# SWP Research Paper

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# EU Battlegroups: What Contribution to European Defence?

Progress and Prospects of
European Rapid Response Forces

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The European Union (EU) has repeatedly failed to develop effective military capabilities because its members were either unable or unwilling to contribute troops to joint military operations. To overcome this shortcoming, EU member states adopted the military "Headline Goal 2010" (HG 2010) in 2004, whose core element were the EU Battlegroups. The Battlegroups have been designed to enable a rapid military response to crises. In creating them, EU member states sought to accomplish two objectives:

▸ Transformation of national armed forces: participation in Battlegroups was intended to encourage EU member states to reform their armed forces towards higher readiness and deployability in international crisis management.

▸ Operations: the Battlegroups were designed to allow the EU to engage rapidly in autonomous military operations independently from NATO.
    With 2011 the time has come to review whether the main targets of the HG 2010 have been reached, to examine the role the Battlegroups have played to date in EU security policy and to consider the role they should play in the future. Such a review is even more critical because EU member states have not yet produced an official and transparent evaluation of the Battlegroups concept and its implementation. Moreover, the security environment has changed, which requires a discussion of the concept itself. In December 2008, EU member states established a new *level of ambition* for the EU's security and defence policy. It stresses the importance of an integrated civil-military dimension for EU security policy, and seeks to improve the provision and deployability of military capabilities. Moreover, the Lisbon Treaty entered into effect in 2009. With the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PSCoop), the Lisbon Treaty opens up further new avenues for defence cooperation. Last but not least the financial crisis has reenergized interest in pooling and sharing (P&S) of military capabilities. EU Battlegroups could present helpful insights into areas and ways for successful defence cooperation.

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In the context of these developments, this study addresses three key questions:

▸ What are EU Battlegroups, and what do they mean for European security policy?

▸ Have the objectives of the Battlegroups initiative—transformation and deployability—been achieved?

▸ How can the Battlegroups be further developed?

An analysis of recent developments indicates that the Battlegroup initiative has been a political success. Following several less successful initiatives, the Battlegroups present the most important example of the willingness and ability of EU member states to seek closer defence cooperation. They represent a profoundly European project and demonstrate how to successfully establish standing military formations.

From a military perspective, however, the evidence is more ambivalent. Although the implementation of the Battlegroups concept has indeed spurred the transformation of member states' armed forces, the successes are restricted to a small section of the armed forces and have mainly been achieved in command and logistics. Over the past years, many EU states have adjusted both their political decision-making and military planning and command procedures to better meet the demands of European crisis management. In addition, they have developed joint solutions in the field of transport and logistics. Despite these advances, however, the broader transformation—of national structures and capabilities—has largely failed to materialise. Planning and command processes remain poorly coordinated between the EU and national levels. The Battlegroups have brought about only a minor upgrading of equipment. Fundamental deficits, such as the lack of helicopters, have not been rectified. On the other hand, the Battlegroups have helped to fuel efforts to overcome gaps in equipment and skills through outsourcing as well as pooling and sharing.

Because of continuing deficiencies in the planning process, in political decision-making processes and in logistics, it remains questionable whether the EU can launch a Battlegroup operation within the required timeframe. Moreover, not all Battlegroups meet the high quality standards set for them which hampers their military effectiveness.

Overall, therefore, the results of the Battlegroup initiative are ambivalent. Since January 2007, the EU has had permanently two Battlegroups on standby. EU member states have therefore succeeded in creating an instrument of close defence cooperation and have worked together to establish joint military forces. However, they have not yet deployed these forces. Nevertheless, the impact of the Battlegroup initiative on the transformation and development of the armed forces at the member state level should not be underestimated.

The reasons why the Battlegroups have not yet been deployed result broadly from the different positions taken by member states regarding the role of the EU in international crisis management, their different strategic goals, and their stances on the use of military force in general. These differences present fundamental barriers to arriving at the unanimous decision required for military operations.

This review raises the question of how the Battlegroups should be developed in the future. The EU's operational experience, lessons from recent crises, such the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti in 2010 or the uprising in the Arab world including Libya in 2011, but also the level of ambition for EU security and defence policy as adopted in 2008 and the Lisbon Treaty suggest where the EU needs to direct its efforts over the next decade and which instruments will be most useful. While a greater number of units is generally needed, these also need to be reliably accessible and ready for deployment within integrated civil-military scenarios.

Based on their analysis, the authors suggest the following recommendations:

▸ establishing permanent civil-military EU planning and conduct capabilities;

▸ widening the Battlegroup task spectrum to integrate civil-military tasks;

▸ revising the Athena mechanism, in particular through a moderate expansion of the areas which are financed in common eg. means of transport and joint equipment;

▸ using EU Battlegroups as a laboratory for pooling & sharing, with a focus on perpetuation, expansion and deeper integration;

▸ making more extensive use of pooling and sharing in logistics;

▸ entrusting the certification of Battlegroups to the European Defence Agency;

▸ creating new incentives for force transformation and defence reform through Permanent Structured Cooperation;

▸ informing policy makers in Germany as fully as possible on the specifics of a Battlegroup deployment and regularly simulating the required decision-making processes.

# EU Battlegroups: Military Forces for European Crisis Management

Since January 2007, the EU has had permanently two Battlegroups on standby and ready for deployment. It has thus achieved a central goal of the European/ Common Security and Defence Policy (ESDP/CSDP),[1] namely, to possess the military capability to respond quickly and independently from NATO to crises. Prior efforts of this kind had failed due to insufficient military capabilities among the member states and their lack of political will to contribute troops to EU operations.

The Balkans conflicts demonstrated at the political level that the EU could not guarantee security in its own backyard and that it was in no position to reach consensus on its role and ambition as a crisis management actor. Militarily, it was only thanks to the support of the US and NATO that the EU was capable of taking action at all. In theory, EU member states' armed forces as a whole form one of the largest armies in the world. However, European governments were unable to deploy their forces jointly and at the necessary speed. France and the UK shared most of the burden and risk of crisis management, since they alone had rapidly deployable and adequately equipped forces at hand.

The recognition of these deficits resulted in numerous endeavours to improve the capacity of the EU to conduct military crisis management operations without recourse to NATO assets. The most recent and ambitious initiative in this regard was the development of Battlegroups. With their help, the EU aimed to intensify defence cooperation at the political, administrative and military levels of the EU and its member states, and to enable an autonomous rapid response to crises, independent of NATO.

## The year 2011: review and reorientation

Following the de facto failure of earlier initiatives such as the 1999 Helsinki Headline Goal, the EU Battlegroups are the most important example of EU member states' willingness and capacity to collectively develop European military capabilities. From the vantage point of the member states, the Battlegroups have substantially supported the transformation of the armed forces and intensified national defence reform processes. Over the course of their continued development, the Battlegroups could eventually become the nucleus of permanent EU military structures, which in turn could serve as the basis for a European army. The favourable assessment of the Battlegroups initiative by EU member states stands, however, in contrast to the criticism of some observers who assert that the initiative has failed because Battlegroups have not yet been deployed.

The tension between these two very different assessments requires, particularly from a German perspective, a military and security review of the Battlegroup initiative, weighing its successes against its shortcomings. Particular attention should be paid to the future orientation of the Battlegroups and how Germany might participate in them. Germany was an active participant during the early phases of the Battlegroup initiative and contributes one of the largest troop contingents. One of the main objectives of the Battlegroups—the transformation of the armed forces—is fully in line with German security interests, which aim at more intensive cooperation in the area of defence, at embedding the German security and defence policy in multilateral structures, and at ensuring the German armed forces' capacity for deployment in the framework of multilateral crisis management. At the same time, Germany has been reproached for having prevented Battlegroup deployments in the past.

Various developments in the field of CSDP allow for or even demand a new direction for the Battlegroups:

▸ **A necessary review:** The Headline Goal 2010, agreed upon in 2004, was to be fulfilled by 2010. Its primary element is the setup of EU Battlegroups. It is now crucial to assess this initiative, examining whether EU member states have reached their objectives. Up to now, there has been no indication that member states are openly and transparently undertaking an assessment of this kind, or that

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[1] When the Lisbon Treaty entered into force in 2009, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) was renamed Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

they want to make the results of such an assessment the subject of political debate.

▶ **New objectives:** In 2008, the EU member states agreed upon a new Level of Ambition for EU capabilities in crisis management.[2] Among other things, their declaration outlines the military capabilities that the EU would like to possess in the future. One means of reaching this level of ambition would be to formulate a new military Headline Goal. It would have to incorporate lessons from the first phase of the Battlegroups as well as plans for their future development.

▶ **A new framework:** With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the framework for the development of military capabilities changed. The Protocol on Permanent Structured Cooperation (PSCoop), in particular, opens new options for promoting their collective development.[3]

▶ **New debates:** Since late 2009, German politicians have increasingly been discussing the idea of a "European army". The 2009 Coalition Agreement of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU); its sister party, the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU); and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) identifies the establishment of a European army as one of Germany's political goals.[4] Other member states such as Italy and Poland—the latter of which has traditionally been strongly oriented toward NATO—are also calling for a European army.[5] The "Weimar Triangle" initiative launched in April 2010 by Germany, France, and Poland, and adopted at the EU-level in January 2011, seeks to create permanent civil-military planning and command structures for the EU and also supports the idea of a European army as a long-term goal.[6] These projects and dis-

cussions testify to the interest taken by some EU countries in closer military cooperation. The political vision of a European army could provide a new impetus for the integration of military forces at the EU level. It remains to be seen whether this idea can be connected to the future development of EU Battlegroups.

▶ **New austerity: What lessons from EU Battlegroups for pooling &sharing (P&S):** The economic and financial crisis has put state budgets throughout the European Union under severe pressure. After massive debt-financed recovery programmes the states now have to seek fiscal consolidation by reducing public spending in a long-term perspective. The two decades of austerity ahead will most likely also hit defence budgets and military capabilities in the EU. Therefore the P&S of capabilities has gained renewed interest as a method to increase spending efficiency and keep essential capabilities if not national at the EU level. As EU Battlegroups are the only functioning EU-framework for capability development, they may offer some lessons identified for the current debate on areas suited for P&S and criteria of successful cooperation.[7]

## Rapid response in EU defence policy

### The concept of rapid response

In the military domain, "rapid response" describes a distinct capability which enables a quick reaction in crisis scenarios. The focus of RR is mainly but not exclusively on preventive and early intervention in opposition to later-stage conflict management in escalated crisis situations. Contrary to the idea that the use of military force should be the *ultima ratio* of any action, RR reflects a preventive approach, which assumes that a timely, rapid and decisive intervention might allow for the prevention of the escalation of a crisis.

It could allow the avoidance of subsequent larger, more violent, expensive and longer term interventions. In fact, an intervention at a later stage often risks narrowing down the options of the intervention

**2** Council of the European Union, *Declaration on Strengthening Capabilities*, December 11, 2008, http://www. consilium. europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/esdp/104676. pdf (accessed 15 March, 2010).
**3** Christian Mölling, "Ständige Strukturierte Zusammenarbeit in der EU-Sicherheitspolitik," *SWP-Aktuell* 13/2010 (February 2010).
**4** *Koalitionsvertrag von CDU, CSU und FDP* (2009), 119, http:// www.cdu.de/doc/pdfc/091024-koalitionsvertrag-cducsu-fdp.pdf.
**5** "Italy's Foreign Minister Says Post-Lisbon EU Needs a European Army," *The Times*, November 11, 2009; "Frattini: Il faut créer une armée européenne," *Le Figaro*, April 8, 2010.
**6** *Deutschland in Europa – eine Standortbestimmung*, Speech by Guido Westerwelle (German Minister for Foreign Affairs) at University of Bonn, April 27, 2010, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2010/100427-BM-D-in-Europa.html; Claudia Major, *A Civil-Military Headquarters for*

*the EU.* Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), December 2010 (SWP-Comment 31/2010).
**7** Christian Mölling and Sophie Brune, *The impact of the financial crisis on European defence*, Study, (Brussels: European Parliament, Subcommittee on Security and Defence), April 2011.

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forces. Military conflicts might escalate and could create results, which can then only be revised by applying the full range of military instruments. In humanitarian terms, a late intervention often risks extending the suffering of the population and increasing the number of victims.[8]

Rapid military response can only be successful as part of a comprehensive strategy that includes a political dimension. In this larger strategy, rapid response should ideally be embedded in the context of other measures addressing the political, social and economic root causes of a complex crisis pattern. This includes a variety of civilian instruments that should be available prior to, during and after military operations.[9]

## Developments in the EU

Since the establishment of ESDP in June 1999, rapid response has been a core objective in the development of EU military capabilities. In particular, the Balkans conflicts of the 1990s made it patently clear to the EU states that despite their sophisticated and numerically impressive armed forces, they were in neither a military nor a political position to act swiftly, decisively, and collectively.

