

The Relevance of a Strong Civilian CSDP: How EU Member States Can Shape the Civilian Crisis Management Agenda 2018 and Beyond

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While member states recognize the value of the civilian Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), a strategic EU vision is lacking. In the face of current and future security risks, the EU requires the capacities to launch civilian missions and to manage major crises in its vicinity. To guide the implementation of the Civilian Compact from 2019 on, the EU should set quantitative headline goals and adopt a strategic planning approach, while member states need to create favorable national legislations.

By the end of 2018, EU member states want to conclude an agreement to strengthen the civilian CSDP for the years to come. In May 2018, in the first phase of the so-called civilian CSDP Compact process, governments agreed on a new concept for civilian CSDP¹. The European External Action Service (EEAS) has since analyzed the needs and gaps in capabilities and put forward proposals for an enhanced civilian capability development². Member states are expected to commit resources to strengthening civilian CSDP by December 2018. The concrete national commitments to the Compact are still under discussion. Some concrete proposals and ideas have been put forward. For example, the German government has suggested to establish a European Center of Excellence for EU-wide training and capacity building purposes³. Another proposal is to set up multilateral projects for civilian capability development in 2019.

The Compact will shape the EU's approach to civilian crisis management for the next decade. The process draws attention to civilian CSDP in Brussels and national capitals. It therefore offers a good opportunity to improve and professionalize it for many years. In order to achieve this, EU member governments should take a forward-

looking approach, based on a shared understanding of the strategic relevance of civilian crisis management as a tool of EU's security.

Enhancing National and EU Security through Civilian CSDP

The EU's security environment has decisively changed over the past decade. In a fragmenting world order, the EU can only protect its own security interests if it effectively supports stabilization in its own neighborhood. Civilian crisis management is indispensable in doing so, since military means alone cannot foster sustainable security. As a political instrument that builds on partnerships and promotes EU values, civilian CSDP is not just an optional "nice to have": On the contrary, it serves member states' national security.

The European Union is surrounded by an array of crises in its East and South. Conflicts have become more complex, and new threats to European security have

developed. These changes require a strategic approach to crisis management as a whole, and civilian CSDP specifically: Needed are not simply more missions, but a different approach which leads to more complex missions that also require significantly higher quantities of qualified civilian experts.

15 Years of Civilian CSDP

In 2003, the EU member states deployed the first civilian CSDP mission. Since then, more than 20 civilian missions have been carried out, mostly in the EU's eastern neighborhood and Africa. Civilian CSDP mandates have so far mostly focused on policing, the rule of law and Security Sector Reform (SSR). Following the EU Global Strategy of 2016, member states decided to adjust civilian CSDP to their new analysis of the security environment by means of the civilian CSDP Compact.

The cases of Syria, Libya, or the Sahel highlight some challenges to which the Compact should offer solutions. Crisis management is key in this regard: The EU has to act because the challenges resulting from these cases have already arrived at its doorsteps. They will most likely remain for the foreseeable future and deteriorate if not actively managed. These three examples illustrate the immediate challenges for which the EU needs to develop capabilities: So far, the EU lacks the not only qualities but also significant quantities to manage such large-scale crises in countries, where government structures are often non-existent. Civilian CSDP as of today is too underdeveloped and understaffed to make a tangible difference to the security situation. This fact contradicts the EU's ambition to become an independent international security actor. Syria will not remain the only crisis, in which civilian means will be indispensable for stabilization and where the EU needs to be ready to bring larger numbers of experts to the ground.

Converging Views on the Added Value of Civilian Crisis Management

Despite these strong reasons to include civilian crisis management as an integral part of CSDP, to date, the EU member states do not share a coherent vision of the strategic relevance of civilian crisis management in general or civilian CSDP specifically⁴. As an analysis of national security strategies reveals, 13 member states do not acknowledge the strategic relevance of civilian crisis management in their national security strategies, and focus only on military crisis management. A number of member states has not yet adopted an integrated

approach to security into their national recourse. Meanwhile, those who mention the strategic relevance of civilian crisis management differ in their assessments of its importance. For some member states, civilian crisis management is purely an element in support of military action. Others outline its role in protecting core security interests in a changing world. However, the analysis of national security strategies and interviews with member state representatives have shown that member states nevertheless value civilian CSDP for a number of reasons. A review of the reasons they give shows that perceptions of the added value of civilian crisis management converge in six relevant aspects.

1. The Integrated Approach Makes the EU a Relevant Security Actor

The civil-military character of CSDP is important for the EU to be a relevant and coherent security actor on the international stage. Most member states at least consider civilian CSDP to be an integral component in the EU integrated approach. The variety and interplay of all civilian and military instruments and policies of the EU in the strongly promoted integrated approach are considered very unique features of the Union's external engagement. But while all member states affirm the latter, they also stress its unused potential resulting, inter alia, from competition between EU institutions. Civilian CSDP is considered an EU trademark for good reasons, but it can do much better. A strong incentive for member states to invest in civilian CSDP is to further strengthen the integrated approach and to move beyond competing for resources. The successful implementation of the integrated approach could increase the effectiveness of EU external action.

