EU Battlegroups and the NATO Response Force: A Marriage of Convenience?

Juha Kaitera and Guy Ben-Ari

In recent years, both the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have worked to prepare for current and future operations by developing new military rapid response concepts and capabilities: the NATO Response Force (NRF) and the European Union battlegroups (EUBGs). For NATO, doing so is an element in the evolution of its military structures and concepts, part of the broader effort to adjust to a drastically different post–Cold War global security environment. The EU case, however, is different. A prominent player in world politics, with a wide range of political tools at its disposal, the EU has traditionally lacked a coherent military dimension.

Despite the creation of these new rapid reaction capabilities in the military domain, today’s expeditionary operations pose a fundamental challenge: how to combine military and civilian power to create a truly comprehensive approach to operations, or what is sometimes called effective multilateralism, that is, the collaborative use of civil and military capabilities of international power in security, stability, and reconstruction operations.1 To date, neither the EU nor NATO has found a way to successfully address this issue despite some progress in developing new capabilities.

This paper describes the EUBG and NRF concepts and outlines their similarities and differences. It then presents two paths to leveraging these forces to achieve a more comprehensive approach to meet the requirements of current and future operations. The first path involves a division of labor in which the NRF, under its original structure, provides the military option while the EUBGs are transformed into a civil rapid response capability. The second path involves a temporarily restructured NRF, as is currently proposed by NATO, and an EU capability that integrates EUBG military elements with civilian crisis response elements.

CONCEPT OF THE EU BATTLEGROUPS

The EUBGs can be traced to three main arrangements within European security and defense policy (ESDP): The Helsinki Headline Goal process (1999), the European Security Strategy (2003), and Operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([DRC] 2003). In the Helsinki Headline Goal process, the EU member countries agreed to create by 2003 an EU rapid reaction force (ERRF) consisting of 60,000 troops available at 60 days’ notice to be sustainable for at least one year. The forces were to carry out all the so-called Petersberg tasks, including humanitarian assistance and rescue tasks, peacekeeping, and crisis management, including peacemaking.2 The Helsinki summit also discussed the possible need for creating smaller, more agile rapid response units within the ERRF for more urgent operations.3

The next major step toward the EUBGs was the Franco-British summit of February 2003 at St. Malo, in which France and the UK highlighted the need to further develop the EU’s rapid reaction capability and took the initiative to establish joint tactical groups of approximately 1,500 troops each (not including support elements).4 Initially, the

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1 In spring 2006 Denmark and six other NATO members outlined the idea of concerted planning and action (CPA) within the Alliance. Later the United States joined the initiative. It was further clarified and is now known as the NATO Comprehensive Approach Initiative. At the NATO Riga summit of 2006, the CPA initiative was formally on the agenda, and it will be discussed further at the NATO Bucharest summit in 2008; see Friis Arne Petersen and Hans Binnendijk, “The Comprehensive Approach Initiative: Future Options for NATO,” Defense Horizons 58 (September 2007): 1–2, www.ndu.edu/ctnsp/defense_horizons/DH_58.pdf.


4 Although the term used in the summit was “joint tactical groups,” these are in effect combined tactical groups as they lack naval and air
battlegroups were designed to be deployed under Chapter VII mandates in support of UN operations. Later, it was agreed that they would not be exclusively used for such a purpose and that autonomous operations would be considered. The initiative was introduced to Germany later that year and was presented trilaterally to the European Union Military Committee. In June 2004 the proposal was officially adopted as part of the Headline Goal 2010 by the European Council.

The third major step toward creation of the EUBGs was Operation Artemis. Launched in June 2003, it was the first military operation undertaken under the ESDP outside the European continent. Its goal was to manage the crisis in the DRC following a request for help by the United Nations to ensure that its peacekeeping forces could take over control of the area around the city of Bunia. Approximately 1,800 troops from several EU member states participated in the operation, with France acting as a framework country (and providing the majority of the troops). The outcome of the operation was encouraging: within three months, the situation in the DRC was remarkably calmer, displaced persons were able to return to their homes, and some local militias were disarmed. This success showed that the EU’s political decision-making and military planning bodies could launch a military operation with elements of peace enforcement at relatively short notice. Without the positive experience of Operation Artemis, it is questionable whether the political process for accepting and shaping the battlegroup concept would have been as smooth and swift as it has been.

