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EU Civilian Crisis Management: **How the Union Can Live up to Its Ambitions – or Stumble into Irrelevance**

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The EU's civilian crisis management (CCM) is at a crossroads, as the security situation of the EU has drastically changed. Current challenges can neither be tackled by member states individually, nor by military means alone. A new ambitious process at EU level gives member states the opportunity to improve the EU's CCM and answer central questions at the conceptual and institutional level. Most importantly though, member states need to increase their financial and personal commitments, if they want to prevent this trademark of European foreign policy from drifting into irrelevance.

Europe's security has drastically changed. Since the Arab spring in 2008, an arc of crises has developed, surrounding the EU from Northern and Central Africa, via Syria and the Middle East to Ukraine. The danger is not just that instability and violence could "spill over" into the EU. Core values of the EU – being a community of rule of law, a union committed to strengthening open and democratic societies that values the rights and responsibilities of the individual – are being openly and violently challenged. Cyber-attacks and terrorist action, sometimes coming even from within the Union, are internal repercussions of the growing tensions worldwide. The security within the Union is significantly influenced by the security outside the Union (the internal-external security nexus).

When the member states of the European Union decided to develop a common foreign and security policy (CFSP) in 1993, one of their key motivations was to enable the EU to make a significant contribution to international security. A trademark of this more impactful, European foreign policy became CCM, the non-military policies and instruments dedicated to the management of a crisis, such as mediation, policing or the support to political reforms. Using these tools coherently requires adequate resources and specialized expertise. And as the member states already recognized 15 years ago when they deployed their first CSDP missions, crisis management efforts can only be successful if they pool their resources and act under a shared EU flag. The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was born under this rationale.

In 2016, the EU redefined its security ambitions with the Global Strategy[1] (EUGS). It reframed the CSDP against the backdrop of the new security situation, towards a Union that protects its citizens[2]. The new priority areas of action have become irregular migration, hybrid threats, cyber security, organized crime, radicalization and terrorism, and border management. This marks a clear strategic shift regarding the level of ambition of the EU and its security priorities. All of those threats require primarily non-military responses, and need to be addressed during all phases of a crisis – from prevention to conflict management if tensions escalate, intervention in armed conflict and post-conflict stabilization. Yet the EU's

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current capabilities are not up to this task – not in terms of quantity, quality nor flexibility.

The EU Needs to Change Its Approach to Civilian Crisis Management – Now

If the EU is serious about playing a significant role in international security and protecting its citizens from newly emerging threats, it needs to dramatically increase its efforts in civilian crisis management. Against this backdrop, eight member states, with Sweden and Germany in the lead, have pushed the idea of a Civilian CSDP Compact (CCC). This process is vital for defining the future of the EU's CCM.

In a nutshell, the CCC process aims at a) the revision of civilian CSDP priorities – to align them with the new security situation, b) an adaptation of the CSDP and capability generation – to make it ready to fulfill new tasks such as combating cyber crime or irregular migration, and c) an increase in responsiveness – to ensure that new missions can be deployed faster, in bigger numbers, and adapt quickly to changing circumstances in the field. The CCC process started with the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) conclusions in November 2017[3], and was further specified in May 2018[4]. It will most likely be finalized in November 2018, though its implementation and redefinition will take until at least 2020.

In view of this ambitious timeframe, EU actors need to put forward the key elements of a successful Compact as early as possible. The member states need to define ambitious, but realistic aims for a civilian CSDP, and to spell out what this would mean in terms of financial and personnel resources. They should also say what exactly they would be willing to contribute. The European External Action Service (EEAS), for its part, should communicate which capabilities it will need to adapt to the strategic shift, and highlight gaps in the current governance structure. And other EU actors, such as Justice and Home Affairs (JHA), need to get involved in the process to provide clarity on their own capacities and priorities. Given the rather small amount and bandwidth of current EU capabilities, which mostly provide monitoring, mentoring, training and strategic advice, advancements in at least three areas are needed:

- The EU's conceptual approach has to change; rather than action being driven by the needs of an individual crisis, there should be a comprehensive strategy for the overall security situation,
- the institutional set-up needs to take into account the added complexity of conflicts and coordinate the multi-actor approach needed to tackle them, and
- resources need to be allocated by member states to improve the quantity and quality of personnel and the equipment and infrastructure available for civilian crisis management.