ESDP was supposed to create the framework for autonomous EU action in international crisis management. In December 1999, the EU countries concretised their military objectives in the framework of a military capability target: the Helsinki Headline Goal (HHG).[10]

In the HHG, EU member states agreed to establish the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF), which was to make 60,000 troops deployable within sixty days for

a period of up to one year. These military forces were to include rapid-response units. In parallel to the HHG, EU member states created new military structures—the EU Military Staff (EUMS) and the EU Military Committee (EUMC). On the political side, the Political and Security Committee (PSC/COPS) took on a more important role. The EU Military Staff is comprised of military experts and is responsible for early warning, situation assessment, and strategic planning. It advises the Military Committee, which consists of the Chiefs of Defence of EU member states. The EUMC, in turn, advises the PSC on all military matters, makes recommendations, and leads the military activities of the E/CSDP. The PSC, which is composed of representatives of the member states at ambassadorial level, monitors the international situation and assures political control and strategic guidance of EU operations.

In May 2003, the EU took stock of the situation. In fact, despite quantitatively meeting the targets set in Helsinki, there were significant qualitative shortfalls in key capabilities such as transport, force protection, or operational mobility. Particular problems have been recognised with regard to the upper end of the spectrum of scale and intensity. Although in principle the member states were able to provide the required number of troops, it was questionable whether these troops could be equipped, deployed, supplied, sustained and rotated as required. The conclusion was that the EU had not access to all the instruments it needed, which limited its ability to act.

## The decision to set up EU Battlegroups

In view of these unsatisfactory results, France and the UK took the fore in urging the other EU member states to improve and accelerate the development of rapid-response capabilities. In February 2004, these two countries and Germany jointly submitted a blueprint to develop, at the EU-level, rapid-response forces called "Battlegroups." The other EU member states approved the initiative in June 2004. They made the development of rapid-response forces a core component of the capability development process outlined in the newly ratified Headline Goal 2010.

The formal Battlegroups concept as adopted in 2006 forms the basis for the EU's rapid response capability.[11] It represents a compromise between the posi-

**8** Micah Zenko, "Saving Lives with Speed: Using Rapidly Deployable Forces for Genocide Prevention," *Defense and Security Analysis* 20, no. 1 (2004) 1: 3–19.

**9** For a more comprehensive look at this issue, see Margriet Drent and Dick Zandee, *Breaking Pillars. Towards a Civil-Military Security Approach for the European Union*, Clingendael Security Paper 13, (Den Haag: Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael"), January 2010, http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2010/20100211breaking_pillars.pdf; Claudia Major and Christian Mölling, "More Than Wishful Thinking? The EU, UN and NATO and the Comprehensive Approach to Military Crisis Management," *Studia Diplomatica*, 62 (2009) 3: 21–28.

**10** European Council (Helsinki), Presidency Conclusion, 10–11 December 1999, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/ACFA4C.htm.

**11** *EU Battlegroups concept*, 13618/06, Brussels, 5 October 2006.

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tions of two different camps: on one side were those states that wanted to ensure more rapidly deployable forces for EU operations. France and the UK in particular were looking for ways to share the expenses and risks of crisis management—which until then was largely borne by them—more evenly across the broader EU community.

On the other side were almost all other EU member states. They were engaged in transforming their territorial defence armies into projection forces, and were, practically speaking, not at all or only partly able to participate in international operations. They hoped that by participating in the Battlegroups initiative, they would gain additional incentives and guidelines for the transformation of their armed forces.

Both camps agreed that, through closer cooperation in the area of defence, their interoperability, equipment, and thus also the operational capability of their forces could be improved. In the long term, this would mean more deployable troops ready for EU operations, which would allow for more equitable burden-sharing, and would also strengthen the ability of the EU to act on the international scene.

Specific developments in 2003 favoured the emergence of the Battlegroups concept:

▸ The experience of the first autonomous EU military mission, the 2003 French−led EU operation *Artemis* in DR Congo, provided the EU with confidence that it was able to carry out a demanding military operation on another continent, within a short time frame, and for the first time autonomously, that is, without recourse to NATO assets. Artemis also demonstrated the advantages of fast, small units in rapid response operations. The Battlegroup concept draws heavily on the *Artemis* experience with regard to size, capabilities, timeframe and requirements.[12]

▸ In spring 2003, the EU member states tasked the High Representative, Javier Solana, to formulate, for the first time, a "European Security Strategy" (ESS). The ESS called, among other things, to improve military capabilities, especially with a view to responding rapidly to a crisis. It also defined the support of the United Nations (UN) in crisis man-

agement as a core objective of the EU's security and defence policy.[13]

▸ The EU was confronted with a general UN request to provide rapidly deployable troops for Chapter VII missions. Faced with a growing number of increasingly demanding missions, the UN only had limited capabilities to undertake operations at short notice and lacked particularly high readiness units. This includes troops to bridge the gap between the start of an operation and the actual arrival of UN troops in the theatre of operations. By offering such forces to the UN through the development of the BG, the EU would be able to honour its commitment to the UN as stated in the HHG and reiterated in the ESS, while also enhancing its own ability to conduct RR operations. Besides, by filling a gap in the international needs, the EU could gain the opportunity to play a role in an area that had been neglected by NATO and the US, thereby enhancing its international role.

▸ All states participating in ESDP had signed the Protocol on Permanent Structured Cooperation agreed upon during the EU Constitutional Convention. It would allow committed member states to more quickly advance in security and defence issues. To participate in the PSCoop, member states had to fulfil certain provisions which corresponded more or less to those required for the participation in BGs.[14]

## EU Battlegroups: concept and current state of implementation

According to the HG 2010 and the Battlegroups concept, an EU Battlegroup as a specific form of RR elements… "is the minimum military effective, credible, rapidly deployable, coherent force package capable of stand-alone operations, or for the initial phase of larger operations".[15]

In January 2005, the Battlegroup concept reached its initial operational capability. This meant that the EU had one Battlegroup permanently on standby. Two years later, full operational capability was achieved, by

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**12** Gerrard Quille, "Battle Groups to Strengthen EU Military Crisis Management?," *European Security Review*, (April 2004) 22: 1−2; Niklas Granholm and Pål Jonson, *EU Battlegroups in Context. Underlying Dynamics, Military and Political Challenge*, Stockholm: Totalförsvaret Forskningsinstitut (FOI, Swedish Defence Research Agency; Stockholm), March 2006 (FOI-Report 1950).

**13** *Ein sicheres Europa in einer besseren Welt: Europäische Sicherheitsstrategie*, December 2003.
**14** See also Granholm and Jonson, *EU Battlegroups in Context* [n. 12].
**15** Council of the EU − EUMC (EU Military Committee) (2006) EU Battlegroup Concept. 13618/06, COSDP 775. Brussels, adopted 5 October 2006; partly declassified 27 April 2007.

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having since then the capacity to deploy two Battlegroup operations to different theatres in parallel. To date, no Battlegroup has been deployed.

Apart from Denmark and Malta, all EU member states and a number of third countries (Turkey, Norway, Macedonia and Croatia) participate in the Battlegroups roaster. The table in Appendix shows the Battlegroup formations that have been on standby since 2005 and those pledged up to 2014.

**Basic features:** A Battlegroup is based on a combined arms, battalion-sized force and reinforced with Combat Support and Combat Service Support elements. The core is an infantry battalion. The generic composition is about 1,500 to 2,500 troops. While the core units are pre-defined, the Battlegroup can be tailored for specific mission requirements via attaching maritime, air, logistical or other special enablers (see Figure 1, page 12). Together, these elements form the "force package."

Member states may set up either national or multinational Battlegroups. The responsibility for putting together the units and ensuring their operational readiness lies with the troop-contributing nations and especially with the so-called "framework nation." Under its leadership, the countries participating in the Battlegroup carry out the planning, set up, training, and certification, and put the deployable Battlegroup at the disposition of the EU for a period of six months. The framework nation is primarily responsible for ensuring the availability of an Operational Headquarters (OHQ) and the majority of the required military capabilities. In the case of deployment, the Operations Commander (OpCdr) takes responsibility for the entire force package.

The decisive criteria for the operational capability of a Battlegroup are interoperability and military effectiveness. The certification criteria that have been developed based on NATO standards should ensure that both requirements are fulfilled. Responsibility for certification of the units lies with the troop contributing nations; for that of the Battlegroup package, it lies with the framework nation.[16]

**Composition:** Each EU Battlegroup is assembled on an individual basis and based on the contributions of various member states. The "blueprint" for creating the Battlegroup—a kind of modular system—is predefined by the above-mentioned elements. The different modules come from various countries (*combined*)

and different armed services (*joint*); that is, different components of the navy, air force, and army are involved. For specific missions, the Battlegroup is expanded to include special niche capabilities, for example, Special Forces.

The headquarters (HQ) provides an overarching framework for the individual modules and coordinates their interaction. To ensure operational capability, all units must adhere to binding standards and procedures.

Battlegroup units are at first earmarked and do not physically exist as such. In the case of a deployment, they must be transferred from various locations and then "assembled" by the relevant HQ according to the Battlegroup blueprint.

**Command:** Responsibility for political control and strategic command of a Battlegroup operation typically lies with the PSC of the EU. The Strategic military command of operations is provided by an OHQ and its OpCdr. In addition, every Battlegroup package includes a headquarters for the command of the force in the theatre of operations (force headquarters—FHQ), which is led by a force commander (FCdr).

**Duration of deployment:** Every Battlegroup unit stands at readiness for six months. In the case of deployment, its sustainability is 30 days, and can be extended to 120 days if appropriately supplied.

**Timelines:** The EU has set itself the goal of deciding on a deployment within five days after the adoption of the Crisis Management Concept. A Battlegroup should be able to start an operation in the field ten days after the approval. An initial entry force, although not the entire force, should be on the ground within ten days.[17]

**Theatre of operations:** In principle, a Battlegroup can be deployed worldwide. The radius of operation and the deployment time depend on the available means of transport and logistics.

**Responsibilities:** The Battlegroups are designed to ensure an initial troop presence, either because military engagement is deemed necessary and other appropriate units are not available, or because a presence is needed to bridge the gap until a larger formation arrives. They are intended to defuse escalating crises. The Battlegroups concept states that the units should be able to carry out the expanded Petersberg tasks as defined in Article 45 of the Treaty on

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**16** Erik Lindberg, *Evaluation and Certification of the Nordic Battlegroup* (Stockholm: FOI) January 2006 (FOI-Report 1901).

**17** See also, *EU Military Rapid Response Concept* (MRRC), 5641/03, 24 January 2003; in January 2009; replaced by *EU MRRC 2009*, 5654/09.

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**Figure 1**
**Generic Composition of an EU Battlegroup**

## EU BATTLEGROUP FORCE PACKAGE

### Core Battlegroup (on Standby)

**(F)HQ**
Including headquarters and command & information systems (CIS) support units and augmentees

*A Choice of Capabilities*

**Infantry Battalion**
▸ headquarters company
▸ staff and supply company
▸ 3–4 Infantry companies

**Combat Support**
Including:
▸ fire support
▸ engineer
▸ air defense
▸ reconnaissance
▸ command and information systems

**Combat Support Services**
Including
▸ logistical support
▸ medical support
▸ military geography service
▸ civil-military cooperation (CIMIC)
▸ military police

### Operational and Strategic Enablers (not on Standby)

*Choice of capabilities*

**Air**
▸ strategic air transport
▸ tactical air transport
▸ close air support
▸ Air Port Of Debarkation
▸ helicopter support

**Sea**
▸ strategic sea lift
▸ aircraft carrier
▸ Sea Port Of Debarkation

**Logistics**
▸ combat service support
▸ maintenance
▸ medical combat support

**Additional**
▸ e.g., Special Forces

*Depending on the characteristics of the operation*

Source: German Ministry of Defense, March 2010.

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European Union (TEU). This article establishes a spectrum of potential operations encompassing humanitarian aid and peace enforcement operations, all the way to providing support for security sector reform and the fight against terrorism.

**Relationship to the NATO Response Force (NRF):** Already in 2002, before the Battlegroups initiative was launched, NATO decided to create the NATO Response Force (NRF). Since the two formations have similar objectives (in particular the transformation of member states' armed forces), cover similar task spectrums (particularly in crisis management), and are provided for the most part by the same states, some coordination between the two was needed. The EU and NATO have agreed to coordinate development plans to avoid duplications and redundancies. At the same time, the NRF concept has influenced the development of Battlegroups: the certification criteria for the Battlegroups are for example based on those for the NRF.

