

The EU Battlegroups (EUBGs) – a successful story or a paper tiger?

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Abstract

After decades of reliance upon NATO in security matters, the EU ought to develop security assets of its own in order to protect its interests and citizens. The Common Foreign and Security Policy as an expression of EU readiness and willingness to play a more significant role in security matters on the international stage led to the creation of the European Security and Defence Policy, thus putting at the EU's disposal civilian and military capabilities for dealing with the crisis spots around the world. The EUBG concept originated with the first member states' pledges in November 2004 which gave added value to the EU in the security and defence area, at least on paper, while so far no EUBG has been deployed in the theatre of operations.

KEY WORDS:

EU Battlegroups (EUBGs), rapid response, ATHENA mechanism, Berlin Plus agreement, EU decision-making process

The origins of the EU Battlegroups

In recent decades the European Union played a significant role in the economic area on the international stage. In those days, tasks in security and defence matters were put in the hands of other organizations – the Western European Union (WEU) and NATO. As a global player that encompasses about 450 million people and produces a quarter of the world's GNP, the EU needs to have instruments at its disposal to promote its interests and protect its citizens in the best possible manner. In addition, Washington has long called upon Europe to take greater responsibility for crisis management around the world, particularly if the EU wishes to become a major partner on the global stage. So, during the 1990s the need for an equal role for the EU in the political and security area evolved and with the Maastricht Treaty,¹ as an expression of the EU's readiness and willingness to play a significant role in security matters on the international scene, a Common Foreign and Security Policy was introduced.

At the same time, in June 1992 the WEU Council of Ministers adopted the so-called Petersberg Tasks introducing the possibility of using the military forces of the WEU states in cases other than those of NATO Article 5 and Article V of the modified Brussels Treaty (common defence), i.e. in humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking.² The dissolution of the WEU led to incorporation of the "Petersberg Tasks" into the EU legal framework (Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997) and a few years later to the creation of the European Security and Defence Policy thus giving the EU its own military and civilian operational capabilities. The first step in developing the military capabilities was the adoption of the Helsinki Headline Goal (HHG) in December 1999 and the declaration of the need for an EU rapid response capability in order to respond to the crisis in a timely and better manner.

1 The formal name is the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and it was negotiated during the second half of 1991, signed on 7 February 1992 in Maastricht and entered into force on 1 November 1993, after ratification by the EU member states.

2 Western European Union Council of Ministers, "Petersberg Declaration", Bonn, 19 June 1992, point 6, paragraph 4.

The main goal of the HHG was to enable the EU by 2003 to deploy 60,000 troops within 60 days in the crisis area in order to execute an operation within the Petersberg Tasks and to remain sustainable in the area of operation for one year. This force is often called the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF). Although the HHG was primarily designed for EU member states, it enabled contributions from non-EU countries too. Based on the HHG, the European Council in December 2000 approved the setting up of a new politico-military structure within the EU Council, i.e. the Political and Security Committee, the EU Military Committee and the EU Military Staff. During the year 2000, in line with the HHG and Petersberg Tasks, the EU Military Staff generated the "Helsinki Headline Catalogue" which specified the required capabilities in each area and in November at the first Capability Commitment Conference initial pledges were made. Member states declared their commitment to over 100,000 soldiers, over 400 combat aircraft and about 100 ships, which was more than was needed by the HHG. These commitments were set out in a document called the "Force Catalogue". However, there were also failed areas such as strategic airlifts, tactical transport, sustainability and logistics, force survivability and infrastructure as well as command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. A year later in November 2001 a Capability Improvement Conference took place but lots of shortfalls remained. To address those shortfalls, in November 2001 a European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP) was established and the European Council in Laeken in December 2001 concluded that the "*Union is now capable of conducting some crisis-management operations*".³ In the next two years significant progress was made only in the area of command and control capabilities. But this did not stop the European Council held in June 2003 from declaring that "*the EU now has operational capability across the full range of Petersberg tasks, limited and constrained by recognised shortfalls, which can be alleviated by the further development of the EU's military capabilities, including through the establishment of ECAP Project Groups*".⁴ Although in key areas significant qualitative shortfalls remained, after adoption of the European Security Strategy and the first lessons learned from EU-led operations (Concordia in Macedonia and Artemis in Congo), during the June 2004 Council EU member states decided to launch a new target – the Headline Goal 2010 which included the BG Concept.⁵

3 Presidency conclusions, European Council Meeting in Laeken, 14 and 15 December 2001, point 6.

4 Presidency conclusions, Thessaloniki European Council, 19 and 20 June 2003, point 56.

5 Note "The European Security and Defence Policy: from the Helsinki Headline Goal to the EU Battlegroups", Dr Gerrard Quille, European Parliament, Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, Directorate B, Policy

The EUBG concept was initiated at the Franco-British summit in Le Touquet in February 2003 and further elaborated at the Franco-British summit in November 2003, where the term “battlegroup” was mentioned for the first time.⁶ In the meantime, the EU launched its first autonomous military rapid response operation, Artemis, in the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which later served as a sort of template for the future rapid response concept, i.e. the EUBG concept.⁷ Germany joined this initiative in February 2004 and three EU leading nations published “The battlegroups concept UK/France/Germany food for thought paper”.⁸ After a positive reaction from the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC)⁹ on 24 March 2004 and a request by the EU Military Committee to the EU Military Staff to develop the EU BG concept (adopted by the EUMC on 14 June 2004) and followed by support from defence ministers in April 2004, a battlegroup became a key element of the Headline Goal 2010 that was adopted by the European Council in June 2004. The initial EUBG pledges were made at the Military Capabilities Commitment Conference in November 2004, when 13 EUBGs and niche capabilities were offered.¹⁰

Department, page 19.

