The Crisis Management and Planning Directorate: Recalibrating ESDP Planning and Conduct Capacities

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Nearly one decade after the inception of the ESDP as a security and defence policy branch of EU foreign policy, the field presents itself as highly institutionalized and considerably matured. ESDP has seen the rapid creation of a whole new set of organizational structures, with the institutional surroundings of the Council Secretariat undergoing the most fundamental changes. However, even after completing no less than 10 civilian and military operations and launching another 12 missions within six years, the institutional structures that support the planning and conduct of these operational activities are yet to come of age. As a matter of fact, throughout the years, the ESDP’s institutional development has very often lagged behind actual operational requirements. To this day, the institutional setup is far from offering a neatly functioning planning and support structure for the operationalization of ESDP, particularly in the civilian realm of crisis management.

This article takes this general trend in the ESDP’s institutional development as a framework to contextualize current efforts towards the creation of a new Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD) within the Council Secretariat, which is to merge the former directorates VIII (Defence Aspects) and IX (Civilian Crisis Management) of DG E (External and Politico-Military Affairs), and thus, to unify civilian and military planning at the strategic level. In many respects, once put into place, this new structure could eradicate many of the organizational intricacies that have kept ESDP from smooth operational performance in the past. What it could bring about more specifically is a new institutional framework for early integrated planning, which is an ability that ESDP has been lacking so far. However, the integrative potential of this new structure will greatly depend on the specific way it is designed, and on the constellation of administrative cultures that will characterize it.

Before discussing the most recent developments around the establishment of the CMPD, this article will highlight the most relevant steps that have been taken so far in order to improve the EU’s capacities for the planning and conduct of crisis management operations. As the creation of CMPD calls particular attention to the relationship between civilian and military planning, this assessment will focus particularly on the way the trajectories of change in each domain have differed from each other. As this article will demonstrate, the two strands have not only advanced parallel to and mostly decoupled from each other, but the development of the civilian planning structures has also been shaped if not dominated by a certain

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1 The content of this article is based on interviews conducted in 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2009. It builds on research in the framework of the European Foreign and Security Policy Studies Programme (EFSPS) funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.
military bias, which has characterized ESDP from the outset.

**ESDP and its civilian annex**

From its very early stages, after the idea of a common security and defence policy had emerged in Pörtschach in 1998, through the European Council meetings of Cologne (June 1999) and Helsinki (December 1999) up to the European Council of Feira in 2000, ESDP was presented as a policy project of a predominantly military nature. Although non-military aspects had been included conceptually from the beginning, the civilian component of ESDP received much less political attention than its military counterpart. Feira saw the definition of a Civilian Headline Goal, and the following process of civilian capability development by far exceeded general expectations in terms of both speed and quantitative success. Throughout the subsequent development of ESDP, however, the military strand continued to dominate the civilian side, most importantly with respect to institutional design and conceptual framing. Looking back at the early years of ESDP, civilian crisis management has very much taken on the character of a by-product or afterthought of the ‘actual’ ESDP, which is essentially military and allegedly more ambitious or high-profile than its civilian annex.

When at the Nice Council in late 2000 the member states agreed on the establishment of permanent structures ‘to enable the European Union to fully assume its responsibilities’ the focus was on the creation of ‘political and military bodies’, i.e. the Political and Security Committee (PSC), the Military Committee (EUMC) and the Military Staff (EUMS).\(^2\) In May 2000 the Council had already decided on the establishment of a Committee for the Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM).\(^3\) However, no civilian counterpart for the EUMS was put into place to support the CIVCOM in its work. What actually drove institutional development in civilian ESDP in many instances was the good will and ambition of small state presidencies. Under the Swedish presidency in the first half of 2001, a Police Unit was created to provide expert capacities for the planning and conduct of EU police missions. In contrast to the EUMS, which constituted a self-standing entity immediately subordinated to the EUMC, however, the Police Unit was not directly assigned to the CIVCOM but attached to the Council Secretariat and placed within DG E IX. Moreover, while at this point, the EUMS already had some 140 staff at its disposal, the Police Unit was allocated no more than 8 officers in total.

