

The need for a Permanent EU Command and Control Structure

A Capability Deficit to Be Addressed

After five years of operational existence of ESDP the EU has proved to be an effective contributor to global stability and security. EU action as a crisis-manager is appreciated on international level and the EU has become an appreciated partner of the UN, NATO, AU and even ASEAN. So far the EU has undertaken 17 successful operations (5 of which are military), although the size of these operations was limited. If the EU wishes to influence actively and positively global stability and security it will be unavoidable for the EU to engage more than in the past in crisis management.

All EU crisis management operations conducted up to now have required the setting up of ad hoc chains of command since the European Union does not dispose of a permanent military strategic command and control structure (OHQ). Strong political and professional military reasons require the creation of a permanent strategic C2 structure in Brussels. Denying the EU a permanent strategic C2 structure creates a self-inflicted and unnecessary handicap for the Union and its role as a successful crisis-manager. It reduces the military effectiveness of ESDP operations and their visibility. Also, the necessary global situation awareness with regard to all the theatres in which the EU is engaged is not ensured.

Although the idea of establishing a permanent capability for planning of military operations within the EUMS found broad support by EU defence ministers at their informal meeting in March 2007 in Wiesbaden the result of negotiations among EU states was so far very modest. The EU planning staff was increased by 5 officers, at the same time staff available for political-military work of the EU Military Staff was reduced.

Against this background, available structures will first be analysed. Second, the case for a permanent EU Command and Control structure on strategic level for EU operations to be established in Brussels will be examined.

1. Available Planning and Command Structures for EU Operations

At present the EU has three options to plan and run crisis management operations: using NATO structures, one of the five HQ of EU framework nations or the newly created Operations Centre. Having no permanent operational planning and command capability at strategic level the EU must discuss and negotiate the establishment of an ad hoc operational chain of command with NATO and EU-Framework nations on a case by case basis. This is of course long and time consuming. In looking at structures available for EU operations the following points need to be considered:

- NATO structures have been built up and organised to plan and command NATO military operations in the area of defence and more recently also of crisis management. If NATO is requested by the EU to provide an OHQ it would not be sufficient just to put an EU label on existing NATO structures, but within the existing NATO chains of command, an ad hoc command chain needs to be negotiated and organised. In the case of operation Althea in BiH, EU-NATO negotiations took over 8 months. In case of a necessary rapid response, e.g. rapid deployment of an EU Battle Group, it is obvious that the Berlin Plus option for an OHQ would not work. Furthermore, NATO does not have civil instruments in house. NATO is therefore not equipped to run EU-type comprehensive civil/military operations. The NATO approach is CIMIC, which means organising military cooperation with available civil actors in the theatre. Using NATO means could also in certain situations be politically difficult. Finally, NATO means might not be available or their use blocked by a member state as the EU has experienced in the past and still experiences.
- As regards the use of EU framework nation HQs, standards for equipment, manning and procedures for EU-OHQ have been defined by the EU and are implemented by framework nations. But also national OHQ need to be activated, augmented and multinationalised within a time frame of 20 days in order to be fully operational. The key nucleus of the OHQ provided by the frameworks nations varies from 42 to 46 personnel. The permanent nucleus available for EU staff work exclusively are 15 persons in Potsdam, 9 in Cento Celle, substantial less (2-4) at Mont Valerien and Northwood. The majority of the key nucleus is double-hatted staff immediately transferable to the activated OHQ. CIS facilities are prepared and the staffs of the key nucleus and augmentees are earmarked. Nevertheless official work of the OHQ can only start when the decision designating the OHQ is taken. This also means time. National HQs do not have civil-military competences either. National parent

headquarters continue to have other national, alliance and coalition roles to fulfil and will only bear the bleeding involved in running an EU operation for operations of clearly limited duration. The idea that one EU country bears the burden for providing an OHQ is not compatible with the concept of fair burden-sharing.

