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Why Europe should care about Britain's Trident

The Blair Government has announced that it intends to build the next generation of nuclear weapons to maintain Britain's arsenal until the middle of this Century. This article examines the implications of this decision for international efforts to combat nuclear proliferation. It contests that unless the major powers negotiate a new 'nuclear settlement' involving a staged process towards disarmament our non-proliferation efforts are doomed to failure. It concludes that new political leadership is required if we are to change course.

Introduction

On 4 December Tony Blair's Government published a policy document (White Paper) (1) outlining its intention to build a new fleet of submarines in which to deploy the next generation of Britain's nuclear forces into the middle of this Century. Although the present Trident system is viable well into the 2020s, the Government argued that a decision has to be taken now due to the long procurement lead times. Parliament will vote on the issue within three months.

Tony Blair strenuously denies any adverse link between Britain's decision to build a new generation of nuclear weaponry and international non-proliferation efforts. This article contests that there is an inextricable connection and that if we pretend otherwise, our non-proliferation efforts are doomed to failure.

Britain's decision should not be regarded as a purely parochial matter. It will have implications for European and international security too. The European Union's 'Strategy Against the Proliferation of WMD' concludes that proliferation "puts at risk the security of our states, our peoples and our interests around the world".(2) If a prominent Member State is about to make a major policy decision that could impinge upon the successful achievement of that Strategy, surely the other Member States have an interest.

If Britain needs them…

The term 'British nuclear deterrent' is presently redundant: there are no hostile states whose actions are deterred by Britain's possession of nuclear weapons. The Blair Government readily admits this but justifies their retention on the grounds that nuclear weapons provide an insurance against the emergence of possible future threats.

But this rationale begs a number of questions. Firstly, if Britain is determined to exercise its 'right' to retain nuclear weapons even when not threatened, how can it hope to maintain an international 'norm' that possession is unnecessary and unacceptable? If such weapons are Britain's ultimate guarantee of its national security, why should other states be denied the same protection?

This 'double standard' argument is not merely a superficial debating point; it goes to the heart of the link between nuclear weapon possession and non-proliferation. It prompts the fundamental question as to whether it is possible to tackle proliferation effectively, while still insisting that nuclear weapons are necessary for 'our' security, but not for 'yours'? Put another way: is it possible to forge a stable, robust international non-proliferation regime based on an essentially discriminatory division between possessors and non-possessors?

There are those who believe that it is. After all, is not this exactly the distinction that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) sustains? Yes it is: but only up to a point and for how much longer? The essential bargain contained in the NPT, between those States Parties who possess nuclear weapons and those who agree to forego them, was never intended as a permanent basis upon which to order the world. Most analysts now agree that the entire non-proliferation regime is creaking under the strain, and unless we address its underlying problems it may disintegrate with dire consequences for all of us.

Triggering a cascade of proliferation

Many states that could have developed nuclear weapons chose not to do so. A serious minority, however, either did not join the NPT and developed nuclear arsenals of their own - India, Pakistan and Israel - or did join, but clandestinely failed to abide by its terms. The latter includes North Korea, which subsequently withdrew from the Treaty and has now tested a nuclear device, and Iran, which, while remaining inside the Treaty, is acquiring the capability to 'breakout' from its civil nuclear programme to build the Bomb.

These last two countries hold very real dangers: not only because they might be prepared to use their nuclear weapons, but also because of the impact their deployment may have on further proliferation in the Middle East and East Asia, respectively.

For how long could Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey remain without nuclear weapons if Iran has them? Similarly, could we expect South Korea and Japan to sit on their hands while North Korea brandishes its Bomb? If Kofi Annan's proliferation "cascade" (3) is indeed triggered by such events, Taiwan, Algeria, Indonesia, Brazil, Argentina and others may follow too.

A frightening prospect

If the world reaches this stage, then it will be hugely more difficult to deal with the problem. Imagine fifteen, twenty, perhaps thirty national nuclear weapon programmes. Massive new investment being poured into developing nuclear weapons, tons of weapons-grade fissile material being produced, hundreds of people acquiring the knowledge of how to make nuclear weapons.

How many of these new proliferant states will be able to establish safe, secure, well managed programmes under centralized control – and how many not? Hopefully, they would all be able to develop robust command and control procedures that would function well in crises, but the expectation must be that a proportion will not. Some new proliferants may be democracies; others will be authoritarian regimes. Some governments may well be relatively stable, others far less so.

And all the time, on the fringes, would be the extremist and fundamentalist terrorist groups with growing opportunities to acquire the wherewithal to acquire nuclear weapons of their own. There would be many more potential A. Q. Khans around – willing to sell nuclear 'know how' and blueprints to the highest bidder?

To believe that such a world might settle at a new equilibrium of multiple deterrent relationships is dangerously complacent. Unpredictable governments developing weapons of mass destruction in volatile regions of the planet, with inadequate command and control mechanisms, reliant on "use them or lose them" doctrines, would vastly increase the risks of nuclear war – whether started deliberately or accidentally.

This is a vision of the future that should frighten every policy maker in every capital around the world. Most analysts probably believe this is the future towards which the world is now heading. Unfortunately, the world is split about how best to respond.

Losing the plot

There are those, exemplified by the five acknowledged nuclear weapon states (also the five Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council), which are prepared to believe that the present two-tier system of nuclear 'haves' and 'have-nots' is sustainable for the foreseeable future.

They insist that existing non-nuclear weapon states should continue to abide by their NPT obligations and that we should strengthen the non-proliferation regime - by tightening export controls, devising new mechanisms to interdict the transport of nuclear-weapons-related materials, and seeking to 'mainstream' counter-proliferation policies within national legislative processes.

