

EU BATTLEGROUP: CONCEPTUALIZATION, APPLICATION AND PROSPECTIVE

O EU BATTLEGROUP: A SUA CONCEPÇÃO, APLICAÇÃO E PROSPETIVA

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) has developed initiatives and activities in order to assert itself as a credible producer of security in the international context. The 1990s were prolific in events that led Europe to look inside itself and to reflect on its responsibilities in crisis contexts. The emerging conflict in former Yugoslavia, in 1991, and in Macedonia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, in 2003, convinced the EU that it lacked a capable Force to drive its European Security and Defence Policy, currently known as Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which would allow the EU to intervene in a timely and credible manner when crises arise within its territory or in neighbouring countries. Thus, the Battlegroup emerged, a modular and flexible unit able to conduct a wide range of operations, seen as a capable tool for crisis management. This paper analyses the evolution of the concept of this Force, identifying its importance, now and in the future. The Battlegroup is now an important tool in the context of the CSDP, taking on whatever importance the EU Member States wish to grant it, but the absence of deployments with those units casts doubt on the future and mode of employment of the concept.

Keywords: European Union, Battlegroup, Common Security and Defence Policy.

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Resumo

A União Europeia (UE) tem desenvolvido iniciativas e atividades no sentido de se afirmar, no contexto internacional, como um credível produtor de segurança. Os anos noventa do século passado foram prolíferos em acontecimentos, que levaram a Europa a olhar para o seu interior e a refletir sobre as suas responsabilidades, no contexto de crises. A conflitualidade emergente em 1991, na ex-Jugoslávia e em 2003, na Macedónia e na República Democrática do Congo, impuseram à UE a convicção da carência de uma Força, impulsionadora da sua Política Europeia de Segurança e Defesa, atual Política Comum de Segurança e Defesa (PCSD), que lhe permitisse intervir, em tempo e com credibilidade, quando surgissem crises, no seu seio ou vizinhanças. Assim, surgiu o *Battlegroup*, unidade modular, flexível, capaz de conduzir uma panóplia de operações, visto como um instrumento capacitado para a gestão de crises. Este trabalho analisa a evolução do conceito dessa Força, identificando a sua importância, atual e no futuro. O *Battlegroup* é hoje uma ferramenta importante no contexto da PCSD, assumindo a importância que os Estados-Membros da União lhe queiram dar, mas a ausência de empenhamentos colocam dúvidas sobre o seu futuro e formas de utilização.

Palavras-chave: União Europeia, *Battlegroup*, Política Comum de Segurança e Defesa.

List of abbreviations, initialisms and acronyms

(F)Cdr	Force Commander
BGCM	BG Co-ordination Mechanism
C ₂	Command and Control
CAGRE	General Affairs and External Relations Council
CMC	Concept of Crises Management
CMO	Crises Management Operations
CONOPS	Concept of Operation
CONPLAN	Contingency Plan
DSACEUR	Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe
MembSta	European Union Member-States
USA	United States of America
EU-BG	EU Battlegroup
EUMC	EU Military Committee
EUMCC	EU Movement Co-ordination Centre
EUMS	EU Military Staff
FHQ	Force Headquarter
FOC	Full Operational Capability
HG	Headline Goal
HHG	Helsinki Headline Goal
JOA	Joint Operations Area
LandRR	Land Rapid Response
MS	Military Staff
NRF	NATO Response Force
OHQ	Operation Headquarter
UN	United Nations
OpCdr	Operation Commander
OPLAN	Operation Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
PSC	Political and Security Committee
RR	Rapid Response
MRR	Military Rapid Response
RSOM	Reception, Staging and Onward Movement
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
EUT	European Union Treaty
EU	European Union
WEU	Western European Union

1 . Introduction

In the French sea port of Saint-Malo, on 4 December 1998, a summit took place between French President Jacques Chirac and English Prime Minister Tony Blair, from which emerged the rudiments of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), known as the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) post-Lisbon Treaty, developed under the second pillar of the European Union¹ (EU), entitled Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

Without prejudice to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Saint-Malo declaration (Governos-Francês-e-Inglês, 1998) expressed the EU's intention to develop capabilities supported on the credibility and readiness of military Forces, in order to use them autonomously in response to crises, especially in situations where the Alliance was not fully committed. In that statement, the EU acknowledges it requires the adequate military resources, national or multinational, pre-designated for NATO under the European pillar. The EU also confirms it may use the capabilities of European countries outside the Alliance (ibid). There was criticism to that initiative from the United States of America (USA), in the words of the Secretary of State -Madeleine K. Albright-, who stated, in an article in the *Financial Times* of 7 December 1998, that Europe should avoid the "3Ds" in its CFSP: Duplication of NATO resources; Dissociation in the relationship with the Alliance; and Discrimination of non-EU NATO countries (Albright, 1998). In contrast, Lord George Robertson, Secretary General of NATO, supported the initiative by stating, in 15 November 1999, that the ESDP should be seen in terms of the "3Is": Increasing European capabilities; Indivisibility of the Alliance; Inclusion of non-EU NATO countries (Becker, 2001, p.6).

The ESDP reinforced the need for agreements between the EU and NATO. These agreements were built upon the Berlin agreements, in force since 1996, between the Western European Union (WEU) and the Alliance, in which the latter had already confirmed its support to the development of the European Security and Defence Identity (UE, s/d). In them, both partners acknowledged there would be no need for duplication of resources, agreed on the pursuit of consensus on crisis management and on the existence of consultations, cooperation and transparency in the proceedings. In March 2003, a permanent framework for relations was established entitled "Berlin Plus Agreements", arising from the 1999 Washington Summit, from the conclusions of the Council of Nice 2000 and from the Joint Declaration EU-NATO 2002 (UE-OTAN, 2003, p.1). In them are three main provisions, linked to EU-led operations: the access to NATO planning by the EU, through the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE); the possibility of the EU benefitting from NATO command options in Europe, possibly with the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR) as the commander of EU operations; and the Union's ability to use NATO resources/capabilities, following rules set by the Alliance. Concurrently, the partners agreed on developing common interest

¹ Known as European Economic Community from 1958 to 1993.

capabilities(UE-OTAN, 2003, pp.2-3)and defined the provisions of mutual consultations. The Berlin Plus Agreements enabled the first EU military operation to be conducted with NATO resources: Operation Concordia².

In 1999, in the Helsinki European Council, the EU identified the need to develop rapid response (RR) resources in order to assert itself on the international stage. This was mentioned in the Helsinki Headline Goals (HHG) -2003, which sought to encourage Member States (MembSta) to provide RR elements, projectable and with high preparedness. In January 2003, seeking to define the concept of “Military Rapid Response” (MRR), as part of crisis management operations (CMO) of the EU, the Military Committee (EUMC) approved the document³ which brought it into being. This year, after a long period of unrest, the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo escalated, with the appearance of large flows of refugees, rendering the United Nations mission (UN) there⁴ineffective. The UN required time to prepare a force appropriate to the challenge, and asked France to lead another Force, to be quickly projected to that country. Thus, on 19 May 2003, the Political and Security Committee (PSC⁵) pondered the conduct of the operation by the EU. On 30 May 2003, resolution 1484 of the UN Security Council mandated the EU for this operation (Operation Artemis⁶).On 05 June 2003, the Council of Europe approved the Joint Action, mandated France as leader of the operation and appointed the Operation Commander (OpCdr) and the Operation Headquarters (OHQ). The Operations Plan was presented, between 08 and 10 June 2003 by the OpCdr to the Military Staff (MS), and was approved by the European Council, on 11 June 2003, the date of the Force Generation Conference in Paris.Seven days after the Council adopted the Joint Action, on 12 June 2003, the first elements of the Force were projected to the Joint Operations Area (JOA). However, the Force found projecting to that country difficult and only reached full operational capability (FOC) on 14 July 2003 (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2015, p.8). However, the EU proved it was able to develop operations in a short-term response, farther than 6,000 km from Brussels, which was a relevant factor to the development of the model and concept of the Battlegroup (EU-BG) as main instrument of Military Rapid Response (MRR).