However, the discrepancy between the military and civilian structures was not only a matter of the number of staff allocated. More specifically, there was also a clear lack of expertise at the intermediate level among the staff assigned to *inter alia* provide advice on the planning and conduct of civilian crisis management missions – the CIVCOM itself. While the EUMC as its military counterpart was made up of experienced and high-ranking military officers, CIVCOM consisted of junior level diplomats with little to no expertise in

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\(^2\) European Council, Presidency Conclusions, Nice 7-9 December 2000.

\(^3\) Council Decision 2000/354/CFSP of 22 May 2000 setting up a Committee for civilian aspects of crisis management.
crisis and conflict resolution, let alone specific mission management or planning. The provision of a Police Unit to support CIVCOM did not meet – to say the least – the functional and structural needs of early ESDP operationality. As a result, the early days of CIVCOM and the management of civilian aspects of ESDP operations have been characterized by ‘day-to-day firefighting’, ‘improvised measures for internal emergencies’ and ‘well-meant but more than courageous trial-failing’. One of the immediate consequences of this precarious situation was that CIVCOM was simply lacking institutional capacities to provide for conceptual advance planning and generic mission design.

Apart from its structural weakness, early civilian crisis management also saw a clear dominance of military thinking in the way it was framed conceptually. Early conceptual work on civilian crisis management, e.g. the development of generic planning concepts, clearly reflected the military approach, and where the military influence was less incise, the police element created a bias of its own. Civilian crisis management planning was not comprehensive, and in the face of the growing functional agenda of ESDP, it lagged far behind the political ambitions of the policy-makers. Critics have been divided about whether this military bias was the result of strategic politics driven by single member states, of institutional isomorphism caused e.g. by Solana coming from a military context, or whether it was indeed a military thrust resulting from the impetus of the St Malo breakthrough and the respective expectations held of the EU to finally include military elements in its foreign political profile. While it has probably been a combination of all these factors, there are also arguments less specific to the ESDP case. At the time civilian ESDP turned operational, fairly little expertise was available about the planning and conduct of non-military crisis management in general. In fact, planning comes more natural to military actors and police than to other civilian branches, which are still included in the functional spectrum of ESDP (inter alia rule of law, monitoring and civil administration). In any case, while indeed there was no generic model to draw upon, there could have been more political enthusiasm for developing a framework to serve distinctly civilian purposes.

Topping up support structures within the Council Secretariat

The provision of a mission support structure to substantiate the civilian strand of ESDP in its planning and conduct capacity had been discussed for some time before DG E IX finally saw the creation in October 2003 of a mission support section and the recruitment of 20 additional staff for the very purpose. At this point, the conduct of EUPM as the first ESDP operation ever had already brought to light that the existing structures were too weak, too inflexible and functionally inadequate for the actual deployment and conduct of

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civilian missions. The specialized section put into place was tasked with coordinating the different aspects related to mission support and with assisting the ESDP civilian missions in their daily management. It was to cooperate closely with other responsible services in the Council Secretariat such as the geographical directorates, the legal service, the EUMS or the Coordination Unit and to relay questions from the missions to them as appropriate. As a result of this reform, (which internally and in the face of the operational challenges rather looked like an emergency measure), DG E IX grew from some 10 support staff in 2003 to 32 by late 2005 and 40 by 2006. Other parts of the Secretariat were also strengthened, such as the units for relations with third countries, international organizations and horizontal issues. However, compared to the capacities available to the military planners, the civilian side remained chronically and notoriously understaffed for some years to come. As the mere topping up of existing structures had clearly failed to meet the operational requirements, mission support for civilian ESDP continued to be an issue at every European Council meeting.

The Civil–Military Cell

The creation of the Civil–Military Cell in 2003 was preceded by a fierce debate about one of the most controversial issues in ESDP: the creation of autonomous command and control (C2) structures for the EU. In April 2003, Belgium, Germany, France, and Luxembourg met at the so-called ‘Chocolate Summit’ to initiate a decisive leap forward in security and defence matters. Under the moral lead of France, the four chocolate producing nations advocated the adoption of a mechanism of collective defence comparable to NATO’s article V, enhanced coordination of security and defence political positions as well as joint efforts towards the build-up of stronger military capabilities including cooperation in training, exercising and force planning. The most contentious suggestion put forward by France, however, was the establishment of a permanent operational headquarters (OHQ) to provide ESDP with the capacities to plan and conduct military operations without recourse to NATO assets. While in the face of the Iraq war most of the other points found little attention, the C2 question led to major divisions within the EU. It was the British in particular but also Italy and the Netherlands who fiercely opposed any such exclusive solution and eventually pushed the developments towards a considerably weaker compromise, the Civil–Military Cell. Located within the EUMS, the Civil–Military Cell was to provide capacities for early warning and situation assessment, and in case of an ESDP operation, to provide support to strategic planning under the auspices of the EUMC and CIVCOM either through a national OHQ (framework concept) or through an autonomous EU OHQ, which would be established on demand by

