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Concepts in the European Union's Policy Area of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

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Abstract

The paper examines concepts and their role in the European Union (EU)'s policy area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding from the theoretical perspective of conceptual history and the "ideational turn" in public policy research. It argues that EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding could be interpreted as a concept development process in which concepts are the "building blocks". The concept analysis outlines four types of EU peace concepts: strategic, mission (operational), bureaucratic and military concepts. Internally, concepts have an integration role for the EU in the predominantly intergovernmental area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Externally, peace concepts could be regarded as a specific resource and a unique "brand" of the EU on the international market of peacebuilding ideas.

Keywords

Concept Analysis, Conceptual History, European Union (EU), Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding, Peace Concepts

1. Introduction

Conflict prevention and peacebuilding are enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty as goals of the European Union's (EU) external action. According to Art. 21 (2) (c) the Union shall define and pursue common policies and actions in order to "preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security". Conflict prevention and peacebuilding as a policy process is framed by the European Union's external action, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). It is also related to other EU polices such as development or internal security policies (Juncos & Blockmans, 2018: p. 132). The focus on conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities is characteristic for the policy practice of some European Commission services,

most notably the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (European Commission, 2018: p. 18). As a research problem conflict prevention and peacebuilding gained popularity at the EU level under research projects funded by the EU's research and innovation programme Horizon 2020 (European Commission, 2014: pp. 88-89).

The question about concepts and their role in the area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding is not extensively addressed. A lexicon with some of the most important concepts and definitions deployed by EU institutions has been drafted as part of the theoretical and methodological framework of a Horizon 2020 research project (Martin et al., 2016: pp. 54-65). Pogodda, Mac Ginty and Richmond (2021) have developed a crisis response typology of EU concepts and approaches derived from conflict theory. The typology ranges from crisis management to crisis resolution and critical crisis transformation. It is framed by EU crisis response/management and does not explicitly address concepts in the area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Mäkinen (2019) has examined the politics of the concept of peace in the context of producing the idea of a European identity.

As noted by Duke and Courtier, the concept of peacebuilding is difficult to define in the EU context (Duke & Courtier, 2009: pp. 3-4). As a concept, it is amorphous and the difference between aspects of conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict stabilization is often hard to spot. This observation holds true not only for the overarching concept of peacebuilding but also for many "lower-rank" peace concepts developed in the EU policy area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The concept of peacebuilding is difficult to define in the EU context because there is no commonly agreed politico-legal definition and EU institutions have had to find their own way of understanding the term. In the EU context, the understanding of peacebuilding is complicated by the more general debate surrounding the nature of security in the post-Cold war era (Duke & Courtier, 2009: pp. 9-10). Under the general security rubric we find within the EU reference to human security (another term increasingly used in the Commission), environmental security, energy security, the civilian aspects of crisis management, conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction and stabilisation, and sustainable peace and development.

Subjectivity is inherent in concepts, especially in the inception phase. As argued by Richmond (2005) peace is a subjective concept. The difficulty to manage and control concepts lies in their complex roots. On the one hand, concepts in international politics—which is the playground of peacebuilding—certainly have political nature. As argued by Wiesner et al. (2018) concepts are always contingent and controversial in their use, meaning, content, range of reference, and normative colour. On the other hand, political superstructures do not always fully reflect the intellectual and even subconscious origins of concepts at their inception. For example, geopolitical concepts such as "Atlanticism", "Eurasian-

ism" or "Europeanism" have very complex intellectual, and even spiritual roots which are difficult to recognise in the respective political superstructures and bureaucracies of today.

Understandably, the term "concept" is difficult to define as it is commonly used with a very general and flexible meaning. In Max Weber's words, concepts are our way of overcoming the extensively and intensively infinite multiplicity of empirical reality (cited in Berenskötter, 2017: p. 155). They help us grasp the world epistemologically and give us an ontology we can relate to. Obviously, concepts are closely related to abstract modes of thinking. The ontology of concepts is an established subfield of philosophy and psychology, where several theories of concepts have been developed (Margolis & Laurence, 2019). The abstractness of concepts unavoidably determines the way we perceive them as a "grand but elusive theme". The perennial difficulty in understanding EU peace concepts in particular is deeply rooted in the EU's nature as a *sui generis* international actor, the fluid scope conditions for EU peace concepts and, last but not least, the limitations of international relations theory, including the subdiscipline of peace and conflict studies.

