



Austrian National Defence Academy
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INTERNATIONAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT: TRENDS AND PROSPECTS 2016

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International Crisis Management (ICM) is undergoing a phase of considerable transition. The UNO, EU, NATO and the OSCE as well as numerous European states are realigning their doctrines or pursuing fundamental reforms. External engagement of decisive players is influenced by geopolitical ambitions and the migrant crisis more than ever and makes ICM additionally complex. Politico-diplomatic means for peace support have gained in relevance after the military operations in Afghanistan have been phased down. In 2015, more than 200,000 persons (including troops from the African Union) have been deployed in 68 civil and military missions – an increase of six missions compared to 2014.

The growing instability within the EU and its periphery is continuing in 2016. Major threats include impacts of the wars in Syria, Iraq and in Ukraine, transnational terrorism, state fragility, cyber attacks, illegal migration, hybrid warfare and an ongoing global financial crisis as a result of a monetary policy based on increasing national debt. In addition, European values like democratic participation, human rights and social welfare are in danger through radicalisation and the erosion of middle classes.

1. Current Phenomena in ICM

Intra-state conflicts and the humanitarian disasters resulting thereof, such as those in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq or South Sudan, continue to dominate the agenda, with neither military nor diplomatic solutions in sight. Traditional state structures slowly dissolve around these and other hot spots. Inter-state wars are still an issue. The ambitions of the

West to stabilise failing states are waning despite increasing negative spill-over effects (e.g. Afghanistan).

As the number of armed conflicts worldwide (42) remained unchanged from 2014 to 2015, the number of conflict fatalities rose sharply from 2008 to 2015 (from 56,000 to 167,000 according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies IISS). The idea of humanitarian intervention combined with the responsibility to protect (R2P-concept) appears to have failed in this context. One reason for this is that Western air superiority may well topple regimes, while positive conflict transformation can only be reached – if at all – by way of adequate troops on the ground, local allies and adequate civil assets. Hence, the relevance of finding political solutions to conflicts is growing (e.g. peace talks for Syria or UN support for Libya). However, geopolitical

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motives to engage remain dominant and as a consequence, measures of ICM, interventions as well as internal and external security issues become blurred (e.g. Afghanistan and Mali). Major profiteers, in any case, are the defence industries and private contractors.

The inherent risk of peace operations to destabilise the situation remains high (e.g. South Sudan), but alternatives are lacking. In Mali, the simultaneous presence of counterterrorist activities and peace operations based on a fragile peace agreement is a combination that will impede a positive transformation of the conflict.

As far as the quality of ICM is concerned, its focus is on stabilisation efforts of the military rather than dealing with the root causes of conflicts. Very often only the symptoms can be addressed (e.g. Mali). Official development assistance that follows usually a more needs-driven strategy has become a component of ICM, but remains underfinanced. NGO staff and even hospitals become strategic targets in conflicts since the protective effects of sticking to the humanitarian principles like impartiality are diminishing (e.g. Yemen, Afghanistan or Syria).

2. Key Players and Approaches

By the end of 2015, 16 UN peace operations (ca. 125,000 personnel) and 11 political and peacebuilding missions (ca. 3,700) were active. The number of available UN troops had increased considerably in 2015 as 50 troop contributors provided an additional 40,000 troops. This and the ongoing reform process towards multidimensional peace operations show the rising expectations towards the UN to act as a mediator and make use of its largely accepted position. A consensus in the UN Security Council to achieve a mandate for operations, however, is becoming more and more difficult to obtain. As a consequence Coalitions of the Willing that may intervene with or without a UN mandate (e.g. the coalition to combat Da'esh in Syria and Iraq) are expected to increase.

In early 2016, there are 17 Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions of the EU with approx. 5,100 personnel ongoing. A focus for EU missions points towards Africa. There are links to several big UN operations in Africa (e.g. MONUSCO in the DR Congo or MINUSMA in Mali) as a growing number of CSDP missions provide support for them. The ongoing EU capacity and training missions (EUCAPs, EUTMs) should be re-enforced with civil and military means to deal with migration (comparable to the activities of EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia). Fostering the rule of law and supporting security sector reform will be central for stabilising armed conflicts, combating human trafficking and dealing with the causes and push-factors of mass migration. In this context, EU Civilian Crisis Management with assets from the European Commission and the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) agencies (e.g. EUROPOL, FRONTEX) should ideally complement CSDP actions.

The African Union (AU) is struggling for more effectiveness to deal with crises. Two missions with a UN-mandate (MISCA in the Central African Republic and AMISOM in Somalia) are under the lead of the AU. In UNAMID in Sudan, UN and AU share the lead in a "hybrid collaboration".

NATO's Strategic Concept from 2010 includes ICM as one of three essential core tasks beside collective defence and cooperative security. In 2015 it was operational with six operations and more than 20,000 troops. Additionally, NATO holds around 40,000 Response Forces (NRF) plus air and naval forces ready. In the Mediterranean Sea, NATO is engaged in anti-terror activities and international efforts to deal with the migrant crisis. NATO's role in peace enforcing with troops on the ground may decrease in the long run despite the substantial presence in Kosovo (KFOR) and Afghanistan (RSM). However, its activities may continue to grow in the field of rapid interventions (e.g. Libya 2011) and in cyber defence. NATO military standards continue to be highly relevant for the interoperability of

armed forces also within the EU and the UN frameworks.

