

EU MILITARY FORUM



EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE – EUMC #1/2025



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

DEAR COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS

The first edition of the Military Forum in 2025 is shaped by the evolving prerequisite for the EU to become more and more a real Union of Defence. The recent global challenges compel us to adapt once more. It is not only Russia's unjustified war on Ukraine or the expectable shift of the United States' attention towards the Indo-Pacific region, but the total amount of crises and conflicts across Europe's key areas of interest. We are now forced to turn the recent wake-up call into real change! This comprises an institutional change as well as new national approaches to tackle future challenges. Most importantly, we need to transform our mind-set towards the ability to simultaneously conduct Crisis Management and Territorial Defence as future core tasks. Hence, the role of EU Member States within NATO remains crucial and requires focused attention. Because one thing is certain: Europe's freedom, peace and security will be safeguarded by Europeans.

Due to the complexity of these challenges, this edition will initially unfold along a global approach to stress Europe's vital interest in security and defence.

To set the stage, Lieutenant General (retired) Brauss' opening article – **“Russia's war and Putin's strategic goals, China's claim to power and President Trump in the White House – strategic consequences for Europe”** – focuses on the EU's contribution to strategic burden sharing. To emphasise consequences for Europe, Camille Grand elaborates on

“The transformation of the Middle East and its impact on European security”.

To conclude the geographical approach in this edition, Colonel Dominik Horn presents a comprehensive analysis of the key to successfully balance cooperation and competition with the Global South in his article: **“The European Union – Global South – BRICS: Perspectives on EU Security and Defence Policy”.**

These future geopolitical challenges require a 360° strategic approach for Europe. The Commission's upcoming White Paper on the future of European Defence will undoubtedly be an initial step towards the Union's necessary development. Colonel Matthieu Pratt, therefore, will analyze this topic in his article the **“Military strategic perspectives raised by reflections on the White Paper on the future of European Defence”.**

The current Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU further explores the significance of the White Paper. General Wiesław Kukuła elaborates on the military implications of Poland's Presidency program in the article **“SECURITY, EUROPE! – Military perspective of the Polish Presidency in the EU 2025”.**

As the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC) reaches full operational capability, the German Military Representative to NATO and EU, Lieutenant General Wolfgang Wien, first highlights **“The ascend of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity”.** In addition, the Commander of Eurocorps, Lieutenant General Piotr Błazeusz offers unique insights into the



General Robert Brieger
Chairman of
the EU Military Committee

role of **“Eurocorps in EU Rapid Deployment Concept implementation”.**

Finally, Lieutenant Colonel Coralie Felblinger summarizes the **“Outcome of the EU Chiefs of Defence meeting in Budapest”** and refers to the next evolutionary steps of the EU Military Committee.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that the level of uncertainty, the series of disruptive events and hybrid activities will diminish any time soon. However, we have the real chance – a clear “window of opportunity” – to reinvent our approach towards peace, security and defence.

I am sure that this edition will significantly contribute to the discussions we need to have in order to succeed.

Enjoy reading
Yours,
General Robert Brieger

RUSSIA'S WAR AND PUTIN'S STRATEGIC GOALS, CHINA'S CLAIM TO POWER AND PRESIDENT TRUMP IN THE WHITE HOUSE – STRATEGIC CONSEQUENCES FOR EUROPE

by Heinrich Brauss



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Since the end of 2018, he has been Senior Associate Fellow of the German Council on Foreign Relations and Member of the Board of the German Atlantic Association in Berlin.

In terms of security policy, 2025 will likely become another difficult year for Europe. Russia's brutal war against Ukraine continues. The 'axis of autocrats' (A. Applebaum), made up of China, Russia, North Korea and Iran, is directed against the Western democracies in both the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific region. The Middle East remains a region of explosive instability. And in the United States, Donald Trump is now in power. Many in Europe are wondering what foreign and security policy he will pursue, whether he will abandon Ukraine for a 'deal' with Putin, what his position is on NATO and whether he will uphold the nuclear protection promise.

All these issues are of strategic importance for Europe, for both the EU and NATO. President Putin wants to crush Ukraine as an independent state and make it part of a new-old Greater Russia. But his imperial ambitions go further; he explicitly wants to regain control over half of Europe and oust NATO from Central/Eastern Europe. Ukraine must therefore continue to resist. It is under great military pressure, and the constant criminal shelling of vital infrastructure is intended to wear it down from within. However, a strong, independent Ukraine is indispensable for the security and stability of Europe. Together with Moldova, it protects the entire Eastern and South-

eastern flank of NATO and the EU over more than 1,200 km.

The threat from Russia is exacerbated by its 'no limits' partnership with China and Beijing's large-scale support for Russia's defence industrial base. The West is thus confronted with two authoritarian great powers, in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific region. They aim to impose maximum pressure on US forces across multiple theatres simultaneously, from the Arctic to the South China Sea. Strategically, the risks for the West in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions are thus interconnected.

THE STRATEGIC ORIENTATION OF THE US UNDER TRUMP

Trump's detailed security policy agenda is not yet clear, but the big lines are. His statements about taking over Canada and Greenland show what drives his thinking: the competition with Russia and China for the control of the Arctic region with its vast mineral resources and the US strategy focusing on the geopolitical confrontation with China. The US sees China as its global systemic rival. For Washington, the strategic centre of gravity is in the Indo-Pacific, no longer in the

Euro-Atlantic region. Notwithstanding this, the US is still the only world power and certainly wants to remain so, also under Trump. The alliance with Europe is an essential prerequisite for this. Europe and the United States are each other's largest trading partners. Together, they generate around half of the gross world product. Secured military access to Europe and the presence of American armed forces here are the basis for America's projection capability to the Middle East, the entire Mediterranean region and North Africa. Europe must therefore remain free and stable and thus safe from Russian and Chinese influence and control. Hence, it is also in the strategic interest of the US to remain a European military power. One can only hope that Trump will eventually acknowledge this.

At the same time, it is in Europe's strategic interest that the US is maintaining strong presence in the Indo-Pacific, forming the military counterweight to China to uphold stability and keep access to markets open there for the export-dependent Europeans. The latter must, therefore, relieve the Americans in Europe and its strategic periphery. This is the overriding strategic reason why Europeans must invest much more in Europe's security and defence themselves: in the event of a major military conflict in the Far East, essential American forces and capabilities that so far are earmarked for the collective defence of Europe would no longer be available here – with massive consequences for NATO's posture. Trump is therefore right: fair strategic burden sharing requires the European NATO allies to invest considerably more in their military capabilities.

Moreover, this must be possible: together, the EU Member States have organized to have the world's second-largest gross domestic product (GDP), still just ahead of China. The GDP of Great Britain, Norway and Türkiye would be added to this. Especially since strategic burden sharing is not a concession to the



Photo: Flickr.com/Cage Skidmore

US or Donald Trump, but a necessity that arises from the geostrategic complexity of common security interests, challenges and tasks, improved burden sharing in favour of the US should be the subject of a 'New Transatlantic Compact'. For example, the European Allies should, by the time of the 2025 summit, commit to raising defence spending to at least 3 % of GDP and providing, by 2030/35, some 50 percent of the key capabilities NATO needs, but also taking on the greater part of Europe's defence in the long term.

A "NEW ERA OF COLLECTIVE DEFENCE"

Given the strategic developments, what needs to be done? First, the Allies and the EU must provide massive and sustained military and financial support to Ukraine so that it can hold out and ultimately negotiate its future from a position of strength. If Trump scales back US support, the Europeans must step in. Second, NATO must continue to significantly strengthen its deterrence and defence. Considering Putin's strategic goals and the brutality of his army, NATO must be able to defend "every inch" of Allied territory without delay. The new NATO

Force Model provides for a significant growth of rapidly available forces from 40,000 to 300,000. For reasons of space-time-forces availability, most of these forces must be provided by the Europeans. In addition, the new (division-sized) 'Allied Reaction Force' will be designed to provide rapid response in a crisis in particularly vulnerable areas.

NATO has meanwhile developed a "new generation of defence plans" for the entire Alliance area, from the Arctic to the Black Sea. The change from small, light, rotating multinational contingents for crisis stabilisation far afield to, mechanised, fully equipped combat-ready large formations for high intensity defence operations against Russia means "turning the whole system around" (SACEUR Cavoli). Consequently, the Allies will receive many more and much more demanding capability targets. Given the Russian threat, they must be met as quickly as possible. As the war in Ukraine shows, key priorities are air defence, long-range guided missiles, reconnaissance and combat drones, and long-range artillery. These are also the biggest gaps in the inventories of the Europeans. When the new NATO targets are apportioned to Allies this summer, it will become clear that 3 or 4 % of national GDPs will be required.




