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DIIS Brief

EU Civilian Rapid Reaction – trouble ahead!

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This brief takes issue with the prevailing view that the ESDP capacity building process is easier and has been more successful in the civilian than in the military field. It argues that civilian capacity building is harder than military capacity building, demonstrates that the EU's civilian rapid reaction capacity is considerably smaller and less integrated than it is generally assumed, and that the capacity goals set for 2008 are unattainable. Yet another major EU expectations-capability gap has been created and there is now a real danger that this gap will seriously damage the EU's reputation as the global leader in civilian crisis management.

This brief summarizes the article: 'The ESDP and Civilian Rapid Reaction: Adding Value is Harder than Expected', *European Security*, Vol. 15 No 3 (September 2006), pp. 275-297. The author can be contacted at: pvj@ifs.ku.dk.

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Since 2000 the EU has deservedly established a reputation as the world's premier civilian crisis manager. It has built a civilian rapid reaction crisis management capacity in record time and launched twelve civilian missions in the course of just three years. In the military field the record is less impressive; none of the major capacity goals have been met and only four military crisis management operations had been launched by mid-2006. This reputation is likely to be destroyed unless EU member states undertake serious reforms both at the national and EU levels and invest far greater resources in their civilian rapid reaction capacities. This brief will argue that the challenge of building a reliable civilian rapid reaction capacity is much greater than building a military one, that an expectations-capability gap is widening in the civilian field, and that the EU will be unable to meet the objectives set out in the Civilian Headline Goal process launched in December 2004.

The argument falls in three parts. The first spells out why civilian capacity building is harder. The second assesses how far the EU has come with respect to establishing its civilian rapid reaction capacity. The third part analyzes whether the reforms proposed as part of the Headline 2008 process can remedy the weaknesses identified in the preceding analysis. Findings are summed up in a conclusion at the end.

Why civilian capacity building is harder

While there is no doubt that the attainment of the military capacity goals set out by the EU (and NATO) will be vastly more expensive than the creation of an effective integrated civilian rapid reaction capacity, establishing the latter nevertheless remains a much greater challenge. The key problem in the military field is above all one of political will and money. The concepts, doctrines and experience required to establish the desired capabilities are available, and the process of transformation from territorial defence to expeditionary postures is well underway in most EU member states. Military capacity building is therefore to a large extent a question of replicating national systems at the EU level, reorganizing existing national capacities and procuring new equipment.

The situation is fundamentally different in the civilian field. Here the problem is not just a question of will and money but also of capacity and design. Concepts, doctrines and standards have had to be developed more or less from scratch. While there is a wealth of operational experience to draw from, multifunctional civilian rapid

reaction capacities in the integrated form that the EU is trying to establish do not exist at the national level in EU member states or anywhere else. An effective EU capacity has to be built on effective civilian rapid reaction capacities established at the national level, but the process of establishing them have only just begun. While considerable process has been made in the field of police and civilian protection (rescue personnel), the establishment of rapid reaction capacities in the areas of civil administration and rule of law remain in their infancy, and the reform process at the national level is bound to be even slower than has been the case in the military field.

The civilian process is complicated by the fact that the civilian personnel have to be recruited from several national state ministries and institutions, including ministries of Development, Foreign Affairs, Interior and Justice, most of which have little or no experience of deploying personnel abroad on short notice on potentially dangerous crisis management operations. The need for organizational reform and cultural adjustment is therefore much greater in the civilian field than has been the case in the military field, and the civilian actors have less incentive to undertake it. Unlike the military, none of the civilian bureaucracies have lost their primary domestic function. International service will consequently remain a marginal activity and with only a small number of civilian personnel serving abroad, the resistance to making international crisis management service attractive will be strong.