The foregoing discussion points to a working definition of concepts in EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Of course, every definition could be contested given the broad scope of the research object and the very different types of existing EU peace concepts. A working definition, however, is needed to specify the object of inquiry and to enhance our understanding of the role concepts play in the EU policy area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The proposed definition has been developed under the EU-funded CDE4Peace project (2020-2022) which has explored the potential of Concept Development and Experimentation (CD&E) for enhancing the EU's conflict prevention and peace-building policy (Pavlov, 2020a; Pavlov, 2020b). A concept in this area could be defined as a solution-oriented policy idea, which is developed in a specific EU socio-political and institutional context to address problems of international peace. The three components of the definition are essential for understanding concepts in the context of EU peacebuilding not as hollow terms but rather as policy drivers. Concepts and politics in this policy area are intertwined and inseparable.

Against this backdrop the article's research objective is to analyse concepts and their role in the area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The main research questions are, therefore:

1) What is the role that concepts play in EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding?

2) What types of concepts are developed by the EU in this policy area?

The research questions are of great practical and theoretical importance because they shed light on the role of concepts in the EU policy process in the "high politics" area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The answers to the research questions will be helpful for a more elaborate understanding of EU policy-making from a conceptual history and ideational perspective. So far, the

conceptual history and ideational approaches have not been employed to EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In doing so, the article will contribute to the scholarship on the role of policy concepts and will open new avenues for investigating the EU as a political and conceptual actor.

The article employs a three-step methodology to attain the research objective. As a first step I will review existing theoretical approaches to concepts in academic literature and assess their applicability to EU peace-related concepts. The theoretical investigation will draw on insights from the existing literature in conceptual history (Koselleck, 1996, 1997, 2004; Skinner, 1969) and the ideational turn in political science (Béland & Cox, 2011; Swinkels, 2020). Secondly, the main types of concepts in the area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding will be identified, analysed and exemplified. The typology will be developed by concept analysis, making use of primary and secondary sources (EU policy and administrative documents, academic literature and case studies). The main research material informing the conceptual analysis will be EU conceptual documents. Finally, by employing the relevant theoretical approaches the article will analyse the role that concepts play in this EU policy area. The employment of a conceptual-historical approach to EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding is innovative and can contribute to academic debates and policy-making alike. For the sake of brevity throughout the paper concepts in the area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding will be referred to as peace concepts.

The analysis of EU peace concepts is carried out at the backdrop of a complex political and economic situation in the EU framed by the ongoing major geopolitical shifts and the highly uncertain economic conditions after the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic growth for the 27 countries of the EU at the start of 2023 is slow (with a forecast of 0.8% in 2023) and inflation remains high (9.2% in 2022). Nevertheless, the EU is expected to avoid recession, as a result of falling gas prices (Rankin, 2023). Since February 2022 the war in Ukraine has been the major defence and security risk for the EU and it has considerably changed the EU's posture and behavior as a peacebuilding actor. This transformation to a more assertive defence role is clearly displayed in policy documents such as in the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence (Council of the EU, 2022) as well as in the considerable financial assistance and military support provided to Ukraine (including by the European Peace Facility). As stated in the EU's Strategic Compass the return of power politics and the return of war in Europe require the EU to "make a quantum leap to become a more assertive security and defence actor" (Council of the EU, 2022: p. 47).

2. Theoretical Framework

The most well-developed theoretical framework for concept analysis has been elaborated within conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) and has been interpreted by Palonen as "a revolutionary move in the understanding and usage of concepts" (Palonen, 1997: p. 64). Koselleck, its leading figure, argues that, with-

out concepts, there can be no society and no political field of action (Koselleck, 2004: p. 74). Conceptual history is concerned with the question of theoretically formulating in advance the temporal specifics of political and social concepts. One of the main research problems in conceptual history is the temporalisation of concepts (Koselleck, 1997). All socio-political concepts have a temporal dimension; it is impossible to understand modern social and political concepts without a theory of historical times. Concepts are conceived and used in a way in which the change of the existing conditions is desirable and necessary. The most typical examples are the "movement concepts" or concepts ending on "ism" which are often prone to ideologisation (Marjanen, 2018). Concepts are both indicators of and factors in political and social life (Koselleck, 1996: p. 61). Koselleck argues that concepts are always preconceptions towards the future (Koselleck, 1997: p. 24).