THE EU'S CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC BURDEN SHARING

The development of targets has been guided by a comprehensive concept of defence directed against “all threats and from all directions, based on a 360-degree approach”, to include resilience against hybrid warfare in peacetime as well as crisis prevention/management in Europe’s strategic periphery, even without US support. This obviously applies to the 23 EU Member States as well that are also members of the Alliance. The EU has (as of 31 Oct 2024) provided some € 115bn financial/humanitarian support, plus Member States’ cumulated military aid worth € 74bn, i.e., much more than the US. In terms of 360-degree defence, the EU focuses on civil, civil-military and military crisis management and stabilisation missions. Strategically speaking, this basically aims at keeping conflicts away from Europe. In the author’s view, this is the key reason why the EU subsumes all related measures, instruments, civil missions, and military deployments under European Defence, in a complementary way to NATO, which is responsible for the Defence of Europe.

In the same vein, it must be clear that the EU Commission’s aspiration to develop a “true European Defence Union (EDU)” does not interfere with NATO’s Collective Defence mission. Rather, the EDU is the umbrella term for all Commission activities to support the Member States in developing modern military capabilities, e.g., in the fields of investment, defence industry, research, development, innovation. With this in mind, NATO and the EU must complement each other, ideally within a coordinated approach to providing 360-degree defence of Europe.

- Without prejudice to the political decision-making autonomy of either organisation, capability planning should be systematically coordinated by the responsible NATO and EU staffs. Ideally, NATO and EU experts should jointly define the key priorities that the Europeans need for collective defence and civil-military crisis management in Europe’s strategic periphery, even without the US. The military component of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity must be part of developing the overall pool of European high-end, first responder forces/capabilities. The 23 NATO-EU nations should receive a single set of targets each reflecting

their contribution to meeting the requirements of both NATO and the EU CSDP.

- A key prerequisite for the swift adaptation of European armed forces and speedy acquisition of critical equipment, including for continued support for Ukraine, is the expansion of industrial production capacities. At the 2024 Summit in Washington, NATO leaders committed to the NATO Industrial Capacity Expansion (NICE), primarily through fostering cooperation across the entire Alliance, long-term contracting, clear demand signals to industry and multinational procurement. This must, however, be coordinated with the implementation of the European Defence Industrial Strategy that generally follows a comparable approach while obviously focusing on European capacities.
- The new Commissioner for Defence, Industry and Space will need to play a key role in promoting the development/expansion of European production capacities. In doing so, he should take advantage of the commitments made by the EU-NATO Allies within the scope of the NICE pledge and seek coordination with his NATO counterpart to this effect. Standardisation of equipment for multiple European Allies, wherever possible, and joint procurement will enhance interoperability, interchangeability and affordability of the required capabilities.
- Finally, to be successful, the described line of action requires enhancing EU funding, in fact beyond reinforcing the EU Defence Fund. By the time of the 2025 NATO Summit, the EU should decide (and establish appropriate mechanisms) to invest significantly in the development of critical capabilities that are essential for the defence of Europe as a whole, such as an air defence shield for Europe. 

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND ITS IMPACT ON EUROPEAN SECURITY

by Camille Grand

The legitimate strategic focus of Europe on the Russian war in Ukraine has prevented or delayed a fundamental assessment of the events of the past two years in the Middle East and their very significant impact on European security. These events have transformed the Middle East possibly more than the Arab Spring in 2011, provoking a realignment of regional and major powers, and generating evolving security challenges and responsibilities for Europe.

THE MOST PROFOUND TRANSFORMATION OF THE MIDDLE EAST SINCE THE ARAB SPRING

The events of latest years (2023-24) have profoundly reshaped the wider Middle East. Such transformations are unprecedented since - at least - the Arab Springs of 2011, and the ensuing regime changes in several countries in the Middle East and North Africa (Tunisia, Libya, Egypt), also prompting a civil war in Syria and the rise (and demise) of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. This sequence generated massive turmoil, an unfinished democratisation wave, as well as an instability and a flow of refugees in Europe. The current transformations are just as meaningful and possibly more significant.

The violent and cruel terrorist attacks of Hamas in October 2023, of a magnitude unparalleled since the creation of Israel, have prompted a large-scale Israeli response in the form the on-going

counter-terrorism operation turned into a regional conflict going way beyond the borders of Israel and Gaza. All involving multiple state and non-state actors, in a spiral of violence that proved difficult to break or control in spite of the best efforts of diplomacy. It has generated another Israeli campaign in Lebanon, severely diminishing the influence and ability of the Hezbollah to operate as a quasi-state and a powerful player in the region and eliminating its leadership, thus significantly downgrading the Iranian sponsored so-called “axis of resistance”. This in turn put Iran and Israel on the verge of a major conflict with mutual strikes both ways, even though both sides properly managed escalation. This resulted in enormous global political controversy and significant civilian casualties amongst the Palestinian and – to a lesser extent – Lebanese populations. While welcomed from a humanitarian perspective, the current cease-fires in Lebanon and Gaza (combined with prisoners exchanges) appear fragile and do not provide to date a clear horizon for a lasting peace.

From a geostrategic perspective, it has reshuffled dramatically the Middle East creating both hopes and challenges as the High Representative/Vice-President Kaja Kallas recently noted when visiting the region. The weakening of Hezbollah and Iran led to the unanticipated fall of the Assad regime in Syria after decades of a barbaric totalitarian regime and more than a decade after the Arab Spring uprising. It also allowed the election of a Lebanese President and the choice of a new Prime



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Minister after years of political stalemate. Israel appears strategically stronger but also politically under some pressure given the international criticism about its massive use of force in Gaza in particular. Türkiye has expanded its influence in Syria and appears as a new regional powerhouse. As it also faces domestic unrest, the Islamic Republic of Iran is now on the defensive. The future of Syria is highly uncertain and it remains to be seen if the new regime will move away from the radical Islamist roots of the new leading forces and preserve a degree of freedom and stability in the country and beyond.

THE INTERLINK NATURE OF THEATRES

Moreover, this rapid transformation is affecting the positions of external powers in the region. Russia is already almost fully evicted from Syria and has clearly lost its main ally in the region. Complicating its game in the Middle East, the Mediterranean and in Africa, Russia is signalling its weakness in the entangled Ukraine. The way Russia reorganises its Mediterranean footprint is of strategic importance for Europe, whether it will support its African operations or pose a direct threat on Europe's Southern flank, or not.

The United States remain the main outside broker but faces criticism for its quasi unconditional support to Israel and seems to have lost its ability to shape events decisively as its influence on local players. The new Trump administration opens a new chapter with potentially more leverage but also with a temptation to either put an end to US engagements in the region, including the US led counter-ISIS coalition, or to further try to shape the regional balance by supporting further escalation with Iran.

China for its part has failed to emerge as a significant player in spite of its growing economic and – to a lesser extent – military presence in the wider region.

THE SECURITY CHALLENGE FOR EUROPE

The radically transformed environment proves to be incredibly challenging for Europe. The European Union and its Member States have only a limited influence to shape events in the region. The massive uncertainties carry more potential risks and challenges for Europe than for any other external actor. Should instability and unrest prevail, Europe will be more exposed to specific consequences. Be it the reestablishment of a haven for terrorist groups operating in the EU, the need to manage massive humanitarian and political crises including a direct impact on European security, or the flow of migrants coming from unstable or brutal regimes, and possibly the continuation of protracted conflicts in the region with additional risks associated with the proliferation of missiles and a new round of nuclear proliferation in a neighbouring region.

Even if this pessimistic assessment was to be proven wrong, Europe needs to further develop its ability to monitor and address those potential challenges. From an EU perspective that entails:


1. Developing its analytical and intelligence assessment capacity in order to be able to anticipate crises and developments of the security environment as much as possible;
2. Monitoring closely the behaviour of regional and major powers and non-state actors in the region as their policies can generate additional risks for Europe;
3. Bolstering security partnerships with countries in the region, none of them are perfect but developing robust security dialogues as well as concrete military cooperation projects help building trust and developing a better understanding of the region;
4. Preserving an ability to intervene rapidly to address a variety of contingencies in the region from the need to evacuate European citizens to humanitarian consequences of crises or to fight the

re-emergence of a significant terrorist threat;

5. Conducting (as for Ukraine) a solid lessons learned exercise of the novelties of the most recent conflicts in the region including inter alia the massive use of drones and missiles, the importance of precision guided munitions, the role of hybrid operations;
6. Protecting maritime routes of critical importance for the European Union. The EU has developed a real know-how in countering piracy and other threats and has a strategic interest in protecting sea-routes off the Horn of Africa or in the Mediterranean;
7. Enhancing the EU-NATO partnership in addressing the aforementioned challenges.

Additional points could of course be added to expand this list, but it offers a good starting point for developing a list of priorities in the security domain as part of a broader strategy aimed at addressing the challenges emanating from the region.

