

The Need for an Open System to Evaluate European Union CSDP Missions (ARI)

*Félix Arteaga**

Theme¹: The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the launch of the European External Action Service are an opportunity to introduce reporting and assessment mechanisms to render CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) missions more democratically legitimate and accountable.

Summary: Now that the Lisbon Treaty is in force, European Presidencies no longer need to continue promoting CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) missions as they did in the past, but they do need to articulate new measures that will consolidate them in the future. While the missions have served as a laboratory for the gradual development of the EU's procedures and civilian and military crisis management bodies, they have not been subject to critical assessment and monitoring processes as stringent as have been established in some countries. This ARI sustains that in future the CSDP missions will not be able to rely on such a tolerant framework and that they will be subject to more criticism and more thorough evaluation. Consequently, the forthcoming Presidencies must start implementing mechanisms to strengthen the legitimacy and transparency of the CSDP missions and prevent European citizens and their representatives in the European Parliament from becoming distanced from them.

Analysis:

The EU has launched 24 CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) missions since 2003, but very little is known about them. The information available from open sources is limited to the information provided by the Council through its website, and only in the last few years have external valuations begun to appear. Compared to the uncritical and complacent descriptions of official reports, independent evaluations coincide in pinpointing common deficiencies in the missions. Among others, they point to a lack of strategy in the mandates, their limited results when it comes to solving the underlying problems, the democratic deficit in their management, the difficulty in coordinating interventions, the difference in strategic cultures among member states and the lack of military planning capacity.

Now that the Lisbon Treaty is in force, European Presidencies no longer need to continue promoting CSDP missions as they did in the past, but they do need to articulate new measures that will consolidate them in the future. As well as improving the operating and doctrinal aspects of the missions, future Presidencies will have to turn their attention to two structural conditioning factors linked to their affordability and accountability. While the

* *Senior Analyst for Security and Defence, Elcano Royal Institute.*

¹ This ARI was originally written as a chapter of the book 'Think Global - Act European III' devoted to the Polish, Danish, and Cypriot Trio Presidency of the European Union. It is published by Notre Europe, Egmont, GKI and the Elcano Royal Institute.

missions have served as a laboratory for the gradual development of the EU's procedures and civilian and military crisis management bodies, they have not been subject to critical assessment and monitoring processes as stringent as have been established in some countries. This work sustains that in future the CSDP missions will not be able to rely on such a tolerant framework and that they will be subject to more criticism and more thorough evaluation. Consequently, the forthcoming presidencies must start implementing mechanisms to strengthen the legitimacy and transparency of the CSDP missions and prevent European citizens and their representatives in the European Parliament from becoming distanced from them.

Reasons for Concern about the Missions' Affordability

The number and international demand for CSDP missions have not continued to grow due to the proliferation of crises and the European aim of contributing to international governance, discharging its responsibility to protect and providing humanitarian aid as a global security player. However, the resources available to the EU do not live up to these expectations, while new needs are constantly arising and priorities must be set. As the 2008 report on the implementation of the European Security Strategy of 2003 highlighted, the EU must 'prioritise [its] commitments, in line with resources'. The concept of affordability refers to undertaking only those missions that can actually be conducted and that, furthermore, produce the expected results in terms of acceptable cost and efficiency. Affordability means earmarking expenses in accordance with the global priorities and resources of the CSDP and CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy).

Experience shows that the political support for CSDP missions is out of step with the contributions to launch them because the very same member states that approve the missions are not obliged to provide the necessary resources to actually implement them. Several of the missions approved in Brussels have seen their roll-out delayed because they did not have the necessary resources (Concordia, EUFOR Chad/Car, EULEX Kosovo and EUPOL Afghanistan), while others were deployed quickly due to the sponsorship of some states (Artemis Congo, EU NAVFOR Atalanta and EUMM Georgia). The practical consequence is that despite appearing to be acting collectively, the EU actually acts like a coalition of the willing in which the available means and participants define the mission.

