategic "Alter" is missing (Coker 2002). This makes new answers and solutions necessary as well. These two distinctions cause the conceptual independence of the risk concept and refer to the heuristic opportunities of conceptualising the EU as a risk community.

The security debates of the Cold War were focussing on the interrelationship between "intentions and capabilities" (the actor was obvious). This led to crucial strategic distinctions, such as the difference between deterrence and compellence (Schelling 1966). Those were appropiate and useful concepts. However, today the question arises whether we can actually understand transnationalised security problems exclusively with these concepts. Discussing,

for example, the problem of terrorism would rather focus on the interrelationship between actors (states or private groups) and capabilities (e.g. WMD) because the intentions have become quite clear in the meantime. This has not only consequences for our security *strategies*, but also for the *concepts* we use to understand the security challenges of the 21st century.

*Cold War's security problematique:*




*Today's security problematique:*

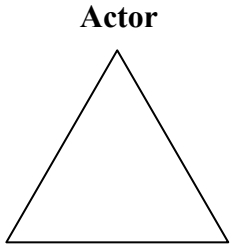



Table 1 (See for a similar argument: Daase 2002:15)

The European security policy and the context in which it is pursued should be taken as a model of risk communication (Ericson/Haggerty 1997). Risk management should be understood as the "governance process" to produce security. These are the reasons to examine the practices of EU security agencies and their risk communication systems, because the specific cultural frame of interpretation, in which the risk management takes places, lies here (Douglas/Wildavsky 1982). Therefore, the understanding of European security policy demands an examination of the logics and processes of the communication system, in which the European security agencies are to be found. These processes are, then, guiding the way of European security policy. Here certain practices in security policy are enabled, others prevented.

In sum, risks have become a central feature of the modern world. Therefore, they have to be explicitly included into an analysis of security policy. Risk institutions and their communication systems have generally become an integral part of the society (Ericson/Haggerty 1997). Moreover, the risk concept facilitates to overcome an old contrast of the social sciences. The risk approach opens the opportunity to take into account the simultaneity of material and discursive processes (Beck 1999).

***The risk dimensions of European security policy within the globalisation context:***

The following table compares traditional security policy with the emerging *risk security policy*. Thereby, the three risk dimensions of the EU, which the paper will develop and analyse, are described.

| | **SECURITY PROBLEMS** | **MEANS TO PRODUCE SECURITY** | **QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NATIONAL CONSTELLATION** | Threat of the own territorial integrity by other states | Deterrence and defence | Monopoly of the nation state (sometimes alliances) |
| **EMERGING POSTNATIONAL CONSTELLATION** | Transnationalised risks for human security | Preventive defence and risk management (civilian and military means) | EU claims responsibility, but problem of consensus and (in)ability to act |
| | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ |
| **RISK DIMENSIONS** | primary risks | prevention risks | context risk |

The traditional security policy of the national constellation knew foremost security problems which resulted from clearly separated communities, organising within states and interacting with each other in anarchic structures. Since the Cold War inter-state deterrence was the fundamental building block to deal with threats and to produce security. The nation state has practically had an uncontested monopoly concerning the responsibility for security problems (Fuchs/Kratochwil 2002).

However, considering the "transnationalisation of security problems" and the rise of new risks (EU Security Strategy 2003), deterrence as central means to produce security is no longer that crucial. How does one want to deter terrorists or failed states? The attempt to make risks controllable is more appropriately understood as "preventive defence" (Coker 2002), or as Tony Blair put it:

> "Perhaps this Islamic terrorism would ebb of its own accord. But do we want to take this risk? That is the judgement. And my judgement then and now is that the risk of this new global terrorism and its interaction with states or organisations or individuals proliferating WMD, is one I simply am not prepared to run (Tony Blair, The Guardian: March 5 2004)."

Here we see that four distinctive policies seem considerable depending, firstly, on the question whether we want to minimize the potential damage or to prevent the actual occurrence of an unwanted event. Secondly, it is possible to distinguish between two strategies being either cooperative or repressive (interventionist) (Daase 2002: 19). Those are the critical dimensions within which political decision-makers must judge and rank the different risks. However, this preventive policy is risky as well because it can cause unintended consequences. This means that the *political* problem of risk appraisal and acceptance comes to the fore (Beck 1999). Moreover, human beings rather than the state or the nation become increasingly the referent for security arguments. This reflects the growing individualisation occurring (or made) within the modern European polity.