- 6 “The EU should be capable and willing to deploy in an autonomous operation within 15 days to respond to a crisis. The aim should be coherent and credible battle-group sized forces, each around 1500 troops, offered by a single nation or through a multinational or framework nation force package, with appropriate transport and sustainability. These forces should have the capacity to operate under a Chapter VII mandate. They would be deployed in response to the UN request to stabilise a situation or otherwise meet a short-term need until peace-keepers from the United Nations, or regional organisations acting under the UN mandate, could arrive or be reinforced.” Franco-British Declaration: Strengthening European Cooperation in Security and Defence (page 281) in Missiroti, Antonio: From Copenhagen to Brussels: European defence: core documents, Volume IV, Chaillot Papers 67, Institute for Security Studies, Paris, December 2003.
- 7 On 30 May 2003 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1484 authorizing the deployment of an Interim Multinational Emergency Force to Bunia (Ituri region) in order to secure the airport, protect internally displaced persons in camps and civilians in the town until the reinforcement UN mission in DR Congo (MONUC - Mission de l’Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du Congo). The EU Council adopted Joint Action on 5 June 2003. The operation plans for Operation Artemis and the decision to launch a military operation in the DR Congo were adopted on 12 June 2003 and some three weeks later EU forces were deployed in the area of operation. The fact is that the first French troops has already arrived in the area of operation on 6 June 2003. About 1800 personnel from 16 EU and non-EU states (Brazil, Canada, South Africa) participated in the operation and France was the framework nation. By September 2003 the UN, i.e. MONUC, was reinforced enough to take over the responsibility for the overall security in the region, so Operation Artemis ended on 1 September 2003. More details on the EU web page under Operation Artemis legal basis (<http://consilium.europa.eu/eeas/security-defence/eu-operations/completed-eu-operations>).
- 8 EU security and defence - core documents 2004, Volume V, Chaillot Papers 75, Institute for Security Studies, Paris, February 2005.
- 9 With the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the GAERC was split into two parts: the General Affairs Council and the Foreign Affairs Council.
- 10 Member states declared 4 national (France, Italy, UK and Spain) and 9 multinational EUBGs (1. France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and potentially Spain, 2. France and Belgium, 3. Germany, the Netherlands and Finland, 4. Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic, 5 Italy, Hungary and Slovenia, 6. Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal, 7. Poland, Germany, Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania, 8. Sweden, Finland and Norway; 9. The United Kingdom and the Netherlands) as well as niche capabilities: medical group (Cyprus), a water purification unit (Lithuania), Athens Sealfit Co-ordination Centre (Greece) and structure of a multinational and deployable force headquarters (France).

Thereafter contributions have been announced twice a year through the Battlegroup Coordination Conferences (usually held in April/May and September/October).

At the same time as fulfilling the HHG, the European Union was negotiating an agreement with NATO (the Berlin Plus agreement) to ensure access to NATO capabilities and assets for EU-led military operations. The Berlin Plus agreement is actually a set of agreements between the EU and NATO which provides a basis for cooperation among the two organizations in crisis management. The origin of the Berlin Plus agreement lay in the 1996 arrangement between NATO and the WEU, which was the EU tool for defence and military cooperation. In the late 1990s the EU decided to dissolve the WEU and to develop its own capacities for military operations, but without unnecessary duplication. The need for developing firmer EU-NATO relations resulted in a joint declaration on 16 December 2002 (NATO-EU Declaration on the European Security and Defence Policy) on the establishment of their strategic partnership in crisis management, while a comprehensive framework for EU-NATO cooperation, i.e. a framework agreement¹¹ (known as the Berlin Plus agreement), was finished on 11 March 2003. Based on Berlin Plus agreements, the EU gained access to NATO planning capabilities, which enabled it to plan its own military operations: the possibility of engaging NATO SHAPE¹² and DSACEUR¹³ as OHQ and Operational Commander in the EU-led operation and the possibility of using certain NATO assets and capabilities for its military operations. Berlin Plus agreements also include an agreed procedure of exchange of classified information as well as EU-NATO consultation arrangements. So far Berlin Plus agreements have been applied only twice in EU-led operations (Concordia in Macedonia and Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina).¹⁴

Military Capability Commitment Conference, Brussels, 22 November 2004: Declaration on European military capabilities, pages 9-10.

