

# **EU capabilities for a comprehensive approach: Broad interoperability as comparative advantage**

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## English Summary

A recurring criticism against the burgeoning European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) has been the notorious shortfalls in Europe's military capabilities, resulting in a well-documented transatlantic capability gap. This report argues that a balanced analysis of Europe's force developments in recent years has been hampered by a one-sided focus on this military gap.

The report adopts a more *Eurocentric* perspective in its analysis of how the EU has impacted on capability developments in support of a Comprehensive Approach. Indeed, the EU's assumption of a military role in 1998 was accompanied by the precondition that the Union would represent a unique strategic actor, not duplicating NATO, while drawing on its ability to mix civilian and military crisis management instruments. This report addresses *both* the military and civilian force generation processes initiated by the EU to see whether it has, in fact, been able to create capabilities that support such a Comprehensive Approach.

The report uses the concept of *broad interoperability* – or the ability of armed forces to operate together and act in conjunction with civilian instruments. The aim is not to reduce the significance of traditional military interoperability, which remains a key issue both amongst European allies and across the Atlantic. However, broad interoperability does open up to new ways of thinking about capabilities, drawing attention to the differences between NATO and the EU: While NATO has remained committed to a US transformation model, the EU has been more open to diversifying tasks between Member States and has started looking into ways to reform systems and procedures for defence acquisitions and production.

Nonetheless, as this report shows, the EU civilian and military force generation processes have remained largely detached, which in many ways undermines the comparative advantage of being able to use military force in a comprehensive manner.

## Sammendrag

En stadig tilbakevendende kritikk av EUs felles utenriks- og sikkerhetspolitikk (FUSP) har vært Europas mangelfulle militære kapasiteter, og en rekke studier har pekt på et transatlantisk “kapasitetsgap”. Denne rapporten tar utgangspunkt i at et slikt gap finnes på en rekke områder, men argumenterer samtidig for at en ensidig vektlegging av dette gapet har overskygget mange av de prosessene som har vært initiert og drevet frem av EU på dette området i de senere årene.

Rapporten tar derfor et mer *eurosentrisk* utgangspunkt og ser på hvorvidt EU har vært i stand til å utvikle kapasiteter som understøtter organisasjonens såkalte *helhetlige tilnærming* (comprehensive approach) til sikkerhet. Et slikt perspektiv er i samsvar med forutsetningen for at EU skulle få utvikle militære kapasiteter: Unionen skulle representere noe nytt og ikke duplisere Nato. Tanken var at EU ville kunne utvikle seg til en annerledes strategisk aktør, med utgangspunkt i organisasjonens unike forutsetninger for å ta i bruk og integrere *både* sivile og militære kapasiteter.

For å favne om både sivile og militære kapasiteter, introduserer rapporten begrepet *bred interoperabilitet*, som viser til militære styrkers evne til å operere sammen og parallelt med sivile elementer. Målet er ikke å redusere betydningen av tradisjonell militær interoperabilitet, som er et vedarende problem både blant europeiske allierte og i forholdet til USA. Begrepet bred interoperabilitet åpner imidlertid for nye måter å tenke rundt kapasiteter på og leder blant annet oppmerksomheten hen mot grunnleggende forskjeller mellom Nato og EU: Natos transformasjonsprosess har i hovedsak vært tuftet på den amerikanske modellen, mens EU har vært mer åpen for å fordele ansvar for å utvikle forskjellige kapasiteter mellom medlemslandene, samtidig som organisasjonen har gått inn for å reformere systemer og prosedyrer for kjøp og produksjon av forsvarsmateriell.

Likevel viser rapporten at EU til nå kun i liten grad har evnet å integrere den sivile og militære styrkegenereringsprosessen, noe som kan synes å underminere det komparative fortrinnet EU tilsynelatende skulle ha i å kunne ta i bruk militærmakt på en mer helhetlig og integrert måte.

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# 1 Introduction

*You cannot send a wiring diagram to a crisis.*

Lord George Robertson,  
former Secretary General of NATO<sup>1</sup>

In 1993, Christopher Hill put forward the concept of a “capability-expectations gap”, arguing that the EU had been talked up to do more than it could actually deliver with the capabilities at hand (Hill 1993: 47). After nearly twenty years of shrinking European defence budgets, it is rather the notion of another “gap”, a transatlantic one in which Europe’s armed forces are being talked down, that dominates the debate (Gompert, Kugler, and Libicki 1999; Schake 2002; Kagan 2003; See e.g. Coletta 2005; Yost 2000; James 2006). This report argues that a balanced analysis of Europe’s force developments in recent years has been hampered by a one-sided focus on this military gap. Instead the report adopts a more *Eurocentric* lead in its analysis of how the EU has impacted on capability developments in support of its burgeoning European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

The notion of a transatlantic capability gap is fundamentally rooted in the strategic lesson that technological superiority will lead to a comparative advantage that will often have a decisive effect on the outcome of wars (Howard 1983: 104). This lesson has been the driving force behind the development of Network Centric Warfare (NCW), which has epitomised US force transformations in the post-Cold War period, and which has (re)raised the issue of interoperability between US and European military forces. Recalling Sir Michael Howard’s four dimensions of strategy, however, when faced with the US preoccupation with technology it is important to note that in singling out the *technological* to be one key dimension of strategy, Howard is equally clear on its limitations if it is not coupled with the other three dimensions (the social, the logistical and the operational) (Howard 1983; cf. Norheim-Martinsen 2007). His key message when highlighting the technological dimension is the unquestionable *comparative advantage* that technological innovation had produced in the major wars fought between the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the late 1970s, when his essay was first published. But recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, as in most operations where European and US forces have been involved in the last ten to 15 years, have shown that technological superiority cannot secure victory in today’s conflicts. Comparative advantage cannot be obtained exclusively through technological superiority, but is a matter of commanding a broad range of capabilities, including non-military, to deal with a multitude of challenges, of which actual fighting is but one. A “capability” must, therefore, be seen as a much broader and contextually dependent category than quantitative approaches often employed in analysis of capabilities suggest. Or as K. J. Holsti holds: “One reason that gross quantities of resources cannot be equated with effective influence relates to the

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Howorth (2007: 62)

distinction between the state's overall capabilities and the relevance of resources to a particular diplomatic situation" (Holsti 1995: 122). That is why this report is not primarily concerned with counting military hardware or comparing defence budgets. Instead it uses the EU's Comprehensive Approach as a benchmark for analysing *both* the civilian and the military force generation process(es) initiated by the EU since 1999.

A key question is whether the EU has taken steps beyond a purely intergovernmental, bottom-up approach of pledging nationally owned capabilities to force pools, and moved towards more collective or integrated arrangements for force generation. One such trend would be the gradual recognition of the different roles that EU Member States may take on along a spectrum of niche and lead nation capabilities, which, in turn, resembles a move towards a more heterarchical structure in which different member states may be granted influence within the structure based on the *relative* value of the resources they put on the table (See Norheim-Martinsen 2010 forthcoming). A second trend would be the introduction of new actors that may in different ways influence the force generation process, such as the European Defence Agency (EDA). A third trend would be a change in normative relations between the actors, as reflected in the identification of new norms of reference, or benchmarks, than those which have marked the force generation process before, or the growing awareness of norms that reflect what has been referred to as an emergent "European way of war" (Boyer and Lindley-French 2007; Everts et al. 2004).

These trends, and the degree to which they have materialised, will be discussed throughout the report. In terms of structure, the report first establishes what a capability is, before briefly discussing the notion of the transatlantic gap to determine what its consequences are for ESDP in particular and for capability thinking in Europe in general. It then moves on to analyse the military capabilities enhancement process under ESDP, using the Nordic Battlegroup (NBG) to illustrate some of the particular challenges and trends that have dominated this process. Finally, it analyses the civilian capabilities enhancement process, before concluding by addressing some issues of broad interoperability within ESDP.