The experience acquired in Operation Artemis helped to formulate, in 2004, the EU HG-2010, which emphasized the development of the EU-BG, which were to beformed by

² Which was conducted from 31 March 2003 to 15 December 2003, in the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

³ EU Military Rapid Response Concept (5641/1/03 REV1).

⁴ Entitled MONUC (*Mission de l'Organisation de Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo*).

⁵ A permanent structure in the area of the CFSP composed of Foreign Affairs politicians from MembSta and assisted by a political and military work group, a committee for the civilian aspects of crisis management, the EUMCC and its Military Staff (EUMS). It was created to monitor the international situation, under the CFSP, to contribute to policy development and to monitor the implementation of the decisions of the Council (AR, 2007).

⁶ The EU considers this operation a milestone in the development of the ESDP and its first autonomous mission outside Europe. Its mandate evoked Chapter VII of the UN Charter, and on 05 June 2003 the operation was the subject of common action by the European Council (Xavier, 2006, p.2).

2007. In June 2004, the EU Military Staff (EUMS) approved the EU-BG Concept, developed by France, Germany and England, and in October 2006, an even more elaborate concept emerged (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2007).

With this research, which is focused on MRR, specifically on the EU-BG, we intend to analyse this Force concept and the manner in which it has been applied, identifying its current and future importance. This research is developed in the field of Military Sciences, particularly in Military Operations and Crises and Armed Conflicts Studies. With it, we seek to discover whether the EU-BG, in its current conceptualization, will become an instrument for the affirmation of the EU in the international arena. Seeking an answer to this need for knowledge, we will analyse the reasons for the importance of the EU-BG for the Union; examine the concept of EU-BG; look at how it has been applied, predicting its future. Finally, we will draw some conclusions.

2 .The EU in pursuit of a military instrument for a CSDP

The war in former Yugoslavia in the late twentieth century enhanced the EU's difficulty in contributing to conflict resolution. NATO's commitments in 1995 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in 1999, in Kosovo, were also reinforced by the EU's failure to intervene there in due course.

On 11.12.1999 in Helsinki, the Council of Europe stated it wished to contribute to international peace and security, acknowledging the primary responsibility of the UN Security Council. It also stated it wished to develop autonomous capabilities to decide, launch and conduct operations in response to international crises, in situations where NATO is not fully committed, avoiding unnecessary duplication, without implying the creation of a European army and providing arrangements for extended consultations, cooperation and full transparency between the EU and the Alliance (Conselho-Europeu, 1999a, p.4). The European Council also advocated, in document HHG-2003, that MembSta should voluntarily constitute Forces, in 2003, aimed at EU operations, with a military staff between 50,000 and 60,000, projectable within 60 days, remaining available for employment in the spectrum of the Petersberg tasks⁷ (ibid) for at least one year, as well

⁷ The Petersberg tasks are part of the CSDP and define the operations to be developed by the EU under CMO. In June 1992, in a Council-of-Ministers of the WEU in Germany, these were defined as follows: rescue and humanitarian missions, peacekeeping missions, combat missions in crisis management, including peacemaking operations (UEO, 1992, p.6). The term peacemaking consensually replaced the term peace-enforcement. In 2009, the Treaty of Lisbon, through Article 43-1, changed those missions: the first and the third remained; the second was renamed "conflict prevention and peacekeeping"; to these missions were added "joint disarmament" and "military advice and assistance" missions and "post-conflict stability operations" (UE, 2009, p.48).

as elements aimed at faster responses. Those elements were included in the concept of MRR⁸, which was the subject of three documents, dated 2003, 2009 and 2015⁹.

In a report from the presidency of the EU (Conselho-Europeu, 1999b) appreciated at the European Council, that information on the Force is reiterated, adding that: it must comprise up to 15 brigades; be self-sustaining; have autonomous decisory capability; have command and control (C2) features, intelligence, logistics and, if required, naval and air capabilities; be dedicated to operations up to Army Corps level; be a priority objective of MembSta; and that States must make it available at least for one year, using additional reserve units and support elements at lower readiness to replace the initial Forces (ibid, p.8). The report also states the need for smaller RR forces, available and deployable at very high readiness, and the European capabilities based on national, bilateral or multilateral capabilities must be developed, with or without recourse to NATO, for effectiveness in crisis management, especially projection¹⁰, sustainability¹¹, interoperability¹², flexibility, mobility, C2 and survival (ibid).

The HHG-2003 appeared to induce in MembSta the “give what you can” principle, emphasizing the volume of contributions. However, the EU realized that high staff numbers did not mean, unequivocally, the ability to at the very least neutralize a contender. From the reviews of the HHG-2003 deficiencies also emerged in the standardization¹³ and the availability of Forces. Jean-Yves Haine identifies three reasons for their failure: they constituted a quantitative objective, resulting from the experience gathered in the Bosnian war and inadequate to the strategic developments; they foreshadowed a catalogue of forces in which only 10% were projectable; no rectifications were made to already identified deficiencies (2004). It was necessary to “discipline” the MembSta, as to their contribution to a credible Force.

At the meeting of the EU Ministers of Defence, in Sintra, Portugal, on 28 February 2000, the document “Elaboration of the Headline Goal” was discussed, where it was suggested that the Union should plan for the constitution, as well as ancillary capabilities¹⁴, of a RR element with size,

⁸ MRR is a process that, in a crisis, produces the required effects more quickly than a Standard Response. A Standard Response is given by the Force referred to in HHG-2003, Army Corps level. The MRR Time is measured from the moment of approval of the Crisis Management Concept (CMC) to the start of operations in the JOA. For MRR, that time ranges from 5 to 30 days. Emergencies may require responses in less than five days, compressing the planning and decision processes, and in specific situations, Forces provided to the EU by MembSta can be used, which are, for national reasons, at high readiness (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2009, pp.7-8)

⁹ EU Military Rapid Response Concept (5641/1/03-Rev1) (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2003), EU Military Rapid Response Concept (5654/09) (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2009) and EU Military Rapid Response Concept (17036/1/14-Rev1) (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2015).

¹⁰ Involves the ability to move people and equipment JOA (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2004, p.3).

¹¹ Involves mutual logistic support between projectable forces (Ibid).

¹² Is the ability of forces to work jointly and interact with civilian instruments. It is an instrument to increase the effective use of military capabilities, and it is fundamental in achieving the EU's ambitions for CMO (ibid).

¹³ For example: the meaning of “Battalion” may not be common to all MembSta, as to staff, means, organization, mission, possibilities and capabilities.

¹⁴ Commonly known as “enablers”, an English term we will use hereinafter. These are skills/facilitators that enable the EU-BG to fulfil its mission.

level and nature dependent of the circumstances of the operations, within an immediate reaction Force, at high readiness and intended as an Entry Force (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2003, p.4).

The attacks of 9 September 2001 in the US led the EU, at the Council of Seville in June 2002, to foresee the establishment of a Rapid Reaction Force with 20,000 soldiers, at 10-day readiness, for the fight against terrorism (Costa, 2008, cit. por Silva, 2011, p.26). On 19 November 2002, the General Affairs and External Relations Council (CAGRE) EU entrusted the PSC and the EUMC with the rapid completion of the work on the RR elements, taking these principles into account: reaction between 5 to 30 days, or less; streamlining of crisis management procedures according to the operational requirements for MRR; the implementation of advanced planning based on illustrative scenarios; the identification of the RR elements in the Headline Forces catalogue; the modalities for the acceptance of the concept offramework Nation (GAERC, 2002, p.15)

On 24 January 2003, the EU Council disseminated the “Concept of EU Military Rapid Response” (2003), where are defined the concepts of “rapid response”¹⁵ of “elements of rapid response”¹⁶ and “Total response time”¹⁷. It states, with regard to a Force, that:

“... An indication of a Rapid Reaction ... in the case of a EU-led CMO would be the ability to have forces and capabilities deployed in the JOA and are ready for action, within approx. 5-30 days (depending on the crisis) from the Council decision to launch the operation ... Certain emergencies could necessitate an even faster reaction, an Immediate Reaction. The forces and capabilities required should therefore - again as an indication - have the ability to be deployed in the JOA and ready for action within 5 days from the Council decision to launch the operation, in the case ... of an Immediate Response”(Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2003, pp.6-7).