In such an environment, and even in the absence of a reduced US engagement in both Europe and the Middle East, Europe will need, over and above the requirements associated with the Russian threat and the war in Ukraine, to rethink the way it approaches the wider Middle East in the 21st century. This attention paid to the European Southern flank is not about addressing the concerns of Mediterranean countries in Europe, but to address collectively the common challenges emanating from the region. Moreover, the interconnection between theatres demonstrate that it would also be a mistake to establish a competition between the Southern and Eastern flanks of Europe.

Ultimately, Europe cannot insulate itself from its neighbourhood. It has a vested interest in a peaceful and friendly neighbourhood and in cooperation, but it also has to recognise that, from a security perspective, Europe is surrounded by a ring of different threats and challenges that require its permanent attention. 

THE EUROPEAN UNION – GLOBAL SOUTH – BRICS: PERSPECTIVES ON EU SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

by Dominik Horn

The relationship between the European Union (EU) and the Global South as well as the influence of the BRICS states have become central topics in EU security and defence policy in recent years.¹ These relationships are embedded in a context of increasing geopolitical tensions and global challenges such as armed non-international and international conflicts, hybrid threats, climate change, migration, organized crime, cyber-attacks and international terrorism. The Global South, which encompasses the regions of Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia, is often both the source and the arena of these threats and opportunities. At the same time, the BRICS countries, which have a significant influence on developments in the Global South, are challenging the traditional supremacy of Western powers, which has implications for the EU's strategic interests. Consequently, the EU has developed various instruments and strategies to deepen its security and defence cooperation with these regions.

Before going into the actual topic, a brief historical outline of the Global South should be provided. The EU's relations with the Global South and to some extent with the BRICS are historically shaped by the colonial past of its member states. After the Second World War and during the Cold War, European policy initially focused on development cooperation, while security policy issues

played only a subordinate role. It was only with the establishment of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the Maastricht Treaty (1993) that the EU began to systematically integrate security policy objectives into its relations with third countries. Security policy cooperation was intensified in Africa in particular. The partnership between the EU and the African Union (AU) in the area of African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the EU-Africa Dialogue are examples of how historical relations have been transformed into a strategic partnership.

In the third decade of the 21st century, the Global South and parts of the BRICS countries face a variety of security threats that have a major impact on the stability of the EU. Many countries in the Global South are characterized by internal and external conflicts, weak institutions and uncontrolled territories. These unstable conditions not only promote regional insecurity, but also migration movements that are often directed towards Europe, with all the consequences that we have been well aware of since 2015. Regions such as the Sahel, the Middle East and parts of South East Asia are breeding grounds for terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram and the Islamic State. These groups threaten both local and international security. In the area of organized crime, we are dealing with human smuggling, drug



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¹ BRICS includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates joined the intergovernmental organization in 2024 and Indonesia joined in January 2025.



Photo: Author

trafficking and arms trafficking, often linking the Global South with networks in Europe. Climate change, in turn, acts as a threat multiplier. Droughts, floods and other natural disasters lead to resource scarcity and conflicts that force people to flee and migrate. Countries in the Global South are also increasingly becoming the target or starting point of cyber-attacks that have transnational consequences.

What role does the EU play in the security policy of the Global South? The EU has developed several strategic approaches to address the aforementioned threats and has launched various initiatives to achieve its security and defence policy goals in the Global South. It places an emphasis on partnerships and capacity building. Through programs such as the African Peace Facility (APF) and the European Peace Facility (EPF), the EU supports African countries in building

civilian and military security structures. In particular, considerable funds are made available through instruments such as the EPF to finance conflict prevention, peacekeeping and military training.

In the military sector, EU missions such as the training mission in the Central African Republic and Somalia (EUTM RCA and EUTM Somalia), the assistance mission in Mozambique (EUMAM MOZ) and the civil-military security and defence initiative in the Gulf of Guinea (EU SDI GoG) as well as the maritime operations IRINI (Mediterranean), ATALANTA (Indian Ocean) and ASPIDES (North-Western Indian Ocean/NWIO) aim to increase stability in regions vulnerable to crises.

Particular attention is paid to the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) operations in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Guinea, which are important maritime routes for European trade and

business and are therefore threatened by piracy and geopolitical tensions. Another key issue in relation to the Global South that the EU is addressing extensively is climate security, where there is a strong link to military deployment ambitions. The EU recognizes that climate change acts as a threat multiplier and exacerbates conflicts in the Global South. It therefore invests in projects that promote resilience to climate-related risks. This phenomenon has a massive impact on military operations, not only in terms of the need to adapt to these situations as such, but also in terms of the need to rethink the deployment strategy (from political/military strategic objectives to the consideration of appropriate training, equipment, accommodation, etc.).

In the civilian sector, the EU's cooperation with the African Union (AU), the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the Association

of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is key. The EU supports these organizations financially and technically in order to establish regional security structures. To this end, the EU links development and security policy. This includes security sector reform (SSR) programs to continuously strengthen the police, military and judiciary in fragile states.

It is no coincidence that the EU Military Committee (EUMC) has given serious thought to how it could contribute to the Global South policy over the past three years. In June 2023, the Chairman of the EU Military Committee (CEUMC) participated in the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. In May/June 2023, a representative of the EU Military Committee Cabinet took part as a delegation member in the bilateral talks between the EU and Brazil in Brasília and in the subsequent International Security Conference Forte de Copacabana in Rio de Janeiro. Under the auspices of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Security and Defense College (ESDC), together with the Spanish University Center for National Defense Studies (CESEDEN), held a bi-regional EU - Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Security and Defense Seminar in Cartagena, Colombia in 2024, in which the EUMC also participated. All of these events focused on how global players try to find common solutions, including on security and defence issues.

What strategies could the EU define for dealing with the Global South and the BRICS countries and what challenges and future prospects can be expected? Despite efforts, the EU and its partners face numerous challenges in establishing pragmatic cooperation with the Global South and the BRICS. One major problem difficulty is the fragmented approaches, i.e. the different priorities of the EU member states, which make a coherent European security strategy difficult.

The 27 member states often pursue different interests. And the Military is not the first responder. Southern EU states such as Italy and Spain attach great importance to overcoming the migration crisis, while eastern countries such as Poland and the Baltic states focus primarily on the threat posed by Russia. In addition, states in the Global South and the BRICS often view European interventions with scepticism, especially if they are perceived as interfering in internal affairs. In addition, the EU faces financial and personnel limitations, particularly in the long-term implementation of missions and operations. Furthermore, it is dependent on external actors such as China, Russia and the USA; these have their own security policy interests in the Global South, which complicates European efforts. Another challenge is insufficient local capacities. Many partner countries have weak institutions that are barely able to tackle security challenges effectively, even with external support.

However, Europe's militaries can contribute to the stability in countries of the Global South by sharing military Know-how as well as expertise.

The EU is committed to a multilateral world order in which international rules and standards are observed. In dealing with the Global South, this means supporting international organizations by becoming even more involved in the United Nations (UN) in order to resolve conflicts and secure peace. In the area of development policy, it offers the Global South an alternative to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with instruments such as "Global Gateway (GG)".²

To be successful in the long term, the EU must increase investment in the Global South. Competition with the BRICS requires the EU to offer an attractive and serious alternative to their offerings. As a serious player, the EU must develop an independent defence capability. Ini-

tiatives such as the "Strategic Compass" adopted on March 21, 2022, the "White Paper" yet to be developed and the "Preparedness Union Strategy" are steps in this direction, but must be backed up with concrete resources. Resilience to hybrid threats must be strengthened. This includes protecting critical infrastructure and combating disinformation.

It is no secret that China and India are investing heavily in the Global South, particularly in Africa and Latin America. Projects such as the BRI create economic dependencies and offer an alternative to Western investments. The BRICS countries often support countries in the Global South that want to break away from Western paternalism. This makes it more difficult for the EU to find multilateral solutions to global problems. Russia and China have long since established security-relevant relationships in Africa and Latin America, ranging from arms supplies to military training.

To summarize, the EU's relations with the Global South and the BRICS countries on security and defence policy issues are complex and characterized by mutual dependencies. While the EU has already made important progress, challenges remain that require continuous adaptation of its strategies. The EU's success will depend on finding a balance between cooperation, competition and the defence of its values and interests. Sustainable security cooperation can only succeed if the EU treats the Global South as an equal partner and takes its specific needs and perspectives seriously. The strategic importance of this partnership will continue to grow in the face of global uncertainties and geopolitical shifts. A strategic, coordinated and long-term approach is essential in order to remain capable of acting in an increasingly multipolar world. It will be crucial not to lose the Global South as a partner to others!



² Cooperation with international partners from the Global South to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

MILITARY STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES RAISED BY REFLECTIONS ON THE WHITE PAPER ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN DEFENCE

by Matthieu Pratt



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As the forthcoming White Paper on the Future of European Defence is expected in March 2025, it is prudent that its ambitions, scope and objectives be reflected in the wider geopolitical and institutional evolution. It seems to be broadly understood that it will take stock of a revised threat assessment to EU interests, which would require a level of preparedness and readiness for "the most extreme military contingencies". In this respect, it is expected to continue to implement the objectives set out in the Strategic Compass. Indeed, they are even more relevant today for European defence: increasing its capacity and readiness, strengthening the resilience of its armed forces, investing more and better in its defence capabilities.

