

Addressing the CESDP's Civilian - Military Mismatch

By Clara Portela

Since the Cologne European Council in June 1999, the European Union has engaged in building a capacity to play a role in crisis-management. This new dimension has been developed under the denomination 'Common European Security and Defence Policy' (CESDP). From the outset, the intention was to enhance the Union's instruments for both military and civilian crisis management. Two years on, a substantial amount of progress has been made in the military realm¹, but where do we stand in the non-military domain? After revisiting the steps taken by the EU in upgrading its civilian crisis management and conflict prevention capabilities, this paper will argue that they need to be further developed. When the Council holds its next meeting on 15-16 June in Göteborg (Sweden), it should take decisive action to impulse the enhancement of the EU's non-military instruments for crisis management.

A secondary place for civilian means

From the very inception of the CESDP, the non-military aspects of crisis management have been relegated to a secondary place. After the Cologne European Council had decided to give the Union the necessary means to carry out conflict prevention and crisis management tasks, the Helsinki Summit had to specify these general guidelines in concrete goals. The language of the Finnish Presidency Report makes clear that the amount of effort that was going to be de-

voted to the military realm was superior to that of the civilian side. Member states declared their intention to "*develop* more effective military capabilities and *establish* new political and military structures for this tasks"². Indeed, military crisis management is a new field of activity in the European Union. In contrast, it was said that the Union would "*improve* and *make more effective use* of resources in civilian crisis management". The Union already had "considerable experience" in civilian crisis management. This reflects that the EU already has some capabilities, which need to be upgraded and supplemented by additional ones.

Indeed, decisions taken since have been in accordance with the priorities stated. At Helsinki, the Member States committed to a military Headline Goal to enable the deployment of a 60,000-strong force capable to conduct the full range of the Petersberg tasks³ by 2003. By contrast, in the civilian domain, it was merely announced that a study to "define concrete targets" would be carried out.

The following European Council at Feira (Portugal) identified four "priority areas" for civilian crisis management.⁴ These are a) the creation of a police force made up of national contingents; b) the strengthening of the rule of law; c) the strengthening of civilian administration, and d) civil protection. However, only one of these was transformed into a concrete 'Headline Goal': Member States committed to be able to

provide up to 5,000 police officers to international missions by 2003. In future, the EU intends to follow a similar approach in each of the three first areas named. This will consist in pooling experts from the Member States who could be deployed in a given post-conflict situation to fulfil two tasks. First, they should help out in the reconstruction of the society substituting for local personnel. At a later stage, they will be in charge of training locals in accordance with international standards.

The Council defined its objectives for civilian crisis management stating that it would concentrate its efforts in those areas which require rapid reaction, and where the response of the international community has been generally slow and weak. Accordingly, the EU would provide "added value" as it improves its capacity to react quickly as well as the capability to meet requests of other organisations.⁵ It was also indicated that the identification of priorities did not "exclude the use of all other tools available to the Union and to Member States". However, it was not specified what these tools were. This makes clear that the Union had the intention to work primarily on those instruments which would give to it an "added value", but also that it did not feel responsible for addressing and strengthening the whole range of existing capabilities.

The Nice Summit presented little progress in the non-military aspects of crisis management. Principles for police missions were elaborated, and some guidelines were established for the strengthening of the rule of law.⁶ Nevertheless, no concrete target was adopted.

In sum, two years after the inception of the CESDP, progress in the civilian realm has been modest. A Committee for Civilian aspects of Crisis Management and a Coordinating Mechanism for interaction with the Commission have been set up in the Council. An inventory of Member States and Union resources relevant for non-military crisis management has been developed, along with a Rapid Reaction Mechanism for dealing with emergency situations.⁷ In particular, the development of new civilian instruments is stuck in a stalemate, with

a single concrete target agreed on. The Council has not yet given any indication of what further areas, if any, will be added to the list once the priority targets are in place.

