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Becoming a More Effective Actor in Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Peace Building: Strengthening CSDP Missions and Operations

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In 2003 the EU declared its civilian and military crisis management instruments ready for deployment. Since then, EU member states have convincingly demonstrated their capability to act as a global security player: they have deployed civil missions and military operations to Sub-Saharan Africa, the Balkans, the Eastern Neighbourhood, the Near and Middle East and even to Asia. These engagements have encompassed a variety of approaches and tools for crisis management and stabilisation, ranging from the training of security forces and the support for the rule of law, to the provision of a military or civilian presence to safeguard elections or to monitor border arrangements and ceasefire agreements, to the fight against piracy or other forms of organised crime. Altogether, the EU has conducted 23 missions and operations under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Two of the current engagements – the ceasefire monitoring mission in Georgia (EUMM) and the anti-piracy operation Atalanta in the Gulf of Aden – have been decided and launched under the last Trio Presidency. In order to achieve the EU's aim of effectively providing security in a changing world, Spain, Belgium and Hungary will have to lead a process aimed at substantially improving the planning and conduct of CSDP missions and operations and at smartly putting into practice the CSDP-related clauses of the Lisbon Treaty.

CSDP missions and operations in practice: a mixed record

So far, CSDP deployments have seen varying degrees of success with regard to the implementation of their mandates, their contribution to conflict management and stabilisation, and their usefulness in serving additional European policy objectives, such as the fostering of effective multilateralism. Without any doubt, in some cases EU deployments have contributed to the peaceful settlement or management of conflicts. Here, the 2005-2006 Aceh

Monitoring Mission (AMM) or the operation EUFOR DR Congo, are cases in point. AMM was instrumental in pacifying a decade-old conflict by actively monitoring the implementation of a ceasefire and peace agreement between Indonesia's central government and the Free Aceh Movement. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the EU in 2006 temporarily supported and backed up UN troops (MONUC) and thus made it possible for presidential elections to take place without any serious disruptions or violence.

However, other CSDP deployments have been less successful. EUPOL Afghanistan, for example, which was established in mid-2007, has lagged far behind its objective to substantially contribute to the training of Afghan police forces. The monitoring mission at the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, established in late 2005, has been *de facto* suspended since mid-2007. The 2008-2009 operation EUFOR Chad / CAR did neither help to tangibly improve the refugees' plight in Chad nor was it in a position to indirectly contribute to conflict resolution in Darfur.

Thus, the EU cannot be identified as being particularly successful or unsuccessful in any specific type of engagement. The assumption, for example, that the 'civilian power Europe' – with its rich experience in helping states with reforms so as to make them fit for EU membership – would be particularly capable, and therefore do well, in its support for structures and institutions safeguarding the rule of law, has not been confirmed by the CSDP experience. Rather, looking at the total of deployments so far, one cannot avoid the impression that member states and European policy makers have focused on demonstrating their ability to intervene globally. In addition, some seem to regard the CSDP as being in an experimental phase, in which they consider it more important to try out the whole of the CSDP tool box, rather than focusing on a specific component of the EU's instruments for crisis prevention and management.

Weaknesses and potential for improvement

As a consequence, no clear criteria or agreed-upon priorities exist on which member states could base their overall planning for CSDP deployments – with regard to where, when and how to get engaged – in addition to individual decisions as to whether or not to engage in a specific context. On the contrary, it seems that member states have not shown an interest in achieving consensus on priorities with regard to certain regions or types of activities. They have also abstained from early planning for possible future deployments. And CSDP deployments have not been preventative, but rather reactive and driven by acute crises or external demand. In this way strategic planning has remained elusive. In addition, rapid deployment – an essential factor if the EU wants to be on the spot so as to manage acute crises – has not been a general feature of EU deployments. Only the missions in Aceh, Rafah and Georgia, as well as the operations Atalanta in the Gulf of Aden and Artemis in the DR Congo, were in place within less than four weeks. In other cases, actual deployment was delayed due