CONCEPT OF THE NATO RESPONSE FORCE

In preparation for the Prague summit of 2002, researchers at the National Defense University introduced the idea of a joint strike force of approximately 20,000–25,000 troops that could deploy swiftly to crisis zones and operate closely with U.S. forces. This idea was adopted by U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who presented the rationale for a NATO rapid response force at the summit, saying: “If NATO does not have a force that is quick and agile, which can deploy in days or weeks instead of months or years, then it will not have much to offer the world in the 21st century.” Participating nations agreed to create the NRF to meet the full range of Alliance missions, ranging from evacuation and disaster management to Article V operations, and be ready to move quickly wherever needed, as decided by the North Atlantic Council.

The NRF was required to have all the necessary elements, including land, sea, and air assets. The NRF was also meant to be a catalyst for the Alliance’s continuing transformation, to be interoperable with technologically sophisticated U.S. forces, and to assist in the implementation of the Prague Capabilities Commitment. Transforming and improving these kinds of capabilities were seen essential to enhance the Alliance’s performance in the full range of missions, but especially in those at the high end of the conflict spectrum where the European allies had the most evident deficiencies in the 1999 Kosovo air campaign.

At the next Alliance summit in Istanbul in June 2004, NATO leaders agreed to a more detailed plan: the total number of troops in the NRF was set at approximately 25,000 at full operational capability, and these troops were to be able to begin deployment at five days’ notice and sustain operations for 30 days (even longer if resupplied). At
the NATO Riga summit in November 2006, the NRF was declared to be fully operational.

The complete list of possible deployments for this “first force in, first force out” formation is ambitious and comprehensive:

- Stand-alone force for Article V (collective defense) or non–Article V crisis response operations such as evacuation operations, support for disaster consequence management (including chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear events), in humanitarian crisis situations, and in counterterrorism operations;
- Initial entry force facilitating the arrival of larger follow-on forces;
- Demonstrative force to show NATO’s determination and solidarity to deter crises (quick response operations to support diplomacy as required).\(^{15}\)

The NRF is a high-readiness combined joint force with air, land, and maritime components as well as specialist functions. The land component has an appropriately tailored brigade-size formation, which consists of five battalions (one airborne, two air maneuver, and two mechanized infantry). The air component comprises helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles, and 120 fixed-wing aircraft with needed support, command-and-control, and missile- and air-defense elements. The air component should be able to carry out 200 sorties per day from three deployed operating bases. The maritime component comprises a carrier group, amphibious forces, and mine countermeasure and support vessels.\(^ {16}\)

The NRF would also be supported by NATO collective assets, such as the NATO airborne warning and control system (AWACS) aircraft.

Since its inception, although it has not been used in traditional military operations, the NRF (or elements of it) has been deployed to:

- Help to protect the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens;
- Support the presidential elections in Afghanistan in September 2004;
- Carry out disaster relief in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina in the United States; and
- Carry out disaster relief after the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan.\(^{17}\)

NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said:

When circumstances demand that we use the NRF, we will know it. And we should not hesitate, in those circumstances, to do so. For example, if the Asian tsunami had happened closer to the NATO area, I have little doubt we would have deployed the NRF. If you look at the mandate of the NRF, it is quite a far reaching mandate.\(^ {18}\)

**EUBGs TODAY**

Table 1 lists all the commitments to the EUBGs as of January 2007. Although there are still vacant slots after 2010, the member states’ responses have been positive overall.

Surprisingly, the EUBG concept has met little resistance since its inception. EU member states support the EUBG’s overarching aim and have readily contributed forces. Some EU member countries clearly see EUBGs as the first step on the path to the EU Headline Goal. For some of the EU’s non-NATO members, the EUBGs are seen as a test-bed for possible participation in future NRF operations.

There are two critical obstacles to deploying the EUBGs, however: size and political will. The two are interconnected, and together they constitute a danger to the survival of the EUBGs as a military concept.\(^ {19}\)

**Size.** If the EUBGs were deployed as a stand-alone force in a high-intensity operation in a hostile environment, the risk of failure would be extremely high. Although Operation Artemis was successful, it will be hard to find other crises on a small enough scale in which the EUBGs can successfully intervene. Given its current structure, a typical military mission for the EUBGs could be to protect a port or an airport during an evacuation operation. In reality, the only reasonable military focus areas for EUBGs would be rather small-scale, short-duration stability, security, transi-

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16 Ibid.


