EU-Battlegroups in Context. Underlying Dynamics, Military and Political Challenges

NIKLAS GRANHOLM & PÅL JONSON

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FOI
Swedish Defence Research Agency
Defence Analysis
SE-164 90 Stockholm

Phone: +46-8 5550 30 00
Fax: +46-8-5550 31 00

www.foi.se

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Author/s (editor/s)
Niklas Granholm
Pål Jonson

Project manager
Niklas Granholm

Approved by
Bo Ljung

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Abstract
Relatively little openly available analytical work on the EU Battlegroup concept has thus far been conducted. As the analytical deficit is gradually being filled, the concept and its different bi- and multilateral arrangements are racing ahead with unusual speed.

The aim of this brief three-part study is threefold. Firstly, by analysing the 'genesis' and the subsequent swift conceptual development of the Battlegroup concept, the issue is put into a wider context. Secondly, a short case study of the development of the Nordic Battlegroup gives a regional context and will hopefully provide a better understanding of the complexities of setting up a multinational high-readiness unit for peace-support and crisis management.

In the third and final part of the study, some issues and problems pertaining to the further development of the concept and some other issues related to the operations and possible effects on European security policy are discussed. Some alternative options on how to further develop the Battlegroup concept are then suggested in the final section of the study.

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Sammanfattning

Relativt få öppna studier av Battlegroup-konceptet finns idag tillgängliga, samtidigt som de olika bi- och multilaterala arrangemangen utvecklas med okarakteristisk snabbhet.

Studien består av tre delar. I den första görs en analys av Battlegroup-konceptets ”genesis” och utveckling för att sätta in den i sitt sammanhang. I den andra görs en enkel fallstudie av utvecklingen av den Nordiska Stridsgruppen (Nordic Battlegroup-NBG).

I den tredje och sista delen av studien diskuteras vissa frågor och problem relaterade till fortsatt utveckling av konceptet, samt några andra kopplade till insatserna och möjliga effekter på europeisk säkerhetspolitisk utveckling. Studien avslutas med några alternativa förslag till fortsatt utveckling av Battlegroup-konceptet.

Även om den konceptuella utvecklingen varit relativt snabb, återstår flera brister ännu. Bland dessa finns strategiska transporter, standardiserings- och kvalitetsnormer samt utveckling av ett modulärt sätt att sätta samman enheter för specifika uppgifter.

Nyckelord

EU-battlegroups, Nordiskt samarbete, Europeisk Säkerhet, NRF, försvarsutveckling

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Foreword

Relatively little analytical work on the EU Battlegroup concept has thus far been conducted that is openly available as a basis for discussion. This analytical deficit is gradually being filled, but at the same time development of the concept and its different bi- and multilateral arrangements are racing ahead with unusual speed. To study the development of the EU Battlegroups is very much to study a moving target.

The aim of this brief three-part study is to help fill this deficit. Firstly, by analysing the 'genesis' and the subsequent swift conceptual development of the Battlegroup concept, the issue is put into a wider context. Secondly, a short case study of the development of the Nordic Battlegroup gives a regional context and will hopefully provide a better understanding of the complexities of setting up a multinational high-readiness unit for peace-support and crisis management.

In the third and final part of the study, some issues and problems pertaining to the further development of the concept and some other issues related to the operations and possible effects on European security policy are discussed. Some alternative options on how to further develop the Battlegroup concept are then suggested in the final section of the study.

Since little has been written on the subject so far, much of the background material consists of interviews conducted with analysts and officials in Sweden, Finland, Estonia, the United Kingdom and in the EU and NATO. Most of the interviewees spoke on condition of anonymity. With a few exceptions, developments are covered up to early September 2005. Finally, the written sources are listed in the appendix.

Stockholm, March 2006

Niklas Granholm
Senior Analyst

Pål Jonson
Analyst

I. Executive Summary

- The development of the Battlegroup concept has been remarkably swift. The embryo of the concept can be traced to the EU Helsinki Headline Goal established in 1999. The main drivers for the project can be assessed on different levels of analysis. An important factor to ensure the operational value of the Battlegroups was the experience gained from the EU operation *Artemis* in 2003, where a small size entry force was able to go into a conflict-ravaged region in the Democratic Republic of Congo and ensure relative peace and stability after a short period of time.

- An institutional factor that also provided impetus was the proposal to insert permanent structured cooperation into the ESDP process during the negotiations on the European Constitution. The basic idea behind this was that one of the requirements for participating in permanent structured cooperation was to provide rapid reaction forces with very short deployment times (5 to 30 days).

- From an overarching perspective the Battlegroup concept can also be seen as an instrument for France and the United Kingdom to force other EU Member States to transform their armed forces in order to ensure that they can generate more rapidly deployable capabilities for international peace support operations.

- The development of the Nordic Battlegroup (NBG), consisting of Sweden as the framework nation, with Finland, Norway and Estonia taking part, can be seen as something of the odd man out in the process. Firstly, none of the five biggest European powers – France, Germany,the United Kingdom, Italy or Spain – are participating directly in this Battlegroup. Secondly, most of the participating states have extensive experience of modern peacekeeping operations, but limited experience of high- intensity peace enforcement operations. Thirdly, since all the participating states in the NBG base their participation on different forms of conscription, they will be forced to review their systems for recruiting personnel. Fourthly, they have a different institutional arrangement where some are only members of NATO and others only members of the EU, which might have implications for the coordination between the EU Battlegroups (EUBGs) and the NATO Response Force (NRF). It therefore seems likely that the Battlegroup concept will pose some challenges to the participants of the NBG. However, it can also provide an important impetus to turn their armed forces into a more adequate and up-to-date structure. The NBG has also provided an increase in defence cooperation between these states, which might be beneficial for future joint projects in the defence sphere.

- Even though the conceptual development of the Battlegroups has been swift, many shortcomings still remain. Strategic lift is a scarce resource, and given the operational concept where long distances need to be covered in a short time span, this calls for further analytical work and subsequent political decisions in order to find acceptable solutions that are economically viable. A combination of sea, air and land transport needs to be worked out.

- The Battlegroups committed today are not homogenous and may have varying levels of requirements and standards regarding training and equipment. This is less of a problem in the nationally-based Battlegroups than in the multinational formations and there is a need for some type of agreed EU-wide benchmarks for training in order to ensure that what the EU Member States have agreed on can be carried out if one or more Battlegroups are deployed.

- There is a clearly discernible difference of view between the large and established EU Member States and the smaller more recently admitted Member States. While the larger established EU states in Western Europe tend to focus almost exclusively on expeditionary operations, the smaller EU states in Central and Eastern Europe are still concerned about their territorial integrity, while much of their defence effort is spent on cooperating in expeditionary peace-support and crisis management operations. Geopolitical position and bitter historical experience both play a part in determining their view on balancing between territorial defence and expeditionary operations. It seems likely that these different views will contribute to the dynamics in Euro-Atlantic security affairs in the years ahead.

- The core of most of the Battlegroups consists of mechanised infantry units. There are few naval and air assets planned to be available in an operation. Given the long range, varying and more ambitious tasks for the two Battlegroups held in readiness, this points to a weakness in the concept. In this study three components (naval, amphibious and air) are suggested that could alleviate this problem. It is vital to ensure that such assets can be linked to the Battlegroups, if need be. Such units could be seen as add-on packages and could be provided from the NRF. If successful, this could in turn help ease the apprehension that some of the recently admitted Member States of the EU and NATO have concerning the aspect of their territorial defence.

