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Time for a European Civilian Reserve

A submission to the ippr Commission on National Security for the 21st Century

by Daniel Korski
Senior Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations

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Time for a European Civilian Reserve

This paper will argue that to create the necessary civilian capabilities in crisis situations for both common and unilateral use, the UK and like-minded allies should consider establishing a European civilian reserve – a reserve corps of 2,000 civilian specialists – with European citizens on stand-by for deployment.

In today's interconnected world, it is in the European Union's interest to help fragile, failing and post-conflict states. Instability in these countries does not only harm the lives of their own inhabitants – 870 million people or 14 per cent of the world's population, according to the World Bank: it also affects the lives of Europeans by creating refugee flows, hideouts for terrorists, and transit-points for the smuggling of contraband and people.

The focus of the 2003 EU Security Strategy on Europe's responsibility for global security was thus a step in the right direction. It described failed states as a 'key threat', and suggested that to deal with fragile, failing and post-conflict states successfully, the EU needed to dispatch the right people with the right skills to support local governments as soon as crises erupted (Council of the European Union 2003). Priority areas for assistance would include community policing, setting up court systems and public administration facilities and rebuilding infrastructure, schools and health clinics.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan and Iraq have shown how this can work. Where such teams are absent, it falls to the military to undertake tasks that they are neither trained for nor best placed to perform. Military power can be used only in a limited way to address societal problems such as economic development, governance reforms and judicial restructuring.

Yet despite the clear need to have trained civilians ready to deploy into conflict situations, progress towards building this kind of capacity has been slow at all levels. Indeed, the contrast between planning and resources of international military and civilian operations is striking. Civilian organisations frequently lack the human and financial resources to carry out the complex mandates given to them.

At the international level and particularly within the United Nations, it is likely that progress towards developing an effective civilian capability will continue to be constrained by the politically-induced inertia that has characterised UN reform for decades. A new UN Peacebuilding Commission was established in December 2005 to improve the way that the organisation helps countries to manage the transition from conflict to post-conflict development. But few analysts believe that it has developed at the right pace, and questions are now being raised about the UN's bread-and-butter role: peacekeeping. Richard Gowan recently argued that 'the idea of large-scale, multi-dimensional UN missions overseeing countries stumbling out of conflict may have run out of road' (Gowan 2008).

Problems with the UN are not only political, but also resource-based. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the UN's former Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, highlighted two areas 'crying out to be addressed': the processes to prepare the right capabilities – the troops, the specialised components, the police, the civilians, and how these are best brought to bear (Guéhenno 2004).

National efforts to develop civilian reserve forces have been equally protracted. The United States has been working to establish a civilian reserve for three years, and in his 2007 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush pledged to create a volunteer Civilian Reserve Corps. However, the initiative has yet to receive Congressional support and has met with opposition inside the State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Efforts in the UK to deliver a reliable, standing capacity to deploy civilians in crisis situations have also failed to come to fruition so far. The 1000-person 'task force' to which Prime Minister Gordon Brown referred when he unveiled the UK's National Security Strategy in March 2008 is essentially a list of people on a database who may or may not be ready and willing to deploy if approached.

This came nearly three years after then-International Development Secretary Hillary Benn told the House of Commons that the UK would be 'able, if necessary, to plan and organise a large-scale deployment of up to several hundred civilians, including police, as part of a post-conflict stabilisation operation by mid-2006' (Benn 2005).

Since national initiatives alone appear incapable of providing the necessary civilian capabilities, the time has come to think anew about alternatives.

Europe's capability gap

The EU should now be considered a serious security actor. In the last five years it has undertaken 20 crisis management operations as part of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which is designed to develop the EU's military capabilities while seeking to avoid costly duplication with NATO, at the same time as adding some modest muscle to its economic and diplomatic weight (see Witney 2008 and Dobbins 2008). The EU is unlikely to replace, or even challenge, NATO on the military front. But it has a natural advantage over the Atlantic Alliance in developing the kind of civilian capabilities required in modern missions.