## 2 The Capability Gap and Interoperability

Taking strategy as point of reference, capabilities can broadly be equated with means, which, in turn, relate to ends or interests.<sup>2</sup> Capabilities as such are hardly relevant without an understanding of the interests they serve. Moreover, capabilities draw their relevance from the context in which they are employed, or as David Yost points out, "scenarios differ, and the employment of capabilities is scenario-dependent" (Yost 2000: 97). Yesterday's capabilities will not necessarily be relevant for today's scenarios, as reflected in the paradigmatic consequences that the end of the Cold War had on Europe's large standing forces when the territorial threat from the Soviet Union disappeared. Capabilities are, as such, in need of constant adaptation to remain relevant to the

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<sup>2</sup> The Institute for Strategic Studies' *Military Balance* cites the *Oxford Dictionary*'s definition of capabilities as "forces or resources giving a country or a state the ability to undertake a particular kind of military action". As such, "they comprise the assets and skills that nations can bring to bear to counter identified threats and to meet responsibilities" (Giegerich and Nicoll 2008: 9).



interests they are meant to serve and the scenarios in which they are employed. However, capabilities will also often define interests, or as remarked by one commentator: “The existence of certain capabilities and fields of expertise is converted into an inclination to discover goals these abilities might serve” (Schroeder 2006: 10). Moreover, the way in which to act, and the capabilities with which to engage, may sometimes even become the end. Acting European has become a source of legitimacy for the military component of ESDP, while opening up to the idea that the EU has other capabilities to draw upon. One of the reasons why the notion of a transatlantic gap still persists, then, is rooted in a situation where one party is in a position to decide what a relevant capability is, whereas the other is forced to follow suit in order to remain *interoperable*.

The traditional understanding of *interoperability* concerns “[t]he ability of systems, units and forces to provide services to and accept services from other systems, units and forces and to use these services so exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together” (NATO Standardization Agreement, AAP-6 quoted in Boyer and Lindley-French 2007: 7).

Interoperability is, on the one hand, a practical concept that must encompass “technical and cognitive, as well as organisational and doctrinal, dimensions” (Boyer and Lindley-French 2007: 7). But it is also a concept with clear political connotations, insofar as the efforts made at remaining interoperable, especially if one part is seen to do more in this respect, may and will be seen to reflect the other part’s willingness to share the burden of alliance.

As Andrew James points out, the issue of burden-sharing has been a source of tension within NATO since its earliest years (James 2006: 223-24). But the debate re-surfaced with particular force during the 1999 Kosovo campaign, which highlighted the technological gap that had become ever more apparent between Europe and the US in the post-Cold War period (See Yost 2000: 103-07). This gap had by then been accentuated by another rapidly growing gap in spending since around 1990. While Europe chose to cash in on the peace dividend, the US instead sought to extend and exploit its unrivalled military superiority by eventually placing the concept of Network Centric Warfare (NCW) at the heart of a deep-reaching military transformation process, often seen to aspire to a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA).<sup>3</sup> The result has been a situation today where European states have a limited capacity to operate militarily together with the US, at least when it comes to complex expeditionary operations. This may be worrisome in itself, but such consequences need to be put in the right context.

Comparisons of military capabilities make sense only insofar as European states want to use force *in the same way* as the US; or if they want to develop similar military capabilities *to influence* US policy. For NATO, the loss of interoperability is a problem for the continued viability of the Alliance: Having to operate alongside rather than together with each other may be seen to harm

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<sup>3</sup> The US also experienced a drop in defence spending after the end of the Cold War, reaching a low point of less than 3% of GDP in 1999. But, while Europe has experienced a continued downward trend, with figures falling from 2.17 % of GDP in 1995 to 1.77 % and a total of US\$283bn spent on defence in 2006 (the UK and France account for 40 %), US spending on defence had risen to 3.94 % of GDP and a total of US\$617bn in 2006 (Giegerich and Nicoll 2008: 93).

unity within and put into question US willingness to defend European interests, as more Alliance partners forego the ability to operate together with the US, not only in out of area operations but also in a situation where the collective defence clause (Article five of the North Atlantic Treaty) is invoked again.<sup>4</sup> But in practical terms, given that the US has chosen to operate largely outside of NATO in Afghanistan and Iraq, while leaving operations in the Balkans to the EU, interoperability has become more of a national concern for all European states that wish to take part in coalitions led by the US. One commentator has questioned “whether Europe should try to simply produce smaller versions of what the US possesses just to keep the US happy” (Lindley-French 2002).

A report commissioned by the European Parliament has advised that “interoperability in an EU context must afford its member-states an opportunity to think strategically based on a long-term security perspective” (Boyer and Lindley-French 2007: 6). As the authors of the report goes on to argue, although the EU has hitherto largely avoided separate interoperability standards that would replace those of NATO, due to constraints amongst several Member States, there are two compelling reasons that could see the need to re-evaluate this approach: the perceived impossibility of ever being able to keep up with the US; and the fact that the EU’s Comprehensive Approach is different from the American Full Spectrum Operations (FSO) or Effects Based Approach to Operations (EBAO). The point is that the combination of growing defence expenditure to cover ever more costly equipment and continuing defence budget cuts will only widen the gap, while other parts of Europe’s military (and non-military) capabilities are being neglected. Also, differences in strategic outlook between Europe and the US render other interoperability standards than the traditional NATO understanding necessary (James 2006).

Indeed, a *broad interoperability* concept has been included in the EU *Headline Goal 2010*, which defines it as “the ability of armed forces to operate together and act in conjunction with other civilian instruments” (European Council 2004: note 1).<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, broad interoperability adds to the complexity of military interoperability. But on the other, by including civilian aspects, the spectrum of relevant instruments that can be “counted” towards narrowing the transatlantic gap can be seen to have widened, insofar as Europe is able to offer capabilities that the US does not possess (See e.g. Biscop 2006). The latter is in itself not a key point. Broad interoperability does not free the EU of its responsibilities for military interoperability, which is also a significant problem amongst European NATO and EU Member States. However, it does open up to new ways of thinking about capabilities in Europe. Although the NATO and EU generated capability initiatives had similar starting points and remain interlinked, NATO’s Allied Command Transformation (ACT) process, initiated at the 2002 Prague Summit, is committed to a US transformation model that indiscriminately imposes the same set of (too) high standards on every member state (See Boyer and Lindley-French 2007: 10; Yost 2000). The EU, on the other hand, has been more open to, for example, diversifying tasks between member states, and looking into ways to reform systems and procedures for defence acquisitions and production. As the process has moved along, a clearer understanding of the kind of tasks that the EU Member States are

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<sup>4</sup> The only time Article five has been invoked so far was after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks.

<sup>5</sup> The military Headline Goal process is covered three.

expected to carry out under ESDP has also emerged, although this remains subject to continuous political controversy.

### 3 Improving Military Capabilities

#### 3.1 The Headline Goal 2003: (Re) Counting Old Capabilities

The tasks that were to be carried out under ESDP were not the main concern back in 1999. Or in the words of a Commission official: “The capability gap was so obvious that no one wanted a real assessment”.<sup>6</sup> Instead it was the overwhelming concern for the shortcomings in Europe’s military capabilities, which had become all so apparent during the Kosovo campaign, that spurred the parallel NATO Defence Capabilities Initiative (DCI) at the Washington NATO Summit in April, and the EU Headline Goal (HLG) initiative at the Helsinki Council in December that year (Cf. Skogan 2001). The objective and methodology of both initiatives were to have Member States commit to out-of-area operations by pledging national capabilities to shared force catalogues, largely irrespective of whether it happened inside NATO or ESDP. There was considerable overlap between the HLG and the DCI, and roughly 70 % of the DCI initiatives were considered relevant to ESDP (King's College 2001: 13-15). As Admiral Moreno Barberá, Head of the first EU Headline Task Force, also remarked:

(...), it is important to get over the idea that what has been done up to now will necessarily be the same after 2003. Normally, solutions adopted to create something new, as is the case with the Helsinki Headline Goal, require many ad hoc steps which may not apply once the goal is attained (Quoted in Ulriksen 2003: 130).

The benchmarks identified by the HLG were loosely derived from the Petersberg tasks, adopted from the Western European Union (WEU) and incorporated into the Treaty on European Union (TEU) by the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty (entered into force in 1999).<sup>7</sup> The Petersberg tasks were originally defined as “humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks, and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking” (TEU article 17). As such, they would be seen to cover almost all types of military operations up to collective defence, which still remains outside the scope of ESDP. Moreover, the Petersberg tasks are described in terms of function and not distinguished by the level or type of force required for each of the tasks. This has, in turn, complicated analysis of what is implied by operations on the “low” and “high” end of the scale (van Staden et al. 2000: 8).<sup>8</sup> Some operations at the low end, i.e. “humanitarian and rescue tasks”,

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Commission official, May 2003.

<sup>7</sup> The Petersberg tasks were originally set out at the Hotel Petersberg near Bonn at the WEU Summit in June 1992.