11 The Framework agreement is actually letters exchanged between the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Secretary General of the Council of the EU, Javier Solana, and the Secretary General of NATO, Lord Robertson.

12 Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons.

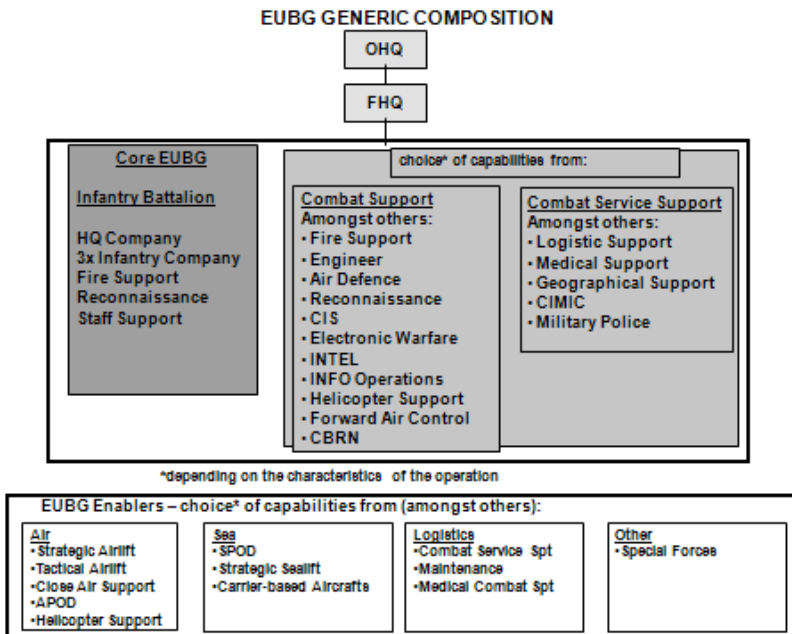
13 Deputy Supreme Allied Command Europe. The DSACEUR is designated Operation Commander, while the EU Force Commander and EU Force Headquarters deployed in the theatre or the EU Component Commands may either be provided by NATO or by EU member states. In addition, the EU Military Staff (EUMS) set up a cell at SHAPE in order to improve the preparation of EU operations drawing on NATO assets and capabilities, while NATO set up a permanent liaison office within the EUMS.

14 Details about Berlin Plus agreements can be found in "EU-NATO: THE FRAMEWORK FOR PERMANENT RELATIONS AND BERLIN PLUS" on the EU web page: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/03-11-11%20>

The EUBG structure, purpose and main characteristics

The EUBGs are a specific form of rapid reaction forces, or rather a force package which has to be “(minimum) militarily effective, credible, rapidly deployable” and “capable of stand-alone operations or for the initial phase of larger operations”.¹⁵ This force package is composed of “combined arms battalion sized force and reinforced with Combat Support and Combat Service Support elements” and it “must be associated with a Force Headquarters ((F) HQ) and pre-identified operational and strategic enablers, such as strategic lift and logistics”¹⁶ (Figure 1). The EUBGs could be formed by a single EU member state or by a group of member states with a so-called “framework nation” and its generic composition is about 1,500 troops. But the structure of EUBGs is not fixed; it depends on the specific requirements of the operation and the member states are those that decide on how to constitute their BG package.

Figure 1 – A generic battlegroup package



Berlin%20Plus%20press%20note%20BL.pdf

15 EU Battlegroup Concept, Council of the European Union, 13618/06 EXT 1, Brussels, 27 April 2007, point 8.

16 EU Battlegroup Concept, Council of the European Union, 13618/06 EXT 1, Brussels, 27 April 2007, point 8

Source: *THE BATTLE GROUPS: CATALYST FOR A EUROPEAN DEFENCE POLICY*, Briefing Paper, Policy Department External Policies, October 2007 EP/EXPO/B/SEDE/FWC/2006-10/Lot4/01

Such flexibility facilitates the EUBG Force Generation and enables a broader spectrum of capabilities. Therefore, the generic structure could be reinforced by different enablers such as maritime, air, logistic or others, so the EUBGs could reach a total of 2,500 troops or even more. For example, the Nordic Battlegroup that was on standby from 1 January until 30 June 2008 was made up of 2,800 soldiers from Sweden (about 2,300), Estonia (about 50), Finland (about 200), Ireland (about 80) and Norway (about 150),¹⁷ but for the strategic and military command aspects they worked with the United Kingdom.¹⁸ On the other hand, an EUBG led by Poland that was on standby in the period 1 January – 30 June 2010 was made up of some 1,800 personnel (about 700 from Poland, about 540 from Germany and about 180 personnel each from Slovakia, Lithuania and Latvia),¹⁹ while an Italian-Hungary-Slovenian EUBG, declared for standby in the period 1 July – 31 December 2012, was set up as a force package of 2,588 personnel in total (Italy – 2,100; Hungary – 260 and Slovenia – 228).²⁰

