

Towards a Comprehensive EU Security Framework: Enhancing Civil-Military Synergy through a Unified Headquarters

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Abbreviations

CFSP – Common Foreign and Security Policy

CPCC – Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability

CSDP – Common Security and Defence Policy.

EEAS – European Union External Action Service

EPF – European Peace Facility.

EU – European Union

MPCC – Military Planning and Conduct Capability

OHQ – Operational Headquarters

RDC – Rapid Deployment Capacity

TUE – Treaty of the European Union

1. Introduction

To what extent will the implementation of the 2022 Strategic Compass have an impact on the effectiveness of Civilian and Military Missions, if the European Union External Action Service's internal structure is maintained as it is? In fact, whilst the 2022 Strategic Compass calls for the urgent need to adopt an "EU integrated approach [...] to respond to external threats"¹ that affect the security of the Union area, the current organization of the Civilian and Military missions seems unable to properly respond to the standards of synergy that are not only demanded, but also strongly needed nowadays.

The Compass outlines multifarious objectives aimed at allowing the European Union (EU) to fit in the strategic competition that characterizes the era we live in, and to effectively address the complex security threats that might arise from its perspective. It delineates an ambitious but achievable plan to strengthen the Security and Defense policy of the European Union by 2030². However, its accomplishment will remain an arduous – if not impossible – task until the internal structure of the EEAS is not adjusted in order to welcome the changes introduced by the Compass, and the synergy among its directorates is enhanced.

This Report claims the imperative to reformulate the internal structure of the European Union External Action Service through the establishment of a unified Operational Headquarters from where Civil and Military missions will be conducted and suggested two formulations of its structure. The establishment of an Operational Headquarters would consolidate the image of solidity and trustworthiness of the Union, as well as its role as a security provider in the international system. The absence of a permanent structure to plan and conduct EU-led Military and Civilian missions represents a capability shortfall affecting and limiting the effectiveness of the EU action.

¹ Council of the European Union, *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence* (Brussels, March 2021), p.15.

² *Ibid.*, p.13.

2. The European External Action Service

On January 1st, 2011, the European External Action Service formally entered into force, following the adoption of Decision 2010/427/EU by the Council of the European Union of July 2010 establishing its nature, scope, and tasks, as initially outlined in the Treaty of Lisbon of 2007. Since then, the autonomous body of the EEAS works with the purpose of bringing “coherence and coordination to the European Union’s international action”³ and supports “the High Representative [...] in the fulfillment of its mandate to conduct the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the Union”⁴.

The CFSP is given manifold means for the pursuit of its ends, as sanctions, Civilian and Military Capabilities, EU Special Representatives, Non-proliferation and disarmament projects, and the newly established tool of the European Peace Facility (EPF). Besides this, the functionally autonomous body of the EEAS represents the most important pillar for planning and executing European Union Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions. Since the launch of the last mentioned in 1999, the European Union has developed the capabilities to plan and conduct Civilian Crisis Missions covering a wide range of areas, from policing, to border monitoring, to judicial reform⁵. The CSDP allows the European Union to hold a leading role in peacekeeping operations, conflict prevention, and the strengthening of international security, and contributes to making it a valuable international actor involved in the support of worldwide long-term stabilization and development.

In the achievement of these ends, a crucial role is played by the EEAS “CSDP and Crisis Response” department. Being in charge of the administration of the “Integrated Approach for Security and Peace” and the “Security and Defense Policy” sub-departments, both internally organized in more specific sectors whose joint work ensure the all-encompassing activity of the division. Hierarchically equal to the aforementioned sub-departments but placed outside the umbrella of the “CSDP and Crisis Response” division, is the “Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability” Directorate, which benefits as well of a range of divisions underneath. The “Military Planning and

³ “About the European External Action Service,” EEAS, August 18, 2021, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/410497_it.

⁴ 2010/427/EU, Art. 3.

⁵ Steven Blockmans and Panos Koutrakos, *Research Handbook on the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018).

Conduct Capability” sub-department, the source of collective military expertise within the EEAS, falls under the command of a third, differentiated umbrella, the “European Union Military Staff”.

3. The Strategic Compass

In March 2022 the Council of the European Union adopted the Strategic Compass, which delineates an ambitious but achievable plan to strengthen the Security and Defense policy of the European Union by 2030⁶, ultimately contributing to making the Union a competitive actor in the international landscape, capable of facing the threats of the future, of protecting its citizens, values, and interests, and positively contributing to international peace and security. In other words, a Union whose name lives up to its value. This is articulated in 4 different work strands, namely Act, Secure, Invest, and Partner, each outlining multifarious objectives under their scope, all aimed at allowing the European Union to fit in the strategic competition that characterizes the era we live in, and to effectively address the complex security threats that might arise on its perspective.

Within the “Act” work strand, three pivotal measures are devoted to achieving the ability to act rapidly and robustly whenever a crisis erupts⁷. Among them, the development of an “EU Rapid Deployment Capacity” by 2025 represents an ambitious goal for the Union: this will allow for the immediate deployment of up to 5000 troops in a non-permissive environment to respond to imminent threats and react to crisis situations. The initiative is largely reiterated throughout the Compass, but a thorough reading highlights how the document forgets to mention who will be in charge of supervising the newly introduced initiative.