- Given the flat or shrinking defence budgets in the EU and the technological change underway, the parallelism in force development between the EU and NATO should be taken into account. There does not seem to be means enough to develop separate capabilities in both the EU and NATO. At the same time, NATO is under pressure to adapt and develop along the lines agreed by its Member States. NATO’s future role in transatlantic security cooperation could be enhanced if increased by cooperation between assets now under development by the EU Member States, as suggested above. The line between ‘warfighting’ by NATO and ‘separation of

parties by Force' by the EUBGs will be less clear in the modern operational environment. Such a parallel development could also help narrow the technology gap between the US and EU/Europe. The forum for such cooperation could be the NRF and the EUBGs.

- Long-term trends in Nordic security affairs help explain the future of the NBG. The Nordic countries have over the centuries never been wholly allowed to or wished to solve their security dilemmas entirely on their own. Outside forces have always intervened to achieve some type of balance. The Nordic countries have, willingly or not, had to adapt to these situations. The EUBGs can be seen in this context: a new concept for solving common security problems will also impact on the security affairs of the region.

II. Genesis – Background to the Battlegroup Concept

In one of the latest developments within the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) the EU Member States have declared that they, by 2007, should be able to provide force packages of battalion size combat units with combat support and combat service support that are able to operate autonomously up to 120 days. The embryo of these force packages or Battlegroups as they are called can be traced to the EU Headline Goal process first outlined at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999. The main achievement at the Helsinki Summit was the agreement that the Member States by 2003 should establish the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF) that would consist of 60,000 troops, deployable within 60 days and sustainable for at least one year. However, the Presidency Report from the Summit also discussed the need to establish smaller rapid response units within the ERRF that would be able to act within 5 to 10 days' notice for more urgent operations. This aspect of the ERRF was later put on the diplomatic backburner, as the main focus of the ESDP process was shifted to achieving the numerical targets for the Headline Goal by 2003.

However, in 2003 France and the United Kingdom took an initiative to further advance the EU's ability to respond to emerging crises. In the final communiqué from the Franco-British summit at Le Touquet in February 2003 – at the height of the rift between the two states over how to handle the Iraq crisis – the two highlighted the need to further develop the rapid response dimension of the ESDP process.[1] And at a Summit between the two in London on November 24, 2003, they referred to the necessity that the EU develop 'tactical forces' which predominately, but not exclusively, were to be created to support the United Nations peacekeeping efforts in Africa.[2] On February 10, 2004, the Battlegroup concept was formally introduced into the EU system via a submission to the Political and Security Committee, and in June 2004 the European Council adopted the concept as part of the EU Headline Goal 2010.[3] Thus, the Battlegroup concept has within a remarkably

[1] See Joint Declaration Franco-British Summit, Le Touquet, 4 February 2003.
[2] Thus, as noted, the first documents that came from the Franco-British initiative had references to the Battlegroups being shaped for operations, predominately, but not exclusively, for Africa. When the initiative was transformed into EU policy these references had disappeared. To some extent, this reflected the shifting political balance within the EU after the enlargement in May 2004. Most of the new Member States did not want any explicit references to Africa and viewed the United Kingdom and France's focus on Africa as a reflection of their historical colonial ties with countries on this continent. Interview at the UK MoD.
[3] See 'EU Head Line Goal 2010 approved by the General Affairs External Relations Council on 17 May 2004 and endorsed by the European Council of 17 and 18 June 2004'.

short time been incorporated into the ESDP process and it is the aspect that currently takes up the most time and attention of the Member States.[4]

Operation *Artemis*

There have been several factors that have contributed to the rather rapid progress of the Battlegroup concept. Firstly, important impetus was generated through Operation *Artemis* which was the first ESDP mission outside of the European continent. This operation, which was launched in June 2003, was intended to handle the crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo.[5] It was undertaken at the request of the United Nations and its objective was to stabilise the humanitarian situation in and around the city of Bunia in order to ensure that the United Nations peacekeeping forces could then take over control of the area.[6] The operation consisted of 1,800 troops from several EU Member States. France acted as the framework nation and consequently provided the bulk of the forces. Within three months the intervening force had been able to ensure relative peace and stability, the return of displaced persons and the disarmament of some local militias. The result of the operation was perceived to be rather successful for the EU since it showed that its decision-making and military planning bodies were able to launch a demanding operation within a short time span.[7] It thereby also provided self-assurance and confidence among political leaders and practitioners that the EU could undertake operations that had the character of a peace enforcement mission.[8] It is doubtful if it would have been possible to build a consensus around an initiative like the Battlegroups if the Member States would not have had references to Operation *Artemis*.[9] The operation was also deemed as an important achievement in political terms since the EU was able to undertake a military operation in order to support the United Nations' role at a time when the organisation was facing major challenges over the rift among its

[4] Interview at the EU Military Staff.

[5] Paul Cornish, *Artemis and Coral*: *British Perspectives on European Union Crisis Management Operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 2003*. Centre for Defence Studies, July 2004.

[6] The Battlegroup concept as such was in part actually developed at the request of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping. The United Nations currently has approximately 80,000 personnel serving in various forms of peace support operations. However, the United Nations has a very limited ability to undertake peace enforcement operations at short notice, given the demanding requirements that are associated with these forms of operations as far as training, materiel and command and control are concerned. Through the development of the Battlegroup concept it has been assumed that the EU could alleviate this problem for the United Nations by enhancing the EU's own ability to conduct early entry force operations.

[7] However, it should be noted that the humanitarian situation deteriorated again once the troops had been withdrawn.

[8] Interview at the UK MoD.

[9] For better or worse the adoption of the Battlegroup concept would then draw heavily on the experience from Operation *Artemis* as far as size and time requirements were concerned. To a certain extent, this notion of 'planning for the last war' might be less than optimal, but it was a model that the Member States could build a consensus around.

Member States on how to handle the Iraq crisis.[10] This was of significance given the emphasis on 'effective multilateralism' stated in the EU Security Strategy and the clear support for the role of the United Nations in international peace and security issues that is prevalent among the EU Member States.

Permanent Structured Cooperation

Another factor that also created an incentive to establish the Battlegroup concept was the idea of extending the integrative method of 'permanent structured cooperation' to the field of security and defence cooperation during the negotiations on the European Constitution. The United Kingdom had previously been rather sceptical of the idea of allowing permanent structured cooperation within the ESDP process. Rather it viewed this as a means for the more integrationist oriented Member States, such as France and Germany, to establish an exclusive inner core within this area that the United Kingdom could not participate in if it in any way would be to the detriment of its transatlantic ties or its sovereignty in matters of security and defence. Yet, significantly, the United Kingdom changed its position in this regard. In the latter stages of the negotiations on the European Constitution it actively supported the inclusion of the permanent structured cooperation clause in the ESDP process, on the condition that it would be linked to what would later become the Battlegroup concept. The basic idea behind this was that the permanent structure cooperation clause would create an incentive to develop more and better military capabilities among the EU Member States.[11] In the end, the protocol for the permanent structured cooperation was formulated as follows:

> Article 1
>
> The permanent structured cooperation referred to in Article I-41(6) of the Constitution shall be open to any Member State which undertakes, from the date of entry into force of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, to:
>
> (a) proceed more intensively to develop its defence capacities through the development of its national contributions and participation, where appropriate, in multinational forces, in the main European equipment programmes, and in the activity of the Agency in the field of defence capabilities development, research, acquisition and armaments (European Defence Agency), and
>
> (b) have the capacity to supply by 2007 at the latest, either at national level or as a component of multinational force groups, targeted combat units for the missions planned, structured at a tactical level as a battle group, with support elements including transport and logistics, capable

[10] Interview at the EU Military Staff.
[11] Interview at the UK MoD.