With regard to the Operations Headquarters (OHQ) there are three options: 1) use of NATO structures according to the Berlin Plus agreement of 2003, in which case the SHAPE will serve as OHQ; 2) use of one of five OHQs declared by member states (France – Mont Valérien/Paris, Germany – Potsdam, Greece – Larissa, Italy – Cento Celle/Rome and the United Kingdom – Northwood)²¹; and 3) the EU Operation Centre, staffed by a small core team of eight and ready for activation since 1 January 2007.²²

17 Sweden as a framework nation contributed the majority of troops: a mechanized infantry battalion with two light companies, one heavy company and a logistics company, as a core unit as well as personnel for Combat Support Units and Combat Service Support; Finland contributed personnel for combat support elements: a heavy mortar platoon, a platoon-sized Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) detection detachment and a unit in the joint Swedish-Finnish intelligence ISTAR Company and for combat service support elements: logistic and military police personnel; Norway contributed personnel for medical services, logistics and strategic lifts, while Estonia provided an infantry platoon for force protection. Furthermore, all participating countries contributed staff personnel to Operation HQ and Forward HQ. Jan Joel Andersson: *Armed and Ready? The EU Battlegroup Concept and the Nordic Battlegroup*, Report No. 2, March/2006, Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, pages 37-38.

18 Web page of the Swedish Armed Forces.

19 Polish-led EU Battle Group by Marcin Terlikowski, BULLETIN No. 3 (79), January 11, 2010, The Polish Institute of International Affairs.

20 EUMC Report to PSC on the Outcome of BGCC 1/12, 8975/12 ADD 1, Brussels, 26 April 2011.

21 Three of them have already been used: Mont Valérien HQ for Operation Artemis in DRC in 2003 and EUFOR Tchad/RCA in 2008; Potsdam HQ for Operation EUFOR DRC in 2006; and Northwood HQ for EUNAVFOR Atalanta (from December 2008 onwards).

22 The EU Operations Centre is not a standing HQ. There is on a permanent basis only staff in Civ/Mil Cell responsible

Regarding the time frame, the EU should be able to adopt the decision on launching the EUBG-size operation within five days after the approval of the Crisis Management Concept by the Council and EUBG troops are supposed to be deployed in the area of operations in the period of 10 days thereafter and stay in the area of operations for 30 days with the possibility of extending its deployment to 120 days, depending on the resupplying capacities. Speaking in geographic terms, the EUBG is supposed to be deployed in the crisis area up to 6,000 km away from Brussels. In addition, an EUBG is dedicated to a new crisis which demands readiness for deployment at very short notice (up to 10 days) in order to avoid the escalation and/or to set the conditions for robust troops in the case of timely and troop-demanding operations. So, an EUBG is not meant to be used for current operations or for solving old crises such as the Afghanistan one. In the process of building the EU rapid response capacity, the year 2005 was the targeted year for setting up the first EUBG, i.e. reaching the initial operational capability (IOC), i.e. a minimum of one BG was constantly on standby for six months, and the year 2007 was set as the year for reaching the EUBGs' full operational capability (FOC), meaning that the EU is able to undertake two simultaneous rapid response operations.

for maintaining the capability to activate the operations centre at any time. Initial operating capability (i.e. capability to plan an operation) is within 5 days and full operational capability (i.e. capability to run an operation) is within 20 days for an operation of up to 2,000 soldiers. EU web page on 27 March 2013 http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/070228-EU_OpsCentre.pdf

Missions, Tasks and Preparations

The exact aims and tasks of the EUBGs are not defined in any document. They are based on the missions and tasks set up for EU military operations in general. At the beginning, the definition of EUBGs' missions and tasks were based on the so-called Petersberg Tasks (humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking) and tasks defined by the European Security Strategy 2003 (joint disarmament operations, support to the third countries in combating terrorism and security sector reforms). Since 2009 the above-mentioned EU military tasks are to be found in one place, in the Lisbon Treaty articles 42(1)²³ and 43(1).²⁴

In this context we should mention that each engagement of the EU military forces, whether rapid response or not, asks for UN legitimacy of the operation.²⁵ In addition to that, there are two main conditions that have to be met to enable EUBG deployment: a new crisis and the need for rapid reaction. In the case of the latter, the EUBG could be employed as a stand-alone force in a short-term operation, or as an advanced force in a long-term operation facilitating the conditions for deployment of the robust troops. The duration of the EUBG engagement could be considered as a third condition, since the maximum foreseeable use of an EUBG is up to 120 days.

23 The Lisbon Treaty in Article 42 point 1 says: "The common security and defence policy shall be an integral part of the common foreign and security policy. It shall provide the Union with an operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets. The Union may use them on missions outside the Union for peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter. The performance of these tasks shall be undertaken using capabilities provided by the Member States."

24 Article 43 point 1 of the Lisbon Treaty stipulates: "The tasks referred to in Article 42(1), in the course of which the Union may use civilian and military means, shall include joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilisation. All these tasks may contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories."

25 For further details see Western European Union Council of Ministers, "Petersberg Declaration", Bonn, 19 June 1992, 6, para 4, European Security Strategy, page 12 and Article 43 of the Lisbon Treaty 2009.