Finally, the civilian capacity building process is hampered by fierce institutional infighting between the intergovernmental EU Council and the EU Commission. This problem does not exist in the military field, where the Commission has no competence or capacity. The turf war between the Commission and the European Council Secretariat tasked by the EU Council to establish the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) crisis management capacity is fuelled by an unclear division of labour. Generally speaking, the Commission can be said to be in charge of long-term or structural conflict prevention, i.e. development assistance and post-conflict peace building as well as humanitarian assistance, whereas the Council Secretariat is responsible for short-term rapid reaction crisis management. In practice there is considerable overlap between Commission programmes and the new civilian crisis management bodies in the Council Secretariat. The Commission pays for most of the costs related to the training and running of actual crisis management operations, the Commission and the Council Secretariat run two different civil protection schemes, and their coordination of field activities is limited.

How much civilian rapid reaction capacity has the EU established?

When the EU set out to establish its capacity it faced a series of formidable challenges. The EU had to significantly increase the pool of qualified civilian personnel available for rapid deployment and organize it into integrated rapid reaction deployment packages that had to be built from scratch. This would require new recruitment and selection systems both nationally and at the EU level, as well as the establishment of new joint civil and civil–military training programs and new multidisciplinary civilian force packages. In addition, an EU capacity for planning and mission support had to be established, and new funding and procurement mechanisms enabling the quick release of the necessary funds had to be devised. The efforts undertaken to meet these requirements will be analyzed below.

Increasing the personnel pool

The personnel committed by member states to civilian crisis management appear in Table 1.

Table 1 ESDP civilian rapid reaction capacities

Police

5,761 police of which 1,400 are deployable within 30 days; 13 rapid deployable, integrated police units (ranging from 60-110 officers each); and four police headquarters, two of which are available for rapid deployment.

Rule of Law

631 experts including 72 judges, 48 prosecutors, 38 administration services, 72 penitentiary system officials and 34 others. 60 officials are available for rapid deployment within 60 days.

Civilian Administration

562 officials able to take on assignments of, among other functions, civil registration, local administration and custom services.

Civil Protection

4,988 personnel, many of whom are organized in rapid deployment packages available at hours notice.

Monitoring

505 personnel.

Creation of integrated deployment packages

The capacities in Table 1 have so far not been integrated in multifunctional deployable force packages. The only formed units covering a range of specialized functions are the integrated and formed police units, which consist of police with military status (i.e. carabinieri and gendarmes), and the civilian protection forces that are drawn from the rescue personnel deployment packages that have been organized

at the national level in many member states. At the moment there is little integration across the four priority areas (police, rule of law, civil administration and protection) and between the military and the civilian reaction forces. Moreover, most of the personnel with the partial exception of the integrated police units and the civil protection personnel are individually recruited. A Swedish initiative aimed at addressing this weakness through the establishment of Civilian Response Teams (CRTs) is still at a conceptual stage. By the end of 2006, the ambition is to establish a pool of up to 100 trained experts drawn from the four priority areas, who can be mobilized and deployed within five days in multi-functional packages to conduct assessment and fact-finding missions and facilitate mission start-up.

Civilian training

Although training is a national responsibility and member states are expected to provide the EU with well-trained personnel, several initiatives have been taken at the EU level to develop common concepts, standards and courses for civilian training. Most progress has been made in the field of police where training courses have been run since 2001 in cooperation with the UN, and a European Police College (CEPOL) has been established. In addition, ESDP crisis management exercises involving the civilian crisis management bodies and forces have been conducted since 2002. Even so, civilian training remains in its infancy. Pre-mission training to ensure that the mostly individually recruited civilian personnel are able to function as a team immediately upon deployment is still very limited, and joint training of civilian experts from the four priority areas and between civilian and military personnel remains limited as well.

Capacity for mission planning, management and support

A Police Unit (10 personnel) has been set up to develop and maintain the police capacity. It is responsible for planning and conducting police operations (including integrated planning and coordination, situation assessment, preparation of exercises and definition of legal frameworks and rules). An additional 20 personnel are involved in planning, managing and supporting civilian missions within the Council Secretariat. In comparison some 200 military officers are performing the same functions for military operations in the Military Staff (EUMS).