Humanitarian and evacuation operations requiring faster reactions within the three scenarios¹⁸ presented in the Helsinki Catalogue HG-2002 can be developed by RR Forces and, thus, some may require Immediate Response Forces. Thus, RR forces can develop operations in connection with a sudden crisis outbreak, or larger scale operations, with various stages of achievement. As for Immediate Response Forces, these are oriented to high emergency crisis situations¹⁹.

¹⁵ “The acceleration of the overall approach which encompasses all interrelated measures and actions in the field of decision making, planning, force identification, generation/activation and deployment, together with the availability of assets and capabilities, and potential C2 options, in order to enable a swift and decisive military reaction to the crisis.” (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2003, p.6)

¹⁶ “Packages of forces and capabilities, possibly combined and joint, tailored for a specific task at very high readiness (available and deployable on short notice), either as part of an overall force... or to conduct an urgent operation on a smaller scale, self-contained.” (Ibid).

¹⁷ “... the time from when the EU considers that action is appropriate until the moment that forces have arrived to the JOA and are ready for action. It includes the time for decision making, planning, deployment to and within the JOA, but ... to safeguard some flexibility no fixed timelines should be assigned to this term, even in a situation requiring “Rapid Response” (ibid).

¹⁸ These are: Separation of Parties in a Steady State; Conflict Prevention Operation/Preventive Development; Assistance to Civilians in: Humanitarian Operations (Specialized Assistance and Logistical Support Operations with Military Assets providing a secure environment); and Evacuation Operation in hostile environments (Ibid, p. 7).

¹⁹ They should intervene in MRR times of up to five days.

At the Council of Thessaloniki, on 20 June 2003, the EU declared itself capable of action in the spectrum of the Petersberg tasks, with known gaps, to be reduced by the development of military capabilities (Silva, 2011, p.96) Some of these gaps were focused on resources for projection and still remain today, making it difficult to conduct safer and more timely interventions and making it impossible to simultaneously enter two JOA.

In the Franco-British Summit held in London on 24 November 2003, the two partners proposed the constitution of a Force to the EU: coherent, credible, with about 1,500 soldiers offered by a nation or multinational coalition; able to respond to the ESDP; developed with UN support and responding to their requests; able to operate in Africa or elsewhere; that could be committed in 15 days, autonomously, in crisis response operations, particularly in the context of Chapter VII²⁰ of the UN Charter; remaining in operations until replaced by another Force from another Organization (França-e-Inglaterra, 2003). The experiences of that year, in Operations Concordia and Artemis, were useful in formulating this proposal, revealing glimpses of the future EU-BG.

On 08 December 2003, the CAGRE welcomed the proposed development of the EU military aptitude to provide crisis management support to the UN, in short commitments and in urgent need, and stated in the conclusions of the 2552th meeting that the relevant Council bodies should develop the MRR capabilities of the EU, focusing the work on the precise definition of HHG-2003 and on complementarity²¹ and identifying the modalities for the RR elements of the EU (GAERC, 2003, p.XI).

Bearing in mind the lessons learned from Operation Artemis, in February 2004, France, the United Kingdom and Germany proposed the creation of an available cohesive force to the European Council that would allow the EU to intervene in demanding environments in support of the CSDP. Taking this proposal into account, and recalling the Conclusion of 08 December 2003, the GAERC stressed, in 22 March 2004, the intention of primarily pursuing work on MRR in order to obtain concrete results relating to the capabilities available and projectable at high readiness and the appropriate planning mechanisms, welcoming the contacts established with the UN on the matter and asking the PSC to lead the works, aiming to approve the Battlegroup concept²² by the end of the Irish Presidency²³ (GAERC, 2004, p.II). The CAGRE saw in this concept a useful contribution to the work on RR Forces and the development of EU structures to ensure that capability. As described in the EU Military Rapid Concept (Doc. 5641/03), the concept is to be a building block within the overall approach of rapid response, and must "... be fully complementary to the accelerated measures and actions in the field of decision-making and planning ..." (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2007, p.6).

²⁰ "Action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression" (ONU, 1945)

²¹ Complementarity is an organizational concept. It requires coordination and implies each actor focuses their assistance on areas where it can add the most value, considering the contributions of the other parties involved. Therefore, it corresponds to an optimized division of tasks, aimed at a better use of human and financial resources (Comissão-das-Comunidades-Europeias, 2007, p.6).

²² The acceleration of activities occurred a few days after the attack of 11/03/2004 in Madrid.

²³ Taking place from 01/01/2004 to 30/06/2004.

On 04 May 2004, the PSC concluded the EU document Headline Goal-2010, acknowledging the constitution of Force packages with a minimum staff, at high readiness, projectable, coherent, credible, to respond to crises as stand-alone Forces or as part of a wider operation (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2004, p.3). This Force would be based on a combined arms Battalion sized force package with Combat Support and Combat Service Support, and the ambition of the EU is to be able to launch an operation within five days of the approval of the CMC by the European Council (ibid). The EU also intended for the Force to implement their mission²⁴ in the JOA, within ten days after the EU decision to launch the operation (ibid), which constitutes a challenge to the projection capabilities of MembSta. That Force would include relevant naval and air capabilities, and would be backed up by crisis management procedures and C2 structures available to the EU, and joint packages would be put together according to the specifics of operations (ibid). Thus came into being the term “EU-BG package”.

The EU’s conclusion that the RR elements, including the EU-BG, would enable a better response to UN requests (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2004, p.6) led it to state that, by 2007, the EU-BG would be developed and the strategic lift, sustainability and debarkation assets would be identified (id., p. 4). Thus, the EU-BG became integrated into the development of the EU global capabilities.

On 22 November 2004, at the Military Capability Commitment Conference, the MembSta confirmed the establishment of thirteen EU-BG, as shown in the table below:

Table I – Commitments for the EU-BG

Number of EU-BG	Effective	Countries responsible for the constitution of the Force
1	1500	France
2	1500	Italy
3	1500	Spain
4	1500	United Kingdom
5	1500	France, Germany, Belgium, Luxemburg and potentially Spain
6	1500	France and Belgium
7	1500	Germany, Holland and Finland
8	1500	Germany, Austria and Czech Republic
9	1500	Italy, Hungary and Slovenia
10	1500	Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal
11	1500	Poland, Germany, Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania
12	1500	Sweden, Finland and Norway
13	1500	United Kingdom and Holland
Total effective	19 500	

Sources: (CIS, s/d) and (EurActiv, 2006, p.2)

²⁴ In EU terminology, “mission” generically refers to civilian missions and military operations; “Operations” refers strictly to military activity (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2009, p.6)

The Union appeared thus to want to impose to its MembSta, in the EU HG-2010, the principle of “contribution, but with capabilities”, emphasizing not the volume but the quality of the contributions. In turn, taking CMO into consideration, the MembSta confirmed on that document their will to give a swift and coherent response within the Treaty of the EU (TEU) (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2009, p.5).

