

**THE EUROPEAN CIVIL PEACE CORPS  
AND NONVIOLENT CONFLICT  
SOLUTION: POTENTIAL AND  
CHALLENGES, WEAKNESSES AND  
STRENGTHS**

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# CONTENTS

Introduction

Civil Peace Corps: definition and structure

The roots of the CPC idea

History and origin of the CPC

Types of action for nonviolent solutions. Which kind of action

Which sort of 'mission' in the field

To set up the European Civil Peace Corps (ECPC)

Profile of volunteers and assignments

Training

From 'Solidarity for Peace in Sarajevo' (1992) and 'Mir Sada' (1993) to CPC: my personal experience

Some fundamental elements so that ECPC acts in a nonviolent pattern: power roots and nonviolent rules

An evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of an ECPC from a nonviolent perspective

Conclusion

Bibliography

## **Abbreviations**

CPC	Civil Peace Corps
ECPC	European Civil Peace Corps
ECPS	European Civil Peace Service
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
NGO	Non governmental organization
UN	United Nations

## **Introduction**

In the last two decades an important debate has grown around Europe on how to face the new era of conflicts which are often within states, rather than between nations. Furthermore the interest in a third part intervention is rising. In the shift from reaction to prevention the civilian organizations have a relevant role. The idea about an ECPC increased to an institutional level after some experience on the ground made from civilian peacekeepers inside the bloody civil war that involved the former ex-Yugoslavia inside the Europe continent.

This essay will examine these sorts of opportunities, especially for the EU, because in Europe there is an important debate surrounding the creation and implementation of an ECPC for nonviolent conflict resolution. This discussion started in 1993 (at time of the Balkan war) and now is at the stage of some feasibility studies. The essay will explore the roots of the ECPC proposal through the actions made in the former Yugoslavia during the civil war, this investigation will be conducted from a nonviolent perspective. Finally, the essay will try to evaluate the strengths and the weak points of the last feasibility study submitted to the EU and will conclude with an evaluation and suggested recommendations.

### Civil Peace Corps: definition and structure

#### What is a CPC?

A service with the aim to train men and women to go into the conflict situation in order to effect change with nonviolent methods and planned nonviolent actions. People of every age are useful for this kind of project.

The thinking related to the creation of the CPC is based on the potential which nonviolence offers to conflict management and also on the idea that civilians can communicate more easily between the parties in conflict. Civilians are usually not perceived as a threat; also the absence of hierarchical constraints facilitates a greater understanding of democratic values. Civilians do not threaten national pride, sovereignty of local military commanders, militia leaders and political leaders (they are not rivals). Thirdly, they can act more quietly, without propaganda apparatus. The interposition, in this case understood as a willingness to enter 'into the conflict', does not have an enemy. Rather 'the enemy' is the war itself which it aims to end. The CPC are aimed to give all parties the opportunity to address the reasons of the conflict at their roots and to look for for stable solutions and mutual satisfaction.

Today in conflict management, using only the resources associated with traditional diplomatic and military strategies is not enough. Comprehensive peace should therefore be aimed at, this should include humanitarian aid, development cooperation and conflict resolution. Interventions must be coordinated at the international level. They should relate to the needs of the population in the conflict zone, to be compatible with civil society and other actors in the field. They must be nonviolent, flexible and practical, however they should be distinguished from coercive action.

Finally they should also be able to counter the escalation of violence since the beginning.

### The roots of the CPC idea

Reasoning behind the creation of a CPC follows the mainstream idea that it is possible to avoid the violence or, at least, to decrease it to a minimum level. In addition we can trace the motivations behind this choice following the track of these important documents and events:

1. Charter of the UN, June 1945, chapter VII, art.51, where the role of UN to maintain international peace and security is indicated (International Court of Justice 1978).
2. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 1948, art. 28, where it is specified that rights and freedoms identified into Declaration should be fully realized (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Right 2007).
3. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizing ‘...the ideal of free human beings enjoying civil and political freedom and freedom from fear...’ (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Right 1966: Preamble).
4. The International Criminal Court (ICC). It is the first permanent international criminal court established to help end impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. It tries persons accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes (ICC n.d.: About the Court).
5. The fall of the Berlin Wall and post 'Cold War'. The end of the Cold War rather than leading to a decrease in military expenditure and conflicts in the world has been characterized by an array of emerging conflicts. New nationalistic and revanchist conflicts have surfaced, sometimes on a presumed ethnic or religious basis, serving only for those in power to maintain power or for those not in power to try to usurp it. Furthermore the aim of war is to defend the western standard of living through the control of the raw materials (for instance oil, gas, uranium).
6. An Agenda for Peace preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former UN Secretary-General (1992: point 15).  
'... Our aims must be: to seek to identify at the earliest possible stage situations that could produce conflict, and to try through diplomacy to remove the sources of danger before violence results; where conflict erupts, to engage in peacemaking aimed at resolving the issues that have led to conflict; through peace-keeping, ...'.

The UN Secretary's report later adds:

‘The terms preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping are integrally related and as used in this report are defined as follows: preventive diplomacy is action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur; peacemaking is action to bring hostile parties to agreement, ... peace-keeping is the deployment of a UN presence in the field, ...’ (1992: point 20).

The former UN Secretary-General recognizes the fundamental importance of civil action for achieving and maintaining peace. He admits that for such a difficult and complex task the UN alone is not able to succeed and requires the help and involvement of non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, parliamentarians, business and professional communities, the media and the public.

### History and origin of the CPC

The idea of the UN White Helmets was the first step made towards the creation of a CPC. This concept was supported by Argentina in 1993 and launched as a global initiative for the creation of national volunteer groups, available for UN activities in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development (UN General Assembly 1994). The idea was to give the UN not only the use of armed force, the so-called Blue Helmets, but also a body of unarmed civilians ready to intervene in conflict zones.

Meanwhile in the field there were two missions led by the Italian NGO 'Blessed the peacemakers' in the Balkan Crisis area: 'Anch'io a Sarajevo' [Solidarity for Peace in Sarajevo ], in December 1992 and 'Mir Sada' [Peace Now], in August 1993. These actions used only nonviolent methodology. 'Solidarity for Peace in Sarajevo ' was able to enter in Sarajevo during the Serbian besiegement. As a result of these missions the idea of ECPC was first introduced in the EP by Alexander Langer, Italian Green Member of the EP, in 1994. The purpose was to provide the EU with an additional instrument to enhance its external action in the field of conflict prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Afterwards the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, which is a philanthropic foundation to promote international peace and advance education and knowledge, made an important research in 1997, which underlined the contribution of NGOs in solving conflicts.

Finally, there were several important statements endorsed by the EP. The first came in May 1995, when the EP made a recommendation on the establishment of a ECPC (Official Journal of the European Communities 1995). At the sitting of 17 July 1998 the President of Parliament announced that he had referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Security and Defence Policy the proposal for a recommendation to the Council by Mr Spencer and 38 other Members on the establishment of an ECPC (The Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research 1999). The third was a

recommendation on the establishment of an ECPC (Official Journal of the European Communities 1999) in February 1999 based on the proposal by Mr Spencer and 38 other Members. The last important document was generated by the EP as a resolution on the Commission Communication on the Conflict Prevention in December 2001 (European Parliament. The Week 2001). As a result of these documents two important feasibility studies were made; the first was led by Gourlay (2004) and the second was published on the establishment of the EU Commission in December 2005.

### Types of action for nonviolent solutions. Which kind of action?

There are several types of actions which could be deployed during a conflict. Briefly it is important to examine the following activities:

**Prevention.** We can define the prevention of violent conflicts as a set of strategies and measures aimed at preventing political controversies between states or within states from escalating to violence, at strengthening the capacity of the parties involved to resolve disputes peacefully, and gradually solve the problems of political, economic and social fields which are the basis of the litigation. Usually they are therefore distinguished as two different areas of intervention: prevention opera which is focussed on the potential crisis in its immediacy, and structural prevention which is directed instead to the structural causes of political, economic and social problems that are the root of the conflict. The first area of intervention relates directly to possible acts of violence and has an impact in the short and very short term. Conversely structural prevention is identified largely with strategies for socio-economic development and the creation of structures of political integration in the medium and long term.

