



Flexibility and “Stabilization Actions”: EU Crisis Management One Year After the Global Strategy

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Since the adoption of its Global Strategy in 2016, European foreign and security policy has been in transition. The missions of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) have also been affected. In the Sahel region, missions are being “regionalized,” the topic of migration management is gaining in importance, and there are significant structural changes in the works in Brussels. In addition, there is also a completely new instrument in the EU’s crisis management portfolio: the so-called “stabilization action” in Mali which is the first operationalization of Article 28 of the Treaty of Lisbon. It is still open whether these various instruments and activities will be complementary or – as provided for in the Global Strategy – integrated. For CSDP missions, these changes hold both opportunities and risks.

For nearly one and a half decades, the European Union, within the framework of its Common Security and Defence Policy, has been engaged in civilian and military missions in the area of peace and security. The EU has carried out 33 missions to date. Since the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force in December 2009, the CSDP and its missions have concentrated mainly on the areas of capacity building, training and advising, with eight of the nine missions deployed since then having this focus.

Moreover, there is a trend towards deploying smaller missions. With the exception of Operation Sophia (over 2,000 soldiers) and the military training mission in Mali (over 500 soldiers), the staff size of new missions since 2010 has normally been between 20 and 200. Gone are the times, it seems, when the EU deployed large-scale military missions (3,700 to Chad in 2008, 2,400 to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2006).

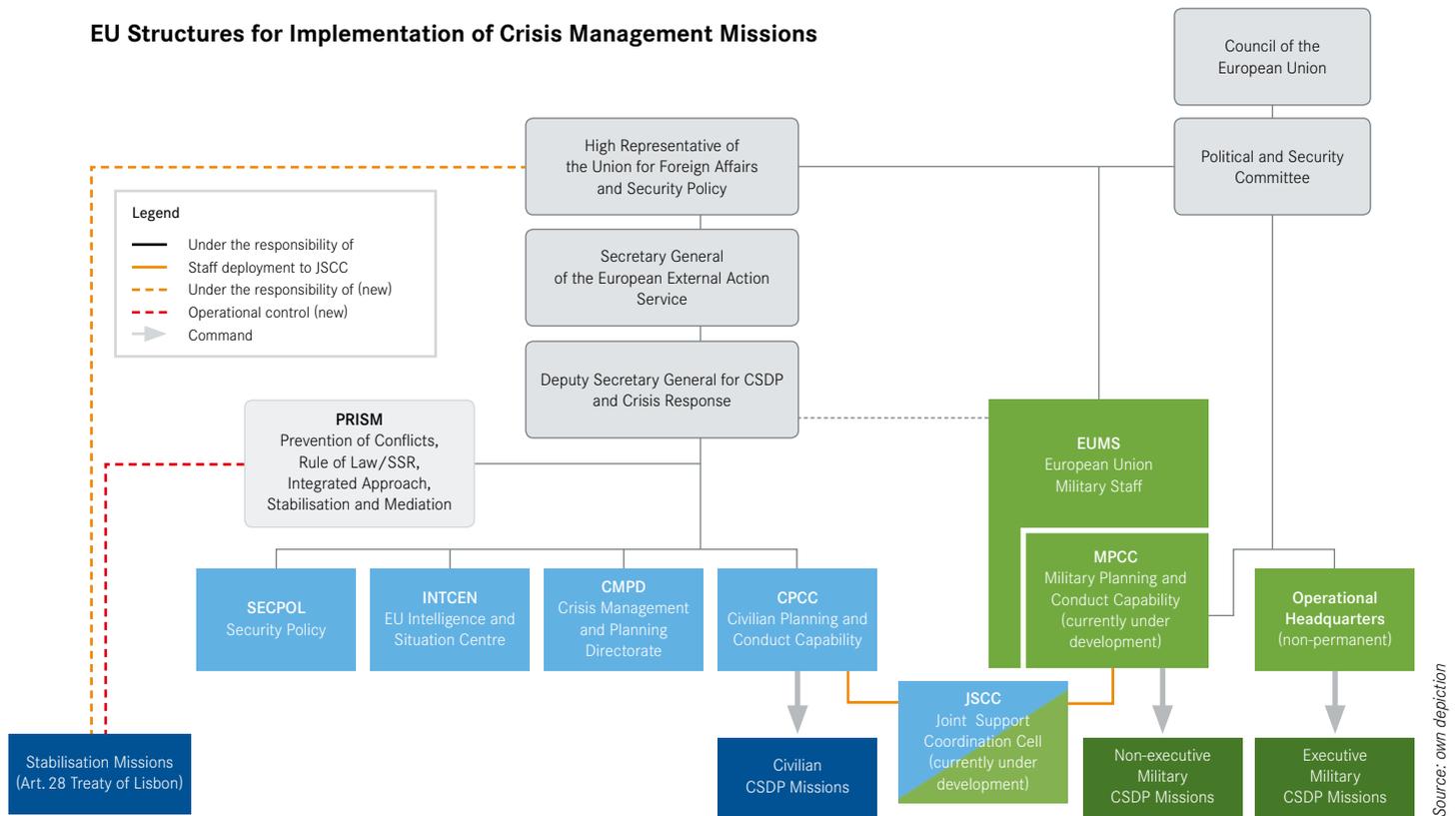
The reluctance of Member States to deploy large military CSDP missions is also apparent with regards to the EU Battlegroups, which celebrate their 10th anniversary this year – but have never been utilized.