However, the NRF differs substantially from the Battlegroups. As an integrated force comprised of land, sea and air elements, the NRF is suited for more comprehensive tasks in larger conflict situations. The large size (originally planned to amount up to 25,000 troops) and the specific list of requirements often present problems, however, for member states attempting to generate the NRF. Particularly smaller NATO member states are not in a position to provide the substantial contributions required. Moreover, general shortfalls in areas such as airlift have had a correspondingly severe impact on the NRF. As a consequence, NATO members have reduced the size of the NRF and adapted its design.

## The German perspective

Since the start of the initiative, Germany has strongly supported the development of Battlegroups and provides one of the largest troop contingents. The goals behind the creation of the Battlegroups—ensuring the operational capability and transformation of armed forces—correspond to Germany's security interests.

First, the German government aimed supporting closer political coordination and integration among EU member states—in the longstanding tradition of German policy on Europe—through enhanced military cooperation. With the Battlegroups, the Union should finally have the capacity to carry out crisis management operations as called for since 1999 in the HHG. As co-initiator of the Battlegroups concept, Germany

also made it clear that it wanted to actively participate in the shaping of the further development of ESDP.

Second, to deploy forces abroad Germany is dependent not only on a UN mandate and authorisation by the Bundestag, but also on multilateral frameworks.[18] Through them, responsibility can be shared, legitimacy increased, and the impression of a militarisation of German foreign policy countered. Multilateral units such as the Battlegroups are therefore politically and militarily attractive.

Third, when the Battlegroups initiative was formulated, the transformation of the Bundeswehr—i.e. its adaptation to new security challenges—was not very advanced, despite clear ideas about how this should be achieved. Participation in the Battlegroups offered an additional opportunity, justification and further incentive, and at the same time a guide for the transformation of the Bundeswehr from a territorial defence army into a crisis management force.

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**18** This does not include evacuation operations.

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# EU Battlegroups 2011: Successes and Shortcomings

Seven years after the start of the Battlegroups initiative, EU member states have made significant progress in the transformation of their armed forces. The Battlegroups have, however, not been deployed to date.

## The EU Battlegroups as a driving force in the transformation of national armed forces

The successful deployment of rapid response forces requires particularly high levels of military performance. The following interrelated processes have to take place very quickly:

- political decision-making,
- military planning and command & control of an operation,
- provision of military forces (combat troops, support and combat support, as well as strategic enablers) and their preparation for deployment,
- transport to the theatre of operations and support (logistics, especially strategic and tactical lift).

### Political decision-making processes

EU member states strive to conclude the formal decision-making process required for any given Battlegroup operation within five days. Many observers have raised the concern that this tight timeline could cause an operation to "fail procedurally"[19], given that numerous decisions must be taken at the EU and member state levels. Moreover, this political process must simultaneously be coordinated with the military planning process.[20]

**Decision-making processes at the EU level:** At the EU level, the decision-making process is clearly structured. Member states decide on military operations in the Council of the European Union. There, a consensus must be reached: if a single member state votes against an operation, it does not take place.
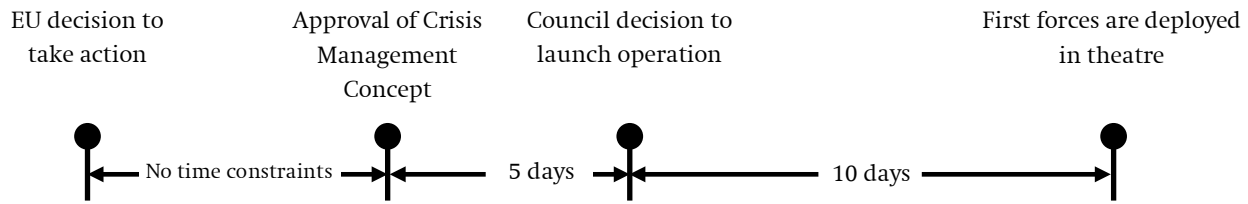
The decision-making process includes three major stages (see Figure 2). In a first step, EU member states decide whether they want to take action in a crisis. By agreeing on an operation, they lay the legal basis for the military planning process and charge the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD) at the EU level with the development of a Crisis Management Concept. The CMPD, an entity within the European External Action Service (EEAS), is responsible for the strategic planning of civilian and military operations.[21] There are no time constraints for this planning phase. The second stage is the approval of the Crisis Management Concept by EU member states. If the concept defines a rapid response, there are tight deadlines from here on out: within five days of approval, the EU Council has to take the decision to start the operation. This third step provides the legal basis for the operation.[22]

The scheduled target of five days can only be achieved if the participating states work together closely. Cooperation is thus crucial even before EU member states decide to launch an operation: the more routine the procedures are, the more familiar all participants are with each other, the further the preliminary planning stages of a potential deployment can go. This also enables the member states to have a stronger influence on the decision-making process at the EU level.

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19 Interviews in the EU Council Secretariat; the Council of the EU; in the German, Belgian, Polish, Spanish, and French Ministries of Defence; and in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, February and March 2010.

20 Tim Williams, "Whose Finger Will Be on the EU Battlegroups' Trigger?," *Europe's World* 4 (Autumn 2006): 46–51.

21 The CMPD was created in 2009, as a merger of the Directorate General E VIII (Defence Directorate (Defence Aspects) and IX (Civilian Crisis Management) of the Council Secretariat. Previously, the Crisis Management Concept was created by the ad hoc Coordinating Crisis Response Team, comprised of personnel drawn from the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU and the European Commission.

22 There are additional possible interim steps, but these are generally bypassed if there is consensus among the member states. Claudia Major, *EU-UN Cooperation in Military Crisis Management. The Experience of EUFOR RD Congo 2006*, Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2008 (Occasional Paper 72/2008).

**Figure 2**
**Timeline for a Rapid-Response Deployment by the EU**

| EU decision to take action | Approval of Crisis Management Concept | Council decision to launch operation | First forces are deployed in theatre |
|---|---|---|---|

No time constraints → ← 5 days → ← 10 days →

**Decision-making processes at the national level:**
Parallel to the processes at the EU level, member states must also take the necessary decisions on a deployment at the national level. The national procedures for approval vary widely. In some countries, a parliamentary decision is required, and in others, a decision by the cabinet or head of government suffices. In Spain, parliament must give its approval in a two-stage consent process. In some countries such as Germany, any military deployment must be authorised in advance. Informing decision-makers about the potentials and limits of Battlegroup deployments is therefore an essential precondition for decisions to be reached quickly.[23]

Some member states, however, especially those in Central and Eastern Europe, were neither politically nor legally prepared for this type of multilateral cooperation, nor could they speedily organise a vote at the national level. The necessary working contacts between the respective national ministries did not exist at the beginning of the Battlegroup initiative. Furthermore, these states had little understanding of how multinational coordination could take place among Battlegroup participants.

Since then, the sole necessity to participate in international coordination processes for a potential Battlegroup operation and the speed required for the decision-making processes have led many countries to familiarise themselves with the procedures and to undertake concrete steps of adaptation: Hungary and the Czech Republic, for example, have established new parliamentary authorisation processes.

Foreign and defence ministries and political decision-makers have intensified their cooperation and deepened their understanding of EU decision-making processes. In particular, participants in the Nordic Battlegroup (NBG) around Sweden as framework nation have developed a comprehensive inter-parliamentary cooperation. Governments and parliamentarians of the NBG states have already simulated the decision-making process. They are thus familiar with the procedures and that will facilitate future cooperation and accelerate the decision-making process in case of a deployment.

In principle, German decision-making processes are designed such that the government and parliament can meet the narrow time constraints. In public debate and parliamentary circles, however, it is often critically noted that the parliament or some of its members have too little time or interest in grappling with military issues and potential deployments. Moreover, in the past, many parliamentary representatives felt inadequately informed by the administration. This may partly be the result of the reluctance that the Ministry of Defence has shown in the past in involving and informing the Bundestag.[24]

In France and the UK, this problem does not exist because the government or head of state decides on military deployments.

In the case of multinational Battlegroups, the existence of different decision-making bodies does not necessarily have to be a problem. In order to deploy the UK-Dutch Battlegroup, the approval of the Dutch parliament is also required. Both countries have, however, bilaterally agreed on deployment procedures and have tested them in numerous operations. The core of this process is a 30-point parliamentary questionnaire on the legal criteria for deployment. If the Dutch government confirms that all criteria have been met,

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**23** Hans Born, Suzana Anghel, Alex Dowling and Teodora Fuior, *Parliamentary Oversight of ESDP Missions*, Genf: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2008 (Policy Paper 28/2008).

**24** Interviews in the German Ministry of Defence (BMVg) and the Bundestag, April 2009 and February 2010.

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both countries can expect a smooth approval process in the Dutch parliament.[25]

Finally, it is not only parliamentary procedures but also government actions that can undermine swift approval. In the Netherlands, the government coalition collapsed in 2009 over the question of whether the mandate for participation in the NATO mission in Afghanistan should be extended. In May 2010, the deployment of Belgian troops in the context of the European Training Mission (EUTM) in Somalia was delayed because the parliament could no longer be formally called upon to authorise the deployment after the government coalition had collapsed.

**Overall assessment:** EU member states have improved decision-making procedures at the national level and have developed intergovernmental cooperation processes. Thereby, important prerequisites for rapid decision-making have been put into place. It was found that the ability to make swift decisions is largely determined by the degree to which policy-makers are informed. This is all the more important since it is a political decision-making process that bestows democratic legitimacy on an operation—or on a country's refusal to engage.

### Military planning and command & control

Military operations require the capabilities to plan, command & control (C2) the deployment of armed forces. In addition to infrastructure, this requires specialised procedures, rules, personnel, equipment, and means of communication.

A Battlegroup's deployment presents three main challenges to the military command. First, there are tight deadlines that must be met. Just as in the case of political decisions, the planning of an operation must be completed within only five days. Second, different doctrines and rules of engagement make it difficult to plan operations. The greatest challenge, however, lies in the third issue—the fragmentation of planning and command structures within the EU.

**Established structures in the form of the national EU operational headquarters:** For Battlegroup deployments, the EU can draw on the C2-structures that are also used for other military operations. An Operational Headquarters (OHQ) exercises military command of EU operations. It serves as an interface between the

political level of operations command—the PSC—and the military level.

Currently, five member states are able to provide an OHQ: Germany, France, the UK, Greece, and Italy. If none of the five countries is able or willing to make its OHQ available, the EU can use its Operations Centre (OpsCentre) within the EU Military Staff in Brussels, which has been operational since 2007. The OpsCentre is a nucleus that can be turned into a fully fledged EU headquarters in case of need. [26]

During the preparatory phase, member states participating in a Battlegroup determine which OHQ should be used in the case of a deployment. This OHQ assumes the planning and preparation for the deployment of the Battlegroup. So far, only those five national OHQs made available by the states have been designated, not the EU OpsCentre. The command of previous "non-Battlegroup" operations by the national OHQs has functioned well thus far.

Through the joint planning and preparation of a Battlegroup, the participating states were able to improve their knowledge and skills in the planning and command of multi-national forces. This has given the military command staff a better mutual understanding of national particularities, such as rules of engagement and the involvement of parliaments. The national-level planners also have gained deeper insight into the structures and processes in Brussels.[27]

These learning processes are an important contribution to the capacity development among the staff of internationally deployable armed forces. Germany, for example, considers cooperation at the EU level and joint exercises in planning and command to be more important than joint troop exercises.[28] Command and planning are ultimately the decisive factors determining the deployment capacity of a formation.

Furthermore, joint planning by EU member states has also led both to a convergence of national approaches and procedures and to the development of common concepts and practices. The procedures and agreements that have been developed—for example, for how to deal with confidential information and

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**25** Interviews in the British Ministry of Defence, May and June 2006, February 2010.

**26** On paper, there is also a third option. In the framework of the "Berlin Plus Agreement," the EU can make use of NATO planning and command structures. However, EU member states have as yet ruled out making use of this option for the Battlegroups.
**27** Interviews in the German Ministry of Defence, March 2010, the Spanish Defence Ministry, February 2010, and the Polish Defence Ministry, February 2010.
**28** Interview in the German Ministry of Defence, March 2010.

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technical specifications, or for the logistical division of tasks—are used as templates for new Battlegroups and provide the concepts and procedures needed for their set up. This facilitates collaboration and reduces workloads.