> of carrying out the tasks referred to in Article III-309, within a period of 5 to 30 days, in particular in response to requests from the United Nations Organisation, and which can be sustained for an initial period of 30 days and be extended up to at least 120 days.[12]

Thus, it is possible that the requirements associated with the Battlegroup concept in the future will be used to set criteria for the Member States to participate in the permanent structured cooperation clause, if the Constitution would ever enter into force. This clause would then enable the possibility of a group of more able-bodied Member States to establish a nucleus within the security and defence dimension of the Union and thereby at least informally gain more influence over the ESDP process. Hence, there might in the future be a more explicit correlation between the size and relevance of the contribution by a Member State to the Battlegroup concept and the possibility of participating in the permanent structured cooperation.

Aims and Purposes of the Battlegroups

A Battlegroup as such is not a new invention specifically adopted and tailored to EU crisis management operations. On the contrary, it has been a commonly used force composition in manoeuvre warfare for decades. In essence, it can be described as the smallest self-sufficient military unit that can be deployed and sustained over time in a theatre of operation. A Battlegroup is based on a combined-arms, battalion-sized force of 1,500 troops reinforced with combat support and combat service support elements. Each Battlegroup will be linked to a Force Headquarters and pre-identified transport and logistics elements. It has also been stated that the Battlegroups can be supported by so-called ‘strategic enablers’, implying combat support from sea- and/or air power in joint operations. Thus, given their limited size the Battlegroup concept is agile enough to undertake rather demanding armed combat missions. With the Battlegroups it is intended that the EU will be able to undertake autonomous rapid response operations, most likely under a UN Chapter VII mandate, either for stand-alone operations or for the initial phase of a larger operation. Thus, a Battlegroup can, for example, be utilised as a spearhead force that enters a conflict region and stabilises the area long enough to enable the deployment of follow-on forces that can operate in the area for a longer period of time.

Contributions to the Battlegroup Concept as of 2005

The Member States have several options for contributing to the Battlegroup concept. If they have a high level of ambition and military proficiency they can provide a

[12] Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe – Protocol on permanent structured cooperation established by Article I-41(6) and Article III-312 of the Constitution.

national Battlegroup where all the troops and resources come from a single state.[13] A second option is to provide a Battlegroup based on a framework concept where one state provides combat elements while others provide combat support or combat service support functions. A third option would be to provide a multinational Battlegroup where all the states assign resources to the different aspects included in the Battlegroup. A fourth option would be to provide niche capabilities in support of the Battlegroups.

The advantage of national Battlegroups is obviously that they contain a large degree of homogeneity as far as language, training and command and control structures are concerned. This facilitates high combat effectiveness and interoperability which are vital when undertaking peace enforcement operations. Furthermore, the deployability of a national Battlegroup is better secured since only one Member State that makes the critical final decision to go along with an operation. The military dependency on other Member States is considerably smaller than in a multinational Battlegroup; however, the drawbacks of national Battlegroups are that they become rather costly to sustain and they cannot work as a vehicle for increased defence cooperation with other EU Member States. Furthermore, from a political perspective, it is favourable to be able to share risks with other participating Member States when a Battlegroup operation is or is about to be launched.

When France and the United Kingdom introduced the Battlegroup concept to the Political and Security Committee in February 2004 they requested as many national Battlegroups as possible. However, at the November 22, 2004, Military Capability Commitment Conference, the Member States made initial commitments to the formation of 13 Battlegroups, of which only four were national.

- France
- France and Belgium
- France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain
- United Kingdom
- United Kingdom and the Netherlands
- Germany, the Netherlands and Finland
- Germany, the Czech Republic and Austria
- Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania
- Italy
- Italy, Hungary and Slovenia
- Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal
- Spain

[13] The label ‘national’ signifies that the manoeuvre elements of the Battlegroup itself are provided by one nation. In ESDP operations the command and control function will always, in one form or another, be multinational.

- Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Norway[14]

Niche capabilities have so far been offered by the following Member States:

- Cyprus (a medical group)
- Lithuania (a water purification unit)
- Greece (the Athens Sealift Co-ordination Centre)
- France (the structure of a multinational and deployable Force Headquarters)

The EU's objective is to have two of the committed Battlegroups at readiness at the same time on a six-month rotation. The two Battlegroups at readiness would be able to begin operating no later than 10 days after the EU decision to launch the operation. Since January 2005 the EU has one Battlegroup at readiness through the British contribution. Full Operation Readiness is scheduled to begin from January 1, 2007.

The number of Battlegroups is hard to pin down over time and the number of committed Battlegroups will change, which complicates the analysis. The Battle Group Generation Conference is held in May and November each year, where Member States have the opportunity to commit force packages. The EU, in turn, presents all Battlegroups for four or five years at a time as a 'sliding window'. Currently, the readiness list is open up to and including 2010. The Battle Group Generation Conference in May 2006 will set out commitments for 2011, which probably will mean an even longer list of committed Battlegroups.[15]

A significant political aspect of the rotation system is that the Member States that are contributing to the two Battlegroups at readiness will most likely be under heavy pressure to conduct an operation if the overwhelming majority of the Member States deem it as desirable or necessary that the EU should undertake such an operation. This in particular poses a challenge to the Battlegroups based on contributions from some of the smaller Member States. These have previously had a tendency to by choice or necessity 'pass the buck' to France and the United Kingdom to undertake dangerous and urgent crisis management operations. This would, in political terms, no longer be possible or at least entail a high political cost when their Battlegroups are at readiness. In short, with the contribution to a Battlegroup comes a large share of responsibility and high expectations from the other Member States to be able to deliver in times of crisis.

[14] Declaration on European Military Capabilities, Military Commitment Conference, Brussels, 22 November 2004.
[15] Interview at the Swedish Ministry of Defence.

The Battlegroups and the NRF

The development of the Battlegroup concept cannot be assessed in complete isolation from the development of the NRF at the NATO Prague Summit in 2002 and the adoption of Initial Operational Readiness in October 2003. Out of the 25 EU Member States 19 are also members of NATO and most of these contribute to the NRF and the Battlegroups with a single set of forces. Yet while there are similarities between the Battlegroup concept and the NRF, such as a focus on early entry- and out-of-area operations, there are also defining differences. One of the most obvious differences is the size of the two formations. The NRF consists of approximately 25,000 troops, including combat support and naval and air assets which can be tailored according to the specific needs of an operation. The land component of the NRF consists of a brigade size manoeuvre unit. A Battlegroup consists of a third of this formation since it is based around a mechanised infantry battalion. The sea and air components of the Battlegroups are also still rather underdeveloped even though it has been stated that the Battlegroups could be supported by strategic enablers through air and sea power. The Battlegroup concept is thus a considerably more 'land-centric' formation than the NRF. The NRF's deployment time (5-30 days) is somewhat longer than the Battlegroups', but it is considerably more robust and able, largely because of the US contribution, and thus considerably better equipped to handle more demanding operations.

