

**The European Union for the transformation of conflicts:  
from civilian crisis management  
to civilian peace corps**

The European Union Institutions have shown in several documents a significant shift towards a global and multidimensional approach in security and defence policies.

While the Common Foreign and Security Policy tried to join the integration successfully gained by other Common Policies, the traditional approach to national and international security has been strongly threatened by a new one<sup>1</sup>. Where the old approach was focused on the military dimension, the new multidimensional approach affirms that national (or continental) security can be assured only protecting at the same time people, environment and collective interests. In a word, social cohesion is the most strategic factor of this approach, where military potential is considered counterproductive on the long term and partially useful in the short term.

This approach brought to the emphasis given by the EU to conflict prevention and transformation.

First of all, a little terminological clarification. The most advanced peace researchers<sup>2</sup> remind that conflicts are unavoidable in societies, but they are not necessary armed conflicts. More, they have to be constructively managed, not necessarily "solved". This is the reason why conflict transformation should be more correctly used where EU documents speak about "conflict prevention".

The multidimensional approach, largely used by multi-track diplomacy supporters<sup>3</sup>, try to find out for each conflict phase the appropriate instrument for a pacific management.

It's clearly difficult, if not impossible, to implement a coherent European political strategy with these instruments in the nowadays EU "pillars-structure" of policies and complexity of institutional competences. In fact, this situation makes it uneasy to build up effective transversal instruments for civil conflict management.

This problem is evident analysing the main institutional documents on the subject.

The European Commission strategy, defined in April 2001 by the **Communication on Conflict Prevention (COM(2001) 211 - C5-0458/2001 - 2001/2182(COS))**, is based on four principles:

1. **an integrated approach for conflict prevention**, to make a more systematic and coordinated use of EU instruments to get at the root causes of conflict;
2. **tackling cross-cutting issues** such as trafficking in drugs, arms or human beings, trading of illicit goods, environmental degradation, etc.;
3. **ability to respond rapidly**, with all the means of the EU, to nascent conflicts. Some facts are already implementations of this principle. At Community level, the **Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM)** is now fully operational. It is being used to bring quickly a host of measures to bear on a conflict situation which would previously have been subject to more cumbersome procedures. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in Afghanistan, in Democratic Republic of Congo. The Commission is now working on framework agreements with Member States to allow the deployment of civilian personnel in crisis management operations. This is intended to be compatible with the systems developed by OSCE and the UN.
4. **to promote international co-operation with key partners in the field of conflict prevention**; direct contacts between the Commission Services and the UN Secretariat have contributed to:
  - co-operation on fact-finding missions, (eg EC participating in fact finding mission for DDR in the Great Lakes in summer 2001);
  - co-ordination of diplomatic activity, including consultations between special representatives (eg EUSR and UNSR in Great Lakes);
  - increased co-operation in electoral assistance and electoral observation, (eg EC co-ordination with UN Electoral Assistance Division for Togo and the UNDP in East Timor and Bangladesh);
  - training programmes, and co-ordination in the field (eg Kosovo).

While the above-quoted Communication do not consider enough the Non Governmental Organisations' resources, both in term of experience and on-the-field presence, the EU Commission manage **the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights**, which funds non governmental initiatives in external countries with several thematic calls for tenders per year. In this respect, however, the enormous gap between the asked financial support and the available one

<sup>1</sup> See also James Burk (ed.by), *The Military in New Times. Adapting Armed Forces to a Turbulent World*, Westview Press, Boulder (CO), USA, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. J.Galthung, *Conflict Transformation with Peaceful Means*, UN, Geneva, 1998

<sup>3</sup> See also Gianni Scotto/Emanuele Arielli, *I conflitti*, Bruno Mondadori Editore, Milano, 1999.

(e.g. for the first call more than one thousands projects were presented and less than 80 financed) gives the image of the marginal political value of the initiative.

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On another level, the **European Council**, has promoted, beside the military aspects of crisis management, also civilian crisis management cooperation in 4 areas, whose implementation is largely supported by Commission work:

### 1. Police

In relation to the police, Member States have committed themselves to the identification of 5000 policemen to be made available for civilian crisis management. The Commission's contribution will be mostly focused on local capacity-building in countries dealing with crisis or emerging from crisis. In recent years the Commission has adopted a number of *programmes* to support police training and infrastructure in various countries: Guatemala, El Salvador, South Africa and (since December 2000) Algeria. More recently, the Commission has become actively engaged in police training in FYROM.