**Conciliation.** Meeting on the level of quality and practicality that clears all contrast objective and subjective. Conciliation can indicate both the process (activities tending to a result) and the outcome.

**Interposition.** The term "interposition" etymologically refers to something that comes between two entities (usually armed) that were fighting until a few hours before. In practice, it can be easily understood as the role of the man who goes to divide two that are fightin. The problem with interposition is that, traditionally, anyone who proposes to divide two litigants, tends to take the heaviest punches, in this case the tradition should be denied. It is belived that there is interposition everytime that a person is given the opportunity to enter into the sphere of another person. This also applies to groups, associations, institutions, etc.

**Management.** Conflict management refers to the long-term management of intractable conflicts. It is the label for the variety of ways by which people handle grievances, standing up for what they consider to be right and against what they consider to be wrong. Those ways include such diverse phenomena as gossip, ridicule, lynching, terrorism, warfare, feuding, genocide, law, mediation and

avoidance. Which forms of conflict management will be used in any given situation can be somewhat predicted and explained by the social structure of the case.

**Mediation.** The word comes from the Latin word “mediation” which means divide, or open in the middle. Mediation takes note of the contrasts of diversity. Rather than dissolve or resolve conflicts, mediation seeks to handle them.

**Monitoring.** It means a process of careful observation and analysis of a situation, - in this case a conflict - conducted over a period of time, in order to ascertain whether the principles, standards, or other agreements are met and to identify possible strategies and actions. Monitoring requires the active collection of information, verification and immediate use of information to address issues of conflict.

**Reconciliation.** It is an objective or a manner to find a way to live beside former enemies to share the daily life with them.

**Resolution.** Conflict resolution approaches seek to move conflict parties away from a zero-sum position towards positive outcomes, often with the help of external actors.

**Restoration.** This is about normal relations that have deteriorated temporarily.

**Transformation.** It is the process by which conflicts are transformed into peaceful outcomes. It recognizes that contemporary conflicts require more than the reframing of positions and the identification of win-win outcomes. The very structure of parties and relationships may be embedded in a pattern of conflictual relationships that extend beyond the particular site of conflict. Therefore it is a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses, and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict. Finally, conflict transformation initiatives are often characterized by long-term horizons and interventions at multiple levels, aimed at changing perceptions, improving communications skills and addressing the roots of conflict, including inequality and social injustice.

### Which sort of 'mission' in the field

According to the foregoing definition of a CPC, intervention in conflict areas can be achieved if the parties in conflict, one party or organizations which are representing the majority of people require its presence. Whereas a feasibility study conducted by the EU in 2005 (EU Commission concerning ECPC 2005) made more complex recommendations. Consequently international NGOs with sufficient capacity could contribute and possibly in some cases be responsible for advance missions, that will be instrumental in defining the nature of the potential ECPC involvement: rapid deployment or longer term planning, and short term as well as long term missions. “Rapid deployment” missions of relatively short duration could include, for example:

- human rights monitoring: volunteers would be able to be enter the crisis area concerned, with a mandate to monitor and report human rights violations. This would typically need coordination with UN agencies;
- election-related training: volunteers could be sent to crisis areas to train election workers, monitors and local NGO representatives prior to elections – this would be



independent of, but in coordination with, election observation as currently carried out by the EU, OSCE, etc.

The ECPC could be used on civilian-related tasks in crisis situations where the EU is involved in armed peace-keeping interventions. Tasks could range from mediation at community level to support for government administration, media support, legislative and judicial support, etc. Short term first missions may in such cases be replaced with more long term missions. The relationship between the ECPC and a military intervention need to be assessed carefully, because a military presence may make it more difficult for the ECPC to be seen as neutral.

Longer-term deployments can also be envisioned, such as assisting in bringing a conflict transformation dimension to development and possibly humanitarian activities. Tasks in this field may be very varied and according to the specific situation they could introduce ECPC-professionals in conflict transformation, human security, human rights, media development, civil society development and elections.