to disagreements among member states over the mandate (EUFOR Chad / CAR, EUFOR DR Congo), the necessity to clarify the legal basis (EULEX Kosovo) or, as has turned out to be a major difficulty, the slow response from member states to provide personnel. Furthermore, decisions on a concrete operation, its objectives, the resources and equipment needed, are taken without sufficient recourse to the expertise and knowledge prevailing among other EU institutions in the region or country of deployment. As links between EU policies and bodies remain weak, the EU Special Representatives and the EC Delegations are barely consulted or made part of the operational planning process – with few exceptions to the rule. It is precisely such expertise, however, that would help to realistically define the objectives of the CSDP engagement in question, to identify actors on the ground with whom to cooperate and actors who might operate as spoilers, and to establish coherence between the mission or operation's objectives and measures and those of the local EC Delegation.

Coordination between CSDP missions and EC Delegations also remains particularly difficult, although its success would significantly increase the EU's effectiveness abroad. Even if cooperation works out on the ground, competing institutions in Brussels keep a suspicious watch and hence often undermine its success. This unhealthy competition is especially pronounced in cases in which CSDP activities touch upon traditional tasks of the Commission, e.g. support in the justice sector. But exactly these missions need an 'integrated approach' in the form of close cooperation and a reasonable division of labour between EU institutions. How can police training and security sector reform be expected to contribute effectively to stabilisation if they are not accompanied by measures to improve the rule of law?

Disputes between the Council and the Commission have in some cases also prevented CSDP missions from having sufficient or even any financial resources of their own (other than their running budget). Such monetary means, however, would significantly increase the chances for success of CSDP deployments on the ground. Having a budget for 'quick impact projects' would enable the missions to back up training measures for police forces with necessary infrastructure investments – such as communication facilities or other basic equipment of police stations. This in turn could provide palpable incentives for local officials to cooperate and make reforms more attractive.

Solidarity among member states appears to be another determining factor in the success of CSDP missions. In several cases, CSDP engagements have been set up on the initiative and pressure of one of the larger EU states. They were realised in spite of serious reservations of other member states. In these cases, the bargaining process usually led to a narrow mandate regarding the deployment's duration, tasks, theatre of operation, etc. What follows is that the EU's engagement often contributes little to conflict management (as the case of EUFOR Chad / CAR demonstrated) or the operation's success is imperilled (as was the case with the restricted duration imposed on EUFOR DR Congo). Besides, such missions and operations suffer in particular from the reluctance of other member states to deploy sufficient personnel. The cases of EUFOR Chad / CAR and EUPOL Afghanistan show that while EU member states

have been willing to go along with a professed interest of one member state to have the EU act, they expect the initiator to bear the main burden of the engagement.

Last, but not least, once CSDP missions are launched, member states rarely critically follow up on their progress. In fact, while Brussels regularly receives Heads of Mission reports, these often gloss over the missions' difficulties. The practice of overemphasising the EU's achievements is criticised in national ministries as well as in Brussels, but tacitly accepted by member states. Hence, for lack of adequate information, there cannot be a sincere and continued examination of achievements, setbacks, and stumbling blocks, nor a serious debate on when and how to redirect a mission. This is all the more problematic considering that a number of deployments have struggled with fundamentally changing conditions over time. If member states and experts were to review ongoing missions more closely, they would be in a better position to react to changes in the theatre of operations and to adapt the mandate, staffing and equipment of the mission or operation accordingly. Whenever mandates have been adapted promptly, e.g. when the Aceh mission's mandate was expanded to actively oversee disarmament, it proved essential to the successful completion of the mission.

Recommendations

While the EU has proven to be capable of initiating civil missions and military deployments on an almost global scale and of a variety of types and profiles, it has much less effectively employed these missions and operations to follow through on the objectives it has set for itself in the ESS. It is time now for EU member states to conclude the 'experimental phase', to draw the lessons of hitherto existing deployments, and to move ahead and use the tool more strategically. Only then will EU member states be in a position to effectively and sustainably fend off threats to European security emanating from fragile states and regional conflicts, to stabilise the EU's immediate neighbourhood, and to enact effective multilateralism in crisis management in a more meaningful way.