The new Commissioner for Defence, Industry and Space Kubilius calls for a "big bang" approach to meet the challenge and urgency of "overhauling" the entire EU defence system, both in the short and longer term. In this context, what are the broader perspectives that are of strategic military interest?

Indeed, the EU has to adjust its role in a fragmented world. And while EU Member States (MS) certainly need to understand and articulate what their common vital interests are and what threats they face in the short, medium and long term, it is worth to understand what the new and emerging geopolitical alignments might be. Moreover, in the

end, how the strategic implications for European defence and security will unfold.

Different prisms will certainly preponderate. The bipolar ones, with competition between the US and China, or the more contested bipolar prism between "democracies and autocracies". In addition, more multipolar arrangements around regional or similarly minded alliances such as BRICS, G7, G20 and others.

It is also almost certain that the broader consensus around international rules-based order is waning. Hence, EU diplomacy, to deliver results, needs more than ever to be backed up by the capacity to act through its distinctive integrated approach; including – if necessary – with military means.

Finally, on security and defence, the EU will have to find a suitable balance between sufficient autonomy and interdependence and partnerships.

As the reflections around the White Paper are already triggering beyond the expected outcome of the document on all these aspects, it is important not to lose the MS in this endeavour, as defence and capability development remains a MS-driven process. These are the reasons why the overall level of ambition of the EU's strategic autonomy and additional common defence policies (including a NATO-EU complementary partnership), common budgetary objectives and the related complementarity of responsibility and ownership between the MS and the



Photo: EURO CORPS / Karen Leon-Henriquez

EU executive (Commission), are topics that will have to be addressed.

Nevertheless, in the meantime and more concretely, the White Paper should seek to pave the way for a very pragmatic approach to defence, through concrete projects of common interest, in which MS share trust and are willing to invest together, to fill the critical capability gaps agreed at European level.

However, what other key factors would need to be considered from a broader military perspective on capability development in order to build the now so-called "true European Defence Union"¹?

Certainly, the willingness and trust of MS to engage in enhanced defence sharing is key, and the elements that could constitute a defence strategy should be openly discussed. This would certainly include a definition of EU vital interests and the associated threat assessment,

agreed scenarios, but also the ability to implement a decision-making process (DMP) fit for extreme contingencies.

This raises a number of tangible questions. What elements of defence could the MS be prepared to take on jointly, to what extent and with what budget? What governance structure should be envisaged to enable both strategic planning and rapid decision-making; both long-term preparedness and the conduct of military operations? Raising the issue of necessary duplication of capabilities to allow autonomous assessment by related intelligence capabilities (highest denominator versus current lowest denominator), and the Communication and Information System (CIS), enabling robust and secure DMP. What structural elements (intelligence sharing, secure infrastructure, CIS, doctrine and procedures) would increase

MS' confidence in the EU to share more in defence matters?

Leaving these questions aside for debates that will certainly raise in the aftermath of the White Paper, it seems more appropriate to assess how the structural changes for a "radical overhaul" of the European defence capability development process should be approached. From a military point of view, it appears essential to set up an end-user-driven capability development process to identify, prioritise and select flagship domains and projects.

Initially, broad military capability areas of strategic interest requiring joint efforts to mitigate major shortfalls or future challenges should be proposed by the European Defence Agency (EDA), a group of MS, or even the Commission. MS and end-users, as the legitimate stakeholders to identify adequate fu-

¹ Political Guidelines | Ursula von der Leyen – President of the European Commission



Photo: Michaela Braun

ture combat requirements, would then endorse them. The EU Military Committee (EUMC) should be consulted for this purpose. "Flagship projects" would then emerge from these areas as concrete strategic defence products that could be proposed by MS.

The Headline Goal process reflects EU military requirements and could be leveraged to this purpose. EDA would continue, as the most appropriate body to coordinate these discussions and produce an "industrial output plan" with a clear target to be achieved around 2030. Taking stock of the capability gaps analysis identified by the EDA, the process could particularly take into account the results of the Agency-led Capability Development Plan (CDP) and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) processes. Timely and effective governance should throughout ensure coherence, from the MS' capability development process to the funding solutions offered by the

Commission, and will leverage existing EU initiatives and instruments to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts and resources. To this regard, cooperation with NATO remains of paramount importance in order to support the European Capability Development Process. In the same vein, cooperation with Ukraine, integrating progressively the Ukrainian Defence Technological and Industrial Base (DTIB) into the European DTIB would strengthen the latter resilience and innovation capacity.

Although this needs to be carefully assessed as this governance framework is still under construction, the current legal framework gives the EUMC a role and scope to fulfil its mission by providing military advice, directly or indirectly, to the institutional bodies. As such, the Defence Industry Working Party (DIWP) is currently the Council's single point of contact for the defence industry and thus the EUMC's potential opportunity to provide military expertise. In addition, whatever governance will be envisaged for the EDIP to act as a new joint programming and acquisition function at EU level, it should build on CEUMC military advice; and on existing instruments and initiatives, notably the CDP, the CARD and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

In line with these governance considerations, the perspective of a single European defence market should be guided by considerations towards the very nature of what military requirements are. Bearing in mind that MS and Chiefs of Defence are the final customers and users, this implies that European competition policy and economic viability should not be the only criteria for a single defence market. Resilience, security of supply, defence export controls are some of the other criteria to be considered.

The concrete needs for funding, the means to mobilise this funding and the criteria for funding projects should therefore be cautiously defined. From

a military point of view, criteria such as production, development and in-service support in Europe, maintenance of specific skills, strategic autonomy, innovation and long-term EDTIB support are key. Funding options should provide predictability, and allow MS to synchronise their national budgets with co-financing requirements where appropriate, and a clear, fast and efficient financial commitment to the European defence industry, both in the short term and in the long term. Therefore, any funding for capability development should, therefore, be done in a multi-annual framework.

Finally, European defence partnerships should also be considered from an end-user perspective, and the participation of non-EU countries in European financial instruments accordingly controlled. Indeed, it leads back to the unrestricted use of capabilities responding to the need for strategic autonomy, also to improve industrial competitiveness, standardisation and interoperability. These objectives should continue to be pursued through a case-by-case approach in partnerships to ensure the complementarity and synergy of efforts. Therefore, the defence systems financed by the EU, in particular through the European Defence Projects of Common Interest (EDPCI), must be equipment or systems that are designed, developed and produced in Europe, to ensure that European industry remains able to design and produce the systems of the future. Moreover, to manage the European systems throughout their life cycle, integrating innovation along the way. European MS should have full authority to operate, modify and maintain these systems to meet their operational requirements.

As the White Paper on the Future of European Defence envisages an "overhaul" of the EU's defence system, it is essential to strengthen continuity and coherence among all areas of responsibility, from the political masters to the military end-users.



SECURITY, EUROPE! – MILITARY PERSPECTIVE OF THE POLISH PRESIDENCY IN THE EU 2025

by Wiesław Kukuta



The sense of stability that may have accompanied us until recently has undoubtedly been eroded. This fact is influenced by, among other things, global competition and economic confrontation, constant attempts to undermine the existing world order, improvement and increasingly effective implementation of advanced technologies to influence societies, as well as instrumentalization of large-scale migrations of people to Europe. These phenomena also include armed conflicts and the return of military rivalry, along with the increasing use of hybrid warfare by state and non-state actors. The European Union (EU) is facing a new reality.

The above-mentioned challenges and threats have their origins mainly outside the EU and require greater attention to be paid to the external security issues of the entire EU. Multidimensional external pressure also places new demands on defence issues, and military ones, which should now be treated with particular attention. Above all, it is up to Europeans to ensure their own security. Europe must continue its efforts to ensure an

optimal level of internal security for its citizens. At the same time, the war in Ukraine has shown that the EU has the potential to provide real support to its Member States and partners and is irreplaceable in responding to large-scale crises. However, it is necessary to move from reactive approach to proactive readiness.

We need common and bold action on European defence, complementing NATO's efforts. It is necessary to strengthen defence readiness based on increased military spending, a stronger defence industry and filling the gaps in defence capabilities.

The Sauli Niinistö Report, published at the request of the President of the European Commission, confirms the legitimacy of the adopted direction of thinking and acting on security as a foundation necessary for the development and well-being of EU citizens. Through comprehensive preparedness for all possible threats, the EU should seek to accept greater strategic responsibility, for the own good.

Therefore, as a natural development of the above remarks, the Polish presidency in the EU will focus on security and defence issues, which are no longer perceived as costs, but a well-understood investment in their own development and a stable future for the next generations.