Conceptual Approach: The Why and What of EU Crisis Management

The EU's approach to crises needs to change because responding ad hoc to the most acute issues is no longer sufficient. The EU needs a comprehensive strategy that takes into account the aims and means necessary for planning ahead and managing crises. In terms of aims, the EU needs to determine what kinds of operations it wants to be able to conduct, by which means it wants to deliver, and what size of crises it wants to be able to manage.

Whose security? The authors of the first European Security Strategy of 2003 wanted the EU to take "share in the responsibility for global security and in a better world"[5]. The EUGS of 2016, on the other hand, wants a CFSP that "builds a stronger Europe"[6]. So whereas the reasoning underlying the 2003 strategic set-up was value-driven (resulting in the need for rule of law, democracy promotion, human rights as what needs to be achieved in the crisis region), the new EUGS of 2016 and the FAC Council conclusions of May 2018 clearly put Europe's own security interests and the internal-external nexus at heart. This entails a significant policy shift for CCM, one that needs to be carried out carefully. With populists currently demanding a strong Europe as a fortress against migrants, the concern is that a strategy to protect Europe might lead to short-sighted decisions that focus on treating the symptoms rather than the sources of violence and migration.

Therefore, the narrative for why Europe needs a stronger CCM must contain a clear message that European security concerns can only be addressed in a sustainable way. Otherwise, the EU runs the risk of escalating conflicts with host nations of CSDP missions, as European interests are not necessarily in line with their priorities.[7] The EU's interest in strong border security, for example, may conflict with regional interests in open borders and the creation of economic unions.

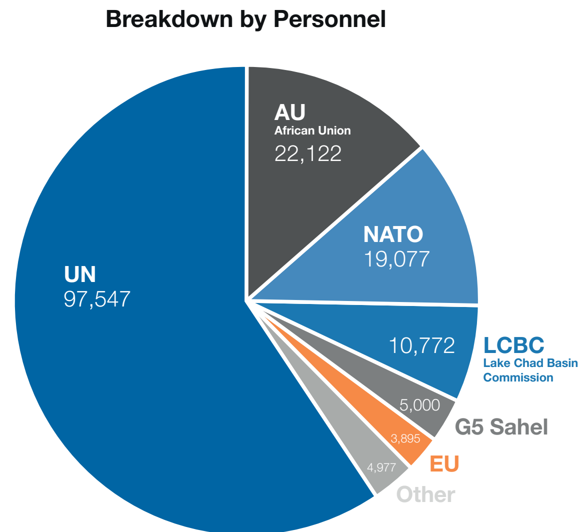
Being in close proximity to Africa, the Middle East and the Eurasian continent, the EU cannot distance itself from the crises and instabilities taking place in its neighborhood. It is in its own interest to engage with these regions and support peace, or at least stability, in order to prevent insecurity entering the Union. There is a strong link between external and internal security. And it is important that European decision makers communicate to EU

citizens that CSDP affects European internal security and the safety of every member state. The success or failure of CCM has implications at home.

Autonomous or appendix? The EUGS sets out huge ambitions. But the current contributions of the EU to international crisis management are relatively small. For example, even if one combines military and civilian missions, the EU is only the 6th largest supplier of personnel for peacekeeping worldwide (see graph). It is high time for the EU to clearly define its level of ambition, and for member states to determine the future scope of their engagement: Does the EU want to continue providing small and highly-specialized independent missions, or should it contribute units to multidimensional international missions, such as the ones of the United Nations?

Or does it want to be able to autonomously plan and conduct large-scale missions to prevent the escalation of violence and stabilize conflict regions, with all the consequences and added responsibility that entails? Given the EU's political ambition of being a relevant and comprehensive international security actor of its own, the latter option is probably more appropriate. Indeed, the EUGS clearly calls for the EU to have autonomy in crisis management[8]. If autonomy is the goal, the EU could provide the backbone of missions, while other partners plug in – and thus the EU would shape the implementation of the mission's political objectives.

