Crisis Management: The Transformation of National and International Systems of Response

Andrzej Karkoszka ∗

In the past, several wise men have passed their judgment on a proper response to a crisis. And so, Talleyrand advised, "In critical situations, let women run things." James Reston said in 1967, "International crises have their advantage. They frighten the weak but stir and inspire the strong." In another *bon mot,* the *Diplomat's Dictionary* says, "The usual response of international organizations to crises passes through predictable phases: they ignore the problem; they issue a statement of concern about it; they wring their hands while sitting on them; they declare that they remain seized of the matter; they adjourn."[1] Regrettably, none of these half-serious comments are helpful.

Neither are the experiences of the decades of the Cold War of much assistance. During those days, several serious international crises occurred. Some of them had a truly historic and strategic nature, like the Berlin crisis in 1949 and 1961, the Suez crisis of 1956, the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, and the crisis at the end of the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Others were of lesser magnitude, with smaller possible implications, and these occurred more frequently. All have had more or less far-reaching political consequences; all have been described, debated, and analyzed at length. However, these experiences and analyses prove of limited value in understanding and preparing for today's menace, which may bring crisis upon us.

The crisis of today may be brought on by a faceless, stateless, unpredictable, irrational, immoral, non-territorial, transnational threat, created by the rise of global terrorist activities. Those who pose this threat use unpredictable instruments and methods of action spanning the widest spectrum, including various forms of warfare affecting mass populations. The old tenets of deterrence seem to fail entirely in the face of readiness for self-sacrifice. Old means of warfare accustomed to a symmetrical doctrine and a comparable type of forces are painfully inadequate, disproportional, and ineffective. It is clear that the traditional response, focusing on a framework of national preparedness and organization, is no longer able to cope with the global character of the threat, which materializes in unexpected (or at least randomly chosen) locations. There is no longer any differentiation between civilian and military targets. Notwithstanding the false veil of religious argumentation, the main purpose of waging this type of warfare is seemingly to inflict "pain" on industrial states and societies that are associated with Western civilization. If so, then the destruction of human life is as important to the promoters of this new type of warfare as is the destruction of the national and international economic, technical, financial, administrative infrastructure of states and nations. In this way the menace is oriented at all levels of the modern organization of societies: from the international, regional, national, and local levels down to the in-

dividual citizen. That is why the response to a potential crisis that may be created by such a threat requires a novel approach, much beyond that associated with the field that has heretofore been known as "crisis management."

The traditional crisis management approach, associated usually with natural catastrophes, responses to organized crime, internal political or social confrontations, or international inter-state conflict can be taken only as a preliminary basis for the new approach. All the traditional measures of early warning, intelligence gathering, legal order, technical and organizational preparedness, and international assistance and cooperation have to be augmented, transformed, and strengthened to cope with the new types of potential crisis. The traditional functions of such instruments of crisis response as military forces, police, intelligence services, civil emergency services, and state and local administrations need a redefinition and new procedures to encourage effective interaction if they are to be ready to confront these new circumstances.

The new crisis management approach has to prepare for all possible and hard-to-predict contingencies, be targeted against a vast range of possible perpetrators, able to execute a massive surge in "response capabilities," prepare all elements of the system for a quick /instantaneous reaction, and have the ability to respond in a measure commensurate to the threat. On top of all this, it must respond with all its organic and supportive elements commanded and controlled in a comprehensive and timely manner, assuring both unity of command and unity of effort in usually messy and dramatic circumstances.

A Few Theoretical Notes on the Concept of "Crisis"[2]

The term *crisis* seems to be used rather indiscriminately, as many situations are deemed important enough to give them a sense of "criticality" or "urgency," depending on context, the real or perceived sense of gravity of a given situation, and the attitude of the observer/analyst. With such a vague understanding of what constitutes a "crisis," it is correct to say that the adequacy of response to a difficult situation will depend in part upon the quality of the classifying categories used and our ability to correctly recognize the event's importance and its consequences. The definition of "crisis" usually depends either on conditions that have systemic consequences or on the decision-making framework. The first approach, linked to a systemic aspect, defines a crisis as a situation that disrupts the system or a part of the system by creating an abrupt or sudden change in one or more of the basic systemic variables. Thus, it may be said that crisis carries the potential for an unexpected or dangerous systemic transformation. It suggests the relationship to such terms as *change* and *conflict*. Whether or not a crisis actually produces significant change depends on various factors, such as the nature of the modification incurred and the available techniques for crisis management. It also depends on the sensitivity of the system to the actual crisis situation.