Crisis Management Structures in Transition

In the wake of the Global Strategy, important innovations have been conceived and implemented for the CSDP, including the establishment of an operational unit for the management of non-executive EU military operations, such as the training missions in Mali and Somalia. The new Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) unit is headed by the Director General of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS). In addition, the various units of the CSDP were reorganized in early 2017 under the Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and Crisis Response (see illustration).



EU Structures for Implementation of Crisis Management Missions



The willingness to reform EU crisis management structures is evident in particular with the establishment of PRISM (“Prevention of Conflicts, Rule of Law/Security Sector Reform, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation and Mediation”). This unit sees itself as a catalyst for the EU’s new Integrated Approach (IA)¹ and is meant to bring about more coordination between all actors, both in the area of crisis response as well as in early detection and prevention. PRISM reports to the Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and Crisis Response,² and is meant to enable implementation of what the Global Strategy and the Council of the European Union consider to be one of five priorities for EU policy: “an integrated approach to conflicts and crises”.³

Stabilization Actions Under Article 28

In addition, PRISM is to operationalize a new instrument of EU crisis management: the so-called stabilization actions under Article 28 (1) of the Treaty of Lisbon. Over the past year there has been intensive debate on this topic in Brussels and in the capitals of the Member States, primarily due to the widespread perception that the

CSDP structures are too complex and the process of mission deployment too drawn-out. The use of Article 28 now can give considerable leeway to the Member States, but above all to the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the High Representative.

Art 28 (1): Where the international situation requires operational action by the Union, the Council shall adopt the necessary decisions. They shall lay down their objectives, scope, the means to be made available to the Union, if necessary their duration, and the conditions for their implementation (...).
(Treaty of Lisbon, 2007)

But there is still a considerable degree of uncertainty. Is PRISM meant to build up completely new expertise for the steering of stabilization actions, or should existing CSDP structures be utilized? What is the relationship between the stabilization actions and the Commission? What specific tasks should they fulfill? Do they have to be purely civilian in nature, or can they also involve police and military? Are stabilization actions predominantly small-scale, with limited scope, or can they potentially also be larger and more long-term? As there has never been an implementation of Article 28, it is up to the High

¹ Thierry Tardy, The EU: From Comprehensive Vision to Integrated Action, EUISS, February 2017.

² PRISM pre-posting training, internal PowerPoint presentation, March 2017.

³ Council Conclusions on the Global Strategy on the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy, October 2016.

Representative and her team to design this instrument accordingly.

A first stabilization action was under consideration for Iraq. The plans provided for the deployment of a small team to Mosul immediately after the end of hostilities to help city authorities rebuild the city's civil registry. However, the Member States ultimately decided against deploying a stabilization action to Iraq and rather for a new CSDP mission – the EU Assistance Mission (EUAM Iraq) – which would operate out of Baghdad with a focus on rule of law. Instead, Article 28 will now be applied for the first time in Mali.⁴

Sahel and Mali as Laboratory

The European Union has been heavily engaged in crisis management in Mali since 2013; its activities there have included two CSDP missions (EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Mali). By now, Mali has become something of a laboratory for the EU to develop new approaches to crisis management: In 2016, the EU decided to adapt the mandates of the Mali and Niger missions to put more emphasis on the areas of migration management and border management. Since June 2016, both missions have been part of the Migration Partnership Frameworks (MPF) for Mali and Niger, which in light of the refugee influx to Europe have been designed by Member States to apply an Integrated Approach to the issue of migration, involving various European actors and instruments.

In this context, both EUCAP missions received smaller budgets for project cells, which, following agreement and approval by the Commission, will for the first time allow for the implementation of development projects through CSDP missions. In early 2017, however, the Commission launched a mission-like program in the north of Mali with a far higher budget.⁵ This program, named PARSEC (“Programme of Support for Enhanced Security in the Mopti and Gao Regions and for the Management of Border Areas”), focuses on improving security for the population as well as on the issue of border protection. The work of PARSEC, similar to that of both EU missions, centers on Malian security actors and structures. Such a co-existence

of parallel EU instruments in one country results in considerable challenges for the coordination of a common strategy – in particular with regard to communication with the host country.

