

The Spanish Presidency and CSDP: Time to Get Serious about the Union's Military Planning and Conduct Capability (ARI)

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Theme: This ARI provides an overview of the EU's capability for the planning, command and control of CSDP military operations and offers some practical recommendations.

Summary: This ARI provides an overview of the EU's capability for the planning, command and control of CSDP military operations and offers some practical recommendations. It argues that the lack of a permanent operational planning capability hampers flexibility in the Union's planning process, as politico-strategic deliberations over potential CSDP missions lack the crucial operational expertise necessary to address crucial political questions, such as how many troops are needed and for how long or how much the mission will cost. Secondly, the lack of an operational planning capability denies the Union the capacity to develop (advance) contingency planning products, that are so crucial in situations where rapid reaction is required. Finally, the lack of a permanent command and control infrastructure has a negative impact upon the quality and security of the Union's military Communication and Information Systems (CIS) and hampers the kind of overall situational awareness offered by a central command, so vital for a Union that aims to think more strategically (as argued in the 2008 revision of the European Security Strategy).

Analysis: In the context of its broader effort to improve European military capabilities, the Spanish EU Presidency has suggested the designation of the existing Operations Centre in Brussels as the 'preferred OHQ' for BattleGroup operations. This ARI¹ welcomes the forward-looking spirit behind that proposal and offers additional practical recommendations that would substantially improve it, namely an increase of some 50 officials in the Operations Centre's permanent personnel. Such an increase would help to solve existing deficiencies in the areas of advance planning, planning flexibility and command and control.

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¹ This ARI builds on the argument developed in Luis Simon, 'Command and Control? Planning for EU Military Operations', EU ISS Occasional Paper nr 81.

The first part of this ARI describes the process for the planning, command and control of CSDP military operations. In the second part it argues that the nature of the EU's planning and C2 capability responds to the existing political balance between the Union's Big Three, with France supporting the development of a permanent and autonomous Operational Headquarters (OHQ) and the UK and Germany resisting any potential duplication of structures already existing at NATO. The third and last part offers some practical recommendations to the Spanish Presidency.

The Union's Military Planning, Command and Control Capability

According to the *EU Concept for Military Planning at the Political and Strategic level*, 'Military Planning is an iterative process which needs to analyse all relevant factors to determine the military mission. At the political and strategic level this will include analysis of the implication of political objectives, desired end state, restraints and constraints as well as an analysis of the capabilities needed, in order to develop potential military options balanced against those capabilities that are offered or potentially available'.

Military Planning is conducted at four levels:

- (1) The Political and Strategic Level (EU institutional level).
- (2) The Military Strategic Level (Operation Headquarters –OHQ– level).
- (3) The Operational Level (Force Headquarters –FHQ– level).
- (4) The Tactical Level (Component Headquarters level and below).²

It is important to distinguish Advance Planning from Crisis Response Planning. Advance Planning is conducted to allow the EU to deal with potential crises. It is sub-divided into two categories:

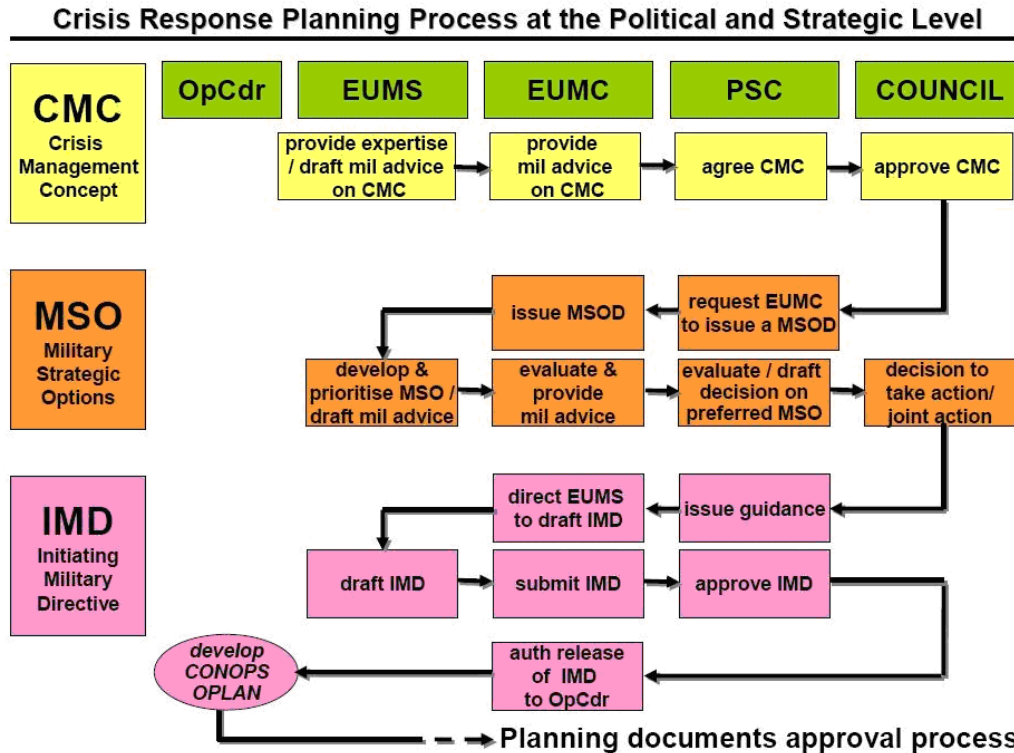
- (1) Generic Planning is the production of basic planning documents for potential operations where some planning factors have not yet been fully identified or have not been assumed. It identifies the general capabilities required.
- (2) Contingency Planning is the production of detailed planning documents for potential operations where the planning factors have been identified or have been assumed. They include an indication of resources needed and the deployment options. They may form the basis for subsequent planning.

Crisis Response Planning is conducted to enable the EU to deal with real crises. It builds on Advance Planning products, whenever available.³

² 'European Union Concept for Military Planning at the Political and Strategic Level', Council Doc 10687/08, Brussels, 16/VI/2008.

³ *Ibid.*

Figure 1. The CSDP Planning Cycle



EU Military Crisis Response Planning Process at the Political and Strategic level

Source: European Union Concept for Military Planning at the Political and Strategic Level, Council doc. 10687/08.

The first element of the Union's Crisis Response Planning process relates to the identification of the crisis, which falls to the EU Situation Centre (SITCEN), placed within the General Council Secretariat.

Once the Council has agreed to prepare a military response to a given crisis, the Secretary General/High Representative can send an information gathering or fact-finding mission integrated by military and civilian experts. This exploration phase is followed by the definition of the political, strategic and political-military objectives of the operation, the end state and exit strategy, the constraints and limitations, risks, timeline considerations, tasks and chain of command, through the so-called Crisis Management Concept (CMC). The CMC offers the basis for the Joint Action that will provide the legal framework for the operation. DGE 8 at the General Council Secretariat is responsible for crafting the CMC for ESDP military operations.

Building on the CMC, the EU Military Staff (EUMS) will produce the Military Strategic Options (MSOs), which describe 'a military action designed to achieve the EU objectives as defined in the CMC. A MSO will outline the military course of action and the required resources and the constraints'.⁴ Once the MSOs have been produced, the EUMC prioritises them and the PSC decides on the preferred course of action.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Once a MSO has been chosen, the EUMS produces the Initiating Military Directive (IMD), which 'should provide a clear description of the EU political/military objectives and the envisaged military mission to achieve these objectives'.⁵ The IMD defines the military strategic level of command; once it is issued, the Operation Commander (OpCdr) and the Operational Headquarters (OHQ) kick into the planning process. This provides the OpCdr with political advice that should be taken into account when producing the Concept of Operation (CONOPS), the Provisional Statement of Requirements (PSOR), the Operation Plan (OPLAN), the Rules of Engagement Request (ROEREQ) and the achievement of the End State and Exit Strategy.⁶