Furthermore, unlike the Battlegroups, which are focused on the Petersberg tasks, including those mentioned in the EU Security Strategy, the NRF covers the whole spectrum of military operations from crisis management to counter-terrorism and collective defence.[16] Yet its main focus is arguably on transforming the European NATO Allies' ability to participate in high intensity warfare operations rather than to contribute to peace support operations.[17] While the Battlegroup concept also can be viewed as a vehicle for converting the EU Member States towards an enhanced ability to undertake expeditionary operations, there are no official transformation programs associated with the Battlegroup concept. There is potentially a risk that the states that remain outside of the NRF will in the long run suffer a disadvantage since they cannot participate in the transformation process to enhance the European Allies' ability to contribute to high intensity warfare operations and other developments of operational concepts within the NRF. Given the fact that the Battlegroups are intended to be used primarily for peace enforcement operations, it is vital that they are agile and preserve a high proficiency to undertake armed combat operations and maintain 'escalation dominance' in such operations. Thus, the transformation process that is associated with the NRF will bring important

[16] The Petersberg tasks include humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks for combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking. The European Security Strategy also includes joint disarmament operations, support for third countries in combating terrorism and security sector reform as possible operations within the ESDP framework.

[17] Even though the NRF has been at readiness since October 2003 it has not yet been used in any operations.

added value to the abilities of the Battlegroups, and the states that remain outside of the NRF run the risk of falling behind in this regard.[18] The members of the EU and NATO have stated that the development of the Battlegroups and the NRF should be mutually reinforcing and complementary. However, since the members of the two organisations contribute to the NRF and the Battlegroups with a single set of forces, difficulties might occur for those that belong to both organisations if there is a need to participate in an NRF operation and a Battlegroups operation at the same time if the rotation systems for the two are not properly coordinated.

[18] This is, to some extent, curbed by the fact that the individual partnership goals through the planning and review process (PARP) are focused on covering this lacuna for the states that do not participate in the NRF process.

III. The Nordic Battle Group – The Odd Man Out?

The establishment of the NBG has become an intensive exercise in Nordic defence diplomacy. It has within a very short time span forced or made it possible, depending on one's perspective, to increase Nordic defence cooperation significantly. It will also have some important implications for the structure of the armed forces within these states. It is clear that the Battlegroup concept as such has not reached an end state. The continued work to develop and improve the NBG will become an important catalyst for further cooperation within this field.

Sweden

When the Battlegroup concept first emerged Sweden was after a short initial period of reflection eager to embrace the concept. Unlike the development of the ERRF, there was little domestic debate about Swedish participation in the Battlegroup concept. The Green Party (*Miljöpartiet – de gröna*) and the Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet*) expressed some reluctance to Sweden participating, but the fact that the concept emerged in the context of assisting the United Nations contribution to peace support operations in Africa made it easier to build a consensus around the initiative.[19] An exchange of views followed on whether Sweden should provide a national Battlegroup or join forces with other Member States. The Swedish Armed Forces and the centre-right opposition parties favoured a national Battlegroup partly on different grounds. The opposition saw it as an instrument to increase Sweden's leverage within the ESDP process while the Swedish Armed Forces favoured a national Battlegroup since it would ensure high interoperability and military effectiveness for the sort of entry operations that the Battlegroups would be centred around. However, the Ministry of Defence instead wanted Sweden to be part of a multinational Battlegroup; firstly, because there were concerns that it would be less favourable to have a national Battlegroup in an EU context if it would be involved, since there was no one to share the risks with in that case.[20] Secondly, establishing a national Battlegroup would be rather costly and the concept had emerged as the Swedish Armed Forces were facing severe budget cuts.[21] The decision was therefore reached that Sweden would try to find other Member States that would be willing and able to establish a Battlegroup together with Sweden.

Rather soon it was clear that Finland would be the most likely ally in this process as the two countries have a long tradition of cooperation in peace support operations.

[19] Interview at the Swedish Ministry of Defence.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Interview at the Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters.

However, the confidence between the two states was somewhat undermined by the fact that the Swedish Armed Forces stated that they saw the cooperation with Finland regarding the Battlegroup as a transitional arrangement and that the long-term objective for Sweden would be to have a national Battlegroup by 2010. This was one of the factors that contributed to Finland's decision to also participate in the German-Dutch Battlegroup (G-DBG), as it wanted to ensure that it would not be excluded from the Battlegroup concept by default.[22] The Swedish contribution to the NBG will consist of 1,100 troops forming the manoeuvre units based on light armoured infantry and logistical support.

Finland

When the Battlegroup concept was introduced into the EU system in February 2004 it was met with reluctance by the Finnish Government.[23] This reluctance, to a large extent, stemmed from doubts regarding the notion of tailoring the Battlegroup concept to the higher ends of the Petersberg tasks and the level of force that potentially could be associated with such operations. President Tarja Halonen raised these concerns explicitly when she stated in a speech in December 2004 that the EU had to establish clear rules of engagement that ensured that the use of force would not take place against, for example, child soldiers.[24] President Halonen was also keen to stress that the EU would need a UN mandate in order to deploy Battlegroups.[25] This sparked some controversy since the EU's official view is that a UN mandate always is desirable but not absolutely vital in order to undertake EU operations. Finland therefore had to undertake a review process of its Peacekeeping Act in order to assess whether it would be possible for it to participate in Battlegroup operations without a UN mandate.

It should also be noted that Chief of Defence Admiral Juhani Kaskeala had stated already in 2003 that he did not see it possible for Finland because of political reasons to participate in the combat units in an operation similar to Operation *Artemis,* given the level of force that was used in this operation.[26] A second reason for Finland's limited enthusiasm for the Battlegroup concept derived from the demanding military requirements that were associated with the concept as far as readiness, personnel and deployability were concerned.[27] It was seen as being a strain on the already heavily burdened Finnish defence budget. This being said, it should be noted that the military establishment had a largely favourable outlook on the Battlegroup concept. It was viewed as an instrument to ensure that the Finnish

[22] Interview at the Finnish Ministry of Defence.
[23] Ibid.
[24] *Helsingin Sanomat International Edition*, 16 December 2004.
[25] 'President Halonen insists on UN or OSCE mandate for troop deployment', *Helsingin Sanomat International Edition*, 25 January 2005.
[26] *Helsingin Sanomat International Edition*, 4 July 2003.
[27] Interview at the Finnish Ministry of Defence.

Defence Forces would be able to maintain their competence in armed combat and ensure their relevance as an important instrument for Finnish security policy.[28]

A national Finnish Battlegroup was seen as a non-option from the outset because of the costs associated with such an undertaking. In its search for suitable partners there were two factors that guided Finnish thinking, namely previous experience of working with partners in other peace support operations and access to NATO's military infrastructure. As noted, Finland and Sweden reached an agreement to establish a common Battlegroup during the autumn of 2004. The offer to participate in the G-DBG came as somewhat of a surprise to Finland and it was within a few hours able to reach a consensus among the parties involved for the decision to participate in this Battlegroup. However, the Finnish participation in the G-DBG has been a politically more sensitive issue than participation in the NBG.[29] This stems both from the informal link to NATO that comes with participation in the G-DBG and the strong public and political support for Nordic cooperation that is prevalent in Finland. It should also be noted that there has been some disagreement between the military and the political decision-making level in Finland where the military has been keener to be involved in the G-DBG.[30]

Another factor that shaped the Finnish decision to opt for two Battlegroups was based on considerations that Finland wanted to participate in a Battlegroup with EU Member States that were also members of NATO. There were two aspects to its preference in this regard. Firstly, participation in the G-DBG was seen as a way to make sure that Finland could be well informed about the development of the NRF in general and its exercise policy in particular. Secondly, participation in the G-DBG has by some analysts also been seen as a means to ensure that Finland would retain the option to keep an open door to future NATO membership.[31] In this perspective, both aspects are mutually reinforcing, seeing as the NRF is assumed to be one of the more important aspects of NATO's ability to guarantee collective defence in the future, given the limited operational planning for this task that has followed after the last two rounds of NATO enlargement.

