

# **UACES 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference**

**Passau, 3-5 September 2012**

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# **An Analysis of Civil Security Systems in the UK and Ireland**

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Draft Version, Please Do Not Quote

Paper prepared for the 2012 Annual UACES meeting, 3 – 5 September 2012, Passau, Germany

## **Abstract**

Civil security and crisis management have increasingly gained ground in academic research. In this paper we explore the possibility of comparing different countries' civil security systems by employing criteria broadly applied in organisational theory and public administration studies. These criteria are: command versus coordination systems; centralisation versus decentralisation of administration; top-down versus bottom-up management of crisis; national or transnational character of the civil security system; dependence solely upon the public sector for delivering civil protection or involvement of the private sector in addition. We thus argue that no matter how unique civil security architectures are due to the specificity of crisis occurrences, they can still be sufficiently compared with the aid of the aforementioned criteria. To empirically test this assumption, we firstly present the British and Irish civil security systems. We then employ the criteria to draw meaningful comparisons between the two countries. The concluding remarks concentrate on how future academic investigation on comparing civil security systems can proceed.

Europe has always been susceptible to crises. Two wars of global dimensions, the Cold War, tumult in the Balkans during the 1990s, terrorist attacks in London and Madrid in 2000s, have all inflicted—or threatened to inflict—mayhem upon the lives of European citizens. Of course, Europe has not been spared its share of natural disasters either, such as flooding, storms and earthquakes. The last few years systematic financial crises have engulfed the EU with a serious detrimental impact on citizens' lives. In such a perilous context, civil security concerns have become increasingly pertinent for academics, policy-makers and politicians.

Civil security is variously called civil protection, homeland security, internal security, national security, public security and domestic security. Regardless, defining features are that civil security's ultimate goal is the protection of civilians within the borders of the state. In contrast to military security, civil security is mainly focused on internal threats and generally under civilian rather than military administration. Civil security systems encompass the various means states employ in order to protect their civilians. Following Boin et al. (2007: 3), “[p]rotection can be defined as the endeavour to preserve human life in the face of both direct and indirect threats”. Although the definition captures well the aspect of protection, it leaves unattended the *civil* component, as this refers to the security of civilians within the territory of a state. Accordingly, civil protection is the state endeavour to protect all civilians under its authority against direct and indirect threats, and a country's civil security system consists of the state apparatus, stakeholders, relevant policies and all other means responsible for providing civil protection in the country.

European countries have developed their largely unique civil security systems, and extant academic research tends to emphasize path-dependencies and country-specific features of the various civil security systems to be found in Europe. Here we argue that ‘unique’ does not have to mean that civil security systems have to be studied in isolation and separated from what happens in the rest of

Europe. More precisely, by focusing on the cases of the UK and Ireland,<sup>1</sup> we argue that even though civil security mechanisms in Europe can be quite distinct, at the same time they present similarities that allow for meaningful comparisons. The core research question of this paper is thus how civil security systems can be compared? Drawing on the broad distinction made in organisation theory between ‘command’ and ‘coordination’ systems of administration, our paper introduces and applies specific criteria to compare civil security systems.

The comparison of Europe's civil security systems is pertinent because it indicates areas where countries can learn from each other and in the long-term cooperate; in short, when and where exactly civil security systems are interoperable. The emergence of new threats such as cyber-crime and bio-terrorism that conventional protection measures cannot effectively counter, have made the protection of citizens more demanding and important (Omand 2010). At the same time, threats have become more likely to cross borders, begging for transnational solutions (Boin, Rhinard and Ekengren 2008); for example, pandemics contaminating populations across Europe, forest fires that easily spread across borders, and organised crime and fraud that involve attacks on banks in more than one EU countries simultaneously. Civil security threats have also grown much more complicated and are often networked, forcing practitioners and stakeholders of civil security to reflect upon innovative counter-measures. Finally, the recent financial crises have constrained government expenditures, including those on civil security, across Europe. However, public demand for civil protection remains as strong as ever, making it more interesting to explore possible efficiency gains from European cooperation.

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<sup>1</sup> Our study is part of the European Commission FP7 ANVIL project examining civil security systems across Europe. The starting point of the ANVIL project is that the European countries have developed their unique civil security systems in response to different civil threats and different national capacities (ANVIL fact sheet). Ireland and the UK are representative cases to start a comparison of civil security systems, since they exhibit common patterns of behaviour in crisis management, emergency response and disasters recovery. At the same time, the two countries vary greatly in terms of size of civil administration and the kind of challenges they usually cope with. Finally, Ireland and the UK share maritime and land borders while being somewhat separate geographically from continental Europe.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. Drawing upon organisational theory and public administration studies, the first section maps out the criteria for comparing civil security systems. We follow up with a brief depiction of the Irish and British civil security mechanisms. In the penultimate section, we apply the criteria and compare the two systems. The concluding remarks focus on how generally the comparison criteria apply and whether they can constitute a broader conceptual platform for comparisons and assessments of civil security systems.

### **Setting Criteria for the Comparison of Civil Security Systems**

Since the civil security system belongs to a country's public administration, it can be examined with the analytical tools of organisational theory, from which we borrow the over-arching distinction between *command* versus *coordination* systems of administration. In the former, a government reaches key decisions centrally and hierarchically. In the latter, the government mainly coordinates different agencies and authorities, each enjoying significant autonomy with regard to policy implementation. Dealing specifically with critical information infrastructures, Assaf (2008: 7) observes a regulatory continuum from more to less interventionist governments. In a command system, governments intervene in all aspects of policy-making whereas in coordination systems they allow certain freedom of movement to the authorities implementing policies. As we will show below, the command versus coordination distinction frames a number of different criteria that are useful when categorising civil security systems.