All of which is very laudable. Unfortunately, in parallel, none of the P5 has shown any indication that it is seriously contemplating divesting itself of nuclear weapons. Indeed, all of them appear intent on embedding their own nuclear weapons more deeply into national security strategies.

At the same time, the US has adopted a new preventive war fighting doctrine, talks about an "axis of evil", and is more willing to consider forcible regime change upon 'rogue' states. Essentially, the US would like to impose non-proliferation through *force majuere*.

Diplomatic engagement is scorned. Potential 'rogue' proliferants are isolated by the international community, subject to sanctions and ultimately threatened with forcible regime change, and thereby become too frightened of the consequences of embarking on proliferation.

The major problem with this one-dimensional approach is that it refutes the possibility that states will draw another conclusion, namely, that the only means by which US intervention can be deterred is through possession of nuclear weapons. What happens then? The remaining options appear extremely limited.

Today, we are faced with a North Korean regime - having withstood US 'sabre rattling' – that is sufficiently emboldened to test a nuclear device. Tehran feels even stronger. With President Bush politically weakened by the Iraq debacle, President Ahmadinejad knows that the US's ability to prevent an Iranian weapons programme is severely constrained.

Hence, present policies have led us to the point at which we are confronted with two countries apparently determined to become the ninth and tenth nuclear weapon states in the world (with all the regional proliferation consequences already outlined above). On top of that, Israel, India and Pakistan are being feted rather than punished for having developed nuclear arsenals outside of the NPT.

Confronted with nuclear weapons in the hands of new and dangerous governments, with the non-proliferation regime apparently crumbling, and with the established nuclear weapon states continuing to assert the crucial importance of nuclear weapons for their own security – how will other world leaders respond?

They might be forgiven for concluding that in order to remain secure they need nuclear weapons too, or at least to get to a point at which possession becomes a viable option. Having witnessed the recent US/India nuclear deal, they may also calculate that once they have acquired nuclear weapons and everyone gets used to the idea, they will be treated with an elevated international status and any sanctions (perhaps) initially imposed will soon wither away.

This dual discriminatory approach of threatening regime change on 'rogue' states we dislike, while failing to take serious action against 'friendly' states that develop nuclear weapons outside the NPT, is not serving the cause of non-proliferation. In fact, it may be achieving precisely the opposite effect.

Changing Course

The other school of thought, whose views were most recently articulated by the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, (4) view the problem through a different lens. This school believes that ultimately it will not prove possible to reverse the proliferation dynamic other than within the context of a significantly reduced role for nuclear weapons in international affairs – perhaps to the point of complete nuclear disarmament.

Proponents of this school maintain that a new 'nuclear settlement' can only be achieved on the basis of a more equal relationship between nuclear weapon possessors and non-possessors. In other words, the present discriminatory system cannot provide a sustainable foundation upon which to reach a shared vision of our common nuclear future: something that will be an essential prerequisite if we are to police a world in which the pursuit of nuclear weapons outside of an international framework is outlawed.

Indeed, this last point requires emphasis. Advocates of denuclearisation have to accept that in order to achieve the necessary critical mass of international 'buy in', compliance with a new 'nuclear settlement' will need to be vigorously enforced. States that defied the international community and refused to accept the international safeguards and necessarily intrusive inspection regime would find themselves subject to swift and decisive sanction.

The existing nuclear powers need to get around the negotiating table, thrash out their mutual commitment to such a course and set out a detailed 'road map' of how to go forward. (5) The starting point should be to negate nuclear weapons' coercive influence in international relations between nation states: to devalue them as instruments of political power. The only purpose of nuclear weapons, pending their possible complete elimination worldwide, would be to negate their possession by others.

Although actually setting the goal of trying to achieve a world without nuclear weapons is important it does not necessarily follow that the ultimate achievement of such an objective can or will be reached. The important point is the degree to which the intention is serious and sincere, and the consequent level of commitment devoted to reaching the ultimate goal. The further necessary steps to *complete* denuclearization might prove impracticable to take for any number of reasons. Nevertheless, we can travel a lot further down the road of nuclear confidence building, arms control and disarmament before such an ultimate decision stage is reached.

New Leadership required

Britain's investment in another generation of nuclear weaponry will not cause the nuclear non-proliferation regime to collapse. If Blair had decided to disarm it would not have changed anyone's mind in Tehran or Pyongyang. But, by choosing to modernize its nuclear arsenal, Britain is sending out a powerful signal to all

those other states – beyond the 'rogues' – that nuclear weapons remain a valued currency of political influence and the most potent means of protecting one's supreme national interest.

In the foreword to the White Paper Tony Blair wrote: *"None of the present recognized nuclear weapon states intends to renounce nuclear weapons, in the absence of an agreement to disarm multilaterally, and we cannot be sure that a major nuclear threat to our vital interests will not emerge over the longer term."* (6)

This is true. But it represents a worrying acceptance of defeat and complacency about the consequences of that defeat. Britain is not a passive bystander unable to shape the future. It is a country with a proud tradition of negotiating arms control treaties and retains significant diplomatic influence. It could take the lead in trying to forge a new international nuclear settlement in which a clear, staged process of denuclearization is set out alongside the elements of a strengthened multilateral non-proliferation regime.

The alternative is that unless we do reverse the proliferation dynamic, major new nuclear threats *will* emerge in the future. In a world of 30 or so nuclear states, eventually we can expect that there will be a nuclear war, whether started deliberately or accidentally, and that terrorists will succeed in getting their hands on the means of committing mass murder. Europe may not be directly involved in a nuclear war but it cannot expect to avoid its potentially horrendous political, economic, and climatic fallout.

The opportunity presents itself for the next British Prime Minister to seize the nettle and provide the strong and purposeful political leadership – in Europe and internationally - this issue requires if the next generation is to avoid Armageddon.