The key priorities for the Polish Presidency in the defence dimension will include activities boosting the defence



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potential of EU, which is fundamental for European security, as well as strengthening transatlantic ties and developing EU-NATO cooperation.

Military support for Ukraine is the first priority that Poland intends to pursue for as long as it takes. Poland is aware that this support is a test of perseverance and determination for the EU and democratic countries; it is a test that is being scrupulously observed all over the world, and its outcome would have global consequences. That is why we will continue the activity of EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM UA) and support Ukraine in other formats, including those coordinated by NATO. As part of the work on the EUMAM UA Strategic Review, which has been postponed until January 2025, we will seek to enhance the mission through the establishment of the Forward Coordination and Liaison Cell (FCLC) and the Advisory Pillar. We want a new opening in this matter and we will try to convince our partners to do so.

Strengthening EU-NATO cooperation also means exchanging information and promoting the activities carried out. Therefore, Poland will promote the EU's activities in NATO and vice versa. This will enable for a better understanding

of the organizational culture and each other's needs and capabilities. The defence of EU territory is almost equal to the defence of NATO territory, which is why cooperation in this area is and will be beneficial for both organisations.

EU-NATO cooperation should not omit the importance of general transatlantic relations. In this vein in particular, we will be committed to coordination between the EU and the USA in response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and to dialogue on global issues, including the Eastern Neighbourhood, China and the Indo-Pacific region, energy policy, new technologies and the connectivity agenda.

The development of security systems will serve common security, particularly when it is implemented together with EU partners with the support of both organisations. Especially since the Russian occupation atrocities in the Ukraine have proven the value of the importance of the essence of defence, of every centimetre of the EU's own territory.

Protecting and defending the territory of the EU requires the right capabilities to maintain and increase technological advantage, rebuild internal supply chains and rebuild/build resources. It is important that the requirements must be de-

fined by the military in cooperation with industry, and not the other way around. In this area, it would be advisable to work closely with NATO, which has developed defence plans, defines standards and requirements. The EU, as a European host, has a multitude of tools at its disposal: legal, financial, industrial and infrastructural ones to build the necessary capacity.

One of the elements of preparations is to enable the efficient movement of forces and resources in Europe, both of the EU and NATO countries, which is why Military Mobility, implemented under the auspices of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). This is another dual-use project complementary to the EU and NATO, which Poland wants to continue and develop. Again a testament that cooperation is a win-win situation.

The ability to shape its own security environment and support others is manifested in the achievement of readiness by the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC), in which Poland, as a framework nation for many EU Battlegroups (EU BG) and its commands, is an active contributor together with its partners from the region. Poland sees the potential and importance of this project and hopes that EU RDC will be an adequate rapid response tool that could serve as a kind of deterrence but, if necessary, will also be used operationally to achieve the EU's objectives.

Poland, being on the eastern flank, knows that securing and protecting the EU's borders will translate into security and stability in the region. As national element of our Presidency that will be beneficial for the security of the EU, Poland will promote the concept and preparation of flag ship projects: East Shield and European Air Defence Shield Initiative.

- **East Shield**, which is a whole of government and cross-institutional project to secure the eastern border of Poland through construction of



Photo: Polish Armed Forces



Photo: Polish Armed Forces

combined system of barriers and fortification to prevent either weaponized migration or military aggression. We see the East Shield, as part of the Baltic States' project "Baltic Defence Line", along the borders of Russia and Belarus.

- **European Air Defence Shield Initiative**, is the Polish and Greece concept to secure and defend the European aerospace against modern air threats.

Poland, as the Presidency, perceives the shift of EU administration, the implementation of the Commission's task letters and the drafting of the "White Paper on the Future of European Defence" as a unique opportunity that must not be missed.

Therefore, Poland wants to advocate for the upcoming changes and be part of it. That is why the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces accepted the proposal for the discussion on the contribution to the "White Paper" as the

voice of the EUMC as the EU's highest military body from the very beginning to influence the document's content. As a part of achieving comprehensive preparedness, the EUMC could propose to modernise our deterrence and defence posture by placing the Military Instrument of Power (MIoP) among other EU tools, including consideration of the implementation of article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). The TEU 42.7 must be the axis of our work: considerations, discussion but the most important - actions. We need to know how we would react if the TEU 42.7 will be activated precisely what will be our part and role. We must define procedures for the worst scenario and exercise them; in cooperation with our partners. We cannot allow again that reality surprises us. After the White Paper is published, the EUMC should be an active participant in the implementation of its provisions, providing military knowledge and experience.

The upcoming changes also include a change in the position of the Chairman of the EUMC. Poland considers as its duty to support the handover process and assist the new CEUMC at such an important moment.

In the second half of 2011 Poland had the first Presidency, which focused on internal market, external energy policy, negotiations on the 2014-2020 financial framework, economic and financial issues, competitiveness but also Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and relations with the East. However, the main denominator of the programme was the development of the EU and its citizens. Thirteen years later, we are facing completely different reality, more grim and unpredictable. Therefore, now we have to focus on how to preserve our common achievements and values: Democracy, Rule of law, Human Rights and the foundation of everyone's Freedom. Today it is time for bold decisions and actions. Today or never!



THE ASCEND OF THE EU RAPID DEPLOYMENT CAPACITY

by Wolfgang Wien



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SHOWCASING EU'S RAPID DEPLOYMENT CAPACITY

The European Union (EU) continues to enhance its military capabilities to address an increasingly complex security environment and assert itself as a credible global security provider. At the heart of these efforts lies the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC), designed to enable swift and effective responses to crises beyond the EU's borders. A major step forward in operationalizing this ambition was last year's Live Exercise (LIVEX 24) comprising of the Military Exercise 2024 (MILEX 24) and European Challenge 24 (EUCH 24), combining strategic planning with live operational drills to highlight the EU's readiness to tackle crises head-on.

The EU RDC LIVEX 2024 was a demonstration of the EU's commitment to collective defence, interoperability and effective crisis response.

The LIVEX was not merely an exercise; it was a demonstration of the EU's commitment to support collective defence, interoperability and effective crisis response. Spanning two phases, the Command Post Exercise (CPX) and the LIVEX, it tested the operational readiness of the EU RDC, a core deliverable of the EU Strategic Compass. In particular, the Distinguished Visitors Day (DV Day) on the 4th of December 2024 in Germany brought together military leaders, tactical units, and policymakers in a shared environment highlighting a stronger and more cohesive European defence framework.

INTEGRATED COMMAND AND LIVE OPERATIONS

MILEX 24 began with a CPX, held from April to May 2024, which focused on enabling the EU's strategic and operational command structures. The EU's Brussels-based Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) acted as the Operational Headquarters (OHQ), while EUROCORPS in Strasbourg served as the Force Headquarters (FHQ). This multi-layered structure emphasized seamless collaboration across strategic, operational and tactical levels, ensuring the agility within the Command and Control (C2) structure required in rapid deployment scenarios.

The following LIVEX phase, conducted from late November to December 2024 at the Bergen training area in Germany, built on these preparations. Soldiers from



During the Live Firing Event at the Distinguished Visitors Day

a wide variety of EU Member States participated, testing their readiness in realistic scenarios and pushing the limits of interoperability. The fictitious setting in the land of “Seglia” served as the backdrop for live-fire drills, rapid deployment exercises and crisis simulations, fostering adaptability and unity among the participating forces.

THE DISTINGUISHED VISITORS DAY: A HIGH POINT OF THE LIVEX

A defining moment of the exercise was the DV Day, held on the 4th of December 2024. This event not only showcased the capabilities and readiness of the EU RDC’s core capability, the EU Battlegroup 2025 (EU BG 25), but also highlighted the motto “train as you fight,” underlining the EU’s commitment to realistic and high-standard military preparation. The DV Day was an opportunity to demonstrate how exercises like MILEX 24 and the associated EUCH 2024 contribute directly to the operationalization of the EU RDC.

The DV Day provided attendees with a first-hand look at the EU RDC as a cutting-edge crisis management instrument.

More than 1,000 soldiers displayed their capabilities at Bergen, exemplifying the coordination between tactical units under EUROCORPS Force Headquarters, deployed as Initial Command Element (ICE) and the MPCC at the strategic level in Brussels. The event brought together high-ranking military officials with the Chair of the European Union Military Com-

mittee (EUMC), European External Action Service (EEAS) officials, and members of the Political and Security Committee (PSC), including its Chair. Their presence underscored the significance of the exercise as not only a military milestone, but also a diplomatic statement of EU unity, and highlighted the importance of the integrated approach.

The DV Day provided attendees with a first-hand look at the EU RDC as a cutting-edge crisis management instrument, the seamless alignment of command structures at the ICE, the logistic abilities at the Combat Service Support Task Force (CSS TF), the medical skills prowess of the Medical Task Force (MTF) and the fighting power of the Core EUBG 2025 itself. Overall, the DV Day was convincing and served as a vivid illustration of the EU’s growing military capabilities and strategic coherence through the professionalism and preparedness of the participating forces.