In order to better prepare EU military capabilities for action, in November 2006 five illustrative scenarios for possible use of EU military forces were set up:

1. Separation of parties by forces requires direct combat engagement, so an EUBG could be engaged in peacemaking activities or for securing vital lines of communication;
2. Conflict prevention, in which the EUBG could be tasked to conduct disarmament operations, enforce embargoes and/or supervise counter-proliferation efforts;
3. Stabilization, reconstruction and military advice to third countries, where an EUBG might be tasked for traditional peacekeeping activities and maintaining security and stability by monitoring cease-fires and withdrawals or providing military assistance for third countries in need of institution building and security sector reform;
4. Evacuation operations in a non-permissive environment, where the EUBG could assist in the evacuation of non-combatants from a hostile environment;
5. Assistance to humanitarian operations where the EUBG could help in delivering humanitarian aid or in protecting aid workers in the field.²⁶

If we analyse these five scenarios we can see that the EUBG matches the latter two perfectly, although none of the others can be excluded.

Based on the above-mentioned scenarios, G. Lindstrom (2007: 18-19) pointed out three main situations for EUBG employment:

- Bridging operations in which the EU would support the troops already on the ground, to reinforce them or to take operational responsibility for a specific geographic sector to enable the existing troops to regroup;
- Initial entry rapid response operation, where the EU forces would have a role of an initial entry force as an advance force to the

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26 Detailed in: Jan Joel Andersson: *Armed and Ready? The EU Battlegroup Concept and the Nordic Battlegroup*, Report No. 2, March/2006, Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, pages 34-35 and EU web page: http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/MilitaryCapabilitiesFC06backgroundNov06_en.pdf Development of European Military Capabilities: The Force Catalogue 2006, EU Council Secretariat background paper, November 2006.

larger ones that follow on;

- Stand-alone operations, in the case of operations of limited time and scale requiring rapid response.²⁷

Member states' commitment to battlegroups is on a voluntary basis. Consequently, their training, equipment, evaluation and certification are national responsibilities too,²⁸ therefore a contributing member state is responsible for training and certification of its commitments at the unit level and the framework nation for training and certification of the whole force package, especially in the area of command, control and communication. The role of EU institutions is limited to facilitating the coordination among the participating nations, and the EU Military Committee and EU Military Staff mainly monitor the EUBG certification process. In order to meet the demanding requirements or standards and be able to act during the standby period each EUBG is declared long enough (usually three to five years) in advance and has to pass the highly demanding training process and certification at the end. Regarding the training standards, EUBG contributing nations rely on the NATO standards wherever possible thus avoiding duplication and promoting further interoperability. In other words, national military forces for both (the EU and NATO) come from the same single set of forces.

Since 2007 when the EUBG concept reached the FOC stage, deployment of EUBGs has been considered a few times (in 2006 for DR Congo and Lebanon, 2008 for the Eastern DR Congo²⁹ and Chad, 2010 for Haiti, 2011 for Libya and 2012 on the occasion of support for EUFOR Althea whose forces were sent to reinforce international forces in Kosovo during the electoral period in Serbia³⁰) but so far not a single EUBG has ever been deployed. Furthermore, slots for recent years remain blank or there is only

27 Lindstrom G: Enter the EU Battlegroups, Chaillot Paper No 97, EUISS, February 2007, pages 18-19.

28 Document: Increasing the Flexibility and Usability of the EU Battlegroups, 15336/09, Brussels, 4 November 2009, point 6.

29 In July 2006, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) required UN mission assistance prior to, during and after national elections. The requirement was for approximately 1,500 troops. At that time Germany had one EU BG on standby but political leaders considered that the situation did not ask for a rapid response while this mission was known in advance, and because the mission would last longer than 120 days. More details in: Lindstrom G: Enter the EU Battlegroups, Chaillot Paper No 97, EUISS, February 2007, pages 57-58.

30 The idea was rejected by the EUMC based on the fact that EUBGs are not meant to be used as reserve forces. The reason could also be the fact that EUFOR Althea is not a new crisis spot but an old one. Hatzigeorgopoulos, Myrto: The Role of EU Battlegroups in European Defence, Institute for Security, European Security Review 56, June 2012, page 5.

one (instead of two) EUBG declared for a certain period.

Figure 2 – Declared EUBGs from 2007 to 2018

Declared EUBGs from 2007 to 2018		
Year	I semester	II semester
2007	Germany, Netherlands, Finland	Italy, Hungary, Slovenia
	France, Belgium	Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Bulgaria
2008	Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Norway, Ireland	Germany, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain
	Spain, Germany, France, Portugal	Great Britain
2009	Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal	Czech Republic, Slovakia
	Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Bulgaria	France, Belgium, Luxembourg
2010	Poland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia	Italy, Romania, Turkey
	Great Britain, Netherlands	Spain, France, Portugal
2011	Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Austria, Latvia	Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Bulgaria
	Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Norway, Ireland, Croatia	France, Portugal, Spain, Italy
2012	France, Belgium, Luxembourg	Italy, Hungary, Slovenia
	vacant	Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Ireland, Croatia, FYROM
2013	Poland, Germany, France	Great Britain, Sweden, Lithuania, Latvia, Netherlands
	vacant	vacant
2014	Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Bulgaria	Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Luxembourg, Spain
	vacant	Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal
2015	Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia	France, Belgium
	vacant	vacant
2016	Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary	Great Britain
	vacant	Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, Czech Republic, Netherlands
		Greece
2017	Italy	Spain
	France	vacant
2018	vacant	vacant
	vacant	vacant