**Reduced efficiency and increased time expenditure due to fragmented planning and command arrangements:** The command of an operation is preceded by different planning phases: advance planning, strategic planning, and operational planning. Political decision-makers at the national and international levels already require sound military expertise from the preliminary stages of an operation on. Therefore, at the national level and in multinational organisations such as NATO, advance military planning is a constantly ongoing process. These very general plans not only help to inform political decision-makers in the early stages of their deliberations, but also create the basis for subsequent strategic and operational planning.

Unlike NATO, however, the EU does not have a permanent planning and command capability. There are only individual fragments that the EU activates and assembles on a case-by-case basis. The first steps in the planning process (advance planning and strategic planning) and the political decisions until the adoption of the Crisis Management Concept all take place at the EU level. However, the operational planning and the command of an operation are then taken over by the OHQ of the designated Battlegroup, which is activated with the adoption of the Crisis Management Concept.

In view of an efficient planning process however, the OHQ is activated too late in the process: EU member states already need to be able to draw on military expertise and specific advance planning in order to generate the Crisis Management Concept in the first place. In the EU, there are established structures for military advance planning at the strategic level in form of the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD) and in the EU Military Staff (EUMS). However, these do not constitute adequate planning capacities, because they are missing the necessary knowledge and skills. For example, they lack knowledge of the precise tasks the Battlegroups on standby can carry out. Currently, only the five national OHQs mentioned above have adequate planning capacities.[29]

In practice, the late involvement of the OHQ probably causes additional delays. Representatives of some

EU member states and institutions are concerned that the current fragmentation in planning and command arrangements could hinder member states to respect the timelines for Battlegroup deployment.[30] If an OHQ is activated for a Battlegroup operation, its planning and command capacities have first to be built up. In particular, the staff must be available and ready to begin work in less than five days. This is a challenge because the national HQs are merely kept on standby when no operation is under way: they are not standing, fully-manned headquarters with infrastructure ready for immediate use. Since with its activation the OHQ takes over the military responsibility for the operation, it will probably go back to earlier planning stages and rewrite those aspects of the planning prepared by the EUMS on which it possesses greater expertise, for example, on questions about the capabilities of the available troops.

During the exercises of the Belgian-French Battlegroup in 2009, the coordination between the national OHQ and the EU level revealed to be difficult, which would have had a negative impact on the command and control of the operation. Because the EU planners had no contact with the relevant BG-OHQ in the early stages of the planning process, they had no detailed knowledge of the capabilities of the Battlegroup on standby. This would have reduced the value and utility of the advance planning. Likewise, the OHQ had inadequate knowledge of earlier planning phases and processes on the EU level. In the later phases of the operation planning, this would have resulted in a greater expenditure of time and would have reduced the efficiency of planning and command.

**Overall assessment:** In the area of command, the EU can rely on the well-proven existing structures of the national OHQs. Planning and command capacities on the political-strategic level in Brussels, however, are very limited. In the practical planning process of multilateral Battlegroups, national planners have already developed a certain routine, and have learned to take national particularities into account. This allows them to accelerate the planning process, and has also led to a gradual harmonisation of the approaches and procedures necessary to command an operation.

Due to the fragmentation of the planning process, it remains unclear whether the narrow timeframe for a Battlegroup deployment can be respected. The fact that the planning phases are split up among different

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**29** Non-Paper "Creating the Conditions for the Use of EU Battlegroups," Brussels, 2 February 2010.

**30** Ibid.

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## Armed forces

The commitment to provide troops for the Battlegroups and equip them adequately poses major challenges for EU member states. The evaluation of the HHG already showed that, firstly, ground troops—the core element of a Battlegroup—were neither rapidly deployable nor available in adequate numbers. Secondly, it was unclear whether the individual Battlegroups could in fact cover the entire spectrum of the expanded Petersberg tasks. It would require the formations to be interoperable and effective, that is, their various military units, systems and technologies would need to be able to cooperate and the units able to reliably carry out diverse military tasks.

**Conflicts of goals around interoperability and effectiveness:** The process of developing the Battlegroups concept revealed the tension between a focus on rapid deployment and one on transformation. There were differing views, in particular about the appropriate relationship between "multinationality" and "military effectiveness" in the composition of the Battlegroups. Germany stressed the multinational dimension, and saw the Battlegroups as a political project and engine of transformation. Consequently, it advocated the "2+1" formula, which foresees the cooperation, within one Battlegroup, of one larger with two smaller member states. France and the UK, by contrast, placed priority on military effectiveness. In this respect, they advocated that EU member states primarily establish national Battlegroups. Given that they share the same standards, the interoperability of national Battlegroups would be assured and hence a comparatively higher military effectiveness. In addition, there would be no need for international coordination. UK officials emphasised that the main objective was the multinationality of the responsibility, rather than the multinational composition of the Battlegroups. Countering this view, supporters of multinational Battlegroups argued that military effectiveness must be buttressed by political legitimacy, that this legitimacy and the credibility of Battlegroup deployments would be increased within multinational frameworks.

Eventually, the Battlegroup concept reconciled the two approaches and allowed for both national and multinational formations. However, so far, the UK was the only country to have provided a national Battlegroup in 2008. However, EU member states have also established clear boundaries to the degree of multinationality within Battlegroups: to ensure military effectiveness, the combat units, which form the core of a Battlegroup, will usually be nationally composed and provided by the framework nation.

The compromise made it possible for smaller EU states in particular to contribute to Battlegroups by providing niche capabilities—in the form of small but important units. This allows them to participate in the joint development of military solutions and show their political commitment to EU security and defence policy. The Czech Republic, for example, regularly contributes its capacities for CBRA, (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear) defence.

Due to the lack of operational experience, it is difficult to evaluate whether the various Battlegroups possess similar levels of effectiveness and interoperability. Observers note a general East-West divide.[31] They doubt the readiness, for example, of the Czech-Slovak Battlegroup (Deployment Period II/2009; see Overview, p. 36) and of the Battlegroup HELBROC from Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus (II/2007, I/2009). They suspect that the provision of these Battlegroups was above all a political statement of commitment to the ESDP/CSDP, but that the contributors failed to meet the military criteria. At the same time, the other EU member states have not vigorously challenged this practice.

That the member states manoeuvre in the practical implementation of the Battlegroups between political and military objectives impairs the effectiveness of the Battlegroups and the fair distribution of costs and risks. EU member states are likely to prevent the deployment of less capable units in order to avoid a potential military and political failure. Then, the countries that do have the appropriate capabilities will probably have to step in—primarily France and the UK, but also Germany.

Efforts to raise the level of effectiveness to a consistent minimum standard have had little success to date. The NATO standards have certainly been broadly applied. However, they allow states considerable lati-

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**31** Niklas Granholm, "EU Battlegroups: Some New Capabilities, Actually," *RUSI Journal* 151 (December 2007) 6: 62–66; Interviews with the EU Council Secretariat, in the British Ministry of Defence in June 2006 and February 2010, in the German Ministry of Defence in June 2007 and February 2010, in the French Ministry of Defence in May 2008 and February 2010.

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tude in their application.[32] The introduction of a transparent certification system, endorsed by many countries, has failed to materialise up to now because of the resistance of several member states who fear the pressure that such a process would place on the development of their armed forces.

**Minor effect on procurement**: To date, the Battlegroups initiative has not yet led to the procurement of new equipment. Seven years after starting the implementation of the Battlegroup initiative, the set up of almost each Battlegroup suffers time and again from shortfalls in costly equipment such as helicopters and strategic communication systems.

There are at least three reasons why the Battlegroups initiative has had such limited impact on equipment. First, most countries' troop commitments to the Battlegroups have been so small in proportion to the total size of their national armed forces that they did not generate structural changes. Moreover, Battlegroups encourage a tendency to provide niche capabilities. This entails the risk that some countries like the Czech Republic may focus on creating a few "showcase" units but neglect the transformation of the armed forces as such.[33]

Second, France and the UK had reached the required capabilities long ago. Before the introduction of the Battlegroups concept, both already had pools available—the Cellule Guépard in France and the Joint Rapid Reaction Force in the UK—that they could draw from when launching rapid response operations, whether they are led nationally, by the EU, or by NATO.

Third, equipment needs that arise out of joint military concepts such as the Battlegroups are more difficult to justify than concrete needs that arise out of operations that are already underway, such as those in Afghanistan. The latter usually are given priority in procurement decisions.[34]

Yet, the Battlegroups have provided an impetus to optimise capability planning at the national level. The French army, for example, has developed a better understanding of what the provision of a Battlegroup requires, particularly in the realms of armed forces and logistics. This will enable it to calculate future commitments to Battlegroups in a more precise manner.[35]

**Limited spectrum of tasks**: Given their size and the available capabilities, the Battlegroups are not able to cover the full spectrum of the Petersberg tasks. In order to ensure speed, mobility and rapid deployability, compromises have been made in force size and equipment. As a result, Battlegroups are not suited for stand-alone or prolonged deployment in high intensity operations.

The fact that Battlegroups are designed for rapid deployment predestines them for pre-emptive operations that are limited in both space and time. Battlegroups are most effective when used in a clearly delimited military and political context and within a narrow geographical framework. They can, for example, protect a small city, port installation or airport. Battlegroups are also well suited for operations to prevent the outbreak of massive violence, such as operations opposing armed militias, preventing unrest or the concentration of military forces. Also possible are bridging operations, for example in the context of UN missions. Here, Battlegroups can be used to fill the gap between mandate approval and the arrival of UN forces.

**Overall assessment**: A common effort of EU member states created a capability for rapid response now available at the European level that does not exist on the individual member state level. There are, however, significant differences among the individual Battlegroups in both their level of capabilities and readiness. The makeup of each Battlegroup ultimately reflects a compromise on the part of the member states between political and military objectives. In general, the formations are not suitable for conventional combat operations and therefore can only fulfil a portion of the Petersberg tasks.

The Battlegroups have emerged primarily out of a process of providing already existing forces and gradually adapting national capabilities to international standards. They have rarely brought about new procurement decisions. Progress has been particularly made in central areas, but that don't require high commitments in terms of personnel: at the EU and

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**32** Lindberg, *Evaluation and Certification of the Nordic Battlegroup* [n. 16].

**33** Wade Jacoby and Christopher Jones, "The EU Battle Groups in Sweden and the Czech Republic: What National Defence Reforms Tell Us about European Rapid Reaction Capabilities," *European Security* 17 (June–September 2008) 2–3: 315–338 (323).

**34** It is possible that during the period studied here, from 2004 to 2010, there were no decisions appropriate to make concerning new equipment. Six years are a relatively short period of time in the lifecycle of a larger military apparatus.

**35** Interviews in the French Ministry of Defence, May 2008, March 2010.

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member state levels, participating states have gained more in-depth knowledge of their partners. Setting up Battlegroups together and searching together for solutions to compensate for equipment shortfalls ultimately lead to the forces being supplied more effectively and to an improvement of their deployability and interoperability. Thanks to this progress, EU member states have improved the deployability of their troops in EU and NATO multinational operations in general. This goes beyond Battlegroup operations—since all participating states essentially make use of the same approaches and procedures. To this extent, the Battlegroups have contributed to a more equitable burden-sharing at the EU level.

These successes have, however, been limited to a small portion of member states' armed forces. The broader transformation effect that the initiative aimed to achieve has largely failed to materialise. Moreover, the high maintenance and operational costs continue to prevent many EU member states from taking on a larger role in the Battlegroups. The costs associated with taking a leadership role cannot be shouldered by smaller countries. These countries are hence likely to continue offering niche capabilities.

## Logistics and strategic lift

Logistics comprises the planning, provision, and deployment of resources and services in support of the armed forces. It includes administration, storage, and coordination of the transport of goods (weapons, ammunition, food, etc.) as well as services in the theatre of operations (housing, waste disposal, etc.).

A key element is deployability—the ability to transport a Battlegroup to the theatre of operations. Here, a distinction is made between strategic and tactical transport. Strategic transport runs from the home base to air or maritime ports near the theatre of operations. Tactical transport describes the moving of troops from the aforementioned point of arrival to the actual theatre of operations.

The challenge of rapid response is to mobilise sufficient transport capacity within a narrow timeframe. The strategic transport of a Battlegroup will likely involve a combination of air and maritime routes. Most of the equipment, in particular heavy and large elements, will be transported by sea. Air lift allows to quickly establish an initial presence in the theatre of operations.

**More leasing and coordination initiatives for air- and sealift capabilities:** The logistical requirements of a Battlegroup operation must be met with existing capacities. Due to the high costs of transportation, the procurement of new capabilities is out of the question. However, the transport capacity of the EU—particularly existing load capacity and range—is not sufficient to move an entire Battlegroup. Therefore, EU member states have started to pool their capabilities and lease equipment from the commercial market.