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[2]　Charles F. Hermann, "International Crisis as a Situational Variable," in *International Politics and Foreign Policy. A Reader in Research and Theory*, ed. James N. Rosenau (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 409–21.

As far as the second approach is concerned, it refers to a process by which decisions are made in response to a situation that is perceived as a crisis. Thus, the crisis acts as a stimulus; the decision represents a response. In this approach, a crisis may be defined as a situation that threatens high-priority goals of the decision-making unit and/or restricts the amount of time available for a response before the decision is made, and often surprises the members of the decision-making body by its occurrence. The key elements of importance here are the reality of the threat, the amount of time available, and the degree of surprise in a given situation. Decision-making in a crisis situation depends substantially on the specific perception of the situation by the actors involved in the decision-making process. If the actors are well prepared, the threat is well anticipated, and the bureaucratic, legal, and technical frameworks are ready for a wide spectrum of contingencies, the typical "crisis situation" is transformed into a "reflective situation." In the last case, the decision-making is similar to that for a "crisis situation," but the reflexive decisions are based on expected circumstances. In spite of time pressures and a lack of chances to consider major alternatives to an action, the flexibility exists for a proper adaptation of reaction, and the decision can be made more rapidly than in an actual crisis situation.

Both of the theoretical approaches briefly sketched above point to the necessity for the serious preparation of the appropriate response mechanism, enabling an effective crisis management approach to avert as much as possible the negative consequences of a sudden break-down of internal, individual, and societal order, as well as the disruption of the international security system, which may be caused by a crisis.

The National/International Security Sector as a Crisis "Response Mechanism"

A classic mechanism of response to a crisis focuses on the clearly separated roles of the individual elements of the national security apparatus. Thus, international crises were usually met by a combination of military forces and diplomatic means, assisted by foreign intelligence services. Internal crises were managed by domestic law enforcement agencies or by the civil emergency system, involving the local and (if required) state-level civil administration. This separation of roles is no longer tenable. The new threat brings about the prospect of a crisis to which the response, if it is to be effective, must be organized on a wider front, drawing on many, if not all, available institutions and forces. All of them must contribute in a concerted effort, bearing directly or indirectly on the final result. According to the classical norms of any strategy based on multi-factor, multi-force, across-the-board activity, such an approach presupposes common legal frameworks, the availability of the full range of information about the threat, broad dissemination of that information in a time-urgent fashion, unified understanding of the intentions of commanding authorities, readiness of various assets, and standardized training for various contingencies.

A good example of the new approach to risk, and hence to the preparation for a new type of crisis, is given by the Comprehensive Risk Analysis project, mandated by the Swiss Parliament in 1991. The idea behind the project is that there exist three

methods to safeguard and enhance national security: two traditional—that is, empirical, or measure-oriented—approaches, and a new one, the risk-oriented approach to preparation. The last one presupposes a systematic assessment of all possible incidents or developments—including natural disasters; technological mishaps; ecological destabilization; cut-offs of the supply of energy, food, and strategic goods; economic meltdown; health system degradation; migration; political and social crisis; dangers to internal security—that could seriously endanger the basic national infrastructure and the livelihood of the population. All of them may be interlinked, and thus call for a comprehensive approach to preparedness and response by the entire national security structure.

As we talk about a host of different institutions and agencies, separated in their professional functions for decades, the proposed integration of effort and response is a very tall order. It requires time, concerted effort, and tangible resources to execute. It is all so much more demanding that we have neither much time nor common understanding of the matter or the resources at hand. The military are not allowed or prepared to act in domestic contingencies. National legislation is only now being developed to govern the new functions of different agencies.

The intelligence services are not prone to cooperate even within the national setting, let alone the international one. The dissemination of classified data is restricted to a very small circle, while in crisis situations it has to reach to the lowest levels of decision-making in a short period of time. The whole range of the command and control function has to integrate local agencies with the top national levels of administration. The state authorities must learn to cooperate with private industry and business in the execution of common goals. International organizations have divergent perceptions of required measures and procedures, not to mention their cumbersome decision-making and force-generation processes.

On a positive note, one must mention the existence of various national and international civil emergency systems, which can stand as a basis for the forthcoming development of a collective crisis management approach. However, the technical, organizational, and resource capacities of these existing crisis management systems need to be seriously augmented for them to be able to meet the new challenge. The politicians can no longer treat the task of crisis management as a secondary one from the point of view of state security, heretofore understood mainly as a matter of defense or law enforcement. Today, in a time of global terrorism and international organized crime influencing our mass survival (in cases of terrorists being armed with weapons of mass destruction) or our basic economic and social interests (in cases of criminals bringing havoc to wide sectors of the economy and society), the role of crisis management cannot be confined to functions such as search and rescue, fire protection, and sheltering or supporting a local population. The crisis and emergency management system is now at the forefront of any state's security protection mechanism.