NATO will always be a 'military-first' organisation, and states such as France are constantly watchful that it does not develop too far beyond its core security mission. As such, NATO has never been given the financial means to engage in civilian reconstruction tasks. The Alliance does not even have a common military budget, let alone funding for non-military purposes. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan are partly coordinated by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), but the civilian elements of all the teams – their funding, personnel and programmes – are determined by troop-contributing countries. Neither the International Staff in NATO nor the North Atlantic Council plays a role in this.

The EU is much better placed to develop effective crisis management capacities, drawing on its wealth of capabilities, mechanisms and instruments, and it has made considerable progress towards developing these capacities over the last five years. The European Commission manages a 1 billion Euro budget for development and has considerable experience helping countries in transition.

The EU's advantage notwithstanding – and in spite of commitments made at the Feira and Gothenburg Councils in 2000 and 2001 respectively – the development of a civilian crisis management capability inside the EU has been slower than expected. On paper, member states have pledged to make 5,000 police officers and 200 post-conflict specialists available. But the feasibility of sending these volunteers into the field has since been called into question. They tend to have day jobs in courts and police stations and they have to decide – and have the consent of their superiors – to take time off from their careers before they can be deployed. Few incentives exist for managers to release their personnel to serve in foreign countries. Voters want their taxes to pay first and foremost for services in their own communities. The British experience with the Territorial Army, and the Swedish and Finnish system of extended service for peace-keeping deployments by conscript volunteers, show that employers can be 'brought round' – but it is not easy.

The EU system relies on either experts loaned from its member states or external contractors. But only a few states, such as the UK and Germany, have developed formal systems to identify, train and deploy experts. In most cases, the same small group of people is deployed to various countries on an ad hoc basis.

Faced with these problems, the EU Civilian Headline Goals process – which guides the EU's capability build-up – was pushed back from 2008 to 2010. However, the Nice meeting of the European Council in December 2000 underlined the importance of operational capacity and the need for coherent and integrated responses to conflicts, as well as the strong synergy required between the military and civilian components.

Since then, progress has been made in a number of areas. The establishment in August 2007 of the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) in the Council Secretariat with a mandate to plan and conduct civilian ESDP operations has been a major step forward, and one that should improve the planning and management of missions. If ratified, the Lisbon Treaty will also create an External Action

Service, which promises to integrate the EU's various foreign policy tools in ways particularly helpful to post-conflict reconstruction.

Training of personnel for deployments is now being organised by the EU Training Group (ETG) – a European Commission initiative to coordinate training of civilians in a number of EU countries. This Group has developed the topic, content, curricula and method of civilian training courses with the Council Secretariat, which exercises political control of EU missions.[1] A continuous dialogue exists between the Council Secretariat and the EU Training Group to ensure that real-world requirements influence the training being offered.

In spite of these developments, the EU build-up of civilian capabilities is still lacking. Most ESDP missions do not include many civilian experts. A major shift has begun with the establishment of the CPCC but this still needs to manifest itself in mission mandates and composition. It remains difficult to find high-quality staff for missions, as demonstrated by the experience of the EU's law-and-order mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the bloc's police mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL).[2] Both missions have suffered from an inability to attract highly-skilled and senior staff. Meanwhile, not all EU states send people to the training courses offered, selection is often random and follow-up or refresher training rare. Equally sporadic is assessment of staff performance, which is crucial to ensure that those deployed are fit for their tasks.

Perhaps most critically, the link between training and deployment is weak. None of UK's PRT team leaders, for example, attended EU courses before their deployment. In contrast, Germany's Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF) has trained hundreds of people – and trains a further 100 civilian experts every year – but few are chosen to be deployed on EU or any other missions. There is also a time lag: people usually hope to deploy shortly following training, but often do not deploy until years later (if at all), by which time they are not able to benefit from the training provided to them.

For their part, the Civilian Response Teams (CRTs) – a civilian crisis management rapid reaction capability of flexible size and composition – were created to give the EU a readily available team of civilians.[3] But so far they have only been deployed on fact-finding missions, and not as part of a permanent EU deployment, for example EULEX in Kosovo. These problems stand in sharp contrast to the ambitions of EU states to build civilian capabilities and deploy these, for example, to EUPOL in Kabul.