Sources: "The Battle Groups: Catalyst for a European Defence Policy", Briefing Paper, Policy Department External Policies, European Parliament, October 2007 and the EUMC Report to PSC on the Outcome of BGCC 2/12 in EU document 14011/12 ADD1

Financial aspect

EU operations having military and defence implications are financed according to the principle "the costs lie where they fall", which means they are almost entirely financed by participating member states. The Union's budget covers only administrative costs for EU institutions (Article 41(1) TEU) and operating costs for civilian missions (Article 41(2) TEU), while in the case of military engagement participating states are charged. The operating costs of EU military operations are financed through the ATHENA mechanism³¹ where contributions are provided by participating nations based on a GNI scale. The ATHENA mechanism is managed under the authority of a special committee composed of a representative of each member state participating in the operation and takes decisions by unanimity. It should be mentioned that Denmark has opted out of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy on military matters, so it does not provide finance for EU military operations. Furthermore, if a member state abstains in a vote and makes a formal declaration (constructive abstention) it is not obliged to contribute to the financing of the respective operation expenditure (Article 41(3) paragraph 2 TEU).

The ATHENA mechanism basically covers incremental costs for headquarters (HQ implementation and running costs, including travel, computer information systems, administration, public information, locally hired personnel, Force Headquarters (FHQ) deployment and lodging) and those for forces as a whole (infrastructure, medical services in theatre, medical evacuation, identification, acquisition of information (satellite images). If the Council decides so, the expenditure for transport and lodging of forces and critical theatre-level capabilities (demining, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) protection,

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³¹ The ATHENA mechanism was set up by the Council of the European Union on 1 March 2004 and amended after that a few times, most recently in December 2011.

storage and destruction of weapons) could also be covered by ATHENA.³² However, the costs covered through ATHENA rise up to 10% of the total costs for certain operations. For financing EUBG engagement the same rules would be applied.

Applying the aforementioned on the EUBGs means that each participating country covers costs for equipment, salaries, training in the preparatory period, certification and transportation of its troops to the area of operation. The same goes for all costs during the standby period. Swedish authorities calculated that from 2005 to 2008 the costs of leading the Nordic Battlegroup were approximately 240 million euros and costs associated with the standby period are estimated at about 38 million euros.³³ Bearing this in mind, no wonder many member states do not take the role of leading or framework nation and not even a larger role in the EUBG concept. One has to agree with the view of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs that "applying the 'costs lie where they fall' principle to the battlegroups (not only BG but all military forces), put on stand-by on a voluntary and rotational basis, is contrary to the principle of fair burden-sharing."³⁴

Financing EU military operations was recognized as a problem even in the Lisbon Treaty and subsequently it predicted the establishing of a start-up fund for urgent financing of initiatives in the CFSP framework, to improve the speed and efficiency of EU action, and for tasks within TEU Article 42(1) and Article 43 when the Union budget cannot be charged.³⁵ In this regard, the Lisbon Treaty wording was, unfortunately, quite unclear, especially about its added value in reference to the ATHENA mechanism and so far nothing has been undertaken. Apart from other stakeholders, even the European Parliament is encouraging the changes in the current way of financing EU military operations with a view to improving the principle of fair burden-sharing. In this way, the European Parliament has recently supported the adjustment of ATHENA to "increase the proportion of common costs"³⁶ and called for "a

32 More details in: Annex III, COUNCIL DECISION 2011/871/CFSP establishing a mechanism to administer the financing of the common costs of European Union operations having military or defence implications (Athena), 19 December 2011, Official Journal of the European Union L 343 of 23.12.2011.

33 Lindstrom G: Enter the EU Battlegroups, Chaillot Paper No 97, EUISS, February 2007, page 26.

34 European Parliament, Committee on Foreign Affairs DRAFT REPORT on the EU's military structures: state of play and future prospects (2012/2319(INI)), Rapporteur: Marietta Giannakou, point 16..

35 See Lisbon Treaty, Article 41.

36 Article 99 of the European Parliament resolution of 22 November 2012 on the implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy (based on the Annual Report from the Council to the European Parliament on the

significant expansion of the common costs for rapid reaction operations, up to a full coverage of costs when battle-groups are used".³⁷ Also, the EP assumes "that any costs that are not linked to military operations, such as preparation and stand-by costs of battle-groups, could be charged to the EU budget".³⁸

EU decision-making process

Having no army, the EU relies on the member states' contributions which means that the whole decision-making process is more complicated, especially from the perspective that the matters concerned are subject to the provisions of intergovernmental cooperation and thus consensus. The situation with the EUBGs is even more complex due to the need for rapid response to the potentially escalating crisis. So, the reaction period is pretty tight and lots of work is needed. On the one hand, the EU has to decide on launching the operation and the manner in which to react, while on the other hand member states have to decide on a national level whether to participate or not.