As far as the international crisis management system is concerned, the situation is even more complex. The national-level incoherence and weak preparedness for crisis management is compounded by the rudimentary character of the international structures devoted to crisis management; by disagreements on the political framework of

decision-making for crisis prevention; the lack of common standards on organizational, technical, and procedural aspects of crisis management between various state members of respective organizations; the possible duplication of efforts; or, more often, complete neglect of crisis management altogether.

The gravity of the problem is, however, resulting in an increasingly intensified emphasis on crisis management on both the national and international levels. Each state in the Western hemisphere, and many outside it, seems to be taking up or pondering over the need to augment its crisis management capability. The issue has also become more frequently debated within international forums, raising the prospect of a better multilateral response to local, sub-regional, or wider global crises.

National Crisis Management—The U.S. Homeland Security System as a Model? [3]

The new character and the unprecedented scale of the threat, epitomized by the attacks of September 11, calls for the full spectrum of responses, from early warning, deterrence, crisis preparedness and management, and consequence management, down to hard-core military defensive measures. Each area was found wanting and not entirely up to meeting the new tasks.

The U.S. crisis management system, built up during the Cold War and focused on preparedness for a nation-wide response to a possible nuclear attack (consisting of early warning and a partial sheltering of the population), and a more local response to civil emergencies, stemming from natural and technical disasters, was found inadequate to the new threats, as evidenced by the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 2001. The newly created White House Office of Homeland Security turned its attention to the readiness of "first responders" at the local level, enhancing border, airport, and seaport security, and improved intelligence sharing among federal agencies. From the outset it became apparent that there is a need for rapid and much tighter integration of the activities of the numerous federal institutions responsible for overall crisis management: the Coast Guard,[4] Customs, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the FBI, police, the medical system, the Department of Energy, the transportation control system, and the intelligence services, to name the most obvious ones. In May 2002, a National Strategy for Homeland Security was announced, consisting of six missions, of which two—intelligence and warning, and emergency preparedness and response—seem to fall within the core of the realm of crisis management. The rest, namely border and transportation security, domestic counter-terror and law enforcement, protection of critical infrastructure, and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) protection belong to the realm of "defense"—that is, physical protec-

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[3] Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Homeland Security: American and European responses to September 11th," in *The Politics of European Security*, ed. Jess Pilegaard (Copenhagen: The Danish Institute for International Studies, 2004), 159–78.

[4] John G. Ross, "Versatility Pays Off. U.S. Coast Guard Adapts Quickly to Homeland Security Challenges," *Armed Forces Journal* (June 2002): 40–44.

tion against, and reaction to, the actual act of terror, providing an additional technical, human, and structural capability to the system of crisis management. The Homeland Security Act of 25 November 2002, creating the Department for Homeland Security, turned out to be the largest transformation of the U.S. internal security system in the post-World War II era, comparable only to the changes undertaken more than fifty years ago in the U.S. external security system, when the Pentagon, CIA, and the Joint Chiefs of Staffs were created.[5] The new department has put together many heretofore separated security, law enforcement, civil and industrial emergency institutions and services, to be augmented by the newly created (as of 17 April 2002) and independent Northern Command of the military.[6] The new department links not only several lateral institutions, working in different areas, but also consolidates various levels of administration and services—from the federal down to the local level—into one huge complex responsible for crisis preparedness and response. The 2003 budget for the new department amounted to $37.7 billion. However, this huge budget is concentrated at the federal level, with no parallel increase of funds at the state and local levels.[7]

Along the lines of the Strategy for Homeland Security, serious re-arrangements were undertaken within the whole U.S. intelligence community, consisting of no less than fifteen different agencies.[8] The role of the CIA in the gathering and distribution of intelligence data is slated to increase.[9] In consequence, the resources for intelligence gathering and analysis, so far devoted mainly (80 percent) to military tasks and operated through Department of Defense, will have to be reallocated. The data concerned with the terrorist threat is to be integrated by the Terrorist Threat Integration Center, now under the CIA (but proposed to be transferred to the new Department of Homeland Security) and also incorporating similar units from the FBI and other agencies.[10] In this way, and for the first time, data on foreign and domestic threats are to be merged.

One of the biggest hurdles confronted by the new U.S. crisis management system seems to be a proper—that is, timely and comprehensive—distribution of relevant information on the credible threat and the coordination of crisis response within the huge

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[5] "The Department of Homeland Security. Help or Hindrance? Strategic Comments," *IISS* 8:6 (August 2002).