Finland has committed itself to providing 200 soldiers to the NBG. More specifically, the contribution will consist of surveillance and electronic warfare equipment, a biological and chemical weapons field laboratory, military police and an artillery group armed with mortars. The Finnish contribution to the G-DBG will consist of 130 soldiers and is focused on force protection of the Battlegroup, i.e., military police and special forces.

[28] Ibid.
[29] See, for example, 'MEP warns on battle group plans', *The Irish Times*, 28 January 2005.
[30] *Helsingin Sanomat International Edition*, 4 November 2004.
[31] Interview with a Finnish defence expert.

Estonia

In some ways Estonia was better prepared to handle the Battlegroup concept than other nations in the NBG when it first emerged, since it is a NATO member and already had allocated forces for participation in the NRF. Thus, the challenges that were associated with readiness, parliamentary approval and personnel were less daunting for Estonia than for Sweden or Finland. Estonia indicated its willingness to participate in the Battlegroup concept from the outset of the initiative. Yet its participation within the NBG was confirmed at a rather late stage.[32] This, to some extent, reflected the rather low priority that Estonia has attached to the ESDP process. In security policy terms, Estonia has, in order of priority, attached the greatest importance to bilateral relations with, first, the United States, then NATO and lastly, the ESDP. This stems from obvious geopolitical reasons in combination with very positive Estonian views of the role of the United States in the European security structure, as well as a general uncertainty about the ESDP process, both because of the implications this might have for the standing of NATO as well as the inability of the ESDP process to generate more military capabilities within Europe. When the Member States reported their contributions to the Battlegroup concept in November 2004, Estonia was one of the few Member States that had not contributed to this force generation conference. A sense of urgency followed in Estonia, and there was a fear that Estonia might be marginalised in the ESDP process as a consequence. However, after some intensive negotiations with Sweden, Estonia became affiliated with the NBG in January 2005. Estonia will provide approximately 50 soldiers to the NBG,specialising in guard duty and personal protection.

Norway

Norway has shown a keen interest in the ESDP process even though it, in security policy terms, puts unquestionable premium on its NATO membership. It has, for example, tried to increase its leverage and insight into the ESDP process by earmarking sizable forces for the EU Headline Goal 2003. Norway's willingness to participate in the Battlegroup concept did therefore not come as a surprise. However, its decision to participate in the NBG was not without controversy. Firstly, there was a debate in the Norwegian parliament in regards to the possibilities of Norway participating in the Battlegroup concept given the fact that it does not have any option to formally influence the decision-making procedure within the EU. Some representatives of the Norwegian parliament therefore wanted to establish a special arrangement whereby Norway would be able to veto EU operations that would include Norwegian forces. However, this would, from an EU perspective, be politically and institutionally impossible. Secondly, there were also some concerns that some Member States within the EU would be inclined to veto Norway's participation within the NBG since they did not want other non-EU Member States

[32] Estonia's contribution to the NBG was finalised on 28 January 2005.

to be able to participate in the Battlegroup concept.[33] However, in the end, Norway's participation proved less controversial than was originally assumed. It was in particular Finland who provided strong political support for the Norwegian participation. Norway will provide the NBG with assistance for the planning of strategic mobility and medical support functions. The contribution consists of about 150 soldiers.

Conclusions

Out of the Battlegroups assigned to the EU, the NBG has some defining features that set it apart from the other Battlegroups. Firstly, none of the five biggest European powers (France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain) contribute directly to this Battlegroup, which is of significance given the leverage and influence that these five states have within the ESDP process.[34] Secondly, it consists of medium-sized and small EU Member States, of which most have extensive knowledge of modern peace support operations, but none have major experience of expeditionary warfare.[35]As a consequence, all of the participating states therefore have limited strategic mobility, especially in reference to an airlift. Thirdly, the NBG is rather heterogeneous as far as institutional membership goes. Some states, such as Sweden and Finland, are militarily non-aligned EU members and have therefore, for example, not been able to participate in the development of the NRF for formal reasons. Norway, on the other hand, has taken an active part in NRF, but is the only non-EU member that participates in the NBG. The only participating Member State that follows the main stream within the European security structure and belongs to both organisations is Estonia. Fourthly, all of the participating states base their forces on conscription, albeit with different systems. This means that the demanding deployment requirements of the Battlegroup concept will force these states to rethink and adapt their previous system for recruiting personnel and the concept will therefore act as a catalyst for defence reform. It therefore seems likely that the Battlegroup concept will pose some significant challenges for these states and the impact it will have on the structure of their armed forces will be greater than on those of the bigger Member States.

[33] It should be noted that Turkey has tried to participate in the Battlegroup concept, but this request has been vetoed by Greece. The assumption was made that Greece would be inclined to do the same thing in regards to Norway in order to maintain a coherent policy line; however, this did not occur.

[34] However, the United Kingdom supports the NBG with C2-capabilities through its force headquarters at Northwood.

[35] Their collective contribution to the EU Headline Goal 2003 consisted of less than five percent of the total forces that were earmarked.

IV. Synthesis

In the preceding parts of the study we firstly described the genesis of the Battlegroup concept. This was followed by a case study on the forming of the NBG.

The final part is structured on a national, regional and European/transatlantic level respectively. We attempt to synthesise the findings, draw some conclusions from earlier chapters, draw some general conclusions and discuss their implications for regional security development. Lastly, some of the possible advantages and drawbacks of this development and some ideas on how the EUBG concept could be further developed are discussed.

The National Level – Sweden

The introduction of the EUBG has initiated several developments in the Swedish military system.
Since the end of the Cold War the Swedish Armed Forces have been going through significant organisational and conceptual changes: a process which is by no means at an end. The earlier focus on territorial defence, almost completely dominant, apart from what the armed forces generally regarded as a ‘sideshow’ of ‘blue helmet’ peacekeeping operations, is almost completely gone. For Sweden, the international peace-support operations during the Cold War played the role of supporting both long-term international norm-building and the UN as a focus for Swedish foreign policy goals.

The operational and strategic experience of the Balkan wars during the 1990s should not be underestimated as a driver of the reform process, namely, many previous concepts on the use of force, equipment, training, intelligence, command and control arrangements and, not least, cooperation with NATO.

It is also fair to say that this marked the return of Sweden to European affairs also in the military-strategic field. For the first time since the end of the Napoleonic era, Sweden from early 1994 took part in a Great Power coalition on the European continent in war-like conditions. The learning curve was at times steep: tactically, operationally and strategically. The coordination of the military crisis management effort with overall political strategy went through a similar development.

Today, the focus of the development in the armed forces is almost wholly on expeditionary resources and hardly anyone argues for a return to the old system. The

attempt during the latter part of the 1990s and until a few years ago to focus wholly on the development of Network-Centric-Warfare (NCW) was unsatisfactory in providing the armed forces with a strategic idea to drive the overall conceptual development. The focus on NCW, though providing some interesting and relevant developments, has given way to a focus on expeditionary operations. The EUBG has already been instrumental in this.