18 Jaap de Hoop Scheffer (remarks at NATO annual conference, Brussels, April 14, 2005).

tion, and reconstruction (SSTR) operations and post-conflict reconstruction (PCR) operations.

If these types of operations are the only ones for which EUBGs will be used, the original purpose of the force will not be met. Furthermore, the shortage of strategic transportation assets and the dependence on NATO for operational planning questions the EUBG’s capability even in these kinds of operations, which in many cases will demand very short reaction times and deployment to remote locations.

**Political Will.** Recent events have highlighted the difficulty of reaching consensus on when to actually deploy the EUBGs. In 2006, for example, the EU again launched a military operation in support of the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) to secure and oversee the election process (Operation EUFOR RD Congo). The military operation was conducted in full agreement with the authorities of the DRC and in close coordination with them and MONUC; it was successfully concluded on November 30, 2006. Although this autonomous EU-led operation was conducted within the framework of the ESDP, it did not involve an EUBG. This was partly because Germany, which was the core nation of the EUBGs in ready status, publicly announced it would provide only one-third of all troops required for the EUFOR, and partly because the mission was a planned one rather than a crisis response one. Eventually, 21 EU member states contributed to the operation, as well as one non-EU nation (Turkey).

More recently, the EU has decided to initiate yet another peacekeeping operation, this time in eastern Chad and northeast Central African Republic to protect refugees from Darfur. The operation was planned to start in mid-December 2007 but was postponed to the first quarter of 2008. The force will consist of up to 4,300 troops, roughly half of them from France. Like the previous two EU military missions, here too it is a tailored force not involving the EUBGs.

One could argue that the EUBGs are merely a political tool and there is no sincere intent to use them in operations. If they are not used in the near future in the types of operations for which they were intended, however, the interest among the member states to maintain and further develop the concept could greatly diminish. Alternatively, not using the EUBGs in the near future could create a disposition to

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**Table 1. EU Battlegroup Commitments, 2007–2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Participating nations</th>
<th>Lead nation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-1</td>
<td>Germany, Finland, Netherlands</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2</td>
<td>Italy, Hungary, Slovenia, Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania</td>
<td>Italy, Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-1</td>
<td>Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Norway, Ireland, Spain, France, Germany, Portugal</td>
<td>Sweden, Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2</td>
<td>Germany, France, Spain, Belgium, Luxembourg</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-1</td>
<td>Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece</td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2</td>
<td>Czech, Slovakia, Belgium, France</td>
<td>Czech, tbd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-1</td>
<td>Poland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia</td>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2</td>
<td>United Kingdom, Netherlands</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-1</td>
<td>Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Finland (tbc)</td>
<td>Netherlands, Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2</td>
<td>Vacant, Norway, Estonia, Ireland</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-1</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EU military staff.
Note: Date of information is May 2007. Country names in **bold** have forces committed concurrently to the EU battlegroups and the NRF.

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21 NATO military staff, personal communication with authors, fall 2007.
periodically deploy them for morale and credibility purposes, even in a scenario that is not optimal for them.

**NRF TODAY**

Although at the Riga summit in 2006 the NRF was declared to be at full operational capability, this was no longer the case six months later. The main reason for the change in status was the diminished U.S. contribution to the NRF, which in turn was driven in part by U.S. frustration over the insufficient contributions by its European allies and in part by the high operational tempo in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, the NRF continues to face cuts as NATO members divert troops and resources to operations in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Iraq.

As more members are unwilling or unable, or both, to fulfill their NRF commitments, the issue has become whether NATO should shift its focus to long-term missions such as those in Afghanistan. Some believe that Afghanistan has to a certain extent stolen the thunder of the NRF. With 40,000 NATO and 18,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan (under both International Security Assistance Force [ISAF] and Operation Enduring Freedom), approximately 180,000 soldiers are effectively tied up there when training and rotation cycles are taken into consideration. Large contributors of troops to Afghanistan are overstretched, while smaller contributors that are resisting sending more troops may find it inopportune to be seen to be reinforcing the NRF. As a result, NATO has been bogged down in a fierce debate about whether and how to alter the NRF concept. Some have argued that its full strength should be reduced at least in the short term. Others have argued that its original strength should be preserved or that it should be used as a strategic reserve.