In the area of air lift, there is currently no leasing solution within the EU framework. Instead, individual EU member states have, through various initiatives, built up different capability pools. In the C-17/Strategic Airlift Capability initiative, twelve EU and NATO countries acquired three Boeing C-17 cargo jets in 2007, which have been available for common use since autumn 2009. Several EU and NATO states are part of the SALIS (Strategic Air Life Interim Solution) initiative. Launched in 2006, this initiative has since then provided access to six Antonov 124 transport aircraft leased from a Russian-Ukrainian company. The countries participating in SALIS can purchase standby and flight hours.

For maritime transport, individual EU member states frequently rent civilian capacities or secure access rights to them. Although they possess their own cargo ships, the load capacity and the speed of these vessels vary widely. Modelling indicates that this transport would be so time-consuming that it would reduce the speed of a rapid response operation.[36]

To meet the growing need for strategic mobility, some EU and NATO countries have developed structures to facilitate the coordination of their limited capacities. To this end, they established the Movement Coordination Centre Europe (MCCE), which coordinates air and sea transport as well as air-to-air refueling.[37] The MCCE also provides support to participating states in their logistics planning. Since September 2010, the European Air Transport Command (EATC) organises military transport operations for France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands on a permanent basis.

There are limits, however, to this coordination. Swedish plans have shown that the Nordic Movement Coordination Centre set up specifically for the trans-

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**36** Gustav Lindstrom, *Enter the EU Battlegroups*, Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, February 2007 (Chaillot Paper 97): 42f; Interviews in the European Defence Agency (EDA) in February 2010.
**37** https://www.mcce-mil.com.

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port of the Nordic Battlegroup (NBG) must be activated a year before the Battlegroup's stand-by phase in order to meet the timeline of ten days for the arrival of the first contingents of NBG troops on the ground.

**Restrictions due to the high cost of logistics:** In addition to the provision of logistics capacities, also their high costs compromise the rapid deployment of a Battlegroup. Member states participating in a military operation must bear the costs of their commitment themselves. Yet many EU member states cannot afford the high cost of relocating and supplying their troops.[38] To address this problem, EU countries developed the Athena mechanism in 2004.[39] In the framework of Athena, so called "common costs" of operations, such as the costs of the headquarters or to some extent troop transport, are covered by the EU. However, Athena does not cover costs for maritime transport or redeployment but only the extremely expensive air transport. The resulting increased use of air transport capacities leads to shortages and increased prices.

**New risks through the privatisation of logistics:** Due to the high procurement and standby costs, member states are no longer just leasing transport services, but have also been outsourcing support services such as "life support" (accommodation, supply, etc.). Joint initiatives only exist with regard to pooling air and maritime transport capacities. Member states purchase other services individually on the commercial market—not least in order to bypass rules on the award of public contracts and give preferential treatment to national suppliers.

Privatisation causes prices to fall, at least in the short term. But it also means that the ability of a member state to provide rapid relocation of its armed forces is now also determined by how quickly the outsourced services can be mobilised. Here, the state becomes dependent on private agents with primarily economic interests. This entails the risk of lower reliability than in the case of capabilities or services provided by the states themselves.[40]

Private suppliers cannot guarantee their services one hundred percent because they often do not have the services immediately at hand themselves but have to purchase them when needed on the international market. The market often responds to crises with price increases, since there is also rising demand for the transport e.g. of humanitarian goods and other supplies, resulting in shortage of transport capacities. In the worst case, the services may not be available at all.

An exercise scenario in a Battlegroup (F)HQ in early 2010 showed that contracts with private suppliers would have prevented the Battlegroup in question from providing rapid response.[41] While the advance units could have been in the theatre of operations within the required ten days, their deployability would have been limited because it would have taken up to forty days to deliver the necessary supplies.[42] Other reports identified massive delays also in the realm of strategic transport. Here, the maritime transport of the Battlegroup was estimated at 20 days and air transport at 16 days until arrival.

Experiences from past "non-Battlegroup" operations such as EUFOR RD Congo (2006) call attention to problems that would take even more severe forms in the case of Battlegroup deployments due to the limited timeframe.[43] The outsourced life support services generally did not meet the agreed standards, were not available by the specified date, and frequently were more expensive than planned.

**Overall assessment:** Given the limited capacities and high costs, EU member states have sought new solutions to deal with scarce logistical resources. Particularly in the area of transport multilateral leasing and the coordination of capacities have become common solutions. The joint solutions to date do not, however, cover capabilities that are equally difficult to obtain (medical care, ISTAR, etc.). At the national level, existing resources are being used more economically through more accurate demand planning and more effective utilisation. This does not mean, however, that the states would be prepared to make larger commitments to the EU.

**38** Annegret Bendiek and Oliver Bringmann, *ATHENA und die Finanzierung der militärischen ESVP*, Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), April 2008 (Discussion paper of the research division EU External Relations, 5/2008).
**39** Ibid. EU Council, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=746&lang=en.
**40** Interview in the Spanish Ministry of Defence, February and March 2010, in the EDA in February 2010; see also, European Defence Agency, *Outsourcing Practices in EU-led Military*

*Crisis Management Operations* (Brussels, 2009); and Claudia Major, "La logistique de l'opération *EUFor RD Congo* en 2006," *Defense Nationale et Securité collective* (2010) 2: 96–103.
**41** Non-Paper "Creating the Conditions for the Use of EU Battlegroups" [n. 29].
**42** Interview in the EDA, March 2010.
**43** Major, "La logistique de l'opération EUFOR RD Congo" [n. 40].

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The financing scheme under Athena does not help smaller EU member states to contribute larger contingents to operations: for them, the deployment costs are simply too high. The lopsided preference for air transport over other forms of transport raises the demand for air transport capabilities, and this in turn increases its cost.

Although EU member states have sought alternatives to the use of their own resources in the form of outsourcing and leasing, this raises new problems in practice, such as quality assurance, funding and the reliability of timely provision. Resorting to seemingly "cheaper" private suppliers entails the risk that the tight timelines for Battlegroup deployment will not be met.

## The deployment debate—lack of opportunities or lack of will?

Up to now, no Battlegroup deployment has taken place. Thus, it is difficult to comprehensively evaluate the success of the Battlegroup initiative. Some countries like France and Sweden have repeatedly proposed operations: in 2006 to monitor the elections process in the DR Congo and the ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel in Lebanon; in 2008 to contain outbreaks of violence in the Eastern DR Congo and as a bridging operation to support the built-up of a UN presence in Chad. The most recent case where a Battlegroup deployment was brought into play was the 2011 Libya crisis.

The longer the Battlegroups are in existence, the louder the call for a deployment becomes. Some politicians and researchers, citing the motto "use it or lose it," argue that if the EU does not make use of the Battlegroups they should be phased out altogether.[44]

But why has there been no deployment so far if there were, as it appears, several opportunities to put these capabilities to good use? First, EU member states have different positions on the strategic priorities of the Union, as well as on the role of military force and its use by the EU. While France, for example, sees the ability to intervene militarily in crisis situations as a key element of security policy, Germany and Austria adopt a more reserved position on the use of military

force. Second, cost considerations also affect decisions on deployment. Since the member states contributing to a Battlegroup bear the bulk of the burden when an operation takes place, they tend to favour Battlegroup deployments in principle but not the deployment of their own units.

Third, the concrete conditions of a potential operation play a central role. Battlegroups are to be used in scenarios requiring rapid response, when there is not enough time to mobilise and deploy forces through the normal force generation procedures. From a German point of view, however, none of the aforementioned proposed operations in 2006 and 2008 constituted a scenario requiring rapid crisis response. From this perspective, the Battlegroups should not be misused for "normal operations" but be kept on standby for rapid intervention, the purpose for which they were intended. In reality, preparations for EUFOR RD Congo 2006 and EUFOR Chad/RCA 2008/2009 started so early that there was enough time to assemble a normal force. In addition, Germany was aware that some states had a strong propensity to support deployment of Battlegroup forces in principle, and wanted to avoid setting a precedent. If that had occurred, the Battlegroups could conceivably be brought into play in the future almost automatically as a rapid deployment force, which would mean a de facto expansion of their spectrum of deployments.

Assessing a situation and deciding on deployment are matters of political discretion. It may be that those EU member states that generally favour the use of Battlegroups will decide against deployment when faced with a concrete situation. In 2008, French Foreign Minister Kouchner proposed a Battlegroup deployment to the DR Congo.[45] EU member states declared the situation there a serious humanitarian crisis. Germany and the UK, however, feared that the Battlegroups were not capable of handling the situation and that their deployment could result in a long-term engagement.[46] This was a significant reason why member states chose not to deploy the Battlegroups that were then on standby, and why the idea of Battlegroup deployment was rejected. Since France did not want to command a force put together through the regular procedure, no other EU deployment took place either. In early 2011 France suggested deploying a

44 Western European Union Press Release, "EU Battle Groups – "Use Them or Lose Them!", October 28, 2009; "Europe's Rapid-Response Forces. Use Them or Lose Them?," *IISS Strategic Comments* 15 (September 2009) 7: 1–2.

45 Press conference with French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and the High Representative of the EU, Javier Solana, Paris, 30 October 2008, http://www.ambafrance-se.org/france_suede/spip.php?article1722.
46 Interview in the British Foreign Ministry, February 2010.

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Battlegroup to Libya (EUFOR Libya). It was supposed to support and enable the work of humanitarian agencies and to contribute to the transport and evacuation of refugees that suffered from the violent conflict between Khadafy troops and the opposition forces. The member states adopted the idea in April 2011 in the PSC.[47] Germany, who contributed to the Battlegroup on stand-by and would hence have been directly concerned, initially agreed for two reasons: first, it was under political pressure to get engaged in the Libya crisis after it has received massive criticism for its abstention in the UN Security Council vote on Resolution 1973. Second, at that time on the ground, a swift military response became potentially necessary–hence the formal criteria for a Battlegroup deployment were met. EUFOR Libya was, however, set up with one caveat: it would only be deployed if the UN-Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) would ask the EU to do so. Observers hence argued, that Germany only agreed to a deployment because it could assume that the necessary call for help from UN OCHA would not be voiced. In fact, almost three months after the PSC agreed on EUFOR Libya, the call from OCHA to trigger the deployment still hasn't arrived. A Battlegroup deployment for EUFOR Libya was eventually taken off the agenda as the urgency declined and a normal force generation process was envisaged. As to date, the operation hasn't started and it seems rather unlikely that it will.[48]

The Battlegroups are designed to shorten the path to an operation by anticipating and depoliticising the cumbersome process of assembling a force (force generation process). Yet the British and German reactions clearly demonstrate that decisions on possible deployments put political questions back on the agenda, and that the discussion of these questions can prevent a deployment—even when Battlegroups are already on standby.

Nevertheless, a decision to phase out the Battlegroups because they have not yet been used would be short-sighted: it would not do justice to the comprehensive objectives of the Battlegroup initiative, and would fail to adequately acknowledge its achieve-

ments. It should be noted, first, that Battlegroup deployment has not been rejected in principle. A few countries, such as the UK and France, fundamentally endorse their use as a pragmatic form of support in crisis management. Other countries support the use of Battlegroups on the basis of other considerations. Sweden, for example, argued for a Battlegroup deployment to Chad in 2009 to justify at the domestic level the enormous efforts it had undertaken to establish the NBG.

Second, EU member states created the Battlegroups with the goal of transforming their armed forces. Given the significant successes that have already been achieved in this area, abandoning this initiative would not be justified. This would mean abolishing the most significant mechanism for capability development in the EU and an intensive form of defence cooperation.

Third, the Battlegroups have put more responsibility on EU member states in the field of security policy: while they can still reject the deployment of a Battlegroup, they can hardly withdraw from a European responsibility in general. For example, the operation EUFOR RD Congo 2006 was not carried out by the German-French Battlegroup—as initially suggested. However, it was eventually conducted under Franco-German command.

Fourth, if the Battlegroups were abandoned, the EU would lose an important instrument of crisis management, that is, in an area which the Union considers of outmost importance. This would send a devastating political message, both internally and externally.

Ultimately, a single Battlegroup deployment would be of limited significance as a basis for broader conclusions. It would only test the performance and effectiveness of one specific Battlegroup on standby in a specific scenario and not evaluate different formations operating across all scenarios. For these reasons, the majority of EU member states have not seriously considered eliminating the Battlegroups so far.

