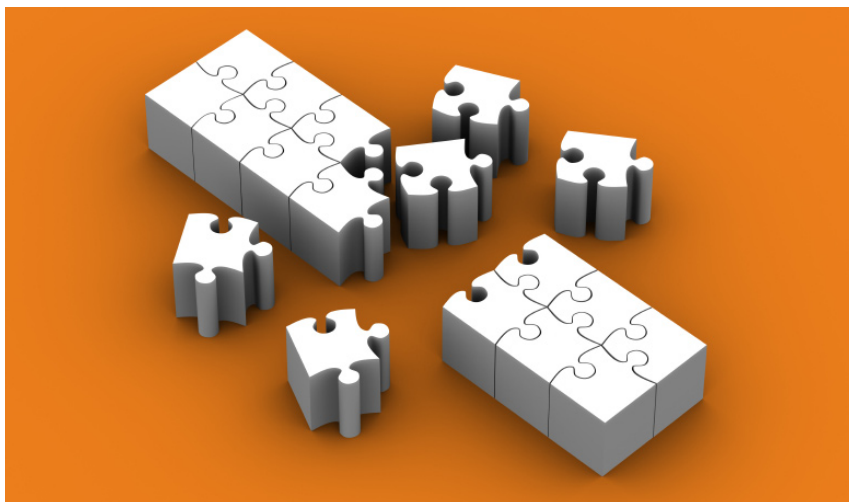


STRATEGIC CRISIS MANAGEMENT: TRENDS AND CONCEPTS

The expansion of the threat spectrum has also entailed changes in the requirements made of strategic crisis management. Today, horizontally and vertically networked efforts of all relevant actors and institutions are required within the framework of a holistic crisis management approach. In conceiving such “homeland security” systems, two approaches have emerged – an institutional one and a process-oriented one. In the case of Switzerland, both aspects can be detected, although key questions about crisis response and leadership structures remain to be answered.



Source: www.istockphoto.com

In the past few years, the threat picture has undergone noticeable change, especially in the Euro-Atlantic region. The end of the East-West conflict and the increasing economic, political, and social integration in the course of globalization have broadened the spectrum of potential risks. Today, environmental and technological hazards as well as threats due to intentional human agency are frequently transnational and are often near-impossible to define in geographical terms. Sub- and non-state actors as sources of security-policy challenges have gained importance. Situation analyses are characterized by increasing complexity and insecurity.

The demands made of strategic crisis management have changed commensurately. Changes in crisis patterns necessitate far-reaching adaptation measures in terms of the institutions, processes, and actors

involved in crisis management. Such processes of transformation have been observed in many states in the past several years. Even though these developments are far from being completed, a number of important trends and concepts are already noticeable today.

New crises, new requirements

All crises are characterized by certain elements that distinguish them from “normal” conditions. For example, there must be a danger to, or threat against, the social, political, or economic system that jeopardizes the underlying values of that system. Another hallmark of a crisis is a high degree of insecurity as far as its specific nature and its expected consequences are concerned. Finally, crises are always characterized by time pressure and the urgency of countermeasures. Often, decisions made at very short notice may entail serious con-

sequences such as high costs, material destruction, and/or the loss of human lives.

The particular novel aspects of modern crises can be characterized by three key trends. First of all, the causes of crises tend to be more complex and more difficult to identify. Traditional crisis categories such as natural or human-induced disasters, social conflicts, or external threats due to power politics are only of limited use in understanding modern crises. Secondly, a transnationalization of crises can be observed. In a global risk society, crises that are due to threats such as political violence or to disasters stemming from natural or technological causes often affect several states or societies at once. Third, some modern crises are more difficult to locate on a timeline than earlier ones. This development also implies that it becomes more difficult to determine the dynamics of crisis developments and the speed at which crises spread beyond boundaries of policy fields and states.

These changed framework conditions result in new challenges to strategic crisis management. There is a strong requirement for reorganization within state crisis management organizations. Since the classic distinction between “internal” and “external” security has diminished in relevance, it is no longer expedient to mainly structure the various instruments of crisis management according to this criteria. What is required today is a holistic approach to crisis management that combines civilian and military instruments and actors beyond portfolio boundaries in a

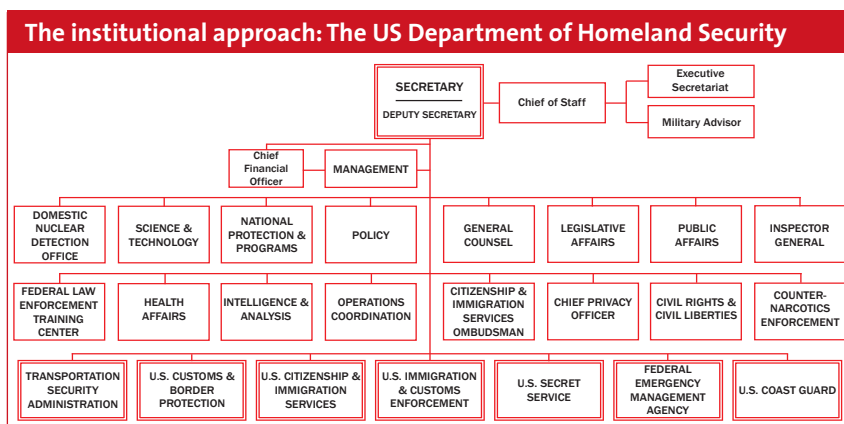
coherent strategy. Coordinated efforts must be made at all levels of national security structures. Important elements of an effective coordination strategy include the creation of common terminology, the installment of expert groups and networks, and defining points of coordination and interfaces.