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4. Speech at Princeton University, 28 November, 2006. Can be found at: http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sgsm10767.doc.htm.
5. For a much more detailed analysis of what this process might involve see: Johnson, R., Butler, N., and Pullinger, S., *Worse than Irrelevant?: British Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century*, Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy, 2006, pp.76.
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Stopping North Korea's nuclear programme: an active role for the EU

North Korea's supreme leader, Kim Jong Il, continues his quest for nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them. On 9 October this year North Korea tested a nuclear device. This followed long-range missile tests in July and a warning that it would retaliate against ongoing US-South Korean military exercises in August. North Korea's actions are a profound test for the future viability of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In contrast to its active role at the end of the 1990s in facilitating the lessening of tensions on the Korean peninsula, at present, the European Union is merely an onlooker. For a long time, while European politicians and media were concentrating on the security risks of the Middle East, North Korea was largely ignored. Now it is time for the EU to re-engage.

Rising tensions

On 9 October North Korea conducted an explosive underground nuclear test in pursuit of its ambition to become a nuclear weapon state. This provocative act led the United Nations Security Council - under Resolution 1718 of 14 October 2006 (1) – to call for sanctions against that country. Defiantly, Kim Jong Il's government called the sanctions a declaration of war on the grounds that the UN resolution "was based on the scenario of the US keen to destroy the socialist system of Korean-style". (2) What can the international community, including the European Union, do to reverse North Korea's nuclear weapons programme and uphold the credibility of the nuclear non-proliferation regime? Or is it naïve to believe that once the weapons are produced nuclear ambitions are ever given up?

Five rounds of six-party talks between North Korea, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States spread over several years have failed to reverse North Korea's nuclear policy. The reason for the stalemate is due mainly to the tough stances adopted by both the North Korean and United States governments. While the latter demands a complete, verifiable and irreversible cessation of North Korea's

nuclear programme as a precondition for negotiations, Pyongyang wants to pursue a step-by-step approach with concessions on both sides, including a specific security guarantee from the US that it will not invade North Korea.

Throughout this period, North Korea has repeatedly raised tensions - by claiming already to possess nuclear weapons, by ignoring the missile moratorium and testing ballistic missiles, and now by conducting an explosive nuclear test. Whether that test was successful or not seems unimportant. So far, neither side has compromised.

While there was general agreement during the fourth round of the six-party talks of September 2005 to eventually dismantle North Korea's nuclear weapons, to guarantee the country's security and to cooperate economically, *how* to reach these goals remains contested. The major stumbling block is the sequence of actions to be taken: Who makes the first step and what follows next?

Other difficult questions also remain. How intrusive can UN inspections be? When, if at all, will light-water nuclear reactors be supplied to North Korea? What is the status of North Korea's highly-enriched uranium programme? A further complication surrounds existing US financial sanctions, which are harming the North Korean economy. Indeed, some believe that the nuclear test may have been an act primarily designed to reverse these financial sanctions. Meanwhile, the US government agreed to discuss these sanctions in the next round of the six-party negotiations and US Treasury experts recently reported that "at least eight million dollars" of the funds blocked by the US in a bank in Macau was legally paid to the DPRK. (3) Thus, the door is open again for continued negotiations.

Possible scenarios

One of the more fundamental reasons for the repeated negotiating deadlock is that the interests of the five countries involved with North Korea in the region are not uniform. While they all want to stop the nuclear programme, the chosen means of doing so vary greatly. Whereas the US policy favours isolating Kim Jong Il's regime or even forcibly changing it, China, Russia, and to some extent South Korea, prefer economic and political cooperation. Hence, the latter trio have been reluctant to pursue the strict sanctions favoured by the Bush Administration. As long as there is disagreement, North Korea can get away with its policy of brinkmanship.

So, where do we go from here? There appear to be five approaches: (4)

Wait and see

Since North Korea continues to improve its nuclear and missile capability this policy seems risky. Simply 'playing for time' is more likely to see the situation deteriorate rather than improve.

Military measures

Launching a military strike against North Korea – either by trying to deliver a decisive blow against its nuclear weapons facilities or by seeking to overthrow the regime – are unlikely to succeed and more probably would precipitate a major war on the Korean peninsula in which many thousands of innocent Koreans would die.

Isolation

Move beyond making North Korea merely an international outcast, and completely isolate the country by ending all communication. Given past experience, however, it seems doubtful that the North Korean government would give in to such pressure. Instead, it is more likely just to "tighten its belt".

Forced regime change

How would this be brought about? Ruling out military action, so far, the Bush Administration has offered only rhetoric, but no concept for overthrowing "rogue state" governments. Except for the US government, none of the states involved favours an abrupt collapse of the regime in Pyongyang: the consequences of which would be incalculable, especially for South Korea and China who would have to cope with millions of refugees.

Cooperation and security guarantees

Given North Korea's dire economic and social conditions, its government has repeatedly announced that, if US nuclear weapons are removed from South Korea and if it receives security guarantees and economic assistance, it is prepared to cooperate with the international community and to stop its nuclear weapons programme. If what it says is true, it would be worth ascertaining more precisely what the conditions of such cooperation and the price of North Korean compliance would be. A policy of economic cooperation, with "carrots and sticks", as practiced by the Clinton administration, probably offers too little for North Korea to comply. Political confidence building measures, such as a security guarantee, are also needed to overcome the North Koreans' distrust of the United States.

The need for an EU initiative

There is one important lesson from the North Korean test: even with hostile regimes the international community needs to negotiate directly. Instead of just leaving it up to the members of the six-party talks, the EU can play its part in finding a solution. As a main player in international politics and an important economic power, here is a real opportunity for the EU to take a lead by engaging North Korea in direct dialogue. Such a policy, of course, requires close cooperation with the major players in the six-party talks, especially the United States and China.

