

The European Union's New Crisis Management Capability

By Raimo Väyrynen

Recommendations

- ◆ The international community and the United States should welcome the new EU force as a major contribution to the development of a more differentiated response to military crises.
- ◆ The EU should develop its new force concurrently with the strengthening of its political and economic instruments of conflict management. The deployment of the force should be limited to traditional and enhanced peacekeeping.
- ◆ Whenever possible the EU should seek a mandate for its military operations from the UN Security Council or the OSCE and possibly even become a regional organization in accord with the UN Charter.

To the surprise of most observers, the European Union is moving quickly toward the establishment of its own crisis management capability. In its June 1999 meeting in Cologne the European Council concluded that the Union must have “the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military force, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises without prejudice to actions by NATO.” The Council pledged to develop an effective EU-led military crisis management capacity in which all EU members, both NATO and non-allied countries, would participate on an equal footing. The new force will perform the so-called Petersberg tasks: humanitarian and rescue operations, peacekeeping, and the use of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking.

This commitment triggered a rapid and thorough preparatory process that culminated in a plan, adopted by the European Council in its December 1999 summit in Helsinki, to establish a European readiness force of 50-60,000 troops by 2003. This contingent, composed of national stand-by forces, will be available within sixty days after the decision to use them. It will be able to sustain an operation for at least a year. Within this contingent a smaller force is to be maintained at high readiness and thus deployable on short notice. Each member state of the EU will decide independently whether it will participate in the operation. Unlike NATO, the new force is not conceived as an agency of collective defense, but as a special operations initiative that will allow EU states to maintain their own policies.

A new standing Political and Security Committee (PSC) comprising senior national representatives will advise the Council of Ministers. According to the Helsinki summit, in “a military crisis operation, the PSC will exercise . . . the political control and strategic direction of the operation.” The PSC will, in turn, be advised by a Military Committee, composed of national Chiefs of Defense, whose military staff will provide advisory early warning, situation assessment, and strategic planning. The EU will assume the relevant tasks of the West European Union (WEU), a largely moribund collective defense organization for western Europe established in 1954.



The EU must establish closer working relations not only with NATO, but also with the UN and the OSCE, the only two organizations with an international legal mandate to authorize peacekeeping and enforcement operations.

Background

The new policy of military crisis management by the EU did not come out of the blue. The Maastricht Treaty of 1991 defined the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as one of the three pillars of the Union. A central aim of the CFSP has been to augment the political and crisis-response capabilities of the EU, but most observers agree that insufficient political commitment by the member states and the lack of appropriate policy instruments has severely hindered its effectiveness. In particular the failure of the EU to stem the escalation of wars in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s left deep political scars.

Thus, the need to develop a more robust military capability was recognized in the EU even before the crisis in Kosovo. However, the air war in March-June 1999 vividly reminded the Europeans how the superiority of U.S. military capabilities allows Washington to shape NATO policy. By late May 1999 it had become clear that the Clinton Administration was moving to send ground forces to Kosovo. The European members of NATO, with the notable exception of Britain, fiercely opposed this move, fearing that it would precipitate major domestic political crises. In short, one can trace a direct link from the recognition of the U.S. dominance in NATO, especially during military crises, to the commitments made by the EU in Cologne. The new bond between Britain and France also influenced the decision to establish an EU force. The Franco-British statement, issued from a December 1998 bilateral summit in St. Malo, reads almost like a draft of the Cologne decisions, which were taken, significantly enough, during the German presidency of the Union. In the second half of 2000, the implementation of the Helsinki decisions will continue under the French presidency.

The Political Dimension

Politically, the most significant aspect of the new policy is the mandate it gives the EU to decide autonomously to authorize a European crisis management operation. Yet the adoption of this principle raises three key questions:

1. Does the EU have an adequate military and logistical capacity to launch such an operation?
2. How will the initiative affect relations among the 15 members of the EU?
3. How will the United States react in the unlikely case that the EU decides to act without its consent?

Although the WEU has a satellite interpretation center in Spain and a planning cell, and member states have sufficient forces needed for military interventions, they lack coordinated command and control capabilities. Thus, the present military instruments are not adequate for sustained, long-term operations. Aware of this weakness, EU leaders emphasize the need for new capabilities and contend that the more effective coordination of national forces will free funds to pay for them. Although neither public opinion nor EU fiscal policies favor increasing military budgets, some leaders see it as essential to enhancing European autonomy. This situation increases the need to organize EU-led military crisis management operations through NATO, which has the military structures necessary to manage such operations. The alternative for the EU is to rely either on national capabilities or multilateral arrangements, especially Eurocorps. At least in the short to medium term, the need to rely in militarily demanding situations on the U.S. capabilities seems unavoidable. The NATO concept of the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF), originally adopted in 1994, provides for such an arrangement, even when the United States does not participate in the operation. More specifically, the 1996 agreement by NATO to make its assets available for WEU-led European operations can be extended to operations by the new EU force.