The question of why a deployment still has not taken place becomes more urgent the longer the Battlegroups exist. The EU has reacted to some crises by sending other troops than the Battlegroups (RD Congo 2006, Chad and the Central African Republic 2008/09) and has thereby proven its willingness to engage militarily. Moreover, a naval operation and a military training operation were launched off the coast of Somalia and in Uganda respectively—showing that the EU is in general willing to contribute to regional crisis management activities, especially on the African continent. Eventually, the adherence to

**47** Claudia Major, *EUFOR Libya als Testfall für die GSVP?* Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), 12 April 2011 (Kurz gesagt). http://www.swp-berlin.org/de/kurz-gesagt/kurz-gesagt-fuer-die-europaeische-sicherheits-und-verteidigungspolitik-kann-eufor-libya-ein-bedeutsamer-testfall-sein.html.

**48** This manuscript was closed on 15 June 2011 and only considers development until this date.

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strict criteria for Battlegroup operations is counter-productive, and waiting for the "ideal crisis" to arise is unrealistic: every conflict is unique, and every decision on military deployment remains a political one. The 2009 decision to create more flexible conditions for deployment, in response to a Swedish initiative, is thus a step in the right direction.

## Political, military and operational achievements

Politically, the Battlegroups are a clear success: after a number of failed efforts, EU member states have finally succeeded in creating previously non-existent capabilities for rapid crisis response.

The key to this success lies partly in how the Battlegroups concept is formulated, reconciling differing interests of member states. In contrast to past initiatives, EU member states have this time been willing to take on far-reaching commitments on both the timelines for the decision-making processes on operations and the binding character of their contributions. From a security policy point of view, the Battlegroups have become the primary forum for multilateral cooperation among EU member states. In this process, the countries have significantly intensified their defence cooperation, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The Battlegroup initiative offers a forum, and at the same time a concrete opportunity for dealing with the role and development of military capabilities in a sustainable, long-term way. The initiative has generated numerous learning effects both within and among EU member states, in both the political and the military spheres.

The price for the political success of the Battlegroups concept has been a certain military ambivalence, however. Due to the political character of the criteria for participation, the military effectiveness of the forces is not always ensured. EU member states attempt to ensure a high level of effectiveness and interoperability by keeping the combat units in a Battlegroup national. Yet this has two negative impacts: first, it limits the integration effect of the Battlegroups to some units, and second, it provides no assurance against qualitative "outliers": even combat units from a single country can experience quality shortfalls, as is suspected, for example, in the case of HELBROC.

## Intensifying defence cooperation

The successes of the Battlegroup initiative are primarily the result of intensified defence cooperation. EU member states organise and coordinate their existing capabilities, especially armed forces and logistics, in a more comprehensive manner.

The cooperation pattern of the Battlegroups is primarily based on pre-existing configurations (e.g. the United Kingdom/Netherlands Amphibious Force, which has been existing for over 30 years and was on stand-by as a Battlegroup in 2010) as well as established partnerships (e.g. NBG). Smaller countries with less experience and more restricted capabilities tend to cluster around those who are willing to act as "lead nations"—countries with more experience and a wider range of capabilities. This combination has its advantages for the smaller countries: the lead nations can offer solutions to their national problems. In some cases, a constructive competition arises: when countries cooperate with one another on multiple occasions, the smaller countries often begin to emulate the larger ones.

The benefits lie primarily in the exchange of experience, in shared learning processes and problem-solving strategies. Furthermore, as defence cooperation is practiced with greater regularity and has developed a certain routine, planning procedures and the use of scarce resources are certain to become more reliable and efficient. The concepts and procedures used by individual Battlegroups will also gradually become more harmonised across the board, as Battlegroups are able to draw on previous experience and put successful solutions to use in other situations.

Decision-making procedures have been improved mainly at the national level. Nevertheless, doubts exist as to whether the deployment timelines can be met. When seeking to improve these procedures, it is important to remain aware that operations are legitimised exclusively by political decisions.

### Positive side effects: operational capability and political responsibility

The creation of the Battlegroups has produced positive side effects that were not central to the concept itself. First, they depoliticise the act of assembling an EU military force. In the case of non-Battlegroup forces, the member states first decide on whether an operation should take place, and only then assemble the

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force package (force generation). The deployment of military forces is often delayed because member states shy away from committing their troops for financial or political reasons.[49] Battlegroups, by contrast, are planned and formed in advance and pledged to the EU. Thus, the force generation process takes place even before the political decision on deployment is made. The BG is already available and the individual states don't have to decide whether they pledge troops. This increases the likelihood that a force can be deployed on schedule.

Second, the Battlegroups have created political commitments for each state in relation to the other Battlegroup participants and the EU. Although each state may withdraw its troops from a Battlegroup or prevent their deployment, this would mean losing face politically. The Battlegroup initiative has thus created a certain political duty for states to assume responsibility. This explains, among other things, the German leadership of the operation EUFOR RD Congo.[50]

## Persistent shortcomings call rapid-response capabilities into question

The aforementioned successes cannot, however, conceal the shortcomings that threaten the achievement of the overall objective: establishing a solid rapid crisis response capability in the EU.

First, the very diverse strategic cultures of EU member states have an impact on the decision-making process at the EU level, and thus on decisions regarding Battlegroup deployment. This is one reason why no Battlegroup operation has taken place to date.

Second, the effectiveness of the individual Battlegroups remains unclear. Third, it is questionable whether the tight schedule established for rapid crisis response can be met. A number of factors contribute to delays. While political decision-making, military planning, force generation and deployment are now better coordinated, these processes do not yet feed into each other quite as smoothly and rapidly as the guidelines require. It is also unclear whether the political decision-makers are adequately informed about the particularities of Battlegroup deployments

(including tight deadlines and rapidly changing crisis situations) and willing to decide as quickly as the Battlegroups concept recommends. The lack of continuity in planning and command at the military level is a further reason for delays. Not least of all, major deficits in financing for troop relocation, transport capacities and logistics, as well as the unpredictable nature of private leasing and service contracts make it questionable whether a Battlegroup will be able to begin an operation within the ten days allotted after the decision to launch an operation.

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**49** See, e.g. EUFOR RD Congo 2006 and EUFOR Chad/RCA 2008/2009.

**50** See Peter Schmidt, "'Freiwillige vor!' Bundeswehreinsatz im Kongo – zur Dialektik einer Führungsrolle wider Willen," *Internationale Politik*, 61 (November 2006) 11: 68–77.

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# The Way Forward.
# EU Battlegroups and the Idea of a European Army

The further development of the Battlegroups should be guided by two aspects: first, the assessment of the successes and failures to date; and second, the challenges and prospects ahead for EU security policy. A central question herein is whether the Battlegroups can serve as a guide, pointing the way toward a potential EU army.

From the review of successes and failures, three overarching principles emerge that should govern the further development of EU Battlegroups:

▸ Politically, the process should be pushed forward in a "top-down" manner: governments and parliaments must undertake the necessary military reforms to improve the Battlegroups' operational capability.

▸ Militarily, the "bottom-up" process should be maintained: as the Battlegroups have gradually expanded and strengthened defence cooperation, they have made real progress and have generated shared experiences. The conceptual development of the Battlegroups should build on this progress.

▸ Finally, the principle of cost-effectiveness should guide future considerations, particularly in light of current budget constraints. Hence the important questions are: what can we learn from EU Battlegroups for the current debate on pooling and sharing and where can the formations themselves be improved to deliver operational capabilities more efficiently.

## New challenges, new possibilities

The following developments will affect the scope of action available to the EU and its member states in the years to come, and should be taken into account in the further development of the Battlegroups:

▸ Declining interest: the Battlegroups are threatening to become "business as usual." As a result, their shortcomings could come to be accepted as part of the operational *Acquis*. References to the unsatisfactory fulfilment of HG 2010 are unlikely to motivate EU member states to intensify their efforts. The attempt to make gradual improvements entails the risk of focusing narrowly on military and technical

minutiae. One possibility for placing political questions on the agenda and linking them to the future of the Battlegroups is the implementation of the CSDP including all new provisions, as adopted with the Lisbon Treaty. If EU member states want to avoid being accused of failing to fully implement this policy, they must develop concrete projects. The Battlegroups could, for example, be a pilot project in the framework of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PSCoop). The goals of CSDP (including PSCoop), which go further than the level of ambition defined within the context of ESDP, require EU member states to grapple with the finality of security and defence cooperation at the EU level (e.g. the European Defence Union).

▸ The financial crisis creates a turning point for the generation of capabilities for all EU Member States—albeit with an unclear direction so far. The financial and economic crisis has exacerbated the already strained state of national defence budgets. The increasing pressure could create incentives for P&S, and break down national patterns of thinking regarding defence investments. Recently, Europe has seen a number of bilateral and multilateral initiatives for capability development. Talks between the UK and France on continued and expanded cooperation and the 2010 bilateral agreement on defence cooperation underscore that even countries equipped with advanced military capabilities recognise the necessity of close cooperation.[51] At the same time, there are signs of a renationalisation in defence policies as the members states mainly cut and reform individually, along national priorities in reaction to the financial crisis.

▸ Particularly two tendencies strongly suggest the necessity of the EU assuming a more independent role as a military actor in the long term. First, US resources will continue to be overstretched and increasingly tied up in Asian regions in the next decade. The US are also less willing to get engaged in areas and tasks where they consider that the

**51** Ben Jones, *Franco-British military cooperation: a new engine for European defence?* Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, February 2011 (Occasional Paper 88).

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Europeans could do the job, such as in Libya 2011. This will make it necessary for the EU to take on more international responsibility. Second, EU member states are less and less in a position to implement their security policy goals unilaterally.

▸ The EU's experience with operations in recent years makes it likely that its missions will be increasingly civilian or civilian-military in nature, and will seldom take place on the upper end of the Petersberg tasks spectrum. For this reason, the Battlegroups will have to be involved in the entire process of conflict management. Moreover, it will be crucial to develop exit strategies and effective forms of cooperation with civilian actors.

▸ The Level of Ambition defined by the EU in 2008 has placed the Battlegroups in a qualitatively and quantitatively new context: the capabilities acquired under the HHG (60,000 soldiers deployable within 60 days for a period of up to one year), together with the Battlegroups, shall allow the EU to carry out the following range of missions: two concurrent operations for stabilisation and political reconstruction, drawn from the HHG pool with up to 10,000 soldiers per mission, each lasting at least two years. Moreover, the following operations are aspired to: two rapid-response operations, for which the Battlegroups can be used; one evacuation operation; one aerial and maritime surveillance operation; one civil-military operation to provide humanitarian aid (limited to 90 days); as well as a dozen primarily civilian missions.

▸ The planning horizon of the HG 2010 has been reached. EU member states haven't yet decided whether they want to adopt a new Headline Goal. If so, it should reflect the new level of ambition, operational experience and a focus on integrated civil-military aspects.

## Battlegroups: a guide, but not a model for a European army

Many politicians and observers have a vision of a "European army", hoping that this could stimulate the integration process in CSDP and the EU following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. In Germany, the governing coalition and large parts of the opposition have voiced their support for an EU army.[52]

Poland plans to make this one of the key themes of its EU Presidency in the second half of 2011.[53] With reference to the Treaty of Lisbon, Italian Foreign Minister Frattini called for the formation of an EU army in 2009.[54] In many of these cases, Battlegroups are seen as the military departure point for a European army.

The idea of a European army includes the vision of merging the integration policy dimension with that of security. However, it hasn't yet materialised. France proposed the establishment of a European Defence Community in the early 1950s, with an integrated supranational army—a project that failed in 1954. This idea resurfaces on a regular basis in security policy discussions, often triggered by events that appear to open up new possibilities for integration, such as the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

The concept of a European army was always a tantalising one, and it is usually not one that is defined in detail. For example, the level of intensity and the preferred form of multinational cooperation are usually not specified. The concept plays with associations sparked by the idea of European integration. It thus consistently evokes reactions ranging from unequivocal support to outright rejection.

Opposing political views often come from nations with strong transatlantic ties like the UK and Central and Eastern European countries. They fear that the existence of a European army would weaken NATO and offend the US. Particularly in the UK, the concept arouses negative associations across party lines, ranging from the spectre of an EU federal state to fears of a loss of national sovereignty.

The concept of a European army has gained such strong political connotations that it almost hinders objective discussions on the different forms and methods, advantages and disadvantages of integrating national armed forces. EU member states agree that close cooperation is necessary to confront security policy challenges, and indeed indispensable in times of tight budgets and rising costs. There is widespread disagreement, however, as to the form and level of cooperation and about how such a project should be designated.