In both its European Security Strategy and its Strategy Against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the EU has recognized its responsibility to act in global crises and to address proliferation problems. Why is it not acting accordingly in the case of North Korea? The EU should get involved because it will have to foot part of the bill even if it is others who resolve the problem.

The EU's present "wait and see" policy is also surprising, given its past performance. Back in 1998 the EU began an intensive political dialogue with North Korea and most EU countries opened diplomatic relations with the country in 2001. Moreover, since 1996 the EU contributed €118m, not counting the additional bilateral contributions of a number of EU Member States, to partially fund the planned supply of light-water reactors to North Korea in an effort to solve the nuclear crisis. (5) Because North Korea's nuclear weapons ambitions continued, civil nuclear cooperation was suspended in November 2003 (and even before the nuclear test was due to be abandoned altogether at the end of 2006). (6)

Although, from an EU perspective, trade with North Korea is marginal, since 1995 the EU has become one of that country's major donors, providing aid totalling €450m to fight starvation and to assist in overcoming the country's economic crisis. (7) Indeed, the EU was North Korea's third largest trading partner after China and Japan, during the second half of the 1990s. (8) However, this cooperation has now been frozen. The amount of humanitarian aid being provided has fallen significantly, to the point whereby during 2004 and 2005 ECHO – the EU's department for humanitarian aid – allocated only €25m aid (especially in the health sector and for water supply). (9)

Despite the European Parliament's 2005 call for intensified contacts with North Korea, EU governments have resisted further dialogue. The EU's inaction is even more difficult to explain when one considers its lack of "historical baggage" in the region. European countries neither played a prominent role in the Korean War nor does the EU have a central strategic interest in the region, nor vested interests. Thus, conditions for a constructive EU role are positive. Now, at this time of acute crisis, the EU should act.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the European Commissioner for External Relations, is correct in pointing out in the European Parliament that North Korea's nuclear test was "a deliberate escalation and provocation." (10) But this should not mean that the diplomatic door is shut and that the EU will refuse to talk to the North Korean government. A diplomatic solution of the problem is more likely than for many other crises in the world. China, Russia and South Korea have all repeatedly criticised the US government's restrictive policy and asked it to put negotiable offers on the table. North Korea's diplomats say they "feel pushed into the corner by the US". (11) It is here that the EU's involvement could have an impact.

The EU should recognize North Korea's catastrophic economic situation and attempt to exercise leverage vis-à-vis the country's heavy dependency on external assistance, with a view to persuading Pyongyang into a more cooperative stance. Indeed, North Korea's government has expressed an interest in EU engagement. Officially, it has also claimed that although it conducted the nuclear test because of US policy, "it still remains unchanged in its will to de-nuclearize the peninsula through dialogue and negotiations". (12)

An action plan

The EU should use its diplomatic relations with North Korea, and bring to bear its experience in regional cooperation, confidence building and multilateralism. For a sustainable solution an action plan is needed – one that has precise benchmarks against which a reversal of North Korea's nuclear weapons policy is measured. To succeed, such an action plan will also need to offer North Korea substantive economic assistance and security guarantees. Specifically, in cooperation with Russia and South Korea, the EU could offer additional assistance in the energy sector, for example.

Such a process could develop in three phases, encompassing the nuclear and missile programme as well as the areas of security and economics. Presently, the DPRK has to understand that the UN mandated sanctions will remain strictly in place until serious negotiations get under way.

- During a first phase of *negotiations* the freeze of the North Korean nuclear and missile programme and legally-binding security guarantees will be negotiated while at the

same time the EU agrees, as a gesture of good will, to supply badly needed energy.

- The second phase of *implementation* will require North Korea to re-enter the NPT and to allow intrusive inspections of the International Atomic Energy Agency, while the international community will lift sanctions, reconstruct the power grid and cooperate in infrastructure projects and agriculture.

- In the third phase of *finalization* all military relevant nuclear technology will be dismantled in North Korea and the weapon-grade material will be removed from the country. The North-South border will be demilitarized and economic cooperation will be sustained on the basis of legally-binding contracts.

Given the urgency of solving the nuclear crisis, it may not be sensible to make political change and improvements of human rights in North Korea a pre-condition for negotiations. The Bush administration's North Korea policy has certainly not been successful in implementing these two aims either, nor have the six-party talks. Negotiating a deal to stop the North Korean bomb is not to "kowtow" to Pyongyang and negotiating with an unfriendly government is not appeasement: it is the only viable option to prevent a nuclear-armed North Korea.

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EU Battle Groups 2007: where next?

The term Battle Group (BG) entered the broader political lexicon in 2004. It soon became a focus of debate and activity related to the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The concept not only has implications for EU capabilities and increasingly integrated European defence co-operation, it also raises questions with regard to NATO's Response Force (NRF). The BGs are meant to become fully operational in January 2007. This article aims to explain their main characteristics, to record progress to date and to indicate challenges ahead. (1)

Why Battle Groups? – Driving Forces

When they become fully operational in 2007, the EU's new Battle Groups will provide an additional military instrument to enhance the EU's political/security options. They should enable the EU to react more quickly, flexibly, and thus more effectively, in different crises, ranging from humanitarian to peace enforcement operations.

Several factors contributed to the inception of the Battle Group Concept. The starting point was the French and British experience of having to carry the major European defence burden when it comes to more ambitious military missions. Both countries had a common interest, therefore, to improve available European forces for rapid reaction operations. The idea was hatched at bilateral meetings in 2003. In February 2004 - together with Germany - France and the UK launched a 'food for thought paper' that outlined the main features of what later became the Battle Group Concept.

