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**EU CRISIS MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS:
EARLY LESSONS, THOUGHTS ON IMPROVEMENT**

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Since the establishment of the European security and defence policy (ESDP), the EU has launched 21 security missions under the blue flag with yellow stars. All of them fall under the rubric of crisis management. In fact, given that the EU has not had a collective defence responsibility,¹ crisis management – from a few civilian observers in Georgia to 3,700 soldiers in conflict-ridden Chad – is the European Union’s niche capability; its contribution to European and global stability.

Not only has the EU focused its operations on crisis-management, it also claims to be uniquely suited for this demanding task. In a number of ways, the toughest crisis management missions like post-conflict nation-building, are more complex and tricky than the tasks of collective defence, for which Western militaries have traditionally trained. But the EU prides itself at being a ‘comprehensive power’ combining military might with development money and the politically powerful prospect of EU membership. This combination does, in theory, give Brussels a very effective set of sticks and carrots for crisis management.

This paper will examine the European Union’s performance in crisis management missions. It concludes that much additional work is needed to truly integrate the various civilian and military aspects of the European Union’s work. And it argues that in addition to becoming truly ‘comprehensive’ in its approach, the EU must also increase its military capability.

Building a truly comprehensive approach to crisis-management

EU member-states grant considerable foreign policy and economic powers to the European Commission in Brussels. But military power and the hardest diplomatic tasks remain firmly in the hands of national capitals. They are loosely co-ordinated through the Council of the European Union. The Council is separate from the Commission and the two often co-operate poorly. It is not unusual for both the Council and the Commission to have separate missions in a crisis area, even though they both represent the same 27 EU member-states.

Let us take Bosnia as an example; at its peak the EU’s largest crisis-management operation.² The European Commission has distributed nearly €1.9 billion of EU support through its delegation in Sarajevo.³ The Commission trains administrators, rebuilds Bosnia’s infrastructure, and finances the return of refugees – all indispensable parts of post-

¹ The Lisbon treaty contains a ‘mutual defence’ commitment, which obligates the member-states to provide aid and assistance in case one of them is attacked. But the clause contains substantial qualifications and provisos.

² When it took over from NATO, the EU commanded some 6,500 troops in Bosnia. The number has since dropped to 2,500.

³ EU Newsletter, European Commission Delegation to Bosnia, No. 1, 2008.

conflict nation-building. And it is responsible for negotiating the terms of Bosnia's pre-accession agreement with the EU – one of Europe's most powerful tools in shaping Bosnia's post-war politics.

Yet the Commission works in separation from the EU's top diplomat in the country, the EU special representative (EUSR). The EUSR (in case of Bosnia also acting as the international community's 'high representative') does all of the heavy-duty diplomatic lifting. He is responsible for winning the support of all Bosnian political actors for the pre-accession agreement, and for reforms that Bosnia must undergo in order to join the EU. But he reports to the Council, and has only limited say in the content of the Commission-negotiated pre-accession agreement between Bosnia and the EU, and practically no say in how the Commission distributes its development and other funds in Bosnia.

This arrangement makes little sense – in an ideal world, clearly the person responsible for the hard task of creating a truly national government in Bosnia would also control the 'carrots' like development aid and association agreement with the EU. But that is simply not the case – the diplomatic and development strands of EU's Bosnia mission are separated.⁴

The EU is already addressing the problem by merging its Commission and Council operations in some crisis areas. Macedonia is the first such example – there, the European Union's Special Representative also serves as the Head of the Delegation of the European Commission. (Bosnia is to switch to a similar arrangement later this year or next.) The EU is thus essentially bypassing, rather than solving, the bureaucratic divide in Brussels. Unified missions in the theatre of operations allow for closer inter-agency co-operation even without breaking down the bureaucratic divides in Brussels.

This approach has worked well for the United States. The US has opted to create strong local envoys like Paul Bremmer in Iraq. They, in turn, are asked to run the offices of the various US government's agencies in the theatre in as unified a manner as possible.

But this approach only works if the person in charge of the crisis management operation on the ground has a truly strong role, capable of shaping budgetary and policy decisions of the agencies back in the national capital. That is possible in the United States, where a strong tradition of decentralised power makes top national decision-makers more comfortable with outsourcing decisions to US envoys in crisis areas.⁵ But there are limits to how much decision-making power the EU will ever delegate from Brussels to its envoys in charge of crisis-management missions. The EU is a collective body of 27 member-states. It works because the national capitals have created an elaborate decision-making structure in Brussels (Council, Commission, Parliament), which satisfies the member-states' desire to exercise influence over collective EU decisions. Any shift of power away from the delicate web of Brussels institutions to EU envoys in crisis areas upsets this balance of power.