STRENGTHENING COHESION AND INTEROPERABILITY

One of the primary goals of the LIVEX 24 was to enhance cohesion and interoperability among the



Equipment arrives on rail for the EU RDC LIVEX 2024



Photo: Bundeswehr/Marco Dorow

During the Live Firing Event at the Distinguished Visitors Day

participating EU Member States' armed forces before they switch to a standby phase in 2025. The exercise therefore gave the last polish for planning, execution and decision-making processes that allows personnel from

diverse national backgrounds to operate as a unified force. This shared strategic culture is vital for the success of EU-led missions and reflects the Union's broader goal of building a collective security framework.

Through scenarios that demanded quick adaptation and collaboration, the LIVEX 24 pushed participants to overcome challenges together. It enhanced further strengthening mutual trust and operational synergy and provided invaluable insights into integrating forces under a single command structure.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE EU STRATEGIC COMPASS

Crucially, the LIVEX 24 was also a tangible step in the EU's implementation of Strategic Compass, the Union's ambitious action plan for enhanced EU security and defence by 2030, adopted in 2022. A cornerstone of this strategy is the establishment of the EU RDC, a modular force package of up to 5,000 troops capable of rapid deployment even in non-permissive environments. The exercise directly supported one of the



Photo: Bundeswehr/Marco Dorow

Inside of EUROCORPS Initial Command Element



Photo: Bundeswehr/Marco Dorow

The high-ranking political and military guests at the Distinguished Visitors Day

core objectives of the Strategic Compass: achieving EU RDC full operational capability (FOC) by 2025. It is therefore a clear signal that the EU is not only preparing to meet future challenges, but is also positioning itself as a proactive and credible security partner in a multipolar world.

AN EVER-EVOLVING CAPACITY FOR THE FUTURE

The exercise in Bergen has convincingly shown the capabilities of the EUBG 25, including the high readiness of the forces and the alignment of the C2 structure from OHQ to FHQ and the tactical forces.

The recently published Final Report on the EU RDC FOC identifies several valuable options to use EU Forces for rapid response as a first step. This by itself is a major achievement, but at the same time, more work needs to be done. If we want to prepare for an increasingly insecure security environment in and around Europe, the EU RDC must be able to conduct operations of varying scale in different environments and across

all domains. How fast and how smooth the EU RDC will be able to integrate and deploy its manifold components is crucial for its success on the battlefield of the future. Hence, the goal is developing the EU RDC into a force that can perform the highly adaptable concept of Mosaic Warfare. In particular worth highlighting is the necessity to further improve MPCC's Communication Information System (CIS) situation and the overall C2 enablement. Those issues are well known and need to be addressed swiftly in order to be best prepared for future tasks. Furthermore, Advance Planning also needs to be prioritised and there is a need to create additional planning documents along with and reflecting to the most urgent and likely scenarios. Ultimately, the creation of the EEAS Advance Planning Concept (APC) would be a major milestone catalysing the integrated approach.

The Strategic Compass has set a high bar for the Union's defence ambitions, and exercises like LIVEX 24 are essential in meeting these goals. Such military exercises are indispensable, not only for achieving full operational readiness, but also for projecting credible deterrence.

Even though the EU RDC now represents a ready to use instrument, there is a need for continuous work and effort to keep it up to date.

At the same time, the EU RDC must be considered as an ever-evolving architecture. Even though it now represents a ready to use instrument, there is a need for continuous work and effort to keep this emergent architecture - comprised of continuous force sensing and generation, ready forces and capabilities, planning and exercises – vibrant and up to date.

The Strategic Compass has marked 2025 as a decisive timeline for the EU to be a capable and relevant security actor. The overall reality of global security challenges and the recent events in EU's neighbourhood drastically underlined the necessity to be able to act on very short notice with a capable force. The EU RDC is now a cornerstone of the EU's ability to act. Together we need to keep it ready, up to standards and assure its relevance by using it!



EUROCORPS IN EU RAPID DEPLOYMENT CONCEPT IMPLEMENTATION

by Piotr Błazeusz



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is since April 2024 the Commanding General of EUROCORPS, Strasbourg. Besides various national and international assignments, he was the Commanding General of the Polish Military Contingent in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Task Force White Eagle Commander in Ghazni Province.

Created in 1992, EUROCORPS is composed of six Framework Nations, namely Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Luxembourg and Poland while complemented with five Associated Nations, Austria, Greece, Italy, Romania and Türkiye. Since 2009, these nations have been bound by the Treaty of Strasbourg, which conferred Eurocorps with legal capacity and established it as a unique multinational Corps Headquarters.

As a multinational, fully deployable and highly autonomous headquarters, Eurocorps is capable of planning and conducting military operations across the

full operational and intensity spectrum. It commands assigned forces as decided by its Framework Nations to the benefit of international organizations, particularly the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The Strategic Compass¹ provides clear guidance for the development of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC)², one of the steering document's key military deliverables for 2025.

Having concluded 2024 with a string of successful training events, where do we stand heading into the New Year? To answer this question, I will highlight key findings made during Eurocorps' preparation as Force Headquarters (FHQ)³ for the German led battlegroup in 2025, followed by recommendations and Eurocorps' potential contributions to the Full Operational Capability (FOC) of the EU RDC.

Building on its certification as Joint Task Force Headquarters (JTF HQ) for NATO in December 2023, Eurocorps successfully participated in 2024 exercises



1 The EU and its Member States (MS) formally approved the Strategic Compass in March 2022 as an ambitious plan of action to strengthen the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy by 2030.

2 The EU RDC will allow the EU to swiftly deploy a modular force of up to 5,000 troops, including land, air and maritime components, as well as the required strategic enablers.

3 Force Headquarters ([F]HQ). The exact C2 arrangements will depend on the mission—and will require case-by-case analysis. The simplified requirements of EUBG operations allow for the adaptation of existing headquarters as a basis for an (F)HQ. It must have the capability to conduct joint operations and be certified to meet the established military certification criteria. Additionally, the (F)HQ to be deployed on Battlegroup-type operations should be kept as lean as possible to ensure rapid deployability.



including MILEX, INTEGRATED RESOLVE and the EU RDC Live Exercise (LIVEX). These exercises, based on an Initial Entry scenario, provided an appropriate venue to prepare for the (F)HQ/commanding role.

Having gathered many valuable lessons throughout 2024, EUROCORPS can offer the following key observations from an operational standpoint.

Bottom line up front: the EU RDC concept needs to be trained to reach the expected level of maturity. The overall planning and deployment timelines (5–10 days in the most ambitious scenario) remain quite challenging.

Secondly, the Crisis Response Planning for Military Exercise (MILEX) exceeded the EU RDC Force Package size of 5,000 troops, with its estimated force requirement of 12,500 troops. Given the EU RDC's tasks and the ambition of the Strategic Compass to operate even in non-permissive environments, a larger force complemented by strategic and operational-level enablers may be necessary. Additionally, the readiness levels of the enablers partially differ from the EU Battlegroup (EU BG) package readiness categories, limiting integration not only in the event of activation, but also during the training and preparation phases.

During the exercise preparation and planning phases, Eurocorps had to contend with the still-limited means of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) for its role as preferred Operation Headquarters (OHQ). Ongoing limited means in Communication Information Systems (CIS), doctrine, infrastructure and personnel resources have an impact both on the exercise planning process and on operation planning at the military-strategic and operational levels. In particular, the CIS means (Deployable Package) provided by EEAS/EU Military Staff, as well as outdated Functional Area Services require improvement if they are to support classified collaborative planning tasks. This has necessitated the development of our own ad hoc Deployable Mission Network.

Regarding the current layout of the (F)HQ to command an EU BG Package, I would like to emphasize the significant challenges felt at both the operational and tactical levels from such a dual role. This leads to frictions when conducting missions, as the headquarters must task troops at the tactical level while simultaneously planning and synchronizing operational-level effects and meeting the strategic demands of the MPCC.

Based on these key findings, EUROCORPS sees the following opportunities to support the EU RDC on its road towards operational capability and to improve the overall readiness of EU Crisis Management tools.

Fostering readiness across all EU institutions by embracing a culture of Table-Top Exercises (TTX) via “crisis gaming” appears to be a promising approach. Regular exercises based on real-world contingency plans at all levels of EU institutions and Member States could help instil the mind-set needed to address today's challenges. Our strategic environment based on the Integrated Approach, underscoring the EU's unique approach to Crisis Management.





Photo: Michaela Braun

To meet demanding readiness timelines, Operations Planning Process (OPP) needs to be more effectively implemented. Future EU Advance Planning should be conducted in a collaborative manner all the way from the strategic level down to the tactical level, as outlined by EU military planning guidelines.