Furthermore, it is necessary to establish close inter-state cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels and systematic cooperation with non-state actors. One long-term aim should be the establishment of public-private partnerships that involve not only collaboration in case of actual emergencies, but also joint planning and exercises. Finally, special attention should be devoted to possibilities for early warning and prevention. In view of the difficulty of managing the dynamics of modern crises, a paradigm shift from reactive to proactive crisis management suggests itself.

Mediatization and political awareness

In shaping crisis management effectively, it is necessary to take into account transformations in the social and political environment. Special attention should be given to tendencies to mediatize and politicize crises. These two phenomena have reciprocal effects. Crisis management is an inherently political task. During a crisis, political actors are expected to supply explanations for events and to swiftly reestablish the normal state of affairs. If crisis management fails in a crisis situation characterized by danger, insecurity, and time pressure, this can undermine trust in the crisis management abilities of the political institutions as well as their legitimacy.

On the other hand, the media already play an important role in identifying and defining a situation as a crisis by moving a given critical situation into the focus of public attention through their communication of information and the mode of reporting. Since the media may have a strong influence on a critical situation and its public perception, crisis communication has become an important element of crisis management for decision-makers. The flood of images that follows every crisis outbreak must be managed proactively. This requires a professional handling of the media on the part of those bearing political responsibility.



Source: www.dhs.gov

Various approaches to “Homeland Security”

The term “homeland security” encompasses the current efforts to reorganize strategic crisis management in a way that is commensurate to the threat. This concept aims to protect the political and social system, institutions, the population, and the critical infrastructure in a networked effort of all state, economic, and social resources, and to mitigate the effects of any crisis that may materialize. There are two possible models for the design of such a homeland security system that are based on institutional (static) or process-oriented (dynamic) approaches, respectively.

The US model of “homeland security” is an example of the institutional variant. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), created as a reaction to the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, is a coordination point uniting a number of hitherto separate governmental institutions as well as other actors from security-relevant sectors. The DHS serves national security by bundling the available resources and coordinating their application in order to avert threats and manage crises.

However, a number of problems have emerged in the practical application of the concept. The cumbersome bureaucratic apparatus has had a negative effect on the efficiency of the DHS. Furthermore, the “homeland security” efforts of the US have so far suffered from the fact that the main thrust of this program has been geared towards combating terrorism, as became clear during the failure to deal effectively with the catastrophe in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. As a result, the new *National Strategy for Homeland Security* presented in October 2007 has a stronger focus on preparedness and crisis management measures for responding to natural disasters.

The dynamic, process-oriented variant of “homeland security” systems is conceived as an efficiency-oriented integrated effort transcending portfolio boundaries. In this process, the individual contributions are coordinated in such a way that the following three goals of crisis management can be met: Prevention, protection, and mitigation. The mission spectrum ranges from crisis prevention to actual crisis management and post-crisis care. Reflecting the principles of military network-centric warfare, the overall nexus is intended to bring together and link up a variety of areas, means, and instruments, as well as state and non-state actors. The provision of services is geared towards an overarching process model that defines the specific leadership, core, and support processes to be applied in individual portfolios with a view to the main mission of the system.

The main advantage of the process-oriented system is perceived to be that this kind of concept maintains or expands the freedom of action of the individual ministries and participating institutions. This is of particular importance in the context of the problems associated with the division of tasks and authority within federal systems. But this particular approach also demands a strict and coherent definition of processes, clear allocation of responsibilities, and systematic monitoring of effectiveness.