The experience of Operation *Artemis* in Congo in 2003 provided the EU with the confidence that it was able to execute a demanding mission on another continent - autonomously and within a short timeframe - via

'Berlin Plus', and without relying on NATO assets. Indeed, the size, capabilities and requirements of *Artemis* became the blueprint for the BG Concept.

The EU was also confronted with a UN request to provide professional and rapidly deployable troops for 'Chapter VII' missions. The BG Concept enabled the EU to put flesh on its commitment to "effective multilateralism" and to act cooperatively with the UN - as envisioned in the European Security Strategy (ESS).

An additional incentive to create the Battle Groups was provided by the protocol for 'permanent structured co-operation' in ESDP within the draft constitutional treaty (Article I-41.6 of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU)). To participate herein member states had to implement the provisions of the protocol before the actual treaty has come into force. These minimal provisions were analogous to the participation in a multinational BG. As no EU country wanted to look poor on this important issue area, all member states joined the protocol.

Last but not least, member states saw the BG Concept as a quick mean by which to manifest the military capacities aspired to in their commitments to the Headline Goals (HG 2010).

Concept and implementation: what are Battle Groups?

The Battle Group Concept, adopted in November 2004 as part of the HG 2010, describes the BG as:

…a minimum military effective, credible, rapidly deployable, coherent force package, capable of stand-alone operations, or for the initial phase of larger operations. (2)

The core of a BG is a combined-arms, battalion-sized force; reinforced with combat support and combat service support elements. Depending on the mission, a BG could comprise around 1,500-2,200 troops. While the core units are pre-defined, the BG can still be tailored for specific mission requirements. Thus, maritime, air, logistical or other special enablers can be attached.

One of the misperceptions in the debate about the BGs has been that the EU will have around 13 of them at its disposal at any given time. Some planners even suggested there should be a different type of BG for every specific mission or task e.g. for maritime, mountain or desert operations. However, in reality, the EU's ambition for the BG Concept is confined to being able to have two Battle Groups on standby to carry out two missions concurrently.

Usually, force generation for BGs will mean assigning units from national contingents and placing them at the disposal of the BG 'package'. Sometimes it will simply mean placing such contingents on a higher level of readiness. One notable exemption is the Nordic Battle Group. This Swedish core unit has been specifically built up solely for this purpose. As Sweden had to give up its traditional mode of defence planning and equipment in order to adapt to the EU Rapid Reaction concept, the Nordic Battle Group is also an important example of 'force transformation'.

In many respects, the BG Concept places the main responsibility for the generation and deployment of a BG firmly on the Member States. Neither the EU military staff nor the European Defence Agency (EDA) will play a central role during the implementation phase of the concept.

BGs will be based on the principles of military effectiveness and multinationality (however, achieving military effectiveness is comparatively more difficult in a multinational force than in a national one, given the diverging doctrines, levels of training or languages etc.). This places a heavy burden upon the 'Framework Nation' in particular. It is responsible not only for ensuring the readiness of the BG (in accordance with the certification criteria), but also for the command and control arrangements, the strategic lift, and the strategic reserve that has to be on call if unexpected problems prompt a need for reinforcements.

The short timeframe between a European Council decision to initiate an operation and its actual launch poses a challenge. The BG Concept envisages only ten days for this endeavour (this applies to the period between decision and the start of the operation, rather than the deployment of the full BG itself).

This also brings into focus the strategic lift necessary to deploy the BGs. Soon after the concept was published, observers pointed out that the EU is unable to provide such a capability without recourse to NATO capacities. To close this gap the EU member states participated in SALIS (Strategic Air Lift Interim Solution). SALIS offers the EU access to eight Antonov AN-124 air carriers until 2011. Thereafter, the A-400M transport aircraft should become available, thereby providing the European solution.

However, it is worth underlining that while strategic airlift is an essential element of initiating a rapid deployment, it is unlikely that the total force deployment would be by air. Presumably a spearhead component will be airlifted and the rest, especially heavy material, follows by ship. And even if it was necessary to airlift the entire BG, it is unlikely that an appropriate airfield would be available close to the

theatre. Therefore, tactical transport to deploy the force, possibly through and into a belligerent environment, poses a slightly more serious hurdle than simply 'capacity building' or renting through SALIS.

While the BGs are on high readiness, their rapid deployment depends not only on capabilities but also on rapid political decision making at EU level**.** A Council decision to deploy a BG requires considerable activity at national level as well as within the EU itself. Member states have to give their consent, which often requires the approval of national parliaments, as is the case in Germany. While this is comparatively simple when only one or two nations are involved, every additional country increases the complexity of the process.

For some member states the BG Concept necessitated changes to parliamentary procedures and legislative processes in order to match the requirements of rapid reaction deployments It is not clear, however, what happens if a potential contributing member state refuses to participate. How would the gap be filled and in what timeframe?

Another crucial point to understand, especially for national politicians and decision makers, as well as for international organizations like the UN, is the scope, capacities and limits of the BG. As a rule of thumb, before calling for the deployment of a BG, the EU should consider the following:

- Does this incident require rapid reaction?
- Is military action appropriate in principle? and
- Is there no other force available and no time to undergo the normal force generation process?

It should also be recognized that these contextual circumstances make BG operations rather vulnerable in two perspectives. First, given that they consist of infantry units that are light, flexible and manoeuvrable they are not heavily armoured. Second, because they are invariably sent into evolving situations that may deteriorate rapidly.

The BG concept mentions "Petersberg " (Article17.2 of TEU) and ESS sets out the spectrum of tasks in which the units can play a role. These range from humanitarian operations through peace keeping to peace enforcement, and also incorporate support for security sector reform and combating terrorism.

Given the size and capabilities of BGs, one has to conclude that their utility is rather limited. The basic characteristics of a BG remain the same, even if they can be adapted, through the use of strategic enablers, to address the specific challenges of each mission. Their size prohibits them from being used as a main force for a larger peace enforcement operation (especially not against other organised military parties) and they are not really appropriate for humanitarian assistance work either.