The IMD is the core of a broader transition package that the EUMS sends to the OHQ, including personnel. Through the IMD and the emissaries it sends to the OHQ, the EUMS provides input into the OPLAN. However, it is the military strategic level of command or OHQ and, more specifically, the OpCdr that is responsible for the development of a Concept of Operations (CONOPS) and the Operation Plan (OPLAN). Under the authority of the OpCdr, the OHQ also exerts command and control over the operation, to actually ensure that its development matches the OPLAN. Only an OHQ can, given its specific expertise, engage in operational planning. The Union does not have a permanent military strategic level of command or OHQ. Instead, it disposes of three different ways of acquiring that capability in an *ad-hoc* manner, the first one relying on NATO and the other two 'autonomously':

- The Berlin Plus agreements offer the EU the presumption of availability of NATO's assets and capabilities for ESDP operations, most notably in the realm of planning and C2. Final confirmation of the lease of such assets and capabilities lies with the North Atlantic Council, which decides on a case-by-case basis.
- Through the framework nation system the UK (Northwood), France (Mont Valérien), Germany (Potsdam), Greece (Larissa) and Italy (Rome), offer their national OHQs for CSDP military operations. The framework nation must ensure that it is equipped to accommodate augmentees from other EU Member States.
- An Operations Centre, placed within the Civ/Mil cell of the EUMS in Brussels can be activated for the planning and C2 of a CSDP military operations 'should the Council decide so'.

In order to understand the nature and evolution of the Union's planning and C2 capability one needs to look at the politics of planning and conduct. Most particularly, the preferences and behaviour of France, the UK and Germany (the Union's Big Three) are largely accountable for the slow pace of the evolution of the Union's Planning and conduct capability.

The Planning and C2 Game: It Takes Three to Tango

France is the main advocate of a permanent, autonomous and fully-fledged operational headquarters. For the French there is a causal correlation between European strategic autonomy, a concept to which they are deeply attached, and the existence of a permanent OHQ that offers appropriate operational input to the strategic planning process, is able to do advance contingency planning and serves as the central reference for a permanent and autonomous command and control infrastructure.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 9.

⁶ *Ibid*.

The UK plays the role of a *status quo* power in the planning and C2 debate, and leads the resistance against France's push for a fully-fledged and autonomous OHQ. London still sees ESDP largely as a means of strengthening NATO and the transatlantic relationship and wants to avoid duplication within the wider pool of transatlantic capabilities. It is in this context that it strongly resists the creation of a multinational planning and C2 capability which already exists at NATO. Britain sees ESDP as an extra lever for stimulating the strengthening of European military capabilities but, unlike France, sees no causal correlation between European military capabilities and EU strategic autonomy. The UK is most interested in those areas in which ESDP can add value to the wider transatlantic pool, namely the civilian realm.

Although perhaps less vocal than the French or the British, Germany's position is crucial for understanding the nature of the Union's planning and conduct capability. Germany's key objective is to 'CFSPise' ESDP, not least due to the difficulties it faces in reforming its armed forces in a climate where the German public is reluctant to see the Bundeswehr deployed overseas. In this respect, Berlin tries to emphasise the importance of non-military solutions (an area in which it excels) to security problems and upload to Brussels the notion of civilian power, much championed in Berlin. Germany sees the 'civ/milisation' of the Union's planning and C2 capability as the way forward, insofar as its understanding of the comprehensive approach sees the military instrument as virtually superfluous for purposes other than territorial defence. Furthermore, Germany does not want to upset the transatlantic framework under which European and German stability have prospered.

