

# PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO CIVIL-MILITARY PARTNERSHIPS

A Hungarian police officer guards a street covered in toxic red sludge in Devecser, Hungary, in October 2010. The disaster sparked cooperation between the police and the military.

By Lt. Col. Darrell Driver

One would be hard pressed to find a discussion involving Western defense institutions, missions and concepts that does not use terms such as “comprehensive approach” and “whole-of-government” to identify the need for a more thorough integration of civilian and military aspects of security. Indeed, the belief that security requires a more thorough combination of defense, diplomacy and development functions has grown into a kind of grand Western consensus. The European Union’s steps to craft a more integrated security architecture, NATO’s support for a more comprehensive approach in its latest strategic concept, and the U.S. efforts to forge more integrated reconstruction and stabilization capacity are three highly visible examples of a search for the right relationship between military and civilian security instruments. It is a search that has become a kind of holy grail for the Euro-Atlantic security community.

Like the legendary grail search, however, institutionalizing a more holistic and integrated mix of such a diverse range of military, police, economic development, governance building, and rule-of-law planning and operational capacities has proven elusive. Below the surface of a growing agreement on the importance of comprehensive approaches and integrated civil-military solutions, strong disagreement remains over the civil-military roles, responsibilities and relationships required to make this more holistic vision of security a functioning reality. Two of the most visible examples of this dilemma can be seen in the ongoing efforts to forge more comprehensive security approaches in the U.S. and EU. These efforts, of course, are divergent — one involves an individual state with well-developed national security institutions; the other involves a collection of states attempting to forge new and unique security structures. Nevertheless, the two projects serve to demonstrate the basic problem underlying all such civil-military integration: the degree to which it is possible for modern militaries to focus more broadly on nontraditional military missions and integrate more thoroughly in hybrid civil-military structures without losing their essential and critical military attributes. It is a dilemma defined by two competing positions: military purists arguing for a military that focuses on traditional combat functions and maintains clear functional distinction from civilian security practitioners versus military pragmatists, who concede a role for military forces in nontraditional security and development, and accept a good deal of integration with civilian practitioners in these areas. The

inability in both the U.S. and the EU to reconcile these two conflicting positions has remained a principal obstacle to the continued development and adoption of a more complete comprehensive-approach model. Until such reconciliation — or at least a satisfactory balance — can be achieved, purists on both sides of the Atlantic will continue to stall the march toward more integrative civil-military concepts and structures.

## A LONG-STANDING DEBATE

Though the comprehensive-approach aspirations that have caused tensions in many contemporary civil-military relations may be novel, the debate between purist and pragmatist conceptions of civil-military organization and purpose is long-standing. The purist view, initially and most comprehensively articulated in 1957 by Samuel Huntington,<sup>1</sup> argues for a clear separation between military and civilian functional domains as a means of ensuring military effectiveness, on the one hand, and civilian control of the military, on the other. The separation is especially necessary in liberal democracies, where values and decision-making are highly antithetical to the exigencies of privation, danger and uncertainty faced in combat. Only discipline and the cultivation of a core set of mission-supportive military values could provide a foundation that military professionals would need to be successful in this environment. Any detraction from this focus, any attempt to integrate civilian and military domains, would dilute military effectiveness. Thus, when civilians grant military professionals the independent autonomy to cultivate their profession according to the dictates of combat, civilian leaders can expect in return both an effective military instrument and one so singularly steeped in the classic conservatism of military values that it would not be capable of effectively vying for power in a liberal democracy.<sup>2</sup> In this way, Huntington argued, separation and distinction breed effectiveness and obedience.

The pragmatist perspective, best outlined in Morris Janowitz’s 1960 rejoinder to Huntington,<sup>3</sup> contends that the modern security environment has made the circumscription of military functions to traditional combat tasks impossible. Moreover, militaries, like other national instruments, should be rationally focused on an ultimate political objective and rendering service to the nation based on context and need rather than overly defined boundaries. Janowitz and the pragmatists had drawn dramatically different lessons from the conditions of the Cold War. The specter of nuclear holocaust, rather than emphasize



the necessity of a military readiness, had significantly curtailed the likelihood of major conflict. In its place were numerous smaller, nontraditional conflicts and policing actions that required militaries to be prepared for a broader array of constabulary functions. As Janowitz argued, this new constabulary force was “continuously prepared to act, committed to the minimum use of force and viable international relations rather than [traditional military] victory.”<sup>4</sup> This meant that civilian political control would not be achieved through a Huntington-style bargain in which military autonomy in a distinct sphere of expertise was exchanged for uncompromising loyalty to ends-focused civilian direction. Instead, civilian control would be assured when civilians and military professionals possessed a deep degree of understanding for the roles, responsibilities, commitments and obligations of the other. As Janowitz described it, the military officer “is amenable to civilian political control because he recognizes that civilians appreciate and understand the tasks and responsibilities of the constabulary force.”<sup>5</sup>