A large number of actors are involved in the decision-making process on the national as well as on the EU level. This brings the usability of the EUBGs to a very challenging stage. Concerning the national levels, we have to bear in mind not only the usual parliamentary decision process that requires certain time but also so-called national caveats³⁹ that reduce the possibility of the use of forces and thus making an impact on the scope of the EUBGs' usability. In most countries, if not all EU member states, the decision regarding the employment of military forces is made

Common Foreign and Security Policy) (12562/2011 - 2012/2138(INI)).

37 European Parliament, Committee on Foreign Affairs DRAFT REPORT on the EU's military structures: state of play and future prospects (2012/2319(INI)), Rapporteur: Marietta Giannakou, point 16.

38 European Parliament, Committee on Foreign Affairs DRAFT REPORT on the EU's military structures: state of play and future prospects (2012/2319(INI)), Rapporteur: Marietta Giannakou, point 21.

39 National caveats mean the restriction that some countries place on the use of their forces. Caveats are imposed unilaterally by the political authorities of each nation, not by, nor in consultation with, NATO or the multinational commander in charge of the foreign mission. It could be: a restriction on the combat roles of their units, not allowing their forces to serve outside a certain area (for example in ISAF - not outside the Afghanistan capital city (Kabul) or to serve in the more hostile southern areas of the country), restriction of use of forces in CIMIC-type missions or civil reconstruction missions, etc. BROPHY John, FISERA Miloslav: "NATIONAL CAVEATS" and their impact on the Army of the Czech Republic.

by parliaments, which as we all know have their schedule and strictly defined frequency of meeting as well as their procedure for recalling extraordinary meetings.

At the EU level the decision-making process is closely connected with the planning process and includes many players and even more papers. The decision-making process includes the Political and Security Committee (PSC), EU Military Committee (EUMC), EU Military Staff (EUMS) and Council as the main decision-making bodies in cases of EU action with military and defence implications.

The Political and Security Committee (PSC) consists of the member states' ambassadors, meets at least twice a week and is responsible for managing crisis situations and day-to-day decision-making on CFSP and ESDP.⁴⁰ When a certain crisis draws the attention of the PSC and it concludes that EU action is needed, the next step is drawing up a Crisis Management Concept (CMC) that contains the political interests of the EU, the aims and objectives of the operation, politico-strategic options for responding to the respective crisis and a possible exit strategy.⁴¹ CMC is adopted by the Council and constitutes the basis for developing strategic options that can be military (MSO), police (PSO) or civilian (CSO). A Military Strategic Option, a document that comprises risk and feasibility assessments, command and control structures, force requirements and the identification of forces available for deployment, as well as recommendations regarding the potential operational commander and headquarters (HQ), is drafted by the EUMS under the direction of the EUMC and guidance of the PSC. Based on the MSO, the Council decides to act (CD – Council Decision) and at the same time the EUMC, backed by the EUMS, works on a planning directive for the operation, i.e. an Initiating Military Directive (IMD), which translates the CD into military guidance for the Operation Commander and serves at the same time as a platform for two other planning documents, the Concept of Operations (CONOPS) and the Operation Plan (OPLAN), as well as for the Council's Joint Action on launching the operation, concurrently appointing the

40 The tasks of the PSC are defined by Article 25 of the Treaty on European Union. They include monitoring the international situation, drafting opinions of policy for the Council, monitoring implementation of agreed policies and providing guidelines on CFSP for other committees. Details in: Council Decision of 22 January 2001 establishing the Political and Security Committee of the European Union (2001/71/CFSP).

41 Björkdahl Annika and Strömvik Maria: The decision-making process behind launching an ESDP crisis management operation, DIIS Brief, April 2008, page 3.

Operation Commander (OpCdr) and deciding on the financial aspects. Before the EU Council adopts the Joint Action, the UN mission mandate has to be issued to give a legal basis for launching the EU operation. Once appointed, the OpCdr is responsible for operational planning documents. Two of them are crucial: the Concept of Operations (CONOPS), which gives an overview on the implementation of the operation, and the Operation Plan (OPLAN), which describes in detail each aspect of the operation. Since detailed planning for a mission asks for OHQ planning capacities at this stage the EU Operation Centre has the role of facilitating preparation of the CONOPS and OPLAN until the Council designates the OHQ that will lead the operation. In this regard, the EU could designate one of the five national OHQs put at the EU's disposal by Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Greece or the EU OpsCentre. At the military operational level, an EU operation or an EUBG operation will be led by a Force Commander from a Force Headquarters (FHQ) deployed in the area of operation. When the OPLAN is approved, the Council takes the decision to launch the operation. During the operation, the PSC exercises political control and strategic direction of the operation, including the assessment regarding its refocusing or termination.⁴²

Speaking in the context of EUBG deployment it means that there are only five days between the two main Council decisions: adoption of CMC and launching the operation. It also means that 10 days after the decision regarding the launch of the operation at least the first EUBG personnel have to enter the area of operation – a pretty demanding task, bearing in mind the huge EU administration and consensus-based decision in defence and military matters.

