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EU-GRASP aims to contribute to the articulation of the present and future role of the EU as a global and regional actor in security and peace.

Therefore, EU-GRASP is aimed at studying the processes, means and opportunities for the EU to achieve effective multilateralism despite myriad challenges.



The EU and Weapons of Mass Destruction

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Executive Summary

The policy domain of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and of weapons of mass destruction is a complex one, that Europe has engaged with in different ways. North Korea and Iran are both projected as problematic and irrational; Pakistan and in particular India have not, and their nuclear developments have been placed in a different frame. The EU is marginalised from some security governance discourses – for example, the Six Nation Talks on North Korea – but is deeply concerned with others; notably the debate over Iran. But the way that Europe talks about nuclear proliferation also says much about the way Europe sees itself and its role in the world, and also has to be set in the context of its own complex formation, with nuclear weapons states, and others strongly committed to speedily bring about a world without nuclear weapons.

Introduction

This Policy Brief examines the ways in which Europe has engaged with the problems posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) around the world by focussing on the lessons that might be learned from three specific cases: that of the proliferation of nuclear weapons debate in Iran, and the proliferation practices of North Korea, and in South Asia. Europe has taken a series of coherent policy positions, but there are a set of challenges that still have to be faced up to.

Background

Iran's nuclear programme dates to the 1950s, but it is in more recent times that international concern has focussed on developments. The first nuclear reactor, Bushehr I, was launched in 2010, although it is not yet online. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had announced that February that Iran was a 'nuclear state.' UN Security Council Resolution 1929 in June 2010 announced a fourth set of sanctions against Iran, noting that Iran had failed to comply with previous Security Council resolutions concerning its nuclear programme. Europe has been greatly concerned with managing relations over the Iranian nuclear programme.

North Korea has a history of nuclear development that had seemed likely to be halted following an agreement with the United States in 1994. However, North Korea declared that the Americans had not fulfilled the terms of that Agreement in 2003, and used that as a reason to withdraw from the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty. In 2006, the North

Koreans conducted their first nuclear test. By May 2009, when a further test was conducted, it was clear to Europe and the world that the North Koreans had nuclear weapons, and the means to deliver them to destroy whole cities in South Korea and Japan.

India – who did not join the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty – conducted its first nuclear test in 1974, and has subsequently weaponised that nuclear technology. Possessing an arsenal of between 80-100 weapons, with the successful sea testing of the nuclear powered submarine INS Arihant in 2012, India promises to possess a full nuclear triad; nuclear weapons capable of being launched from land, air and sea.

Pakistan began its nuclear programme in 1972, and after many years of development, detonated a series of five nuclear tests in 1998, immediately following India's second nuclear test. Pakistan is also not a signatory to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, and has a nuclear arsenal around the same size as that of India.

The problem with the current policies

Europe has framed the issues of nuclear proliferation across these four countries in different ways. For Iran and North Korea, there have been concerns with danger and irrationality. Europe has been much quieter with regard to India and Pakistan.

In terms of Iran and North Korea, Europe has attributed negative characteristics to the regimes in power. In the Iranian Case,

European discourse has been framed by attributing characteristics varying from illiberal, irrational, dangerous, and unstable to the political regime in Tehran. The unpredictability of an actor's erratic behaviour has tended to complement aspects as to what is technically known about the state of advancement of the Iranian nuclear programme. The distinction between intentions and capabilities is central in EU discourses. Both matter when evaluating the degree of threat the Iranian nuclear programme poses to the region and to the international community as a whole. But while a discourse on pure capabilities falls into a non-politicised realm and does not presuppose securitisation, a discourse mixing references to dangerous capabilities and to destabilising intentions manifested by an irresponsible leadership paves the way for a different mode of governance. Much of the debate has been framed more about political assessments over the ultimate goals Iranian nuclear weapons might have, rather than nuclear weapons per se. With regards to the North Korean Case, many similar characteristics were found in the discourse. North Korea is represented in EU discourses an inherently aggressive, irresponsible and duplicitous state which repeatedly fails to follow international norms.

In the South Asian Case, Europe has been quieter. With regards to India, both the EU and India have declared a shared interest in working towards accomplishing 'the goals and objectives of universal disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery'. The declared rationale

for this is that both parties regard the 'proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and its linkages with terrorism poses a threat to international peace and security'. Consequently, both parties have agreed to 'enhance collective action to fight the proliferation of WMD as well as their means of delivery'. To ensure further dialogue on this issue, the 2005 Joint Action Plan confirmed the establishment of a 'bilateral India-EU Security Dialogue at Senior Official level which will include regular consultations on global and regional security issues, disarmament and non-proliferation to increase mutual understanding and identify possible areas of cooperation'. Indeed, this was a prominent element of the 2009 EU-India Summit, in which India and the EU 'reaffirmed their shared interest in working together for disarmament and for countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems'. With regards to Pakistan, the EU's position is somewhat more problematic. The ESS identifies terrorism, proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, state failure and organised crime as its five 'key threats'. In this regards Pakistan lies at the cross roads of these threats in multiple ways and is perceived by many to be the most likely state to allow for the EU's 'frightening scenario ... [where] terrorist groups acquire weapons of mass destruction'. Yet, the possession of WMD is deeply articulated with Pakistani identity and reflects serious regional concerns Pakistan has with India. Consequently, although the EU is Pakistan's largest investor and trading partner, Brussels continues to maintain a low-profile. The EU and Pakistan nevertheless have

declared a shared interest 'in working towards achieving the goals and objectives of universal disarmament and non proliferation of nuclear materials, technology and Wads'. In this regard, the EU has noted the continued work Pakistan has done with the International Atomic Energy Agency on safeguards and physical protection.