Conceptual history strongly emphasizes the connection between language and reality. In Koselleck's words, "concepts are like joints linking language and the extra-linguistic world" (Koselleck, 1996: p. 61). Concepts are defined as "collective singular terms" in the context of the relationship between language and social history. Language as a social phenomenon is of primary research interest for conceptual history. This is particularly characteristic for the Cambridge school which explores the intertextuality (or interweaving and cross-referencing) of political texts in developing political lexicons and puts them in their changing intellectual and societal context. Skinner, one of the leading figures of the Cambridge school, argues that the focus of the study of the history of ideas is essentially linguistic; the study of all the facts about the social context of the given text can then take its place as a part of this linguistic enterprise (Skinner, 1969: p. 49). Any statement is inescapably the embodiment of a particular intention, on a particular occasion, addressed to the solution of a particular problem. In Skinner's words, there are in fact no timeless concepts, but only the various different concepts which have gone with various different societies (Skinner, 1969: p. 53).

Conceptual history has its strengths and weaknesses in methodological terms. It is embedded in the historiographic tradition and some scholars consider it under-theorised (Müller, 2014: p. 74). The origins of conceptual history are in the German intellectual and scholarly tradition, making it not fully applicable to other contexts. It should be noted, though, that over the last years there has been a remarkable internationalisation in conceptual history (Ifversen, 2021) which makes it very relevant for the study of entangled and transnational EU policies such as EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Another strength of conceptual history are the well-developed links with linguistics (Ifversen, 2017). The question of referentiality and extra-linguistic reality is of great importance for EU peace concepts as concepts in action.

Conceptual history seeks to give a coherent account of, broadly speaking, the relationship between language and social history (Müller, 2014). It deals with the historical semantics of terms and aims to uncover the changing understandings

of concepts. Conceptual history depends on a theory of historical times as all concepts contain an internal temporal structure. Some of the main features of conceptual history are the importance of the concrete context for understanding concepts and the conception of the essence of politics as conflict. An important research focus in conceptual history is also the ideologization of concepts which is very relevant for the EU context.

With a few exceptions, conceptual history has not been applied to the study of EU policies and politics, so far. A European Conceptual History Project (ECHP) has been carried out to study from a comparative perspective the evolution of concepts at the European level. The project's mission statement clearly expresses commitment to a new European conceptual history and addresses the challenging problem of the diverse meanings of the concept of Europe itself (Steinmetz, Freeden, & Fernández-Sebastián, 2017). The project has explored key concepts such as parliamentarianism, democracy, civilisation, and liberalism. The conceptual history approach has been applied to the study of EU cultural policies and, more specifically to the genealogy of the concept of heritage in the European Commission's policy discourse (Lähdesmäki, Kaasik-Krogerus, & Mäkinen, 2019). Overall, EU studies could benefit from conceptual history which has already been successfully applied to a wide variety of concepts, ranging from political and social concepts—which were at the centre of Koselleck's work—to emotion concepts (Pernau, 2016).

Marjanen addresses the problem of methodological nationalism and the possibilities of writing the history of concepts on a European level (Marjanen, 2017). He argues that transnational conceptual history should be able to illustrate the complicated spatial dynamics in how concepts have been used. It can undermine a strictly national understanding of politics and culture by showing the concrete transnational links that have been in place through the "travels" of concepts, and the connotations that these concepts have been given in other cultures, nations or places. Taking into account the shortcomings of "methodological Europeanness" it could be argued that transnational conceptual history is very relevant for the study of the EU as a transnational entity and for the study of EU policies which are transnational in essence.

The approach or, to put it more precisely, the approaches coming from conceptual history could be helpful for the study of EU peace concepts in two ways. First, conceptual history can be very helpful in the analysis of the spatial-temporal context of EU peace concepts and the transformation of concepts in the EU policy process. Secondly, conceptual history can increase our understanding about the role peace concepts play in the EU policy process. Concepts are not simply contextualised within the EU policy process but also play an active part in this process. Following the logic of conceptual history, without peace concepts, there can be no EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding as a policy practice. Concepts predate any political action in the area of EU peacebuilding and are real factors in the EU policy process. Hence, EU peacebuilding cannot simply be re-

duced to acting (Poopuu, 2020) but its conceptual basis and substance should also be duly acknowledged and examined.

As argued by Heiskanen, concepts are not mere words but miniature theories of the social world: by structuring experiences and expectations, concepts constitute social imaginaries that allow actors to navigate the world around them (Heiskanen, 2021: p. 233). Heiskanen strives to lay the theoretical groundwork for international/interlingual conceptual history. In his view the conceptual architecture of the modern international order provides the socially recognized metalanguage that allow international/interlingual relations to take place on a global scale (Heiskanen, 2021: pp. 233-234). While the theoretical framework is not sufficiently developed this approach could be useful in terms of finding the place of EU peace concepts in international relations, and international peace-building in particular.