Thus, rather than define the boundaries of the military domain in terms of what militaries do, namely waging traditional combat, pragmatists define the military domain in terms of the unique service role that militaries play in society and the dangerous conditions within which that role is performed. What ensures civilian control of the military is not separation but a thorough embrace of shared societal values, mutual understanding and common democratic commitment. Though one can find traces of this debate across a variety of examples, the focus here will be on two recent cases in which rhetoric for more comprehensive civil-military integration has brought competing visions of civil-military organization into stark relief.

## THE EU APPROACH

European Security and Defense Policy, or ESDP, re-named the Common Security and Defense Policy by the Lisbon Treaty, is an interesting case for its attempt to construct wholly new security structures expressly focused on delivering a unique civil-military capability, with integrated security, rule of law, policing, civilian administration and civilian protection functions.<sup>6</sup> The EU would have an added advantage in being able to construct these comprehensive-approach-focused security institutions from whole cloth. There were no pre-existing institutions that would have to be bent toward more integrative designs. As argued by Javier Solana, former EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, this “distinctive civil-military approach to crisis management ... was ahead of its time when conceived.”<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, this hybrid focus would also serve only to highlight the split between purist and pragmatist perspectives. Moreover, unlike such internal civil-military debates in the U.S. and elsewhere, the purist-pragmatist split in the EU would take on the additional difficulty of playing in a multi-state environment in which purist and pragmatist methods of civil-military organization became increasingly identified with competing national interests.

Born from a 1998 compromise between Britain and France, ESDP would be defined by two competing visions of how to make ambitious comprehensive-approach aspirations an institutional and operational reality. In one vision, that of France, ESDP would need a relatively autonomous operational capacity for the military instrument and a standing operational headquarters that could provide command and control to deployed forces. The United Kingdom, on the other hand, remained unconvinced of the need to build such an autonomous military structure. If the logic of ESDP was as a crisis management and prevention tool, requiring a balance of civilian and military competencies, there was no need to construct a military capability distinct from the other aspects of the institution. For Britain, an independent military operational headquarters was unnecessary in an organization focused on delivering integrated security. A clear split developed between more purist models of military organization and function, championed by France, and more pragmatist-inspired models, promoted by the U.K.

There are a number of possible reasons for this persistent disagreement. The most apparent is the political split between Britain and France over the role of ESDP regarding NATO. France saw ESDP as an opportunity to gain European independence and strategic flexibility from NATO. Without a military instrument capable of performing independent traditional defense tasks, such flexibility would be dramatically limited. This limitation informed France’s desire to develop a standing operational headquarters, without which ESDP would have to rely either on individual member states or NATO to forward deploy any sizable security force. Nevertheless, Britain recognized an independent EU military capability as a duplication of and direct challenge to the defense responsibilities of NATO, demanding the integration of civil-military instruments in line with ESDP’s stated comprehensive-approach purpose. In this explanation, a simple political contest between Britain and France explained the disagreement over how to make ESDP operational. Luis Simon of the EU Institute for Security Studies described the disagreement this way: “It’s the politics, stupid.”<sup>8</sup>

In other explanations, however, the disagreement was not simply a matter of national interests and political positioning. Instead, Britain and France based their positions on clear distinctions in each country’s historically and socially generated view of the civil-military relationship. According to Per M. Norheim-Martinsen, the British position of a more thorough civil-military integration is best explained by a security culture that has long embraced close ministerial cooperation.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, “the E.U.’s civil-military organization [came ...] to resemble the French ‘Huntingtonian’ system of strict separation, and its fairly conservative approach to civil-military coordination in general.”<sup>10</sup> Given the French constabulary tradition, the country isn’t completely resistant to holistic or comprehensive security solutions. For France, political interests, constabulary history and civil-military proclivities contribute to the view that, rather than

civilian-military integration, a “strong and autonomous military instrument is crucial for an effective comprehensive approach to crisis management.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, the emerging question has been whether to pursue a comprehensive approach through civil-military integration or the selective application of each instrument’s unique capabilities within separate spheres of responsibility. At the heart of this dilemma is Huntington’s argument that a strong military and an autonomous military are invariably linked, making civil-military integration irreconcilable with traditional military effectiveness and unacceptable for those states whose defense insecurities and national interests require the latter.