Policy Options

Europe's options vary greatly in relation to its connections with the various proliferation issues discussed above. It is a domain in which the United States is particularly dominant. Over North Korea, Europe is not a formal part of the security governance architecture, the Six Power Talks, in which North Korea is engaged by the United States, South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia. There is no similar framework with regards to South Asia, whose key states in any case share different characteristics to those in Pyongyang and Tehran. In South Asia, EU security governance has been marginalised when it comes to India's and Pakistan's WMD programmes. And in response, there has been a good deal of silence on the part of the EU on these issues. Europe, articulate on matters of Iran and of North Korea, has been more silent, and more distant on a discursive level, and also of the practice of security governance. However, the EU has space to act in this area as its policy develops further. Not least because the US and the EU share common objectives on the denuclearisation of the subcontinent, as well as larger objectives of promoting good governance and democracy. It is in the Iranian Case that Europe has been the

most active. The European Union has expressed its stance in an evolving format, initially comprising only the 'Big Three', i.e. France, Germany and the United Kingdom (E3), who, mainly in a preventive move vis-à-vis an expected US military approach, decided to launch diplomatic negotiations with Iran based on a dual track approach, combining diplomatic offers and the threat of sanctions. The EU 25 format was deemed unfit and in contrast, the idea of establishing a Directoire, while not new to the EU was particularly striking at a time when the catchword for the Union's external actions was multilateralism.

Policy Recommendation

Although there have been clear difficulties in maintaining coherence in the European context, and in maintaining influence with international partners, the Europeans have in regard to the Iranian Case developed a mode of security governance that has been framed by sets of discursive moves to shape what is possible and what is acceptable in the question of the Iranian nuclear programme. Many issues remain unresolved; how useful such discursive frames over Iran are to European interests and values; and how appropriate an arrangement it could be for Europe to speak through a framework dominated by a small number of countries. With the Lisbon Treaty, it is clearly possible that a more broadly based European action could develop, in which perhaps more voices will be heard on the framing of the security issue of Iranian nuclear developments. In the case of North Korea, a set of security problems that sit more comfortably in their management in

multilateral fora within the Union, there is again challenge to the successful engagement with a very problematic issue at the level of security governance because of discursive choices made and deployed in Europe that limit the scope of possibility. With regards to South Asia, the EU must broaden its security agenda in the region and construct an approach that attempts to deal with wider regional problems. That is to say, the EU needs to consider the wider regional security dilemma between India, Pakistan, China and Afghanistan, and attempt to deliver a more holistic regional policy. To this extent it would be useful if the EU de-securitised its discursive articulation of the threat of terrorism and WMD, returning it to the realm of normal politics. This would allow for a refocusing on the possibilities of state to state conflict between India and Pakistan, which poses a serious threat to the region and the international system more broadly. Thus, whilst the EU focuses on the 'root causes of instability' and attempts to redress 'political conflicts, development assistance, reduction in poverty and the promotion of human rights', this approach is too indirect.

Conclusion

Identity constructions are vital in the development of WMD policy. For some states, there is a process whereby EU statements construct linked and differentiated signs that enable the Other to be marked clearly as problematic because it exhibits traits opposite to Europe's own, and thereby the Self is demarcated, justified and legitimated. In relation to Iran – and drawing on a genealogy of European tropes of Iranians/

Persians going back many centuries – the regime is 'illiberal', 'irrational', 'dangerous', and 'unstable.' Of course, as a consequence, the EU space can be seen as marked by liberalism, rationality, safety/security, and stability. North Korea is marked as 'irrational', 'deviant' and 'duplicitous', again contrasting with the linguistic opposites that mark the nature of Europe. Through these processes, we see a Europe that is a 'force for the good', 'active' and a 'tireless negotiator' for peace, and an 'honest broker'. So Europe's internal character underpins its external policy, and that character is marked and described in contradistinction to Others. Thus, Europe's WMD policy helps us tell ourselves who and what we are.

These identity constructions are nevertheless complex. India's proliferation in the nuclear realm has not led to a series of ascriptions to it of irrationality and duplicity; there are no differentiated signs there. Indian democracy, and its opened and booming economy, are more dominant elements of the ascription of values to the country.

It is the case that with WMD policy, Europe struggles to find ways of speaking with one voice. President Chirac argued in favour of Europeanising nuclear weapons policy; and sparked a major backlash from Germany and Scandinavian countries, who did not wish to be so involved. Different attitudes on WMD – and on Iraq, in particular – meant that the EU has struggled with ways of developing its 'coordinative discourse' – its ways of speaking with one voice. The European Security Strategy is of course one

example of the attempt to develop such coordinative discourse. With regard to Iran, the need for coordinative discourse led to the development of the E3, and then the EU3, rather than acting as a multilateral whole. Much of that specific debate, indeed with all WMD country issues, has been the debate as to whether to politicise or securitise. But on WMD issues, the EU faces a wider problem of coordinative discourse – not only within its members, but also with the United States.

WMD policy is a particularly difficult area for the EU given the nature of the issue and the nature of the EU. And indeed, on issue specific questions, strategy for engaging with a nuclear power is complex. Should that strategy be one of coercion, of dual track diplomacy, of constructive and engaged dialogue or of critical dialogue? The choices are never simple, but it is clear that whichever security governance frame that the EU chooses and engages with, it brings with it the baggage of its own identity constructions, and its own divisions over WMD practice.