[6] Eric Schmitt, "Military Role in U.S. Gains Favor," *International Herald Tribune*, 22 July 2002.

[7] "New Funding Backed for U.S. Intelligence," *International Herald Tribune*, 16 May 2002; *Security after 9/11. Strategy Choices and Budget Tradeoffs. A Briefing Book* (New York: Center for Defense Information, January 2003); James Russell and Iliana Bravo, "Homeland Defense: Ramping Up, But What's the Glide Path?" *Strategic Insight* 1:1 (March 2002).

[8] Stansfield Turner, "Five Steps to Better Spying," *International Herald Tribune*, 10 February 2002.

[9] Bruce Berkovitz, "The CIA is not Suited to Homeland Security," *International Herald Tribune*, 5 August 2003.

[10] Duncan DeVille, "How to Split Up the Bipolar F.B.I.," *New York Times*, 18 June 2002.

new bureaucracy.[11] The existing internal communication networks used for intelligence purposes are secret, encrypted, and require users to have the highest clearances. Now, the potential users of this material—local officials, emergency workers, law enforcement officers—are located down the chain of command and are far more numerous, and are often not given access to this information. The existing procedures set up according to the U.S. National Information Security Act and Cyber Risk Reduction Operations necessitate the strict protection of computer networks, impeding the level of interoperability among various agencies. The existing U.S. national emergency alert system established during the Cold War and based on television and radio broadcasting networks works on the national level, but is highly unreliable on the state and local level. The integration of command functions is developing adequately on the military side of the system due to the efforts of the newly established Northern Command in the form of the Joint Terrorist Task Force for Civil Support, but the military do not have the leading role in managing the Department of Homeland Security.[12] The whole system of command and control requires frequent training and exercises, but state and local budgets are not adequately financed for this purpose. Some aspects of the efforts to increase the general level of awareness and information gathering on possible threats— like the Terrorism and Prevention System (TIPS program), which envisages the recruitment of citizens to provide information on suspects and dubious activities—are sparking opposition from those concerned about civil liberties and creeping McCarthyism.[13]

The U.S. Homeland Security administration and its growing role in crisis prevention may be seen as the upper limit of a national effort to confront the new security threats and adopt a national crisis response system. It is supported by financial and technical resources that most likely cannot be matched or replicated by other states. But, in fact, the U.S., faced for the first time with a direct and "inchoate," or "amorphous," threat to its national territory, is doing what other states (particularly those in Europe) have done for a long time before, although on a lesser scale. The European states—especially those, for example, like Switzerland, Germany, or Finland—having invested for years in their civil emergency and civil defense systems, seem to be much better prepared to respond to the new breed of security challenges. In the case of Finland, the state believed to be best prepared for such eventualities, the approach to crisis management is based on a Total Defense Concept envisaging the mobilization of all sectors of society in case of crisis, linking all civil defense and rescue services. The system is well coordinated on the regional level, and is equipped with an efficient communication system, radiation monitoring, and is linked to a robust border security management capability. However, in most other national cases, problems of informa-

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[11] Ralph Norman Channell, "Intelligence and the Department of Homeland Security," *Strategic Insight* 1:6 (August 2002).

[12] James Russell, "NORTCOM to Coordinate DoD Role in Homeland Defense," *Strategic Insight* 1:3 (May 2002); Karen Guttieri, "Homeland Security and U.S. Civil-Military Relations," *Strategic Insight* 2:8 (August 2003).

[13] "War on Civil Liberties," *International Herald Tribune*, 11 September 2002.

tion gathering, analyzing, and disseminating—as well as the construction of efficiently coordinated national structures able to respond to and manage the new type of crises—may prove technically and politically daunting, and very costly to boot. It seems that the challenges posed by the new type of threats are only now becoming the first order of business for many governments.

International Crisis Management – a Task for the Future [14]

The EU Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 contains a formulation placing the Petersberg tasks at the core of European security and defense policy, within which the non-military measures and civil-military coordinated efforts are to be Europe's strength, to be used in the area of international crisis management. The Helsinki summit of the EU in 1999 posited civilian crisis management as being of parallel importance to the development of the Union's military capacity. According to this formulation, a specialized civilian crisis management committee was established, reporting to the Political and Security Committee of the Council. Within the committee's purview were the creation of the EU police corps (5,000 strong) capable of deployment in a crisis area together with the appropriate command structures; preparation of a law enforcement detachment (judges, prosecutors, administration, and penitentiary specialists); development of a body of experts in the area of civil administration in a broad spectrum of civil affairs; and a capability to field a civil protection corps able to respond quickly to natural disasters (linking to the humanitarian assistance policy already established within the European Commission).