2. Enabling Deeper Integration in the EU and Coexistence with NATO

First and foremost, civilian CSDP enables the enhancement of CSDP as a whole. A number of member states, especially the Nordic states, would not participate in a Common Security and Defense Policy without civilian elements at all⁵. The civilian dimension makes the military one more easily digestible in domestic debates. Hence the civilian dimension facilitates progress in military cooperation and integration: In practical terms, member states can counterbalance increased military effort by strengthening their civilian engagement. Moreover, this holistic approach distinguishes the EU from NATO. Especially for those who do not focus on the civilian but on the military dimension of security, CSDP does not duplicate NATO or threatens its existence, due to its specific civil-military

character. Because of this civilian dimension, an “either or”- discussion is therefore less likely.

3. Supporting Partners

Member states also value civilian CSDP as a useful political instrument. By deploying civilian missions, EU member states foster partnerships and show visible support for partner countries. Missions have a high potential to extend and reinforce the EU’s political strategies on the ground – as widely visible transmitters of the EU’s shared understanding that sustainable security can only be achieved through inclusive processes, democratic reform and human rights. The political backing of 28 member states formulating the mission objectives creates leverage. This allows the missions to touch upon sensitive subjects in the recipient country. Member states can use this leverage to contribute responsibly to sustainable solutions in international crises. Civilian CSDP opens a different quality of communication channels with national authorities and can make a difference especially when they go “from uniform to uniform”. The daily direct engagement of highly qualified specialists, seconded directly by EU member states, with national stakeholders is a very unique level of interaction that e.g. Commission programs cannot provide.

4. Promoting Value-Based Security Policy

In the CSDP framework, member states define the EU foreign and security policy on the basis of shared values. Many of the member states want the EU to counterbalance the fragmenting international order by conducting missions with a holistic understanding of stabilization. Their understanding is that missions should not only stabilize, but encourage democratization, civil society and human rights to foster sustainable security in a broader view.

5. Shaping Member States’ Own International Profile

Most EU member states also recognize that their engagement in civilian CSDP helps them shape their own international profile and increase their own clout, reputation and influence in international crisis contexts. Some national strategies, therefore, explicitly set the target to raise the number of management level personnel in EU missions to increase national influence and use CSDP to forward political aims. Building clout through pooling resources and speaking with one voice makes a remarkable difference for EU member states and remains a main driver of CSDP.

6. High Flexibility of the Toolbox

Civilian CSDP is one of the most flexible and responsive instruments at the EU’s disposal. As EUAM Iraq shows, missions can be on the ground in a short time if political agreement is reached quickly. In light of complex security challenges, member states largely agree that more flexibility and rapidness is the key for an effective civilian CSDP in the future. Combined with the fact that civilian CSDP can be deployed in dangerous theaters – and occasionally is one among very few civilian actors on the ground – this flexibility is a valuable strength if further promoted.

How the Compact Can Raise the Strategic Importance of CSDP

Against this backdrop, the Compact should not only focus on concrete structural and operational improvements but also provide the base for developing a more strategic understanding and use of civilian CSDP, which the EU needs to tackle challenges to its security. Only if member states explicitly agree on the role and relevance of civilian CSDP in the EU’s response to crises, and follow the same goals can they make the best use of this instrument: On the basis of a shared vision for civilian CSDP, the EU could, finally, develop a functioning division of labor with other civilian and military instruments of crisis management. Moreover, member states who acknowledge the strategic relevance of civilian CSDP would be more committed to resource and support civilian missions. In the continued absence of a shared strategic vision, there will be no adequate burden-sharing; instead, individual member states will continue to push for missions which advance particular national interests.

The lack of coherence in the strategic importance assigned to civilian CSDP by the EU member states cannot be fixed overnight. However, the Compact can be an important first step into this direction, towards a strategic and strong civilian crisis management of the EU. Member states should bear this bigger picture in mind when negotiating. At the end of 2018, the Compact needs clear commitments to hold the attention in both member states and Brussels high for next steps to come, in 2019 and beyond. To this end, it should include the following points.

A strategic vision for civilian crisis management:

The EU should develop a civilian crisis management strategy which defines clear goals for civilian crisis management, and establish a clear and functional division of labor between the different actors in EU civilian crisis management. The Compact could include a commitment

to develop a strategy. The elements analyzed above provide first building blocks for this discussion.

Make civilian CSDP a unique strand of crisis management: To develop its civilian CSDP component, the EU should not create ill-fitting solutions again by simply imitating military structures, as the idea to create a “civilian PESCO” by launching some multilateral projects for capability development suggests. The simple transfer of military logics to civilian crisis management is insufficient. Civilian CSDP is still less developed than the military component and thus needs a greater push than currently envisioned. In contrast to military CSDP, it cannot draw on trained, standing personnel, decade-long experience and well-functioning structures in most of the member states: These problems have been discussed extensively during the past months. Instead of relying on predefined models, member states can develop tailor-made responses to the problems of civilian CSDP. In terms of capabilities, which in civilian CSDP mostly relates to the quality of personnel, a European Center of Excellence could be an adequate solution. In such an institution, seconded personnel could be trained together for the different mission tasks.