<sup>8</sup> Note that the extension of tasks in the Lisbon Treaty does not significantly change this, although it can be argued that they now express more explicitly the combined civil-military approach that is envisioned for future ESDP operations. The new formulation includes “(...) joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilisation. All these

may require more sophisticated military resources, more manpower and a longer-term commitment than “peacemaking” at the high end. It does not make immediate sense, therefore, to state that the EU is ready to take on tasks at the low end but not the high end, nor is it particularly useful to set specific force levels for each of the tasks.

The identification of the Headline Goal was, therefore, of only limited value in terms of defining the EU’s “level of operationality”. The first set of goals, agreed at the 1999 Helsinki Council, set 2003 as the target date for establishing a Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) of 60,000 troops, with appropriate naval and air support, to be deployed within 60 days and sustained in theatre for up to 12 months.<sup>9</sup> At the 2001 Capabilities Improvement Conference (CIC) in Brussels, the Member States identified a substantial range of forces available to meet the HLG, including 100,000 troops, 400 combat aircraft and 100 naval elements. Most of these forces were, however, already pledged to NATO under the parallel DCI, or to the UN (Schake 2002). No additional capabilities were created, and crucial shortfalls remained in strategic lift, tactical transport and C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance).

As a step towards remedying these shortfalls, the EU launched a European Capability Action Plan (ECAP) at the Laeken Council in December 2001, which established a set of guiding principles to increase the effectiveness of capability efforts, including better coordination between member states and with NATO. Still, the shortfalls took some of the zest out of the Laeken Declaration, which announced the ESDP operational for *some* Petersberg tasks only. It, nonetheless, signalled a not insignificant change of focus away from the negative and paralyzing preoccupation with Europe’s perceived military inferiority. Despite the small progress made in terms of increasing defence budgets or filling crucial gaps in the force catalogue, the mere notion that the ESDP was now operational, that a first goal had been reached, seemed to give the EU and its Member States the confidence to set its own qualitative benchmarks as the HLG process entered a second phase.

### **3.2 The Headline Goal 2010: From Quantity to Quality (I)**

The new Headline Goal, endorsed by the Council in June 2004, and which set 2010 as the new target date, was considerably more to the point. The document put great emphasis on “qualitative requirements”, such as deployability, sustainability and interoperability of forces. It also gave the impression of greater trust in distinct *European* resources, including an emphasis on civilian crisis management instruments “that can be employed together with military instruments” (European Council 2004). We shall return to these below.

The most significant element of the HLG 2010, however, was the further strengthening of the EU’s Rapid Reaction capacity through the “ability to deploy force packages at high readiness as a response to a crisis either as a stand-alone force or as part of a larger operation enabling follow-on phases” (European Council 2004: 2). The idea of having smaller sized rapid reaction force

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tasks may contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories” (Article 28 B of the Lisbon Treaty).

<sup>9</sup> Force numbers and composition were largely influenced by the 1999 Kosovo campaign.

packages grew out of the experience gained in the EU's military operation *ARTEMIS* in DR Congo in 2003. The possibility of using this operation as a template for an EU force concept was raised already at the Franco-British Summit in London on 24 November 2003.<sup>10</sup> Specifications for a "Battlegroups Concept" were then identified in a "food for thought"-paper unveiled by France, Germany and the UK on 10 February 2004 (*The Battlegroups Concept* 2004). Based on this concept, the envisioned force packages were required to be "military effective, credible and coherent". This was translated into "a combined arms battalion sized force package with Combat Support and Combat Service Support", i.e. some 1,500 troops with appropriate logistical, naval and air support (European Council 2004: 2). It was envisioned that the EU should be able to deploy a battlegroup no later than 10 days after a decision to launch an operation.

At the November 2004 Military Capabilities Commitment Conference, the Member States made initial pledges towards establishing 13 self-sustained multinational battlegroups. Some were to be formed by a nation alone, while others were to be made up by a framework nation with other nations contributing niche, or specialist, enabling capabilities (*The Battlegroups Concept* 2004). The first EU Battlegroup (EUBG) was declared operational in January 2005, and Full Operational Capability (FOC) was reached in 2007. From that point on, the EU was to have two battlegroups on standby at all time, ideally enabling the EU to conduct two concurrent crisis response operations simultaneously (Cf. Lindström 2007: ch. 1). By the end of 2008, some 20 EU Member States had done their "tour of duty" in one or several of the first eight EUBGs. None have been deployed so far. This has not been for shortage of crises, which raises questions of the political and practical feasibility of the Battlegroup concept in the first place. Also, the individual contributions have varied in how they have responded to criteria for military effectiveness. This has been a particular challenge for those EUBGs that have been made up by contributions from multiple Member States. The Nordic Battlegroup (NBG), on standby for the first half of 2008, is a particularly telling case, since it was the most multinational of the EUBGs in this first period, involving four EU Member States plus Norway. Still it was considered to be one of the more successful ones, or as noted by *Economist*:

Some contingents, such as the Nordic Battlegroup, are a model of integration. They may be small, but many experts think the battle-groups are a more useful tool for crises management than NATO's hard-punching response force (Economist 2008).

Of course, the NBG never saw any action either. Its relative success was based on other criteria. We shall, therefore, take a closer look at the NBG experience to illustrate the role that the EUBGs have played so far in the capabilities enhancement process, and to illustrate some of the particular challenges involved.

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<sup>10</sup> The origins of the Battlegroup Concept is covered in depth by Gustav Lindström (2007: ch. 1).

### 3.3 The Case of the Nordic Battlegroup – Role and Challenges

In 2004, Sweden, as the first of the small to medium EU Member States, took upon itself the responsibility to act as framework nation for a group of contributing states that would eventually comprise Finland, Norway, Estonia and Ireland. Sweden used this opportunity as a catalyst for transforming its military forces, and between 2004 and 2008 considerable effort and money was invested in creating a small but effective Swedish expeditionary force (Granhölm and Jonson 2006: 19-21). For Sweden, the NBG was also seen as a way to rid itself of its legacy of *alleingang* as a neutral power (Interview with Gunnar Heløe, former Norwegian Defence Attaché to Sweden, 2008). Unlike the previous development of the EU Rapid Reaction Force (RRF), it was reported that there was little domestic debate around Swedish participation in the EUBGs, and that it was relatively easy to build a consensus around the NBG initiative (Granhölm and Jonson 2006: 14). Ireland, who joined the NBG in 2007, was in a similar position, since full participation in the NBG implied a change national law that prohibited Irish armed forces from participating in multinational exercises outside the homeland (Kristiansen 2008). As such, the NBG represented a window of opportunity for two traditional neutral states to make their first binding commitments to an international force. The traditional pattern for states like Sweden and Ireland has been to arrive in theatre with peace forces three to six months after a UN mandate has been given (See Granhölm and Jonson 2006: 21). Entering into a Battlegroup, on the other hand, commits the participating states to having standing forces that will be first on the scene; presumably under a UN mandate, but this is not strictly a formal requirement (Lindström 2007: 52).

Although the Swedish Armed Forces favoured a national Battlegroup, multinationality for several reasons became an explicit objective of the NBG—policymakers wanted to share the risks and costs of putting up a battlegroup, while making it easier to swallow politically (Granhölm and Jonson 2006: 14; interview with Gunnar Heløe, 2008). Eventually multinationality has also become a political objective of the Battlegroup concept itself.<sup>11</sup> It has been seen as a way to foster integration, and to grant those Member States that cannot provide a battlegroup on their own an opportunity to participate in ESDP (Mölling 2007: 7). For the NBG, the multinational character, as well the drive towards transformation in the Swedish Armed Forces, resulted in a somewhat larger battlegroup than stipulated, or perhaps strictly needed (Kristiansen 2008: 30-31). Although the actual fighting force, which was supplied in full by Sweden, counted 1,500 troops, the NBG in the end totalled some 2,800 personnel. Some of the individual contributions were clearly more helpful than others, such as for example the Irish IED (Improvised Explosive Device) team, and if the NBG would have been deployed, some parts of the force would almost certainly have stayed behind or transported in later (Kristiansen 2008: 31). On the other hand, the multinational composition of the NBG was also a practical way for a small state like Sweden to take on responsibility for a battlegroup. The Swedes did, for example, not have sufficient field medical capacities, which it turned to Norway to supply, and it had to rely on outside partners to supply key logistics.

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<sup>11</sup> Britain originally wanted the Battlegroups to be made up of predominantly single nations, since this would ease the challenges of interoperability and deployability.