During 2001, the civilian crisis management developments at the EU, falling as they did within the Common Foreign and Security Policy, were partially overshadowed by the efforts devoted to the military elements of the ESDP, particularly with the creation of the EU Rapid Response Forces, which may be taken as an augmentation of the EU's approach to crisis management on the more demanding, military side. In connection to these activities, the establishment of the Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management group and a Joint Situation Centre widened the EU's array of crisis management structures. The capability of the system was already put to the test in the actual operations of the EU on police missions in Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2003. In the same year the EU Council decided to further improve the EU's crisis management planning and response capabilities, establishing a special civil/military planning cell. The purpose was to be able to augment selected national military headquarters, to allow them to be used as part of the framework for EU-wide operations. As the report of the Working Group VIII (called the "Barnier Report" after the name of its chairman) indicated, the EU's security and defense policy needs a broader capability than the traditional crisis management approach to ensure security within and without the EU, based on the reinvigorated solidarity among member states.

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[14] Hans-Christian Hagman, *European Crisis Management and Defence: The Search for Capabilities*, IISS Adelphi Papers 353 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 35–51.

The progress made in the EU's crisis management capabilities during the last few years is commendable. However, the real crisis response capabilities of the EU system are far from robust or efficient. Among its shortcomings, one could enumerate several conspicuous ones. First is the decision-making process for rapid response, falling into the realm of the "third pillar" of the community, depending entirely on the individual national will and decision to act, harmonized only at the level of the Council. Second are the structures for planning and management. Although they are quickly maturing and gaining necessary experience in organizing international crisis response, they are still only at the early stage of their development. Third is the fundamental dependence on national intelligence sources and the unwillingness to establish a common intelligence policy and sharing of information.[15] Fourth, the existing national crisis management systems are not all well connected and able to cooperate in time of need. This last deficiency has in some cases, like the German-Polish-Czech or German-French instances, been ameliorated after experiences of floods covering wide areas of these states, but this is still more a local than a pan-European network of cooperation. In sum, the EU crisis response is still in the nascent stages of its formation, and will take years to become a reliable and efficient system, able to cover the entire territory of the Union, not to mention the wide areas around it, where it may be needed most.

While the EU's crisis response capability may be described as developing with a clearly stated purpose and some resolve, NATO's ability to react and to manage crises (other than purely military ones) does not yet seem to be in the cards. Partially, this may stem from the still prevailing classic definition of the Alliance's mandate, concentrated on the military response to possible threats and paying less attention to other, non-military contingencies. The well-established NATO capacity to react to a serious security challenge to any of the member states stems from the era of the Cold War, when the threat was tangible and perceived by all. That old crisis response mechanism did not change substantially over the years. However, the shift in the character of the threat confronting the members' security today is already well acknowledged in the relevant official documents of NATO that have been issued in the last five years. NATO adopted the posture of a quasi-regional security organization, assuming responsibility for security and stability of areas far beyond the Treaty's legal area of responsibility. It thus became involved in a number of peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations, involving many tasks other than military ones.

So far, one obvious response to the new security circumstances has been the whole gamut of programs and initiatives leading to the transformation and modernization of the capabilities of the conventional national militaries. Within these developments, one of the more recently undertaken steps is the NATO Response Force, designed to be able to serve in times of urgent international crisis. However, as it is envisaged today, this force seems intended for a high-intensity conflict more than for a wider range of contingencies, including low-intensity and geographically restricted crises precipitated,

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[15] Inga Czerny, "Ministrowie spraw wewnetrznych krajow UE o walce z terroryzmem (Ministers of internal affairs of EU states on battle against terrorism)," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19 March 2004.

for example, by non-state actors. Though debated within NATO, such a wide conflict management capability—which would include better adaptation of doctrine and available technology, better understanding of the "new" threats, joint handling of non-military security threats, and interaction with other European and international organizations involved in an international crisis management—still seems a matter for the future. Once developed, however, it would enter the territory already well covered by the EU's efforts and capabilities. Such a course of events would probably have a positive impact on the abilities of both of the organizations.

The NATO posture seems strongly influenced by the U.S. preoccupation with the anti-terrorist campaign, in which the Alliance as a whole has a much less clearly defined role. The main value of the Alliance's mechanisms in this respect may consist more in providing a forum for intelligence exchanges, as far as the other members are able to add to the vast capabilities of the U.S. information gathering system. Additionally, the Alliance's political framework facilitates the mobilization of allies for a particular crisis response, including a military operation among a coalition of willing states.

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