At the NATO Conference of the Military Committee in Canada in September 2007, the chiefs of defense decided to continue work on the reduced model of NRF known as Option 2. Thus, fewer designated troops for the NRF can be expected in the near future. Before the meeting, NATO spokesperson James Appathurai stated in a press conference the inevitable need for the NRF concept adaptation: “...keeping the essentials of the [NRF] model in place, but seeing how it can be potentially adapted to ensure its sustainability, in a period where, as I say, there is heavy pressure on NATO and other countries, to provide forces for real world operations, which, of course, have to be the priority.”

One month later, in October 2007, at the NATO defense minister’s unofficial meeting in Noordwijk, Netherlands, the ministers agreed to adjust a concept of the NRF to so-called graduated readiness. In a nutshell, this means fewer troops, even earmarked troops, in each NRF after NRF-10 completes its rotation in the first half of 2008 (Table 2). This change is intended to last only as long as NATO’s deployable forces are tied to ongoing operations. A more detailed plan for this was sketched out in early 2008.

In principle, this change means that the challenges facing European NATO members in providing troops to current operations and to the NRF has been finally accepted as reality. Still, this might not affect the present situation because, ultimately, it does no more than face the facts and adapt the NRF concept to prevailing circumstances. When this change goes into effect, the majority of troops for NRF operations will be collected on the basis of requirements of each operation, with each force structured around some kind of core element. The first phase would be to identify the main core capabilities and rebuild the concept around three different core elements: minimum core, limited core, and full core. The full core would be capable of executing at least one lower-intensity task without reinforcement. Member countries could view this change of concept as a more realistic approach to the decision-making process before they commit to an operation that demands rapid reaction. However, the already decided long-term rotation plan shown in Table 2 might still remain valid as a basis of the “core element.”

Some NATO sources say that ISAF has already helped NATO to achieve what the NRF was intended to do and is, in fact, the real catalyst for transformation in NATO.

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23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 NATO military staff, personal communication with authors, fall 2007.


27 For the first time, an unofficial meeting included an official section, which enabled defense ministers to make public decisions. This was mainly because of the schedule problems caused by the NATO summit in April 2008.

28 NATO military staff, personal communication with authors, fall 2007.

29 Planning for this arrangement, which is described as temporary, is under way in NATO, and very few facts have been made public; any thoughts about the new model are therefore speculative.

30 NATO military staff, personal communication with authors, fall 2007.

31 Ibid.
There is a transformational element to the Afghanistan operation, which is, in many ways, reflecting what the NRF was designed to help promote,” NATO spokesman James Appathurai has said.\footnote{Defense News, October 8, 2007, 20.} In contrast, the rapid deployments and short-term missions that have been envisioned for the NRF since 2002 are totally different from the slow buildup and the long-term stabilization and reconstruction operations in Afghanistan.

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**Table 2. NATO Response Force Rotations, January 2008–January 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATO Response Force</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Rotations</th>
<th>Headquarters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NRF-10</td>
<td>2008-1(^a)</td>
<td>Germany/Netherlands, United Kingdom Maritime Force (UKMARFOR), Allied Air Forces Southern Europe (Naples)</td>
<td>Joint Forces Command Naples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF-11</td>
<td>2008-2(^b)</td>
<td>France, Spain, United Kingdom, Italy</td>
<td>Joint Headquarters Lisbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF-12</td>
<td>2009-1</td>
<td>Spain, STRIKE FORCE NATO, France, Italy</td>
<td>Joint Headquarters Lisbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF-13</td>
<td>2009-2</td>
<td>United Kingdom, Italian Maritime Force (ITMARFOR), Component Command-Air Headquarters Ramstein (AIR N), France</td>
<td>Joint Forces Command Brunssum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF-14</td>
<td>2010-1</td>
<td>Germany, Italian Maritime Force (ITMARFOR), Component Command-Air Headquarters Ramstein (AIR N), tbd</td>
<td>Joint Forces Command Brunssum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF-15</td>
<td>2010-2</td>
<td>EUROCORPS, France, Allied Air Forces Southern Europe (AIR S), Turkey</td>
<td>Joint Forces Command Naples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF-16</td>
<td>2011-1</td>
<td>Italy, Spain, Allied Air Forces Southern Europe (AIR S), Turkey</td>
<td>Joint Forces Command Naples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF-17</td>
<td>2011-2</td>
<td>Turkey, United Kingdom Maritime Force (UKMARFOR), Germany, Spain</td>
<td>Joint Headquarters Lisbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRF-18</td>
<td>2012-1</td>
<td>Germany/Netherlands, United Kingdom Maritime Force (UKMARFOR), France, Spain</td>
<td>Joint Headquarters Lisbon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EU-NATO non-paper (discussion paper prepared by EU and NATO staffs as background and support for the exchange of information at the EU-NATO Capability Group, update of November 2006). Note: Date of information is June 2005. Country names in **bold** have forces committed concurrently to the EU battlegroups and the NRF.