Past experience and the characteristics of the BGs suggest that they will be best suited for preventive deployments - securing vital assets such as harbours or airports, or fighting against militias. They might also be deployed as a 'first entry' element - to establish a presence on the ground until a larger follow-on force can be deployed. BGs should be sustainable in theatre for 30 days, extendable to 120 if they are re-supplied.

Achievements and leftovers

The BG issue is a "moving target", with some aspects still "under construction". Nonetheless, by acting as a guide for the transformation of national forces - especially for smaller and new member states - the BG Concept has already spurred the development of new capabilities. The BGs' multinational nature has also encouraged member states to intensify defence cooperation at the EU level. In fact, the BGs are already contributing to defence integration and thus to a more coherent approach in EU crisis management. Participating in the BGs also allows sharing costs and risks, at least amongst those who contribute.

However, some BGs may display higher levels of military effectiveness than others. Many member states cannot provide a full national BG. Therefore, multinational cooperation is the only solution. Nevertheless, serious efforts must be made to ensure that the principle of multinationality does not dilute or adversely affect military effectiveness - especially with regard to force interoperability. Otherwise there is a danger that the buck of more dangerous missions may be passed to the "usual suspects". To prevent this and to ensure instead that costs and risks are shared across all member states, two options could be considered.

First, a BG's effectiveness could be subject to an evaluation by the EDA or EU Military Committee. This could exert peer pressure on those states whose contribution to the BGs was not up to scratch, thereby helping to bring all BGs up to a standard of proficiency that would enable them to take over the full spectrum of missions. Subsequently, it may lead to further engagement in military transformation (especially capabilities, doctrines, equipment), or towards greater pooling of capabilities and role specialisation. In addition, regular training will enhance BG effectiveness.

Second, the current situation whereby those who carry out the operation have to carry the highest financial burden, could be changed so that the costs are spread more equally among all member states. This implies a

revision of the 'Athena' financial mechanism - whereby costs 'lie where they fall' - or alternative tools of cost distribution. This may boost the economic argument for pooling and specialising capabilities at the European level, especially if it avoids the cost of intensive redundancies on the national level.

Much has been made of the potential rivalry between NATO Response Forces and EU Battle Groups. At present, this rivalry exists mainly at the rhetorical and political level. While it hinders constructive political cooperation, it remains to be seen whether this rivalry will spill over and affect the operational domain. Today BGs and NRF are complementary. They reflect the different approaches and levels of ambition of EU and NATO. The rather small BGs add an important instrument to the EU's comprehensive 'tool box', whereas NRF are more appropriate instruments for larger force requirements deployed to major conflicts.

Challenges ahead

Up to now the EU has not conducted a Battle Group operation, so the validity and reliability of the concept has not yet been tested. Nevertheless, the challenges it is likely to face are already obvious.

Politicians should be aware of the limited utility of the BG and the need to integrate them into a political strategy. BG operations need: to operate under a precise mandate that is achievable; and there has to be a clear follow-on or exit strategy.

The BG concept also needs to be put in a strategic context. By definition, the main operational environment of the BG will be operations other than war. Consequently, while core military tasks, like war fighting and peace enforcement, may be needed, units will face an essentially asymmetric environment. For example, militias operate among civilians, and successful stabilisation inevitably involves active contact with, and support from, the local population. This civil-military interface will have to be tackled effectively.

It should also be recognized that BGs may not be the only external actors operating in the theatre. They may well have to coordinate their efforts with missions of international organisations like the UN or the EU Commission, as well as with NGOs. There might be parallel deployments of police and civilian specialists as well. To ensure that a BG operation does no harm the overall strategic objective of an operation, but instead facilitates the achievement of the desired end-state, the EU concept of civil-military coordination has to be taken into account.

All of this implies a comprehensive approach – right through from the planning phase until the (re)deployment of a unit. Although this would raise the complexity of a mission, invariably it would be crucial for the prospects of overall success.

A first step in this direction has been made by the EU Exercise Study (EST 06), which took place in Brussels on 27-28 November 2006 and gathered experts on military, civilian, legal and financial aspects of EU crisis management from the member states, the Council and Commission. They discussed options to improve the rapid deployment of civilian, police and military instruments as well as the financial and legal implications.

While such integrated missions would be more effective, their real-life conduct would create even more challenges. Given the problems that already exist, one can expect such operations to increase the complexity of planning, decision-making, command and control. This would require more intense coordination.

The successful establishment of the BG Concept should not lead to a neglect of the effective implementation of the Headline Goal. The BGs are only of limited utility. To engage in bigger, more demanding scenarios the EU does not need more BGs; it needs follow-on force capabilities.

In this respect, the priority is to further the implementation, and possibly the refinement, of the more generic military rapid reaction concept rather than changing the BG Concept. Similarly, it may also be necessary to refine the broader conflict management approach in order to tackle the relevant non-military aspects of rapid reaction and the follow-up, especially in respect of an exit strategy and the subsequent handover of the conflict into civilian responsibilities.

As an interim measure the BGs are an enormous achievement. The EU has shown its ability swiftly to turn words into action. These forces add an important instrument to the EU`s comprehensive approach to crisis management and thus also to ESDP's legitimacy and credibility.

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1. This contribution is based on a longer article by the same author, forthcoming in *RUSI Journal* February 2007: 'EU-Battlegroups – European Rapid Reaction Capabilities and the British Perspective'.

2. Military Capability Commitment Conference, Brussels, 22 November 2004, http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/MILITARY%20CAPABILITY%20COMMITMENT%20CONFERENCE%2022.11.04.pdf

Security Sector Reform: from Concept to Practice

The EU's Security Sector Reform Strategy represents a new approach to foreign policy and external assistance that addresses today's intertwined challenges of development, security and governance. It is a key framework of action for the EU in the decades to come. This article highlights some of the risk and opportunities of implementing SSR approaches in the years ahead.