Although from a military effectiveness point of view, such “the more the merrier” thinking is clearly not an asset for an expeditionary force, the NBG did receive praise for the way it managed to mould a surprisingly integrated and effective force out of contributions from five nations with limited logistical resources (Kristiansen 2008: 32). From its Force Headquarters (FHQ) located in Enköping, the NBG carried out the full planning process in preparation for the standby period together with the dedicated Operations Headquarters (OHQ) in London, and was, as the first EUBG, actually able to deploy and train the full force in an exercise in Luleå in Northern Sweden in November 2007. However, some crucial capability shortfalls, which continue to hamper all of the EUBGs, were never properly addressed or put to the test.

First, the framework nation is responsible for pre-identified operational and strategic enablers. Sweden had to make arrangements for deploying and sustaining the NBG within ten days of an eventual decision to launch an operation. Drawing on the *ARTEMIS* experience, the only really viable solution for any EUBG would be deployment by air.<sup>12</sup> Sweden itself only had a small fleet of eight medium-sized C-130 Hercules aircraft, which meant that it had to rely on others to supply strategic airlift capacity for the NBG. This was also partly the case for tactical airlift.<sup>13</sup> The problem, which is covered extensively in ESDP literature, is that European states are still severely short of the kind of aircraft needed for deploying large quantities of troops and personnel over great distances simultaneously (Lindström 2007: 31-40; See e.g. Andersson 2006: 29-31; Vlachos Dengler 2002). The combined EU transport fleet consists of some 600 small to medium-sized military aircraft. Most of them are really tactical transport aircraft, which fall short of the kind of tonnage and range required for effective strategic airlift in operations outside Europe (Lindström 2007: 32).<sup>14</sup> The Swedish solution was to join the 2005 NATO Strategic Airlift Interim Solution (SALIS), which is, as the name indicates, an interim arrangement through which 15 European states charter six civilian Antonov An-124-100 aircraft from Ukraine. The arrangement is meant to cover the period pending the delivery of the Airbus A-400-M aircraft, which has been purchased by seven European states. The project has been delayed several times, but the first aircraft are currently expected to arrive in 2010.<sup>15</sup> During the NBG standby period, Sweden together with 11 NATO Member States also signed a Memorandum of Understanding confirming

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<sup>12</sup> For discussions of the feasibility of alternative transport by sea, see von Weissenberg (2002) or Lindström (2007: 40-45)

<sup>13</sup> The Swedish C-130 aircraft would have been able to cover some of tactical airlift requirements, but they would have been limited to areas with appropriate airfields. The problem is rather one of a general lack of suitable helicopters, which significantly reduces the tactical mobility of a combat force. As NBG entered into stand-by modus, Sweden was still awaiting delivery of its new NH90. As a temporary solution, it initiated the conversion of three civilian Puma helicopters into tactical transport helicopters, but these were not delivered in time. As it stands, Europe faces continued shortfalls in tactical transport helicopter capabilities, but these problems will be reduced when the NH90, which has been purchased by 11 European states, enters into service from 2010 after several delays.

<sup>14</sup> *Strategic airlift* refers to the ability of aircraft to carry so-called outsized equipment, such as helicopters armoured vehicles and boats, and/or large numbers of personnel over long distances *into* theatres of operation; i.e. between two airbases that are not in the same vicinity. Defining characteristics are, as such, payload, troop carrying capacity and range, but also size of cargo doors, dimension and geometry of cargo compartment and floor loading restrictions. See Lindström (2007: 31-40) for detailed discussion.

<sup>15</sup> It has been pointed out that since the A-400-M is significantly smaller than the Antonov or the C-17, it will only reduce, not solve the problem (Andersson 2006: 31).

participation in the NATO Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC) initiative for the collective acquisition and operation of three Boeing C-17s. These will be based at Papa Airbase in Hungary and operated by multinational crews. In addition, Britain has leased five C-17 aircraft from Boeing, the last one to be delivered in 2009. This means that the Europeans are for the moment formally covered through SALIS and the British aircraft – although issues of actual availability still remain – and will by 2012, through a mix of national and collective purchases, have taken significant steps towards filling the strategic airlift shortfalls.<sup>16</sup>

On the personnel side, the framework nation is, in addition to putting up the actual battlegroup, responsible for making arrangements for a pre-identified strategic reserve force. The Swedish Armed Forces were not able to put up such an additional reserve. A request was forwarded to the UK, but arrangements were never formalised, which meant that it would have had to be improvised in case of need.<sup>17</sup> Pre-identified reserves has been a consistent problem for all of the multinational EUBGs, and several (non-optimal) solutions have been proposed (Mölling 2007: 8; Lindström 2007: 53-56). The problem is ultimately rooted in the general lack of European forces available for deployment in international operations. The IISS' *Strategic Balance* shows that only 2.69 % of Europe's 2.65m men and women under arms were deployed in 2007. This is well below the NATO target of 8 % of ground forces on operations and 40 % being deployable (Giegerich and Nicoll 2008: 13). It should be noted that the percentage of deployed troops, in relative and absolute terms, has been growing steadily together with a reduction in Europe's large standing armies from 4.51m in 1995 to 2.65m in 2007. Then again, there are large variations between the states (see below). However, the point is that there is a mismatch between available troops and competing demands for forces to active deployments in Afghanistan and elsewhere, in addition to parallel demands for troops to the NATO Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) (Kaitera and Ben-Ari 2008: 7). In this highly competitive environment, suitable troops are hard to find.

Whereas the 2010 HLG represented a qualitative improvement from the 2003 HLG, it seems that the EU has put all its eggs in one basket with the prominence and prestige given to the Battlegroup concept. This raises a central question: Is the Battlegroup concept a relevant force model for the EU? It is a well-known fact that armies prepare to fight the last war. The initial EU RRF concept, conceived in 1999, was based on the experiences in the Balkans during the 1990s. Likewise, the Battlegroup concept built, as described above, directly on operation *ARTEMIS* in DR Congo in 2003. During the three months EUFOR was deployed, a small but effective EU force of some 1,800 soldiers managed to establish secure conditions in an area limited to the immediate surroundings of Bunia, capital of the Ituri province, to allow MONUC to regroup and move to a Chapter VII mandate. As it often turns out, however, chances are slim that the same conditions will apply to the next scenario. Pre-identified force packages like the EUBGs have to strike a balance between being flexible enough, while tailored to fit the most likely contingencies. Although the political reasons for not deploying the EUBGs should not be underestimated, none

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<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that Luxembourg, for example, could and would hardly have purchased *one* A-400-M had it not been for the prospect of being able to offer a highly valued capability to NATO and ESDP.

<sup>17</sup> There is no absolute reserve force requirement, but it remains a basic military principle (Lindström 2007: 53).



of the contingencies in which the EU has intervened have been “perfect fits” for the Battlegroup concept (Cf. Lindström 2007: 58-59). The main problem has to do with the limited size of the EUBGs. It has been remarked that “[i]f the EUBGs were deployed as stand-alone force in a high-intensity operation in a hostile environment, the risk of failure would be extremely high” (Kaitera and Ben-Ari 2008: 3). Of course, this is not the kind of environments in which the EUBGs are likely to be used anyway, but given the ever present uncertainty about the potential scale of a crisis, a more robust force model would certainly reduce the risk, and thus make it more relevant for political decision-makers to use them.

In comparison, the parallel NATO Response Force (NRF), conceived at the 2002 NATO Prague summit, called for a joint force package consisting of a brigade-size land component of approximately 10,000 troops, in addition to maritime and air components, totalling roughly 25,000 troops.<sup>18</sup> NRF was declared fully operational at the 2006 NATO Riga summit, but this was no longer the case six months after, mainly due to diminished US contributions (Kaitera and Ben-Ari 2008: 5). The rather ambitious NRF concept has, thus, proved to be unsustainable at a time when the bulk of NATO’s deployable forces are tied to the ongoing ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) operation in Afghanistan. At the unofficial NATO meeting in Noordwijk, Netherlands, in 2007, the NRF concept was adjusted to so-called *graduated readiness*, which implied a considerably smaller NRF force after 2008 when the initial rotation scheme ended (Kaitera and Ben-Ari 2008: 5). Then again, the main objective of the NRF has arguably been to provide an incentive for force transformation amongst the European NATO Member States in order to remain interoperable with US forces. This renders the fact that the NRF has not been deployed nor continued to fulfil the identified force targets less important, insofar as ISAF has been the real catalyst for transformation (Kaitera and Ben-Ari 2008: 6; See Binnendijk and Kugler 2003).<sup>19</sup> The Battlegroup concept, on the other hand, has not been associated explicitly with transformation goals (Granholm and Jonson 2006: 12). This may have left the EU in a more vulnerable situation than NATO, for whom NRF is arguably more easily dispensable.<sup>20</sup>

The question is whether the EUBGs will continue to receive much patronage if their relevance or likelihood of ever being used is put into doubt, regardless of whether the obstacles are political or practical. Having forces on standby is neither significantly less expensive nor resource-consuming than having them deployed, while the political leverage gained by putting your forces in harm’s way is undoubtedly higher. The point is simple — not using the EUBGs has and will continue to undermine the credibility of the concept. But in addition, this has deluded the role that the EUBGs have played in transforming and integrating armed forces, in particular forces of some of the small to medium states.