According to these considerations, primary and prevention risks increasingly determine the security policy. However, the standards of risk appraisals do neither exist independently from norms and values nor institutions and interests. They are not simply "out there" but have to be shaped (reproduced or changed) in a cultural context (Douglas/Wildavsky 1982). Moreover, the question arises whether the institutional structures of the EU (*polity*) are determined by the risk concept as well. Here, tensions exist between the EU's claim of responsibility concerning security questions and the problematique of constructing a consensus and the resulting (in)ability to act (Everts/Keohane 2003). Similar to national risk communities the risk of failure is emerging. In this case, however, and this is the main difference to nation states, European security policy itself becomes increasingly questioned. It can easily come to a "crisis" (e.g. the Balkans or Iraq) leading, therefore, to problems for the *political* European project as such. In contrast to this, national risk communities do not face this risk because the state as a security providing institution is not seriously questioned (e.g. the US after 9/11). Accordingly, the institutional context within which the EU is pursuing security policy epitomises itself as a risk, namely the context risk (Luhmann 1991).

This context risk is first and foremost about unintended consequences of political decisions as well as non-decisions. Political decisions for a pro-active or preventive risk security policy could lead to a "militarisation" of the EU and to the legitimisation of the use of force in international politics endangering the substance of the European project as such. Besides, unintended consequences are inherent to military operations – as Clauswitz has already pointed out. On the other hand, political non-decisions (as has usually been the case until today) – in spite of the claim for responsibility in security issues – are neither the solution. One of the major arguments of the discourse on globalisation is that nation states cannot provide security (as well as social welfare) for their citizens on their own. The European Union expresses the

hope to meet these emerging needs. Therefore, non-decisions could lead to the unintended consequence of an increasing lack of the EU's legitimacy.

Finally, the EU does not only have to be distinguished from national risk communities but rather from inter-state alliances. They focus on military threats (i.e. states) from outside. Their central means are deterrence and defence. In contrast to this, a risk community pursues risk management focusing on the outside as well as on the inside using civilian and military means. Thereby, the constitutive distinction between the in- and the outside is increasingly coming under pressure (Ericson/Haggerty 1997, Bigo 2001). The objective is to make the different risks controllable. Thereby, one follows rather a control or insurance than a deterrence logic (Coker 2002).

## IV) Conclusion

The considerations made above pointed out that the EU as a risk community offers a new "conceptual lens" for analysing the tensions between the EU institutions and its security policy. Thereby, not only the changes in security thinking (i.e. 1st and 2nd risk dimension) but as well the unique characteristics of the European security policy (i.e. 3rd risk dimension) are taken into account. This envisaged change of perspective is able to demonstrate the limits of classical approaches and could open new domains for empirical analyses and theoretical debates. Accordingly, the question arises on how to apply these considerations empirically. How does the EU as a political organisation deal with risks? And vice versa: How does *risk security policy* affect the EU as a political organisation? Here, the following research questions come to the fore:

First of all the problem of how the EU as a risk community was *constituted*:

Which processes of globalisation (respectively denationalisation) have led to the EU being understood as a risk community? What have been the "critical turning points" to be found? What influenced the specific (cultural) form as a risk community?

Secondly, an analysis of the EU's risk security policy as such:

What new problems derive from a risk security policy? What conflicts are e.g. created through the political discourse over the relation of primary and prevention risks and its establishment in practice? In how far can an active risk security policy lead to the "militarisation of the EU" or to a general legitimisation of military interventions?

The final research question shall ask for possible implications. To sum it up and to offer some prospects, it could be interesting to ask what consequences the risk security policy could

have regarding the (institutional) future of the political European project. In this respect, two extreme positions along a continuum seem considerable.

(1) When following Ole Waever's argument on the origin of the EU as a security community (Waever 1995, 1998), the "desecuritization" took more responsibility than the "securitization" for the establishment of "dependable expectations of peaceful change" between the member states. This means that the "securitization" of many EU issue-areas (e.g. CFSP or development aid) can lead to growing difficulties to reach consensus on the relation of primary and prevention risks. Because these "policy-decisions" are closely linked with the "polity" - the context risk - the worst case scenario can lead to fragmentation and thus would be the beginning of the end of the *political* European project.

(2) On the other hand there is the possibility , that the many new risks, that are shared all over Europe, will be the basis for an even stronger sense of community. Here "risk-sharing" or "socialisation of risks" are the mechanisms that strengthen the community-identification. By this, risks do not only have to be "bads" but can also be "goods" (Beck 1999). In this sense integration could be intensified - on the emerging basis of a *common risk identity*.

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