Accordingly, the level of (de)centralisation provides a first criterion. In a centralised system of civil security, a single centre of decisions-making manages—both administratively and geographically—civil protection. Most commonly, a government delegates authority to the Home Office or Ministry

of Internal Affairs located in a country capital, which remains ultimately accountable to the premier or president. In a decentralised system, instead of central administration, the powers to decide and act are distributed across the different actors participating in the design and implementation of civil protection. Of course, this does not mean an arbitrary allocation of responsibilities. Relevant legislation predefines the distribution of jurisdictions amidst the participants in the civil security system. Hence, decentralisation might occur geographically (allocating resources and tasks at local, regional, and national level), hierarchically (discerning the strategic, operational and tactical levels of decision-making), or functionally (discerning the specific nature of the threat). The level of decentralisation is likely to relate to a country's specific political system; that is, whether a country is federal, unitary, or confederal. To provide a concrete example, in a country with a decentralised civil security system, local police forces will first deal with a flood and if this can be done successfully, the crisis may not even be acknowledged to the regional prefecture. Decision-makers in a decentralised system enjoy considerable freedom of action while the government (or central authority) focuses on strategic decisions. Command systems tend to be highly centralised whereas coordination systems highly decentralised, even though this is not absolutely necessary. Moreover, 't Hart, Rosenthal and Kouzmin (2008) demonstrate that that decentralised systems do not always become more centralised during periods of crises, because decentralisation tends to be formally or informally institutionalised and endure even in periods of crisis.

A second distinction closely associated with organisational hierarchy is whether a civil security system abides by a top-down or bottom-up approach in crisis management and emergency response. Here, the distinction often has a geographical connotation. In a bottom-up response the first actor notified and activated in case of an emergency is the locally proximate responder. The regional or national level is only involved in case the crisis escalates and threatens to engulf a larger geographical area. In a bottom-up response, the local level maintains contact with the other levels,

informing them and reporting back to them about how the crisis progresses. A reversed logic applies in a top-down civil security system. Here, the centrally administered, national level of decision-making gives direct and fully-detailed orders to the regional and local responders on how to deal with crises.

In practice, however, it is hard to imagine an exclusively top-down approach in crisis management. Often civil crises are of a local nature and require an initial reaction by local authorities, even only to notify national authorities. Command systems are more prone to prefer top-down management of civil crisis, while coordination systems rely more on a bottom-up approach. Notably, centralised or decentralised, top-down or bottom-up should not be regarded as absolute labels to be given to civil security systems. Instead, they are better conceptualised along a continuum for several reasons. First of all, the nature of crises is highly volatile; they are highly unpredictable (for example, terrorist attacks) and demonstrate a high level of variety of magnitude (for example, industrial accidents and forest fires). Flexibility is thus often essential. As Perry and Lindell (2008: 345) observe, “the practice of emergency planning varies considerably among communities and nations. Whether or not such variation is desirable, it is a fact of the planning environment.” In other words, the nature of the crisis will partly determine the nature of the response; for example, a small local flooding will cause limited anxiety to the government, but the 2010 Iceland's volcanic ash cloud could quickly activate a country's central crisis response mechanism.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Particularly for the Volcanic Ash Cloud Crisis in April 2010, the role of the transnational civil security mechanisms was very important and may have preceded the activation of the national crisis mechanisms. The EU Commission took immediately the lead to coordinate the member states in their reactions and reflected upon the issues of response, recovery and relief of the passengers ('See Volcanic ash cloud crisis: Commission outlines response to tackle the impact on air transport', *Press Releases Rapid*, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/10/152&format=HTML&aged=0&language=en> ). In addition, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), an EU Agency, immediately attended to technical details of crisis response at transnational level. This happened with a 'Safety Information Bulletin' on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. At the same time, EASA organised a workshop (June 2010) and an exercise (April 2011) on volcanic ash crisis so as to increase preparedness of the European countries for a similar emergency in the future (See EASA's webpages: <http://www.easa.europa.eu/communications/press-releases/PRen22042010.html> and [http://www.easa.europa.eu/communications/docs/annual-report/EAS\\_AnnualReport\\_2010.pdf](http://www.easa.europa.eu/communications/docs/annual-report/EAS_AnnualReport_2010.pdf) ).

The difference between national and transnational crisis management is a third criterion. This dimension is also closely related to the nature of crisis but at the same time describes the organisational preference of the civil security mechanism. Some countries are more prone to approach other countries for assistance when dealing with crises, especially when threats are of transboundary nature. Cooperation may vary from exchange of information when crises emerge, to reporting to a common transnational institutionalised authority, to pooling and sharing capacities for emergency response and recovery. Under EU Commission's auspices, European countries have arranged common understandings about crises that can cross borders (for example pandemics, natural disasters, etc.). Their cooperation is of intense nature even though not necessarily of adequate “institutional maturity” (Boin et al. 2007). Exchange of information occurs through the channels of EU institutions – in particular through MIC – and the alerting systems of the member states have been networked together, coordinated by a Brussels-based centre of notification. Still Brussels' role in pooling and sharing civil security capacities is under-explored territory as the member states feel reluctant to bestow sovereignty to the EU Commission in a field that is situated so clearly within domestic politics. For the EU countries, nevertheless, civil security systems have an intense transnational character. A transnational civil security system means that the country does not just take advantage of opportunities presented in front of it on the table. In the example of EU, the member states are presented with ideas from Brussels concerning further integration of their civil security policies. However, it remains questionable whether the member states adopt a solely transnational view with regard to their civil security. In our opinion, a valid way to discern civil security systems that highly depend upon transnational cooperation, from the ones that are obliged to collaborate with other countries because of globalisation, interdependence and the transboundary character of crises, is to pay attention to the factor of initiation. We would thus expect strongly transnational civil security systems to pursue all possible routes of collaboration with other countries in crisis management and emergency response and take the initiative to develop