Furthermore, the UN mandate is a sensitive issue for the European Union. So far all EU operations have been under the UN mandate. It depends on EU members whether it will be valid for the future too or whether there could be a situation when the EU would react without UN mandate. The latter possibility would definitely have a positive impact on rapid reaction possibilities while reducing the time for reaction, but whether it would be acceptable for EU members is hard to say. In any case, it has to be taken into consideration sooner or later.

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⁴² Source: Naert Frederik Legal Aspects of EU Military Operations, *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 15 (2011), 218-242.

Concluding remarks

For decades the EU cherished the discrepancy between its economic significance within the international community and almost insignificant role in the political, and above all, security and defence area while relying on NATO. At the end of the 1990s came the time for the development of its own security assets in order to protect its interests and citizens. The first step in that direction was creating the Common Foreign and Security Policy which in a short time led to the creation of the European Security and Defence Policy thus putting at the EU's disposal civilian and military capabilities for dealing with the crisis spots around the world. Great promoters of the EU's development in security and defence matters were France, Germany and the UK, but other member states were more than willing to follow them. The speed of development in the ESDP area was truly impressive, especially in relation to the EUBG concept that represented true added value to the EU capacity for reaction in the international hot spots.

The EUBG concept initiated at the Franco-British summit in Le Touquet in February 2003 quickly resulted in the first member states' pledges in November 2004 and reached full operational capabilities in January 2007 putting at the EU's disposal two of them in each semester. What a tremendous start for something that did not get practical confirmation after six years of existence and beside that ended with an empty slot in the first half of 2012! Will the EUBG concept become a paper tiger like its predecessor the ERRF or many other EU initiatives? Does it still have any value or has it already failed? The outcomes of the EUBG concept could be evaluated twofold – to a certain extent the EUBG initiative was successful while on the other hand it was a failure.

The economic crisis has put each country's budget under great pressure. The most common way to address this problem is by decreasing the public budget, especially its defence part. That leads to cutting down investments in research, development and procurement in the defence sector. In contrast to cutting down the budget, participation in the EUBG concept asks for the dedication of a huge amount of money for building and preparing the EUBGs and even more money for their eventual

deployment. In addition, the overall contribution of the countries whose EUBGs are not on standby at the time of operation is doubtful, bearing in mind the functioning mode of the ATHENA mechanism as well as the financial *modus operandi* as a whole. Therefore, the burden and sharing principle is definitely undermined in the case of EUBG employment, unless the EU finds out a way to finance its military operations in the manner of a civilian one. It could be argued that security costs a lot but at least the expenditures could and should be divided fairly.

In addition, all participating countries suffer a certain shortfall regarding the means of deployment, i.e. strategic air and sealift. Acquiring such capabilities requires a lot of money and there is also the problem of their usability. Namely, transport by sealift is time-consuming while using faster airlift capacities is restricted by the limited landing possibilities in Africa, the most probable area of deployment, and finally both kinds of strategic transport are further affected by bad road conditions and the length of transportation from entry ports (air or sea) to the area of operation. And EUBGs are supposed to enter the area of operation within 10 days of the EU decision. Also, the fact that all countries have the same set of forces at their disposal for EU, NATO and UN activities has to be taken into account.

Time pressure is also one of the obstacles in the EUBG story since it puts at odds the need for rapid reaction and EU/national bureaucracy. Besides that, the decision-making process for EUBG deployment includes the consensus of all member states.

The fact that none of the EUBGs was deployed despite its engagement being considered a few times additionally complicates the positive judgement of their value. Their credibility in undertaking CSDP rapid actions has not been proven yet and "waiting for the ideal crisis may turn the Battlegroup into a 'forgotten' instrument of the CSDP toolkit" (Hatzigeorgopoulos, 2012: 6).⁴³ On the other hand, neither have the forces declared through capability catalogues been used. When it comes to EU-led operations, the ad hoc force generation processes still prevail.

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⁴³ Hatzigeorgopoulos, Myrto: The Role of EU Battlegroups in European Defence, Institute for Security, European Security Review 56, June 2012, page 6.

However, EUBGs have significantly intensified and deepened cooperation among not only EU member states but among candidate countries and European NATO members as well. EUBGs have also had an important role in developing interoperability standards and transforming the military forces of respective states. Yet this impact is limited to the very small component of their troops and is therefore more significant for individual member states than for the Union as a whole. In the future, the EUBGs could have a positive impact on deepening EU integration in the security and defence area. The challenge the EU faces is to provide as many capabilities to protect its interests and citizens with less money. Savings could be achieved through cooperation with other countries and specialization. In this case, EUBGs could act as driving forces for closer and expanded cooperation among the participating states and contribute to the reduction of costs through the implementation of a pooling and sharing initiative.

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The opinions expressed in this article are authors own and not those of the MOD.