The systemic approach to developing the EU RR capabilities in response to crises²⁵ through the participation of MembSta leads those states to opt for developing/transforming their Forces, aiming at high levels of interoperability in terms of assets, procedures and doctrines. It is beneficial to NATO MembSta that interoperability be consistent with their contributions to the organization. Operation CONCORDIA demonstrated the Union’s ability to manage crises and establish strategic partnerships with NATO. The existence, since 2004, of EU cells at SHAPE and NATO and of NATO liaison arrangements at the EUMS, will improve the preparation of operations under the Berlin Plus Agreement. In EU HG-2010, the EU Council states that this could ensure complementarity and mutually strengthening of initiatives involving the EU and NATO in rapid response to crises (2004, p.6). It states that, taking into account the EU-BG in relation to MRR, the requirements of the Forces would have to be identified by the second half of 2004, to facilitate the contributions of MembSta to joint packages, scheduling a scrutiny and evaluation of the committed capabilities²⁶ for 2005, encouraging the opportunities for RR elements to train in a multinational environment, regularly and realistically (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2004, p.7). The concept of EU-BG, approved on 2 October 2006 by the EUMC stressed the importance of mechanisms of cooperation and complementarity between the EU and NATO. The document “EU Battlegroup Concept” emerges in that context on 05 October 2006, stating that the EU-BG:

“... is a specific form of the Rapid Response Elements ... it constitutes one possible answer to the timely provision of the necessary capabilities for an EU-led CMO requiring a Rapid Response.” (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2007, p.7)

Since then, the concept has become widespread and the EU-BG has been an important instrument of the EU in the context of the CSDP, without ever having been tested in practice. As we have seen, the important events of the twentieth century accelerated its development. Others have provided more justification for being convinced of its necessity than reasons for its existence²⁷, as an EU-BG is not always an ideal and universal tool to combat all threats, particularly when those threats are volatile.

3 . The EU-BG concept

The EU - BG, as MRR instruments geared towards the EU’s CMO, present the following characteristics (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2007, pp.7-13)

²⁵ Some RR require civilian instruments, such as law enforcement components, which, if interoperability can be ensured, can be employed with the military component under its responsibility and integrated a plan.

²⁶ In terms of interoperability, projection, sustainability and numbers.

²⁷ For example: the attacks of 9 September 2001 in the USA, and of 11 March 2004 in Madrid.

- are Tactical Units, based on combined and joint arms, coherent, credible, interoperable, battalion sized, with about 1,500 effective, involving combat and support elements, rapidly deployable, supported by strategic lift assets, naval and/or air;
- can be committed and self-sustainable in the JOA without support from the Host Nation for 30 days (as a planning basis). When re-supplied²⁸ appropriately, their action can extend to 120 days;
- Are capable of stand-alone military operations;
- Can be employed in the initial phase of larger operations
- Constitute the core element of EU RR, giving it the ability to react;
- The staff, composition and number of EU-BG to be deployed depend on the definition of the possibilities of employment and the level of ambition for MRR;
- May be formed by a Framework Nation²⁹ or a coalition of Nations³⁰;
- The generation of EU-BG³¹ is flexible, voluntary, and MembSta are free to offer assets/capabilities. The EUMC and the EUMS coordinate the process, ensuring the availability of the requisite number of EU-BG;
- As it is flexible in formation and staff, the appropriateness of a Force to an operation may require the prior dissemination of orders and directions by the OpCdr;
- It can be seen in Figure 1 that Forces have up to ten days from the decision to launch the operation, and no later than fifteen days after the approval of a CMC, to start operations in the JOA. Thus, the EU-BG are required to be constituted and equipped, and held at a readiness³² of 5-10 days;

²⁸ By MembSta or others with which there are agreements.

²⁹ A Framework Nation is "A Member State or a group of Member States that has volunteered to, and that the Council has agreed, should have specific responsibilities in an operation over which the EU exercises political control" (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2014, p.21).

³⁰ Without prejudice to the rights of MembSta, the EU-BG can include the non-EU European NATO countries, other countries which are candidates for accession to the EU or other potential partners. (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2007, p.7). The contributions must be interoperable and in accordance with the defined rules and criteria, which will be assessed before the standby phase, aiming at the certification of the Force.

³¹ The process must ensure the associated strategic lift assets, and comprises two mechanisms. In one mechanism, MembSta generate the US-BG from a State's capabilities at high readiness, or under the principle of multinationality, indicating when and for how many periods of six months the resources will be made available. It is up to the BG Co-ordination Mechanism (BGCM) EU to ensure the supply of shortages. In the other mechanism, the BGCM, over a five-year period, triggers the generation of the Force and performs the harmonization, with States indicating when and for how long their offers remain available, confirming them and supplying the shortages at a later date. Stand-by periods and other details are also defined (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2007, p.11).

³² These are reference values, and contributions at higher readiness may be made available. The readiness of a Head Quarters/Unit is the process that involves the proper planning and preparation to achieve the response time required of the Force and of the Units. It is the measured period since the issuance of the initial order of operation until the Head Quarters/Unit is ready to commence its task from its peacetime location or from an Airport/Sea Port of Embarkation (APOE/SPOE). It does not include transit time to and within the JOA or the time to be ready to perform its mission in the JOA (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2015, p.25).

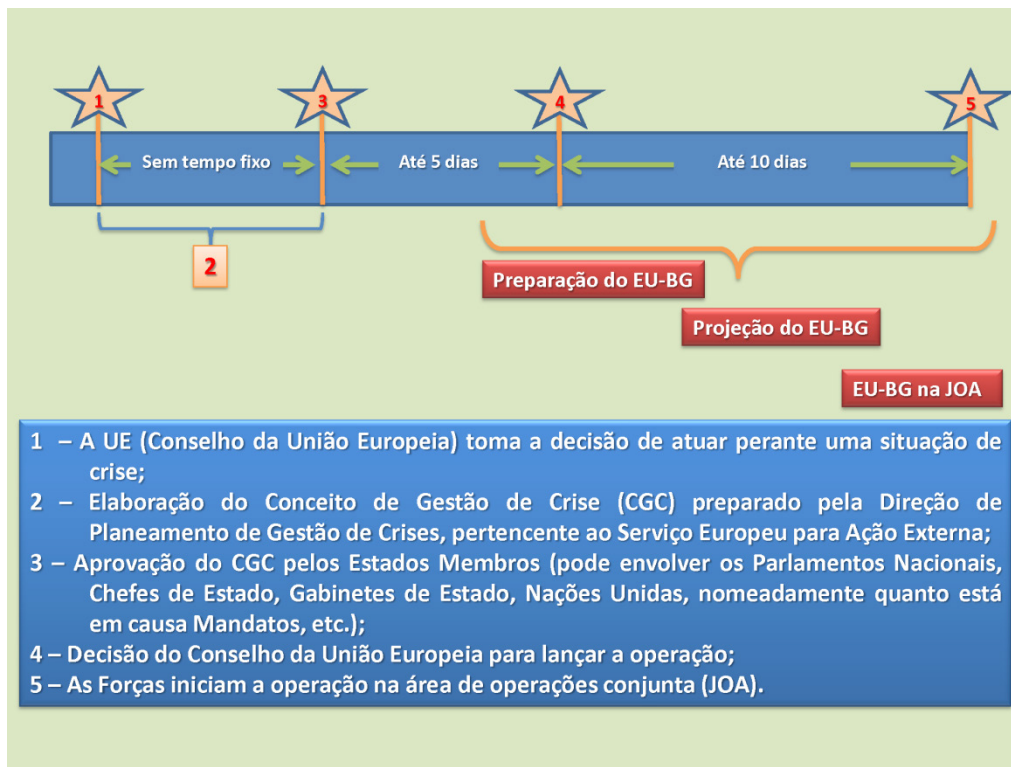


Figure 1 – EU-BG employment timetable

Source: Author, from the sources:(Hatzigeorgopoulos, 2012, p.11), (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2007, p.8) e (Hamelink, 2005, p.10).