cooperative schemes with other actors in the international system (whether these are nation-states, IGOs, INGOs, etc.). Moderately transnational civil security systems would be the ones which seek access in 'regimes of convenience', meaning intergovernmental schemes with neighbourhood countries which do not necessitate a great deal of relinquishing national sovereignty. Finally, weakly transnational would be the civil security system that suffices in collaboration on civil protection issues flowing from the country's membership in IGOs and multilateral fora.

The final criterion to describe civil security system is their relationship with and dependence upon the private sector for crisis management. Governments may lack the capacity to deal with extreme disasters; for example in response to the nuclear accident in Fukushima in 2011. Such disasters dictate the mobilisation of the whole society, with an active engagement of the private sector and the civil society. However, even for more minor crises, many countries have become increasingly dependent upon public-private partnerships. Governments may lease the infrastructure and capabilities of private companies; for example, the British government contracted a private security firm (G4S) for assisting civil protection of London Olympics 2012. The involvement of the private sector in civil protection should not be taken for granted, though. It might seem commonsensical in the case of western, industrialised, market-based countries, but are not widespread in highly centralised regimes. At the same time, civil protection has been steadily the concern of numerous civil society actors. NGOs such the Red Cross or CARE International are actively engaged in recovery and disaster relief. In addition, as we will show in the following sections voluntarism, as another form of the private sector's engagement, is also important in crisis management.

## The Civil Security Systems in the UK and Ireland

It is not our intention to exhaustively describe the civil security systems of the UK and Ireland. Especially for the UK, this has been done by other academic studies (FORESEC's report in de Franco and Meyer 2011, Kuipers and Matzén 2008, Omand 2010). Instead, we will focus firstly on aspects of civil protection that relate to the criteria presented above and secondly on the most fundamental aspects of the countries' civil security apparatus. We start by providing the main definitions of crisis and some historical context about how the countries' civil security systems evolved. We then proceed with a brief presentation of the main central/governmental authorities and agencies responsible for crisis management and emergency response. This is followed by a brief presentation on how the emergency mechanisms are activated when an emergency is announced. Last but not least, we examine supplementary aspects of civil protection, accentuating the role of the private sector in the delivery of civil security.

In the UK, there is a definitional polyphony concerning crises, emergencies and disasters. Simply put, there are multiple formal definitions to be found in official documents. The UK government has eventually established a, frequently updated, *Lexicon of UK Civil Protection Terminology*. For the term 'crisis', the Lexicon offers different definitions deriving from various sources. According to the British Standards Institute, a crisis is "an inherently abnormal, unstable and complex situation that represents a threat to the strategic objectives, reputation or existence of an organisation". The definition provided by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat entails that a crisis is an "emergency of magnitude and/or severity requiring the activation of central government response".<sup>3</sup> Definitions of crisis are elaborated every year through the UK's National Risk Assessment that considers five different criteria to depict and assess a crisis.<sup>4</sup> Academic experts of British civil security define a

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<sup>3</sup> The *UK Civil Protection Lexicon*. Version 2.0.1, 2011, [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/cplexicon](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/cplexicon), accessed 5<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Based on interview with officials from Civil Contingencies Secretariat, London, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

crisis in terms of its destructive capacity, ranging from catastrophes to accidents that can be managed at the local level.<sup>5</sup> In general, there is no unique definition of what is perceived as civil crisis in the UK. Common in all the definitions is the inconvenience and harm caused by a crisis to the public, forcing the State authorities to activate the civil protection mechanism.

The British government had to counter serious civil security threats in post-WWII era: terrorist attacks (2005 London bombings and IRA attacks in the 1970s and 1980s), civil unrest (London riots in 2011 and in Liverpool and Manchester in early 1980s), massive strikes affecting the country's economy (miners and trade unions in 1970s); a series of industrial and transport accidents ranging from oil spills to train derailments;<sup>6</sup> epidemics affecting humans (E.coli's outbreak in 2011) and animals (Mad Cow Disease);<sup>7</sup> and a long list of floods. In Britain disasters and emergencies have been relatively frequent but with great variation in magnitude and damage caused. As Omand highlights the recurrent – yet non-predictable and non-regular – emergencies have forced the UK government to develop its civil protection based on 'anticipation' of crises, thus structuring British resilience around prevention, preparation and pro-activeness (Omand 2010: 11-12).

The British civil security system is highly dynamic, embodying lessons-learnt from previous crises. For example, during the Cold War civil protection was regarded through the lens of civil defence and was under the absolute jurisdiction of the Home Office. The end of the Cold War initiated a 10-year period of reflection about civil protection, resulting in the creation of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat in 2001, being up to now the main governmental authority for crisis management and emergency response.<sup>8</sup> The London bombings in 2005 led to the creation of new agencies (*Research, Information and Communications Unit* established in 2007) and increased the responsibilities of

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Academic Expert, London, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Information available from the International Disaster Database, [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be), accessed 14<sup>th</sup> 2012.

