

The Future of European Crisis Management - A Critical Perspective

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One could argue that the future of European crisis management looks promising indeed. The EU's crisis management capacity is becoming a reality, and this is a dream come true for many. Not only so, but there is also something else to congratulate oneself for: the pace of this development has been amazing, the troops have been committed without problems or delays, and the target year of 2003 is almost there.

Listening to some people entrusted with the task of refining the EU's military arsenal and planning for joint operations one could even get the impression that they now only look for a crisis, hoping for a suitable crisis to take place - one that is not too big and messy, but not too little and insignificant, either - in order to be able to test this new machinery, and, through a test successfully passed, to claim still another victory for the EU and the integration process as a whole. It is almost as though the EU needed a crisis more than the victims of a crisis need its crisis management.

Yet we can also sense some caution, or a fear of failure. Once the EU announces that its crisis management capability is operative, in 2003, it is expected to act in a crisis. In a way, it is expected to act already now, but expectations grow. Once it is declared to be operative, however, it cannot fail, since that would mean a blow for its credibility. In a sense, thus, a crisis to be managed once the EU does have crisis management capabilities can be more of a crisis for the EU itself. What if the new institutions do not function? What if the capabilities are not enough? What if the division of labour between the EU and NATO does not work? At worst, the EU would be worse off than before the hype about its crisis management capabilities. What will the EU then do? Will it perhaps take the easy way out and give the responsibility for managing the crisis to someone else? After all, it could do that; it has not, as of yet, defined what crises it actually aims at tackling, or what its responsibilities are.

What brought us to this point? We know that the pace of the changes has been fast. But why so fast? The rapidity has been caused by several factors. First, embarking on crisis management was to do what any sensible person would do, to borrow a Finnish saying, to climb over a fence at its lowest point - yet, we also know that the fence is here high enough to impede turning back: we know the inability of the EU to go backwards once it has taken steps forward in a given realm. Second, there were some unintended consequences of actions taken by different players that inadvertently contributed to this process.

Let us look at these factors a bit more closely.

Climbing over the fence at its lowest point, I said. Creating crisis management capabilities in the end was not difficult: it was very easy. We were used to thinking that integration in foreign policy was difficult, and that anything having to do with the military and defence would be totally unthinkable. The last years have been years of surprising development in this field where not much was expected, and which according to established theories was in any case to remain outside the sphere of integration - actually, it was a proof of theories like the realist ones that there was a limit to integration.

Still, crisis management is easy: it is easier than common defence, and it is easier than enlarging the Union, or agreeing to a common constitution, or reforming the CAP.

Another theoretical bias or view where we may also get caught is that crisis management would be developed as crisis management, that the need to manage crises would be the main if not the only reason for the measures taken. Again, things seem very different. Crisis management developed for a variety of other motivations as well: as a way of bringing forward integration, or avoiding deadlocks; and as a way that allows for participation and influence for some particular countries. In the first sense, it has been a motor for integration - thus performing a similar function to the EMU or enlargement - and in the second sense, it has permitted the UK, and perhaps also the USA, to have a foot inside the EU and even a leading position. So, crisis management is not only about responses to crises. The decision to embark on crisis management can even be a 'substitute activity' in a Union that needs to show progress and dynamism but is facing difficulties in other realms, such as enlargement.

Crisis management is well-suited for these two purposes - enhancing the EU's international role and giving a foothold for particular interests or countries - in that it yields results, visibility; it is about efficiency and concrete power. After all, it has ramifications in armaments industry, linking, thus, big business interests into the development. In comparison, civilian crisis management and conflict prevention do not possess these competitive edges. They can in practice be almost any activities - ranging from promoting student exchange to improving living standards or encouraging free media. This is particularly true for conflict prevention where one could argue that the EU already has been engaged. In this sense, there is not the same sense of novelty as in military crisis management - no-one gets thrilled by the feeling of starting something new. Furthermore, civilian crisis management and conflict prevention, as they do not similarly attract the defence industry, lack the additional background driving force that these industrial interests can be in the development of European military crisis management capabilities.