Over the recent years the field of international relations has seen a growing interest in theorising concepts and analysing the question how concepts structure the theory and practice of international politics. "Theory concepts" are regarded as key concepts in international relations (Diez, Bode, & Da Costa, 2011). Guzzini points out that theorising concepts is key to understanding the ontology of the modern international order; concepts give the field of international relations its ontology (Guzzini, 2013). Concepts are needed to construct theories; they not only provide the ontological building blocks of a theory, often in the form of basic assumptions, but also the components out of which theorists generate their arguments. He calls for "ontological theorising" as a reflexive engagement with central concepts. Against this backdrop Berenskötter (2017) differentiates three approaches to concept analysis labelled "historical", "scientific" and "political (critical)". The historical approach traces how a particular concept is understood and employed differently throughout history, how it evolved and how we arrive at the meaning(s) we employ today. The scientific approach sees concepts as methodological tools for measuring, explaining and predicting the world. The political (critical) approach highlights the intertwined nature of theoretical and socio-political discourses and explicitly understands concept analysis as an engagement with politics. The political (critical) approach is most relevant for concept analysis in the policy area of EU conflict prevention and peace-building.

EU peace concepts can also be analysed from the perspective of the "ideational turn" in political science. Political science and public policy research have experienced an "ideational turn" over the recent years (Béland & Cox, 2011; Swinkels, 2020). Ideas are considered an important variable shaping public policy-making processes. As noted by Parsons (2016) ideas powerfully shape policies. Carstensen and Schmidt have theorised ideational power and defined it as the capacity of actors to influence other actors' normative and cognitive beliefs through the use of ideational elements (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). They have suggested three different types of ideational power: power through ideas, power

over ideas and power in ideas. The "ideational turn" and the growing literature on ideas is very relevant for the work on EU peace concepts as concepts are traditionally defined in terms of ideas. For example, the Merriam Webster's Dictionary (2022) defines "concept" as "an abstract or generic idea generalised from particular instances". In this context ideational literature could be helpful in examining the ways in which peace concepts matter in the EU policy process.

Globalization has strong impact on peacebuilding and conflict prevention in multiple ways. First, the conceptualization of peacebuilding on the international scene has been the result of the complex interrelations between global and regional international actors. For example, EU thinking on peacebuilding to great extent was shaped by the United Nation's understanding of peacebuilding (Duke & Courtier, 2009: p. 5). International organizations such as the EU, NATO, the UN and the OSCE actively cooperate (and also compete) with each other in peacebuilding missions and operations in conflict-stricken countries. As noted by Richmond the much-contested phenomenon of globalization has had an important impact upon conflict response and the understanding of peacebuilding (Richmond, 2004). Globalization has raised the question of what peace really is, and how it can be attained equitably. The globalization of peace and the peacebuilding consensus remain highly problematic in conflict zones as they require a clerarer understanding of what kind of "peace" is envisaged by the many peacebuilding actors.

3. A Typology of EU Peace Concepts

The policy area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding abounds with concepts. This remarkable profusion of peace concepts is closely connected with the active developments in the Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) which was established in 1999 and to great extent forms the political framework of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding. As noted by Fiott, there is nothing comparable in the history of EU security and defence to the hyperactivity that has been observed in this domain since 2016 (Fiott, 2020: p. 3). After 20 years of the CSDP there is a growing number of concepts developed and implemented—in many cases with mixed results—in this "high politics" area. In addition, peace concepts are also developed in other related EU policy areas such as development and humanitarian aid.

The multitude of concepts in the area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding could be structured under a typology with four main types of concepts: strategic, mission (operational), bureaucratic (technocratic) and military. The typology is derived from the EU policy practice. The different types are differentiated by the aim, scope, hierarchical level, content and output of the concepts in the EU socio-political and institutional context. The article will analyse each type of EU peace concepts with a characteristic example to showcase the central components of these specific policy constructs. To be practically feasible within a limited space, the concept analysis is restricted to one example for each concept

type. The typology is developed to bring order and reduce complexity in the field of EU peace concepts which is beneficial to the scholarship and policy-making alike. The rationale behind the typology is that in order to understand EU peace concepts we must first classify them.

