



Europe's External Action and the Dual Challenges  
of Limited Statehood and Contested Orders

## Kick-off Conference Report

'Europe's External Action and the Dual Challenges of Limited Statehood and Contested Orders' (EU-LISTCO)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

EU-LISTCO's kick-off conference entitled 'Europe's External Action and the Dual Challenges of Limited Statehood and Contested Orders' took place in Berlin from April 25 to April 27, 2018. The conference officially started the three-year research project and aimed at three goals: firstly, it provided an opportunity to EU-LISTCO's consortium partners to engage in discussion on the project's research questions, agenda, conceptual and theoretical framework, the state of the art of the literature and planned empirical research. Secondly, the conference brought together practitioners involved with the project in the framework of Work Package (WP) 6 and therefore represents the first step in making EU-LISTCO's research as policy-relevant as possible. Thirdly, through a public roundtable on autocracy and instability in the EU's neighbourhood hosted by the European Commission's representation in Germany, the conference made a first step to ensure wide public dissemination of its research.

The conference took place at Seminaris Campus Hotel in Berlin-Dahlem. It was organized around the WPs of the project, and individual breakout sessions provided an opportunity for the consortium partners involved in each WP to discuss in detail the division of labour within each WP.

This conference report summarizes the major discussions, findings, and insights generated at the conference. The following section addresses the WPs, while the last section recapitulates the public roundtable.

## 2. WORK PACKAGE SESSIONS

### 2.1 WP1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Above all, WP1 aims at the elaboration of an integrated conceptual framework that guides the empirical research within the project, including the definition of key concepts and the development of an analytical framework. Throughout the course of the project, WP1 formulates hypotheses on the conditions under which areas of limited statehood and contested orders (ALS/CO) change from risks to threats for the security of the EU, its member states, and its citizens, and WP1 identifies 'tipping points' accordingly. This framework will be re-evaluated and adapted in the light of empirical results throughout the course of the project.

At the kick-off conference, Thomas Risse and Tanja Börzel (Freie Universität Berlin, FUB), presented the conceptualization of key terms central to the project. (1) *Areas of limited statehood* are conceived of as areas, not states, where the central state authorities lack the capacity to implement decisions/the law and/or the monopoly over the means of violence. (2) *Governance* is understood as institutionalized modes of social coordination to produce collectively binding rules and/or collective goods which can be provided by state actors and non-state actors alike. (3) *Contested orders* describe the incompatibility between two or more competing views about the political, economic, social, and territorial order. Different coping mechanisms range from deliberation and majority decisions on the one hand to co-optation and repression on the other. While these contested orders are risks to the security of the EU, they are not threats per se. (4)



*Tipping points* describe moments where risks turn into threats for the security of the EU, its member states, and its citizens, i.e. where ALS/CO deteriorate into governance breakdown and/or violent conflict. (5) To avoid such a deterioration, the question is how *resilience* can be fostered in ALS/CO. In sum, the two research questions guiding the consortium are: (a) Under which conditions do areas of limited statehood and contested orders deteriorate into governance breakdowns and violent conflict (from risk to threat, tipping points)? (b) How can the willingness and capacity of the EU and its member states be strengthened to foster resilience in areas of limited statehood and contested orders?

Stephen Krasner (Stanford University) discussed this contribution. He confirmed that these conceptualizations are mostly unproblematic and serve the purpose of the project well, and he raised two questions: How ambitious can these efforts at strengthening resilience in ALS/CO be – what is realistic? This question arises especially in light of recent external interventions that have been judged as rather unsuccessful by many observers. Second, can areas of limited statehood develop effective national identities as the basis for majority-based coping mechanisms?

## 2.2 WP2: RISK SCANNING AND FORESIGHT FOR STRATEGIC POLICY DESIGN

WP2 aims at the development of novel qualitative and quantitative methodologies for risk and threat scanning and strategic policy design. The former involves identifying, assessing and monitoring known and novel risks and threats to the EU and its member states from ALS/CO. The latter subsumes developing strategic policy options for the EU and its member states to prevent and respond to these risks and threats through supporting societal resilience in ALS/CO. These methodologies will be improved and further developed throughout the project together with practitioners.