\(^a\) This will probably be the last NRF rotation in the current format before shifting to the reduced model of NRF known as Option 2.

\(^b\) The information on NRF rotations after the second semester of 2008 may change as the debate over the future structure of the NRF graduated readiness model unfolds.
Jean-Yves Haine, senior fellow for transatlantic security at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, argues that, instead of being a vehicle for change, the NRF may have steered NATO down a wrong path:

Given the limited number of troops in Europe, combat and peacekeeping operations are conducted by the same pool of forces. Current operations, like Afghanistan, demand boots on the ground rather than high-tech capabilities. As the U.S. looks to recruit more soldiers, European nations need to juggle manpower with investments in technology.  

It could be argued, however, that in the early days of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, in two very different military operations, the NRF could have fulfilled an important role.  

The challenge of collecting enough troops for the NRF and tweaking its guiding concept is part of a larger problem related to questions of mutual solidarity and burden sharing in operations among the NATO member countries. When the recent decisions are implemented, the NRF will no longer be a solid, operationally ready force at high-alert status but, instead, a 5,000 to 10,000 troop core element around which a final force can be structured when needed. The question is: After reducing the NRF force structure and increasing the demands on force generation, should NATO reconsider the original operational requirements and the tasks to be undertaken? On the one hand, this would enable a more realistic schedule for political decision making and crisis response planning. On the other hand, current and future crisis scenarios, including natural disasters and unforeseen circumstances in ongoing NATO operations, seem to indicate that a lower state of alertness, smaller force sizes, and longer response times may be insufficient.

**INTERRELATED CHALLENGES**

There are certain similarities between the NRF and the EUBG concepts. Both are intended to be high-readiness forces to be used in early entry out-of-area operations. In addition, neither the EU member states nor NATO members seem to have reached a consensus on when and how to use their new rapid response capabilities. Certain countries believe that the NRF should not specialize in high-intensity combat operations. In addition, there is a debate within the Alliance about whether the NRF should act as a catalyst for the transformation. Similarly, there is no clear strategic framework for the EUBGs and no consensus within Europe on when to deploy them.  

There are, however, significant differences between the two forces. The most obvious is the quantity of troops. In addition, EUBGs are more land based, lack aerial and maritime components, and therefore would have to be supported by strategic enablers if they are to meet all their operational demands. The NRF is more robust and operationally capable largely because of the U.S. contribution, even since the U.S. decision in June 2007 to reduce its NRF contribution to the level before the Riga summit.

Another key difference is that, while the EUBGs are intended to undertake Petersberg tasks, the NRF, barring future changes, covers the whole operational spectrum, from crisis management to collective defense. Also, although one of the key tasks for the NRF is to act as a catalyst for transformation among the European NATO allies so that in the future they would be more capable of participating in networked, high-intensity operations, no official transformation goals or programs are associated with the concept of the EUBG (although it does include certain elements, such as a troop certification process, intended to prepare and enhance the EU member states’ capability to undertake expeditionary operations). Table 3 summarizes the similarities and differences between the two forces.

Given the similarities and differences between the two forces, there is one key challenge they both face: remaining relevant for all their members. This is because many EU member states are concerned with their ability to provide troops simultaneously to ongoing operations, and the NRF, and the EUBGs, or to two of the three. This concern exists despite an assessment by the NATO secretariat that calculated that NATO countries collectively have approximately 2.4 million troops, of which 264,000 are taking part in ongoing operations (when U.S. troops in Iraq are included) and, therefore, the potential exists within the NATO countries to fill the gaps in both operations and the NRF. However, this kind of calculation is far too simplistic. Meeting NRF and EUBG commitments is not just about counting boots, it’s also about having the right kind and right number of enablers and relevant training.