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52 See Koalitionsvertrag [n. 4] and the Working Group on Security and Defence Policy of the SPD Parliamentary Group

in the German Bundestag, *Transformation der Bundeswehr – Mehr Effizienz mit Augenmaß*, 21 July 2010, http://www.rainer-arnold.de/pdf/TransformationBW_longvers210710.pdf.
53 Interviews conducted in the Polish Defence Ministry in February 2010 and in the EU Council Secretariat in February 2010.
54 See the newspaper articles cited in n. 5.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this. First, caution is needed in the word choice. The UK will not, in the foreseeable future, support any EU project referred to as a "European army." Given the country's military importance, any EU-level defence cooperation that does not involve the UK would be severely weakened in both its legitimacy and its effectiveness. Similar efforts under a different name would have better chances of success.

Second, revolutionary approaches to integrating security and defence policies are almost entirely pointless given this sector's strong associations with national identity and sovereignty and thus the sensitivity of the issue. Little has changed in this regard since 1954. If EU member states want to intensify their defence cooperation, they need to take a pragmatic approach. Such an approach has already proven to be effective in ESDP. The Battlegroups have demonstrated that concrete projects are met with broader acceptance than sweeping proposals laden with symbolism about the finality of the European integration process.

The Battlegroups could to a certain degree function as the nucleus of a European army. Due to their size, composition and specific tasks, they cannot, however, serve as the actual blueprint. Particularly a European army would imply considerable qualitative differences: Such an army would require that political decision making processes, military laws, equipment and other aspects of defence cooperation have already been largely harmonised and denationalised.

Germany can contribute to this process, but will not be able to play a leading role in the creation of European armed forces. The Federal Constitutional Court decided in its 2009 ruling on the Treaty of Lisbon that transferring the power to authorise military deployments away from the Bundestag to a European body—which would come with a European army—crosses the boundaries towards integration into the creation of a European federal state. This step would require a referendum.

## The further development of EU Battlegroups: key recommendations

### Unified civil-military planning and conduct capabilities

> *The EU member states should establish permanent civil-military planning and command structures in Brussels. The German-French-Polish ("Weimar Triangle") initiative launched in April 2010 and put on the EU agenda in January 2011 is a promising blueprint.* [55] *The Polish EU presidency in the second half of 2011 offers a window of opportunity for implementation, before countries less interested in CSDP or less capable take over the EU presidencies.*

There are two possible solutions to overcome the fragmentation in the planning and command procedures of the Battlegroups: 1) involving national OHQs at an earlier stage, 2) building autonomous planning and command capabilities at the EU level.

For Option 1, EU member states would first have to establish the legal basis. This would allow the OHQ to be officially activated at an early stage by a Council decision. If EU member states can either not consent on a new legal basis or in a precise case, an alternative would be to delegate national planning staff to the EU Military Staff and the CMPD in Brussels. This would strengthen the strategic planning capabilities in Brussels and simultaneously improve communication between Brussels and the Battlegroup. The seconded personnel would return to their national OHQ for the operation and contribute their newly gained understanding of the structures in Brussels to their work at the national level.

These measures can only minimise the problems resulting from fragmentation but cannot solve them. Particularly, they may not be appropriate to assure that the tight timelines for Battlegroup deployments are met. Moreover, the issue of appropriate EU planning and command capabilities has implications beyond the Battlegroups: The broader context of EU operations has to be taken into account. Especially, the increasing demand for integrated civil-military planning and command structures is of central importance to the future EU OHQ structure.

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**55** Claudia Major, *A Civil-Military Headquarters for the EU*. Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), December 2010 (SWP-Comment 31/2010).

Even maintaining just the five national OHQs on standby at times when no operations are underway creates high infrastructure and personnel costs. Since it is difficult to predict when an OHQ will need to be activated, the staff of all five OHQs has to be trained for possible deployments. The OHQ selected for an operation cannot draw on significant experience in activating, planning or commanding an operation. There is no institutional memory: every time an operation is about to take place, EU member states must de facto reinvent the wheel anew.

Option 2 would solve most of these problems. Permanent planning and command capabilities within the EU—an EU HQ—should not be based on purely military structures but rather include civil-military structures. The EU's comprehensive approach to crisis management, operational experience and options for the future all strongly suggest that purely military structures would not be adequate to meet the challenges ahead and would not fit the specific character of the EU. A standing EU HQ could start military advance planning independently and at an early stage. It could tailor plans to the situation at hand, working continuously and in close collaboration with other EU institutions and national representatives in Brussels, and then command the mission at the strategic level.

To build a permanent planning and command capability, EU member states should make use of existing EU institutions: the CMPD, the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) and the EU Military Staff. These institutions would be united in an integrated civil-military planning and command capability of the EU.

This would remove any need to keep the national OHQs on standby for EU operations—and would eliminate dependence on the five EU states that provide these headquarters. At the same time, the costs for those states that provide an OHQ would be reduced.

## Changing the spectrum of operations: more active, more civilian

> *EU member states should voice their support for expanding the range of operations of the EU Battlegroups and assess practical implications of the civil-military dimension of crisis management by using Battlegroups as a test bed for a comprehensive rapid reaction capability.*

Based on the EU's operational experience and in view of its future strategic orientation, the Battlegroups in their current composition will probably not be used within the upper spectrum of the Petersberg tasks. For this reason, the list of tasks should, first of all, be extended. Second, civil-military aspects should be incorporated into the Battlegroups concept, without however blurring the division of labour among civilian and military elements of such a comprehensive rapid reaction force.

Up to now, the EU has been waiting for the "right" crisis to put its Battlegroups into action. It is not clear why the Battlegroups are being kept on standby for an operation that fits the very narrow criteria for their deployment when other missions currently lack troops to carry out similar tasks.

In 2009, the Swedish EU Presidency succeeded in making the Battlegroups concept more flexible in parts. Since then, member states have been permitted to withdraw troops from a Battlegroup in order to deploy them to other operations. While this is a step into the right direction, member states should avoid using Battlegroups to fill gaps in operations which are notoriously lacking troops.

More precisely, the Battlegroups could serve as standby or "over-the-horizon force" for current operations. Operation *Althea* in Bosnia-Herzegovina lends itself to a test case. While the military presence will be scaled down in the future, its rapid increase has to be assured to be able to react to a deteriorating security environment. As the Balkan is accepted as a primary area of EU responsibility, EU member states are likely to agree to use the region for such a test case.

A second option would be to extend the Battlegroup concept to include a wider range of capabilities, which address the expanded spectrum of Petersberg tasks. From a comprehensive approach perspective such a move would simply widen the pool of available capabilities that can be tailored to a mission to include civilian expertise. Hence, such a comprehensive crisis reaction unit would not necessarily be a military force and could thus be subordinated to and lead by a

civilian operations commander. The specific Battle-group would not itself grow in the process. It would simply form a nucleus around which other civilian or civil-military capabilities would gather. Most of these capabilities exist already within the EU, like police units, administration experts or civilian crisis response teams. Such a civil-military force package could be considered for deployment in disaster relief operations like those that took place in Haiti in 2010.

### Expanding the financing possibilities: means of transport and joint procurement

> *The EU governments should approve a moderate expansion of the areas financed under the Athena mechanism and support the acquisition of shared EU equipment for joint operations.*

The lack of adequate financing options for joint operations limits the EU's ability to take action. In addition, the current mode of financing contradicts the idea of fair distribution of risks and burdens. The costs that are covered jointly through Athena make up just ten percent of the total costs of the operation. Those member states that take part in an operation not only carry the lion's share—ninety percent—of the costs; they also bear all of the risks of the operation.[56]

For this reason, the areas that are financed jointly under the Athena mechanism should be moderately expanded. A first area to be considered for routine financing via Athena could be transport costs to the theatre of operations and back again. Currently, the redeployment is covered by Athena only on an individual basis. On the one hand, this would mean that countries like Germany would indirectly cover the costs of deploying other countries' troops because it pays a comparatively large amount into Athena. On the other hand, the risks associated with an operation would be more justly distributed among the member states, since more countries would probably be willing to pledge their troops.

The costs of maritime transport should be covered jointly, as is already the case in air transport. Currently deployment funding is limited to the most expensive option, namely air transport. This leads a one sided concentration on capabilities while more economic options for transport by train or ship are rejected because the resulting costs are not covered.[57]

Athena should be expanded to include logistic arrangements and guarantee funding to award contracts for strategic transport and other support services.

A qualitatively new step would be the joint EU purchase of military equipment that is used in every operation, such as HQ infrastructure and accommodation. Athena finances the purchase of new equipment for each individual operation. These costs could be reduced if EU member states purchased their materials jointly and made them available for joint operations. This would make the EU less dependent on individual member states that have provided equipment up to now. The equipment could be stored at a central location, where strategic transport would also be based (see below).

### Using EU Battlegroups as a laboratory for pooling & sharing; advancing them by perpetuation, expansion and integration

> *To overcome limitations in capabilities and sustainability EU member states should perpetuated, expand,and further integrate the forces starting with reoccurring formations. Moreover EU Battlegroups can act as starting point and laboratory for pooling and sharing. Some progress into these directions can be achieved within the 2010/11 Weimar triangle initiative.*

EU Battlegroups are currently the best developed mechanism for regular and intense defence cooperation at the EU level. However, given that the units disband after six months, they cannot profit militarily and economically from established routines and the joint procurement of equipment and services. Moreover, they are too small to provide for the bandwidth of capabilities needed for current contingencies. Reoccurring formations like the Nordic Battlegroup, Franco-German cooperation or HELBROC could act as points of crystallization for an incremental evolution of P&S but also for applying best practice and innovative elements. There are three possible courses of action that could be taken in this context: perpetuation, expansion and integration.

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**56** Drent and Zandee, *Breaking Pillars* [n. 9].

**57** Non-Paper "Creating the Conditions for the Use of EU Battlegroups" [n. 29].

**Perpetuation:** Defence cooperation could be perpetuated by having a group of states taking responsibility to fill a Battlegroup slot on a regular or permanent basis. Already existing cooperation between individual countries, like the Nordic Battlegroup or Franco-German cooperation, could form a point of departure for this.

In addition to the political symbolism inherent in such cooperation, it would also have military and economic advantages: logistic arrangements, command structures and planning could be established on a sustainable basis. This would reduce planning costs and efforts in comparison with the current semi-annual "stop-and-go" situation where similar supplies are often purchased anew by the formation on duty but are only used for a short period of time. At the same time, institutional knowledge would be maintained by the permanent C2 structures of the unit. This could contribute to the further harmonisation of standards. It would also prevent member states from attempting to keep their standby Battlegroups out of an operation by deferring decisions on deployment until the next Battlegroup standby phase begins.

**Expansion:** The Battlegroups concept could be expanded to larger numbers of troops and a broader capabilities range—ideally a brigade equivalent. The aim would be on the one hand to expand the high level of troop commitment across a larger portion of European armed forces. On the other hand, such a brigade type formation would comprise capabilities needed for more complex and combat intense operations.

Instead of the ten-day period until operational readiness that applies to existing Battlegroups, progressive operational readiness could be introduced for such a force. Contingents from this brigade could be ready for deployment within a period ranging from 48 hours to 60 days. Whenever one contingent would deploy, another unit with the comparable capabilities but lower operational readiness would fill the gap. Thus, the overall force would always remain at the highest possible level of operational readiness.

Different contingents of a force package could take on the tasks of the Battlegroups alternately for half a year each. When an operation requires rapid access to additional capabilities or reinforcement, these could initially be provided out of the overall force itself. This would encourage institutional cohesion.

However, the larger size of such "Battlegroup-Brigades" would also present difficulties: in order to expand the size of the force packages, more member states would have to participate, or the participating states would have to make larger contributions. If the large countries provide more, they may also be accused of dominating the other participants or the Battlegroup initiative as a whole. Under the current conditions, Ireland and Lithuania, for example, are equal, but they would not be in larger formations. This could weaken the political dimension of the Battlegroups.

**Integration:** Holding such large forces at permanent readiness could foster cooperation and military integration. This would promote the transformation and long-term harmonisation of equipment. Such an approach would make it all the more difficult, however, to harmonise the various formations themselves. Learning would take place increasingly within the contingents of a Battlegroup-Brigade rather than between them. Further integration would not occur "from the bottom up" but would have to be initiated in a "top-down" manner.

The example of Germany clearly illustrates the tensions that would arise with a further integration of the armed forces. Germany is politically dependent on multilateralism and practices this principle militarily within different cooperative frameworks. At the same time, the conditions (e.g. rules of engagement) that define how Germany deploys military troops have changed, and are specified in such a way that German ground forces in particular cannot fight alongside French or British troops in an integrated contingent. Such troop deployments would not only fail, due to the differing rules for the use of force in operations, but also due to Germany's higher standards than its European partners, which also include the supply of German troops in the field. Closer integration could thus require Germany to undertake legal deregulation in its military sector.