So the EU needs to address the lack of co-ordination between the various civilian and military agencies at the source, in the Brussels institutions. In fact, it already is. The Lisbon treaty creates the post of an EU high-representative for foreign affairs and security policy.

⁴ The European Commission's delegation in Bosnia and the EUSR have formed lower-level working groups to co-ordinate their approaches but people familiar with the working groups' daily work say that co-operation is mostly consultative and formal.

⁵ The author would like to thank Kori Schake for her thoughts, which have helped shape this section.

Unlike the current high-representative, who is based at (and heads) the secretariat of the Council of the European Union, the new high representative will also serve as vice-president of the European Commission, and take over the tasks previously carried out by the Commissioner for external relations. He will thus merge the considerable diplomatic clout of the current high representative with the financial resources of the Commission's external relations budget (and some control over the development and enlargement budgets as well). And the Lisbon treaty also creates an EU diplomatic service, which will do away with the habit of fielding duplicate Council and Commission missions in crisis areas.⁶

These reforms will help to streamline the co-operation between the EU's various civilian agencies. They are repairing what is, in effect, a failure to forge a civil-civil cooperation in crisis management missions, rather than the more often discussed civil-military co-operation.

But co-operation among the EU's civilian and military arms remains equally difficult. The EU military and civilian planners may share the same building but, as the chief of the EU military staff, Lt Gen David Leakey, put it, they remain "stuck in the mindset of separate and compartmented civilian and military operations."⁷ If the EU is to become a truly 'comprehensive power' – and, more importantly, if it is to become more effective in crisis management – these institutional and cultural barriers must come down.

For now, the immediate hurdle lies in making the civilian assets more 'expeditionary'. Unlike the militaries, most civilian agencies are simply not geared up – philosophically or practically – for deploying their people abroad. Police or judges operate by laws and regulations that did not foresee a possible deployment abroad. Civilians find it too difficult to temporarily leave their jobs for a foreign operation. So the EU has been forced to often recruit on the basis of who is available rather than who has the desired skills. As a result, the EU often deploys less than its best.

Clearly, some sort of an EU civilian 'force generation' capacity was needed – a mechanism that would allow the European Union, in a timely manner, to draw on the right civilian resources for crisis management. To this end, the EU Council secretariat formed in 2007 the *Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability*. It is meant to work as a civilian counterpart to the EU's military planners. And, judging by Lt Gen Leakey's own assessment, the early results are encouraging. 'The degree of increasing excellent collaboration between the Commission and the military and civilian arms of the Council Secretariat has surprised even me',⁸ he noted.

The creation of the civilian force generation unit solves one part of the civil-military integration dilemma: the scarcity of civilian personnel for crisis management. The second phase is just as difficult: once you bring both civilian and military actors into the theatre of operations, how do you get them to work together? They have different institutional

⁶ For an excellent analysis of the benefits as well as drawbacks of the Lisbon treaty's defence and foreign policy provisions see Gerrard Quille, 'The impact of the Lisbon treaty on ESDP,' briefing paper, policy department external policies, European Parliament.

⁷ Lt Gen David Leakey, 'Joint and Separate Priorities for the EU and NATO in 2008', SDA Discussion Paper Part 1, Security and Defence Agenda, p. 18, http://www.securitydefenceagenda.org/Portals/7/Reports/2007/SDA_NATO_ESDP_relations_DiscussionPaper2008.pdf

⁸ Ibid, p. 18.

cultures and habits, and do not always mix well. A part of the answer lies in changing the chains of command. One overall commander, either civilian or military, should run EU operations.

But by the time of deployment in crisis areas, it may be too late to try to foist co-operation on civilians and soldiers wholly unaccustomed to integrated approach to crisis management. So the change may well lay with the member-states themselves rather than the EU. EU operations draw on national civilian and military forces, which are deployed on EU operations for limited periods of time. So it is not the EU but the national governments that need to institute common approaches to crisis management between the ministries of defence, foreign affairs, interior and development (and other relevant agencies).

Some countries like the UK show the way; the London government formed a special unit where defence, foreign affairs and development officials meet regularly to discuss current operations and how each department can contribute. More, and more intensive, contacts of this sort are needed.