Whatever the explanation, the disagreement created a schizophrenic ESDP institutional design that has failed to either realize or reject the competing visions of military autonomy and civil-military integration. Though the Nice European Council Meeting of 2000 set to create structures that would “ensure synergy between the civilian and military aspects of crisis management,”<sup>12</sup> there was no formal civilian-military relationship or coordinating mechanism created below the very senior level of the Political Security Committee. This relative segregation of the military and civilian aspects of ESDP was further exacerbated by the clear and decisive resource advantages of the military component over its civilian counterpart. Below the PSC level in the defense directorate, for instance, the European Union Military Committee was supported by a European Union Military Staff consisting of 140 experienced planners. By contrast, the Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management, or CIVCOM, initially enjoyed no such staff support.<sup>13</sup>

The organizational history of ESDP, from Nice forward, has been one of iterative political negotiation and compromise to correct these dual faults of institutional segregation and civil-military resource disparity. For instance, the Swedish presidency in 2001 added a police unit to staff and plan civilian police missions. Nevertheless, this unit included only eight officers and was attached to the Council Secretariat, where its relationship with CIVCOM remained uncertain.<sup>14</sup> In response to poor support for the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a 20-person civilian support section was added in 2003, but this was a small step compared with the planning capability that existed on the military side. Finally, in 2003, the U.K., Italy and the Netherlands, on the one hand, and France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg, on the other, brokered a compromise on the debate over a standing operational military headquarters. The negotiated solution was the establishment of a civilian-military operations cell within the EU Military Staff. France got improved planning, command and control, while Britain ensured the cell bore the title “civ-mil” and resided in the military staff. This integration with the military staff meant that it was quickly dominated by the military and largely isolated from the civilian staff in the Council Secretariat.

Significant improvements in civilian planning and staffing capacity did not begin in earnest until 2007. In that year,

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British Soldiers lend a hand at a police station in central Basra, Iraq, in December 2008. The United Kingdom has taken a broader view of how to use its military in places such as Iraq.

the addition of the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability gave the civilian side of ESDP a measure of parity in staffing and planning resources. Movement toward a more thorough integration of the civilian and military components began a year later, when, in December 2008, the European Council agreed with Solana’s recommendation to unite ESDP civilian and military structures below the PSC level in the form of the new Crisis Management Planning Directorate. Ratification of the Lisbon Treaty followed in 2009. The treaty sought to meld foreign policy by uniting EU Council and EU Commission efforts under a common High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Previous divisions had created an ambiguous line between security, which was controlled by the council, and development, which was the purview of the commission.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, in part because the Lisbon Treaty has also directed a continued level of independence for the development function, plans to unite these structures remain a topic for further political negotiation.

Thus, far from being the immediate comprehensive solution for which many had hoped, ESDP was plagued by a persistent inability to define to everyone’s satisfaction the civil-military roles and relationships at the heart of the project. National disagreements over how to organize the delivery of civilian and military functions reflected a purist-pragmatist split over the degree to which military autonomy, mission distinction and institutional separation should be maintained in an age of more multifaceted threats and challenges. These questions and disputes have not been unique to ESDP.



An Afghan Army rescue helicopter comes to the aid of flood-affected Pakistani villagers near Shahdadkot in August 2010.