<sup>7</sup> See the UK's Health Protection Agency, [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk), accessed 6<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with officials from Civil Contingencies Secretariat, London, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

already existing ones (*Office for Security and Counter-terrorism*).

The UK has a highly elaborate public administration, presenting traits generally attributed to federal systems; apart from the central government supervised by the Cabinet Office, there are also the local governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The British civil protection moves across both the level of central government and regional and local authorities. Additionally, there are miscellaneous public or semi-public agencies which are involved in civil security affairs. In crisis situations, the degree and leverage of autonomy of all these different governmental branches and agencies exhibits occasional principal-agent problems.<sup>9</sup> Even when official documents clearly determine the responsibilities and jurisdictions of each actor, the extreme division of labour increases the need for coordination in crisis situations. Liability often becomes an extremely complicated issue no matter how well-described the responsibilities of the different administrative levels are. Simply put, if something goes wrong and the crisis management is not successful, it is very difficult to hold accountable the authorities truly responsible for the failed management. It is difficult to trace back perceptions of civil threats, match these perceptions with committed actions and hold administrative units accountable by confirming correspondence between their allocated responsibilities and committed actions (Gregory 2008).

The delegation of authority in crisis management in the UK leads us to two initial observations. Firstly, the demands of coordination because of tasks and responsibilities' diffusion are imperative and absorb a lot of time of British emergency planners. Yet, not all the challenges under the frame of civil security would seem to require the same level of coordinative effort. Secondly, the variety of crises occurrences and the administrative complexity of the British civil security system seem to cause different understandings of civil security held by the UK authorities. This suggests a civil

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<sup>9</sup> For more information on the principal-agent problem and the theory of delegation and how it has been applied in EU politics, see Kassim and Menon (2003).

security mechanism that is events-driven and proceeds by confronting emerging crises case by case. At the same time, the highly-refined UK administration suggests that the British civil security mechanism is bound by the path-dependence of bureaucratic politics. The two assumptions are however at odds.

The multiplicity of actors dealing with British civil security does not mean that there are no overarching authorities, with augmented responsibility and supervising role. We firstly distinguish the Home Office under whose jurisdiction the *Police*, the *National Crime Agency* and the *Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism* operate. For protection against accidents related to hazardous substances and CBRN attacks, a branch of the Ministry of Defence called *Defence CBRN Centre* is expected to be actively involved. The *Department for Transport* covers among others the fields of aviation and maritime security and transport resilience.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, different branches of the UK's government play vital roles. Within the Cabinet Office, the *Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS)* collaborates with “government departments, the devolved administrations and key stakeholders to enhance the UK's ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies”.<sup>11</sup>

The CCS is thus the main coordinator of British civil security. It regularly publishes the National Risk Assessment, assessing the likelihood of potential civil threats for the UK; it participates in the preparations of national exercises regarding emergency preparedness and it is the contact point of the UK for regimes of transnational cooperation in civil security.<sup>12</sup> The CCS cooperates closely with the *Emergency Planning College* which is responsible for the training of Britain's emergency planners, and the *Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure* which is the government's advisor concerning resilience of infrastructure (*inter alia* against cyber-security). This list, which

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<sup>10</sup> See the Department's web-page, <http://www.dft.gov.uk/topics/security/>, accessed 6<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted from Cabinet Office's web-page, <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/civil-contingencies/>, accessed 5<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Information from interview with representatives of CCS, London, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2012

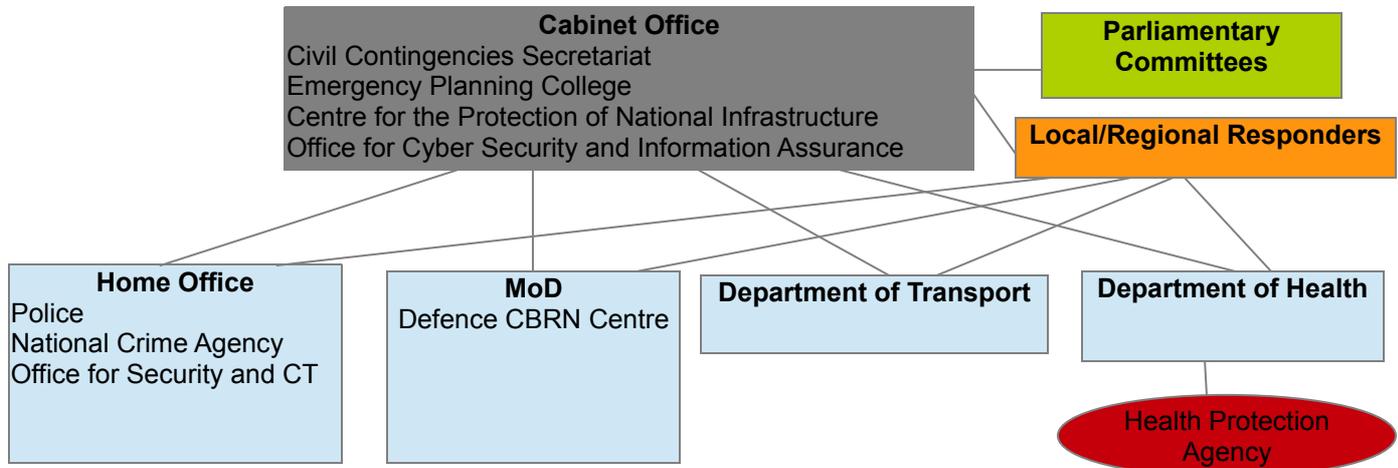
just registers the main ‘managers’ of civil security, should be supplemented with statutory administrations. For instance, the *Health Protection Agency* (HPA) works closely with the Department of Health and provides scientific expertise about infectious diseases, health dangers caused by radiation or poisoning. HPA is endowed with its own Emergency Response Department that runs regular exercises.<sup>13</sup>