The UN is no easy answer

The problems at the EU level make it tempting to turn to the United Nations for civilian crisis management capacity, as the UK government has done. But the UN provides no easy answers. At present, the UN oversees the largest single pool of civilian mission managers in peace operations, with approximately 5,000 international staff in 20 missions, supplemented by 15,000 volunteers and local staff. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to fill all the posts available – 20 per cent of civilian posts in the UN's Kosovo operation were unfilled last year. The vacancy rate ran as high as 35 per cent in the hardship posting of Sudan (Sarjoh Bah 2008) while the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) also struggles to attract staff (Alexander 2008).

Although the UN is undertaking efforts to improve its civilian response capacity, it is likely to be overwhelmed by demand for the foreseeable future. Similar strains are likely to affect the UN's civilian

1. The EU Training Group is composed of partners from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The actual coordination is undertaken by the non-governmental organisation International Alert.
2. The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo) is a planned deployment of EU police and civilian resources to the Republic of Kosovo as foreseen under the so-called Ahtisaari plan. The EU Police mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL AFGHANISTAN) was launched in mid-June 2007 and seeks to monitor, mentor, advise and train Afghan police officers.
3. These consist of Member State experts with, in principle, Council Secretariat participation. European Commission experts are invited to participate where appropriate. A CRT is drawn from an EU-wide pool of experts, pre-selected by Member States, in accordance with agreed criteria and procedures. Before their first deployment, CRT experts will have undergone specific CRT training.

police capacity. The UN had deployed nearly 10,000 police worldwide by late 2007 – up 50 per cent on two years previously. UN police are deploying alongside EU troops in Chad. But the demand for UN police continues to grow exponentially – the mandate for Darfur calls for 3,700 alone – and is growing ever harder to meet (Sarjoh Bah 2008). In clear terms, 'UN peacekeeping is currently navigating a series of interrelated crises – immediate, systemic and paradigmatic' (Gowan 2008).

A European civilian reserve

There is a clear need to reach out to the broader civilian community and pull in a wide range of skills and personnel to assist the international community in meeting the new challenges of global governance. To improve on the EU's existing capability process – the so-called Helsinki Goals Process – a logical next step would be to create a European reserve corps of 2,000 trained civilian specialists who can operate like government staff, but who are not full-time employees.

Like the military reserves, reservists would be private citizens who sign a contract to be on stand-by for a set period. For example, the Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights (NORDEM) puts people on a list for one year, during which time they are willing to deploy within 72 hours. Naturally, different arrangements would have to be made for existing government staff like judges or police officers. Reservists should be able to deploy either individually or as part of a CRT. The reservists would undergo standardised introductory, annual and pre-deployment training, such as the kind organised by the EU Training Group. In addition, personnel should be trained for the different phases of response to a crisis situation: fact-finding, planning, preparation and operation. These phases require different skills that are not always compatible.

As with military reserves, reservists would remain in their day jobs until mobilised for training or deployment. Recruitment could be carried out in two ways: either directly by the EU Council or by the EU 27. In the latter case, Member States could be allocated a number of personnel to be recruited, for example, 100 from Germany, 30 from Denmark and so on. These 2000 people trained by the ETG process could form the nucleus of the reserve, until the number is expanded.

Initial selection for the reserve should concentrate on recruiting 'Senior Mission Managers': senior personnel capable of leading missions or parts of missions. Such individuals are senior enough to have limited need for lecturing, and training would have to be more focused on leadership in the context of post-conflict work. Besides the obvious candidates of former statesmen and parliamentarians, talented future leaders might emerge through core training, followed by specialised leadership training. In terms of functional areas, mobilising police, police trainers, rule of law experts and public sector reform specialists is key. Recruitment could subsequently be expanded to encompass other government functions.

However recruitment takes place, reservists would follow national chains of command during 'peacetime' or during national emergencies, while in all instances being recruited, trained and certified according to standards developed by the Council Secretariat and the Commission. This would mean that even personnel recruited by the EU states and deployed only for homeland tasks (such as civil contingencies) would have common backgrounds and could collaborate if an emergency were to so require.