As a matter of fact, an in-depth analysis of the document inevitably raises a question: to what extent will the implementation of the Strategic Compass have an impact on the effectiveness of Civilian and Military Missions, if the EEAS internal structure is maintained as it is? In fact, whilst the Compass calls for the urgent need to adopt an “EU integrated approach [...] to respond to external threats”⁸ that affect the security of the Union area, the current organization of the Civil and Military missions seems unable to properly respond to the standards of synergy that are not only demanded, but also strongly needed nowadays.

⁶ *Ibid.* note 1, p.13.

⁷ *Ibid.* note 1, p.11.

⁸ *Ibid.* note 1, p.15.

The Civil missions are currently under the supervision of the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) Directorate, responsible for the autonomous operational conduct of civilian CSDP operations. Since its establishment in 2003, the Directorate has deployed 22 Civilian missions on three continents: Europe, Africa, and Asia, and 11 are currently being undertaken⁹.

On the other hand, since its establishment in 2017 the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) is responsible for the operational planning and conduct of non-executive missions, six of which are currently being undertaken, namely in Somalia, Mali, Central African Republic, Mozambique, Ukraine, and Niger – chronologically ordered. The MPCC was created under the broader ambition of strengthening civil/military cooperation, hence in line with the principle of avoiding unnecessary duplication with NATO¹⁰. It also supervises the Executive Military Operations *Eunavfor Med Irini*, *Eufor Althea*, and *Eunavfor Somalia*.

Nevertheless, besides the MPCC role, the planning takes place in operational commands offered by the single Member States, these are: Naval Station Rota (NAVSTA Rota) in Rota, Spain, which hosts the naval missions; Italian Joint Force Headquarters (ITA-JFHQ) in Rome, Italy; Armed Forces Operational Command (EinsFüKdoBw) in Potsdam, Germany; Centre for Planning and Conduct of Operations (CPCO) in Paris, France; and Hellenic European Union Operational Headquarters (EL EU OHQ) in Larissa, Greece.

4. Lack of synergy

The structure that has been described above photographs the severe lack of synergy among the work of the directorates, eventually resulting in fragmented management. A similar level of fragmentation is not sustainable in the long run and, in order to be able to provide a sound response to the challenges that might arise in the future, tailored to the expectations one has of an actor of such importance as the European Union, an integrated internal structure must be implemented. The reformulation of the EEAS internal structure is aimed at ensuring integrated, effective, and long-term results from the EU CDSP Civilian and Military Missions, based on the ambitions set out by the 2022 Strategic Compass.

⁹ “The Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC),” EEAS, October 3, 2022, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/civilian-planning-and-conduct-capability-cpcc_en.

¹⁰ “The Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC),” EEAS, February 2023, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/20230222_MPCC%20Factsheet.pdf.

The above-mentioned lack of synergy represents an obstacle to finding a solution to modern-day issues, and will increasingly represent one, tomorrow. Indeed, the Compass has set the ambition to reinforce the Civilian and Military CSDP missions and operations by providing them with more robust and flexible mandates, promoting rapid and more flexible decision-making processes, and ensuring greater financial solidarity¹¹. Issues will arise when these ambitions will be confronted with the existing level of fragmentation within the EEAS structure, which will embody a tangible obstacle to the pursuit of its interests. This embodies one of the reasons why it is of vital importance that such reformulation is implemented, as the current conformation runs the risk of undermining the great power status of the Union – which has not entirely consolidated yet.

The most rewarding solution to overcome this deficiency is the establishment of an Operational Headquarter (OHQ), within which both the Military and Civilian operations will be managed throughout all their stages: from prevention, to programming, to the surveillance of the monitored areas, until the execution and management in case of emergence of a crisis to deal with. The OHQ will be based in Brussels. The geographical collocation is as well aimed at ensuring ease of coordination. Moreover, in order to ensure the necessary level of synergy and coordination that will make the EU act as one, the Headquarters will have to periodically report to the COREPER and the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

5. Two configurations of the OHQ structure

The Headquarters will serve as a permanent structure where to plan and conduct integrated Military and Civilian Missions, whether executive or non. Indeed, if the European Union wants to consolidate its position in the international system, and sharpen its role as a security provider, it needs to grab all the tools that will provide its action with visibility and credibility in the world's eyes. The absence of a permanent structure to plan and conduct EU-led Military and Civilian missions represents a capability shortfall affecting and limiting the effectiveness of the EU action.

In the first case, the Headquarters will involve all the departments working under the umbrellas of “CSDP and Crisis Response”, “European Union Military Staff” and the sub-division of “Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability”. Such configuration implies the complete integration of all the departments possibly involved in the pursuit of International Security, within the same

¹¹ *Ibid.* note 1, page 3.

Headquarters. The latter would thus build a bridge between the different fields that are being integrated into one, enabling the accomplishment of a sound, integrated response from the European Union, acting as one.