By no means a uniquely Swedish problem, the budgetary issue of the armed forces has led to a substantial reorganisation and bases being closed as well as regiments and units being disbanded. This has been a painful process and has caused resentment in the armed forces and locally. Without the 'new' direction provided by the EUBG concept, a lack of organisational forward thinking could have contributed to a significant lowering of morale. This is one of the reasons why the Swedish Armed Forces relatively quickly took to the EUBG concept and started developing the unit.

New personnel concepts will also be introduced as a result of the development of the EUBG. The significantly higher readiness required of the EUBGs means that it no longer will suffice with stand-by arrangements, which have been the norm under the Headline Goal 2003 arrangements. The Nordic EUBG will be a standing force during its six-month readiness period. This in turn has raised the issue of whether conscription, volunteer forces or a combination thereof, will be the core of the concept in the future. The current trend is more and more towards a phasing out of conscription, all but in name, with a volunteer force employed on time-limited contracts. An important political breakthrough recently occurred through the introduction of an element of soldiers employed on time-limited contracts.

The budgetary problems will also have other, more far-reaching effects that are harder to quantify. The cost of developing the NBG and keeping it as a standing force for six months, when there is very little or no free money available for investment, will inevitably lead to hard choices regarding future force structures.[36] The military planners in charge have always and will always be faced with this obvious question, but the consequences will be severe. A force structure exclusively for international crisis management in a multilateral setting would be satisfactory if the strategic situation would allow, but long-term trends will also have to be taken into account. The NBG, minus its foreign contributions, is, of course, an asset, but is hardly sufficient in the territorial defence role. In the Nordic region, there are still international security problems that remain unresolved; many of them linked to how

[36] Currently, slightly less than half the budget is spent on defence materiel, most of it linked to the Gripen fighter project and maintaining existing systems. Much of the remaining budgetary means are tied up in costs for restructuring and personnel, thus leaving little room for new projects, training and, not least, operations.

Russia develops.[37] Over the longer term, the Russian factor cannot be ignored and might have an impact on the EUBGs in general and the NBG in particular.

For Sweden, as a framework nation of the NBG, these trends place an extra responsibility on putting the unit together. The realisation that the price of failure – in getting the unit ready in a credible way, deploying and employing it, should it be required – would be high is clearly there and has concentrated efforts both at the military and defence policy-making levels in Sweden.

The EUBGs present Sweden with another challenge regarding its policy for international peace operations: as these have developed during the decade and a half since the end of the Cold War, the pattern has generally been that Sweden arrives in theatre with a peace force three to six months after a mandate has been given by the UN.[38] After that, the mission, often with good reason, becomes long-term and a troop presence is retained, in some cases for decades. For example, the Balkan missions are now into their second decade, and the UN-led mission to Cyprus began in 1964 and Sweden contributed to UNFICYP until 1987.[39] Since a few years back, there have been some smaller shorter-term operations, mainly in Africa. The Helsinki Headline Goal process has led to units being put on stand-by. In contrast, the concept of the EUBGs sets the deployment time to about ten days and sets out a maximum endurance of 120 days, when other follow-on forces are to relieve them. With the budgetary constraints discussed above, ongoing conceptual development and Sweden's foreign and security policy goals, this poses a policy question: is Sweden prepared to set aside the resources to do both, i.e., have a long-term security presence in areas where it is deemed in our interest and, at the same time, maintain part of a high-readiness multinational force to be quickly deployed into an open conflict?

The Regional Level

The Nordic Factor – Effects on Military Cooperation in the NBG Countries

Nordic cooperation in the field of international crisis management is not new. Arrangements, cooperation, coordination and joint training for UN Peacekeeping operations were established already during the Cold War. The end of the Cold War brought this cooperation to new qualitative levels during the operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s. The NBG will mean further integration and requires a closer and more intense exchange of personnel, ideas, concepts and standards. The frequency and content of the exercises and a certification process of the unit will

[37] Jan Leijonhielm et al, 'Russian Military Capability in a Ten-Year Perspective – Problems and Trends in 2005', FOI User Report, FOI-R—1662—SE, June 2005.

[38] Paradoxically, during the Cold War readiness for deployment was in several emergencies faster, sometimes down to a month from decision to 'boots on the ground'.

[39] For data on UNFICYP see 'The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peacekeeping', Second Edition (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1990).

also be a determining factor of whether the NBG will be seen as credible. It is likely that the whole process in itself over the long-term will lead to a higher degree of military integration between the participating Nordic-Baltic nations.[40]

Interestingly, of the four participating countries, most of them have differing institutional arrangements for their security policy.[41] Seemingly, such differing institutional arrangements should, to a casual observer, hinder a multilateral arrangement such as the NBG, but Nordic cooperation has for many decades had positive connotations in the Nordic countries and is easy to sell politically. That said, Nordic cooperation has always had its limits. Regarding defence materiel, some of the more high-profiled projects have at times run into problems and have only been partially successful.[42] This indicates that Nordic cooperation is far from problem free. The NBG project has though, in all likelihood, better prospects in its present form, since it concerns crisis and conflict management in the multilateral EU context. All data at present indicates that the NBG is alive and developing well.

The NBG Means Different Things to the Different Countries That Contribute

One of the features that the NBG shares with some of the other multilateral EUBGs is that participation in it means different things to different nations. Within the NBG the nations' reasons for taking part seem to vary.

For Sweden, one of the main reasons was and is firstly to regain a focus on the development of the armed forces that had been slipping somewhat in the past few years. A role as a framework nation for the NBG was taken up early on. Secondly, not being a full member of NATO, this step in the development of the ESDP was the acceptable avenue open to Sweden. Thirdly, it can be seen as the next logical development of the crisis management capabilities that had come to the fore during the 1990s. Fourthly, the long-standing support of the United Nations crisis management capacity was also a factor, since most of the international peace-support operations Sweden has taken part in have been directly led by the UN and the requests for the EUBG concepts originally came from the UNDPKO.[43] Lastly, the will to develop a capacity that in time would come to rival that of NATO's –

[40] Denmark, while a member of the EU as well as NATO and a Nordic nation, does not take part in any EU military cooperation whatsoever.

[41] Sweden and Finland are both since the mid-1990s members of the Partnership for Peace (PfP). The PfP now seems likely to lose some of its political momentum, since its main purpose of preparing the aspiring members for full NATO membership is now largely completed. Focus has shifted to developing methods of defence planning and democratic control of the armed forces in, for example, the Central Asian republics.

[42] The joint Nordic helicopter purchase of the NH-90 was hampered by a last-minute Danish withdrawal and the new Viking submarine project seems in its present form close to demise after the Norwegian decision to withdraw from the project in 2002 and the Danish withdrawal from the project in 2004.

[43] United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

which could lead to a weakening of the transatlantic link – was not one of the reasons. Sweden sees NATO as one of the important parts of transatlantic cooperation, and Sweden has no wish to see this cooperation weakened.

Finland took a more cautious approach to the EUBG. While taking part in the NBG was deemed important, a framework role was considered too much of an effort and the Finnish contribution was limited to a maximum of 220 soldiers. On the other hand, Nordic cooperation – particularly with Sweden – has always been important, and this influenced the decision to take part in the NBG. Finnish concerns were also heard early on, since some Swedish officials publicly held the optimistic view that the NBG was merely a stepping stone towards a Swedish Battlegroup some years down the line. The Finns justify their contribution (130 strong) to the G-DBG, saying that they might be left without any participation in an EUBG, should Swedish ambitions be fulfilled. Another reason is to support the option of a future Finnish NATO membership.