In a second sense, too, crisis management has involved climbing over the fence at its lowest point. The good old 'functional logic of integration' tells us to start from easy things, and have faith in subsequent spill-over. In this particular case, the 'functional' method of establishing a crisis management capacity for the EU has been to start with institutions and capabilities. Why? They are easy, much more easy than to tackle first the questions of who we are, what we want, or who are we responsible for and what means do we approve of. These remain without answers; there is no underlying political consensus on what is to be done, on intervention strategies, on the 'upper

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limits' or geographical extension of joint operations, and the like. What one *can* agree on, then, are new institutions and the numbers of troops (which is somewhat bizarre as one could think that it is impossible to know how many troops are needed without knowing what they are going to do).

Two more features of this integration logic can be added: the difficulty in taking steps 'backwards' or renouncing a step, and the fact that security provides a powerful legitimising device for integrative measures, in this case crisis management. Crisis management is a concrete manifestation of the EU's security political role. Security is a rationale behind integration, and once one starts from assumptions like 'common security is good' and 'integration enhances security', it is also easy to justify the concrete measures taken in crisis management in that they contribute to security. Let us, for instance, restrict the access to documents about crisis management - a first priority, after all, is to protect the security of the common operations ... It may be difficult to approach these apparently self-evident claims in a more nuanced way, being critical where needed.

I also mentioned the unintended consequences of some actions that have carried the development further. One perfectly understands that there are countries that bring crisis management (and common defence) forward because they have always fancied it, or because they want to gain influence in it and through it in the EU. But even countries that are not members or that a priori have a different view about the EU's nature and have perhaps pronounced against its defence dimension at some point may actually be bringing forward this development.

Let me take two examples of paradoxical effects of some countries' position on their policies and thus on the development of crisis management.

First, there are the countries that want to become members of the Union and that need to show loyalty and Europeanness. How to do that? Trying to fulfil the membership criteria, but this is a tricky path, as the criteria seem to be growing. One could also take advantage of other ways, such as: conforming to policies of the Union even before membership (voting like the members), and committing troops! For the not-yet-members, such concrete contributions are an opportunity to show Europeanness, which is strange as such - it is almost as if one bought membership with arms. There are echos of what is almost like a competition between the candidates about who is the most generous per capita. No wonder then the number of European troops easily grows.

Second, there are the non-aligned EU member countries. Their paradox lies in the fact that they can become eager supporters of all development in order to compensate or to minimise the doubts about them being unreliable. Their joining the EU was one factor behind the need to launch the then ambitious CFSP: one wanted to ensure that their policies would be bound by the jointly agreed principles. Themselves, they later on advocated including the Petersberg tasks in the Amsterdam Treaty. While Sweden has been generous in terms of troops for crisis management, committing even *Jas* fighters, Finland was ready for enhanced cooperation in defence and armaments industry within the EU. These countries' willingness to be good Europeans almost makes it seem that they do not have views of their own - one might ask, for instance, what is

the relevance of Finland's position that peacekeeping operations are to have a mandate by the UN or the OSCE today.

In conclusion, there has been great hurry in this field, as to seize an opportunity provided by the sudden convergence of several actors' ideas, trying to be fast. The consequences, then, of this need to hurry and get something done is that one tends to take on easily found ready models and to start with the easy questions.

Thus, we arrive at a problematic situation where we suddenly have new institutions and military forces. Once they are there, they will probably have to find something to do. Are we then to be worried about growing militarism, the EU resort to "yesterday's tools and answers" - military power - to today's problems? Not necessarily. There is always another side to these issues, too: including the military and defence forces in EU integration is a step away from the traditional system of state power and state sovereignty, towards new and more modern, perhaps more meaningful, uses of the military. Similarly in EU-NATO relations, we might see not only an introduction of military practices or culture in the EU, but also a possibility for the EU to influence NATO.

In all, there is hardly reason for alarmism. Yet, it would be good to keep in mind two points. First, that the EU should perhaps not aim at doing everything itself: there are other actors as well, and a division of labour perhaps increases efficiency. Secondly, the EU has other projects as well, not only crisis management. It is tempting to tackle the easy things first, but one should not for that reason leave the difficult ones aside - like enlargement. Enlargement, after all, is but a very efficient form of foreign policy, of crisis management and crisis prevention.

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