Background

Security Sector Reform (SSR) is a process applied in countries the development or prosperity of which is hampered by structural weaknesses in their security and justice sectors - often exacerbated by a lack of democratic oversight. It encompasses a broad variety of assistance programmes, such as: the development of norms of 'good practice' in the security sector; enhancing civilian control over the military; community-based policing and justice reform; and the control, collection and destruction of small arms.

In July 2005 the European Council adopted an SSR concept in relation to ESDP (second pillar) and in June 2006 the European Commission produced a communication relating to Community (first pillar) SSR activities. (1) Despite some pleas (emanating from within the Council and Commission) for their merger into one overarching and comprehensive document, the Austrian Presidency seems to have preferred to retain the papers' separate identities under the chapeau of a single cover document.

The European Commission and the Council have now started to work on how to implement the EU's SSR policy. Europeaid (the acronym of which is AIDCO, the Directorate in charge of the implementation of external relations policies) is trying to raise awareness among other Directorates General (DGs) and EC Delegations in order to promote the sharing of know-how, best practice and lessons learned across first and second pillars. In order for these efforts to be fruitful it is necessary first to assess the potential risks and challenges faced by the new EU SSR approach.

Risks

The main challenge for the newly adopted SSR approach is to avoid being misunderstood both by those who are supposed to implement it and by those who are theoretically entitled to benefit from it. Many in the development community (officials and non-governmental) are still very hostile to the very word "security" in the SSR acronym and see this approach as a way to divert resources allocated for development assistance towards security-focused and counter-terrorism programmes. Others consider that it is too vague and broad a concept to be realistically applied.

To these critics, one may reply that SSR is more of a long-term approach and a way of conceiving change than a policy in itself. SSR is very much a framework aimed at orientating a diversity of concrete actions, the goal of which is to foster change and to achieve stable and prosperous development in at least a decade's time.

The second risk for SSR is that it will not be applied at all: instead remaining - as has happened to the two excellent LRRD (Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development) communications (2) in the past - a convincing policy that never leads to innovative practical measures. To avoid this, EU institutions need to allocate enough resources to ensure that tangible activities are undertaken - such as information sharing on best practice, the development of SSR implementation guidelines for EC Delegations and regional workshops to explore SSR approaches tailored to particular regional and local contexts.

The third challenge for SSR is to avoid being implemented in a way that adversely affects the rest of the EU's external relations. If used without proper prior assessment based upon a thorough understanding of the local context, SSR may become merely an unsubtle form of foreign intervention into other countries' security sectors. In which case, it would be damaging to EU diplomacy. In other words, SSR needs to be based as much on democratic principles as on the principles of partnership and ownership and it should adapt its long-term perspective in order to overcome short-term obstacles.

If assessments, against clearly identifiable criteria, demonstrate that a given country is not ripe for SSR programmes or even for SSR pilot initiatives, the EU should be prepared to postpone or cancel the development of SSR activities in that country, while still maintaining political dialogue on this issue.

The final challenge confronting SSR implementers may well be practical - related to the lack of appropriate internal procedures to provide guidance to EC Delegations, and also to bottlenecks in the recruitment of SSR experts by Member States. The latter problem has already been identified by the EU institutions and is currently being addressed - but there will be no quick fix.

Member States and EU institutions need to identify innovative ways of increasing the number of SSR experts - such as closer partnerships with NGOs and think-tanks involved in development, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and crisis response. More generally, the EU needs to rely on internal existing and potential SSR 'champions' in the institutions and Member States, whose task will be to convince their colleagues and other potential stakeholders that the EU is capable of, and should be fully self-confident about, intervening in areas at the fringes of the development and security sectors.

Opportunities

Despite scepticism, the new SSR strategy provides the EU with a formidable tool to engage in groundbreaking initiatives worldwide. A balanced approach is required, between effectiveness and accountability, with an efficient and democratic security sector operating in harmony with successful development. This corresponds to the basic requirements usually expressed by those affected by the problems of fragile situations. (3)

Through its long-term engagement and commitment to work for safer and fairer communities - without provoking conflict or violating the ethos of democratic security governance - the EU's SSR approach offers an alternative to conservative US security visions.

Another advantage of SSR is that it is politically demanding and focuses on very tangible results such as crime statistics, usage of arms, weapons injuries, financial data etc. This allows the EU to go beyond the good intentions expressed in recent strategies.

Many observers and practitioners in developing countries (4) have pointed to a lack of partnership in SSR programmes. This could be addressed through the development of 'bottom-up' participatory approaches that include not only state officials but also non-state actors.

The lack of ownership by those who are meant to benefit from SSR programmes can be tackled through targeted initiatives in the most promising sub-sectors (police, penitentiary, criminal law, borders security) and through thematic entry points (small arms, health, women, humanitarian aid, infrastructure) where local actors will help to broker change. This will enable such progressive groups and individuals to become drivers for change, and thereby strengthen their role in society.

Another key added value of SSR is that it provides an explicit framework within which one can address causes of instability by supporting dialogue and co-operation between security and non-security stakeholders in any given context. SSR allows the EU to strengthen state structures (a key challenge in fragile states) while balancing their power by developing oversight and accountability mechanisms, thereby also contributing to greater long-term stability.

By encompassing many practices and ways of dealing with security, development and governance, SSR makes it possible for the EU to have a major impact worldwide. Implementing SSR will therefore imply another shift in development assistance by considering the potential impact these new approaches may have on other sectors at regional, national and local levels.