Most of the official evaluations highlight the EU's capacity to implement missions requiring comprehensive management because it has a range of civilian and military instruments which other players do not have. However, some evaluations question this comparative advantage because many missions have experienced difficulties in assembling military, civilian and financial resources. European Defence Agency data show that the difference in military capabilities between member states continues to increase and unless future Presidencies make real efforts to introduce convergence criteria there will be increasingly fewer countries able to operate jointly. Presidencies should also keep up their efforts to achieve the civilian and military headline goals set. These goals were not achieved by the 2003 and 2010 deadlines, while resources have been launched such as the EU Battlegroups which have so far not been used in CSDP missions.

The EU has shown a greater capacity to generate civilian capabilities in technical, development and humanitarian aid missions, but not in missions like those of Kosovo and Afghanistan which required sizeable police contingents or in missions to reform the security sector in complex scenarios such as Guinea Bissau and Somalia (perhaps this explains why missions like EUJUST LEX Iraq, EUSEC DR Congo and EUTM Somalia do

not even feature on the Council's website). Similarly, experience shows that peace-building and nation-building missions require more resources, strategic patience and management capacity to achieve results than the EU can provide.

The funding of these missions is yet another source of uncertainty. Civilian missions can be funded using CFSP funds (€327 million for 2011), but this is barely 3%-4% of the total EU external affairs budget. In military operations, the States involved take up most of the expenses (costs lie where they fall), except for some common costs covered by the Athena mechanism and others to launch the operations but which only cover approximately 10% of the real expense. Despite the financing mechanisms and the budget increase applicable to CSDP missions, the funds are insufficient and their management by the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Services needs to be rendered more coherent.

The reliance on national military, civilian and financial contributions gives major European countries an extraordinary power to reject those missions or mechanisms that oblige them to make significant contributions (Germany and Sweden in EUFOR Chad) or to demand – in exchange for their contributions– the control of the decision-making process and a more prominent role and greater visibility in the missions (France contributed 53% of EUFOR Chad/CAR's troops).

Presidencies must aim for synchronisation between the political decision-making processes, operation planning and the generation of forces, so that missions are not approved unless the necessary resources are guaranteed. When synchronisation has worked, it has been possible to conduct missions as demanding as the Concordia mission in the Balkans and Atalanta in the Horn of Africa. But when common decision-making has underestimated the availability of resources, either it has not been possible to deploy the missions (Darfur), or they have been delayed (it took six months to assemble 16 helicopters and 10 transport aircraft for EUFOR Chad/CAR) or they have been deficient, as was the case of Kosovo and Afghanistan. Presidencies must also continue to support initiatives like permanent structural cooperation, the division of tasks, functional specialisation, the pooling of resources and outsourcing, which can increase collective resources and reduce the dependence on individual countries.

In a Europe where citizen welfare is being scaled down and where many are questioning their governments' decisions to intervene in international missions, Presidencies must focus on streamlining the EU's intervention criteria. The influence of an international player is not gauged by the number of missions it conducts but by the results that are achieved. Presidencies must help change the mentality of those in charge of the missions in order to shift the focus to mission quality and not quantity. The EU must take advantage of the emergence of new global and regional players to share with them the responsibilities of international security, within the complementary framework advocated by a comprehensive approach.

Reasons to Demand Accountability in Respect of the Missions

European governments are finding it increasingly difficult to justify to their own citizens their involvement in international security missions, especially those where costs do not translate into results. Because of the need to secure and maintain political and social support for these missions, many countries have established democratic supervision mechanisms to authorise involvement in international initiatives. These mechanisms apply mainly to military missions, but they have increased the influence of parliamentary

debates and opinion polls in the approval of and continued involvement in missions. The general tendency of governments asking for prior approval before sending troops abroad forces them to justify the reasons for their involvement in such missions, the goals thereof, results obtained and human, material and financial resources necessary to implement them.

It is true that not all 27 EU member states have accountability mechanisms, that these mechanisms vary from one country to another and that they are all in the test phase. But it is also true that they have become widespread and that the governments which were previously opposed to being scrutinised are now benefiting from the support and legitimacy it affords them. At EU level, there are not yet similar mechanisms in place due to the democratic shortfall of the CSDP in general, and missions are not subject to public scrutiny. However, it will not be long before societies and parliaments that are used to demanding accountability from their governments with regard to missions start insisting on the same from Brussels, so it would be a good idea if the next presidencies began preparing the institutions and changing the procedures so as to improve accountability.