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<sup>18</sup> The initiative was introduced by US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld and loosely based on a concept put forward in an article by Hans Binnendijk and Richard Kugler (2002). The final NRF concept was then agreed at the 2004 NATO Istanbul summit. For more details, see Kaitera and Ben-Ari (2008: 2-3).

<sup>19</sup> Although not deployed for military purposes, NRF was used for security purposes in the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens and the 2004 presidential elections in Afghanistan, and to carry out disaster relief after hurricane Katrina in the US and the earthquake in Pakistan both in 2005.

<sup>20</sup> NATO may, however, be in for more trouble, having “chosen” ISAF as its prestige project.

Sweden actively used the NBG as a catalyst for transforming its armed forces towards expeditionary capabilities. A similar effect has been noted amongst some of the Central European states, although in many cases it is hard to discern whether transformation has been spurred by participation in NRF or the EUBGs (Mölling 2007: 6). This is of little practical consequence, however, since the use of NRF benchmarks has been encouraged in EUBG training and standardisation to ensure interoperability between NATO and EU forces (Boyer and Lindley-French 2007; for an example, see Swedish Armed Forces 2008). In most cases, the same forces will also rotate between being on standby for either organisation. However, beyond the streamlining of standards for training and equipment, and the popular notion that NRF means roughly the same as the EUBGs, only bigger and more robust, there are some differences between the concepts when it comes to flexibility and the incentives they offer to different categories of Member States.

### **3.4 Towards Lead and Niche Nations: ESDP as Arena for Role Specialisation**

The Battlegroup concept offers much flexibility in terms of formation, ranging from single nation to multinational EUBGs, and capabilities to be included beyond the minimum requirements outlined above. Different Member States may and do have different reasons for and means of participating in an EUBG. Large states like Britain and France have no trouble setting up a single nation EUBG with support of its own OHQ, and appear to prefer to do so with only symbolical contributions by other states. As such, participation in EUBGs for these states has on the outset little impact on internal transformation or integration with other states. Smaller member states, on the other hand, are given strong incentives to transform and integrate their armed forces with partner states and the pre-identified OHQ structure. The NBG, for example, gave a significant boost to long-dormant plans for tighter Nordic Defence Cooperation (NDC), which have continued to evolve in the period after the battlegroup was dissolved (Granhölm and Jonson 2006: 14; see also O'Dwyer 2008; Stoltenberg 2009).

In fact, the flexibility of the Battlegroup concept, and the simultaneous identification of six EU Member States that were to develop the capacity to lead ESDP operations from national OHQs (Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Greece) (this also a consequence of operation *ARTEMIS*) can be seen to have accentuated and formalised ongoing trends towards some role specialisation and tighter cooperation between armed forces in Europe. These trends have been evident for some time, and can be attributed partly to the increased demand for expeditionary forces in international operations, and the need to spend smarter in view of shrinking national defence budgets (Missiroli 2002). They are, however, ultimately dependent on some form of shared normative framework or arena in which these new capability practices may evolve. Both NATO and the EU have been instrumental in creating this arena, but whereas NATO through its ACT and NRF initiatives has put the same type of rigorous demands on all its Member States based on a US expeditionary warfare model, the EU has arguably been more open to diversifying the incentive structure in a way that appeals to states along the whole force spectrum. Today, Europe's armed forces can be put into three main categories (Forster 2006; cf. also Giegerich and Nicoll 2008: ch. 3): in the first category, the British and French armed forces have as their main function an *Expeditionary Warfare* role, focusing principally on deployment outside

national borders. This transformation represents, according to Anthony Forster, “the most striking characteristic of trends in Europe since the late 1990s”, and most states’ armed forces have taken steps in roughly the same direction, although it is far from a given that they will end up with the same structure (Forster 2006: 47). The largest category is still made up of states like Finland, Greece, Sweden, Norway and the post-communist states, which remain committed to a *Territorial Defence* model, and have retained conscription and relatively heavy armoured formations (Forster 2006: 53-57). Most of them, however, struggle to combine large standing armies with the qualitative (and financial) demands on forces to NRF and ongoing NATO operations, and have in reality moved towards semi-professional forces for international operations, while their territorial defence capacity is being bled. Finland remains a notable exception. A third category consists of states that have adopted what Forster refers to as a *Late Modern* model, including Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. These states retain a dual mission for their armed forces, “providing what might be termed a ‘residual Territorial Defence function’, but in parallel a commitment to provide a significant contribution as a proportion of overall force size to international peacekeeping” (Forster 2006: 62). Some states in this category, such as Belgium, have gradually shifted more of their weight towards the latter role, tailoring their forces to cater specifically to international operations, but foregoing the ambition of being able to defend national territory (Ulriksen 2003: 157).

Individual states have, in other words, adopted different ways of transforming their forces to cater to an expeditionary warfare model, and have, as such, moved in roughly the same direction, albeit not consolidated around an ideal form. Many of the smaller European states in particular have come to view NATO standards as something of a straitjacket, while it has been pointed out that “the [ACT] certification process has proved so complex that it is either unaffordable and/or unattainable for many EU members that are also members of NATO” (Boyer and Lindley-French 2007: 10). Contemporary trends may, therefore, rather point in the direction of some intra-European division of labour: in which the small states develop niche capabilities that can be plugged into the force structures of a handful of lead nations. France in particular appear to have seen the development of an expeditionary warfare model, as well as taking the lead in two ESDP operations (*ARTEMIS* in 2003 and *EUFOR Tchad/RCA* in 2007), as important means of increasing the amount of influence it has within the EU (Forster 2006: 47; Rieker 2005). Other states have aspired to become lead nations by developing framework capabilities, such as OHQs, or seeking to integrate the capabilities they lack through permanent or ad hoc arrangements with partner states. Yet others have gone for sought-after niche capabilities, such as the Irish IED capacity or Luxembourg’s purchase of *one* A-400-M transport aircraft. The appeal of such a system, the contours of which have become more apparent as the ESDP has progressed, is that it offers incentives for some states to change in order to *lead*, while also rewarding states for developing capabilities that increase their *influence* within the system.

A similar line of argument is offered by Janne Haaland Matlary, who adopts Robert Putnam’s classical “two-level game”-approach to argue that the EU invariably offers incentives for states to “pool” sovereignty in the security and defence field (Matlary 2006; Putnam 1988). She claims that since states want to share the risk of intervention, and contemporary Peace Support

Operations (PSOs) demand integration and the involvement of international organisations to an increasing extent, the EU has become a useful arena for its member states: “EU governments now use military force for general foreign policy aims related to gaining international influence, and view EU membership also in this perspective” (Matlary 2006: 110). In this context, the main concern is no longer “the defence of national independence but the quest for influence” (Aggestam 2005: 16; quoted in Matlary 2006: 110). As such, “sensitive questions about national sovereignty” have become an inherent part of the “incremental capacity-building process” (Matlary 2006: 111). That is, all of the EU’s capability initiatives and programmes so far have been created from the bottom up, and none of them has *formally* impeded on national sovereignty. But the *de facto* incentive structure that has emerged has, nonetheless, modified the priority that all of the EU Member States, not only the small, seem to put on the national sovereignty norm, while incrementally replacing it with more collective norms.

Of course, this applies differently to individual states, depending amongst other factors on size, membership affiliations and strategic outlook. This is also reflected in the current situation where divergence, or at least a degree of fairly stable variations in European force structures, in place of the uniform transformation towards an expeditionary force model that has been the goal of the NATO initiatives, seems to be the major trend. A remaining problem is, however, that some collectively desired capabilities, such as typically strategic airlift carriers, may have little incentives for being initiated at the national level, whereas there are difficulties in filling certain “holes” in the capability catalogue without some “top-down” management. There also appear to be limited incentives for changing to more collective practices on the capability *acquisition* side (i.e., *procurements + production*), which inevitably leads to continued inefficient spending and unnecessary duplication of national assets. To deal with these problems, the 2010 HLG also identified the creation of a common European Defence Agency (EDA) as one of its central objectives.