3.1. Strategic Concepts

Strategic-level concepts contain political assessments, objectives and guidance. These are typically outlined in strategic policy documents or legal acts such as the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy (hereafter EUGS) or the Lisbon Treaty. Characteristic examples of strategic concepts in EU peace-building are resilience and strategic autonomy (set out in the EUGS), crisis management, stabilisation, liberal peace, and post-liberal peace. It should be noted that sometimes approaches could be semantically converted into concepts as is the case with the integrated approach which is interpreted as "integrity" (Tardy, 2017). Some of the concepts such as liberal peace, resilience, sovereignty or common strategic culture could be considered metapolitical in nature as they are the subjects of theoretical or philosophical political science. In some of these cases, most notably with regard to resilience and liberal peace the term "paradigm" is equally justified.

Two sub-types of strategic concepts in the area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding could be differentiated—official EU concepts and academic concepts. Official concepts are developed and adopted by EU institutions and Member States. In a sense they represent the mainstream EU concepts. The academic strategic concepts are research-based concepts which are usually developed under EU research projects. The paper will analyse resilience (as an example of an official EU strategic concept) and "conflict sensitivity" (as an example of an academic strategic concept).

Resilience is listed among the five key strategic priorities of EU external action in the EU Global Strategy (European Union, 2016: pp. 23-32). It is defined as a broad concept, encompassing all individuals and the whole of society. The ideal of a resilient state and resilient society is proclaimed. The EU declares its will to promote the resilience of states and societies to the east stretching to Central Asia, and south down to Central Africa. The EU Global Strategy provides an academically credible definition of resilience—"the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises." The concept of resilience has been interpreted by Juncos as the new EU foreign policy paradigm (Juncos, 2017). Resilience has been interpreted even broader in terms of ideology in the context of international statebuilding (Chandler, 2013). The problem of the definition of resilience has already been widely discussed and the scholarly consensus is that we should embrace the conceptual vagueness and malleability of resilience (Humbert & Joseph, 2019). It should be noted that the geopolitical and defence implications of the resilience concept are not specified in the EU Global Strategy. Another problematic aspect is how the EU's resi-

lience concept can actually be converted into resilience politics in conflict-stricken countries.

A good example of an EU academic strategic concept is conflict sensitivity. The concept which originates from development and humanitarian assistance discourses has been applied to the EU under the Horizon 2020 research project EUNPACK (2019). In the spirit of the current "turn to the local" and in an attempt to fill in the implementation-perception gap the project elaborates conflict sensitivity as a novel concept pretending to overcome the shortcomings of current EU policies (Rieker & Blockmans, 2019). In the EU context conflict sensitivity is understood as the ability to recognise the complexity and multi-layeredness of conflicts as well as that different groups in a conflict have different perceptions on the root causes of the conflict.

One of the practical shortcomings of conflict sensitivity is that the "romantic charm of the local" might not be appealing to many of those working in the competent EU institutions. It is not fully clear how conflict sensitivity could be interpreted by policy-makers and to what extent it would be implemented on the ground. The willingness of the EU staff to apply a conflict-sensitive approach to a variety of local groups and marginalised communities cannot be taken for granted. Moreover, conflict sensitivity has certain ambiguities. It is embedded in the over-theorised framework of three generations of approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Richmond, 2002)—a framework which does not fit the humble empirical reality of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The analysis shows that the central component of strategic concepts in the area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding is the concept's ideal. In the case of resilience this is the ideal of resilient state and society. In the case of conflict sensitivity, the ideal is imagined as a more conflict sensitive EU crisis response mechanism. Traditionally, strategic concepts claim for novelty. This is achieved either by coining a new term (phrase) or by opposing the new concept to an old one in a dialectical process.

Strategic concepts are academically credible in terms of definitions but they tend to become unstable and volatile when it comes to practical implementation. As noted in a research report, the multiple usage of the same term presents a serious policy challenge that should be addressed by way of greater conceptual clarity—ensuring that all actors attach the same meaning to these terms (Juncos et al., 2018: p. 10). Concepts are generally perceived as social constructs which tend to be averse to practical implementation. In some respects, they look delicate and otherworldly. In most cases (resilience, strategic autonomy) concrete policies coming from strategic concepts are not clearly defined. In this sense EU strategic concepts—even the academic ones—cannot be considered as fully developed concepts in scientific terms. They bear resemblance to the foreign policy pre-theories in Rosenau's classical work (Rosenau, 1966).