The 'awkward alignment' between the UK and Germany is particularly responsible for the rather modest evolution of the Union's planning and C2 capability. Although using different means (opposition by the former, ambiguity and inaction by the latter) and driven by different motives ('Atlanticism' in the case of the former, 'Civilian Power Europe' in the case of the latter), the behaviour of these two countries has been key in confounding the creation of the permanent military strategic level of command Paris has pursued so eagerly. Albeit for different reasons, both London and Berlin champion the notion of Civ/Mil integration at the military strategic level (the so-called Civ-Mil OHQ). Whereas London perceives the idea of a civ/mil OHQ as a means of drowning the Union's strategic potential in civilian waters, Berlin supports the notion of Civ/Mil integration at the military-strategic level out of strategic cultural conviction.

How has the Union's military planning and C2 capability evolved?

As the institutional setting of ESDP was being discussed in the interval between the June 1999 Cologne EU Council and the December 2000 Nice one, discussions on the nature of the EUMS constituted the first debate on the nature of the Union's planning and C2 capability. According to an insider to the discussions, 'there was an absolute consensus that something like the EUMS was needed to assist the political institutions with strategic planning'.⁷ It was, however, the very nature of that something that sparked the argument. Paris wanted a fully-fledged OHQ capable of doing advance planning and with a permanent C2 structure, as it considered it inseparable from the autonomous European crisis management capability to which the 1999 Cologne EU Council had committed. London, for its part, was more in favour of a small international secretariat that would assist the EUMS with strategic planning but would have no operational punch, in order to avoid the duplication of a capability already existing at NATO. The Germans stood close

⁷ Author's interview with EUMC representative in Brussels, May 2008.

to the British position: they wanted to avoid duplication with NATO and supported the British vision of a political structure with some military expertise rather than the French vision of an operational structure.⁸ A compromise was reached along the lines of the British-German position. The EUMS would stay away from the business of advance planning, restricting its activities to the realms of early warning, situation assessment and assisting with the politico-strategic phase of crisis response planning. It would have no capacity for operational planning or C2.

As a way of compensating for the lack of an operational planning and C2 capability, the framework nation and Berlin Plus tracks were agreed under the provisions of the Helsinki Force Catalogue. For the French, the framework nation scheme was a transitional solution only justified by the need to maintain the capacity to act of the European military instrument. The UK, on its part, was most instrumental in bringing about the so-called Berlin Plus agreements through which the Union would gain access to the Alliance's planning and conduct capability at SHAPE.

The first attempt to restructure the Union's planning and C2 capability was aimed at mainstreaming the objectives contained in the 2010 Headline Goal (notably the need for rapid reaction and greater Civ/Mil interaction) into the Union's planning and conduct capability. In this context, the Council decided to create a Civ/Mil cell within the EU Military Staff that would 'reinforce the national HQ designated to conduct an EU autonomous operation, assist in coordinating civilian operations and have the responsibility for generating the capacity to plan and run an autonomous operation, once a decision on such operation had been taken'.⁹ Attached to it would be the new Operations Centre, a sort of embryo of an OHQ that could be activated at the request of the Council on a case-by-case basis.

This first planning and C2 reshuffle is an eloquent example of the extent to which politics delimit the scope of evolution in the Union's planning and C2 capability. The need to downplay the strong sense of intra-European bitterness caused by Iraq underpinned a mood for movement on the planning and C2 front. Most interestingly perhaps, Germany's oscillation towards the French position at the April 2003 Tervuren Summit was instrumental in advocating for the need to reform the Union's planning and C2 capability. Months later, a tripartite compromise between France, the UK and Germany in December 2003 in Berlin gave way to the Civ/Mil cell-Ops Centre package. In the words of a French official:

'we convinced the German Chancellor on the necessity of a Permanent Joint OHQ, but we did not convince the German military. For the British that was a red line. We had a very long trilateral discussion, and the result was a bad compromise'.¹⁰

Concerns over the planning delays in the 2006 EUFOR operation in DRC acted as the trigger to the post-Wiesbaden process in mid-2007, which resulted in a second reorganisation of the Union's planning and C2 capability. A brand new division fully devoted to advance planning, the Military Assessment on Planning (MAP) branch, was created within the EUMS. The German EU Presidency agreed with the French that the EUFOR DRC operation had called into question the efficiency of the Union's planning and

⁸ Author's interview with EUMC representative in Brussels, May 2008.