33 Ibid.


36 NATO military staff, personal communication with authors, fall 2007.


39 Ibid.
NATO have an arrangement called the EU-NATO Capa-

Table 3. Comparison of European Battlegroups and the NATO Response Force

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forces</th>
<th>Number of participating nations</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Type of operations</th>
<th>Additional goals</th>
<th>Time frame</th>
<th>Composition of forces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European battlegroups (EUBGs)</td>
<td>22a</td>
<td>1,500b</td>
<td>Petersburg tasks</td>
<td>Develop European military capabilities independent of NATO</td>
<td>Six-month standby rotations; training and coordination vary</td>
<td>Ground forces only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO Response Force (NRF)</td>
<td>11a</td>
<td>25,000c</td>
<td>Entire operational spectrum</td>
<td>Force transformation</td>
<td>Six-month training period, followed by a six-month standby rotation</td>
<td>Air, sea, and ground forces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ analysis.

Of the 27 EU member states, 21 are also members of NATO. Several non-NATO member states contribute troops to NATO operations. Some countries that belong to both NATO and the EU sometimes double earmark their contributing troops to the EUBG, NATO, and ongoing operations. In fact, some NATO countries have already hinted that certain members of both EU and NATO are using their commitments to the EUBGs as an excuse to lessen their troop contributions to the NRF or ISAF.

From a NATO point of view, dual-hatting of forces should be avoided, and Deputy Supreme Allied Command Europe tries to enforce this. Thus, when nations commit forces to the NRF, they should be withdrawn only under exceptional circumstances. From the EU point of view, however, a “frozen” organization model should be avoided and forces should be made available to both organizations within suitable timelines. So it is naturally in the EU’s interest to maintain as much flexibility as possible.

An often-used phrase—“separable but not separate”—describes the relationship between the EU and NATO troops, meaning that the same national forces and capabilities will form the basis of both EU and NATO operations. However, some NATO capabilities can be allocated to the European Union under the Berlin Plus agreement if NATO refuses to act and the EU decides to do so. In addition, the EU and NATO have an arrangement called the EU-NATO Capa-

manent, possibly leading to the loss of key elements in the NRF concept, such as substantial force size and short response time. The Alliance must proceed with caution and, in cooperation with willing non-NATO partner nations, maintain and further develop an NRF that can provide a credible military alternative for decision makers.

In parallel, the EU currently possesses the seeds of a prominent civilian crisis management (CCM) capability, which can be deployed on reasonably short notice. This capability is far from utilizing Europe’s full potential in the civilian response domain, however, and ways must be found to do so. The EUBGs offer one way of achieving a better European civilian rapid response capability.

The European capability for civilian response is based on the civilian dimension of the ESDP, launched at the June 2000 European Council in Feira, Portugal. It can be used in autonomous EU-led missions or as part of larger missions organized by the UN or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and it covers five priority areas:

- **Police**: EU member states can make more than 5,000 police officers available when needed, up to 1,400 of them deployable in less than 30 days;
- **Rule of law**: Some 600 prosecutors, judges, and prison officers can be made available;
- **Civilian administration**: a pool of experts has been created, capable of deploying to civilian administration missions in the context of crisis-management operations; some 550 individuals can be deployed at very short notice;
- **Civil protection**: Some 600 civil protection experts and 4,500 staff for up to two intervention teams are deployable within several hours to one week;
- **Monitoring**: Some 500 personnel (identified by the December 2004 Council).

These separate areas have recently been extended to cover an even broader range of expertise. The CCM capabilities can also be organized case by case in multifunctional packages of experts. In addition, the European Council emphasizes rapidly deployable CCM capabilities, including civilian response teams, and rapidly deployable police elements. Table 4 presents current commitments of personnel to civilian EU operations.

As Table 4 indicates, the EU’s CCM commitments have been quite small—often too small—in terms of both budget and number of personnel. For example, EUPOL Afghanistan would have to be much larger in scale in order to significantly impact the training of Afghanistan’s police forces. Specifically, the most challenging areas for the EU CCM capabilities have been a lack of effective coordination at the operational level (beyond the coordination of resources); a lack of conceptual framework and functioning structure for addressing complex challenges, interoperability, and training; and an inability to perform large-scale planning. Several recent reports have highlighted these shortcomings within many civilian organizations involved in crisis management.

For the EU to undertake large-scale, rapid response CCM operations, a better decision-making process is required, as are a good concept, an effective organizational structure, and the ability to plan complex operations more effectively. This was recognized at the EU’s Civilian Capabilities Improvement Conference and noted by the General Affairs and External Relations Council on November 19, 2007. However, these are capabilities in which all militaries traditionally are experienced and are currently reluctantly involved as part of ongoing stabilization and reconstruction operations around the globe. More important, all of these capabilities already exist in the staff supporting the EUBGs.