The resulting contingency plans should be sufficiently detailed to allow for early force sensing and regularly updated based on new intelligence assessments and “crisis gaming” (war gaming) outcomes. EUROCORPS, with its more than three decades of operational experience, stands ready to support these advance planning efforts.

Considering the mission spectrum of the EU Rapid Response Force (EU RRF), early integration of enablers and additional force modules is paramount to achieving the necessary cohesion and efficiency on time. To this end, the Notice to Move (NTM) of these enablers and

force modules should be in line with the supported EUBG Package.

Not surprisingly, the CIS challenge is a key focus. All levels and domains of the EU RDC should be interconnected via an integrated, classified (SECRET), secure and de-

ployable network. The implementation of efficient military CIS capable of providing new and NATO-interoperable Functional Area Services will be crucial for ensuring that the EU Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) can become fully operational.



Photo: Michaela Braun

Regarding the future C2 layout of the EU RDC, the Force Headquarters/ (F)HQ⁴ should be limited to the operational level, while individual Component Commands should command the built-up forces at the tactical level (EU Rapid Response Force). At the strategic level, a complete separation between the EUMS and a fully enabled MPCC could represent an important step towards a robust and permanent EU Command & Control structure. Additionally, the Joint Support Coordination Cell should ensure that an “Integrated Approach” to Crisis Management supports the Force Commander.

This separation could also fit neatly into the review of EU exercise planning and evaluation. The planning of regular exercises for the EU RDC, especially the annual LIVEX, should be a responsibility of the MPCC. Furthermore, future EU exercise planning and evaluation needs to take place earlier, i.e., at least two years before a given exercise.

Looking ahead, Eurocorps will implement the new EUROCORPS Vision 26+ roadmap starting in 2025, as it was endorsed by the Chiefs of Defence of our Framework Nations in Warsaw last November. This vision aims for Eurocorps to be “EU and NATO ready” while maintaining its unique role as a headquarters for Crisis Management Operations for both organizations. On its way to this goal, Eurocorps is addressing key challenges inherent to reaching the next level of EU-NATO duality.


Our upcoming operational commitments and exercises within the EU and NATO have already come to reflect this increased duality. During the first semester of 2025, Eurocorps will be on Rapid Response Standby for the German-led EU Battle Group Package, and will begin preparation to serve as (F)HQ for the Spanish led troops Package in the second semester



Photo: Michaela Braun

of 2026 and first half of 2027. In the second semester of 2025, Eurocorps will be on Express Response Standby and will conduct an internal exercise to prepare for the next (F)HQ rotation. The year 2026 will be dedicated to the standby as (F)HQ for the Spanish led EU BG Package and preparing for a major NATO exercise cycle.

In addition to these preparations, Eurocorps remains available for contributions to EU Advance Planning, EU Common Security and Defence Policy Missions and Operations, and NATO exercises.

Over thirty years of experience as Land-centric headquarters for the EU and NATO, as well as its upcoming EU and NATO commitments are what make Eurocorps a vital operational bridge between both institutions. This cross-cutting role could support the development of a common set of standards for EU Force Headquarters and NATO Non-Article 5 Crisis Response Operations Headquarters. Such an alignment would increase efficiencies for both types of headquarters, enabling the EU RDC concept to benefit more fully from EUROCORPS' extensive experience and capabilities. 

⁴ The Force Headquarters ((F)HQ) is the operational-level headquarters of an EU-led military force deployed to the Areas of Operations (AOO). It supports the Force Commander in planning, conducting and exercising C2 over the forces deployed within in the AOO.

OUTCOME OF THE EU CHIEFS OF DEFENCE MEETING IN BUDAPEST

by Coralie Felblinger



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One year after the first European Union Chiefs of Defence (EU CHODs) meeting outside of Brussels, which took place in Sevilla in 2023, we reiterated the experience again last autumn, accommodating the EU Military Committee (EUMC) at the level of the European Union Chiefs of Defence in Budapest this time, taking advantage of the Hungarian Presidency of the European Council. Upon the kind invitation of the Hungarian CHOD, General Gábor Böröndi, the semi-annual CHODs meeting was held on 14th and 15th of October 2024. The generals and admirals were also invited to attend the Distinguished Visitors' Day (DVD) organized on 16 October within the framework of Exercise Brave Warrior 24 - EU.

The agenda of the CHODs meeting was busy, as the CHODs acknowledged that the increasingly deteriorating security environment demands their commitment to contribute to making

EU even stronger and more militarily capable and expressed their wish to discuss numerous issues. The number of security and defence topics relevant for the EU has been steadily on the rise during the past months, and the will to address all of them in the most appropriate manner to enable the EU as a strong security provider is strongly shared by all members of the EU Military Committee.

General Robert Brieger, the Chairman of the EUMC, opened the meeting with a first session on the EU Naval Military Operations in the North Western Indian Ocean, and the CHODs re-affirmed the important role of operations ATALANTA and ASPIDES in tackling threats and challenges within their respective mandates. Both operations provide and enhance maritime security to safeguard the freedom of movement on the international waters. Recognizing the results achieved so far, the CHODs discussed the way ahead with



Photo: Flickr/HU24eu/Robert Erdi



Photo: Flickr/HU24eu/Robert Erdi

a focus on the provision of the necessary assets for both operations.

Assets are indeed a key element for all EU missions and operations, and capability was the second topic on the agenda of the meeting. The CHODs agreed on the Progress Catalogue 2024 and the derived High Impact Capability Goals (HICGs), while tasking the EU Military Staff (EUMS) to present a solid plan to increase the reliability and usability of the headline Goal Process (HLGP) in order to focus on Member States' most urgent needs. Their role is key as regards the development of projects under instruments such as the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the envisaged European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP): in fact, they are the military end-users of the outcomes of those projects.

They then discussed one of the major objectives of the past year, as we are drawing close to the deadline set for one of the key military deliverables of the EU Strategic Compass, namely the Full Operational Capability of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC). Standing ready to receive the EUMS final report to assess the readiness of the EU RDC and provide their military advice to the

political level for the endorsement of the RDC status, they reaffirmed their commitment to this objective. Its achievement relies on continued efforts regarding common costs, as well as staffing and Communications and Information Systems for the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC). The RDC is not a one-time objective, it is a capacity that needs to be maintained and exercised to provide the EU with an efficient tool to respond to imminent threats or quickly react to a crisis situation outside the Union at all stages of the conflict cycle. In this respect, the CHODs were able to see first-hand how professionally their soldiers cooperated during the DVDAY of Exercise Brave Warrior 2024-EU on 16th of October. General Brieger praised the teamwork of the international units participating in the exercise, stating that "the exercise and the routine acquired will enhance capabilities and make operational procedures smoother".

Support to Ukraine was among the main items on the CHODs' agenda. They discussed further coordination of training and support to the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF). Acknowledging EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine

(EUMAM UA) key role and success (EUMAM UA has trained already up to 70 000 Ukrainian troops, they stressed the importance of maintaining the EU's leading role in this domain, by ensuring a detailed and effective information-sharing and coordination mechanisms with all training initiatives, including the new NATO's Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine structure. They had the opportunity to address the different political views on the forms of support that may be further provided to Ukraine, and they stand ready to adapt the various strands of support according to further political guidance. Taking the opportunity of the geographic location of this EUMC meeting at CHODs' level, another point on the agenda was the participation of Western Balkan countries in Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) initiatives. The Western Balkan CHODs of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia were invited to participate in this session and were given the opportunity to express their thoughts on the ongoing defence and security cooperation projects between the EU and their countries. All five Western Balkan countries are regularly

participating in EU CSDP missions and operations and they are also candidates to join the EU. In this regard, Member States need to enable alignment of future allies on CSDP requirements. The CHODs identified positive work strands and initiatives to further enhance EU defence and security cooperation.

The EU CHODs also used this semi-annual meeting to exchange views on strategic reflections on defence matters within the evolving geopolitical environment, taking into account also the evolution of the EU institutional structures. As the European Union is increasingly taking responsibility to address security and defence issues that have impact on the common values and interests of its Member States, the CHODs are very much aware of the responsibility they have to provide timely military expertise for all EU institutions working on military-related topics. Considering those elements, they also made the decision to activate the position of the Deputy Chairman of the EU Military Committee. This position is foreseen in the Council Decision that establishes the EUMC but has never been filled yet. We are now looking forward to welcoming a Deputy Chairman by the end of the year.

