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Civilian CSDP Missions: The Curious Case of German Institutions

Domestic Coordination for German Civilian CSDP
Contributions

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The EU's activities in civilian crisis management under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) have become more complex since missions were first launched in 2003. This applies to geographical scope, the number of personnel deployed, and the operational diversity. As the capabilities for such missions are to be found primarily on the domestic level, civilian CSDP has put national government institutions under strain. Whereas administrative questions might not be as fashionable as operational ones, they are nevertheless a precondition for successful mission implementation. Germany – known for its rigid administrative structures – has continuously faced the challenge of lowering ministerial walls to streamline actions in this field. The ultimate aim is to deliver promised contributions to CSDP missions, and to do so in a timely manner. What follows is a stocktaking exercise on Germany's effort to break with a tradition of limited ministerial coordination in the context of civilian crisis management during the first ten years of CSDP. To what extent has the EU demand for police officers, experts in the rule of law, and other civilian personnel triggered changes in German inter-ministerial interaction?

Why Coordinate?

In the German federal administration individual ministers have a high degree of autonomy in their responsibilities of implementing ministerial policy (*Ressortprinzip*). But as soon as more than one ministry is affected by a specific policy plan, other ministries need to co-sign the proposal (*Mitzeichnung*). The Chancellery cannot 'durchregieren', or impose its viewpoints on the ministries involved, but merely has a 'Richtlinienkompetenz'; the competence to coordinate policies at the level of cabinet.

The principle of ministerial independence has built high walls between ministries which has resulted in fragmented decision-making, inadequate coordination, and – because competences more often than not overlap – inter-ministerial frictions. The German administrative history of ministerial segregation and restricted interaction has hampered coordination in many areas; not least in European policies.

With more and more government institutions becoming involved in external civilian crisis management, streamlining their actions has become indispensable. Whereas the paths of the Foreign Office (FO) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) have deviated into respective European and Atlanticist directions, the challenge of coordinating civilian missions remains much more pressing given the multiple ministries and institutional actors involved since the birth of CSDP.

The federal Ministry of the Interior (MoI) has now become involved in producing CIVCOM instructions, and serves as the

political umbrella for police contributions by the Federal Police. The Bundespolizei headquarters in Potsdam – alongside the Länderpolizei – checks the feasibility of deployment and prepares police personnel to be sent out. The Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), established by the FO, strengthens Germany's non-police civilian crisis prevention capacity, and provides required training programmes. The Ministry of Finance delivers customs officers and logically checks financial implications of CSDP missions. But the MoD also remains keen on keeping a foot in the civilian side of CSDP by following up civil-military coordination. Likewise, the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (MoECD) has continuously sought to reconfirm its *raison d'être* in security matters by attending the Security Council, and by 'sharing' region-specific knowledge from its own experts. In short, although the Foreign Office has attempted to keep pulling the strings, it is now forced to share decision-making with other ministries, as more and more 'Mitzeichnung' is required.

Although Germany has contributed to civilian missions through other channels, CSDP has really put German coordination efforts to the test. In keeping with the idea of 'Zivilmacht', which is in essence still anti-militarist, the civilian aspects of EU crisis management have been a welcome initiative for the German political elite, as rhetoric and operational support confirm.

The fact that the EU is a political union – and not a military alliance like NATO, or an international peace organization such as the UN – raises the stakes for all involved, at least on the political level. Once member states have committed to contribution, they alone are responsible for the timely delivery of the required resources. Member states that cannot get their act together risk delaying the mission. This negatively affects national credibility as well as the EU's international standing. The political costs of not showing solidarity are high, particularly as the European ambitions are reaching new heights. This places even greater demand on domestic structures.

Given the size of the German administrative apparatus, the need for formal coordination to monitor the broadening scope of EU civilian crisis management domestically is all the more acute. Still, breaking with an institutional past of ad hoc coordination and ambiguous competences is tricky, even in times of urgent need for change.

Learning to Coordinate Civilian Crisis Management

The main initiative to achieve a coordinated way of delivering civilian personnel came from the Foreign Office, which introduced the 2004 Civilian Crisis Prevention Action Plan. The Plan prescribed the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee (to coordinate civilian crisis prevention) and a Government Advisory Board (to provide for a link between gov-

ernment and civil society). As a response to the EU's growing ambitions in civilian crisis management, the Action Plan was a political attempt to break with a long history of coordination struggles. But critics have pointed to the theoretical nature of the Plan, and the lack of external control on its implementation.