### **3.5 The European Defence Agency: Managing the System Top-Down?**

At the June 2003 Thessaloniki Council, agreement was reached on the establishment of a defence agency, following a Franco-British proposal earlier that year. The EDA was formally launched on 12 July 2004. It was set up as an EU Agency acting under the authority of the Council, with Javier Solana as Head of Agency and chairman of the Steering Board. It was endowed with four principal tasks: harmonising defence capabilities development and identifying capability needs for ESDP; consolidating the European defence technological and industrial base; promoting research and technology; and facilitating armaments cooperation. Since 2006, a strategy for each of these areas has been elaborated, with work being undertaken in support of a fourth strategy on armaments.

The idea of creating a defence agency grew out of several more or less failed attempts at increasing coordination of arms procurement and production in Europe during the 1990s. The EDA formally replaced the West European Armaments Group (WEAG), which had been established in 1992 in the framework of the Western European Union (WEU). It also adopted a much broader agenda than the Organisation for Joint Armaments Cooperation (OCCAR), which

had been established in 1996 (acquiring legal status in 2001) by Germany, France, Italy and the UK, and which remains engaged in downstream management of a few key defence equipment programmes, most notably the A-400-M transport aircraft. Other initiatives include the 2000 Framework Agreement, signed by the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden, based on the 1998 Letter of Intent, and designed to ease export regimes and harmonise national rules related to defence procurement (Cf. Eliassen and Sitter 2006). These initiatives represent pragmatic attempts to overcome some of the more technical and procedural obstacles to a more effective European defence industry, but they remain limited in terms of membership and fall well short of a defence *agency*. What was it, then, that prompted the much more ambitious EDA initiative in 2003?

First, as argued by Eliassen and Sitter, the increased role of the EU in security and defence matters around the turn of the century added to the pressure for a common approach to armaments that had increased steadily since the end of the Cold War, which had left Europe (and the world) with a large surplus of armaments producers (Eliassen and Sitter 2006: 10; See Bitzinger 2003). Secondly, the Commission assumed a more active role against the defence sector's position as a "bastion of interventionist and protectionist policy in an increasingly free-market and integrationist European Union" (Eliassen and Sitter 2006: 3 and 10). This took the form of increased pressure for opening up to competition in the defence market, especially in the area of "dual use" products, i.e. products that are designed for military use but have significant civilian applications (e.g. radios) and vice versa (e.g. doors for frigates). This meant that more products, which used to be subject to national exemptions under article 296 of the TEU, were included in the internal market, which, in turn, increased the Commission's leeway to comment also on defence market issues (See Mörth 2003; Eliassen and Sitter 2006: 11; European Commission 2003, 2007). Thirdly, the defence industry itself started to put pressure on governments to ease up on protectionist practices, as the European defence industry started to consolidate through a series of national mergers (e.g. the merger of British Aerospace and GEC Marconi to create BAE Systems) and transnational mergers (e.g. the merger between the German DaimlerChrysler Aerospace AG [DASA], the French Aérospatiale-Matra, and the Spanish Construcciones Aeronáuticas SA [CASA] to create the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company [EADS]) (Cf. Vlachos Dengler 2002). These companies still have to deal with a very national oriented mind-set, but the close identification of interests between national defence industries and governments has grown significantly weaker, removing thus some of the principal obstacles on the national level to a more consolidated European defence market.

Once the weight of the "national factor" softened, the idea of creating a European Defence Agency quickly matured in step with what André Barrinha has deemed a "move from a military sector dynamic to a clear economic one reinvented as the main existential logic related to defence industry" (Barrinha 2008: 10). Put rather crudely, the defence industry is no longer primarily or exclusively subject to the logic of national survival but of economies of scale, although much remains before a truly competitive European defence market is a fact. The change of tone since around 2000 is, nevertheless, significant: the very legitimacy of the once so strong norm of retaining a strong national defence technological and industrial base is simply losing out to what

can be referred to as the “existential condition” argument—that Europe must unite for its own survival, or face a gradual corrosion of its military clout (Barrinha 2008: 23). Within this new normative context, the EDA’s “name and shame”-tactic has become quite an effective instrument for compliance, despite the lack of *binding* commitments made by the participating states (all EU Member States except Denmark, and Norway).

Since 2006, EDA has operated an intergovernmental *voluntary* regime aimed at encouraging cross-border competition and transparency in the European defence equipment market. It is based on a voluntary Code of Conduct (CoC), adopted on 1 July 2006, which currently includes 25 of the 27 EU Member States (except Romania and Denmark) and Norway. The regime covers contracts exempted from the internal market by article 296 of the TEU, and complements thus the Commission’s initiatives in the area of “dual use” products.<sup>21</sup> In principle, and increasingly so in practice, the bulk of European defence procurements are, in other words, covered by some form of EU regulations. In place of the strict enforcement mechanisms employed in the internal market, however, the voluntary regime is based on a monitoring and reporting system to help ensure compliance with the Code and increase the transparency of the regime, such that “peer pressure” can be exercised in cases of non-compliance. To this end, all defence contracts over one million Euros are to be posted on a European Bulletin Board (one for Government Contracts, EBB1, and one for Industry Contracts, EBB2). The periodical EDA reports indicate that there has been a steady increase in contract opportunities posted on EBB1, and sub-contract opportunities posted on EBB2, while exemptions from the CoC reflect “a reasonable and relatively restrictive use of the follow-on exceptions” (EDA 2008).

Still, although the regime may bring about more efficient spending, it is certainly not a given that all of Europe’s capability shortfalls will be filled by relying on market mechanisms, since some collective needs do not necessarily correspond with national priorities. It has been suggested that the EU through a common EU fund could organise joint procurements along the line of NATO’s AWACS fleet (See e.g. Naumann 2000). But it is unlikely that such a fund, would receive much patronage, given the current state of European defence budgets. Insofar as the idea is gaining some practical salience, however, the EDA could become an important catalyst for similar projects in the future. Also, by promoting collaborative defence research, the EDA has taken steps to avoid the massive duplication that still exists in research and development (R&D). EDA projects have been initiated to address, for example, Command, Control and Communications (C3) shortfalls. These are capabilities that have typically hampered interoperability, as armies often operate different radio systems that do not communicate with each other. With joint R&D, such problems can be avoided in the future, whilst linking R&D to concerted procurement may create economies of scale (Schake 2002: 32).

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<sup>21</sup> Exceptions from the CoC are allowed in cases of pressing operational urgency, for follow-on work or supplementary goods and services, and for extraordinary and compelling reasons of national security. In these cases, an explanation must be provided to the EDA. Excluded from the Code altogether are procurement of chemical, bacteriological and radiological goods and services, nuclear propulsion systems and cryptographic equipment.

Finally, as an EU agency on the side of the Council structure, the EDA has to some extent become an independent agenda setter and a voice in the capability debate, while serving as a vehicle through which Solana, as Head of Agency, can keep up the pressure on the EU Member States to continue to honour their commitments.<sup>22</sup> The EDA has also produced a substantial number of policies and recommendations, and has allegedly “constituted itself as a privileged forum where national defence ministers and armaments directors, Commission, Council, and industry meet and harmonize views” (Barrinha 2008: 21; see also Oikonomou 2006). The EDA’s first Chief Executive, Nick Witney, has, on the other hand, warned that the level of harmonization, as well the EDA’s actual impact on national priorities, should not be exaggerated, and that many challenges remain (See e.g. Witney 2008). The changing dynamics of the European defence industry have, nevertheless, spurred some analyses that draw attention to the alleged existence of a European “defence-industrial simplex”, or the way in which:

both the military – armaments lobby and the technology-industrial lobby have worked at the EU level to create a simple but compelling relationship between the need for forces capable of ‘robust intervention’, the technological and industrial benefits of defence and aerospace research, and (...) the creation of the European Defence Agency (EDA) in 2005 (Manners 2006: 193).

