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**HEADLINE GOAL 2010 AND THE CONCEPT OF THE EU BATTLE
GROUPS: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE BUILD-UP OF A EUROPEAN
DEFENCE CAPABILITY**

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Introduction

Let me first set everything I am going to say against this opening statement. I believe passionately that Europeans should take their security destiny into their own hands. I therefore believe in a strong ESDP. Europeans will have to go strategic and they can only do so as Europe. I also believe in the reconstitution of the transatlantic relationship with NATO at its core if we are to have any chance of managing security in the big world that is emerging in the twenty-first century.

Three methods are required to meet the challenge, description, prescription and assessment. I will get the description, (i.e. what is Headline Goal 2010 and what are the Battle Groups?) over as quickly as possible, but it seems to me the prescription should be built around three questions.

- What is the relationship between Headline Goal 2010 and the Helsinki Headline Goal?
- To what extent is the Capabilities Development Mechanism serving Headline Goal 2010?
- What is the relationship between Headline Goal 2010 and the strategic environment?

Headline Goal 2010

So, what is Headline Goal 2010? Let me quote from the European Council communiqué of 17-18 June 2004. It states: “Building on the Helsinki Headline and capability goals and recognising the existing shortfalls that still need to be addressed [key phrase that], Member States have decided to commit themselves to be able by 2010 to respond with rapid and decisive action applying a fully coherent approach to the full spectrum of crisis management operations covered by the Treaty on the

European Union. This includes humanitarian and rescue tasks, peace-keeping tasks, [and] tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking”.

The communiqué goes on to state that “As indicated by the European Security Strategy this might also include joint disarmament operations, the support for third countries in combating terrorism and security sector reform”.

Two things are worth bearing in mind at this point. First, a direct link is established through the European Security Strategy (or ESS) with the security environment. Second, the mission set was also transferred into the Constitutional Treaty. In other words, the stated intent is ambitious.

Battle Groups

Now let me turn to Battle Groups. What are they? The Battle Groups were first outlined by Britain, France and Germany in February 2004 specifically as part of the negotiations over Headline Goal 2010. The proposal followed the agreement of the three in Naples in November 2003, on the eve of the launch of the European Security Strategy.

The Battle Groups were presented as a new approach to force packaging and were designed to improve the capacity of the Union for rapid reaction. They were to be supported by an EU cell at SHAPE in order to improve EU operational capacity through the Berlin-plus arrangements with NATO that had been finalised at NATO’s Prague Summit a year prior. The objective was to give the Union greater operational flexibility with a specific, but not exclusive, responsibility to act in response to requests from the UN, particularly for operations in Africa. Operation Artemis, which took place in the Democratic Republic of Congo between July and September 2004 has become, in some ways the template, following the request from the UN Security General for an interim emergency multinational force some 1400 strong.

Specifically, Battle Groups would be:

- Some 2500 strong in total, with 1500 combat personnel and a further 1000 to include combat support and combat support services;
- Deployable within 15 days;
- Able to undertake high intensity missions;
- Capable of acting as a stand alone force or an initial entry force;
- Designed as complete force packages, with air and naval components; and
- Complete with readiness targets set for a battalion at 48 hours, brigade at 21 days and the full force at 60 days (important this because it is the only indirect reference in Headline Goal 2010 to the European Rapid Reaction Force).

It was envisaged that in addition to the 3 high readiness Battle Groups already operational, 7-9 would be available by 2007 and 13 by 2009.

At the centre of the Battle Group concept is the so-called force generation process. In order to keep two Battle Groups permanently at high readiness to go there needs to be at least 9 Battle Groups extant. That in turn means pre-identified deployment,

support, logistics and command and control assets and capabilities capable of enabling high intensity missions.

In addition, it was envisaged that the European Defence Agency, set up in 2004, would (and I quote) "...support...the fulfilment of the commonly identified shortfalls in the field of military equipment". In particular, EU Strategic Lift joint co-ordination to [quote] "achieve by 2010 necessary capacity and full efficiency in strategic lift", part of which may be a future European Airlift Command, an aircraft carrier with its associated air wing and escort by 2008, networked interoperability and advanced communications, both terrestrial and space-based, and the development of quantitative benchmarks and criteria that national forces declared to the Headline Goal would have to meet in the field of deployability and multinational training.

Helsinki Headline Goal

So, there you have Headline Goal 2010 and Battle Groups. Now let me reel you back a bit to the Helsinki Headline Goal of December 1999 as part of my third question; What is the relationship between Headline Goal 2010 and the Helsinki Headline Goal?