Not long after the Action Plan was launched, the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee was up and running under the chairmanship of the Foreign Office. It sought to gather all relevant ministerial actors involved, but the drawback was that it was highly dysfunctional and portrayed an extreme form of 'Referatsdenken' (unit-thinking), with parties unable to look beyond their own ministerial interests. It was also afflicted by varying levels of political commitment: ministries sent representatives with different positions, and some – although invited – remained absent. Those present rarely showed willingness to cooperate, and were often only attending because it was an institutional obligation. An additional problem was its mandate: aimlessly lingering between the political and operational level, the Committee merely had a conceptual focus without real coordinating power. As a result, it became an information exchange forum with no credible outcomes. The Government Advisory Board also underperformed due to contradictory expectations of different partners.

That said, other initiatives were still taken to enhance inter-ministerial coordination on civilian CSDP contributions. The exchange of personnel between the MoECD, the MoD and the FO was one strategy, establishing an informal working group on Afghanistan (the Afghanistan Round Table) at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik to bring together multiple ministries was another. The FO now also has a Special Task Force on Afghanistan and Pakistan which supposedly shapes the German policy towards those countries and coordinates between the FO, MoD, MoI, MoECD and the Chancellery. Monthly meetings with State Secretaries, as well as with the heads of the Afghanistan/Pakistan desks across ministries have also been put into the mix. Surprisingly enough, the Federal MoI, which has the political responsibility for police deployments, remains less present at such meetings compared to the MoECD.

This all points to the fact that coordination remains highly dispersed and fragmented across German administrations. Despite strong inter-ministerial consensus for new structures, the Foreign Office – which ultimately is still pulling the strings – favours the status quo. The loss of coordinating powers to the Chancellery is a prospect that few in the Foreign Office relish.

Politics and Coordination

With mounting requests for civilian CSDP, and little domestic change, the second term of Schröder's Red-Green Government could no longer ignore the need to try and get to grips

with civilian contributions. Whereas Schröder lacked much in the way of long term thinking, Foreign Minister Fisher pushed through proposals for increased inter-ministerial coordination. Highly supportive of German contributions to civilian EU missions, and fearing loss of coordinating control to the Chancellery, the Foreign Office duly issued the 2004 Action Plan, albeit with the prime aim of staying in charge. Despite severe criticism, the Action Plan was implemented. The inter-Ministerial Committee gathered once a month under the leadership of an enthusiastic and motivated chair.

Unsurprisingly, it proved to take more than a year to break with a tradition of limited coordination. When Merkel's grand coalition government came to power in 2005, coordination slipped down the political agenda with the Committee meeting less and less. Merkel appointed a new chair, who was institutionally separated from the ESDP division, and fulfilled his role in a more careful and diplomatic way. This resulted in a Committee existing by nothing more than name. The lack of political will under Merkel – who was more eager on developing a bigger coordinating role for the Chancellery – put coordination back on its pre-2004 path. Whereas Fischer was able to push for change due to Schröder's indifference, Steinmeier primarily focussed on becoming the next Chancellor. He therefore didn't try to counterbalance the Chancellery for more coordinating power.

Although Schröder and Merkel have both acknowledged that better coordination is needed to make CSDP work, and to live up to the promises made in Brussels, political priorities have hindered the implementation of coordination mechanisms. The inevitable result was that the Action Plan failed to outlive Fischer's tenure. In a sense, both Merkel and Steinmeier preferred the status quo of limited and ad hoc coordination.

Civil servants working in the relevant ministries have expressed the wish to increase coordination for decisions on civilian crisis management deployments. But the debate on how the German machinery could be improved will have to overcome serious political road blocks if that is to happen. The need for better coordination is widely agreed within the administration, but civil servants are reluctant to express this publicly, fearing to lose career opportunities within their administration. In general, politicians oppose coordination among experts across ministries. Ultimately political tensions play out even at desk officer level.

The chance of improvement is small, at least until after the next German federal elections in 2013. Unless Germany addresses formal structures, policy coordination will be fragmented. That will inevitably play out at the policy level for EU missions, and that's a cost that neither Germany nor the EU can afford.