Cost effectiveness

Based on American estimates, recruiting 2,000 civilian reservists would cost some €250 million (interview with State Department official, 3 March 2008; see also Russell 2006). As the numbers increase, economies of scale in recruiting, training and management would accrue. Maintaining a reserve of this size on a yearly basis would cost approximately €7,000 per person. Depending on security requirements, the estimated costs of deploying a reservist for a year runs from €250,000 to €420,000.

A look at the EU's overall budget puts these costs into perspective. For the period 2007–13, €1.74 billion has been allocated to Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) activities. The EU's total CFSP budget for 2007 is €126.5 billion, meaning that a civilian reserve force would

require a mere 0.19 per cent of the EU's 2007 spending.[4] The cost could be split between the EU budget and Member States, with the former paying for deployment and the latter covering the costs of training and equipping the reservists.

Crisis Management Training Centre

In tandem with the establishment of a civilian reserve, the European Security and Defence College in Rome should create a Crisis Management Training Centre to offer specialised training and education for the reservists to complement the training already provided by institutes through the EU Training Group.

The mandate of the Crisis Management Training Centre should be fourfold:

- Offer **high-quality, mission-relevant training and education** primarily for civilians. This could include three elements:
  - — A Masters of Public Policy programme (for example, a Masters of Public Policy in Post-Conflict and Civil-Military Cooperation, organised jointly with a university)
  - — Subject-matter courses and in-theatre training (ranging from a few weeks to two months on topics such as Security Sector Reform or Quick Impact Projects)
  - — Pre-deployment training and civilian exercises.
- Act as an **information clearinghouse** for the stakeholder institutions who engage in similar training. Clearinghouse activities will include but need not be limited to: the production of print or online journals; maintenance of websites, virtual collaboration sites, or other information exchange media; helpdesk, literature research, newsletter, conference reporting or similar activities.
- Conduct **practically-focused research** for the purpose of improving training and education. This could include two elements: field-based research, and coordination of lessons-learned analysis and dissemination among existing institutions.
- Draft **practically-focused European post-conflict reconstruction doctrine** to guide the training and work of the reservists.

Such a centre could function as a consortium of institutions that participate in the delivery of crisis response education, training, research, analysis, services and policy development across the Euro-Atlantic community, including Germany's ZIF, Canada's CANADEM and the US Institute of Peace (USIP). While the day-to-day management of the centre would be undertaken by an Executive Director, an advisory board of prominent practitioners (such as Paddy Ashdown, Soeren Jessen-Petersen or Michael Steiner, for example) could be set up to ensure high-level guidance and linkages to operations.

Conclusion

Post-conflict operations, post-major combat activities, stability operations, and reconstruction and stabilisation efforts are not new, but the recent emphasis on them is. Success in these operations means getting the right people with the right skills on the ground quickly to support host government stabilisation and reconstruction efforts, including assistance with community policing, setting up court systems and public administration, rebuilding infrastructure and getting schools and health clinics back up and running.

Efforts to build purely national systems to generate the necessary personnel have hitherto failed to deliver the necessary capabilities. It is therefore time to create a European civilian reserve of trained and equipped civilian specialists, which can provide the EU *and* its Member States with:

- A 'just-in-time' capability that is trained, flexible and more cost-effective than maintaining a standing government staff, yet will operate with the same level of standardisation and clarity of mission that standing government staff enjoys

4. For information on the EU's budget: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/budget_detail/current_year_en.htm

- A capability that works with other first responders from Member States, international partners and host nations
- The capacity to carry out essential tasks, such as: conducting assessments; designing, implementing and evaluating programmes; filling local institution roles; managing contractors and grantees; and providing consultation and training to host nation leaders to facilitate transition to local control.

Just as the EU battle-groups – launched at a Franco-British summit in 2003 – served to build defence capabilities across the EU, so too could a European civilian reserve help build more capacity across the Union. This would benefit all Member States, including the UK, while simultaneously creating a larger framework to assist the build-up of the UK's own capacity in this area.

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