

Working Group VIII

Working document 12

WORKING GROUP VIII « DEFENCE »

Subject : **Introductory Note by the Secretariat on the variety of situations and capabilities in the Member States of the EU**

In view of the meeting of the Working Group on 4 November, members of the Group will find attached an introductory note by the Secretariat on the variety of situations and capabilities in the Member States of the EU.

**Introductory note on the variety of situations and capabilities
in the Member States of the European Union**

1. A basic characteristic at present is the fact that the Member States' defence commitments are voluntary. The situations of the various States, in terms of their status, the budget which they allocate, their military structure and their capabilities within the Union, are undoubtedly diverse and will become even more so following enlargement of the European Union.
2. The first point to note is that the Member States have different statuses in the field of defence, ranging from being committed to collective defence to choosing to remain non-aligned. Specifically:
 - 11 Member States of the European Union (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom) are members of NATO and therefore bound by the collective defence clause in Art. 5 of the Washington Treaty¹.
 - 10 States (all of the above except Denmark) are also members of the WEU and therefore have a similar, if not wider, commitment under Art. V of the Brussels Treaty².
 - 4 Member States (Austria, Finland, Ireland and Sweden) are non-aligned countries. They have observer status at the WEU and can therefore attend meetings of the WEU Council and WEU working parties.

¹ The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by [Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations](#), will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.

² If any of the High Contracting Parties should be the object of an armed attack in Europe, the other High Contracting Parties will, in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, afford the Party so attacked all the military and other aid and assistance in their power.

- Mention should also be made of the particular situation of Denmark which, while being a NATO member, enjoys special arrangements within the European Union by virtue of a Protocol annexed to the Treaty. On the basis of that Protocol, Denmark does not participate in the elaboration and the implementation of decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications, but does not prevent the development of closer co-operation between Member States in this area.
- A variety of situations is also to be found in the countries which are candidates for accession to the European Union. Four of them (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Turkey) are already members of NATO, while others will become members at the Prague Summit on 21 and 22 November 2002. The candidate countries already in NATO are also "associate members" of the WEU, while the others (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia) have the status of "associate partners" and will most probably become "associate members" once they have joined NATO. Two candidate countries remain non-aligned (Cyprus and Malta).

3. Another source of diversity between countries in the defence field is of course the size of their defence budget, the actual structure of that budget and the nature of their military capabilities. The size of the Member States' budgets varies widely within the European Union. An analysis of the States' defence budgets shows that in only five of the fifteen Member States does military expenditure exceed 2% of GDP. Only two States (France and the United Kingdom) have recently announced sizeable increases in their military budgets. Military expenditure continues to decrease in the majority of Member States.

There is also the question of the differing structures of military expenditure budgets, especially as regards the allocation of expenditure on the development of forces and on equipment. Some countries have military police forces which are also financed from the defence budget.

As noted during the Working Group's meetings, the remaining shortfalls in the achievement of the Helsinki Headline Goal are closely linked to a very diverse effort among Member States in terms of military capability. This matter is strictly related to Member States' ability to deploy capability. It must not be forgotten that, while linked to national budgets, this ability to deploy capability is more than simply a budgetary issue. It is important to note that a small number of Member States currently have forces designed for deployment outside their national territory and have experience of this type of operation.

4. It is also important to examine the Member States' willingness to engage in both military and civil crisis management operations. Apart from the countries linked by defence agreements, there are several non-aligned countries heavily involved in UN peace-keeping operations.
5. A further point needs to be made. Recent experience shows that, although conducted outside the EU framework, several military operations have involved a large number of Member States. Such operations are based on a coalition of the willing. This was the case with Operation Alba in Albania in 1997, and also the operation in Afghanistan under the auspices of the United Nations. This method of cooperation rests on a voluntary individual commitment by States, which act under the authority of the Security Council. Thus we need to consider why Member States take part in such "coalitions" rather than conduct the same type of operations under the EU flag. It should be noted here that within the European Union a certain flexibility exists by virtue of the possibility of constructive abstention. It may be asked whether, given that the discussions must first involve all the Member States, this possibility is sufficient or suited to the need for rapid decision-making and action on the part of a State which has important interests at stake.
6. Given the differences in the Member States' current situations, it is necessary to ask a number of questions about the way in which they could be overcome so as to develop a defence policy at European level. In asking these questions, it would be useful to consider whether some of the solutions we might envisage would be relevant not only in the field of defence in the broad sense but also in more targeted actions, such as management of operations or cooperation in the weapons field.
7. Bearing these preliminary remarks in mind, the Working Group might wish to attempt answers to the following questions:
 - Given the differences between Member States, how might it be possible to envisage greater flexibility in decision-making and the organisation of joint actions by the Europeans in the field of defence?

- Would it be useful to resort to a mechanism for closer cooperation on a voluntary basis (with the possibility of opting in) which brought together Member States that wished to invest greater efforts in the defence field at European level?
- If the answer to the preceding question is in the affirmative, what would be the rules for inclusion in such cooperation? What conditions would the Member States have to fulfil to make such a commitment credible?

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