Some remarks about the organisational nature of the UK's civil security system can be made so far. The British civil protection involves different departments and different governmental agencies. The dissemination of civil protection follows the increased complexity of civil crises; as crises have become more complicated, they demand more specialised counter-measures. This has affected the scope of action and type of newly created agencies; for example, 20 years ago there was no need for the *Office for Cyber Security and Information Assurance*. The British administration has been responsive to new emergencies, especially in post-London bombings period, after which we witnessed the proliferation of public organisations dealing with civil protection. The various statutory Agencies enjoy certain autonomy of action but maintain channels of communication with each other, thus creating a crisis management administrative network. Adding the regional and local providers of civil protection and the Parliamentary Committees attentive of the legislative part of civil security, the UK ends up with a highly elaborate and organisationally advanced public mechanism for delivering civil security, which can be sketchily depicted in the following graph:

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<sup>13</sup> Information available from Health Protection Agency, [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk), accessed 6<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

**Figure 1: UK Civil Security System**



When crises emerge, the first responders to be activated are local authorities and more specifically the police.<sup>14</sup> The central government is notified if a crisis escalates or in case of a disaster of great magnitude. Subsequently, it will undertake the strategic coordination of crisis response through the summoning of the *Cabinet Briefing Rooms* (COBR). Around COBR's table, representatives from the Government's Departments and senior civil servants from the CCS and the intelligence units decide upon the strategic coordination of emergency response. In severe crises, such as the London bombings in 2005, COBR is chaired by the PM.<sup>15</sup> COBRA “developed into a purpose-built situation centre with the capacity to house teams of senior officials with their secure communications from the main government departments, the intelligence community and the police” (Omand 2010: 61-62). One of COBR's main responsibilities is to nominate the ‘lead department’ coordinating the emergency response. However, COBR does not directly interfere with the operational level of crisis management, but stays in touch with the operational level which is supervised by the responsible commander.

<sup>14</sup> Information based on interview with Police Officer, Chief Inspector, video-call on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Information based on interview with Academic Expert, London, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012.

Crisis management in the UK is envisaged as a concern for the whole society with increased responsibilities of the private sector and civil society. The latter are engaged in crises through two different routes. Firstly, the British government has established public-private partnerships (PPPs) to contract the capacities of the private sector and thus recruit them in case of emergency; for example, the private security company G4S was contracted to provide security during the London 2012 Olympic Games. Secondly, the private sector is heavily involved in crisis response and recovery phases through volunteering; citizens can contribute to civil protection by volunteering in civil society organisations such as the *British Red Cross* and *St John's Ambulance*. The engagement of the public in emergency response and disasters' relief takes place mainly at local and regional levels, where citizens' initiatives are monitored and coordinated by the *Regional Resilience Fora* and the *Local Resilience Fora*.<sup>16</sup>

In Ireland the perception of civil crisis is primarily categorised by the Strategy Statement 2008-2010 of the Department of Defence. The document distinguishes firstly internally induced crises, coming from “dissident republican paramilitaries” that “continue to pose a low-level threat in terms of capability and intent”, without currently posing a significant challenge for the Irish State (Department of Defence 2008: 9). Secondly, “in terms of significant damage and/or casualties, the main international threat to domestic security is expected from a terrorist attack or an accidental disaster, such as a nuclear accident or medical epidemic (Department of Defence 2008: 9). Irish official documentation mostly refer to ‘domestic’ rather than ‘civil’ security accentuating the geographical element, namely crises that occur within the borders of Ireland.<sup>17</sup> In other words, for Ireland, challenges of civil security either refer to dangers coming from the interior of the country or ones originating from the international environment. The Irish Office of Emergency Planning

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<sup>16</sup> Information based on interviews with representatives of CCS, London, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2012, Academic Expert, London 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012, and Police Officer, Chief Inspector, video-call, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

<sup>17</sup> In addition to the term ‘domestic security’, the Ministry of Justice uses the term ‘community security’, thus transferring the issue of civil crisis to a sub-local level. This is reasonable as the MoJ deals with offences that address the individual, such as ‘organised crime’ (Department of Justice 2008).

(OEP) defines a major emergency as “an incident, which, usually with little or no warning, causes or threatens, death or injury, serious disruption of essential services or damage to property, the environment or infrastructure beyond the normal capabilities of the principal emergency services ... in the area in which the event occurs”.<sup>18</sup> In general, the Irish perceptions of threats to civil security are more ambiguously depicted and registered compared to the explicitly mentioned and well-referenced ones in the UK, possibly because Ireland has to cope less frequently with civil crises. There were 7 major disasters in Ireland in the last 20 years, most of them of natural character, whereas 20 major disasters, either natural or technological, occurred in the UK in the same period.<sup>19</sup>