Figure 1: Multilateral Peace Operations 2018



Source: Sipri 2018 (https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/mpo18.pdf)

Institutional Setup: Dealing with Complexity and Coordination

In this changing security environment, new European actors engaged in crisis management have emerged, and new competences have developed within the EU. For example, PRISM and the EU Trust Fund for Africa have begun to carry out actions similar to those of CSDP, and Frontex has taken on a bigger role in border management. As a consequence, CSDP, once the core of EU's crisis response, has become merely one among many crisis management actors within the EU – and the EU itself is only one of many international actors engaged in this field. The United Nations, the African Union and new ad hoc coalitions like the G5 Sahel are also active (see graph). To be successful in a field shared with other organizations, the EU needs to revise and adapt its institutional structures to the added complexity of multi-actor approaches, as well as the new priorities set out in the EUGS.

Between EU institutions: Integrated or loosely connected? The EU once coined and touted an "Integrated Approach" – the combination of all foreign policy tools in a coherent manner – as the key to its success in foreign policy. But at present, the EU's response to a crisis is likely to be more of an ad hoc quick fix, characterized by competition between institutions and actors and sometimes even leading to conflicting policies and programs. This needs to change if the EU wants to become a relevant, proactive, coherent, and capable player in international security.

Today, different EU institutions deliver important capabilities: Security Sector Reform in the field is primarily implemented through the EU Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), which is in charge of international cooperation and development; border security is coordinated by FRONTEX; cyber security projects are developed under the aegis of the European Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA); and counter-terrorism is predominantly handled by Europol and other units organized under Justice and Home Affairs.[9] The engagement of these entities is based on different decision-making structures and financed through differing sources. Unfortunately, the coordination between them is currently weak and areas of responsibility are sometimes distributed arbitrarily.

So a decision needs to be made on the relation between these different EU actors. The question is whether civilian CSDP (CCSDP) should be only loosely connected to other crisis management actors (risking competition for visibility and resources), serve as the overarching coordination body for the variety of activities and actors in a respective field to plug into missions, or if it should run as one instru-

ment under a common strategy for task-sharing under the coordination of the Commission. Currently, the choice of instruments for crises seems to be determined not by a common understanding of actors and clear competence division, but by matters of short-term political needs and resources. The FAC conclusions of May 2018 emphasize the need for more coordination and coherence, once more stressing the Integrated Approach as a trademark of the EU. If the EU wants to live up to this ambition and meet its self-declared goals, it needs to develop a clear functional differentiation and organizational structure that takes into account the various actors and tools involved in the EU's crisis management. Plus, other policy areas usually not included in crisis management, such as trade, climate and energy policies, need to be given attention, as ignoring them or keeping them separate could undermine the aims of crisis management in a given region.[10]

Between EU and member states: Independent and flexible or static and controlled? CCSDP missions need to be more "flexible, modular and scalable". The FAC stressed this once again in its conclusions of May 2018. The foreign ministers have remained silent, however, with regard to the institutional changes needed to achieve flexibility. Today, CCSDP missions are bound by highly specific and static mandates, and require unanimous decisions from all member states for their actions. In the past, these restrictions did not allow for the flexibility that is necessary to adapt to the rapidly changing circumstances in the field.

But a look at Frontex shows how this can be different. Since the strengthening of its mandate in 2016, Frontex, as an agency under the auspices of the Commission Directorate-General Home, has had the broad authority to conduct border management operations at EU external borders. It can rapidly deploy operational staff to crisis areas in support of member states, even without a request from the latter. If member states want a more flexible, modular and scalable CCSDP – which is of the utmost importance given the current security situation – they need to make a decision about how much freedom they want to give heads of missions to make autonomous decisions in the field. And they need to decide to what extent they are willing to give up veto rights and hand over responsibilities to the EEAS with regard to strategic decisions for CCSDP missions – as they did in Mali 2017 with the first stabilization action under Article 28 TEU.[11]

Size and Quality of Resource Commitments

Overall, the EU has a mixed track record with regard to CCM. While it praises itself for having conducted 22 CCSDP missions over the last 15 years, the outcome and impact of these has been only moderate. In 2017 the EU deployed highly specialized missions with 2,000 personnel and a budget of 259 million € with only a limited strategic impact. Even if all necessary conceptual and institutional changes are made, the success of attempts to considerably strengthen CCM will remain highly dependent on the willingness of member states to support reform with financial as well as personnel resources.