⁹ 'European Defence: NATO/EU Consultation, Planning and Operations', *op. cit.* in note 12, p. 3.

¹⁰ Author's interview at the French Ministry of Defence in Paris, June 2009.

C2 capability. For the French the lessons to be learned from the DRC mission was that the EU needed a permanent operational planning capability that would help avoid the kind of delays in the politico-strategic planning process experienced in the run up to the Congo mission. However, the German Presidency agreed with the British that the lessons from DRC should concentrate in improving the Union's strategic planning structures, not the operational ones. Even if modest, the post-Wiesbaden process resulted in an improvement in the Union's PC2 capability: with the creation of the MAP, the path towards a European advance planning capability was, in principle, open.

In late 2008, NATO-friendly France's hold of the EU Presidency and US support for an autonomous CSDP raised expectations over a more fundamental reshuffle of the Union's planning and C2 capability, and potentially the creation of a fully-fledged OHQ. While the financial crunch, the Georgian crisis and the Irish 'No' vote in the first referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in June 2008 certainly drained the energies of the French EU Presidency, Britain's ongoing uneasiness towards the concept of a permanent OHQ remained the biggest obstacle to France's ESDP agenda. Towards the end of the French Presidency, in November 2008, a proposal was put forward for the creation of a Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD). Although many of the details concerning its organisation still remain unclear, the new CMPD will gather into a single body all the strategic planning capabilities until now spread out across the Council's structure (DGE 8, DGE 9 and parts of the Civ/Mil cell). The CMPD will offer comprehensive strategic planning, including advance planning, and will have responsibility for the Crisis Management Concept. It will have 'a military angle, a police angle, a rule-of-law angle, a development angle, etc'.¹¹ A Detached Augmentee Cadre (DAC) integrated within the CMPD will be deployed into the Union's various Operational Headquarters, both military (framework nation, SHAPE, OpsCentre) and civilian (CPCC).

The question of the nature of the Union's capability for the planning and C2 of ESDP military operations has, arguably, been the issue surrounded by the most controversy throughout the ESDP process. It has been in the context of this debate that the Union's most influential Member States have most vigorously projected their views over the heart and soul of ESDP, namely its degree of autonomy from NATO and the appropriate balance between the civilian and the military instrument. The awkward alignment between the UK and Germany largely explains the rather modest development of the Union's planning and C2 capability and, most particularly, the lack of a permanent military strategic level of command or OHQ. On three occasions (in late 2003, mid-2007 and late 2008) the French have explored windows of opportunity to bump up the Union's planning and C2 capability. On the same three occasions they have met with Britain's explicit opposition and Germany's 'destructive ambiguity'. Compromises between the Big Three have led to some improvement in the Union's planning and C2 capability. Yet the fact of the matter remains that the lack of a permanent military-strategic level of command continues to considerably cripple the performance of the Union's planning and C2 capability.

¹¹ Author's interview with General Council Secretariat official in Brussels, May 2009.