The Irish civil security system has developed mainly around Northern Ireland as a specific source of threat. Negotiations between the Republic of Ireland and the UK on the belligerence in Northern Ireland because of the integrationist demands have continued for more than 30 years before reaching a successful arrangement in late 90s (Wolff 2001: 163). Since the signing of the 'Good Friday Agreement' on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1998, the region has been relatively tranquil. Because of intense paramilitary activities in the past, Irish civil security has developed closely related to military and defence issues, and key aspects of domestic security are managed by the Ministry of Defence. The two over-arching authorities of crisis management and emergency response in Ireland, both the Office of Emergency Planning and the Civil Defence Board are administratively associated with the Ministry of Defence. In contrast, in the UK the MoD has been gradually kept outside matters of civil security.<sup>20</sup> One factor common in the development of civil security systems in both the UK and Ireland is how occurring crises and disasters impact on the institutional shaping of civil protection. For example, extreme weather conditions in winter 2009/2010 as well as the floods of autumn 2009 have forced the Irish public administration to reconsider the more localised emergency response and

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<sup>18</sup> Frequently Asked Questions, from the site of the Office of Emergency Planning, <http://www.emergencyplanning.ie/faqs.aspx>, accessed 15<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Data available from the International Disaster Database, [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be), accessed 4<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Information based on interviews with Academic Expert, London, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012, and representatives of CCS, London, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

shift towards management that activates the whole society.<sup>21</sup>

Irish civil protection starts at the local level, with the local authorities, the Irish police force and the *Health Service Executive* as the principal response agencies (Ministries for the Environment, for Health and for Justice 2008). When directions and coordination are needed from the central government, the *Office of Emergency Planning* (OEP) takes action. This authority “is responsible to the Minister for Defence for the co-ordination and oversight of emergency planning.”<sup>22</sup> Staffed with both civilian and military personnel, the OEP is the leading, permanent organisation of Ireland providing strategic design of crisis management. Ireland also has a long tradition of civil defence based on volunteers. During the Cold War, the Irish policy-makers established Civil Defence as a capability against the nuclear threat. The Civil Defence organisation currently counts about 6,000 members and has an updated mission. Although it still consists of volunteers, the latter are trained to deliver ambulance services, fire and rescue services and even radiation monitoring. Administratively, civil defence is under the jurisdiction of the local authorities, but it is supervised by the *Civil Defence Board* appointed by the Minister of Defence and staffed with members from the military, the city and county authorities, the police and civil servants from ministries dealing with emergencies.<sup>23</sup> Within the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, the *National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management*, is responsible for the operational coordination of the various local and regional groups.<sup>24</sup> The financial recession has significantly reduced the size of Ireland's public sector with a significant impact on the number of emergency planners.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Information based informal discussion with Irish civil servants, July 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Office of Emergency Planning, <http://www.emergencyplanning.ie/government-structures.aspx>, accessed 15<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Civil Defence Ireland, <http://www.civildefence.ie/cdweb.nsf/documents/AEEB06284977F81C80256E8A003C631E>, accessed 15<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Information based on informal discussions with Irish policy-makers, July 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Information based on informal discussions with Irish civil servants, July 2012.

The functioning of the Irish civil security system resembles the British system in important respects. Crisis management in Ireland includes mitigation/risk management, preparedness, coordinated response and recovery. The phase of coordinated response starts at the local level, with the police, the Health Service Executive and local authorities as the Principal Response Agencies (PRAs). Every one of them has their own Crisis Management Team “to provide support to the agency’s Controller of Operations” (Ministries for the Environment, for Health and for Justice 2008) and their own Major Emergency Plans (MEPs), one for each PRA (Department of the Environment 2010). To safeguard that there is coherence between their actions, there is always a ‘Lead Agency’ that leads and supervises the actions of all. The *Government Task Force on Emergency Planning* provides strategic advice and coordination at the level of central government; “the top-level structure which gives policy and direction, and which co-ordinates and oversees the emergency planning activities of all Government departments and public authorities”, chaired by the Minister of Defence herself.<sup>26</sup> The National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management through a *National Steering Group* ensures operational coordination of response, where key Government Departments as well as agencies are represented.<sup>27</sup> As in the case of the UK, operations of crisis management rests within the local or regional levels, while the central government focuses on coordinating actions and on providing strategic analyses of emergencies and disasters during the mitigation/risk management and preparedness phases. Interestingly, UK has a Leading Department for the strategic supervision of major emergency management, whereas in Ireland this is always the duty of the Task Force. It is only at the operational level, that a Lead Agency is appointed.

As mentioned earlier, in Ireland the Civil Defence organisation is most important for the engagement of the private sector and civil society in crisis management. The Civil Defence organisation recruits volunteers who are afterwards trained by the organisation's *Training College*

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<sup>26</sup> Office of Emergency Planning, <http://www.emergencyplanning.ie/government-structures.aspx>, accessed 15<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Information based on informal discussions with Irish civil servants, July 2012

and are made available to the localities. For recovery and relief, the action of the *Irish Red Cross* is important as well as a number of other voluntary emergency services that vary from *Mountain Rescue Teams* to *Rescue Dog Associations*. The private sector may be asked to assist the crisis management tasks by means of “specialist services and equipment”; in this case it is up to the PRAs to decide whether and how the private sector should be involved (Ministries for the Environment, for Health and for Justice 2008: 76-77).