### **Potential demand and requests for ECPC**

According to the original proposal, the ECPC should function only under a mandate backed by the UN or its regional organizations. It is therefore essential to base the potential work of the ECPC on close cooperation and coordination with other international and regional bodies. According to the “Final report” the ECPC should normally work with a clear mandate.

### To set up the ECPC

It is important to choose between a centralized or decentralized structure for the ECPC (EU Commission concerning ECPC 2005: 60)

The decision whether to have a centralized or decentralized structure depends on two levels:

- recruitment level and management of a roster;
- deployment and management of operation.

According to the conclusions of the ECPC feasibility study, the ECPC should be based on a decentralised recruitment structure with identification and pre selection of qualified candidates at national level, and with the possibility of establishing framework agreements with either European NGOs or national agencies.

A number of factors indicate that rosters and the pre-selection of candidates should preferably be based on national systems:

- the wish to involve the civil society in recruitment makes it necessary to base pre-selection on a good knowledge about the national civil society in each country, including NGOs and existing recruitment systems within the civil society.
- Different capacity levels and levels of experience make it necessary to make special national efforts to find candidates.
- Different national systems mean that thorough knowledge about the national labour market and educational system are important.

A decentralised structure will however still require a small efficient central management unit for the ECPC to function as an EU instrument.

The proposal formulated by the EP describes the ECPC as consisting of two parts: a core of full-time employed professionals to fulfil management tasks and ensure continuity, and a pool of mission-specific professionals to be called on for specific missions.

### Profile of volunteers and assignments

The right profile of an ECPC-volunteer (EU Commission concerning ECPC 2005: 54) is supposed to be a person with significant experience in the area of focus, with language skills and familiarity with issues relating to the local culture, religion and ethnicity. The volunteers should have strong skills in communication and cooperation. Moreover they should be trained and qualified with inter-cultural cooperation methodology.

These above qualifications are essential; in addition they should be expert in some specific areas, such as the following:

- civil administration,
- civil society development,
- conflict management,
- democratisation and democratic institutions,
- disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration,
- elections,
- governance,
- human rights monitoring,
- human security,
- media and media development,
- mediation and conflict resolution,
- minority rights,
- mission administration and support,
- mission management,
- peace education,
- rule of law,
- training and education.

The report explains that candidates should be found from within NGO's, at universities and research institutions, and elsewhere within civil society. According to the research some candidates from civil society could be former junior professional officers and volunteers in the UN-system, and former national volunteers and development workers from national NGOs and government agencies. An interesting number of European NGOs in EPLO (European Peace-building Liaison Office), ENCPS (European Network for Civil Peace Services) and PBI (Peace Brigades

International) have started creating national and local ability and practice with peace services; therefore it could be a kernel of practitioners with excellent personal backgrounds from different regions and nations. There will be a demand for rapid and short term as well as long term operations with a total number of about 500 to 2,000 candidates.

### Training

The report outlines training in different chapters.

Regarding volunteers (EU Commission concerning ECPC 2005: 30) it suggests that training can be decided on the mission at hand (country background, local language, local political situation) or on the basis of general competence (conflict resolution skills, communication, security training, etc.). The training can be prior to a mission or a general training course offered to members of a database. By the end of training a learner must demonstrate aptitude in the language of the country of service, competency in the technical skills indispensable to perform the task, and adequate knowledge of the culture and history of the country of assignment. The duration of training provided should vary depending on whether volunteers are deployed on a long- or short-term mission. This also has an influence on the content of the training (for instance learning of local language, learning of the local context).

In relation to the training needs for civil crisis management (EU Commission concerning ECPC 2005: 68-71) there is substantial agreement that the staff must have qualifications and significant experience. Having a decentralized structure, the idea is to have already formed national staff whose professionalism is completed with specific courses. There are several existing models for the courses on which it is possible to work to find a suitable training model. The subjects of the courses are those previously identified for the profile of volunteers (see above), although there is a need to identify further areas and issues. As a final point it is also necessary to involve civil society, because the effort for resolving conflict requires all sources and knowledge which are available to the whole society.