The civilian capacity was strengthened with the establishment of a civil-

military planning cell in the EUMS in 2005. This planning cell has assisted in the planning of the civilian missions to Aceh and Rafah and done work on security sector reform. When fully established in January 2007, the civil-military cell will have the capacity rapidly to set up an EU Operations Centre for a particular operation consisting of some 90 personnel, of whom 8-10 may be civilian.

Thus, the EU capacity for planning and supporting civilian crisis management remains very limited and in danger of being overwhelmed by the growing number of civilian operations. It has been a struggle to manage the existing operations even though they have been small in size, tasked with relatively simple tasks, primarily monitoring and advisory functions, and had relatively long lead times.

Financing

Effective procedures for the rapid financing of civilian crisis management operations using ESDP capacities do still not exist, and all operations have been financed in an ad hoc manner. Even if funds exist they cannot be released quickly in a crisis because the procedures take at least 3–5 months. The participating states have covered some of the costs related to the secondment of their personnel while the rest has been covered by the Community budget in a variety of ways that have changed from one operation to the next. The question of financing has thus been a key difficulty encountered in the planning of most operations and it remains unresolved. Rapid deployment hence depends on the willingness of personnel contributors to provide the funds and equipment needed for effective mission start-up.

Will Civilian Headline Goal 2008 solve the problems?

The overall objective of the Civilian Headline Goal (CHG) process is to enable the EU to conduct several civilian missions concurrently and deploy multifunctional integrated civilian crisis management packages on 30 days' notice. To attain it, the Council Secretariat has made a number of sensible reform proposals including: improved personnel databases; the establishment of a start-up fund and an equipment warehouse to facilitate rapid deployment; enhanced planning and mission support; new capabilities such as monitoring; increased cooperation across the four priority areas; the establishment of multifunctional deployment packages; and an increase in the funds for civilian crisis management on the CFSP budget.

When judged against the problems that have characterized the EU's civilian crisis management operations, the CHG is aiming for the right objective, and the steps taken and planned to attain them also make perfect sense. The current pace of reform is too slow for the EU to be able to meet its stated ambitions by 2008, however. Three reforms cannot be ducked any longer if the EU is to build a capacity to deploy sizable integrated civilian mission packages at short notice.

First, the civilian expertise in the Council Secretariat needs to be strengthened. As a result of the CHG, which requires member states to update their commitments and provide very detailed information about their personnel, the civilian personnel in the Council Secretariat have literally been buried in information, and the eight persons put in charge of day-to-day management of the CHG have little chance of processing this information as they also have other duties to attend to, including mission planning and support.

Second, the EU has to allocate more money to civilian crisis management and introduce procedures allowing the quick release of funds. To facilitate rapid deployment the proposed start-up fund and equipment warehouse should be established without further delay. Their necessity has been self-evident since the deployments of EUPM and Proxima, and the chaotic process preceding the recent deployment of the Aceh Monitoring Mission further underscored it.

Unfortunately, funding seems destined to remain a problem in the foreseeable future. The EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Solana has estimated that €120 million will be required for 2006 to fund ongoing operations and establish a reserve for unforeseen contingencies. Yet the entire CFSP budget for 2006, which covers far more than operations, only amounts to €102 million. The CFSP budgets for 2007–13 amounting to €200–250 million a year also fall short of Solana's request for 300 million a year.

Third, and most important, member states have establish reliable standby capacities at the national level. A strengthening of the Council Secretariat and increased and more reliable funding of civilian crisis management will not make much difference if member states remain incapable of providing high-quality personnel with the right skills in greater numbers. Although the EU personnel deployed on EU missions make up only a small part of the total committed by member states, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the Council Secretariat to obtain high quality personnel to meet current demands. These problems are likely to

grow as the EU takes on more and bigger operations like the police mission in Kosovo which the EU is preparing to take over from the UN in 2007.