## THE U.S. APPROACH

Within the U.S., this question of civil-military integration is closely wedded to the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Early in these conflicts, observers were quick to criticize the U.S. for an overly purist approach to the military's role in mixed competency missions such as those found in reconstruction and stabilization efforts. Writing about the 2003 invasion of Iraq and its aftermath, Robert Egnell found that the civil-military separation principles in the U.S. Army generally resulted in a force not well-suited, or particularly inclined, to integrate with civilian reconstruction and development efforts in the stability and support phase of the operation. Conversely, the British military forces, though not as effective as the Americans in the initial combat phases of the invasion, were able to draw on more pragmatist traditions of civilian-military cooperation and constabulary duties to provide for a more seamless transition from combat to stability and support.<sup>16</sup>

Though this purist penchant for a military focused on exclusively military objectives has been viewed by some as an integral part of American strategic culture,<sup>17</sup> the ongoing conflicts in both Iraq and Afghanistan have wrought major changes in this perspective among U.S. security practitioners. In 2005, National Security Presidential Directive 44 named the Secretary of State, through the newly formed Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, as the lead entity for integrating U.S. government efforts in the stability and reconstruction domain. This is accompanied by an ongoing effort to establish a 4,200-person Civilian Response Corps covering fields such as rule of law, agriculture, governance and economic development.<sup>18</sup> If the U.S. State Department was taking steps to shore up

its stability and reconstruction capacity, the Defense Department entered this effort at a full sprint. Some of the more visible efforts included the establishment of a directive elevating stability operations to a level on par with traditional combat operations; the publication of new doctrines in counterinsurgency and stability operations that emphasized political and developmental aspects of these missions; and securing new funding to aid the developmental activities of military commanders. On the one hand, the pace of change and capability development was impressive for a typically slow-to-move security establishment. On the other hand, the convert's zeal by which the U.S. security community has embraced comprehensive-approach ideals has not resulted in any broad consensus on some of the most pressing and inveterate questions at the civil-military interface.

As the U.S. military has moved to adopt a more pragmatist interpretation of providing national security, this has prompted worries that the purist-pragmatist pendulum had swung too far. Indeed, by 2008, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and key members of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee worried publicly about the potential of a "creeping militarization" of U.S. foreign policy, as the Defense Department was increasingly asked to broaden its role to include economic development, policing and nation building.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, military observers began to fear that the more expansive mission-set of the U.S. military was undermining traditional combat effectiveness, especially of ground forces. For instance, U.S. Army Col. Gian Gentile has worried "that fighting as a core competency [of the U.S. Army] has been eclipsed in importance and primacy by the function of nation building" and that the U.S. was courting "strategic peril as a result."<sup>20</sup>



## ACHIEVING CONSENSUS?

In both the EU and U.S. examples, military institutions and their security-sector civilian overseers and colleagues have remained unable to arrive at an acceptable consensus on the purist-pragmatist question. Multifaceted, nontraditional challenges, from stability and support missions to countering transnational threats, have created a groundswell of efforts to forge more comprehensive civil-military approaches to security. However, the issue of how to forge a fuller civil-military partnership without compromising civilian control of security policy or undermining military effectiveness has emerged as a primary dilemma. Purists on both sides of the Atlantic argue for clearer separation of military and civilian responsibilities and a narrower defense focus for militaries, while pragmatists maintain that the scope and scale of security challenges make such separation unachievable and even irresponsible.

The basic tension framing the debate is the fundamental difference in threat perception between the two sides. Just as original purists rejected the notion that the threat of nuclear holocaust forestalled the possibility of conventional combat in the Cold War, today's purists, like many international affairs realists, dismiss the idea that globalization and interdependence have dramatically reduced the prospect of conventional military conflict. Continuing to see traditional defense capabilities as an essential power projection tool and a necessary hedge against potential military threats, purists in both the EU and the U.S. have fought hard to keep defense capacity from being watered down by hybridization and civilianization.<sup>21</sup> Contemporary pragmatists, of course, disagree with this threat assessment, arguing it is best to prepare defense and security institutions for the most likely challenges visible today. These challenges include failed states, international terrorism and crime, trafficking, mass migration, climate change and other nontraditional drivers of conflict that might require "hybrid defense" and well-synchronized civilian institutions.

Though in the Euro-Atlantic sphere, it has been fashionable to equate the U.S. with one position — the purist — and Europeans with the other position — the pragmatist — recent debates in both the U.S. and Europe reveal a more complicated picture. Indeed, as one begins to weigh the likelihood and potential consequences of future threats compared with forms of civil-military organization and capacities that might best account for them, it is more likely true that security actors in the U.S. and Europe find themselves serving both purist and pragmatist roles. This much more confused and complicated picture makes it even more unlikely that this enduring disagreement has a decisive resolution.