The case of Switzerland

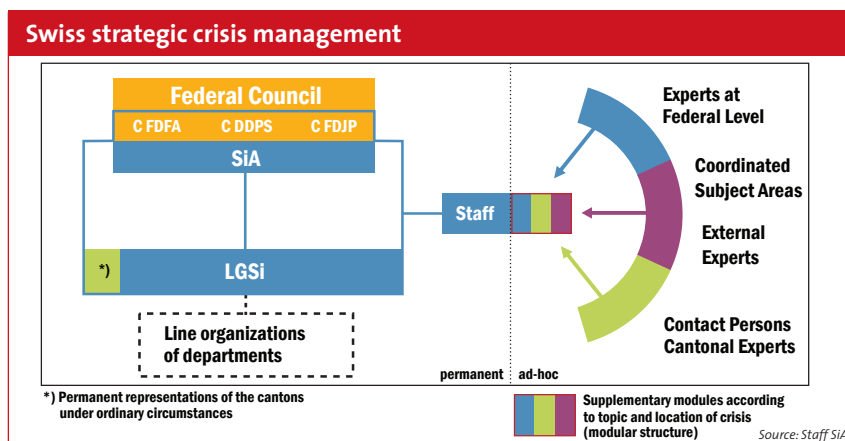
Switzerland has also reacted to the changing security situation and the new challenges to crisis management. The *Zentralstelle für Gesamtverteidigung* (ZGV), which had been oriented towards the military threats of the Cold War era, was abolished in 1999. It was replaced by several new administrative bodies. However, Switzerland still lacks a coherent concept in the area of strategic crisis management. While

the process of structural adaptation was initially dominated by process-oriented elements, the debate today is shaped by a variety of solution approaches that are only partially coordinated.

The foundations of a new model of security-policy leadership in crisis situations were laid with the establishment of the *Sicherheitsausschuss des Bundesrates* (SiA; Federal Council Security Committee) and the *Lenkungsgruppe Sicherheit* (LGSi; Security Steering Group) in 1994. The SiA is composed of the heads of the Foreign, Justice, and Defense Departments (FDFA, FDJP, DDPS), i.e., the three ministries with main responsibility for security policy. Its task is to strengthen the leadership of the Swiss Government, the Federal Council, in security-policy matters. As a preparatory caucus of the overall Federal Council, it assesses the security situation and coordinates security-relevant tasks and other matters with the intelligence services across ministerial portfolios. In this work, it is supported by the LGSi, which includes representatives of all ministerial portfolios and of the cantons. This group constantly monitors the situation and the spectrum of potential violent threats, is charged with early detection and warning, elaborates strategies and options, and prepares the work of the SiA.

In 2006, another process-oriented element was added in the shape of the SiA Staff. This permanent staff supports the SiA, provides assessments concerning security-policy developments, ensures emergency notification of the security-political leadership organs, and is the main point of contact for crisis management at the federal level. In case of crises brought about by strategic threats or serious disasters, the SiA Staff coordinates relevant expertise and supports the head of the Defense Department in the task of proposing to the Federal Council measures for dealing with the situation. To this end, it cooperates with the responsible bodies in elaborating recommendations for action. Since in the case of emergencies, the federal president is authorized to issue precautionary directives in place of the entire Federal Council, the SiA Staff is also available to the Office of the President and the Federal Chancellery (cf. the Ordinance on the Organization of the Security Policy Leadership of the Federal Council of October 2007).

Charged with the tasks listed above, the SiA Staff can act as a point of coordina-



tion and interface and as the backbone of an overall crisis management system at the federal level. However, the current system still has a number of weaknesses. For example, difficulties are to be expected in the modular process of complementing the SiA Staff with experts from the federal administration, as is foreseen in crisis situations, since these experts will also be needed in their respective departments in the case of a crisis.

Another problem is that strategic crisis leadership is located at the federal level, while authority at the operative level rests with the individual ministries. The SiA Staff and the LGSi have no authority for leadership and decision-making vis-à-vis the federal administration's structures. This also creates difficulties for the coordination of collaboration between the federal administration and the cantons. At the operative level, cantons are still faced with a potentially bewildering number of contacts in the federal administration when it comes to crisis management.

The challenge of building a Security Ministry

Currently, a number of initiatives are under way to improve and optimize Switzerland's strategic crisis management capabilities. For example, the "Murten Process", conceived in the course of military exercises, is the first effort to map the leadership structures and products to be elaborated at all levels of national crisis management. The goal of this process-oriented approach is to ensure the vertical and horizontal integration as well as the topical and temporal coordination of the measures required for a coherent overall strategy, and to synchronize the various component processes.

In addition, there are also efforts indicating an institutional approach towards "homeland security". By agreeing in September

2007 to the creation of a unified Security Ministry, the Swiss parliament has delivered a strong signal pointing in this latter direction. The ministries concerned will propose concrete suggestions as to the design of such a ministry by the end of February 2008. There is a consensus that the institutional model could offer at least a partial solution for coordination problems affecting Switzerland today, for example by presenting the cantons with a single point of contact in case of a crisis. However, this step would not in itself be sufficient to meet requirements for stronger international cooperation and for attribution of greater importance to crisis prevention.

Additional challenges arise from the fact that the concept *Nationale Sicherheitskooperation* (National Security Cooperation) will also have to be adapted to the emerging "homeland security" system. Overall, the need for clarification is particularly urgent in four main areas of Swiss crisis management: The way that strategic crisis response is designed at the federal level; the relationship between the approximately 30 topical crisis management groups and the emerging national leadership structures; coordination between the federal administration and the cantons; and leadership in the area of crisis management.

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