The only durable solution to this problem is to expand the force pool of high-quality personnel and this will take time. As pointed out earlier, this will require the introduction of new personnel policies at the national level that make international service attractive both financially and career-wise for the individual and more acceptable to the civil organizations that are asked to make their personnel available. The simplest way to do the latter is to increase the budgets of these organizations enabling them to create a surplus pool of personnel. Governments would consequently have to provide the relevant organizations with financial incentives to reduce the extent of bureaucratic infighting and foot-dragging that demands for releasing personnel to international operations can be expected to trigger.

While progress is being made at the national level with respect to establishing standby capacities in each of the four priority areas, few if any states are yet capable of deploying integrated packages involving more than one priority area and none seem likely to have a capacity to do so by 2008. The battle groups established to generate capacity in the military field could serve as inspiration to speed up the process. Member states should be encouraged to establish rapid reaction packages involving personnel from the four priority areas on a national or multinational basis. The establishment of civilian 'stabilization groups' would greatly facilitate mission start-up and make it possible to use the lead-nation or framework nation concept that has proved quite effective with respect to overcoming both collective action and command and control problems in multinational military operations in the civilian field as well.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom pushed the battle group initiative, and the lack of great power interest has been a major problem with respect to civilian capacity building. Civilian crisis management has primarily been driven by the Nordic countries, including the non-EU member Norway, the Netherlands and Ireland, and it will be up to these countries, the High Representative and the civilian experts in the Council Secretariat to keep the process going. If these countries committed themselves to taking the lead in developing integrated civilian crisis management standby capacities they might inspire other EU members to follow suit. If they do not take the lead, it is difficult to see how the EU can meet its CHG objectives in the foreseeable future on anything but a minor scale.

Conclusion

This brief has made the case that civilian capacity building is harder than military capacity building for three principal reasons: 1) it has to start from scratch because multifunctional civilian rapid deployment packages do not yet exist anywhere in the world; 2) more civilian ministries are involved at the national level and they have less incentive to engage in substantial reform than the military because they did not lose their *raison d'être* after the end of the Cold War; and 3) because civilian capacity building at the EU level is facing fierce opposition from the EU Commission.

The brief has demonstrated that the EU has less civilian rapid reaction capacity than it is generally assumed. While the member state commitments to the EU look impressive on paper, the EU is having difficulty deploying and sustaining a tenth of the police forces committed by member states; the process of creating rapidly deployable integrated civilian teams has only just begun; the capacity for civilian mission planning and support is clearly inadequate and effective funding mechanisms have yet to be devised. Finally, the brief has argued that CHG 2008 goals are unattainable because the member states are unwilling to undertake the necessary reforms and investments.

This rather pessimistic assessment of the EU civilian crisis management capacity will no doubt strike many as unduly harsh. It is therefore important to put the critique into perspective. The EU has made considerable progress and the process can only be described as a success. Indeed, member state commitments to civilian crisis management and the launch of twelve civilian missions have helped to establish the EU as the world's premier civilian crisis manager. The point is not that the EU efforts to establish a civilian rapid reaction capacity have been unsuccessful. The problem that this brief has sought to highlight is that the expectations-capability gap in the field of EU civilian crisis management is widening, and that the EU is in danger of becoming the victim of its own success. The EU approach to civilian crisis management is identical to the one employed by the UN during the Cold War when UN peacekeeping operations were run on shoestring budgets with a handful of officials in charge of planning and mission support. This approach worked as long as the operations were simple and few in number, but it collapsed completely when UN peace operations grew in number and became more complex in the early 1990s.

The same thing is likely to happen to EU civilian crisis management operations if the current expansion continues. The capacity is stretched to the breaking

point and EU now faces a choice between scaling back its ambitions and activities or putting its money where its mouth is. Unfortunately, EU member states seem mostly likely to opt for the former option.

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