Yet this creates a potential political dilemma. Partly to avoid the possibility of entrapment in a crisis, Washington wants to contribute to the EU planning at an early stage. An important goal of the EU in setting up the new military force, however, is to increase its independence from Washington. Finding an acceptable balance between the EU's quest for autonomy and the U.S. interests in Europe is a complicated and sensitive political task. The United States should welcome the new force as a significant contribution to the goal of developing a more differentiated response to military crises. At the same time, it seems likely that Washington will closely monitor the development of the EU to ensure that it does not erode U.S. influence in Europe.

Deployment Issues

The new EU force is intended to prevent and manage military crises. However, there has been little debate in the EU on when, how, and where the new force would be deployed. In a crisis situation member states tend to have different interests. In the absence of effective leadership, the forging of a common position might become an arduous task. One does not need to be a sage to understand that the EU has to navigate between the perils of inaction, on the one hand, and disabling disagreements among its member states, on the other. Obviously, any operation would require the full consent of at least Britain, France, and Germany.

One critical choice concerns the level of military ambition of the Union: will it confine its forces only to traditional or enhanced peacekeeping, or will it also engage in enforcement operations? Although the Petersberg tasks include "peacemaking," it is unlikely that the EU will start major military operations on its own. The upper limit is probably an enhanced peacekeeping mission, such as SFOR in Bosnia and KFOR in Kosovo. Such missions would require, though, a preceding political solution and a minimal consent from the host country to create an environment in which the EU forces can operate in relative safety.

Practical experiences have shown that a single country or organization seldom meets all the necessary political, humanitarian, and military needs in the management and settlement of a major crisis. Thus, the EU must establish closer working relations not only with NATO, but also with the UN and the OSCE, the only two organizations with an international legal mandate to authorize peacekeeping and enforcement operations.

The necessary link with the UN brings to mind the problems faced by the Security Council in mandating military operations, most recently in Kosovo and East Timor. Reliance on the UN makes the EU a potential hostage of the permanent members of the Security Council, who can block the action by their veto. On the other hand, an affirmative decision by the Council would endorse the EU's decision-making. Therefore, despite the inherent political problems, the EU should seek UN authorization for its crisis management operations. One way to reach this goal would be to make the Union a regional organization of the United Nations, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Such a status would not prevent the EU from undertaking peacekeeping actions; Security Council authorization would only be needed for enforcement actions. This arrangement might be considered as part of the reorganization of the composition and tasks of the Security Council.

Conclusion

The establishment of an EU readiness force creates a new tool for crisis management on the continent in which some of the most serious military crises and gross violations of human rights have taken place in recent years. The EU should continue to strengthen economic and political instruments of conflict management and should take care in setting priorities and criteria for deploying the force. It also should seek an international mandate for military operations by the force.



RAIMO VÄYRYNEN is Professor of Government and International Studies at the University of Notre Dame and a Senior Fellow of the Kroc Institute, where he was John M. Regan Jr. Director from 1993-98. He has written extensively on international security and disarmament, international political economy, and peace and conflict studies. His recent publications include *Breaking Cycles of Violence: Conflict Prevention in Intrastate Crises* (Kumarian 1999) (co-author) and *Globalization and Global Governance* (Rowman and Littlefield 1999) (editor). He can be contacted at Raimo.V.Vayrynen.1@nd.edu.

KROC INSTITUTE POLICY BRIEFS

The Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame is a leading international center for education, research, and outreach on international norms and institutions; religious, philosophical, and cultural dimensions of peace; conflict transformation; and social, economic, and environmental justice. Based on pioneering research by peace experts at the Kroc Institute and their affiliates, policy briefs analyze current issues in international affairs and propose innovative strategies for peace in a concise 4-8 page format. Policy Briefs are published in print and on the web. To receive print copies or email notification when briefs are posted on the web, send your name and address to Hal Culbertson, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, P.O. Box 639, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556-0639 (email:Hal.R.Culbertson.1@nd.edu) or sign up through the Kroc website at www.nd.edu/~krocinst.

The Kroc Institute gratefully acknowledges the generosity of Mrs. Joan B. Kroc for endowing the Institute and this series.

Copyright© 2000 Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. The views expressed in this Policy Brief are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Kroc Institute or the University of Notre Dame.

The Kroc Institute

FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE STUDIES

University of Notre Dame

Hesburgh Center for International Studies

P.O. Box 639

Notre Dame, IN 46556-0639

(219) 631-6970

(219) 631-6973 Fax

krocinst@nd.edu

www.nd.edu/~krocinst

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Notre Dame, IN
Permit No. 10

Return Service Requested