Both the CHODs meeting and the exercise held in Hungary were very fruitful. Nevertheless, there is no time to rest on our laurels, as the crises tempo is still extremely high and there are many discussions that need to be continued, while new topics keep emerging and need to be addressed. This is our weekly endeavour during the regular EUMC meetings, and the CHODs themselves shall meet again in Brussels this spring for another intense meeting. Hungary has now handed over the reins to Poland, which holds the presidency of the European Council for the first semester of 2025 and ensures that military matters are addressed adequately to shape the future of Europe's defence together, ensuring freedom, security and prosperity for its citizens. ❌



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NEWS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

EU MILITARY COMMITTEE: AWAY DAYS IN BALATONFÜRED, HUNGARY



Photo: HU24EUflickr

On 18 September, an informal European Union Military Committee meeting was held in Hungary. The Military Representatives of the twenty-seven Member States gathered and met in Balatonfüred. Organized in the framework of the Hungarian Presidency, the event served as a forum for the participants to exchange views on shared challenges and tasks such as military assistance to Ukraine, cooperation with the Western Balkan countries and upcoming work on improving European defence and security. The officials also discussed the need and ways to further enhance European military cooperation in the areas of maritime security, cyber defence and effective delivery of military assistance missions.

EU MILITARY COMMITTEE: CHAIRMAN OF THE EU MILITARY COMMITTEE VISITS POLAND

On 26 September, General Robert Brieger visited Poland upon the invitation of General Wiesław Kukula, Chief of General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces.

The Generals discussed the current security environment and the future cooperation along with the EU's Strategic Compass and Common Security and Defence Policy.

During the visit, the Chairman visited the flood-affected areas. General Brieger witnessed the effects of the natural disaster and Polish Armed Forces' military capabilities in disaster relief and crisis management.



Photo: Polish Armed Forces

EU MILITARY COMMITTEE: MEETING AT CHIEFS OF DEFENCE LEVEL, 15 OCTOBER 2024



Photo: HU24EU Flickr

The European Union Military Committee meeting at Chiefs of Defence (CHOD's) level was held in Budapest, Hungary, from 14 to 16 October, organized by the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Chiefs of Defence of 27 EU Member States and four Western Balkan countries assembled to shape the future of Europe's defence together, ensuring cooperation

to preserve peace, security and prosperity for its citizens.

On 16 October, the Generals and Admirals also attended the distinguished visitor's day of the BRAVE WARRIOR 2024 – EU Military exercise to witness a complex joint tactical level exercise; involving military units and capabilities of the participating EU Member States,

modelling the military evacuation of EU civilian personnel from an unsafe, politically destabilized area on foreign lands outside EU soil. As result of the meeting, the conclusions of the talks have been summarized to set the directions and provide the most comprehensive military perspective on current challenges to support the EU decision making process.

EU MILITARY COMMITTEE: CHAIRMAN GENERAL BRIEGER VISITS DENMARK

On 24 and 25 October, General Robert Brieger visited Copenhagen upon the invitation of the Danish Chief of Defence, General Michael W. Hyldgaard, in view of Denmark's forthcoming EU Presidency in the second half of 2025.

The visit was an opportunity to discuss European security and the ongoing transformation of European defence aiming to strengthen cooperation and make EU an even more resilient and effective security provider.

During the visit, the Chairman met the Minister of Defence, Troels Lund-Poulsen and the Political Director and Deputy State Secretary for Foreign Policy, Ms. Eva Marie Barløse to exchange views.



Photo: CEUMC Cabinet

General Brieger also visited the Danish Royal Life Guards in Rosenberg Barracks. He received a presentation of the Danish Military and Defence Capabilities by the

Chief of Plans, Capabilities and Joint Operations.

The Chairman had the honour to meet His Majesty Frederik X, King of Denmark.

EU MILITARY COMMITTEE: CHAIRMAN VISITS SLOVAKIA

General Robert Brieger travelled to Slovakia on 14 and 15 November following the invitation of General Daniel Zmeko Chief of the General Staff of the Slovak Armed Forces.

During the visit, the Chairman met the President of the Slovak Republic, Peter Pellegrini, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Robert Kalinák and the Chairman of the Committee on Defence and Security, Richard Glück to discuss the EU's current security environment and the latest developments of the global geostrategic landscape.

On 15 November, a Commander's Conference was organized by the host, General Zmeko. The aim of the conference was to evaluate the tasks carried out by the Slovak Armed Forces in the previous period and to enhance the



Photo: CEUMC Cabinet

situational awareness of the Slovak military leadership through discussions

and exchanging views on security and defence.

EU MILITARY COMMITTEE: CHAIRMAN VISITS THE GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG

On 22 November, the Chairman, General Robert Brieger, travelled to Luxembourg. The official visit was organised upon the formal invitation by General Steve Thull, Chief of Defence of Luxembourg.

The Generals exchanged views on the current security environment and discussed the Luxembourgish Defence Guidelines for the coming decade. They emphasized topics like capability building to meet the requirements posed by recent threats and challenges, with special focus on the cyber and space domains.

The defence capabilities of Luxembourg were presented to the Chairman through a static display and a presentation by the Head of Strategic Planning Department.

General Brieger also met Nina Garcia, the Director of the Luxembourgish Directorate of Defence, to further



Photo: Luxembourg Armed Forces

discuss the Luxembourgish view and outlooks on the security and defence domains.

Later he visited the private company "Société Européenne des Satellites"

(SES) to get more familiar with the development of dual-use (civilian-military) high-tech capabilities as part of the implementation of its Defence Space Strategy of 2022.

EU MILITARY COMMITTEE: CHAIRMAN VISITS LATVIA

On November 28 and 29, General Brieger travelled to Latvia upon the invitation of Lieutenant General Leonīds Kalniņš, Chief of Latvian Defence. The two days provided the Chairman with valuable insights to Latvia's military capabilities and technological developments on the field of dual-use services and toolkits. General Brieger met the Minister of Defence, Dr. Andris Sprūds and exchanged views on the global strategic landscape with special focus on the Baltics and Europe.

The Director of Policy at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ivars Lasis also invited General Brieger to an Office Call as well to deepen EU cooperation and review the European outlook in light of the recent geopolitical trends.

The hosts organised a visit to Latvijas Mobilais Telefons (LMT), Latvia's leading telecommunications company which is



Photo: Latvian Armed Forces

contributing to defence capabilities with developing the dual (civilian-military) use of 5G services.

The Chairman also visited the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of

Excellence, where he met the Director, Jānis Sārts. They discussed today's information environment and the relevance of accurate, timely and comprehensive strategic messages.

EU MILITARY COMMITTEE: CHAIRMAN ATTENDED EU LIVE MILITARY EXERCISE MILEX24 DISTINGUISHED VISITORS DAY

On 4 December, General Robert Brieger visited EU's second Live Military Exercise (MILEX24) in Bergen, Germany.

MILEX24 was a significant step towards the declaration of the full operational capability of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC).

The combined multinational exercise was conducted under the command of the EU Military Planning and Conduct Capability, Eurocorps Headquarters and the German Army Command. MILEX24 was run parallel with the German-led EUROPEAN CHALLENGE 2024 Exercise.

With participation of 15 EU Member States and more than 1,700 soldiers, MILEX 24 aimed to test the interoperability in planning and conducting joint operations throughout different levels.



Photo: Bundeswehr/Dorow

At the same time, the exercise provided training environment for the EU Battle-

group Force Package 25 to adapt and deploy in a predefined scenario.

EU MILITARY COMMITTEE: CHAIRMAN VISITS THE NETHERLANDS

The Chairman travelled to The Hague on 9 January upon the invitation of General Onno Eichelsheim, Chief of Defence of the Netherlands. In the framework of the first visit in 2025, General Brieger met Dutch officials to exchange views on the latest developments of the geostrategic landscape and to discuss how to bolster further cooperation.

After the discussions with General Eichelsheim, the Chairman met Gijs Tuinman, State Secretary for Defence at the Dutch Ministry of Defence and later Marcel de Vink Director-General for Political Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The high officials assessed the current European security environment, the common challenges and possible ways to enhance cooperation. They discussed the ongoing development of the Netherlands Armed Forces and military capabilities, its contributions to military missions and



Photo: Dutch Ministry of Defence

operations and the way ahead in the national and European defence domains.

Throughout the discussions, the Chairman emphasized that ensuring peace and security always takes tireless efforts

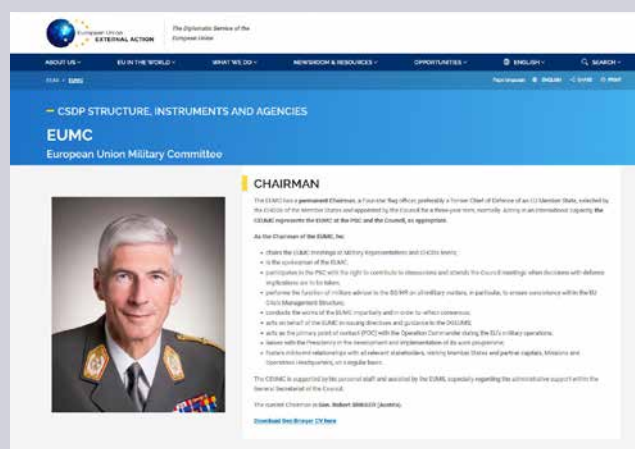
from all partners but also praised the Netherlands' commitments especially its significant and leading role in developing European Military Mobility through Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

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