

Box 2.4.1 Can the EU Rebuild Failing States? A Review of Europe's Civilian Capacities

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Since the establishment of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) a decade ago, the EU has rested its conflict management reputation on acting as the so-called global civilian power. In theory, the EU is meant to be able to deploy almost 10,000 police officers to faraway theaters, to exploit the expertise of more than 40,000 diplomats, to dip into the world's largest development budget, and to ensure that its deployed civilians are able to work hand-in-glove with military deployments. This is an essential element of power in a world where stability in Afghanistan, Kosovo, or Somalia is seen as a direct corollary to security across EU capitals.

Despite this stated power, the EU's recent postconflict civilian interventions have struggled to find staff for its missions and have rigidly relied on operational models that are inappropriate for most modern conflict settings. Naturally, the results of the EU's deployment of civilians have been uneven. The "Bosnia template,"

which seemed appropriate for the EU's police-training intervention in that country nearly a decade ago, has been applied elsewhere and proved ineffectual. The EU has focused on judicial reform in places where basic security has not been properly established, like Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Congo, or in theaters where locals have no incentive to cooperate politically, like the Palestinian territories.

The next generation of security challenges that will face the EU will be fluid and violent, with little to distinguish the good from bad guys. These scenarios will of course require a far stronger emphasis on crisis management skills. Yet the experience the EU has acquired over six years of ESDP missions may not leave it best placed to cope with these challenges. When the EU has deployed into hostile environments, its personnel have usually been protected by UN, US, or NATO troops; when it has managed to deploy speedily and without protection, as in Aceh and

Georgia, its civilian capacities have been put under severe strain. EU civilian missions are woefully ill prepared to deal with threats to their own security, and the EU has struggled to coordinate the activities of its civilians with military forces—even its own peacekeepers.

If the EU is to effectively tap into its "civilian power" and constructively assist in the rebuilding of failed states, it will need to drastically rethink the way it designs, deploys, and maintains its foreign interventions. Crisis management situations that the EU can expect to deal with in the coming years will require it to adapt its mechanisms and staff to focus on three factors: speed, security, and self-sufficiency. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the EU's future interventions will rely on the willingness of its member states to strengthen their own capacities to enable missions to serve a more constructive role.

Source: EU Council on Foreign Relations.

Note: For more information, visit http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/civilian_capacities_report_page.