This scenario stands in sharp contrast with the development of the military dimension of crisis management. Here the Union has made progress at an unusual speed. What accounts for these different velocities? Clearly, decision-makers gave pre-eminence to the military build-up because it needed to be done rapidly. First, the addition of a military strand to the European Union had been an objective long shared by certain Member States, notably France but also Germany. After decades of outright British opposition, Prime Minister Blair gave a green light to the project at the Franco-British Summit at St Malo in December 1998.⁸ Once given the chance of finally going ahead with this agenda, EU leaders realised that they could only be sure of bringing it to an end if they proceeded smoothly and rapidly. This attitude is not surprising considering that general elections could bring a change of government and policy in several major countries such as the UK, France, Germany or Italy. In particular, the strong opposition from the British conservatives bore the potential of blocking the development of a CESDP.

In contrast with the civilian side, the development of military instruments for crisis management was a politically delicate move, because it involved a change of the nature of the European Union. The long civilian-only organisation would acquire a military capability for the first time. This background along with the slow development of civilian capabilities puts into question the seriousness of the EU's commitment to upgrade its civilian instruments. Foreseeing that not everyone would judge military capabilities a good idea, the Council might have sought to enhance the political palatability of the CESDP by pledging to upgrade also civilian instruments.

It is all very well for the EU to put in place a military crisis management capability. However, there is no justification why this should happen to the detriment of civilian and conflict prevention means. On the contrary,

there are sufficient moral, political and economic reasons to put more efforts into conflict prevention and civilian instruments.⁹ First, enhancing conflict prevention elements can make it less likely that the EU will ever be compelled to make use of its military tools. As Commissioner for External Relations Patten has suggested, “experience, and even common sense, tells us that it is much better to prevent conflict than to manage it and deal with the consequences. It causes less disruption. It provokes less human suffering. And it is cheaper.”¹⁰ Secondly, the EU is extremely well placed to engage in civilian crisis management or conflict prevention. It enjoys both adequate instruments and substantial experience in many fields – development aid, humanitarian and technical assistance, economic sanctions, arms-control and nonproliferation. It also finances a Conflict Prevention Network. For example, it can introduce a ‘human rights clause’ in its bilateral trade and co-operation agreements making their implementation conditional on respect for human rights. It can grant duty free access to the European market to developing countries, run assistance projects ranging from post-conflict civilian reconstruction to the management of water or energy. It has substantial economic resources. In addition, it is much easier to find agreement among the Member States to take decisions on intervening in a crisis by civilian-only means than agreeing on a military intervention. The use of civilian tools is not politically problematic vis-a-vis public opinion in or outside the EU. If anything, the civilian and conflict preventive domain should be granted pre-eminence over the military one. As if these reasons would not suffice, now that the structures for military crisis management are largely in place, there are no excuses for the EU to turn its attention to the civilian realm.

Conflict Prevention

As far as conflict prevention is concerned, the Commission recently tabled a Communication on the subject.¹¹ It outlines the policy fields in which the Commission has already adopted a conflict prevention approach, but also makes suggestions as to how certain instruments could be enhanced

to strengthen their conflict prevention impact and how to eliminate present shortcomings. The most notable feature of the Commission’s concept is its impressively comprehensive scope. It addresses short- and long-term prevention measures, including such diverse issues as the promotion of regional integration projects, anti-drug action, supporting child-related post-conflict rehabilitation measures, halting the spread of small arms, or tackling environmental degradation.

However, a good concept is not all required for preventive action. The Communication’s guidelines remain rather general and need to be specified into concrete initiatives. In addition, the EU should keep in mind that success will ultimately depend on adequate funding for the relevant programs.

Finally, the Commission recognises that its competence ends at the very point where politics begin and passes the baton to the Council, which indeed has sole control over some highly useful tools for preventing conflict. This includes agreeing a common line on sanctions, enhancing diplomatic means such as the role of the EU Special Representatives to establish a political dialogue with unstable states, etc. In particular, failure of the Member States to reach a timely agreement on their policy towards a given conflict-prone situation is a major stumbling block to effective EU action.