- Preparation and certification (monitored by the EUMC) are charged to MembSta taxpayers and should preferably include multinational exercises and a final exercise, joint and combined, requiring all the EU-BG capabilities including C2 to evaluate and ensure, through FOC, their commitment to the EU CMO;
- Their life cycle foresees a period of preparation/training, which includes Forcecertification, and another period of six monthsknown as stand-byperiod, geared towards commitments;
- They integrate a deployable Force Headquarter ((F)HQ). Additionally, there is still an OHQ33, not part of the EU-BG, but associated with it.

EU-BG can be committed, though not exclusively, at the request of the UN or under their mandate and can perform operations under Article VII of the UN Charter, in a circle with a radius of 6.000 Km (FINABEL, 2014, p.9) with centre in Brussels, involving territories outside the EU.

³³ The OHQ operates from a fixed installation, using the existing structure and can be enhanced with staff by the MembSta, materializing the strategic-operational level of the operation.

The common expenses of EU-BG commitments are generally reimbursed by the Athena Mechanism³⁴ (FINABEL 2011, p.8). These Forces can carry out the tasks under paragraph 1 of Article 42 of the TEU, aimed at maintaining the peace, preventing conflict and strengthening international security. Paragraph 1 of Article 43 describes those tasks (União-Europeia, 2010, p.38):

- Humanitarian tasks;
- Rescuetasks;
- Peacekeeping tasks;
- Combat forces in crisis management taskswithin peacemaking;
- Conflict prevention tasks;
- Joint disarmament operations;
- Military advice and assistance tasks;
- Post-conflict stabilisation operations.

As the EU-BG can be trained for high intensity commitments, namely combat, it can be preferably and primarily employed in the first four tasks, while not invalidating its performance in the others. By fulfilling the first six tasks, it contributes to the fight against terrorism, ensuring theprovisions at the end of paragraph 1 of Article 43 of the TEU (União-Europeia, 2010, p.39).

The EU-BG, backed by enablers, may act in the following scenarios (FINABEL, 2014, p.14)

- Operations to separate parties by force, including crisis management, peacemaking and security of communication lines;
- Conflict prevention operations, including preventive projection, disarmament and embargo;
- Rescue operations in non-permissive environments, including non-combatants;
- Humanitarian assistance operations, including disaster response and assistance to migration to safe areas;
- In specific situations, they perform tasks associated with stabilization,reconstruction and military advice operations.

³⁴ Usually the cost of commitment of the capabilities of a State in an EU operation is the responsibility of that State. Under the CSDP, the **common costs** of military operations are financed by 27 MembSta, without the participation of Denmark. Thus, in 2002, there was need of a legal mechanism to manage the accounting and financing of the common costs of EU operations and/or military support actions to States/Organizations, with the Athena Mechanism emerging in 2004 (UE, 2012). The common expenses borne by Athena are defined in Annex I to the Decision (CFSP) 2015/528 of the EU Council of 27 March 2015 (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2015, p.60). In addition to these, the Mechanism also covers the operational common costs (attributable to an operation) relating to: the preparatory phase of the mission (id, p.61); the active phase, some of those when the Council so decides (ibid, p.62) or upon request approved by the FCdr (ibid); and/or those attributable to the settlement of an operation (id, p.63). The majority of types of costs reimbursed by the Mechanism relates to civil operations or Headquarters, but is not limited to these.

The EU-BG has little talent for stabilization, reconstruction or military advice operations, nevertheless it is able to perform them, especially when situations deteriorate (id, p. 19). Should it be used in stabilization and reconstruction operations, it must be given specific nonlethal skills geared for those operations. Its employment for military advice would be a waste, given its capabilities and possibilities.

A multinational character is crucial to the EU-BG concept, a character that requires effective interoperability and facilitates the integration of the Armed Forces of MembSta as a way to promote regional cooperation within the framework of the CSDP. Through this multinational integration, the EU-BG is the expression of the multilateralism enabling EU action in the face of violations of international regimes and treaties (União-Europeia, 2003, p.9), with all its members being "... more active..." in making Europe "more... capable..." and "... more coherent..." (Ibid, pp. 39, 40 and 41).

Theoretically, *"The EU BG Concept is complementary with NATO Response Force (NRF) documents, while taking into account the characteristics of the EU"* (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2007, p.8) because of the similarities in terms of training and employment methods. This, in theory, will give MembStathe ability to assign the same Force/capability to the NRF and the EU-BG, assuming that such a measure is clear to NATO and the EU and there is no redundancy of employment in the framework of these organizations. The necessary coordination is facilitated by the above mechanisms linking the two organizations.

Figure 2 shows the "EU-BG package". It should contain: a deployable Headquarters ((F) HQ) with C2 capabilities and Communications and Information Systems; one Infantry Battalion³⁵ with a Command Post, a Support ServicesCompany and 3-4 ManoeuvreCompanies; a set of CombatSupport and Combat SupportServices capabilities, selectedaccording to the employmentof the EU-BG; and a set of operational and strategic enablersfrom Air, Naval, Logistics³⁶, Special-Forces and Force Protection areas, the choice of which depends on the commitment, the JOA and assessed threat.

³⁵ The EU-BG is that battalion, reinforced with combat support and campaign services.

³⁶ Namely for staging, embarkment, reception and onward movement to the appropriate assets location, commonly known as RSOM Operations (Reception, Staging and Onward Movement).

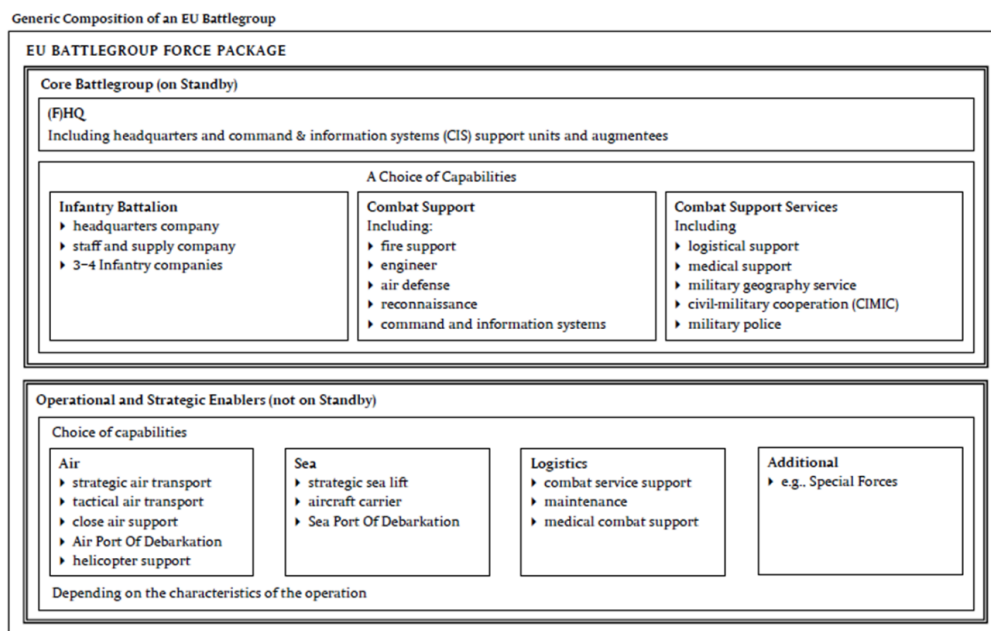


Figure 2 – EU-BG package

Source: (Major & Mölling, 2011, p.12)

There are two C2 options for the EU-BGA, at the strategic level: using NATO assets/capabilities, enjoying the credibility of systems that are tested and certified; by using other assets/capabilities. In the latter case, the options are:

- One EU OHQ³⁷ from the Force Catalogue;
- One OHQ from a MembSta, on request of the Framework Nation;
- Recourse to the EU Operations Centre. This variant, while it is limited in terms of capabilities and resources, can be used when civilian and military resources are engaged, or when another OHQ was not identified.