Many of the EU's strategic peace concepts belong to the same "concept constellation" as they are theoretically embedded in critical constructivism as one of

the major schools of thought in international relations (Wendt, 1999). Indeed, this postpositivist theory has strong positions in the mainstream political discourse and scholarship on EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Other schools of thought—most notably Realism—are not adequately developed at the European level. Moreover, most of the strategic concepts—both official and academic—originate from Western Europe, while Eastern Europe is underrepresented in the concept development process with only few individual researchers or experts involved.

3.2. Mission and Operational Concepts

Mission and operational concepts govern the planning and conduct of concrete peacebuilding missions and operations. After 20 years of the CSDP the EU has conducted over 35 missions and operations using civilian and military instruments. It should be noted that in EU terminology civilian CSDP interventions are called "missions", regardless of whether they have an executive mandate or a non-executive mandate. Military interventions can either have an executive mandate in which case they are referred to as "operations" or non-executive mandate in which case they are called "missions". Every EU mission and operation has a mission/operational concept which is framed by the respective Council Decision and the main conceptual documents, the Concept of Operations (CONOPS), the Operational Plan (OPLAN) and the Crisis Management Concept (CMC). The CONOPS is a concise statement of how the operation commander intends to fulfil his mission, whereas the OPLAN is the highly detailed script of the operation in its entirety. Mission and operational concepts follow the same EU policy and administrative procedures and are framed by the same policy and operational documents (Kermabon, 2014). The CONOPS, the OPLAN and the CMC frame the mission (and operational) concept as a distinct type of concept in the area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

A clear example of an EU mission concept is the concept of the EULEX Kosovo mission, the largest and the longest running EU civilian CSDP mission. EULEX Kosovo has been studied extensively (Spernbauer, 2010; Zupančič & Pejič, 2018; Osland & Peter, 2019). EULEX Kosovo is considered a unique and unprecedented EU mission due to its unparalleled staff size (about 2500 staff members in 2009) and its initially executive mandate with three different components (justice, police and customs). Conceptually, EULEX Kosovo is seen in the context of other police missions in the Western Balkans, most notably the EU police missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Macedonia (Spernbauer, 2010). Within its current mandate the mission undertakes monitoring activities and has limited executive functions. To great extent the international setting and the specific needs of the situation on the ground have shaped the mandate of the EULEX Kosovo mission which took over executive justice functions from UNMIK (UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo). Moreover, the mission's mandate was constantly evolving to integrate new challenges. As argued by Zupančič and

Pejič the executive mandate of EULEX is in line with the EU's normative character; the Union presents itself as "a force for good", using the instruments of peacebuilding as a way of building its image as a normative actor (Zupančič & Pejič, 2018: p. 83). The concept of "normative power Europe" was developed by Manners who argues that EU principles or norms (the centrality of peace; liberty; democracy; supranational rule of law; and human rights) differentiate the Union from other political entities and incline it to act in a normative way (Manners, 2002). Research on the perceptions of local residents in the post-conflict Kosovo society, however, shows that the ability of the EU to project normative power is questioned on the ground. EULEX Kosovo has been subject to criticism with regard to deficiencies in the planning and implementation of the mission's mandate (Zupančič & Pejič, 2018: pp. 69-70). The negative perception of the mission is explained by the double proximity paradox in peacebuilding in the context of the limits of the "normative power Europe" concept (Osland & Peter, 2019: p. 493).

EULEX Kosovo lacks a clear end-state and the mission's conceptual and operational documents (CONOPS and OPLAN) do not include an exit strategy. As noted in an audit report, the EULEX Concept of Operations (CONOPS) and Operation Plan (OPLAN) do not contain clear benchmarks and objectively verifiable indicators to assess progress in meeting the mission's objectives (European Court of Auditors, 2012: p. 29).

The example of EULEX Kosovo shows that mandates are pivotal in mission/operational concepts. The mandates actually represent the EU's intentions; and the deficits in the mission concepts reveal the gaps between mandates (intentions) and implementation on the ground. Mission and operation mandates are usually over-ambitious which has attracted strong criticism and calls for a more realist approach (Bøås & Rieker, 2019: p. 13).

3.3. Bureaucratic Concepts

Another distinct type of concepts in the area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding are the bureaucratic (or technocratic) concepts. This type of concepts could range from the establishment of new politico-bureaucratic bodies such as the European External Action Service (EEAS) to new funding mechanisms such as the European Peace Facility (EPF) and the European Defence Fund (EDF). The bureaucratic concepts have clear political and administrative nature. They follow the established bureaucratic and technocratic path of EU institutions. Some of the most important bureaucratic concepts which were actually implemented by the EU were the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) in 2011 and of the Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence (PESCO) in 2017.