The presentation by Siri Aas Rustad (Peace Research Institute Oslo, PRIO), Johannes Gabriel (Global Public Policy Institute, GPPi), and Philipp Rotmann (GPPi) made clear that WP2 focuses on systematically thinking about uncertain futures within the next two to five years and on action-oriented foresight which provides answers to questions about how to handle such uncertain futures. The WP2's aims include (1) risk scanning, which identifies when risks turn into threats; (2) the assessment of these risks and threats in terms of probability, impact, outliers, and uncertain risks; (3) a further qualification of these risks and threats through categorization; (4) the assessment of cross-impacts; and (5) the identification of tipping point scenarios, potential dynamics, and measurable indicators. WP2's analyses take seriously subnational risk differentiation by distinguishing between state and non-state violence on different levels; at the same time, the scope in terms of which ALS to include remains to be determined. The first half of WP2's research, which focuses on threat identification and qualification, links quantitative research from PRIO with workshops on threat scanning, qualification, and monitoring for strategic foresight. The second half focuses on the implementation of a foresight methodology for strategic policy planning.

Heather Grabbe (Open Society Policy Institute) discussed this contribution. She considered these tools very useful for policy engagements and thinks that they will be appreciated at the EU level.



One challenge may arise due to foreign policy being generally on the decline. As most countries give more priority to internal security, it becomes harder to direct attention towards foreign risks. To increase the relevance of WP2, especially for practitioners, Grabbe suggested that (1) the risks and threats assessed in WP2 should be communicated as concrete, not just as one of a multitude of potential futures; that (2) the research activities within WP2 should start with something that is close to home in terms of political relevance and geography; and that (3) WP2 can make use of the policy planning units of the foreign ministries partnering with the consortium. Finally, it is important to change perspectives and look at greater horizons and time periods, not only at immediate priorities. Likewise, she pointed out that surveys may not be the best method given that surveys are abundant already.

### **2.3 WP3: GLOBAL AND DIFFUSE THREATS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON LIMITED STATEHOOD AND CONTESTED ORDERS**

WP3 analyzes global and diffuse threats and their nexus with risks and threats in ALS/CO in the surroundings of the EU. 'Global threats' cover threats emanating from territories not directly neighbouring the EU, such as Afghanistan/Pakistan, China, Iran, North Korea, and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. 'Diffuse threats' are non-territorial threats, such as climate change, transnational crime and terrorism, or cyber-coercion. WP3 analyses how global and diffuse risks and threats affect ALS/CO neighbouring the EU, and how global and diffuse risks and threats affect European security directly. WP3 identifies global and diffuse factors which can foster resilience and which can be used as entry points for EU policy responses, and it formulates policy-oriented insights on global and diffuse threats.

The presentation by Amichai Magen (Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, IDC) emphasized these contributions of WP3 and further discussed the distinction between the territorially defined global threats and the non-territorially defined diffuse threats, while also hinting at potential grey areas between these two. At the moment, five sources of risks and threats have been identified: (1) hard security issues, such as terrorism; (2) ideological threats, including religion, feeding into CO; (3) biological sustainability and environmental threats; (4) demography (population growth) and economic threats; and (5) disruptive intelligence, such as new technologies and artificial intelligence. However, identifying risks and threats is not sufficient for useful policy application. Existing assets, opportunities, and alliances need to be considered as well. In an upcoming workshop in June, WP3 and WP2 will discuss how to combine qualitative and quantitative methods in foresight and develop pilot cases.

Wolfgang Ischinger (Munich Security Conference) discussed this presentation. In his initial remark, he noted that the state's monopoly of violence is eroding globally as citizens can inflict major damage on infrastructure through cybercrime and as non-state actors become more powerful. He called attention to the lack of clarity in the term 'governance breakdown', which is central to EU-LISTCO: How do we know governance breakdown when we see it? Similarly, what (European) society considers a threat and which issues should be high on the security agenda remains unclear. Finally, Ischinger observed that policy responses have to be different for global and diffuse threats on the one hand and regionally proximate threats on the other while calling attention to the generally limited options for foresight and early warning in foreign policy.



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## **2.4 WP4: RISK AND THREATS IN AREAS OF LIMITED STATEHOOD AND CONTESTED ORDERS IN THE EU'S EASTERN AND SOUTHERN SURROUNDINGS**

WP4 aims at the analysis of tipping points where ALS/CO deteriorate into governance breakdown and violent conflict and where risks turn into threats for the EU and its member states. It also investigates the prospects and conditions for societal and political resilience in the EU's Eastern and Southern neighbourhood. Thereby, WP4 contributes to the refinement of the conceptual framework, the identification of different risks and threats to the security of the EU, and the analysis of the conditions for governance breakdown and violent conflict as well as conditions for fostering resilience.