Moreover, EUCAP Sahel Mali is the first mission where the EU tests a so called “regionalization”⁶ of this instrument. In summer 2017, a Regional Coordination Cell (RCC) with 15 employees was established. Connected to the mission in Bamako, this RCC is meant to provide support to the “G5 Sahel”⁷ in the areas of security, border control and defense. The mission deploys individual experts to the EU delegations in Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, with the aim of enhancing their capacities through training and mentoring. The question, however, is to what degree one or two experts sent to the respective delegations can actually make a difference in this complex environment. Nevertheless, Brussels is already considering implementing similar regionalization measures with the help of EU missions in the Horn of Africa.

New Kid on the Block: EUSTAMS

Last, and essential for the future of CSDP missions: the first-time deployment of a stabilization action under Article 28 (1) of the Treaty of Lisbon, as described above. Under the name EU Stabilisation Action in Mopti and Ségou (EUSTAMS), ten experts will be sent to central Mali to provide support in the process of rebuilding administrative structures and to help improve coordination between Malian authorities. This stabilization mission is mandated for twelve months. EUSTAMS is under the responsibility of the High Representative, while operational control is carried out by PRISM.

As this is a new area for PRISM, there are fundamental questions regarding personnel deployment, selection and support. Should existing CSDP structures or those of the delegations and the Commission be utilized for stabilization actions? Or should PRISM develop its own structures so that it can carry out more stabilization actions in the future? At the very least, coordination with the EU delegation in Bamako should

⁴ Decision of the Council of the European Union, 4 August 2017.

⁵ With nearly 29 million euros at its disposal, PARSEC has precisely the same annual budget as EUCAP Sahel Mali.

⁶ Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/50, 11 January 2017.

⁷ The G5 Sahel was founded in 2014 by Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

function smoothly, as its head will also hold the position of head of EUSTAMS.

In some respects, the decision to test Article 28 for the first time in Mali is a surprising one, as a number of other options would have been available there: Alternatively, the delegation in Bamako could have carried out these tasks in Mopti and Ségou. Another possibility would have been to merge EUCAP and EUTM with an expansion of the mandate to Mopti and Ségou. This would have strengthened the Integrated Approach and taken advantage of local staff expertise, as well as the security mechanisms of the missions.

Observers explain that the decision was not determined so much by local factors, but rather by the possibility to test a stabilization action for the first time. Only then can the EEAS and the High Representative gain a better understanding of the possibilities and limitations of Article 28.

What Future is in Store for EU Crisis Management?

Is the EU now getting serious about the “responsive and flexible union”⁸ in crisis management and stabilization? CSDP missions can implement development projects, the Commission makes inroads into the north of Mali with CSDP-like programs, and a completely new instrument has been introduced through Article 28.

The new flexibility of the instruments has long been evident in the cooperation between the Commission, EU agencies and the EEAS on migration and border management. For example, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL) cooperate both with Operation Sophia as well as with NATO operations in the Mediterranean. EUROPOL has long supported EULEX Kosovo, and EUROPOL, FRONTEX and the European Union’s Judicial Cooperation

Unit (EUROJUST) are working together with the mission in Libya. By now, Brussels can conceive of scenarios in which CSDP missions are active within the EU or at its external borders – or, alternatively, scenarios in which FRONTEX leads a mission outside of the EU. Such increased flexibility should be welcomed – provided that it does not result in a blurring of respective competencies or lead to the development of parallel structures between actors in the same country. The attempt to implement a comprehensive approach through common strategies and the establishment of PRISM could prove to be the right answer.

If EUSTAMS is judged to be a success, further stabilization actions could follow, with far-reaching consequences for CSDP missions, in particular civilian ones. Member States could be quicker to decide on stabilization actions and, if they are comparable to CSDP missions in size and thematic orientation, stabilization actions could in certain cases even replace the CSDP missions. Article 28 could serve to expand the High Representative’s room to maneuver in the area of foreign affairs and security policy. Whether or not all of this will lead to more efficiency or effectiveness in the EU’s crisis management is yet to be determined.

One must also remember that both instruments – CSDP missions and stabilization actions – are relatively small in terms of budget and staff size, compared to the activities of the EU Commission and oftentimes the United Nations on the ground.

Ultimately, the future of CSDP missions or stabilization actions should depend on whether they are effective or not. Determining this will require a transparent and critical assessment of both instruments.

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⁸ EU Global Strategy, p. 11.