Conclusions: The Union's planning and C2 system is severely handicapped, as the current *ad-hoc* system (framework nation, Berlin Plus, Ops Centre) does not meet minimum quality standards. Most notable are the lack of an advance planning capability, the lack of operational input into the politico-strategic process and the lack of a permanent command and CIS infrastructure. In the words of an official from the General Council Secretariat:

'When you plan something from Brussels at the strategic level, fundamentally there are three things that Member States would really like to know: how many troops, how much money and how long? We are in no position to answer any of those three questions satisfactorily. In order to do that you need an OHQ that is theatre-acquainted. Since we don't have it, we try and plan things from a strategic level, but it is very unprofessional and unreliable'.¹²

The current institutional design underpinning the Union's planning process tends to accentuate what is essentially an artificial division between what are commonly referred to as the *politico-strategic* and *operational* phases of planning. Both in the national and NATO contexts, the various levels of command can go up and down the planning and C2 ladder as the situation requires. Planning and conduct are inherently porous activities. On the one hand, operational input is tantamount to an informed politico-strategic process. On the other, OHQ-OpCdr involvement in politico-strategic deliberations ensures a greater feeling of ownership at the military-strategic level, a feeling that results in greater political awareness throughout the operational level.

Beyond this more general problem of a lack of flexibility throughout the planning and C2 cycle, the lack of a permanent military strategic level of command creates CIS and situational awareness issues. According to an EUMS official, 'the lack of a permanent CIS is the biggest problem we face in the realm of C2: our current CIS does not meet the security requirements of the military'.¹³ Furthermore, a permanent OHQ would make it possible to better keep track of all European deployments, enhancing the Union's broader situational awareness'.

In this regard, the Spanish Presidency's suggestion to designate the Operations Centre as the preferred OHQ for BattleGroup Operations¹⁴ is a very promising initiative provided the 'preferred OHQ' designation is accompanied by an increase of the personnel and resources of the Permanent Nucleus of the Ops Centre. With the CIS infrastructure that the Ops Centre already has, a planning and C2 skeleton of some 50 personnel would suffice to address the Union's shortages in the realm of advance contingency planning and for the purposes of increasing flexibility in the planning process. It is also of the utmost importance that the OpsCentre maintains the principle of military autonomy: while a comprehensive approach to crisis management requires that the concept of Civ/Mil integration is applied at the politico-strategic level (ie, the new Crisis Management Planning Directorate), at the military-strategic level of command, Civ/Mil cooperation must be addressed through coordination (by co-location) and not integration. This Spanish proposal, provided it is accompanied with the necessary boost in the OpsCentre's permanent staff, would sort out several aspects at once: it would improve the prospects for using the BattleGroups (theoretically available since 2007 and not yet used) and would

¹² Author's interview with General Council Secretariat official in Brussels, May 2009.

¹³ Author's interview with EUMS official in Brussels, May 2009.

¹⁴ Intervention of Spanish Minister of Defence Carme Chacon before the Spanish Senate on the priorities of the Spanish EU Presidency on CSDP, available at <http://www.mde.es/actualidad/intervencion/>.

save many of the headaches associated with force generation; it would give the Union the necessary advance planning capacity and planning flexibility that rapid reaction require; and it would bring important benefits in terms of situational awareness and CIS security, boosting the efficiency of the Union's command and control capability. This is an opportunity for Spain to prove its pro-European credentials in a meaningful area.

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Abbreviations

BG	BattleGroup
BIH	Bosnia Herzegovina
C2	Command and Control
CAR	Central African Republic
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	Communication and Information Systems
CMC	Crisis Management Concept
CMPD	Crisis Management Planning Directorate
CONOPS	Concept of Operations
CPCC	Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability
DGE	Directorate General
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DSACEUR	Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
ESS	European Security Strategy
EUMC	EU Military Committee
EUMS	EU Military Staff
EUSG	EU Staff Group
FHQ	Force Headquarters
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
HG	Headline Goal
IFOR	Implementation Force
IMD	Initiating Military Directive
MAP	Military Assessment on Planning
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MSO	Military Strategic Option
MSOD	Military Strategic Options Directive
OHQ	Operational Headquarters
OpCdr	Operations Commander
OPLAN	Operation Plan
Ops	Operations
PSC	Political and Security Committee
RCA	<i>République Centrafricaine</i>
SFOR	Stabilisation Force
SG	Secretary General
SG/HR	Secretary General/High Representative
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SITCEN	Situation Centre
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