In this, the Lisbon Treaty does not show the way forward. While it extends the Petersberg Tasks to include joint disarmament operations, military advice and assistance, and the support of third countries in combating terrorism on their territories, it does not indicate how to improve the EU's operational performance in crisis management. There is one exception: two mechanisms should allow for 'guaranteed rapid access' to the community budget or to a 'start-up fund' financed by member states depending on the type of mission or operation. If these mechanisms are put into practice in a way that does indeed guarantee rapid access to funding, they would certainly help to speed up deployment. In this vein, the current Trio Presidency should work towards putting into practice the CSDP provisions of the Lisbon Treaty in a fashion that allows effectively for rapid deployment. It should also focus on setting up an External Action Service that increases coherence rather than allowing member states and Brussels institutions to get bogged down in disputes over personnel and posts. With regards

to CSDP missions and operations, Spain, Belgium and Hungary should join forces to initiate a serious debate among member states and convince them to:

- **Establish long-term, strategic planning for CSDP deployments.** It is in the nature of crisis management that the EU will always have to respond to crises, often unexpected ones, at short notice. That fact is, however, not in contradiction with the requirement to initiate a discussion and seek a consensus among member states on criteria and priorities for deployments. Against the backdrop of limited resources, EU member states will have to take decisions about where to engage and under which circumstances. As a rule, the EU should rather concentrate on few deployments that start early, are carefully chosen and consistently implemented, and integrated into a comprehensive approach of conflict management. With regard to deciding about a concrete deployment, an important question to ask is if and as to how far the EU can make a decisive contribution to crisis management and long-term stabilisation with the capabilities at its disposal and in a given situation. It will also be important to ensure that deployment of personnel can be sped up by early planning, genuinely available personnel reserves and flexible procedures.
- **Ensure member states' active support for deployments.** Ahead of a specific deployment, member states should discuss openly whether a sufficient number of them are willing to actively support a planned EU deployment, rather than just reluctantly agree to it. The fact that member states 'tolerate' deployments, but then impose all kinds of restrictions on their mandates, do not provide sufficient personnel and at times withdraw their personnel ("vote with their feet") undermines not only the specific deployment's success in the field, but also the EU's credibility as an actor in crisis management in general. Member states should also think about mechanisms that ensure that the burden of deployments is shared among all. One possibility could be to cover all (or part of the) cost incurred in military operations by a common budget rather than continuing the ATHENA mechanism (the mechanism for financing military operations) and the practice of "costs lie where they fall".
- **Establish a binding and institutionalised 'lessons learned' process and constant follow up.** Missions and operations can only be concluded successfully if mandates and codes of conduct can be easily adapted to changing circumstances and if lessons learned in other deployments are taken into account. Such a process would systematically and sincerely evaluate strengths and weaknesses of current and previous missions. It would then feed into the conceptualisation and adaptation of new and existing mandates and plans of operation. In this context, the collaboration of functional and regional units within the Council Secretariat would have to be improved and EU Special Representatives, the EU Commission and EU Delegations as well as independent experts be incorporated in the endeavour. Also, measures aimed at enhancing the EU's 'institutional memory' would be needed so as to make sure that valuable experience is not lost.
- **Endow CSDP missions and operations with financial resources and overcome competition between EU institutions in Brussels and on the ground.** Having independent budgets would allow CSDP deployments to complement training activities by technical

and infrastructure support. In this context, cooperation between CSDP deployments and the work of EC Delegations needs to be improved – activities should always be executed by the EU institution that is best suited to ensure successful implementation. Here, the establishment of the External Action Service provides an opportunity for increased coherence between various EU activities – but only if member states and Brussels institutions allow for that to happen. Ensuring a smoother process of coordination between the Council's Secretariat, Special Representatives, member states, and EU Delegations would significantly enhance the standing of Europeans and facilitate coherent action in conflict zones. Coordinated action would also provide the Europeans with meaningful incentives for local actors to cooperate and be induced to reform.