A clear example of a bureaucratic (technocratic) concept is the Civilian CSDP Compact which was established following conclusions adopted by Member States at the Foreign Affairs Council in November 2018. Through the Compact

the Council and the Member States commit to a more capable, effective, flexible, responsive and joined up civilian CSDP (Council of the European Union, 2018). The Civilian CSDP Compact contains guidelines for the strengthening of the EU's capacity to deploy civilian crisis management missions. The Civilian CSDP Compact has been interpreted as raising the level of ambition in civilian CSDP and strengthening the role of the EU as a civilian or soft power (Faleg, 2020: p. 147). In practice, however, the Compact has still no clear impact on the civilian CSDP capabilities in terms of the stated ambition to be able to launch a new mission of up to 200 personnel in any area of operation within 30 days after a Council decision. The Civilian CSDP Compact still has predominantly bureaucratic implications. The Compact is implemented through an annual review process with two main objectives—to take stock of implementation and to identify capability shortfalls.

As shown by the example of the Civilian CSDP Compact the central component of bureaucratic (technocratic) concepts is a policy initiative at the EU level. Bureaucratic concepts are implemented in the EU policy process and they have predominantly administrative and bureaucratic implications. Martins and Mawdsley have introduced the perspective of sociotechnical imaginaries to the related policy area of EU defence (Martins & Mawdsley, 2021). They engage with literature on sociotechnical imaginaries to analyse how policy initiatives such as the European Defence Fund are shaped by collectively held pan-European visions of desired futures. Bureaucratic (technocratic) concepts in the area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding could also be interpreted from the perspective of sociotechnical imaginaries as they are embedded in a particular pan-European vision of the future. In the case of the Civilian CSDP Compact this is the vision of the EU as a "civilian actor"—a vision which has a strong and viable tradition starting from the 1970s (Duchêne, 1972). From this perspective, EU bureaucratic concepts could be viewed as the contemporary materialisation of the sociotechnical imaginary. The establishment of new concept-driven politico-bureaucratic bodies at the EU level could be interpreted as the institutional stabilisation of the sociotechnical imaginary.

3.4. Military Concepts

Another distinct type of EU concepts are military concepts. Military concepts are obviously not proper "peace concepts", they are nevertheless relevant for the policy area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding inasmuch as they are employed in EU military missions or operations, having a peacebuilding mandate. Although the EU is not known for its military concepts it has actually developed a huge number of this specific type. The EU Military Conceptual Development Implementation Programme 2020-2021 contains a list of sixty-seven EU military concepts (European External Action Service, 2020). Most of the EU military concepts are drafted by the EU Military Staff (EUMS) and adopted by the EU Military Committee (EUMC). EU military concepts are grouped in three sub-types:

military framework concepts, military operations concepts, and military enabling concepts. It should be noted that EU military concepts have attracted very little scholarly attention.

A clear example of an EU military concept which has relevance for peacebuilding operations is the concept on protection of civilians in EU-led military operations (Council of the European Union, 2015). The concept belongs to the sub-type of military enabling concepts. The concept's aim is to provide guidelines for greater integration of the protection of civilians in all phases of EU-led military operations, including planning, pre-deployment training, conduct of operations, and lessons learned. The concept is well-elaborated and detailed as it takes into account important aspects such as conflict sensitivity and strategic-level benchmarks. In this specific concept the central component are the guidelines for greater integration of the protection of civilians. Some EU military concepts are developed at the tactical level, for example the EU concept for logistic support for EU-led military operations and missions. Ranging from disaster response to hybrid threats and CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) risks, military concepts clearly demonstrate the great diversity of concepts in the EU policy area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

4. Concept Analysis

Concepts are the "building blocks" of the EU policy process in the area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Both at the strategic and operational level the policy process is hardly possible without concepts, strategic and operational (or mission) respectively. Bureaucratic concepts are essential for every policy initiative in this area and military concepts are indispensable for EU military missions or operations. Studies on the CSDP policy process are traditionally carried out from two different perspectives—"intergovernmental" and "institutional" (see, for example Chelotti, 2016). Proponents of intergovernmentalism understand the CSDP policy process as an intergovernmental arena, while the institutionalist approach interprets it as a jointly defined enterprise, influenced by common identities and a strong cooperative spirit. Howorth challenges this distinction and argues that in the field of CSDP decision-making the emerging pattern begins to look more like "intergovernmental supranationalism" (Howorth, 2011). Peace concepts play an essential role in this respect as they provide material for the policy process, stimulating consensus-seeking. Negotiating conceptual documents and conceptual exchange form significant parts of policy-making in this area. Therefore, the policy process in the area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding could be interpreted as a concept development process, whereas the EU acts as a "concept developer" and "concept owner".