Standardization or Patchwork? There are two major obstacles preventing the EU from scaling up CSDP activities: the lack of standardization of missions and tasks, and the lack of planning capacities (and political willingness to use them). CCSDP is already facing huge challenges with regard to the recruitment, preparation and training and exchange of staff across missions. Certain tasks in missions, such as logistics or IT, need to be standardized in order to enable a quick transfer of staff from one mission to another. Recruitment and pre-deployment training must be standardized too. Small steps are being made in this direction, and some countries have professional secondment and training facilities. Yet the current speed of improvements is slow. Some member states still find it difficult to second skilled staff at all. Some staff arrive at pre-deployment trainings with a wide range of skills and expectations regarding their deployment; this variety is sometimes hard to handle in the field. Also, equipment needs to be easily available and compatible. The warehouse[12], a central place designed to store and manage equipment for CCSDP missions at a central place for rapid deployment, has been fully operational since June 2018 and is a good first step in this direction. But if the EU wants to increase the flexibility, quantity, and quality of staff in the missions, it urgently needs to move beyond the current patchwork structure of recruitment and mission set-up.

Planning should be a central aspect of such reform. Strategic planning efforts in the EU have so far remained very limited, mainly due to an institutional set-up that relies heavily on member state contributions and has very limited capacities on its own. But at the same time, few member states are investing in strategic planning efforts for CCM at the national level. To prepare for upcoming crises and ensure coordination with other CCM entities of the EU, CCSDP will need a unified body that conducts long-term crisis and capability planning – one not linked to the command and control of actual crisis management missions. This body would plan for crisis contingencies, draw conclusions from lessons learned in earlier operations, and ensure a long-term process of institutional learning on the European level. For such an initiative,

member states' will and political support is essential. So far, however, many are focusing their efforts on the military side of CSDP, or shying away from a further transfer of competences to the EU level.

Commit or Fail? As important as organizational and institutional reforms are, the Civilian CSDP Compact (as well as all other CCM projects) can only succeed if member-states demonstrate political will and commitment by contributing significant financial and personnel resources. Skilled personnel are the key resource of any CCM tool. But even today, in a deteriorating security situation that requires common action, motivating member states to second experts remains a time-consuming and often frustrating task. Growing domestic needs make it even harder for missions to recruit specialists. Germany, for example, is currently only seconding 39 police officers[13] to EU CSDP missions and has never seconded more than about 400 police officers to international missions at a time[14], largely due to the reluctance of police commanders to send personnel to international missions while they are facing recruiting challenges at home.

Prior attempts of the EU to set concrete headline goals for capabilities in terms of personnel and readiness have not been met by member states.[15] Compared with the budget envisioned for military research and development (the newly founded European Defence Fund will receive 5,5 billion Euros a year[16]), the budget for the whole CFSP is negligible (341 million Euros in 2018, which includes inter alia all civilian CSDP missions and structures).[17] While EU military missions can rely on a trained and equipped pool of staff made up of national armed forces, civilian recruiting remains piecemeal. This financial and personnel imbalance needs to change dramatically.

Don't miss this Train

The Civilian CSDP Compact is an important initiative that will define the future of the EU's CCM. To be successful, it needs to embed CCSDP in the broader context of EU crisis management tools, and member states need to massively increase their commitment in terms of personnel and finance, in order to equip CCM with the tools and resources necessary to live up to its ambitions.

It is true that in past years CCM was not relevant enough to be of much concern to decision-makers: No one was against it, but no one strongly supported it either. But today, European policy makers have rediscovered the value and importance of CCM as an integral part of the EU's security policy to tackle current challenges, and for good reason. The EU is no longer surrounded by friends – its neighborhood has become more dangerous and it is threatened from within. CCM is a vital complement to the EU's military and development initiatives, and given the new security setting, it may even be the most relevant one. Decision-makers will therefore have to explain to their constituents, the citizens of the European Union, the importance of CCSDP and how it affects their security and those of the people in their immediate neighborhood. Given the challenges that the EU currently faces, internally as well as externally, it can simply not afford another round of technical debates and institutional quarrels. The key question is a bigger one: Will the EU's CCM deliver on security – or become irrelevant, with potentially dramatic consequences for the security and the future of the EU?

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