Way Forward

For the EU, SSR represents a new approach to foreign policy and external assistance that addresses today's intertwined challenges of development, security and governance. It is a key framework of action for the EU in the decades to come and an alternative means of addressing development/security prolematiques, compared to US practices in the 'war on terror'.

A new generation of SSR implementers is on the rise. They will come from different backgrounds and countries - military, civilian, diplomatic, development, humanitarian, official or non-governmental. They will need tailored training on how to assess and develop programmes and how to combine the diversity of EU tools and financial mechanisms into coherent SSR initiatives. They will have to develop indicators for successful SSR programmes and identify criteria for choosing good "entry points".

SSR implementers will need to share their expertise and know-how within the framework of an EU SSR network already in the making. In country, they will have to ensure strong interactions between EC Delegations and Brussels Headquarters. For the EU, the timing for implementing the SSR strategy is good. The budgetary programming exercise for 2007-2013 is starting and there is room for some innovative synergies between security and development approaches and implementers.

SSR is highly relevant in many countries where the EU is already a key donor and it enjoys strong political backing from the Member States. NGOs that have competent staff and skills are ready to assist the EU

institutions to raise awareness of SSR and to launch effective SSR initiatives where appropriate.

Damien Helly (Saferworld)

1. Damien Helly, 'Developing an EU strategy for Security Sector Reform', *European Security Review*, No 28, February 2006.
2. COM (1996) 153 final and COM/2001/153/FINAL .
3. See Saferworld small arms and human security surveys on www.saferworld.org.uk as well as Crisis Group reports on www.crisisgroup.org.
4. Debates during the EC/UK Presidency Saferworld Seminar on SSR, 28 November 2005.

Aceh Peace Process - Update

The mandate of the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) ends on 15 December this year; at which point the 36 international monitors currently deployed in the field will leave the region. (1)

Broadly speaking, the AMM is considered a successful example of the EU's capacity to export peace and security abroad. The Mission's Chief of Staff, Justin Davis, recently declared that the peace process in Aceh is solid and there is no fear of its foreseeable collapse. He justified the Mission's end both by the security situation in the field and by the fact that the EU has not been requested to stay longer. (2) Recent positive statements from the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and Indonesian Government tend to support this view. Over the next few months the GAM will transform itself from an armed movement into a political party, and the Indonesian Government is committed to approve a law that will facilitate this (Law on Political Parties).

Four days before the Mission's end, the Acehnese held local elections. An EU observation mission - comprising about 80 personnel financed through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) of the European Commission and headed by Glyn Ford MEP - monitored the election process.

Nevertheless, some local civil society groups have expressed major concerns about the solidity and the sustainability of the peace process. Faisal Hadi, Executive Director of the Aceh Coalition of Human Rights NGOs, recently described the region as still characterised by social and religious tensions among the population, and added that after 30 years of conflict, mutual trust still needs to be built and the mentality of people needs more time to change. (3)

In particular, the process of reintegration of former GAM combatants remains highly sensitive. Even though the disarmament and demobilisation process was perceived as having been successfully completed at the beginning of 2006, the reintegration phase is still ongoing and many doubts have been advanced concerning its effectiveness and sustainability.

The recognition that 'handing in arms doesn't mean becoming a civilian' (4) goes hand-in-hand with major concerns about the effective distribution of the benefits emanating from the reintegration programme. Concerns have been expressed that this programme seems designed to address political requirements more than the real needs of former combatants and victims of the conflict.

However, various EU representatives have clearly stated that the end of the AMM does not mean the end of the EU's engagement in the region. Although the AMM was a short ESDP mission with a limited mandate, the European Commission work to consolidate peace and stability in Aceh - particularly through assistance to governance, elections, reintegration, and police and justice reform - will carry on. The technical office (called 'Europa House') that it established in Banda Aceh to supervise this work, along with the post-tsunami reconstruction process, will continue to function. Indeed, at some time in the future its mandate could be expanded to include sensitive issues like human rights and gender, which have yet to be properly addressed in the peace process.

The mechanisms established in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Indonesian Government and the GAM, signed on 15 August 2005, to address human rights and reconciliation issues – the Truth and Reconciliation Committee and the Human Rights Court - still face great obstacles in carrying out their tasks. There are major concerns about the effective protection of human rights of all citizens in the region, and of women in particular, after the international monitors depart. Specifically, the future implementation of Sharia law could seriously threaten the condition of Acehnese women.

In fact, one of the most important lessons that can be learned from the EU mission in Aceh is that human rights and gender have to be mainstreamed in every future EU operation, and that civil society and gender groups must be involved in the planning and implementation phase from the beginning.

With the AMM coming to an end, the Acehnese population is now forced to deal with its past and project its future, hopefully with continuing strong and sustained support from the international community - especially in terms of economic recovery and capacity building. Most importantly, the Acehnese leadership needs to develop a new democratic and pluralistic approach, especially vis-à-vis the rights of religious minorities and women, but also in relation to the important role that local civil society can play in the transition to peace and stability.

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1. See also N. Pirozzi and D. Helly, 'Aceh Monitoring Mission: a new challenge for ESDP', in *European Security Review*, no.27, October 2005 and N. Pirozzi, 'Update on Aceh Monitoring Mission', in *European Security Review*, no. 28, February 2006.
2. At the seminar "Lasting Peace in Aceh? Strengthening civil society as an active mediator for peace", organised by ICCO and EEPA, Brussels, 5 December 2006.
3. At the "EU-Indonesia Day. Pluralism and Democracy: Indonesian Perspectives", organised by the European Commission and the European Institute for Asian Studies, Brussels, 7 December 2006.
4. Statement by an NGO representative at the seminar "*Lasting Peace in Aceh? Strengthening civil society as an active mediator for peace"*, organised by ICCO and EEPA, Brussels, 5 December 2006.