Although the phrase “defence-industrial simplex” itself may come across as somewhat conspiratorial, the very idea that the gradual alignment of interests between the European defence industry and the proponents of ESDP has strengthened the military element in EU policy, is uncontroversial (Mörth 2003; See e.g. Mawdsley, Martinelli, and Remacle 2004). And as we shall see next, despite the EU’s legacy as a civilian actor and the relative importance given to the comprehensive approach and the civilian dimension of ESDP, the civilian capability process has received only marginal attention in the literature on ESDP, almost to the point of neglect, when compared to the military side (See Howorth 2007: 124).

## 4 Improving Civilian Capabilities

### 4.1 Civilian Crisis Management: Sending Solicitors to War

As described above, Europe’s main concern back in 1999 was its military shortcomings so painfully displayed by the Kosovo campaign. The subsequent military HLG, therefore, naturally received more attention than the parallel civilian process, also because the latter was an area in which it was more or less taken for granted that the EU was well covered. Both the EU and the member states had considerable experience in sending police officers, observers and other personnel to various conflict zones, often in the aftermath of military intervention, and in the context of the UN, the OSCE and various NGOs. However, beyond the obvious military lessons, the Kosovo experience also revealed significant difficulties deploying a sufficient number of police personnel to UNMIK in the aftermath of the NATO-led military campaign (Nowak 2006:

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<sup>22</sup> The EDA’s first Chief Executive, Nick Witney was also fairly outspoken in the debate, and has continued to voice his opinion after he resigned (See e.g. Witney 2008).

18). Initially, therefore, the main motivation behind the development of the non-military crisis management dimension of ESDP was limited to coordinating the various resources of the EU and the member states to be able to respond more rapidly and effectively to crises.

The first significant step was made at the Helsinki Council in December 1999, which adopted an *Action plan for non-military crisis management of the EU* alongside the plan for strengthening the military component of ESDP (Council 1999).<sup>23</sup> Recognising the considerable collective and national civilian resources available to the EU, the plan underlined the need for: strengthening the synergy and responsiveness of national, collective and NGO resources in order to avoid duplication and improve performance; enhancing EU contributions to and performance within other organisations, such as the OSCE and the UN, and in EU autonomous operations; and ensuring inter-pillar coherence. Mirroring the military HLG, particular emphasis was put on developing a rapid reaction capacity, while urgent consideration was to be given to police capabilities. In accordance with the Action Plan, a second step was made with the identification and approval of four priority areas of civilian crisis management by the Feira Council in June 2000. These were police, rule of law, civilian administration and civil protection. Targets were identified for each area, including: 5000 police officers, 1000 of which to be deployable within 30 days; 200 judges, prosecutors and penitentiary staff, 60 of which deployable in 30 days; a pool of experts for civil administration with concrete targets to be identified at a later stage (never happened); and 2-3 assessment or coordination teams to be dispatched within 3-7 hours for civil protection, as well as intervention teams of up to 2000 persons to be dispatched within a week. By the time of the 2001 Laeken Council, at which ESDP was declared operational, most targets had been met, and at the Civilian Capability Commitment Conference in November 2002 it was confirmed that all targets had been exceeded through voluntary commitments by the member states.

At the outset, this confirmed the image of the EU as a strong civilian actor, but as on the military side, these first civilian targets were really an exercise in counting capabilities that were already there. Qualitative requirements, such as the actual availability, competence and sustainability of the personnel pledged, were still largely absent. Nevertheless, the fact of the matter was that before 1999 *civilian* crisis management (CCM) had yet to enter EU security vocabulary. Rather, as Agnieszka Nowak points out, “EU policy-makers used the expression ‘non-military crisis management’ to describe any EU civilian involvement in crisis management” (Nowak 2006: 17). The identification of CCM as a specific element of ESDP in the 1999 Action Plan, initiated the gradual development of civilian-operational capabilities and mechanisms of coordination that “is indeed particular to the EU and has no equivalent in other organisations” (Nowak 2006: 17). The 2001 Swedish Presidency especially put great emphasis on the civilian dimension of ESDP, while for the first time exploring a more proactive role of civilian instruments in an ESDP report that resulted in the endorsement of the *EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts* by the Göteborg Council in June 2001 (Cf. Howorth 2007: 126).

Despite the meagre qualitative progress made in those early years, the EU identified and started filling an operational and conceptual vacuum, only partially occupied by the EU itself via first

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<sup>23</sup> For a more detailed account of these developments, see Nowak (2006).



pillar activities and Member State involvement in UN and OSCE missions. By gradually building an institutional framework into which especially nationally generated civilian capabilities could be plugged, it also moved beyond the *ad hoc* character of previous CCM practices. Fuelled by the experiences in the Balkans as well as Iraq and Afghanistan, this rather constructive role played by the EU in harvesting national experiences and creating a normative space in which civilian instruments have received a gradually and relatively more significant role compared to military instruments, ought to be kept in mind when revisiting the many challenges that still remain.

The EU Police Mission in BiH (EUPM), launched on 1 January 2003, was a first source of lessons learned for the EU in the area of CCM. First of all, it revealed the significant institutional challenges of coordinating the EUPM with other EU police related activities, which were all subject to different approaches, time spans, decision making structures, mandates, structures, etc (Interview with Commission official, May 2003; cf. Norheim-Martinsen 2005). The EUPM itself was given a small mentoring and advisory role, but no executive powers. Executive police work was generally left in the hands of the Bosnian police force, although EUFOR, the military ESDP operation *Althea* initiated in December 2004, was mandated to engage in gendarmerie type operations. In addition, the Bosnian police force was already receiving advice and guidance from ten police and justice experts, employed by the Commission under the Stability and Association Process (SAP). Complicating the situation further, the EU was also engaged in activities under the external dimension of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA), addressing issues of corruption, organised crime and border control. Beyond the obvious operational challenges raised by this situation, it confirmed the key problem of inter-pillar coherence that had been anticipated in the 1999 Action Plan (See Marquina and Ruiz 2005).<sup>24</sup>

On a general level, the EUPM experience revealed some problems of the methodology of increasing civilian capabilities. The “boxing” of capabilities into the four priority areas identified at Feira (police, rule of law, civilian administration and civil protection), which were then negotiated and developed separately, effectively limited thinking on what was actually required in each particular case (Gourlay 2004: 12). Moreover, due to both poor external assessments and lack of training, the quality of the personnel deployed relative to each situation needed to be improved. The actual recruitment of appropriate personnel was also limited by a national “force” generation process that was biased towards government employees, and effectively excluded people with (more) relevant experience, including independent consultants, academics and professionals engaged in NGO activities (Gourlay 2004: 7; Nowak 2006: 28). These issues, in turn, reflected a more general problem of using the military force generation model as a blueprint for civilian “corps”. Eventually, EU policymakers also realised that the initial subordination of CCM capabilities to military capabilities was simply not tenable, as it became clear that CCM as an instrument was not going to be used reactively and primarily after or alongside military forces, but preventively to avoid crises in as far away places as Indonesia. As such, they need to be self-standing, which requires a whole different administrative and logistical apparatus than what was envisioned initially.

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<sup>24</sup> Although fully appreciating the gravity of the significant challenges posed by the inter-pillar (See e.g. Gourlay 2006), this report concentrates on CCM capability developments within the *ESDP* context.

## 4.2 The Civilian Headline Goal 2008: From Quantity to Quality (II)

Drawing on the initial lessons learned, a new Action Plan was endorsed by the Brussels Council on 17-18 June 2004 (European Council 2004). The plan pointed to the need for more flexible, integrated “packages” of CCM personnel, while broadening the range of expertise beyond the four priority areas identified above. Accordingly, the 2008 Civilian Headline Goal (CHG), also endorsed by the June 2004 Council, added monitoring missions and support for EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) to the original list, while noting that the EU should also be able to contribute to security sector reform (SSR), and to support disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes (European Council 2004). To this end, the EU was to be able to strengthen local institutions by means of advice, training and monitoring, and to carry out also executive functions in so-called “substitution missions”. Mirroring the objective of the parallel military HLG 2010, the aim was set to deploy and sustain several civilian ESDP operations concurrently, including at least one large substitution mission, at short notice and in a non-benign environment.