A first step would be to increase the information available regarding the status, results and lessons learned from the missions. Official civilian and military evaluations do not filter down to civilian society and the constraints on open information are compounded by the lack of methodological instruments for assessing CFSP missions, hampering self-criticism and learning. Accordingly, it would be advisable for the next Presidencies to present initiatives to boost the information flow and develop more transparent evaluation mechanisms and indicators. This would enable them to increase the interaction between national parliaments and the European Parliament, Europeanising the defence commissions, in order to foster greater social involvement, as suggested by the EU Institute for Security Studies.

Until now, most CSDP missions have lacked a strategy clearly marking out the EU's vital interests and priorities at play, the strategic objectives, resources needed and how these resources will be used. European public opinion and MEPs do not have that information because the available public documents are too general and the concepts of crisis management and operation plans (OPLANS) are confidential. Without having access to these aspects, it is very difficult to know why missions are approved and what strategic effects they have. Neither are there efficient reporting mechanisms for MEPs to receive this kind of information confidentially, since governments avoid being accountable to the European Parliament by arguing that they are accountable to their own national parliaments, and they avoid being accountable to the latter by arguing that the decisions are taken in Brussels. As a result, in the EU, missions are as likely to be as out of step with societies as they already are in member states, and the way to prevent this is for those responsible for the missions to provide transparent and systematic accounts of the results of the missions.

Conclusion: The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the launch of the European External Action Service are an opportunity to introduce reporting and assessment mechanisms to render CSDP missions more democratically legitimate and accountable than now. The European Parliament now has a greater capacity to supervise and interact with the High Representative and the European External Action Service, for them to provide more information on missions financed with European funds or responding to requests from the President of the Parliament or the External Affairs Committee concerning the CFSP. The European Parliament also receives periodical reports and can

draft non-binding recommendations with the information received during visits, hearings and open sources. However, European institutions have little capacity to demand accountability from those responsible for CSDP missions whose financing and resources come from governmental sources.

Consequently, and although it hardly seems logical to ask Presidencies to promote transparency and supervision of the intergovernmental system, they must do exactly that, because establishing a European open evaluation system would help European citizens identify better with the CSDP missions and would nurture Europe's strategic culture. In a strategic context such as that of the next few years, in which the available resources will shrink, there will be no shortage of people questioning the wisdom of the EU continuing to expand the number and complexity of CSDP missions without those responsible for managing them being asked to provide explanations with regard to their goals and results. As well as official assessment mechanisms, a more open and transparent evaluation system must be implemented to enable governments and institutions to share the lessons learned with MEPs and civil society. Furthermore, the implementation of such a mechanism would help advance towards monitoring procedures based on the best national practices and strengthen democratic supervision by national parliaments since they would be able to verify the information they receive from their governments against the information received from Brussels.

Since this is a long-term process, the immediate steps for Presidencies should be aimed at creating evaluation, supervision and communication instruments that affect CSDP missions that do not have a significant military component. Presidencies must try to put an end to the current dilution of responsibilities throughout the institutional universe and the various decision-making levels and start defining and personalising responsibilities. In the long term, in order to do the same with military missions, presidencies must foster cooperation between the European Parliament and national parliaments in order to consolidate the principles of accountability and accessibility, regulate open or classified information systems, harmonise the evaluation procedures and methodologies and promote the strategic communication of European leaders with regard to CSDP missions. Now that Presidencies have lost much of their prominence in CSDP missions, their work must be aimed at consolidating the missions by fostering the EU's credibility and efficacy as a leading player in global security.

In summary, Presidencies must: (1) recast their role in CSDP missions towards monitoring and supervision; (2) introduce intervention criteria to synchronise political decision-making, operations planning and generation of resources (affordability); and (3) introduce transparency, evaluation and supervision mechanisms for the missions (accountability).

Félix Arteaga

Senior Analyst for Security and Defence, Elcano Royal Institute