The EU could help. It should advise member-states on how to improve co-ordination between civilian and military agencies, and on how to prepare civilian agencies for deploying their personnel abroad. This could be done by a small EU advisory team, which would impart to national governments the lessons in civil-military co-operation learned from ESDP missions abroad. And it could also spread best practices in the EU on drafting rules for the deployment of civilian personnel abroad. NATO has a similar process in place; its defence planners regularly visit the member-states' defence ministries to do a 'health check' and advise on where and how improvements could be made – all this, of course, on a strictly voluntary basis.

More capable European militaries

Better civil-military integration, while important, will be of limited value to the EU's crisis management skills unless the European Union also improves its ability to deliver military force to crisis areas. Soldiers create the necessary conditions on the ground for civilians to do their work. In Kosovo as well as in Afghanistan, the reconstruction process has taken steps back when violence forced civilian experts to abandon their work. Without stability reconstruction cannot follow; without reconstruction, military victories remain hollow.

The more ambitious the EU becomes and the bigger the missions it commands, the more it runs into the same force generation problems that have troubled NATO for the past decade. In 2008 the EU had to delay its mission to Chad because member-states could not find enough working helicopters. This was in part due to political disagreements (many EU member-states saw the Chad mission as an attempt by Paris to use the EU to extend French influence in Africa). But most European capitals simply do not have troops and weapons to spare.

In principle, the EU should be generating a lot more force than it is – it has more men and women in uniform than the US (2 million vs 1.4 million). Yet, in comparison with the US, a much smaller fraction of the overall force is trained and equipped for deployments in overseas crisis management. Much of the rest of the force are inexperienced draftees.

If the EU is to strengthen its crisis-management capability, EU member-states must do more to make their militaries more usable. Deeper military reform is the starting point: for any given level of spending, much more can be achieved by militaries and ministries that have been modernised. Those countries that have not abolished conscription should do so: what Europe needs are professional, mobile troops who are ready and able to go anywhere in the world.

Military reform itself can be expensive. So EU member-states may need to not only spend their defence money more intelligently, but also to spend more money. NATO wants its member-states to set aside two per cent of GDP on defence. The alliance has not had much success getting to that goal; only a handful of European governments (like France, Britain or Greece) spend above the 2 per cent mark. But the EU may have more powerful incentives in its arsenal. The 'structured co-operation' on defence, a concept introduced in the Lisbon treaty, could be made conditional on meeting the 2 per cent threshold. EU governments may deem this too unrealistic (due to other budgetary pressures such as health and education) or too exclusive (some member-states that are contributing large numbers of their armies to ESDP missions would struggle to reach a two per cent threshold). In that case governments could at least agree that they should spend a minimum of 20 per cent of their defence budgets on equipment procurement and technology research. Those states that do not spend enough would initially see themselves excluded from a European defence *avant-garde*, but they would have a strong reason to catch up.

Conclusion

What underlies much of the debate on EU crisis management missions is the conflicted nature of Europe's defence initiatives. Two very different rationales have driven European defence policy to date. Some countries, like Belgium or (until recently) France, have pushed for stronger European defences because they want to lessen US influence in Europe. Others, like the UK, want stronger European defences because they fear that the US is less and less interested in defending Europe. Each impulse drives the EU defence policy in a slightly different direction. Those who fear that the US will be less engaged in Europe are increasing their military strength while keeping a strong link to the US, through NATO. Those who want to see less US involvement in European security are challenging NATO by building alternative European military bureaucracy, or by launching 'flag-planting' EU missions in Africa and elsewhere.

Neither instinct dominates – the EU is too complicated a beast to produce a clear outcome – but both instincts, in their own way, contributed to building a strong Europe of defence. It has not become the sort of un-NATO that the France would have preferred (under Chirac, less so under Sarkozy). But equally, it has not generated as many capabilities, as the UK would have liked it to.

However, the more missions the EU carries out under its flag, the more substance EU defence is acquiring. Already the EU has started twenty ESDP operations. And, in different ways, the EU institutions and member-states have begun responding to the real-world needs, which those crisis-management operations have raised. The civilian planning cell in the Council is helping to generate more civilian capabilities. Reforms introduced by the

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Lisbon treaty will make for better co-ordination of the EU's diplomatic, development, and enlargement policies. And the 'permanent structured co-operation' promises to create more military capacity. The progress is often slow and frustrating. But it is tangible.

(This paper is based in part on a forthcoming CER pamphlet by Daniel Keohane and Tomas Valasek, "Willing and Able? EU defence in 2020".)