Since the beginning of the Ukraine conflict in 2014, the OSCE has gained in strategic significance due to its established position as a mediator in the Russian sphere of influence. In 2015, OSCE was executing 18 missions (approx. 3,000 personnel). Eventually, it might also play a stronger role in US-Russian relations and in view of potential escalations in the Caucasus region or in Moldova.

3. Future Parameters in ICM

Civil and military measures to maintain or re-establish regional and international security and peace range from counterterrorism efforts (e.g. France in Mali), peace enforcement operations (e.g. KFOR), traditional peace-keeping (UNDOF on the Golan Heights) to EU capacity building and training missions (e.g. EUCAP Sahel Niger, EUTM Mali) and political missions (e.g. UNOWA in West Africa). The migrant crisis and the growing number of terrorist attacks in 2015 and 2016 will have massive impacts on concepts, resource allocation and policies in ICM. As a consequence in 2016, there is more financial support available for police and military forces (e.g. in Austria). Public support for peace operations in the EU-periphery will therefore possibly increase.

By way of advising and mentoring regular forces (e.g. RSM, EUTM Mali or in Libya) and loyal militias (i.e. the Kurdish Peshmerga), contributions to ICM can be provided with relatively low risk. The difficulty to identify loyal groups for counterterrorism and stabilisation efforts (e.g. the recruitment of fighters against Da'esh by the USA), however, involves considerable risks. It also turned out that literacy and education projects in war-torn regions like in Afghanistan were clearly more sustainable than infrastructure projects. This should be taken into consideration for future ICM missions, e.g. in Syria or Libya.

Corruption represents a significant cause for conflicts (e.g. Central African Republic,

Nigeria), creates inequality and counteracts good governance. Hence, the relevance of conflict prevention, e.g. in Tunisia, Jordan or Lebanon, is rising and an important EU agenda.

The expansion of partnerships in ICM will be significant to diminish push- and pull-factors for migration. In this context the relevance of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter (Regional Arrangements) is on the rise (e.g. enhanced partnerships from the UN and EU with the AU). As an example, the African Peace Facility (APF) connects the EU on a partnership basis with African countries that are at the same time countries of origin of refugees.

The “Comprehensive Approach” (CA) has established itself as a concept for civil-military interaction based on shared situation awareness, integrated planning and division of labour. Preconditions are a mutual understanding of the mission objectives, a Whole of Nation-Approach and a policy of coexistence with NGOs. The issue of leadership remains a weak point of the CA which manifests itself in the migrant crisis within the EU and its member states.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

- **The spectrum of ICM is increasing.** The proximity to conflict regions and threats (e.g. the war in Ukraine, terrorist attacks) and the overall European struggle with the migrant crisis will have a massive impact on future missions and activities in ICM. Specialised contributions (niches), support of weak security sectors, EU's external border security and tasks that civil stakeholders cannot cope with will gain importance for the military.
- **Protection of Civilians (PoC) is of rising importance in ICM** due to the high number of civilian fatalities in conflicts worldwide. As the number of civilian experts and international police forces will continue to remain low, the military needs more robust capacities, specialists and additional or new operational procedures

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- (e.g. in the field of mediation or for non-lethal combat assets). However, PoC is also a task where NGO-expertise is crucial. In this context, a needs-based approach should be promoted.
- **A stronger focus on conflict prevention is necessary** which depends on the political will and influential personalities. Capacity building through reinforced EUCAP-missions or the APF, however, is an opportunity for the EU to act in a preventive manner.
 - **The training and advising of local forces** is a rewarding task for the military, but also involves risks. It should be accompanied by supervision in any case. The consequences of the outsourcing of the training agenda should not be underestimated (e.g. rising costs).
 - **The migrant crisis is a strong trigger for the EU** to support state resilience in Africa and the Middle East in a more effective manner with civil and military assets. Dealing with the root causes of conflicts and supporting the local creation of jobs should manifest itself in a comprehensive **EU-Africa strategy**, which would have to be based on an overall European migration concept.
 - A considerable **expansion of civil and military EU-activities in Africa** and more local collaborative EU-efforts, e.g. to support Multifunctional Transit and Assistance Centres of the IOM (e.g. in Agadez / Niger) or similar centres can be expected.
 - **For Austria, the migrant crisis offers the opportunity to become more active and to shape the agenda.** Additional resources should be provided to build up security and justice sectors, fight against corruption (e.g. on the basis of Austria's extensive experiences from the Western Balkans and Uganda) and deal with the causes of migration in countries of origin. Armed Forces can play a significant role within an expanding **Whole of Nation-Approach**. The valuable expertise from the civil society, ministries and NGOs is important.

- **A military focus should be laid on ISTAR** (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance). Further areas that will gain importance in ICM are Reactivity, Special Forces, improving C2 structures (Command & Control), Self-sustained Capabilities, Partnering, Mentoring, and Advising tasks as well as EU external border management. It has to be determined which areas Austrian Armed Forces should focus on. In any case, should peace talks for Syria yield a consensus or the situation in Libya deteriorate sharply, the need for peace support troops might increase strongly.
- **The current reluctance of Western countries to engage** in crisis regions to a major extent will continue as political and military risks as well as the costs are growing. The migrant crisis and the “Brexit” might, however, have beneficial results for a civilian and military “Crisis Manager EU” – if a Comprehensive Approach can be achieved. Ultimately, the USA, Russia, the EU, China and other players will have to contribute their share in ICM with the containment of jihadism, terrorism and extremism being of strong common interest.

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Note: This contribution exclusively represents the author's own opinion.