Alternatively, the Headquarters shall only involve the “Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability” and the “European Union Military Staff”. This second, equally valuable configuration, puts in close connection only the two directly involved departments. If, on the one hand, this will ensure a more focused preparatory work, on the other hand, will require building communication channels with the entire “CSDP and Crisis Response” department, in order to plan and conduct missions that address all the possible issues. Special channels to facilitate communication with the OHQ with the “European Peace Facility” department will also be ensured. In fact, this off-budget fund established in March 2021, was specifically drawn as a single mechanism to finance all Common Foreign and Security Policy actions in military and defense areas.

Indeed, in consideration of Article 41.2 of the Treaty of the European Union (TUE), which states that “*Operating expenditure [...] shall be charged to the Union budget, except for such expenditure arising from operations having military or defense implications*¹²”, the European Peace Facility serves as an appropriate alternative to funding CSDP missions. For instance, it enables the EU to provide all types of equipment and infrastructure to the armed forces of EU partners, in compliance with International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law, ultimately enhancing the Union’s ability to prevent conflicts, build peace, and strengthen international security¹³.

In both cases, within the newly established Headquarters and in accordance with the aim of conducting integrated Military and Civilian missions, the sub-departments of *Integrated Approach: Methodology and Implementation* (ISP.1) and *Integrated Strategic Planning for CSDP and Stabilisation* (ISP.3) would gain primary relevance, as their approach will be raised as a model to be spread throughout the entire Headquarters.

Both configurations ensure improved coordination between the different sectors whose involvement in the implementation of the mission is required, and the adoption of a comprehensive and integrated approach in crisis management. Such approach is understood as *multi-level*, as it serves all the levels from the local to the global; *multi-phase*, as it concerns all the phases of the conflict:

¹² European Union, *Treaty on European Union* (Maastricht, 1992), Art 41.2.

¹³ “European Peace Facility,” Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, February 2022, https://fpi.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/european-peace-facility_en.

from prevention, to crisis response, stabilization and longer-term peacebuilding; and *multi-dimensional*: indeed, the EU benefits from a substantial number of policies and non-military instruments at its disposal, ranging from diplomatic, to financial, to development cooperation, to humanitarian aid tools¹⁴, which are becoming increasingly important for the successful outcome of the operations. As a matter of fact, only a united and coordinated effort of all elements involved in the strategy will ensure cohesion and will enable the achievement of the objectives¹⁵.

Two new departments will be introduced in the new OHQ, regardless of the configuration, aimed at ensuring the legitimacy and efficiency of the response: a Legal department, and one specifically drawn to supervise the Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) tool. Indeed, the Strategic Compass establishes that by 2023 regular live exercises will be actualized before the RDP enters full operability in 2025. In order to respect the abovementioned timeline, the RDC needs the supervision of a specialized department. This will be responsible for the implementation of the live exercises during the timeframe between 2023 and 2025, which represents a challenge as this is something completely new in the EU context.

After the troops will be fully operational, the department will work in close collaboration with the Intelligence section of the European Union Military Staff, in order to detect threats in advance and rapidly deploy the 5000 troops. Due to its delicacy, the phase immediately preceding the decision to deploy demands the support of a solid permanent structure, which strongly enhances the urgency of establishing an OHQ.

Additionally, having an entirely dedicated department will allow for properly tailoring the capacity to the mission. The department will welcome military personnel in charge of the supervision of the exercises and of the missions, experts for advanced scenario-based planning, decision-makers, an office in charge of the common funding, and a cybersecurity team. Alongside that, the introduction of a Legal department is of fundamental relevance. This will supervise the respect of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law throughout the course of the missions, as well as the compliance with the UN Security Council mandate. Under its surveillance, it will be guaranteed that the European Union will operate under a framework of legality, avoiding the risk of being liable to sanctions by the United Nations.

¹⁴ Council of the European Union, *European Union Concept for Military Command and Control - Rev 8*, (Brussels, 2019), <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8798-2019-INIT/en/pdf>.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

6. Conclusion

The 2022 Strategic Compass was published in March, one month after the Russian deliberate and massive invasion of Ukraine. This event raised the attention of strategists, defense planners, and armaments experts and shifted it further toward strengthening collective defense. In this context, the Rapid Deployment Capacity tool introduced with the Compass acquired outstanding relevance, as it is specifically drawn to provide a quick military response in urgent and unexpected scenarios. Nevertheless, the potential of this tool is likely to remain hidden and non-implemented because the current configuration of the EEAS is not prepared to suit the groundbreaking innovations introduced by the Strategic Compass.

The present report has advocated a twofold solution whose application would serve the implementation of both the newly introduced RDC tool, and of the civil and military missions under the scope of the CSDP, which will ultimately benefit from a higher-quality organization within a new integrated Headquarters. The establishment of the latter will represent the culmination of the adoption of an integrated, comprehensive approach in planning and implementing Civil and Military missions, which will be able to span a wide repertoire of policy responses to crises and emergent crises¹⁶. The establishment of a Headquarters will increase the visibility of the EU-led operations at the international level, as well as raise the support of its own citizens.

¹⁶ Mac Roger Ginty, Sandra Pogodda, and Oliver P. Richmond, *The EU and Crisis Response* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021).

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