### From 'Solidarity for Peace in Sarajevo' (1992) and 'Mir Sada' (1993) to CPC: my personal experience

I have directly participated in two initiatives during the war in former Yugoslavia which later led to proposals for an ECPC. What is remarkable about these initiatives is that they strive for peace and not other reasons, such as humanitarian aid. Somehow these actions are a first definition of the types of actions that the ECPC could do on the field. In fact, actions were in areas related to the interposition, mediation and monitoring.

The first action took place in December 1992 with the aim of arriving in Sarajevo on

the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10. The peace march was organized by 'Blessed the peacemakers' with 500 volunteers of different nationalities. After a difficult sea crossing from Ancona to Split which lasted 20 hours, the expedition members boarded 10 buses and starting from Makarska arrived in Kiseljak. Then after going through difficulties and lengthy negotiations with the Serbian checkpoint (the Serbs had been besieging Sarajevo for a long time) in Iljdzza, they arrived in Sarajevo in the evening on December 11th. Meeting with people and the opportunity to visit and talk with people in different parts of the city and on different occasions was the most important and moving initiative. The intention of the peace delegation was mostly to understand the needs of the people involved in this fratricidal war and the attempt to convey in a humble and respectful way a message of peace. Leaving Sarajevo the following day, after a journey not without its risks the 500 members of the peace delegation embarked for Italy on December 13. For the first time a large group of civilians with little means and belonging to a voluntary organization had been able to enter into a conflict zone where even the UN had difficulty in taking action.

The second initiative ('Mir Sada' [Peace Now]) also organized by 'Blessed the peacemakers' with another French aid organization named 'Equilibre' in August the following year did not achieve the same positive result. The caravan for peace was larger: 2,000 people, but the majority of participants could only get to Mostar where they held an action of peace. A smaller group arrived in Prozar, and only a small delegation was able to reach Sarajevo. The division emerged in the organizational pattern between Equilibre and 'Blessed the peacemakers', then the acceptance of people who did not participate in the training activities and other difficult circumstances prevented the peace-seekers from reaching Sarajevo.

These two expeditions can provide some instructive indications.

On one hand, the following results were obtained: 1) these initiatives show how the action of civilians may also play a role in conflicts and not only in post-conflict humanitarian assistance or reconstruction; 2) nonviolent methods, which are adopted for internal organizations and for external actions, have been shown to operate in situations of extreme difficulty. The operational structure, consisting of small groups close to each other through previous professional training and 'affinity groups', the link between the groups gathered through the speaker system in the Council of Speakers, and other fundamental mechanisms, has proven itself to be excellent; 3) these initiatives generated a debate that has led even to the level of the EP in 1995 with the proposal to examine the feasibility of establishing CPC.

On the other hand we have seen that nonviolence in order to operate requires: 1) preparation and training with a group of people integrated with each other and with the same basic training. The integration between different groups should not be on the field, but before; 2) nonviolence also requires facilities, financial resources, tools and

practitioner staff, volunteers - even when motivated and efficient - are not enough; 3) finally, these initiatives need to be formally recognized (at the level of national and international institutions) to have that political and diplomatic weight and meaning that otherwise makes the actions undertaken much weaker in terms of their potential.

### Some fundamental elements so that ECPC acts in a nonviolent pattern: power roots and nonviolent rules

Before introducing the strengths and weaknesses of an ECPC it is essential to be acquainted with some factors pertaining to the nonviolent viewpoint. It is important to avoid creating an ECPC that could become a bureaucratic branch of the EU, instead of a useful way to try to solve, transform, manage conflicts. It could happen if the action and the configuration of the ECPC does not reflect the philosophy and methods of nonviolence. Including the feasibility study done in 2005 (EU Commission concerning ECPC 2005); so far there is not provision for nonviolence as part of a qualifying project. Nonviolence does not appear even as a way to implement the action and the training of the ECPC. The purpose of this section is to explain the minimum requirement in order that nonviolence could be present within the project of the ECPC.

Nonviolent methodologies were used effectively for the first time by Gandhi in South Africa and later in the fight for independence the British Empire in the early 1940s. Of course the 'first time use' of nonviolence does not mean that Gandhi was the first to use nonviolent methods. The aim of nonviolence is to reduce to the minimum the possible presence of violence in mankind and human activities.