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7 Lessons from the Planning of the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUPM), Autumn 2001–December 2002, 14 July 2003, 11206/03.
9 Joint Statement of the Heads of State and Government of Germany, France, Luxembourg and Belgium on European Defence, Brussels, 29 April 2003 (‘Tervuren Declaration’).
activating the cell’s standby Operations Centre.10

One of the key assets of the cell was its allegedly integrated civil-military setup: bringing together military and civilian (mostly police) planners as well as 1-2 Commission officials, the cell was expected to generate wider integrative effects in both intra- and inter-pillar terms. However, it was again the strong military bias that largely kept the cell from living up to this potential. As the cell had been located within the EUMS, the military soon absorbed the civilian elements to eventually produce a hybrid but functionally disintegrated entity that operated in relative isolation from the civilian core staff at the Council Secretariat. In a way, the cell has suffered from the political context of its own establishment. As it was meant to suit both the French claim for a military planning capacity and the British concerns about duplication, the result could not be much more substantial. This also has to be kept in mind when assessing the value of the Civil-Military Cell in providing mission support for civilian operations.11 It has not only failed to truly act as a ‘system integrator’ that would unify the civilian and the military strand of ESDP, it has to some extent also proved a suboptimal

solution to the chronic lack of integral mission support capacities for civilian crisis management.12

The Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC)

For several years, the gap between actual workload and the institutional capacities available to master it kept weighing heavily on the fragmented structure of civilian ESDP. Much of this burden centred upon DG E IX, which was not only in charge of running several concurrent civilian missions, and developing lessons learned and best practices, it was also serving as an institutional platform for the management and guidance of the civilian capability development process. While military ESDP could draw upon the administrative support of DG E VIII as well as on the experience and expertise in the EUMS, the civilian side was largely left with a dysfunctional and essentially ill-designed institutional base.

Previous experiences had shown that a mere increase in staff does not eradicate the basic flaw about the overall institutional arrangement that the planning and conduct of civilian missions had been built upon. In fact, as mentioned above, the establishment of an integral mission support structure for the planning and conduct of civilian operations has never fully disappeared from the agenda.13 However, it was only in June 2007 that the so-called Civilian

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10 Civil-Military Cell – Terms of Reference, 15 June 2004, 10580/04. In line with their attitude towards the Tervuren initiative, the UK together with a group of other member states strongly opposed the creation of a standing structure to provide for autonomous planning. The compromise was to create a core staff unit, the so-called Operations Centre, which could be activated in cases where neither the recourse to NATO C2 structures nor a national OHQ would be available options.

11 The provision of mission support was one of the main functions assigned to the cell at its creation. So far, the cell has contributed to the planning and conduct of the civilian missions in Aceh, Darfur, Guinea-Bissau and the Palestinian Territories.


13 Even though the matter is often referred to as part of the so-called ‘Hampton Court agenda’ (with reference to the informal Council meeting in Hampton Court in 2005), it has in fact been discussed from the very early stages of ESDP operability, i.e. since late 2002.
Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) was put into place to finally provide a civilian counterpart to the EUMS and establish a unified civilian command structure directly answerable to the SG/HR and led by a Civilian Operations Commander. CPCC was to fill at least part of the structural gap that years of ad hoc and point-by-point adaptation had left. Although some member states were showing reluctance to really name the new structure a ‘civilian OHQ’, CPCC factually took on the functions of such a permanent C2 capacity: the planning, deployment, conduct and review of civilian operations. Personnel to staff the new structure were mainly drawn from DG E IX as well as from the Police Unit, which was in fact absorbed as a whole. As staff had to be drawn together from other units, and personnel were hired in addition, the CPCC only became operational in May 2008. That month also saw the appointment of Dutch diplomat Kees Klompenhouwer as the first CPCC director and Civilian Operations Commander. Today, the CPCC is made up of a ‘Conduct of Operations’, a ‘Horizontal Coordination’, and a ‘Mission Support Unit’, and, inclusive of administrative support, has around 65 staff at its disposal. In accordance with its terms of reference, the EUMS, through its Civil-Military Cell, was meant to keep providing mission support to the CPCC, most particularly in cases involving the use of military means. Moreover, the Watch-Keeping Capability (WKC) that has been built up within the cell’s Operations Centre since late 2007, and has been operational since mid 2008, is available to support the conduct and monitoring of civilian operations by establishing a 24/7 link to the theatre level.\textsuperscript{15}

The Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD)

Although the creation of the CPCC has to be seen as an important step forward, it was clear that yet another reform was needed to really grasp the full potential of finally having a civilian counterpart to the military chain of command. The build-up of CPCC had left DG E IX as a skeleton whose core capacities had been extracted to substantiate the new civilian support structure. Despite the staffing problems, there still was an essential link missing that would integrate the civilian and the military chains of command below the PSC level. In December 2008, the European Council agreed on the creation of the so-called Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD),\textsuperscript{16} which from a structural point of view would mainly involve the merger of DG E VIII and IX to integrate civilian and military planning at the strategic level. More specifically, however, the build-up of CMPD implies a fundamental reshuffling of all capacities potentially available at this level, and as such a basic recalibration of the entire setup of ESDP planning and conduct.

At the time this article was finalized, the specific constellation and staffing level of the CMPD had not yet been specified.

\textsuperscript{14} Javier Solana welcomes the appointment of Kees Klompenhouwer as first Civilian Operations Commander, 14 May 2008, S167/08.

\textsuperscript{15} Presidency Report on ESDP, 18 June 2007, 10910/07. The establishment of a WKC within the Civil-Military Cell is to be seen as a follow-up measure to an informal meeting of the EU defence ministers in Wiesbaden in March 2007. More generally, the so-called ‘Post Wiesbaden agenda’ involved general restructuring of the EUMS.

However, as early investigations show, the CMPD might reflect much of the composition of the so-called Crisis Response Coordinating Teams (CRCTs), which so far have been convened on an ad hoc and case-by-case basis. According to the CRCT model, the CMPD would include personnel from all geographical task forces within the Council Secretariat, from the SitCen, SatCen, the EUMS, and most particularly from its Civil-Military Cell as well as from relevant Commission services. A comprehensive screening of human resources available within the Council Secretariat was conducted earlier this year, and an additional number of seconded national experts and officials will be hired in the upcoming months. The CMPD will constitute a standing structure and it will be located at deputy level within DG E. It will be led by a civilian head, who has yet to be appointed, and a military deputy, most probably the acting director of the Civil-Military Cell. Whatever the CMPD will eventually look like, drawing on the specific experiences made in the context of the CPCC, it can be expected that one of the main challenges for the new structure will lie in the diversity of administrative cultures that it will have to bring together. This does not only include the familiar gap between military and civilian working modes but also well-known discrepancies between civil servants and seconded personnel, and between various organizational cultures constituting the civilian spectrum of ESDP (policemen, judges, security sector experts, etc.).

**Conclusion**

When criticizing the way planning and conduct capacities have been developed in the framework of ESDP it is important to consider that most of the institutional changes occurred during periods of intense operationality, during which not only the workload and number of concurrent operations was rising continuously but also the functional agenda of ESDP crisis management was growing broader with every deployment. This partly explains why ESDP developments at the institutional level until very recently mostly came about as ex post adjustments of existing preliminary – and mostly suboptimal – structures rather than as timely and strategically motivated reforms that would provide for smooth planning and deployment procedures. Looking at the speed and extent of structural changes, this manner of growing with its tasks and its failures respectively has arguably been very dynamic and fruitful. However, for a very long time it has not brought about the structural setup ESDP required from the outset. The creation of the CPCC and the subsequent decision to unify planning structures at the strategic level under the umbrella of CMPD certainly mark a departure in ESDP institutional development from this sort of contingent and haphazard modelling. Once operational, the CMPD might change the face of ESDP conduct radically. To what extent it will enhance the EU’s overall capacity to deliver on its potential remains to be seen.

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17 Interviews in June 2009.
18 Follow-Up to the CMCO Action Plan – Council Secretariat/Commission Outline Paper on the CRCT, 2 December 2002, 14400/2/02.