- The new Operations Centre at the EUMS enables the EU to build and equip an operational chain of command for autonomous operations at short notice in Brussels, particularly in cases where a joint civil/military response is required and no multinationalised national headquarter has been identified to conduct the operation. However, the EU Operations Centre is not a permanent structure. It can be activated within 5 days achieving full operational capability within 20 days for operations up to 2000 soldiers. Infrastructure is prepared and personnel from the EU Military Staff, Council General Secretariat and member states have been earmarked to work at the Operations Centre. But the present construction of activating the Operations Centre would bring about the temporary destruction of the EUMS, which is a matter of concern. There would not be sufficient staff available for other important staff-work such a military strategic contingency planning, crisis response strategic planning etc.

2. The case for establishing a permanent strategic planning and command structure in Brussels

The experience of EU operations demonstrates clearly that the lack of a permanent strategic C2 structure has become a capability-shortfall affecting and limiting the effectiveness and the credibility of EU operations. For these reasons, the EU should start equipping itself with a permanent strategic C2 structure for autonomous EU operations.

Several arguments speak in favour of creating such a C2 structure on a strategic level:

1.) Duplication does not exist

The argument for avoiding unnecessary duplication is neither convincing nor valid. Given the civil/military focus of the EU, a permanent strategic EU C2 structure in Brussels would not duplicate anything that exists elsewhere. Such a capability neither exists in NATO nor in available national HQs.

2.) Structuring the operational strategic level

Having no permanent structure at the operational military strategic level reduces the competence of the EU to plan and conduct military operations at that level, which affects EU's effectiveness and credibility. When launching an operation, the credibility of the action relies first on the credibility of the chain of command, i.e. the capability for the upper layer to assess and control at any time what the subordinate layers are doing. Therefore a clear military need for a permanent structure at the operational strategic level exists. Such a capability would allow a better implementation of the concept of Effects-Based Operations Planning. Such a capability needs to be located in Brussels in order to ensure that the military implications of political options and decisions are effectively translated and communicated to political leaders.

3.) Improving arrangements for preparation, planning and conduct of operations

Lessons learned from EUFOR RD Congo demonstrate that arrangements for preparation, planning and conduct of EU military operation need to be improved. The translation of directives, from the political to the military level, was made difficult by an existing gap in the military planning process. The need for an OHQ in the phase immediately preceding the decision to deploy, was felt strongly by the Council Secretariat and EUMS because a number of questions related to the OHQ were raised by political decision-makers and there was no OHQ yet designated. Operational expertise is therefore needed from the very outset of strategic planning.

Also the force generation process was faced with difficulties due to the lack of sufficiently precise military data. There were also problems related to timely information of all EU member states about essential military characteristics of the operation under preparation. Some member states insisted on running their own reconnaissance missions to the Congo, resulting in a series of European delegations asking the same questions and sowing confusion.

4.) Conceptual inconsistency

The 2010 Headline Goal's declared responsiveness target for battle group deployment in the theatre is ten days. Such target days are incompatible with the time to negotiate the choice of an OHQ, its multinationalisation and the time necessary for planning. It is inconsistent to develop a Battle group concept to be able to deploy force rapidly far away and rely on a case by case basis for providing an operational chain of command.

5.) Supporting a comprehensive approach

The comprehensive EU-approach to crisis management trying to link up the various civilian and military instruments into a coherent policy for subsequent action should be implemented by planning and conducting also military operations in Brussels, keeping in mind that the EU has substantial non-military instruments at its disposal which are becoming increasingly important for the successful outcome of such operations. Most of these tools are managed by Brussels institutions. The establishment of a permanent military C2 structure on a strategic level would be an important contribution to enhance the EU comprehensive approach and would allow the EU to respond faster and better to the increasing demand for comprehensive civil-military action in the area of crisis-management. Such a permanent military structure would complement the already established Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) in Brussels and make the EU more capable of implementing its comprehensive approach in crisis management.