In the C2 structure of the EU, it must be considered that above the strategic-military level there is the political-strategic level, where the EU Council, the PSC, the EUMC and its General Staff (EUMS) can be found. For the purposes of strategic planning, there may be a link between the EU and SHAPE/NATO.

³⁷ The OHQ are not deployable/projectable.

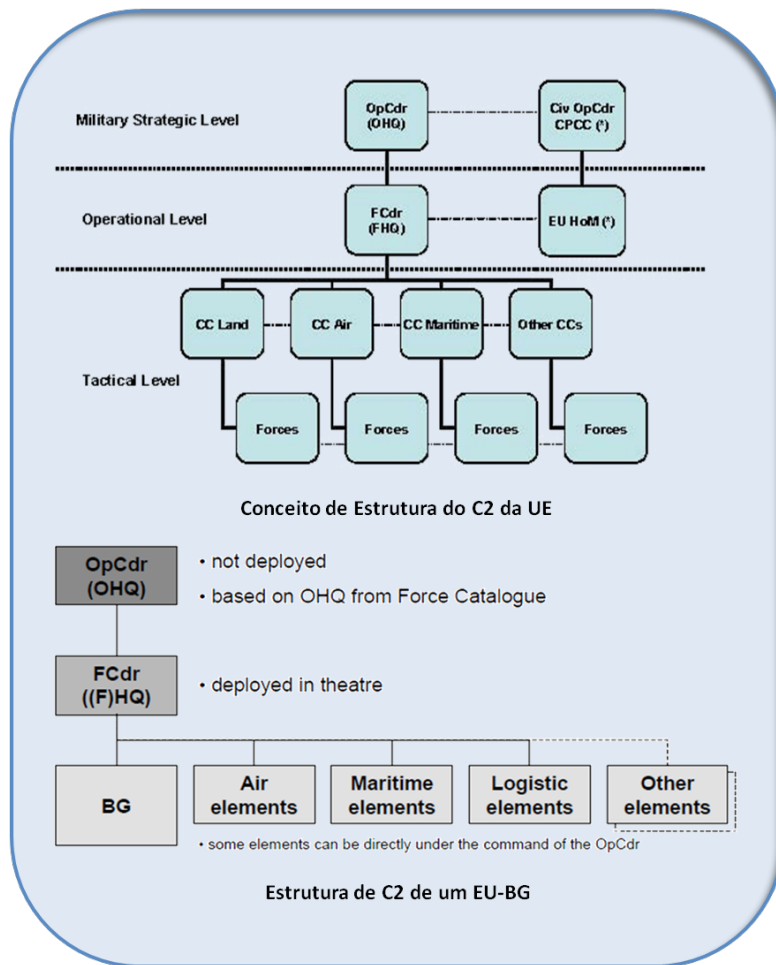


Figure 3 – C2 structures of the EU and of a EU-BG

Source: Adapted from (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2012, p.12) and (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2007, p.12)

The C2 structure of the EU-BG (Figure 3) includes the OpCdr, the Force Commander (FCdr) and the tactics and enablers components. The OpCdr at the OHQ can reserve combat elements - such as Special Forces - to be under his direct command. When a reduced response time is required, the generation of a Force based on a Framework Nation is the most suitable choice because the C2 structure can be more easily implemented. The definition of this structure as early as possible facilitates the constitution and readiness of the Force. Often, the (F)HQ may be at Brigade level, employable and certified for joint and combined operations. The close relationships and understandings between the (F)HQ and the EU-BG benefit efficiency, and it is convenient that they belong to the same Framework Nation.

As the EU ambition is to have two EU-BG acting simultaneously, it follows that there would be two OHQ38, two (F)HQ and two Headquarters of the EU-BG. However, there may be C2 structures with only one OHQ, two (F)HQ and two EU-BG Headquarters.

The concept of EU-BG includes reserves at the military-strategic, operational and tactical level. In the last two levels, the reserves, especially C2 and projection, are the responsibility of taxpayers from MembSta, so they must be the ones to authorize their use. At these levels, the reserves are part of the “EU-BG package”. As a rule, when the EU-BG is projected to the JOA, it will be accompanied by those reserves. The formation of reserves at the military-strategic level depends on the risk assessment of the operation, and is listed on the Concept of Operations (CONOPS) and detailed in the Operational Plan (OPLAN) or the Contingency Plan (CONPLAN). Should there be one, these reserves should be declared six months before stand-by, under one of the following conditions: pre-identified and available or at guaranteed availability; without pre-identification. Pre-identification would be ideal. The lack of strategic military reserves does not preclude the use of the EU-BG. When they exist, they are located outside the JOA, preferably in Europe, at the same degree of readiness as the EU-BG, and commitment should not, as a rule, exceed 120 days.

In short: the EU-BG is the minimum modular force capable of conducting military operations in the context of CMO within the EU, and it is capable of developing the initial phase of larger scale operations.

4 . Application of the EU BG concept

The EU can simultaneously commit two EU-BG in two different RRM operations, without however being able to conduct two projections simultaneously (FINABEL, 2014, p.9) Thus, there must be, always, two EU-BG on standby for periods of six months (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2007, p.10)

We have seen that the EU-BG can act at the tactical level, using operational and strategic resources/capabilities, producing effects at the strategic level, contributing to the affirmation of the CSDP. However, because it was never committed, there are doubts about the adequacy of its structure and dimensions to the political ambitions of the European Security Strategy. Neither can the EU limit its strategic objectives to the capabilities of the EU-BG, nor can the latter extrapolate those capabilities to achieve the objectives, especially those relating to security, preventive actions and crisis management, which can mean “preventing genocide” or “ensuring conditions for peace” (Kerttunen, 2005, pp.35-36). That EU-BG could prevent the ethnic genocide of Rwanda or Darfur is a matter of opinion, as the militias involved had government support (ibid).

With the ability to perform a wide range of missions, the EU-BG must be prepared for the most demanding of missions, which is to adapt to changes in the situation and to take risks,

³⁸ There are five OHQ capable of supporting the EU-BG, located in: Germany, Greece, France, Italy and the United Kingdom (FINABEL, 2014, p.12).

thus training may feature high intensity environments and ensure interoperability. The Force and its elements must be prepared and equipped to be deployed in any location and to work in environments with a variety of threats, including terrorism and use of chemical/biological/radiological agents.

The profiles of the operations to be implemented by the EU-BG are (Kerttunen, 2005, p.36):

- Expeditionary Force - Acting autonomously or as part of a joint/combined operation, particularly with NATO, for solving limited size crises;
- Entry Force – To pave the way for other, larger Forces conducting for example, enforcement or peacekeeping operations;-Emergency Force – As a credible capability to solve crises limited in time and scope, in support of an ongoing operation, for example peacekeeping.

Considering these profiles, EU-BG have been prepared for “operations in the JOA” and “entry in the JOA”. Even if EU-BG have the capability to be committed in a broad spectrum of operations, few would/could be employed across the entire spectrum. It may therefore be appropriate to define/standardize their types of capabilities. The absence of such standardization could lead to the EU-BG being unprepared to deal with a worsening crisis, and an adaptation to operational requirements may be necessary (França et al., 2015, p.2). Considering the decision-making time of the intervention, that adaptation can delay the entry of Forces in the JOA or require a reconfiguration/reorientation during the course of an operation.

By early 2015, the EU-BG was part of the concept of MRR as shown in Figure 4. The lack of a land component (LandRR) is noteworthy because the EU Maritime Rapid Response Concept and the EU Air Rapid Response Concept were developed in the EU Rapid Response Concept, 2007, but the EU Land Rapid Response Concept was not. For years there has been the perception that a LandRR component is an increased effort on the part of MembSta.