### 2. Rule of Law

In relation to the rule of law, the goal has been set to identify 200 experts to be called upon to contribute to crisis management. Community co-operation instruments already provide for programmes to strengthen the administration of justice in many partner countries. In this area, as in that of civilian administration, the difficulty of building up an EU response capacity in crisis situations often relates to the *lack of readily available personnel* in the Member States. Past experience has shown, for example in the area of *human rights monitoring*, that the development of **common training modules** is one of the best means of building up capacity at EU level. The Commission has therefore launched a project for the setting up of a network of training institutions in the Member States for the development of training modules for personnel to be deployed in peace keeping missions. Such modules will be developed *together* with Member States and should be *compatible* with UN and OSCE modules, for example the new OSCE *REACT* system. This need not necessarily imply the establishment of new structures at the level of the Union, but should be built on *strengthened co-operation* between Member States and especially through *synergies* between *existing* training programmes and institutes.

### 3. Civilian Administration

In relation to civilian administration, the Commission, on the basis of its experience, is identifying key areas and aspects for support to civilian administration in crisis situations. For example, the Commission has initiated reflection with the Member States on the role of customs services in crisis areas as a key contribution to the re-establishment of viable local administrations. The Commission is also examining the **twinning model** being used with the applicant countries in order to see whether lessons can be drawn in building up resources for deployment in crisis/post-crisis situations.

### 4. Civil Protection

In relation to civil protection, a new **Community Co-ordination Mechanism** has been recently adopted by the Council. The Community Mechanism provides for co-ordination of national civil protection bodies, early warning and information exchange, co-operation for the training of civil protection personnel and the establishment of databases.

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The path of the multidimensional approach to security had a more complex history but more advanced results **in the European Parliament**.

In 1995, Alexander Langer, Green Member of the European Parliament started to campaign among colleagues for the idea of **European Civil Peace Corps (ECPC)**, to give a multinational and nonviolent instrument to the nascent Common Foreign and Security Policy.

After several quotations of ECPC in some resolution of EU external relations, in 1999 the resolution [A4-0047/99](#), approved on 10/02/1999, writes: “[European Parliament] Recommends to the Council to produce a feasibility study about the possibility of establishing an ECPC within the framework of a stronger and more effective Common Foreign and Security Policy [...]the possibility of practical peace-making measures such as arbitration and confidence-building between the warring parties, humanitarian aid, reintegration (inter alia by disarming and demobilising former combatants), rehabilitation, reconstruction and monitoring and improving the human rights situation”.

Quite surprisingly, also the freshly appointed CFSP High Representative Solana speech before the EP on 17 November 1999 emphasised that "security goes beyond merely military aspects".

More recently, on 13/12/2001, the Member of the European Parliament Legendijk was rapporteur for the **resolution (A5-0394/2001) on the Commission communication on Conflict Prevention, which is a good example of a real multidimensional approach on security policies**. In fact, it is based on three main levels:

### **1. Conflicting impact of the common policies of the EU - the need for conflict prevention assessment:**

- integrating conflict indicators and the objectives of Conflict Prevention into the programming of Community external aid programmes;
- creating a legally binding framework with sanctions for companies which contribute to conflicts;
- carrying out a "Conflict Prevention Assessment" when examining major decisions concerning the common policies of the Union as well as when launching any type of programme in non-member countries;
- an appropriate structure, which should consist of a "non-military rapid reaction unit".

### **2. Establishing a European Civil Peace Corps**

- possible ECPC's tasks would be to coordinate at a European level the training and deployment of civilian specialists to carry out practical peace-making measures such as arbitration, mediation, distribution of non-partisan information, de-traumatization, and confidence-building between the warring parties, humanitarian aid, reintegration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, education, and monitoring and improving the human rights situation, including human rights accompaniment measures [...] by making full use of the resources of civil society.

### **3. Enhanced relations with the United Nations and the OSCE**

- Recommends strengthening the operational links between the different institutions and organs who play a role in Conflict Prevention within the EU institutional framework with the OSCE REACT (Rapid Expert Assistance and Co-operation Teams) mechanism.

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**Some past experiences of institutional civilian intervention in conflict areas could represent a good basis to further implementation of conflict transformation strategies.**

The first one to be considered in this respect is the **European Community Monitoring Mission (EUMM)** in Former Yugoslavia<sup>4</sup>. The primary objective of the EUMM is to contribute by its activities (information gathering and analysis), in line with directions from the Secretary General/High Representative and the Council, to the effective formulation of the European Union policy towards the Western Balkans.