We offer two ways to undertake an upgrade of the EU’s capacity for civilian rapid response that will enable a truly comprehensive approach to the EU’s foreign policy philosophy of effective multilateralism. Path 1 is to gradually do away with a European Union military rapid response capability and transition the EUBGs into a purely civilian force, a Civilian Rapid Response Capability (CRRC). The

41 The definition for CCM used here is: a nonmilitary policy or instrument intended to manage a crisis. CCM has been commonly used in EU papers since 1999, but there has not been an official definition for it. See, for example, Catriona Gourday et al., *Civilian Crisis Management: The EU Way*, Chaillot Paper no. 90 (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, June 2006), 15–16, [http://aei.pitt.edu/7407/01/cha90.pdf](http://aei.pitt.edu/7407/01/cha90.pdf).


43 Gourday et al., *Civilian Crisis Management*, 36.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU operation</th>
<th>Date of launch and duration</th>
<th>Budget (in millions of euros)</th>
<th>Number of personnel</th>
<th>Key objectivities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU police mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUPM)</td>
<td>January 2003; 3 years</td>
<td>38 (annual budget)</td>
<td>440 police officers plus 60 civilian experts</td>
<td>Monitor, mentor, and inspect Bosnian police in order to establish sustainable policing arrangements under Bosnia-Herzegovina ownership in accordance with best European and international practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU police mission in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (EUPOL Proxima)</td>
<td>December 2003; 1 year (plus 1 year extension)</td>
<td>15 (annual budget)</td>
<td>200 police officers</td>
<td>Support, monitor, and mentor the consolidation of law and order, the practical implementation of the reform of the Ministry of Interior, including the police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU rule of law mission to Georgia (EUJUST Themis)</td>
<td>July 2004; 1 year</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>9 legal experts</td>
<td>Assistance in the development of a horizontal governmental strategy guiding the reform process for all relevant stakeholders within the criminal justice sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU police mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (EUPOL Kinshasa)</td>
<td>April 30, 2005; planning phase until end of 2005</td>
<td>4.4 (planning phase)</td>
<td>Approximately 30 police officers</td>
<td>Monitor, mentor, and advise on the setting up and the initial running of an integrated police unit in Kinshasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU integrated rule of law mission in Iraq (EUJUST LEX)</td>
<td>July 2005; 1 year</td>
<td>10 (one year)</td>
<td>Training was provided by the different EU member states</td>
<td>Provide training for high- and mid-level officials in senior management and criminal investigation duties; training aimed at improving the capacity of the Iraqi criminal justice system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU monitoring mission to Aceh, Indonesia (AMM)</td>
<td>August 2005; 6 months</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>80 monitors— initial phase from August 15 to September 15 (226 monitors)</td>
<td>Monitor the implementation of the memorandum of understanding signed by the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU civilian-military supporting action to the African Union in the Darfur region, Sudan (AMIS EU Supporting Action)</td>
<td>July 2005; 6 months</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Civilians: 16 police officers; military: 19 operational and logistics experts</td>
<td>Ensure effective and timely EU assistance to support the African Union mission in Sudan and its political, military, and police efforts to address the crisis in Darfur region of Sudan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU police mission in the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL-COPPS)</td>
<td>January 2006; 3 years</td>
<td>6.1 (first year)</td>
<td>33 police and civilian personnel</td>
<td>Assist in the implementation of the Palestinian Civil Police Development Plan, advise and mentor senior members of the Palestinian civil police and criminal justice system and coordinate EU assistance to Palestinian civil police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU border assistance mission at Rafah crossing point (EUBAM Rafah)</td>
<td>November 23, 2005; 1 year</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>60 police and customs experts</td>
<td>Monitor, verify, and evaluate implementation by the Palestinian Authority of the Framework Security and Customs Agreement; contribute through monitoring to building up the Palestinian capacity in all aspects of border management at the Rafah crossing point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU police advisory team in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia (EUPAT)</td>
<td>December 15, 2005; 6 months</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>30 police advisers</td>
<td>Support the development of an efficient and professional police service based on European standards of policing; monitoring implementation of police reform in the field, police-judiciary cooperation and professional standards and internal control; monitoring and mentoring the country’s police on priority issues in the field of border police, public peace and order, accountability, and the fight against corruption and organized crime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
European military option would remain in the form of ad hoc national or multinational responses under a lead nation, in a manner similar to past force deployments in the DRC and Chad. Path 2 is to fuse the EUBGs with existing CCM and civilian planning and conduct capability (CPCC) to create a truly interagency, comprehensive, joint, and combined European rapid response capability. This would in effect be an affordable and effective living laboratory for civilian-military collaboration. It would also enable very early deployment of civilian elements into crisis areas, as they would possess a built-in force protection element.