Norway's reasons for taking part in the NBG were, to a great extent, motivated by the wish to play a role within the development of the ESDP as well as taking part in what was seen as a Nordic project. Partly at Finnish insistence, Norway was invited to take part. Questions within the Norwegian political system, stemming from a long-standing criticism of the EU, of which Norway is not a member, and that it would weaken NATO, were also raised. The issue of a Norwegian right to a veto before a decision on deployment was also debated, but this seems to have been dropped, and there is no mention of it in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the four countries in the NBG.[44] Cost was also one of the arguments raised against taking part. The Norwegian defence reform, with several expensive new materiel projects (the new *Fridtjof Nansen* class frigates, the replacement of the F-16 fighter system, etc.), is tying up a lot of the available funds and the defence budget does not seem likely to increase. Norway contributes about 150 troops to the NBG and is also responsible for sealift arrangements.

Finally, Estonia was initially apprehensive to participation in the EUBG, since it would put further pressure on an already stretched military system. In addition, the view was initially taken that NATO would suffice, but since all the other Baltic states already were part of an EUBG, it would look odd if Estonia had stayed outside. Estonia's contribution to the NBG (around 50 troops) is naturally the smallest.

The brief description above highlights problems inherent in all multinational formations: the more nations that contribute to the unit, the greater the need for

[44] 'Memorandum of Understanding Between the Estonian, Finnish, Norwegian Ministries of Defence and the Government of Sweden Concerning the Principles for the Establishment and Operation of a Multinational Battle Group to be Made Available to the European Union', 24 May 2005.

political coordination and standardisation, since the different nations often have varying perspectives and traditions, for instance, on the use of force. Also, the political impetus for the force to actually deploy at the EU's request will leave little room for political manoeuvre or margin for error should one or more nations have reservations before a particular mission. In the Nordic case, the domestic political scene will be an important factor if and when the decision to deploy the NBG actually arises. Substantial political attention will probably have to be paid to this to avoid a last minute ruckus. Obviously, if this is done, the strength of the concept will be greater than otherwise, and the likelihood of operational success will be greater.

In three of the four countries the NBG is an important project, and for Sweden as a framework nation it is a major project. For all four it will mean that careful tradeoffs when planning future defence structures will have to be made. The process will not be easy, and some of the problems associated with this will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

To conclude, the EUBG project raises many questions for the military apparatus in many of the participating countries. In particular for the medium and small European nations, it is a driver of development towards a more expeditionary capability as well as a challenge to many of the established military concepts in this region. While other countries no longer think about the aspect of territorial defence, several of the Nordic states do to a varying degree.

The European and Transatlantic Level

Small vs. Big? The EUBG Also Means Different Things to Different EU Nations

If the incentive for being involved in the EUBG project differs between the Nordic nations taking part in the NBG and this is even more markedly so at the European level, for the major EU nations in Europe – the United Kingdom and France are in a league of their own with their large military establishments – the EUBG concept is, first of all, not new.[45] Their expeditionary tradition and know-how make it relatively easy to assign tasks to the units, allocate transport, gather the relevant information, plan the rotation of the units, deploy and conduct operations, should need be. Moreover, the political systems in these countries are, to a greater extent, geared to using their military resources directly as a political tool. The combination of these two factors means that for these nations, also the original founders of the concept, the EUBGs can help to fill the perceived 'readiness gap' and pull other nations along

[45] It may seem odd to exclude Germany from this group, but its strategic stance during the Cold War and well into the 1990s placed severe and mostly self-imposed limits on expeditionary crisis management that remained in effect long after the Cold War. The structure of the *Bundeswehr* is undergoing change to accommodate this, but a lot still remains to be done, which merits a grouping among the larger medium-sized European states.

in their defence restructuring. A nationally manned and led EUBG is the norm for these countries.

For the medium-sized European nations – like Italy, Spain and Germany – the EUBG is a little harder to handle. The resource-base is smaller and their NATO readiness assignments compete with their EUBG readiness tasks. Their defence structures are still, or were until recently, based on soldiers volunteering from the trained conscripts called up for national service. In some cases, the EUBG concept will mean that something in the defence structure will have to be disbanded and/or will not be developed in order to afford the 'new' unit. Defence budgets in these countries declined after the Cold War to cash in on the so-called peace dividend, but have remained stagnant for some years. Strategic lift is often in short supply nationally and a pooling of resources will therefore be necessary. A nationally led EUBG is a possibility, but is, in most cases, not within the means of these nations. A role as a framework nation in a multinational EUBG is what most in this group of nations can afford without straining their defence apparatus too much.

The group of smaller nations – like the Baltic states and most of the new EU members – face different challenges. These nations cannot aspire to the role of a framework nation, but will participate in the multinational category of EUBGs. Usually, company-sized units are the upper limit for this group of nations. Like the medium-sized nations, the need for contributions to the NATO structure and the rotation of units in various international peace-support and crisis-management operations are already today straining defence systems. At the same time, these are already undergoing far-reaching reform processes. Thorough planning will have to be made and the will to contribute must be carefully matched with available resources. The EUBG concept can mean that these states will have to refrain from developing units and capabilities that they otherwise would have acquired.

The description above highlights a dilemma: most European countries will agree that a reasonably capable force with readiness for rapid crisis and conflict management further away from Europe is lacking today. This should be set against the concerns that many smaller and medium-sized new and older EU Member States have for a return to a territorial threat in one form or another. Bitter historical experience and geography clearly play a role here. The concern of these nations is that the EUBG concept could, while the need for a rapid crisis management resource is clearly relevant, draw too much scarce resources away from what territorial defence is deemed to be required. The looming mistrust of developments in Russia is the main background factor. While Western Europe has adopted a policy of transparency and cooperation to create security in what has been called a 'postmodern' community, this has not been the case in Russia.[46]

[46] The notion of 'modern' and 'postmodern' is elegantly used in: Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003). This book is also helpful in discussing this issue.

This view is much less apparent or completely absent in the major nations in Western Europe. Here, a policy of refocusing on the expeditionary operations that have been a part of the concept of these nations is now clearly dominant. No longer do they see the need to use scarce resources for a territorial defence while other tasks should take priority.

A Step up on the Conflict Ladder?

The establishment of the EUBGs will also have an effect in two respects on the medium-sized and small nations taking part. Firstly, the EUBGs are designed for crisis management on behalf of the European Union up to and including 'separation of parties by force' and 'Tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking' but excluding 'warfighting'.[47] What this more precisely means is, to some extent, a matter of opinion, but the operational environment - as it has developed during the past decade - suggests increasingly higher demands on the forces as regards a need for training, readiness, operational adaptability, use of force, technical and cultural know-how and, not least, ability to cooperate with various civilian agencies, etc.

Secondly, one of the newer aspects in the environment is that insurgents do not any longer always limit themselves to the territory where the conflict takes place. In some cases, their goals are universal and they move relatively freely between areas of open conflict and areas in the Western world. This will bring the factor of homeland defence into focus: the risk that a deployment of a Battlegroup could lead to revenge or retribution attacks on the territory of the country or countries that sent the EUBG must be taken into account. That this threat is very different from the territorial threat of the Cold War and requires different approaches is also evident.[48] Here, both police and military resources in a suitable mix will have to complement each other in countering this threat. A better solution at the national level is needed, but that is not enough: improved multilateral cooperation could help ensure that the 'home front' is kept safe.