During the recent Balkan Wars this structure has shown the following strengths:

- to be preventive unarmed, which permitted easy confidence building and logistic organisational work; multiprofessional teams;
- a good tactical organisation (e.g. each team with an autonomous satellite communication station);
- an attitude of collaborating with locals, International Organisations and NGOs.

Among the main weaknesses, it should be reminded the following ones:

- the 6-months-rotation of EU presidency meant rotation of ECMM leadership;
- the rotation of single members decided by the member's country and not by the coordinating authority;
- the acute conflicts between its proper mission and the fact of depending on UNPROFOR's armed protection.

Another interesting and recent development in this field is the **OSCE body called " REACT "** (Rapid Expert Assistance and Co-operation Teams). REACT was established during the 1999 OSCE Summit in Istanbul, asking OSCE participating States to form a pool of skilled resources available for rapid deployment to upcoming and future civilian missions.

Individual members to be considered for REACT missions must be available for sudden deployment (usually within few weeks) and must meet both the OSCE general minimum requirements for Mission members and the minimum requirements for the specific field(s) of expertise. These fields are a very wide range: from Human Rights to Communication, from Media Development to Electoral Observation, from Political Affairs to Rule of Law and Democratisation.

<sup>4</sup> See "The ECMM in former Yugoslavia, by Lt-Col. Rémi Landry, ACCORD occasional paper, n. 5/99 by Alessandro Rossi, director of Centro Studi Difesa Civile (Civilian Defence Research Centre) For further information: rssale@flashnet.it - europe@pacedifesa.org

Outside Europe, the most similar concept to the Civil Peace Corps' one is the **UN White Helmets**.

This concept has been spread at diplomatic level by the Argentinians in the early 1990's and launched in 1993 as a global initiative for the creation of national volunteer groups. These groups should stay available for UN activities especially in the gradual transition from crisis relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. The concept was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 1995 (A/RES/50/19/ as of December 22, 1995) and quoted several times both in Boutros Ghali's and Kofi Annan's documents.

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Some final remarks can be made on a desirable evolution of European Union conflict transformation policies within a multidimensional approach.

As Professor Arno Truger, one of the major expert in the field and founder of the Schlaining Training Centre in Wien, stresses, there should be at least three areas of a joint efforts of Institutions, NGOs and Training Bodies:

- to recognise the whole spectrum of civic functions needed in crisis areas;
- to make use of the already existing resources and experiences of UN, OSCE and NGOs;
- to keep up pushing the civil crisis prevention and management efforts on the EU level.

It is quite clear that the future key change will be from Tacito's approach (*si vis pacem para bellum* – if you want peace prepare war) to the Capitini's (founder of pacifist movement in Italy):

*se vuoi la pace, prepara la pace*<sup>5</sup>.

#### **Further reading/surfing:**

##### *Books:*

- *“Le Organizzazioni Non Governative e la trasformazione dei conflitti. Le operazioni di pace nelle crisi internazionali. Analisi, esperienze, prospettive”*, Francesco Tullio (a cura di), Edizioni Associate/Editrice Internazionale, Roma 2002.
- F. Tullio, *La difesa civile e il progetto Caschi Bianchi. Peacekeepers civili disarmati*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2000.
- *Dopo la guerra*, Movimondo, Roma, 2000.
- European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation (edited by), *Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia – An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*, Utrecht, 2001.

##### *NGOs Websites:*

[www.mediazioni.org](http://www.mediazioni.org): trainings on microconflicts

[www.pacedifesa.org](http://www.pacedifesa.org): research and training for civil peace services / associations/ public administrations

[www.peacelink.it](http://www.peacelink.it): portal of the Italian peace movement

<http://www.euconflict.org>: the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation

<http://www.4u2.ch/EN.CPS/index.htm>: European Network for Civil Peace Services

##### *Institutions Websites*

<http://ue.eu.int/pesc/> : Council of Europe – Common Foreign and Security Policy

<http://www.osce.org> : OSCE

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/cpcm/cm.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cpcm/cm.htm) : European Commission office for civilian crisis management

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/cpcm/cp.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cpcm/cp.htm): European Commission office for conflict prevention

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<sup>5</sup> “If you want peace, prepare peace”.