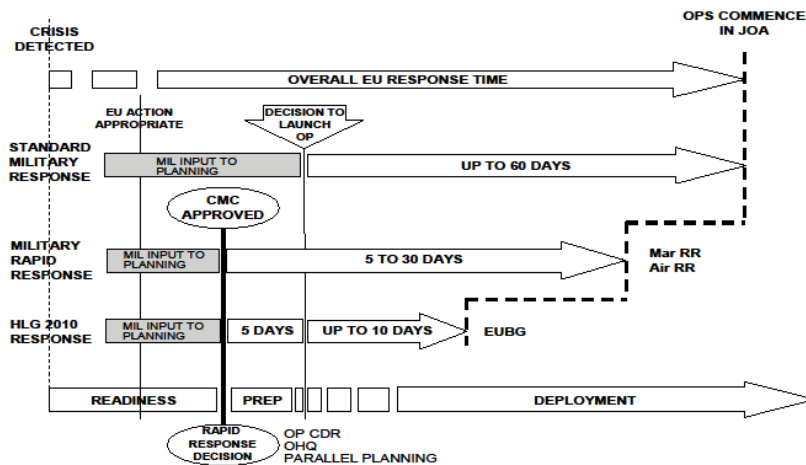


Figure 4 – EU Crisis Response (version 2007)

Source: (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2009, p.21)

The lack of a LandRR, generated a tendency for the employment of the EU-BG in operations with RR times longer than 10 days. It was imperative, then, to form one LandRR, entrusting the EU-BG with the commitments with RR times between 5-10 days.

In 2010, the EU stated its ambition³⁹ regarding the EU-BG. Taking that into account, in 2013 the EU admitted it might rethink the RR Forces, namely the EU-BG, as they are the “vehicle” for concrete, multi-national, interoperable cooperation, stressing the need for a coherent set of land, air and sea assets for more flexible operational planning and use of these forces (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2013, pp.2-3). This approach led, in 2015, to the new EU Military Rapid Response Concept, which, as shown in Figure 5, includes the EU-BG and the land, sea and air components.

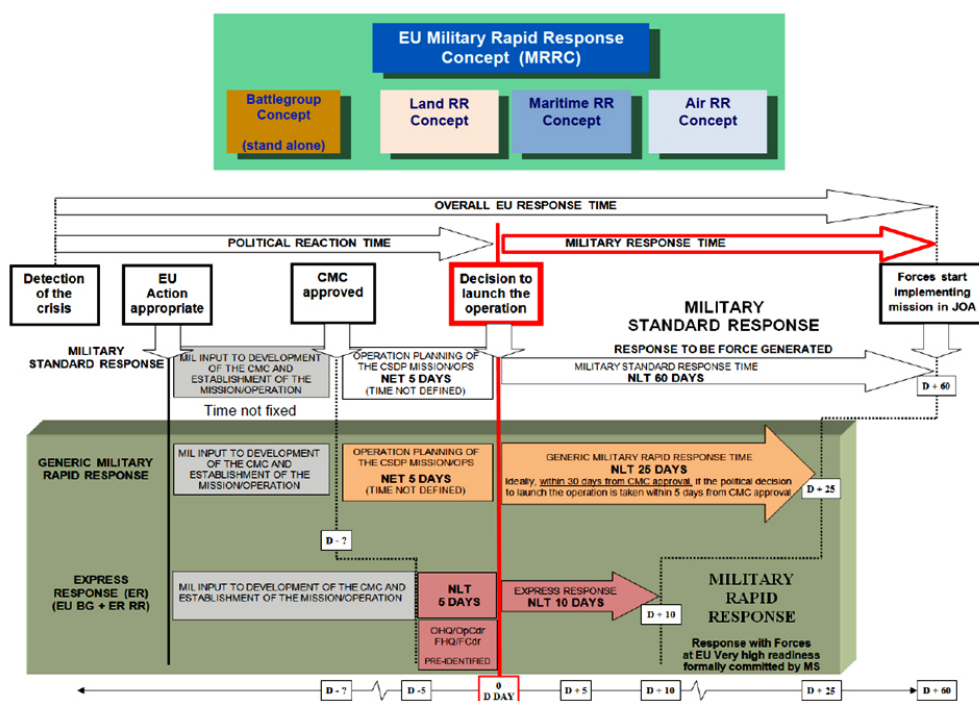


Figure 5 –EU Crisis Response (version 2015)

Source: (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2015, p.12 e 24)

³⁹ EU ambition: two major stabilization/reconstruction operations, suitable for civilian components and supported by 10,000 soldiers for at least two years; two MRR operations of limited duration, employing, among other services, the EU-BG; a European rescue operation, to be launched in less than ten days, safeguarding that the primary responsibility of these operations belongs to MembSta; a surveillance/interdiction air or naval operation; a civilian-military humanitarian assistance operation lasting up to 90 days; a dozen civilian missions, within the CSDP (law enforcement, civil administration, reform of security sectors, support in drafting legislation and observers), including in the form of RR, which can last for years, and possibly involve more than 3,000 experts (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2010, p.3).

There are three types of Force in this concept: those meant for “standard military response”, with up to 60 days to start the mission in the JOA; those meant for “general military response”, with up to 25 days to start operations in the JOA; and those meant for “immediate response”, which includes the EU-BG, with up to 10 days to start operations in the JOA. This concept requires assets for projection, and it is up to MembSta to guarantee them. The planning, coordination and execution of projection is the responsibility of the OHQ (Conselho da União Europeia, 2012, pp.14-15), supported by the EU Movement Co-ordination Centre (EUMCC), and agreements can be made with Host Nations and International and/or non-governmental Organizations located in the JOA. However, there are few MembSta with the strategic/operational resources to project an EU-BG, in a few days, to areas close to 6,000 km from Brussels, using instead civilian means, so that may prove to be an ambitious timeframe.

The Portuguese participation in the EU and NATO falls under the National Strategic Defence Concept. In it, Portugal defines the following basic interests: to assert its presence in the world, to consolidate its integration into a strong network of alliances, to be assertive and to achieve external credibility, the valorisation of Portuguese communities and the promotion of international peace and security (Portugal, 2013, p.8). As our country possesses a “... universal vocation, albeit with limited resources... [the] EU and NATO are thus vital to the national security and defence, as well as to the modernization and prosperity of Portugal...” (ibid).

The CSDP, reinforced in 2003 by the European Security Strategy⁴⁰, bound the EU to reciprocal and collective assistance, necessary for mutual defence and solidarity. This commitment requires EU coordination and the availability of a variety of civil and military resources. Aware of its obligations, Portugal has adapted its participation to its respective size, interests and possibilities, having participated as Framework Nation, with Spain, France and Italy in EU-BG 2011-2, providing one Battalion, C2 structures, in addition to other capabilities, in a total of 914 soldiers who acquired crucial experience. The EU-BG drive the development of our capabilities, and for that reason Portugal should participate in them with land, naval and air components. Portugal is also expected to participate in EU-BG 2017-2⁴¹ with Spain as Framework Nation, strengthening bilateral cooperation in defence.

5 . The future

France, Germany and Poland submitted, on 16 February 2015, to the EUMC and subsequently to the PSC, the reflection “*Entry operations of the primary operational option of EU Battlegroups.*” The document consists of an exposition of ideas about the use of EU-BG, arguing that (França et al., 2015, pp.1-2):

- Conceptually, the Force may be engaged in a broad spectrum of possible scenarios;
- CMOs require a RR by the EU, as the major challenges emerge at the start of operations;- The key to using the EU-BG lies in employing it in entry operations, as

⁴⁰ Reviewed in 2008.

⁴¹ In stand-by mode during the second semester of 2017.

that is its core capability;- The capabilities of the EU-BG to conduct those operations must be standardized;

- The strategic enablers required by the EU-BG must be available, prepared and certified in accordance with the “EU Military Rapid Response Concept”;
- The EU-BG certifications shall conform, where possible, to the criteria of “NATO Response Forces”;
- The Athena mechanism must finance not only the common costs, but also the projection for the JOA, which is currently the responsibility of MembSta.