As the EU seeks to develop its ability to integrate its civilian and military crisis-management means it would contribute to its effectiveness having also symmetric structures in the military area close at hand, making cooperation not only much easier but creating important synergies in the use of the multidisciplinary instruments available to the EU.

A further step could be to create a properly integrated OHQ responsible for all EU operations, both civil and military.

6.) Overseeing and coordinating EU operations

No connection is so far established between different operations allowing centralised management from Brussels. There is an increasing need for a capacity to watch, command and control the various concurrent EU operations from Brussels. The new Watch Centre in the EU MS is a step in the right direction. But in order to be able to maintain a global situational awareness with regard to all the theatres in which the EU is engaged and also to be able to analyse, to inform and to provide all the necessary expertise for political leaders, the EU would need a permanent central command structure in Brussels.

7.) Including smaller member states

The present system of using five framework-nation HQs as EU-OHQs present for smaller EU countries a major difficulty, whose staffing constraints are considerable. It is indeed difficult

for most of the smaller countries to send permanent liaison officers to five HQs, which would ensure their full involvement in EU crisis-management and give them full and timely information about essential military characteristics of the operation which is being planned and in which they should be able to take part. With the same number of officers, smaller states would be able to contribute substantially to a permanent multinational OHQ. The creation of a permanent strategic C2 structure in Brussels would make it easier for smaller member states to be represented and play a role in ESDP military operations.

8.) *Strengthening institutional memory*

The current system, whereby the responsibility for planning and conduct of an operation is passed from one framework-nation to another, means that the experience gathered during the previous operations is not retained in the EU for operational improvement and benefit as it should be. EU's lack of a permanent operational planning and command structure means that the institutional memory and lessons learned at the military operational level will likely be lost every time a new OHQ is designated. There is a strong argument in favour of setting up a permanent staff of planning officers, particularly given that greater experience means also shorter lead times.

9.) *Using synergies*

A permanent strategic C2 structure would create synergies for the development of an EU strategic culture as advocated in the ESS. This would also allow the development of a more coherent European military and operational culture and strengthen understanding, trust and solidarity among European military. However, there is no need to reinvent anything within the EU in terms of standards and concepts, which already exist in NATO, but it would be important that NATO makes them available to the Union and all its members.

10.) *Cost effectiveness*

A permanent strategic C2 structure would allow a better pooling of resources and fairer burden sharing of costs among EU members than the present system. The cost argument against creating EU operational planning and command structures is not valid. In designing a permanent EU planning and command structure, the EU would not need a structure commensurate with NATO's due to its lower level of ambition. CIS equipment exists already

to a large extent. The placing of about 60-80 people in an operations centre in Brussels should be easily affordable for the EU.

11.) *Better visibility of EU operations*

A permanent strategic military C2 structure in form of an EU-OHQ, which could also be called a EU Mission HQ, would increase the visibility of any EU operation on international level but also increase the visibility of EU operations with the European citizens, which support ESDP development with a great majority.

12.) *Improving emergency response*

Permanent military C2 structures could also be used to assist in implementing the 'solidarity clause' in cases such as multiple severe terrorist attacks or other major emergencies. Attempts to prepare an EU information network for emergencies have so far not found support. Emergencies as foreseen in the solidarity clause make an immediate response necessary. The military role is most important in the first 24 hours after the incident. Planning, preparedness and command structures would have to be designed accordingly, and there would be demanding requirements on access, mobility, information, communication, vehicles and force protection.

Conclusion:

If the European Union has the ambition to act as effective and credible international actor than the European states must not only strengthen European military and civil capabilities, but they must also provide the European Union with the necessary capabilities to plan and conduct EU operations in effective and credible way. The present patchwork of authorities for planning and command of EU operations is a quite inefficient, costly and even a risky way to run EU operations and should therefore be replaced by a central EU Command and Control Structure (OHQ) in Brussels responsible for all EU operations, civil or/and military.