With no clear victor in sight, the most promising solution might be to look for ways in which both perspectives and organizational forms can be accommodated simultaneously. Given declining defense budgets, this will be difficult. However, if solutions like collective security, burden sharing and niche specialization can be brought to this require-

ment in the same way that it is being used to reduce costs in traditional defense, the task might be more manageable. One possible means of sorting this dispute out would be to provide a separate institutional vehicle within which comprehensive-approach design, experimentation and operations could move forward more rapidly. This was supposed to be the role of ESDP before the purist objections stalled the effort. Two recent developments, nevertheless, may signal a useful reset for ESDP. First, the 2009 return of France to NATO's integrated military command structure may quiet the French desire to see ESDP mature into an alternative military instrument to NATO.<sup>22</sup> Second, the unification of EU foreign and security policy provided by the Lisbon Treaty could offer the centralized direction required to refocus comprehensive-approach development. □

1. Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1957).

2. Darrell Driver, "Ideology and the Military Profession: A Reassessment of the Military Mind" in *American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*. ed. Suzanne Nielsen and Don Snider, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

3. Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*, (New York, NY: Free Press, 1960 [edition, 1971]).

4. Janowitz, 418.

5. Janowitz, 440.

6. "Presidency Report on the European Security and Defence Policy" in Presidency Conclusions: Nice European Council Meeting (Nice, France: European Council, 2000), Annex VI. "Final Report on the Civilian Headline Goal 2008," Ministerial Civilian Capabilities Improvement Conference of European Union (Brussels, Belgium, 2007), 14807/07.

7. Javier Solana, "Remarks by the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy," in ESDP@10: What Lessons for the Future? (Paris, France: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2009), 7.

8. Luis Simon, "Planning, Commanding, and Controlling the Development of European Security and Defence Policy: It's the Politics, Stupid," (Paris, France: EU Institute for Security Studies, December 2009), 1.

9. Per M. Norheim-Martinsen, "Matching Ambition with Institutional Innovation: The EU's Comprehensive Approach and Civil-Military Organisation," Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, #01311, (Kjeller, Norway; 3 July 2009).

10. Norheim-Martinsen, 19.

11. Simon, 5.

12. Presidency Conclusions: Nice European Council Meeting, Annex VI.

13. Carmen Gebhard, "The Crisis Management Planning Directorate: Recalibrating ESDP Planning and Conduct," Institute for Advanced Studies Report, 7, no. 4 (Vienna, Austria, 2009).

14. Gebhard, 2.

15. For more on the challenges associated with this division of responsibility, see Christopher Hillon and Ramses Wessel, "Competence Distribution in EU External Relations after ECOWAS: Clarification or Continued Fuzziness," *Common Market Law Review*, 46 (2009), 551-586.

16. Robert Egnell, "Explaining U.S. and British Performance in Complex Expeditionary Operations: The Civil-Military Dimension," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 29, no. 6 (2006).

17. According to Eliot Cohen, for instance, the American military's embrace of strict civilian-military separation was a part of the Vietnam legacy, one in which the war became a symbol of the perils associated with civilian meddling in the business of war-making. Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime*, (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2002).

18. "Introduction to the Civilian Response Corps," (Washington D.C.: Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, 2009), [www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=4QRB](http://www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=4QRB). See also Nora Bensahel, Olga Olier and Heather Peterson, *Improving Capacity for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations* (Arlington, VA: RAND, 2009).

19. Ann Scott Tyson, "Gates Warns of Militarized Foreign Policy," *Washington Post*, July 16, 2008. "Defining the Military's Role toward Foreign Policy," in Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2008).

20. Gian P. Gentile, "Let's Build an Army to Win All Wars," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 51 (1st Quarter, 2009).

21. Although it is important to note that Morris Janowitz himself never argued for military hybridization. For Janowitz, the increasing overlap between military and civilian activities did not supplant the uniqueness of the military's role to perform these activities under conditions of extreme danger directed in service to the state.

22. The most recent French Defense white paper emphasizes the need for a strategy to leverage limited resources to account for a fuller-spectrum of traditional and nontraditional threats. *Défense et Sécurité nationale, Le Livre Blanc*, (Odile Jacob: La Documentation Française, June 2008).