### **Comparison of UK and Irish Civil Security Systems**

In this section, we revisit the criteria developed earlier and apply them to the cases of the British and Irish civil security systems. Our primary objective is to show that they can be fruitfully employed to compare the two countries. The first, most general, distinction was between command and coordination systems. Neither the UK nor Ireland can be seen as command systems. Part of civil protection and the decisions concerning crisis management and emergency response are administered by actors that do not administratively belong to the central government and there is clear involvement of the private sector and civil society in each country. Arguably, the British emergency planners enjoy more autonomy of actions, at least at the operational and tactical level. At the strategic level, again, there is some freedom of initiative for local and regional emergency planners, expecting that this leeway will be compatible with the general guidelines about civil security as these are drawn by the National Strategies and the strategic guidance of CCS. The central government only coordinates the different agents of UK's civil protection when this is deemed necessary. This means that even coordination of actions may stay at the local or regional level as long as it can successfully secure the citizens from the crisis. In this case, there are specific mechanisms of reporting back to the central government. In short, it can be said that the British civil

security highly depends upon coordination.

The Irish system is also organised around coordination of multiple civil security actors rather than a command structure. The Irish civil protection further depends upon the civil society organisations (for example the Irish Red Cross) and the involvement of volunteers, in particular the Civil Defence organisation in case of severe disasters. These actors are centrally coordinated during the phases of response, recovery and relief. The important difference in Ireland's case is that there is relative paucity of local and regional authorities capable of coordinating the operations of an emergency response. This situation may well deteriorate as the size of the Irish public sector is reduced because of the financial crisis. In Ireland, the central government is forced to intervene more often in crisis management as coordination provider. Figure 2 summarise our assessment that the civil security systems of both the UK and Ireland rely on coordination, with more reliance on national authorities in Ireland.

**Figure 2: Categorisation of Irish and UK Civil Security Systems along Command-Coordination Continuum**



With regards to centralisation versus decentralisation, both the UK and Ireland follow a decentralised emergency response. Operations are conducted at local or regional level and they are coordinated and supervised at national level if there is need to do so. The picture is slightly modified when one refers to the strategic/national level of crisis management. Especially in the case of the UK, there seems to be intense decentralisation following the type of crisis even at the strategic level. The UK always has a ‘lead government department’ for the emergency response, in other words an actor at government level that holds a position as ultimate crisis manager and strategic coordinator and that does not necessitate the activation of the whole of government. In the

case of Ireland, however, all needs for strategic design of civil security lead to the Ministry of Defence. The fact that one part of the government is so heavily loaded with the responsibility of civil security's strategic choices makes us categorise the Irish civil security system as less decentralised than the British (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Categorisation of Irish and UK Civil Security Systems along Centralisation-Decentralisation Continuum**



It is interesting to speculate that the escalation of a crisis could affect crisis management in the two countries differently. Existing literature tends to argue that escalation will lead to more centralisation of crisis response, but 't Hart, Rosenthal and Kouzmin (2008) have found empirical evidence which contradicts this assumption. Possibly, decentralisation is more entrenched in the UK, while the monopoly of strategic design in the Irish case makes centralisation more probable.

Applying the top-down versus bottom-up criterion, we need to further clarify the exact meaning of these terms. Previously, we combined both the notion of hierarchy and the geographic centralisation to depict the 'top' as the national centre of decision-making with ultimate authority upon strategic decisions of crisis management; and the 'bottom' as the local level authorities leading operations and acting as primary responders—although generally without strategic responsibility. Available data on the British and Irish civil protection suggest that both countries have adopted a bottom-up approach towards crisis management and emergency response. In both countries in case of a crisis, local authorities are activated as the first responders. If they can handle the crisis, there is no further activation of the civil security mechanism. Even when crises grow more demanding and difficult to counter, local authorities often remain responsible operationally while strategic direction comes

from a 'superior' layer of administration. In the UK, COBR provides ultimate strategic direction, and in Ireland, the Government Task Force respectively. At the same time, information tends to flow from the 'bottom' to the 'top'. Local authorities report 'upwards' enabling senior emergency planners to provide strategic direction and to coordinate operations.<sup>28</sup> The overall picture is complicated and difficult to depict as a continuum. What would be meaningful instead is to provide more detail on information flows between the 'top' and the 'bottom' during a crisis and how escalation affects the flow of information.

Currently, our data are still limited on whether the British and Irish systems are more or less interested in transnational cooperation. So far, we have found that the British civil security system gets involved in multilateral regimes mainly for the sake of exchanging information and with a particular focus on collaboration with neighbouring countries. Britain's elaborate civil security mechanism usually has sufficient capacity to deal with crises.<sup>29</sup> In case of transnational crises, for instance epidemics or cyber-crimes, the UK primarily through the CCS exchanges information with the other affected countries. However, the exchange of information does not always happen in a centralised manner; other civil security agencies (for example HPA) can also contact corresponding agencies in the other countries. The UK seems to lack political willingness to initiate more cooperation of the civil security systems at EU level. British emergency planners seem sceptical about the idea of pooling and sharing capabilities at EU level and through the EU Commission-led Civil Protection Mechanism.

On the other hand, Irish official documents frequently refer to cooperation with the other EU countries. To some extent, the Irish government appears to count on assistance from its EU partners,

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<sup>28</sup> Our research has identified such flows of information for the UK and Ireland. Interview Academic Expert, London, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012. Also see Ministries for the Environment, for Health and for Justice (2008).

<sup>29</sup> An interesting counter example is that last winter, due to the severe weather conditions, the UK asked other EU countries to provide grit-salt. Information from interview with officials from CCS, London, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

especially in case of transnational crises. The Irish position seems justifiable given the relatively small size of the country's civil security mechanism and inherent limits to its capacity to deal with major incidents. To summarise, the Irish civil security system is closer to the transnational end of a continuum while the British system is closer to the “national” end. However, neither system appears exclusively national or transnational when dealing with civil security issues.