Concepts could also be interpreted as shared experience between EU Member States and EU institutions in the area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding. A great amount of scholarship has been dedicated to the problem of consensus in the EU's CSDP and peacebuilding. Research on a key EU body in this

policy area, the Political and Security Committee (PSC) suggests that, above all, the Committee seeks to achieve consensus (Juncos & Reynolds, 2007; Howorth, 2014). The decision-making process in the PSC most often ends up with a broad consensus or even unanimity. Very often this is a consensus on collective documents framing concepts in the area of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding, especially operational or mission concepts. The shared experience of peace concepts is also revealed in the process of adopting EU strategic concepts. Despite some initial differences the EU was able to reach consensus on the EU Global Strategy which contains the most important EU strategic concepts such as resilience, the integrated approach (integrity) and strategic autonomy. The specific policy process and the shared experience of developing the EUGS are described with much detail by Tocci (2017).

Concepts play an important integration role for the EU in the area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This is an area which for many scholars has still predominantly intergovernmental character, especially within the frameworks of the CSDP (Smith, 2017: p. 14). In Howorth's words, this is an area in which both public perceptions and scholarly theory would suggest real limits to European integration (Howorth, 2011: p. 5). In this context, peace concepts play an important role for pushing the frontiers of European integration. EU peace concepts are essential for enhancing the EU integration process in this policy area by providing EU institutions and Member States with common policy ideas and frameworks. And, even more importantly, peace concepts stimulate peace-oriented mode of thinking within the EU, which directly supports European integration as a peace project.

Concepts potentially could add an important external dimension to EU peacebuilding. Some studies on the relations between the EU and other organisations in peacebuilding have focussed on resources and resource dependencies (Petrov et al., 2019). Resources for peacebuilding are usually understood in terms of financial resources, personnel and equipment. Peace concepts, however, could also be considered as a specific kind of peacebuilding resource at the EU level. There is a growing demand for peace concepts on the international market of ideas. All international peacebuilding actors, such as the United Nations, the EU, NATO and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are facing challenges and frustration in bringing sustainable peace in conflict-stricken countries around the world. The great practical importance of concepts has been recognised by NATO Military Committee, which has launched the NATO Concept Development & Experimentation (CD&E) process (NATO Allied Command Transformation, 2021). In line with the organisation's mandate, concept development in NATO is focussed on military concepts. As shown in the concept analysis the EU is able to produce and deploy a great variety of peace concepts. In practice, the EU's specialisation as a "civilian" and "normative power" is exactly in peace concepts. Peace concepts could be regarded as one of the unique "brands" of the European Union on the international market of

peacebuilding ideas. This pragmatic approach to concepts fully resonates with Galtung's argument that EU influences through "the power of ideas" (Galtung, 1973: pp. 33-36) and with the more recent "ideational turn" in political science.

5. Conclusion

The European Union is an active producer and user of concepts in the area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The "universe" of EU peace concepts could be structured under a typology with four distinct types: strategic, mission (operational), bureaucratic (technocratic) and military concepts. The different types of concepts have different central components which poses a major difficulty in terms of deriving a common definition of concepts in this policy area. The author's understanding of concepts is informed by the theoretical approaches developed within conceptual history and the "ideational turn" in public policy research. These two perspectives help increase our understanding of how EU peace concepts can be defined and what their role in the EU policy process is. More specifically, the conceptual history approach is very relevant for the study of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding as it helps explain the fundamental role of peace concepts as both indicators and factors in the EU policy process.

Concepts are the "building blocks" of the EU policy process in the area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Concepts are the essential policy material at all levels, including the strategic, politico-bureaucratic, operational, mission, and tactical levels. Therefore, the policy process in this area could be interpreted as a concept development process, whereas the EU acts as a "concept developer" and "concept owner". Internally, concept development brings shared experience between Member States and EU institutions. Concepts play an important integration role for the EU in this predominantly intergovernmental policy area by pushing the frontiers of European integration. Externally, peace concepts could be regarded as a specific kind of resource and one of the unique "brands" of the European Union on the international market of peacebuilding ideas in times of constant conceptual change.

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