This document is proof of the lack of consensus on how to employ the EU-BG. If there is no consensus on that employment, the training and capability building of the Force cannot be properly directed. The increase in the employment framework of the EU-BG may be the best demonstration of the EU’s political will to act (Id, p.2). However, while a EU-BG is not employed in a high-intensity operation, doubts will subsist.

The challenges posed to Europe, especially by terrorism, led to the conclusion, at the informal meeting of Heads of State and Government on 02 December 2015, in Brussels, that the EU should become relevant in its neighbouring area, particularly to the south, and in the struggle against that scourge (Conselho-da-União-Europeia, 2015), requiring instruments to enable it to fight. Budgetary cuts and the European economic and financial crisis have raised the question of how many in the EU truly contribute to the resolution of neighbouring crises⁴². It is legitimate to doubt whether the EU is truly committed to security and the CSDP or whether it will proceed in the expectation that others will continue to meet these costs. And keeping the EU-BG operational and capable costs money.

NATO has warned Europe regarding the qualification of its Forces. The recent critical situation in Ukraine led that Organization to rethink the conceptualization of the NRF, increasing the degree of readiness⁴³ and availability, the latter for three years, during which a Force can be committed and is subject to operational training. Thus, the possibility of FRS forces, or their enablers, integrating “EU-BG packages” under the Berlin Plus Agreements, will be more difficult, because the commitments intrinsic to NATO require many capabilities, for a long time, with high rates of requirement and readiness. In addition, the participation of countries in NRF can lead to fatigue and withdrawal in providing capabilities for EU-BG. The regeneration of the Force and the costs for participation in NRF and the EU-BG may lead MembSta to choose between NATO and the EU for their contributions, which may not be to the latter’s advantage.

Recently, Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, called for the formation of a European Army, to address threats to Europe and defend European values, reducing military spending, facilitating European integration, developing a CSDP and pre-

⁴² In Riga, on 03.11.201, the French Minister of Defence reminded that France should not respond alone to the threats to Europe (Stroobants, 2015).

⁴³ From the three NRF phases (stand-up, stand-by and stand-down), the second is at greater readiness, merely a few days.

venting wars inside the EU, a position that pleased the German defence minister, who ruled out, however, the possibility of such an event happening soon (Florin, 2015). The idea does not raise consensus in the EU⁴⁴ but has gained some support. Were this Army to exist, the current design of the EU-BG would have to be reviewed. Until it does, the EU-BG will be whatever MembSta wish them to be.

As for Portugal, the commitments in the EU and NATO constitute a challenge in the deployment of Forces. National resources, air and naval, do not allow the projection of a Battalion equipped with Pandur vehicles or caterpillars in the context of an “immediate response”. The possible acquisition of a logistics ship may overcome this deficiency and become an asset for the EU-BG.

Conclusions

The search for a place on the international stage enabling it to have an independent voice led the EU to develop the concept of EU-BG. This development was a slow process, outlined with that ambition, but tempered by the need for the EU to intervene in crisis management in its internal space or in its neighbouring space, whether near or remote. The conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Macedonia and more recently, Libya and Ukraine, are, for Europe, milestones that mark the need for Intervention Power, while some also mark the helplessness that comes with not having that power, or being unwilling to exercise it. Some of these adverse events drove the generation and development of that concept. Others, however, were more “justifications” rather than “reasons” for the existence of this Force, as, in spite of its high flexibility, it is not directly appropriate to tackle the underlying threat.

The materialization of the EU-BG concept has required reflection by the EU. Currently, the EU-BG are the EU’s main instruments for MRR within CMO. This means that these instruments are important for the affirmation of the CSDP, as they constitute the EU’s immediately available military capability for possible EU operations. The EU-BG have been an earnest and, in a way, achieved attempt at a rapprochement between MembSta and at increasing mutual trust and the development of capabilities in a multinational context of interoperability and cooperation. Although there were asymmetries in the effort to make available capabilities in the process of generating EU-BG Forces, taking into account the commitments made by countries, adhering to this process already demonstrates a spirit of sharing and union which is important for the cohesion, coherence, empowerment and affirmation of the EU. However, these asymmetries have led some MembSta and the EU itself to appeal frequently to a reinforcement of the Union’s capability to use, swiftly, whenever necessary, the right and sufficient Force to conduct operations in the wide array of current crises. Only thus will the EU take on the role expected of it, by enhancing its role and responsibility in maintaining security and world peace. That role and that responsibility were not visible during and after NATO’s intervention in Libya, in 2011. If this had occurred, that country would probably not be at risk of becoming a failed State.

⁴⁴ More integration is met by opposition in some states.

The EU-BG have been crucial in the transformation of the Union and of its Member States. While some participated in the implementation of the concept more than others, the EU-BG have been the engine of the metamorphosis of a vision geared towards large volume Armies, typical of a time of “block warfare”, for another, geared towards flexible employment, based on modularity, projection, interoperability, high readiness and commitment to broad-spectrum and high-intensity operations. That is, the paradigm of “volume” evolved to that of “capability”.

Based on permanent availability and high readiness, the EU-BG takes on an image of versatility and efficiency, which lends credibility to the EU. However, this efficiency, credibility and versatility depend on the acceleration of the decision making process, the degree of training of the constituent forces, the actual capabilities that support them, their projection capability and, when at the JOA, their ability to survive. Now, it is on projection that the larger vulnerability of the concept resides. Depending on the willingness and availability of Member States with shortcomings with regard to assets of strategic projection, the concept also internalizes that need, which will only be visible and truly felt when there is a need to use the Force at the required MRR readiness (ten days). Portugal has minimized this vulnerability by using national and international resources that are not exclusively military, as happened recently, with the projection and retraction, by sea, using civilian means, of a reconnaissance squadron for Lithuania within the NATO concept known as “Assurance Measures”

The discussion we have been witnessing in recent times, on how to use the EU-BG, is another concern arising from the concept. The approximately seven years that followed the approval of the concept were not enough to define its form of employment. The EU felt there was a need for this instrument in order to achieve the desired assertion. It now exists, and, today, we still do not know how to employ it. That is, no one knows how to employ the instrument to obtain assertion, which casts doubt on how effective it really is.

With the latest evolution of the concept of NRF, doubts are raised about the feasibility of the provisions of the Berlin Plus agreements, in particular with regard to the use by the EU of assets allocated to NATO by Member States, but which are available. The new concept requires greater availability and readiness of resources, for longer periods of time, which can lead to higher costs, to the impossibility of employment of those capabilities for operations in the EU framework and to saturation by Member States, because of their contribution for both Organizations. A certain withdrawal is thus expected by Member States in their declarations of availability for both organizations, possibly with greater incidence in the EU-BG.

This saturation and the higher costs, combined with the asymmetry of capabilities demonstrated by Member States and their contributions to the EU-BG, could lead Europe to consider, more acutely, the existence of a European Army. Such an asymmetry could lead to the formation of EU-BGs that are “more capable” than others, leading to the idea that such Forces could develop the same operations at “different speeds” and with very disparate efficiencies. This perception may even lead to only Member States with relevant military capabilities, thereafter having the privilege to form EU-BG, reserving to other Member States the role of suppliers of less

relevant capabilities, which could compromise the multinational character of the concept. Although there are staunch opponents of an European Army, it has gained some supporters and there is a conviction that, sooner or later, it may become a reality. In this context, the EU-BG, in the multinational coalition model, cooperative and voluntary, may not have a place in that army, but that does not mean a Force with the characteristics of the EU-BG will not exist therein.

We thus conclude this research and reflection, in answer to our desire for knowledge, as defined in the Introduction: today, the EU-BG, despite their vulnerabilities, have been crucial in affirming the CSDP and the EU itself, although their actual employment is still only in the realm of possibility. The EU-BG are applicable today, but could be called into question in the future, given the commitments, the availability of MembSta, the asymmetries presented in capabilities and in allocation of resources, and the evolution of the Union itself.

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