Path 1 involves transforming the EUBG concept by building a civilian capacity on the basis of key military functions, most importantly operational planning and training. The EU military staff would be at the core, transforming the best military practices in the EUBGs into the CRRC and mentoring civilian planning teams. The EU CCM would thereby benefit from the EUBG conceptual framework as well as from the experience gained in setting up the battle groups. Battlegroup exercises such as European Endeavour would gradually be transformed into civilian training exercises based on sound military planning and practices. Under this option, the ability to deploy large numbers of civilians is generated by creating a scalable civilian rapid response force based on military know-how.

Path 2 entails integrating existing CCM elements into elements of the existing EUBGs. Initially, this could involve cohabitation of relevant military and civilian personnel in the EU military staff. In addition, a command structure must be designed that is acceptable and efficient. Each element will need to be educated on the key capabilities and contributions that the others bring to the table. Trust building will be emphasized, as will information- and knowledge-sharing processes to enable a common knowledge base. Creating this new deployable capability must also involve combined and joint training, for which the groundwork has been laid through EUBG exercises (for example, European Endeavour) and CCM exercises (for example, the multinational emergency response exercise EU DANEX). In undertaking this civilian-military training, the participation of prominent international actors, for example, the UN and the Red Cross, should be encouraged. Under Path 2, an ability is generated to deploy not only large numbers of civilians but the entire spectrum of crisis response elements required.

Creating a more effective civilian (Path 1) or civil-military (Path 2) rapid response capability will relieve military forces of many of the security, stabilization, and reconstruction missions that currently demand so much of their time and for which they are poorly trained and equipped. Military forces cannot by themselves establish functioning governments, capable internal security forces, and prosperous economies;
they require the assistance of civilian agencies. Involvement of civilian agencies will in turn free up much-needed military personnel for high-intensity military operations. For example, the military elements providing security to provincial reconstruction teams and training local security forces in Afghanistan and Iraq might be replaced by police and gendarmerie forces, thereby making the entire team a nonmilitary force and making more soldiers available for combat operations.

At a more strategic level, this fusion could be an example for other countries and international organizations of how critical military capabilities—in operational planning, logistics, and decision making—are folded into a civilian organization, thereby taking pressure off the military and creating a more sustainable and competent civilian response force for security, stabilization, and reconstruction missions. The United States, for example, has for the past several years been struggling to create a civilian response force of sufficient scale for operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. Under the auspices of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization in the Department of State, this initiative has so far had only limited success and has received a lukewarm response in Congress.47 By creatively transitioning the battlegroups into a civilian or civil-military rapid response capability, the EU can become a world leader in this field.

CONCLUSION

Despite the often heard slogan that NATO and EU troops are “separable but not separate,” the economical and operationally wise solution for the future would be to approach the whole spectrum of crisis management with two separate sets of capabilities: one military, the other civilian, with a clear division of labor and an effective relationship between the institutions responsible for each. The EU’s traditional strength in the civil sector and NATO’s existing military capabilities should form the foundation for achieving this. Doing so, however, will require action at both the NATO and the EU levels, extensive dialogue between NATO and the EU, and a willingness by national governments to relinquish certain national capabilities.

A more realistic alternative is to recognize that NATO has operational requirements—at least in the foreseeable future—that prevent it from maintaining a military rapid response capability at the level to which it was committed when the NRF was created. In parallel, the EU will likely be reluctant to do away with its military option. Therefore, change in the NRF structure seems to be inevitable and the EUBGs will most likely continue to exist. Yet both forces must be carefully changed. The NRF cannot veer too sharply from its original course so as not to endanger its ability to meet its stated goals. In parallel, the EUBG concept must change dramatically if it is to remain relevant. Achieving a European rapid response capability that is credible should involve integrating existing military and civilian capabilities and building on the core competencies of both.

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