A more strategic approach to civilian capability planning: Ideally, the EU would be capable to rapidly deploy large-scale autonomous crisis management missions. This requires a more strategic planning approach instead of ad-hoc mission set ups with hasty secondments from member states. Only new and quantitatively larger approaches can take civilian CSDP to the new professional level needed to be flexible enough and adequately for future crises. Moreover, to develop new and stronger capabilities, it is not sufficient to rely on lessons learned from past missions. Among the new priorities, the EU, for instance, wants to respond to cyber threats. To build this capability, it cannot draw on experiences from the last missions. Crises transform over time – driven not only by conflict parties that act in isolation of the international environment but also by external factors. Anticipating potential future crisis developments does not only allow the EU to sketch the future operational environment for which it needs the capabilities; it also allows to grasp the changing importance of individual factors and thus provides opportunities to influence them – even before the crisis breaks out. As a result, the EU needs a fully-fledged long-term vision of future crises and crisis management from which it can develop its capabilities.

Better resourcing: For a lasting and visible impact, civilian CSDP needs a larger budget. Its current budget has only slightly increased in the last years⁶. While the European Defense Fund will allocate 1 billion Euros per

year for research and development within member states from 2020 onward⁷, all civilian measures of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, including missions and several other instruments, have accounted for 341 million Euros in 2018. In the Compact, member states aim to declare their continued political support for civilian CSDP. Commitments have to reflect this: The financial side of civilian CSDP should not be marked by complete imbalance vis-à-vis the military financing. If civilian CSDP is to make a visible contribution to stabilizing crises, it needs adequate resources. To start with, member states should allocate more resources to develop the necessary capabilities, i.e. larger quantities of trained personnel.

Quantitative headline goals and commitments: The Compact should contain detailed long-term commitments in terms of financial and staffing resources, i.e. new headline goals to be implemented in 2019 and beyond. In contrast to the headline goals of 2008 and 2010, which member states have never met, potential numerical targets in the Compact need to be fulfilled to strengthen civilian CSDP for today’s global security environment. Such quantitative targets push discussions more thoroughly– as seen in the spending debate on the 2-percent/GDP debate on defense.

Strengthening civilian CSDP on national levels: The debate about a shared strategic relevance for civilian CSDP cannot take place in isolation at EU level. The discussion on how civilian crisis management can contribute to the security of the Union must also take place at national levels. This understanding is crucial to ensure long-term political support and commitment of resources. The Compact should contain clear commitments by member states to work towards creating national legislations in support of civilian crisis management and including such aspects into their national security strategies.

Setting the agenda beyond 2018: As the negotiations of the Compact are coming to a close, not all important topics may have been tackled. The Compact should list any open issues and ensure that they are addressed in the years to come. Key points to which the Compact should refer for further work in 2019 are: the strategic engagement of national security actors, shaping the civil-military nexus, mapping and developing national recruiting and seconding structures, third-state contributions and further developing concepts to implement the new priorities. The Compact should entail a strong mandate to address these topics from January 2019 on – lest it lose momentum.

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Notes

- 1 Foreign Affairs Council, Council Conclusions on strengthening civilian CSDP, 28 May 2018, <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35380/st09288-en18.pdf>> (accessed 18 September 2018).
- 2 The Civilian Capability Development Plan is not publicly accessible; it was disseminated to member states.
- 3 Auswärtiges Amt, „Bukarest, Berlin, Brüssel – gemeinsam für ein souveränes, starkes Europa“. Rede von Außenminister Heiko Maas anlässlich der rumänischen Botschafterkonferenz, 27 August 2018, <<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/-/2130236>> (accessed 24 September 2018).
- 4 The author has analyzed the Security Strategies of 25 member states. The United Kingdom was excluded because of Brexit. Cyprus and Portugal were not considered, as no English, publicly accessible National Security Strategy, White Paper or alike was found. Additionally, the author conducted interviews with a number member state representatives.
- 5 Raphaël Bossong, Thorsten Benner, Capacity-Building at the Headquarter Level: The Case of EU Civilian Peace Operations, *Journal of Intervention and Peacebuilding*, 2012, 6:4, p. 352.
- 6 The CSDP budget used for civilian missions runs under the greater budget of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and is not disclosed as a separate position. It constitutes the biggest share of the CFSP budget. From 2014 to 2018, the CFSP budget increased from € 314 mio. to € 341 mio. Numbers are taken from: EU ISS, Yearbook of European Security (YES) 2018, 2018, p. 195, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/YES_2018.pdf> (accessed 20 September 2018).
- 7 European Commission, A European Defense Fund: € 5.5 billion per year to boost Europe's defense capabilities, 7 June 2017, <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-1508_en.htm> (accessed 20 September 2018).