The presentation by Federica Bicchi (European University Institute, EUI) started with a discussion of the state's administrative capacity and its monopoly of force which were linked to two basic ideas, namely penetration and fragmentation. 'Penetration' alludes to the continuous confrontation of political systems with another, external political system and the ongoing struggle for regional autonomy resulting in reduced distance between the local and national level. 'Fragmentation' refers to the internal structure of newly created post-independence states, such as a weak army paired with a strong security apparatus, which are typically prone to regime capture. In this context, WP4 seeks to identify which kinds of vicious/virtuous circles in terms of risks/threats and resilience can be imagined. The presentation also included a brief comparison of the Eastern and the Southern neighbourhood of the EU: In the East, resilience means primarily resilience vis-à-vis Russia. The centrally governed system in the East, historically speaking, has linked Russia and its neighbours for centuries; ALS emerged with the end of the Cold War. The situation is different in the South, where ALS have been much more common throughout history.

Vladislav Inozemtsev (Moscow Higher School of Economics) commented on WP4. He highlighted the significant differences between North African states and Eastern Europe and urged for a differentiated approach to these regions. While the EU's Southern neighbourhood is characterized by internal conflict, conflicts in the Eastern neighbourhood typically involve Russia (e.g. Georgia, Ukraine). In this context, the EU's actions and their consequences should be analyzed, such as its actions and reactions during the Ukraine conflict. Generally, he criticized that the Russian perspective is underrepresented in favour of overrepresented Western perspectives.

## **2.5 WP5: ANALYSIS OF THE PREPAREDNESS OF THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES**

WP5 examines the willingness and preparedness of the EU and selected member states (France, Germany, and Italy) in dealing with security threats emanating from ALS/CO in their neighbourhood as well as from global and diffuse threats. This includes the conceptualization of their willingness and preparedness and the evaluation of the institutional capacities, instruments and strategies (1) to anticipate, respond to, and prevent crises deriving from ALS/CO and from global and diffuse risks and threats, (2) to foster resilience, and (3) to promote policy coherence when acting in ALS/CO. Finally, WP5 seeks to analyse the extent to which order contestations inside the EU affect the external action capacity of the EU and its member states.



The presentation of Pol Morillas (Center for International Information and Documentation in Barcelona, CIDOB) explained in more detail the contribution of WP5 to EU-LISTCO. The preparedness, he emphasized, included both willingness and capacity, and will be analysed using benchmark categories. Regarding the order contestation within the EU, WP5 will focus on the question of how the rise of populist parties affects the preparedness of the EU and its member states to act.

Meltem Müftüler-Baç (Savanaci University) discussed this contribution. She noted that generally, the scope of WP5 seems rather broad and that narrowing the agenda down could benefit its output. Furthermore, she called attention to the conceptual confusion and the difference between capability and capacity, which should be sorted out in WP5. She encouraged WP5 to also problematize the preparedness of the EU and its member states next to its conceptualization and assessment. Finally, it is crucial in WP5 to differentiate between the EU and its member states and to assess potential gaps and differences in their preparedness.

## **2.6 WP6: POLICY RESPONSES – EU AND MEMBER STATES**

WP6 formulates and probes the policy responses of the EU and its member states to anticipate, prevent, and respond to risks and threats emanating from ALS/CO in the East and the South of the EU, to help foster political and societal resilience, and to respond to global and diffuse threats. Therefore, WP6 maps and analyses the risk/threat conceptualisations as well as the corresponding processes of policy response operationalisation and implementation in the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the foreign ministries of France, Germany, and Italy. This is done in collaboration with representatives from these institutions while WP6 seeks to establish innovative interactive working methods between research and practice. On this basis, WP6 will produce policy proposals.

The presentation given by Riccardo Alcaro and Daniela Huber (Istituto Affari Internazionali, IAI) highlighted that there is limited literature on and experience with knowledge exchange between theory and practice, but that it is absolutely necessary for scholars and practitioners. The idea is to familiarize practitioners and scientists with each other's knowledge. WP6 is guided by two questions: (1) How are risks and threats framed in the four diplomatic institutions in terms of substance and processes? (2) How can the process of knowledge exchange between the academic and diplomatic communities actually work? In the first phase of the project, two EU-LISTCO scholars in residence at the four institutions will help familiarize practitioners with academics. In the second phase, reports and workshops aim at further knowledge exchange, with the addition of representatives from Poland and Spain.

Stephen Krasner (Stanford University) discussed this presentation. He observed that incentives work very differently in policy and in academia and that generally speaking, it is hard to get open ears as an academic in policy-circles and to have impact. One option is that three streams have to come together for academic ideas to have policy impact: the generating stream, the policy formulation stream, and the politics stream. His comments ended with the plea to be very attentive to what policy makers actually need in a particular moment and who the target audience of EU-LISTCO results is.



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## 2.7 WP7: KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

WP7 communicates the research of the consortium to European and international policymakers, academic and think-tank communities, civil society, media, and the general public. This dissemination embeds project research and the consortium in European and global research and civil society networks. WP7 aims to raise public awareness, both within the EU and in the EU's surroundings, about the EU's and EU member states' preparedness and willingness in preventing and managing threats emanating from ALS/CO.