A threefold challenge for the Council

The European Council in Göteborg faces a threefold challenge with regard to the civilian aspects of crisis management and conflict prevention. The following points can be addressed:

First, the Council should define concrete tasks for the three priority areas which do not have a Headline Goal yet, i.e. rule of law, civil administration and civil protection. This should be easy to accomplish. Since they were identified at Feira there has been a whole year to work on them.

Secondly, it should expand the catalogue of civilian instruments for civilian crisis management and conflict prevention. The designation of priority areas implies by definition

that there are other areas to be addressed once the priorities have been met. However, they have not yet been named. In general, the Union should come up with a comprehensive list of what it considers civilian tools for crisis management, and make publish the inventory of existing resources agreed at Helsinki. The lack of any public listing makes it difficult to assess strengths and deficiencies. There is no reason why there should not be total transparency.

The objectives identified so far are mainly directed at short-term post-conflict reconstruction. The scope of both crisis management and conflict prevention is much wider, though. In its Action Programme on Conflict Prevention, the Swedish government included disarmament issues.¹² Should not the EU do likewise? Reportedly, the Swedish Presidency is planning to present a new EU policy statement on conflict prevention during the Summit.¹³ Also, the Council should ensure that civilian means receive sufficient financing to be fruitful.

Finally, there are a number of political questions that the Council should address without delay. These include the framing of a common line on sanctions and enhancing the role of representatives. A progressive tightening of the Code of Conduct on Arms Exports could be undertaken as a conflict prevention measure. And, most importantly, the interaction between the Council and the Commission could be made more effective. These are delicate points, but their importance for conflict prevention is clear.

Furthermore, in the longer term, the Council will have to take on a task the Commission wants it to address: an enhanced ability to approximate positions among the Member States in a timely manner. They need to strengthen their ability to frame common policies on politically damnable issues. This is not an immediate task to be reviewed during the next Summit. Clearly, this will not be easy. But if the EU is serious about enhancing its international role, it will have to consider this question. It does not make much sense for the EU to develop military crisis reaction forces if it is incapable of framing common policies. The Summit might be a

good occasion to start deliberating on the way ahead.

Endnotes

¹ Political and military decision-making structures have been developed for the Council. Modalities for third country participation in EU led operations have been defined. Negotiations on modalities for cooperation with NATO are underway. The Member States have identified national military capabilities they could provide to the EU. They identified military deficits and developed a mechanism to supervise work to eliminate them. For details, see the documents available at:

www.bits.de/CESD-PA/newcesdmain.html

² Presidency Report on "Strengthening the Common European Policy on Security and Defence" and on "Non-military crisis management of the European Union", Annex IV, European Council Presidency Conclusions, Helsinki 10-11 Dec. 1999

³ The Petersberg tasks include humanitarian, rescue and peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management including peacemaking. Agreed by the WEU Council at Petersberg (1992), they were introduced into the Amsterdam Treaty as Art.17(2).

⁴ Presidency Report on Strengthening the Common European Security and Defence Policy, Annex I, European Council Presidency Conclusions, Feira 19-20 June 2000

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Presidency Report on the European Security and Defence Policy, annexed to the European Council Presidency Conclusions, Nice 7-9 Dec. 2000

⁷ Council Decision, 26 Feb. 2001

⁸ Defence Initiative Declaration, St.Malo 4 Dec.1998

⁹ The concepts of "civilian aspects of crisis management" and "conflict prevention" cannot be entirely dissociated from each other, since civilian tools for post-conflict reconstruction contribute to preventing the recurrence of violence.

¹⁰ Commissioner Chris Patten's remarks at Press Conference on 11 April 2001

¹¹ Communication from the Commission on Conflict Prevention, 11 April 2001.; Report on "Improving the Coherence and Effectiveness of the European Union Action in the Field of Conflict Prevention", submitted to the European Council, December 2000, by the SG/HR and the Commission.

¹² Action Programme on Preventing Violent Conflict, 1999.

¹³ Some members oppose these plans. Bloom, F.: "Sweden still struggling to for civilian aspects of EU crisis management", *PENN Newsletter*, no.14, 2001

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