**Figure 4: Categorisation of Irish and UK Civil Security Systems along National-Transnational Continuum**



Finally, we have referred to the public versus private distinction. As described in the second section, the British civil protection strongly engages the private sector, not only through the contracts with companies of private security but also because of the active engagement of NGOs and citizens' initiatives at local/regional level during crises response, recovery and relief. Consequently, we are drawing the UK's civil security mechanism in the middle of the continuum public-private as crisis management is shared between the public, government-led and private sectors. The situation is similar in Ireland. Whereas the crisis management is strategically directed by the government and the PRAs are all part of the public sector, the private sector can be activated in emergency response through the Irish Red Cross and through the voluntary emergency services; in particular the volunteer-based, locally administered Civil Defence of Ireland. However, the Irish official documents do not explicitly refer any PPPs in the domain of civil security. Therefore, our initial estimation is to tag the Irish civil security system in the middle of the continuum but a bit closer to the 'public' end.

**Figure 5: Categorisation of Irish and UK Civil Security Systems along Public-Private Continuum**



Further empirical work is needed to differentiate public-private involvement in strategic direction from operational response. Possibly both countries are more dependent upon the public sector for the strategic direction, while the private sector is more engaged in the crisis operational response.

Finally, a series of clarifications on the above application of the criteria seems warranted. Firstly, we have sketched the application in compliance with data availability at the moment. Further research may modify and sharpen our currently rather rough estimates. Secondly, the application of the criteria was largely based on qualitative data, but quantitative data may well be available to corroborate our assessment and to make it easier to categorise a larger number of countries. For now, Table 1 compares the civil security systems in Ireland and the UK.

<b>Table 1: Comparison of UK/Irish Civil Security Systems based on Key Criteria</b>		
<b>Criteria\Countries</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>IR</b>
<i>Command or Coordination System?</i>	Coordination system (highly)	Coordination system (moderately)
<i>1. Centralised or Decentralised System?</i>	Decentralised (highly)	Decentralised (moderately)
<i>2. Top-down or Bottom-up Approach?</i>	Bottom-up	Bottom-up
<i>3.a) Based on National or Transnational Means?</i>	Moderately transnational	Strongly transnational
<i>3.b) Keen on more cooperation and integration of civil security at EU level?</i>	Sceptical about more active engagement with the EU on civil security issues	Counting upon EU's assistance in case of severe crisis and encouraging cooperation
<i>4. Based on Public or Private Means?</i>	Equally exploiting public and private means	Equally exploiting public and private means

## Conclusions

Despite the fact that civil crises have their own unique nature, this paper has argued that different countries' civil security architectures can be compared by introducing a small number of comparative criteria. Accordingly, we have presented four binary distinctions from organisational theory and public administration studies and tested whether they can be used for comparing the concrete cases of British and Irish civil security systems. The criteria are: command versus coordination systems; centralisation versus decentralisation of administration; top-down versus bottom-up management of crisis; national or transnational character of the civil security system; dependent solely upon the public sector for delivering civil protection or also involving the private sector.

By depicting these criteria on continuum lines, we have provided informative comparisons between UK and Ireland and expressed research hypotheses that can be pursued in the future. What is important to mention here is that using continua as our methodological tool has provided a notion of “scaling” in our comparisons. The latter has been mainly qualitative but this does not exclude a quantitative approach if there are available quantitative data. Especially in case of comparing more than two countries, the availability of quantitative data will greatly facilitate comparisons.

This schematic parallel assessment of the Irish and British civil security systems has shown interesting reflections for future investigation. Firstly, how crisis escalation can possibly affect the position of a country on the continuum lines. For instance, is the government going to adopt a more centralised perspective towards the crisis as the latter deteriorates? And if yes, the qualitative investigator will ask “How?” and the quantitative researcher will ask “How much?”. Secondly, there seems to be one more distinction that cross-cuts all the criteria introduced in this paper; this is

the distinction between the strategic direction and the crisis operational response as two distinct phases of crisis management. It is worth examining how such a distinction can actually refine the application of the above criteria. It might be the case that whereas a country's civil security system is strongly transnational at the level of strategic direction, it is moderately or weakly transnational at the level of crisis operational response. This is not an effort to complicate what has been up to now a parsimonious presentation of the criteria. Especially when researchers have qualitative data in their disposition, such an internal splitting of the criteria can significantly refine the coding scheme used for further data processing.

In this paper, we have chosen to proceed mainly along theoretical lines. This does not exclude using the criteria to compare not merely civil security architectures but more specifically how the latter reacted in certain crisis occurrences. For instance, one can use the criteria to delineate how the Irish and British governments reacted during the Iceland's volcanic ash cloud crisis. Which of the two adopted a more transnational stance towards the problem? Which of the two adopted a more decentralised approach towards the emergency response?

A brief comment on whether the criteria we mentioned here can be used for broader comparisons. As implied above, this will highly depend upon the nature of available data. We consider that quantitative data can allow for much more concrete comparisons, with the capacity to entertain robust hypothesis testing. The latter can probably establish testable causal inferences between our categorising criteria, seen as independent variables, and the efficiency of civil security systems as dependent variable.

Last but not least, in this paper we have provided a thorough discussion around different aspects of the British and Irish civil security architectures. Apart from being informative, the comparison has

highlighted issues surrounding the evolution of crisis management in the two countries which can be addressed in more general terms. In particular, future research could reflect on the main factors affecting the administrative development of a country's civil security system. Is crisis management largely events-driven, or is determined mainly by path-dependencies following the rationality of the agencies and bureaucratic authorities involved in civil protection?

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