Whichever route of development is chosen, it would have to be enhanced by the careful harmonisation of doctrines, procedures and equipment. In order to guarantee the comparable operational capabilities of all Battlegroups, one would have to evaluate their capability portfolios. Such an evaluation presupposes a system for the standardisation and evaluation of these capabilities. The incentives to adapt and harmonise capabilities could be enhanced by a transparent process of monitoring operational performance. Here too, significant progress can only be achieved

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through political decisions determining the future direction of the Battlegroups.

## Pooling and sharing: logistics as a starting point

> *EU governments should go ahead with pooling and sharing especially in the area of logistics. They should create logistical "EU warehouses" and make installations available for this purpose.*

Only a few EU member states are capable of carrying out the enormous task of deploying and supplying a Battlegroup through stand-alone operations. All Battlegroup participants without exception complain of the high costs and lack of reliability in service contracts for outsourced tasks, especially in view of the tight deadlines for deployment.

P&S make it possible to reduce costs and ensure more reliable provision of services, for example transport capacities. By pooling demand, better prices can be negotiated.

For this reason, the EU should pool demand through framework contracts for the logistical services used in EU operations. To make this possible, member states would have to establish standards—life support standards, for example—that would make the demands placed on civilian contractual partners transparent and directly comparable. This would streamline the award of public contracts, simplify quality control and provide the basis for contract enforcement. In 2009, the European Defence Agency created Third Party Logistic Support (TPLS), a platform designed to help member states outsource their logistical functions.[58]

In a similar manner, member states can also bundle their capabilities into logistical centres. Steps in this direction are the European Air Transport command (EATC) and the European Air Transport Fleet (EATF). The latter was launched in 2008 and should become operational in 2014. The EATF pools the European air transport capacity available through the air fleet of one of twelve EU countries. Similar possibilities should be examined for land and maritime transport. A warehouse could be set up around the EATF, close to appropriate airfields to store material and equipment for civilian and military EU operations.

## Certification, pooling and sharing through the European Defence Agency

> *EU member states should make a more concerted effort to ensure that the full potential of the EDA is used for capability development.*

The EDA can contribute to the improved provision of Battlegroups. It cannot force EU member states to join this effort, but it can initiate changes and facilitate new developments.

First, the EDA should encourage EU member states to implement further P&S initiatives. The establishment of the TPLS platform in 2009 to enable more effective outsourcing of logistics was a first step.[59] The EDA is designed to provide a forum in which member states can reach a common understanding of multinational logistical solutions to complement and enhance national logistics. This should help create the foundation for further P&S initiatives.

Second, the EDA should be a contact point for logistics. It could, as a central authority, make the necessary transport arrangements and also take on the responsibility for providing deployable FHQs. This would substantially improve the interoperability and efficiency of the Battlegroups and simultaneously take some of the burden off EU states. This, in turn, would make it more attractive for member states to participate in Battlegroups.

Third, the EDA should act as an independent authority for the certification of Battlegroups. This would ensure consistent quality of the established Battlegroups and reliable Battlegroup planning. Certification by the EDA as an external, independent supervisory authority could also eliminate the potential for rumors about the low quality or low operational readiness of some Battlegroups. Not least of all, this would be one way of depoliticising certification. If the EDA took on this function, it would be less likely to become politically involved than would be the case with other bodies, such as the EU Military Committee, which is composed of representatives of the member states.

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**58** See "European Third Party Logistic Support Platform," 25 March 2009, http://www.eda.europa.eu/tpls.

**59** See "European Third Party Logistic Support Platform" [n. 58].

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## Permanent Structured Cooperation as an incentive for working together

*EU governments should seek to establish PSCoop in a long-term perspective as a result of successful P&S projects and use PSCoop to define the "gold standard" for EU Battlegroups.*

The Protocol on Permanent Structured Cooperation (PSCoop) in the Lisbon Treaty is designed to enable interested and qualified member states to work together in exclusive forums. Smaller groups of states can use this framework to develop joint capabilities, assemble multinational military forces and share equipment as well as to introduce, for example, qualitative and quantitative standards or criteria for contributions. The concept of PSCoop also entails verification of whether the agreed contributions have been made and the criteria fulfilled. The verifying body is to be the EDA.

With PSCoop, higher standards for the Battlegroups' further development can be put in place in almost every area: troop strength, military planning and command structures, and logistics. Such standards could thus become a verifiable "gold standard" for contributions in the field of CSDP in general. This "PSCoop certification" would provide incentives on the military level to move forward with the transformation process.

PSCoop presents ways to make cooperation more flexible. Up to now, increasing the level of cooperation required the approval of all member states. Now, EU states can join groups in different combinations to work together on a long-term basis. This allows circumventing individual states' political opposition to one or another specific cooperation project. At the same time, PSCoop remains open for later accession of further EU states. Conversely, EU states can also be excluded from PSCoop if they fail to produce the required results.

Since PSC is envisioned as a form of long-term cooperation, rationalisation and savings effects are likely. Not least of all, PSCoop is a political project. It is the only concrete innovation that the Lisbon Treaty offers in the area of CSDP. It is therefore in the interests of all those who support the idea of a common security and defence policy to use this instrument to invigorate the CSDP.

However, until today EU-states have avoided to table tangible suggestions to implement PSCoop, let alone to commit themselves to any precise project.

Three issues add to the current stalemate: First, ambiguous political visions and strategic objectives: Many ideas are in the air, but they are rarely compatible. Nor do they outline direct revenues of participation in PSCoop. Second, the road to implementation is not clear: The discussed principles and criteria to define the implementation of PSCoop are rather abstract. What lacks is an evolutionary approach that would build on existing cooperation projects in the area of defence and that would seek to answer the question how varying interests of member states could be integrated. Third a missing financial boost: PSCoop implementation is hit by the current financial crisis. Member states consider investment in PSCoop as a financial risk which national decision makers find themselves unable to bear.

Given these hurdles, for the moment, EU member states should stop theological debates on PSCoop. Instead they should engage in concrete pooling initiatives that could become militarily effective, financially attractive and sustainable solutions. If such pooling initiatives have been successful for a longer time, they can eventually be considered de facto PSCoop's without however—for political reasons—being labeled this way.

## Germany: raising awareness and improving cooperation on the domestic level

*The German Bundestag should inform itself regularly at the beginning of each Battlegroup standby period about the decision-making processes within the participating states, but also about current crisis regions where Battlegroup deployment might come into question. Efforts should be made to simulate the decision-making process on a regular basis with the involvement of governmental authorities.*

Germany sets stringent criteria for the deployment of military forces. At the same time, the country is bound to multilateral structures. It is therefore crucial that political decision-makers are informed about what the EU Battlegroups can achieve—and about the limits and risks of potential operations. On the other hand, they should use international cooperation to maintain close ties to other decision-makers and gradually intensify their cooperation.

The death of German soldiers should not be a taboo subject in discussions between the government and the parliament. Yet this topic can and will, unfortu-

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nately, be misused to gain political mileage at the national level. A better understanding of security and defence questions could, however, put limits to such discussions. Independent of any concrete decision on troop deployments, regular and ongoing discussion within the Bundestag of the general risks of military operations would contribute substantially to this end.

The discussion should also address the scope of German policy and its primary responsibilities. A multinational operation will always reflect the interests of other countries as well, or those of the EU. For this reason, the deployment of German troops will take place not just in the German interest, but in the European interest. Inversely, the deployment of other member states' troops by the EU will be in the German interest. The issue of "killing and dying for Europe" should be discussed seriously, and not left to marginalised groups for use in their polemical debates.

The German parliament has to support the government's ability to decide quickly on EU operations. German members of the Bundestag—especially those on the parliamentary committees for foreign affairs, defence and European affairs—should be familiar with both the EU procedures and the key decision-makers in the other countries involved in a Battlegroup. The Nordic countries, which sustain close inter-parliamentary coordination, can serve as a model for this process. The members of Bundestag could, for example, establish regular contacts with the parliaments of the other countries contributing to a Battlegroup. One possibility would be to organise reciprocal visits prior to commencement of a Battlegroup standby period, or to simulate the decision-making processes that are required throughout an operation. This could also include political discussions with members of parliament from the countries that regularly contribute to Battlegroups with Germany—for example the Netherlands, Poland and Finland.

Furthermore, the Bundestag should pave the way for the planning of a precise operation to continue, even if the parliamentary decision on deployment still has not been made. The significance of its decision will not decline in the process. Continuity in planning will lay the foundation for rapid decisions on operations and enable troops to be deployed within a short period of time should the Bundestag approve an operation. It would otherwise be very difficult to adhere to the narrow timelines of a rapid-response operation. The Bundestag should make it possible to prepare the necessary planning steps that would be required in the event of a decision on deployment—either as a

general rule or on a case-by-case basis. This includes gathering cost estimates and clarifying leadership modalities. The Bundestag would benefit from this option, since it would improve the chances of resolving questions that may arise more quickly.

# Appendix

## Glossary of Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| BG | Battlegroup |
| BMVg | German Federal Ministry of Defence |
| C2 | Command and Control |
| CMPD | Crisis Management and Planning Directorate |
| CPCC | Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability |
| EATC | European Air Transport Command |
| EATF | European Air Transport Fleet |
| ERRF | European Rapid Reaction Force |
| ESS | European Security Strategy |
| ESDP | European Security and Defence Policy (since 2009: CSDP) |
| EUMC | EU Military Committee |
| EUMS | EU Military Staff |
| EUTM | European Union Training Mission Somalia |
| EDA | European Defence Agency |
| FCdr | Force Commander |
| (F)HQ | Force Headquarters |
| FOI | Totalförsvarets Forskningsinstitut (Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm) |
| CSDP | Common Security and Defence Policy (up to 2009: ESDP) |
| HG 2010 | Headline Goal 2010 |
| HHG | Helsinki Headline Goal |
| HQ | Headquarters |
| ISTAR | Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance |
| MCCE | Movement Coordination Centre Europe |
| MRRC | Military Rapid Response Concept |
| NRF | NATO Response Force |
| OHQ | Operational Headquarters |
| OpCdr | Operation Commander |
| OpsCentre | EU Operations Centre (Brussels) |
| PSC/COPS | Political and Security Committee |
| PSCoop | Permanent Structured Cooperation |
| RUSI | Royal United Services Institute |
| TPLS | Third Party Logistic Support |
| UN | United Nations |
| UN OCHA | UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |

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## Overview of member states' contributions to EU Battlegroups (as of March 2010)

| Period Semester/year | Participants | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| I/2005 | BG1 | UK |
| | BG2 | France |
| II/2005 | BG1 | Italy |
| | BG2 | none |
| I/2006 | BG1 | France, Germany |
| | BG2 | Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal |
| II/2006 | BG1 | France, Germany, Belgium |
| | BG2 | none |
| I/2007 | BG1 | Germany, Netherlands, Finland |
| | BG2 | France, Belgium |
| II/2007 | BG1 | Italy, Hungary, Slovenia |
| | BG2 | Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus – HELBROC Battlegroup |
| I/2008 | BG1 | Sweden, Finland, Norway, Estonia, Ireland – Nordic Battlegroup |
| | BG2 | Spain, Germany, Portugal, France |
| II/2008 | BG1 | Germany, France, Belgium, Luxemburg, Spain |
| | BG2 | UK |
| I/2009 | BG1 | Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece |
| | BG2 | Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus – HELBROC Battlegroup |
| II/2009 | BG1 | Czech Republic, Slovakia |
| | BG2 | France, Belgium, Luxemburg |
| I/2010 | BG1 | Poland, Germany, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia |
| | BG2 | UK, Netherlands |
| II/2010 | BG1 | Italy, Romania, Turkey |
| | BG2 | Spain, France, Portugal |
| I/2011 | BG1 | Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Austria, Lithuania |
| | BG2 | Sweden, Finland, Norway, Estonia, Ireland – Nordic Battlegroup |
| II/2011 | BG1 | Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus – HELBROC Battlegroup |
| | BG2 | Portugal, Spain, France, Italy |
| I/2012 | BG1 | France, Germany, Netherlands |
| | BG2 | To be determined |
| II/2012 | BG1 | Italy, Slovenia, Hungary |
| | BG2 | Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Macedonia |
| I/2013 | BG1 | Poland, Germany, France – Weimar Battlegroup |
| | BG2 | To be determined |
| II/2013 | BG1 | UK, Sweden |
| | BG2 | To be determined |
| I/2014 | BG1 | Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus – HELBROC Battlegroup |
| | BG2 | To be determined |

Source: German Ministry of Defence, March 2010.

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