Short-Term Conflict Management vs. Long-Term Crisis Management

[47] The Petersberg Declaration, Bonn, 19 June 1992, accessed at www.weu.int, 8 July 2005. '…Tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking', The Alliance's Strategic Concept Approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C. on the 23rd and 24th April 1999, accessed at www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm, 3 November 2005.

[48] The issue is discussed in the following RAND report: David Aron (ed.), *Three Years After: Next Steps in the War on Terror* (Arlington, VA: RAND Corporation, 2005).

The establishment of the EUBGs will have yet another effect on the capacity of European crisis management. As described earlier, the development of the EUBG has, in part, been driven by the operational experience of the past five to ten years. These gave a strong indication that the ability to deploy a crisis management force quicker was an important factor in a successful process towards halting and then settling the conflict over the longer term. The longer a conflict is allowed to rage unchecked, the harder its settlement will be. The EUBG will, however, again have various effects on the different European countries. For the smaller and medium-sized nations the ability to deploy a force quickly will mean that they will have less, or in some cases, no capacity for the longer-term handling of a conflict, where the often complicated and drawn-out process towards a stable situation will require a substantial and flexible security presence, often over many years. This effect is similar in nature, but less marked in the major European nations. Is there a risk that the balance between short-term deployability, for which the argument is valid, and the longer term security presence is tipped to the detriment of the whole?

Stretching the Concept – How Could the EUBG Be Enhanced?

Given the fact that the EU is, in many ways, now going through a period of crises, discussing possible further developments of the Battlegroup concept might seem almost pointless, but so far the EUBGs have developed with remarkable speed. How the structural crisis in the EU could affect the EUBG is difficult to say, but two possible mini-scenarios are listed here: in one scenario the Battlegroups are developed as plans stand today, but the EU's structural crisis will hamper any further conceptual developments. Most of what political energy there is, is consumed by internal issues such as a new constitution, long-term budgets, CAP reform, budget rebates, the Stability and Growth Pact, etc. The Battlegroups become victims of these conflicts in that a decision to deploy them cannot be made due to internal splits. With the EUBG units developed and ready but with deployment blocked by political disunity, it becomes a case of 'all dressed up, but nowhere to go'. Such a scenario would also lead to a further loss of credibility for the EU as a strategic actor.

In another scenario, the Battlegroups are developed according to plan, the structural crisis leads to EU political conflict as above, but the strategic culture of integration in the EU instead agrees to disagree on these policy areas, and in return the relative success of the Battlegroups is reinforced and further conceptual development takes place. The EUBGs are held forth as a shining example of European cooperation, while other internal issues are hampering further development of the EU.

Whether either of these two mini-scenarios will have any likeness to the real world or not, it is nevertheless relevant to think of what new capabilities an enhanced Battlegroup concept could benefit from. Today, the legacy of the operational experience of the 1990s has led to an almost exclusive 'ground-centric' focus – a

Battlegroup based on mechanised infantry and support units is, in most cases, the standard solution; sometimes almost regardless of what the problem is. It is, of course, a drawback to be limited to types of forces that can only be deployed with considerable effort and which are relatively manpower-intensive. Another effect of this weakness is that though the deployment time is set at about ten days, the support units (especially combat support and combat service support) can take longer in arriving at the theatre of operations. With an operations concept where light forces are sent in first, followed by medium to heavy forces at a later stage, in the high-end operations, firepower and operational mobility still count. This suggests a need for developing a number of 'add-on-packages' that could improve an EUBG about to be deployed. Such a development would also lend further credibility to the EU crisis management function in particular and the EU as an international actor in general.

Several such functions are feasible and some of them are already in the inventories of some of the major and medium-sized nations. Given that further development can take place, three components – strategic enablers – could either be integrated directly into the concept,linked to it or that its availability is ensured:

- A naval component – the question of how to get to the operational area safely and how to give support from the sea will, in many cases, face a Battlegroup about to be deployed. The inherent flexibility of a naval component suitably linked to an EUBG adds resources and assets that would otherwise take a long time to reach an area of operations. The emphasis on speed and flexibility for the deployment of the EUBG also supports a naval component.

- An amphibious component – many possible operational areas lie in or near an often resource-rich coastline. This could mean that the difficult transfer phase from sea transport to land operations can be countered or opposed by relatively small forces if the EUBG deployed is set up to go ashore without taking into account opposition in a port or landing zone. In other operational situations, the need to remain in the coastal zone for a longer time period will be in focus. Amphibious assets could prove crucial in some operations, and in others shorten the transport routes considerably. Again, increased flexibility and versatility would follow.

- An air power component – to get resources into an operational area quickly, an air power component could prove vital. Reconnaissance, strike capability, fighter component, operational and tactical air transport are all assets that together or in combination all could help to strengthen a Battlegroup under deployment in an operational area or under pressure during ongoing operations.

With this the problem of competition or cooperation between NATO and the development of the ESDP has presented itself. If the EUBG concept is developed along the lines indicated above, it would be well on its way to reaching a capability independent of NATO resources and would strain transatlantic relations. This is not deemed to be in the interest of many of the EU nations, big or small. Simple in theory, but much harder in practice, could be to develop the 'add-ons' so that they could be borrowed from NATO resources and thus giving the US a role. The development of the operational environment into more dynamic and fluent conditions suggests this – it is already today hard to draw a clear line between crisis management, as envisaged at the 'high end' of the Petersberg tasks, with 'separation of parties by force', and what is considered modern 'warfighting' in NATO terminology. Such a development could also act to help narrow the technological gap between the US and Europe. This suggests convergence rather than divergence regarding the development of NATO and the EU's future capabilities.

The tool for such cooperation between NATO and the EU in this field could be to develop a closer relationship between the EUBG concept and the NRF. Can a workable solution be found? The abovementioned apprehensions of the medium-sized and small EU member nations of a lack of concern over their perceived territorial threat could be alleviated, thus strengthening the concept further.

What makes such a possible development unlikely, on the other hand, is the EU's current structural crisis: the differing views on the development of European security structures where the *finalité* of the ESDP has been kept deliberately hazy. The EU also has several other structural problems that could spill over and affect the future of the Battlegroups. Transatlantic relations have also experienced severe strain in the past few years, and even though relations have improved somewhat since the US presidential elections in 2004, a grand structural breakthrough in transatlantic relations seems less likely today. At the military level, however, the EUBGs are seen by the Pentagon as a positive development.[49]

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The narrative in this study suggests that the face of Nordic cooperation in security affairs has a relatively high degree of consensus on security, long-standing and institutionalised security cooperation, and a high degree of pragmatism as some of

[49] Hans Binnendijk, David C. Gompert, Richard L. Kugler, 'A New Military Framework for NATO', *Defense Horizons*, Center for Technology and National Security Policy, National Defense University, May 2005.

its main features. But it is also clear that an exclusively regional perspective is insufficient, since external factors over time have determined the security set-up for the Nordic region.

The problem for the Nordic nations is that an analysis in isolation from the surrounding strategic landscape will prove inadequate. A long-term trend in Nordic security suggests that the region throughout history has hardly ever been able or allowed to settle its security affairs in isolation from the rest of the geopolitical developments in a wider, regional context. The region has always been dependent on outside factors that determine its solutions to security matters. Dutch, British, French, Russian, German, Soviet, and American interests have over the centuries always had to be taken into account by the Nordic nations. In all likelihood, these external factors are what will influence, possibly finally determine, the future of the EU Nordic Battle Group. How to strike the balance between regional security and engagements far away remains as always the question for the Nordic nations.

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[50] The interviewees talked to us on the condition that they would not be named.