Subsequently, priority was given to the development of rapidly deployable packages of experts in so-called Civilian Response Teams (CRTs), to be deployed within 30 days of a decision by the Council to launch a mission (European Council 2004). At the same time, steps were taken towards a comprehensive EU concept for Security Sector Reform (SSR) (Cf. Spence and Fluri 2008; Nowak 2006: 32-33), while the institutional and administrative capacity of the Council Secretariat to undertake civilian strategic and operational planning and mission support was strengthened (see previous chapter). Regular stocktaking in Civilian Capability Commitment/Improvement Conferences later showed that the number of personnel has increased steadily across the “six plus” priority areas, fulfilling thus the 2008 CHG, while routinely pointing to the need to do more, especially when it comes to creating synergies within and between the civilian and military areas of ESDP. This was also the main theme in the 2010 Civilian Headline Goals, adopted in 2007, which took note of the growing demand for SSR, but included little new in terms of concepts or concrete targets (European Council 2007).

The civilian capability process shows that the EU has experienced a steep learning curve in its quest to develop an effective CCM capacity, a task that has proved perhaps more challenging than initially expected. The result has, nevertheless, been an emerging capacity that is, indeed, “particular to the EU”. The development of the CRTs in particular demonstrates that the EU has “undertaken an important methodological step” away from the initial “boxing” towards more flexible and integrated planning and deployment of civilian ESDP operations (Nowak 2006: 33). The question remains, however, how it has affected the comparative advantage of the EU as a strategic actor. Or to rephrase the question: Have civilian CCM capabilities substituted for or complemented military force in a way that renders the previously covered European military capability shortfalls less important?

## 5 Concluding Remarks

### 5.1 Broad Interoperability as Comparative Advantage

One problem is that, despite the relative strengthening of the civilian side and the growing emphasis on *broad interoperability*, civilian and military ESDP operations are still carried out separately. Several simultaneous and/or follow-up ESDP operations have been launched, but no “integrated” civil-military operations, making use of the civil-military planning and command structures in the Council Secretariat, have been carried out.<sup>25</sup> Despite the apparent overlaps between the methodology, concepts and schedules between the military and civilian headline goals, a *Huntingtonian* separation of the EU civil-military interface is, therefore, evident when it comes to enhancing capabilities (Huntington 1957; Cf. Egnell 2006; Gordon 2006; Norheim-Martinsen 2009).<sup>26</sup>

As CCM has evolved to become a proactive instrument of the EU, to be used before a crisis erupts and the need for military crisis management supposedly becomes unavoidable, it has also become – and this might be good news in some respects – more separate and separable from the military side. The problem is, however, that it has become correspondently harder to identify how CCM complements or substitutes for military force. As we shall see in the next chapter, the EU’s operational pattern has become distinctively sequential, a point which undermines the very idea of the comprehensive approach; that is, quoting Kaitera and Ben-Ari, “the *collaborative* use of civil and military capabilities of international power in security, stability, and reconstruction operations” (Kaitera and Ben-Ari 2008: 1, emphasis added). It also confirms the very plausibility of a division of labour between (NATO) war-fighting, on the one hand, and (EU) prevention and reconstruction, on the other. *Inter alia* conceptually there is less added value to EU *military* crisis management as long as *civilian* crisis management instruments remain detached from it. The same point is formulated conversely in the *Military Headline Goal 2010*, which states that (broad) interoperability, or the ability of armed forces to interact with other civilian tools, “is an instrument to *enhance the effective use of military capabilities* as a key enabler in achieving EU’s ambitions in Crisis Management Operations” (European Council 2004: note 1, emphasis added).

To raise the comparative value of civilian capabilities, it appears necessary, therefore, that a stronger link is forged between how civilian and military capabilities are being used in ESDP operations. Or, in rather crude terms to score burden-sharing points, the EU needs to start putting its civilian personnel in “harm’s way”, i.e. early deployment into crisis areas, taking advantage of built in military know-how concerning force protection, logistics, command and control (C2), etc (Kaitera and Ben-Ari 2008: 11). This would almost inevitably lead to the subordination of civilian instruments to military structures and practices, and thus represent something of a relapse to the old conception of civilian capabilities: backing up military capabilities and helping to restore civil

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<sup>25</sup> These structures are covered in depth in a previous report (Norheim-Martinsen 2009). See also the report by Bjørn Olav Knutsen (2008).

<sup>26</sup> Often referred to as the “normal” theory of civil-military relations, Samuel Huntington’s model calls for a strict separation of the civil-military interface, as opposed to the integrated, “constabulary” model proposed by, for example, Morris Janowitz (1960).

society after crises (Nowak 2006: 28). This need not imply that the EU cannot or should not continue to carry out the kind of ESDP stand-alone civilian missions that have been launched to date. However, as a strategy to strengthen the EU's comparative advantage as a comprehensive strategic actor, it arguably needs to be able to – and, indeed, demonstrate clearly that it can – do both, by developing explicitly integrated concepts and engaging in explicitly integrated missions.

## 5.2 Towards a *European Way of War*?

The continuous shortfalls in Europe's military capabilities have often been a trump card for ESDP sceptics who have resorted to "hard numbers" to show why it is bound to fail. When disaggregating the capability question from its traditional transatlantic interoperability context, however, this report has shown that the EU has, in fact, taken a number of steps that have affected both the military and civilian force generation processes in Europe in the period after 1999.

From their initial quantitative focus, both the civilian and the military processes in the EU have through the parallel headline goals moved towards more qualitative benchmarks centred on small, rapid reaction force concepts. Both the EU Battlegroups (EUBGs) and the Civilian Response Teams (CRTs) have yet to prove their worth in operations, and it is likely that both concepts will have to be strengthened further to increase their relevance in future scenarios, which will almost inevitably require robust intervention by multiple teams of military and civilian personnel. Even without being deployed, however, both concepts have contributed towards changing the normative framework for the ongoing transformation process(es) in Europe. On the military side, the Battlegroup concept has, as illustrated with the NBG example, helped consolidate an intra-European division of labour by offering incentives for some states to change in order to *lead*, while rewarding other states for developing niche capabilities that increase their *influence* within the system. However, it should be noted that, while Denmark, for example, has taken steps towards a *late modern* military organisation, a significant proportion of Europe's armed forces continue to bleed their territorial defence capabilities, while struggling to commit the right kind of (expeditionary) capabilities, be it lead or niche, to NATO or the EU.

At the same time, Europe needs to get more "bangs for its bucks". But it still remains to be seen what impact the European Defence Agency (EDA) will have on the defence acquisitions side of this issue. It appears, however, that by becoming a key agent for a "consolidate or perish" line of argument, the agency has gradually weakened the legitimacy of the once so strong norm of the protection of a national defence technological and industrial base, while serving as a catalyst more collaborative defence acquisitions procedures.

On the civilian side, the EU has opened up the conceptual and operational area of civilian crisis management (CCM), eventually transcending the military support role that was first envisioned for it. As such, it has also escaped some of the methodological and conceptual problems associated with the initial subordination of CCM to military instruments, while creating a valuable additional set of tools for the EU. By turning towards a more conflict preventive role, however, the CCM activities under ESDP have not only accentuated challenges of civil-civil

coordination between the Council and the Commission. The *de facto* conceptual and operational separation of civilian and military crisis management has also limited broad interoperability in ESDP.

Insofar as the latter can be conceived as both a qualitative benchmark and a comparative asset, in the sense that it represents a different, sought-after way of warfare, creating integrated force packages as a preferred mode of deployment would perhaps better distinguish the comparative advantage of a *European way of war* (Cf. Everts et al. 2004). A similar suggestion is offered by Boyer and Lindley-French, who ask whether Europeans, rather than following the US military lead, should “invent their own ‘grammar’ of warfare which better corresponds to European views on warfare but which nevertheless retains a high degree of co-operability with the US” (Boyer and Lindley-French 2007: 5). Again, we see that the way in which to act, and the capabilities with which to engage, may well become the end. It is worth underlining that, contrary to Matlary’s conclusion that we should “treat the question of whether the EU is a strategic actor with a strategic culture in a manner distinct from the capacity-building process”, there is, indeed, “a logical connection between the two” (Matlary, 2006: 111).

For the EU, the Comprehensive Approach to security constitutes an alternative set of qualitative benchmarks for measuring capability developments and offers thus an alternative perspective on the “gap” problem. Of course, overlapping memberships and alliance commitments through NATO will continue to put heavy transformation demands on Europe’s military forces, since decision-makers on both sides of the Atlantic retain a key interest in being able to operate militarily together. That said all parties also appear to have an interest in an EU that draws upon its comparative strengths as a different strategic actor, and which utilises its inherent potential towards a truly Comprehensive Approach. However, the *Huntingtonian* separation of the civil-military interface, which is evident throughout the capability dimension, suggests that the EU has yet to fully live up to its ambitions as a unique strategic actor.

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