There are a variety of nonviolent approaches, western academic theorists of nonviolence emphasise the importance of observing connections between nonviolence and power (Sharp 2005: 37), because some people think that nonviolence means losing power and living in submission to the force of others.

Power signifies the ability to lead people to rely on human resources and materials, have an apparatus of coercion and bureaucracy. Power is based on the collaboration of a large number of groups, institutions, people etc. It depends on sanctions as an instrument to impose or restore obedience and deter disobedience against the rulers.

Sources of power, those elements that give recognition to the power are:

- 1) authority,
- 2) human resources,
- 3) availability of skills and knowledge,
- 4) subtle factors such as ideologies, cultural traditions / religious etc.,
- 5) physical resources,
- 6) sanctions.

The *penalty* is important because it triggers the psychological element of fear and fear can block any kind of will and action.

The power to exist, in addition to the sources, must rely on obedience. Obedience factors are:

- 1) information and knowledge;
- 2) fear of sanctions and retaliation;
- 3) the moral obligation that each of us feels towards a law, a rule or a recognized authority;
- 4) the personal interest of one who obeys;
- 5) the psychological identification with the authority figure;
- 6) the existence of zones of indifference to certain situations which allow us to remain "neutral" because, we feel little concern or involvement;
- 7) the lack of self confidence and a strong will;
- 8) the tendency to avoid any responsibility;
- 9) habit, which consolidates all the other points mentioned above.

Obedience is certainly a crucial element if tied to authority. An interesting experiment describes that, beyond moral judgments on the authority - which may be good or bad - obedience to authority can be a source of human destructiveness. The psychologist Stanley Milgram of Yale University proved this thesis through a series of rigorous laboratory experiments described in his book (Milgram 1974).

These observations on power and obedience demonstrate that nonviolence may be a useful tool for:

- obtaining new things: more "just" freedom, more civil and human rights, preventing actions deemed reprehensible, pushing governments, corporations, companies or groups towards certain choices;
- defending things that are valid, including existing laws, democratic institutions, civil achievements, traditions and culture, territory, persons, associations, etc.

A lot of work, organization and training is required to explore and understand the benefits of nonviolence. Its instruments of struggle are ways to fight such non-collaboration, civil disobedience, boycotts, sabotage, and constructive alternative program and many small actions, techniques and procedures. Therefore human and financial resources are necessary to experiment with these methods. Finally, those who adopt nonviolent methods must follow some clear rules (Weber 2001, Pontara 1996) such as:

- a) the nonviolent struggle becomes legitimate only after all other lawful means (a collection of signatures, petitions, demonstrations, proclamations, strikes, etc.) are used;
- b) nonviolent activists must not broaden the objective of the struggle nor start the fight with the most radical course of action (there is a gradual scale which plans to

- start with half a "minor" impact for the other party and then intensify if this does not produce a result);
- c) nonviolent activists should always attempt to get "in the shoes of the other" to understand the motivations that lead the other party to the conflict with the goal of being able to find points of agreement with the counterpart;
  - d) nonviolent activists must always seek a compromise so that both parties are satisfied by the resolution of the conflict. The goal is not 'win-lose, but win-win';
  - e) nonviolent activists should never compromise on the "heart" of the conflict or on principles that underlie it. This point therefore requires a great capacity for analysis and political choice about the things that are at the "heart" or "principles";
  - f) nonviolence must be understood as respect for the dignity of the other party and not only of his life. The group in question must refrain from all forms of organized struggle to destroy the enemy or to impose suffering upon him directly or indirectly. Nonviolent actors should not behave in a way that puts the opponent in a situation of anxiety and fear because in this context, the opponent will be more predisposed to resort to violence;
  - g) material things also must be respected. However, nonviolent activists decide to use a boycott, the goal of the operation should be targeted and should not cause danger to anyone (except for the political or economic affairs of the counterpart);
  - h) nonviolent activists should always avoid hiding and secrets. The nonviolent action must be public, with no secrets or dual purposes. The counterpart must know exactly what the activists want;
  - i) nonviolent actors must be creative and imaginative striving never to leave the move to the other party, they should act first in order to force the counterpart to "chase" on their soil. The more innovative the action, the more the counterpart will be in difficulty;
  - j) nonviolent activists must always establish a "constructive program", for example a series of things or achievements that are desired rather than a list of matters in dispute. For nonviolent actors there is always the burden of presenting a credible proposal and realization of aims;
  - k) it is necessary to remember and know that nonviolence, lived only as a technique of action, does not guarantee the fairness of the end. Nonviolent activists can do use nonviolent methods for purposes that are not just or not legitimate;
  - l) as a final point, training. A nonviolent struggle requires adequate preparation for the methods and techniques of nonviolence otherwise the risk of the action being "run by hand " can become very high.

An evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of an ECPC from a nonviolent perspective

One possible weakness of an ECPC could be that the risk that the considerations of European NGOs might be minimized. For instance there is the risk of overlapping subjects in the same area, the risk of not having a clear distinction between the phases of the conflict or the risk of a lack of coordination between the various sectors of the EU (EU Commission concerning ECPC 2005: 76-77). More generally, there is the obstacle of a European security policy anchored strongly to the idea of military intervention as the primary solution in situations of conflict. It seems difficult indeed to think that military intervention can be focused and limited (in scope and in time) to stop a conflict wherein actions have already escalated into armed violence. If EP had in mind this perspective would ECPC a wide spaces of intervention before and after a possible degeneration of the conflict.

On the difficulty of building an ECPC can enter the theme of this cost structure, including those to completely review the formation and training of persons engaged in ECPC. It is obvious that if the training is not directed to the use of nonviolent methods, the risk of having a new department of the EU, which performs functions similar to those of European NGOs, becomes very high. Finally, there is certainly the risk of imagining a completely new tool in conflict management in the field, not knowing with any certainty what and how it will work.

From the perspective of the same European NGOs report (EU Commission concerning ECPC 2005: 76) the strengths of an ECPC certainly outweigh the potential weaknesses.

For example, the strengthening of existing civil initiatives in areas of conflict, to a greater focus on the prevention of conflict with a more sensitive awareness of public opinion. Moreover there is an increase of the professional quality of the civilians on the ground, because of the greater resources available and demands of civilian practitioners for these tasks. Other positive elements such as the wider dissemination of knowledge and methods of nonviolent conflict management should be also noted. This knowledge may have a positive 'ripple' effect on various sectors of society to prevent general degeneration of conflicts into violence. The cost of this training to nonviolence could have a return even if not a full success of ECPC intervention. The reduction, however, military intervention to the minimum necessary to stop the violent actions would accordingly reduce the costs of military spending, and particularly the damage caused by violence, destruction, deaths and injuries. Last but not least the role of civil society could be strengthened with the assumption of responsibility for managing conflict, now almost entirely delegated to the military.

At the moment civil society is satisfied only in the context of humanitarian aid; thus it becomes a palliative that dresses or heals the wounds and, somehow, makes armed conflict less brutal and, paradoxically, more easy to implement.

The proposal of an ECPC therefore is in the interest of strengthening the role and responsibilities of civil society. Indeed it was illustrated by Schmdit and Rossi (2009) that '...the ECPS programme will be able to mobilize expertise and human



resources available within European civil society to actively contribute to peacebuilding' (Rossi, A., and Schmidt, J. 2009: 9).

### Conclusion

Nonviolent strategies has deployed their capability to manage conflicts and the recent surveys and feasibility studies have shown that an ECPC could be a new possible way for Europe to achieve a new international role without depending only on the military power, which today 'belongs' to United States of America or, at the best, to the NATO Alliance. The project of the ECPC is an advanced security solution, aimed at spreading useful competences for the nonviolent settlement of disputes. Therefore today for Europe it is paramount to take the first step in order to create the ECPC and to achieve this the most important element is the political willpower to pursue a new concept for imagining relationships among nations and coping with conflicts.

Finally, it is important for this essay to leave a recommendation concerning the use of exclusively nonviolent methodologies and principles, including in the training areas for the development of an ECPC. This stipulation would make the difference between a traditional European structure and another real innovative and powerful organization.

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