The presentation by Judy Dempsey (Carnegie Europe Foundation) made the approach of this WP7 clear. WP7 follows a multi-platform communication strategy involving traditional media, social media marketing, and direct communication with key audiences. It combines targeted dissemination, easily accessible information, and activity through various social media and online platforms. Digital communication activities involve the development of EU-LISTCO's visual identity, the creation of a project website to be launched shortly after the kick-off conference, social media activities on Facebook and Twitter, and a biannual online newsletter. EU-LISTCO publications involve a series of blog pieces, both Working and Policy Papers Series, academic articles, and a final publication. The project will host various events, including conferences in Berlin, Ankara, Brussels, and Washington D.C., as well as regional forums to engage the policy-making community in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood of the EU, respectively.

## 2.8 WP8: COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT

WP8 ensures that the outcomes of EU-LISTCO are of high quality and that all agreed milestones and deliverables are met. More concretely, WP8 seeks to ensure efficient administrative and financial management, to coordinate academic activities within the project, and to provide organisational support to the partners. It is also the partner responsible for communicating with the European Commission.

The presentation given by Karoline Eickhoff and Eric Stollenwerk (FUB) recapitulated basic administrative procedures within the project as detailed in the EU-LISTCO Quality Management Guidelines. This especially pertains to the timely preparation of deliverables and a standardized review process for the all Working Paper and Policy Paper outputs.

## 3. PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: 'RING OF FRIENDS OR RING OF FIRE? INSTABILITY AND AUTOCRACY IN THE EU'S NEIGHBOURHOOD

On the afternoon of April 26, a public roundtable took place at the European Commission's representation in Germany. The event entitled 'Ring of friends of Ring of Fire? Instability and Autocracy in the EU's Neighbourhood' addressed the current challenges of contested orders and limited statehood in the EU's immediate neighbourhood and the EU's preparedness to deal with them.



Five experts were present on the panel: Ekkehard Brose (Special Envoy for Crisis Prevention and Stabilization, German Foreign Office), Hervé Delphin (Head of the Strategic Planning Division, EEAS), Wolfgang Ischinger (Chair of the Munich Security Conference), and Natalie Tocci (Director of the IAI, Rome, and Special Advisor to the High Representative Federica Mogherini). The discussion was moderated by Tanja A. Börzel (EU-LISTCO's coordinator and Director of the Center for European Integration at FUB). More than 80 participants attended the round table, including representatives from academia, civil society, and politics.

The discussion started with the following question to the panellists: Which are the three most pertinent challenges the EU and its member states are facing at the moment in their neighbourhood? Ekkehard Brose commented that these challenges are (1) the new power centres (Iran, Turkey, Russia, China) in the EU's surroundings, (2) the fragility of many states in the MENA region accompanied with increased violence and growing flows of migration, and (3) the decreasing trust in established elites in Europe and a weakening support for the liberal post-war order. Hervé Delphin considered the most pressing challenges to be (1) the deteriorating development in the MENA region in terms of HDI which inevitably leads to informal economies and migration, (2) the increasing tension between Russia and the United States, and (3) conflicts in the Middle East involving Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. Wolfgang Ischinger named hybrid threats and crises in the Middle East, such as the conflict in Syria, the primary challenge for Europe, much like Ekkehard Brose and Hervé Delphin, but also noted that two internal affairs are impeding the EU's responsiveness to foreign policy challenges: the low visibility of the EU's foreign policy activities to its citizens and the use of veto power in the Council. Natalie Tocci remarked that the hollowing out of the state in the Eastern, but mostly the Southern neighbourhood – breakdowns into violent conflict, problems associated with changing demography, the dependence of the rental state on oil – is the largest challenge in the EU's surrounding, as are contested orders and proxy wars in the region. Finally, the EU itself and the growing fascination with the 'strong man' has become a problem for the EU's foreign policy capacity.

With audience involvement, the panellists discussed how well the EU and the member states are prepared to face these challenges. The panellists agreed that the EU is part of the answer to these challenges. In particular, Nathalie Tocci commented that the EU member states need to internalize that their individual powers are rather limited, and the EU institutions need to be recognized as the more promising avenue to solving conflicts in the EU's neighbourhood. It has also been noted that the EU needs to prioritize in its foreign policy agenda and develop clearly formulated interests. Many agreed that the EU has a strong security responsibility in its surroundings. The question was raised how short-term military solutions can be discouraged in favour of long-term approaches to security in the EU's neighbourhood. At the same time, a participant from the audience voiced the concern that the public needs to be informed that military force may be required in some cases, and the EU needs to step up its security engagements accordingly. It remains rather unclear who should communicate this message.