Let me first remind you what the Helsinki Headline Goal set out to achieve in 1999. It stated as its objective (and you will forgive me if I quote it at length): "To develop European capabilities, Member States have set themselves the headline goal: by the year **2003**, cooperating together voluntarily, they will be able to deploy rapidly and then sustain forces capable of the full range of Petersberg Tasks as set out in the Amsterdam Treaty, including the most demanding, in operations up to corps level (up to 15 brigades or 50-60,000 persons). These forces should be militarily self-sustaining with the necessary command, control and intelligence capabilities, logistics, other combat support services and, additionally, as appropriate, air and naval elements. Member states should be able to deploy in full at this level within 60 days, and within this to provide smaller rapid response elements available and deployable at very high readiness. They must be able to sustain such a deployment for at least one year. This will require an additional pool for deployable units (and supporting elements) at lower readiness to provide replacements for the initial forces".

In other words, the full force of the Headline Goal was to be comprised of 15 brigades of around 4000 personnel each and it was the full force, i.e. the European Rapid Reaction Force that was the force development end-state. However, there were to be elements at Very High and High Readiness that could be deployed within 48 hours and seven days. Therefore, what Headline Goal 2010 has effectively done is shift the emphasis away from the full force to the component forces thereof.

In other words, Headline Goal 2010 decapitates the Helsinki Headline Goal and extends the time required for the realisation of a force a third the size, by roughly three times as long. Indeed, thirteen times 1500 equals 19500, which is roughly one third of the original Headline Goal. It was, of course, always envisaged that with force rotation the average size of a single full force deployed under the Helsinki Headline Goal would be 20,000. Helsinki Goal 2010 is, therefore a sub-division of a sub-division. Or, to put it another way, the methodology of Headline Goal 2010 is to

make the most of what Europeans have got and are likely to get. The Helsinki Headline Goal was prior to a strategic consensus within the Union over the role of militaries in security, the applicability of coercion and the relative value to be assigned to hard security over the demands of social security.

Headline Goal 2010 justifies itself with the phrase (and I quote); “Member States have decided to set themselves a new Headline Goal, reflecting the European Security Strategy, the evolution of the strategic environment and of technology”. Thus, the larger Helsinki Headline force was justified on the basis of the WEU’s Petersberg Tasks as incorporated and laid out in Title V of the EU Treaty of Amsterdam. Whereas, the smaller Battle Groups in Headline Goal 2010 are justified by the expanded Petersberg Tasks, as laid out in both the ESS and the draft Constitutional Treaty. A *de facto* military task-list that was expanded, under the Common Security and Defence Policy, from "humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking" to include also joint disarmament operations, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention, post-conflict stabilisation, and "supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories".

Now, one could argue that post-911 one needed lighter, more agile forces in different force packages to undertake more counter-terrorism activities and less heavy crisis management. Moreover, such a move, should in principle have helped force rotation with the 21000 strong, high readiness, high intensity NATO Response Force (NRF) as 21000 can indeed be divided by 1500 14 times and thus Battle Groups, or modular blocks thereof are, in theory, compatible with the force generation of, and rotation within, the NRF. Unfortunately, an agreement over NRF/BG rotation has been hard to get, trapped as it is in the pointless and seemingly interminable ‘NATO first-EU first’ wrangle.

Whichever way one cuts it Headline Goal 2010 is a retreat from the Helsinki Headline Goal and that is to be regretted. Moreover, there are only ever likely to be 7-9 real Battle Groups, because at least four of the proposed paper groupings reflect the desire of states to generate political influence rather than military effect. Headline Goal 2010 is, therefore, like politics – the art of the possible, as opposed to the science of the required.

Headline Goal 2010 and the Capabilities Development Process

Still, that was not the question set which was, as I understand it, more focused on the degree to which the capabilities improvements process and development mechanism is serving Headline Goal 2010. To answer that question I have to delve into the Capability Improvement Process per se.

The Capability Improvement Chart II/2005, following the Brussels conference of 21 November, 2005, states: “Every six months a progress report on EU military capabilities is submitted...for the follow up and evaluation of military capabilities objectives and commitments by Member-States”. It goes on; “The Headline Goal 2010, set in 2004, aims at the further development of European capabilities for crisis management [so things have not changed that much between 1997 Amsterdam and

2005 Brussels] with a horizon of 2010, reflecting the European Security Strategy, the evolution of the environment and drawing on lessons learned from EU-led operations”.

The document goes on to establish a close working relationship between Headline Goal 2010 and the European Defence Agency, with the European Capabilities Action Plan seen as the prime capability generator, with 11 ECAP Project Groups established to address identified shortfalls.

So, what’s the performance been like so far. Of 64 Capability Shortfalls and Catalogue Deficits covering Land, Maritime, Air, Mobility and ISTAR (intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance), seven have been formally solved, four are showing signs of improvement and fifty-three have not changed over the 2002-2005 period identified in the Catalogue and according to the Catalogue.

So, limited progress has been made towards the capability goals of Headline Goal 2010. Given that Headline Goal 2010 was meant to be driven more by what Europeans could achieve, rather than what European need to achieve in what is, after all, a rapidly changing environment, the progress is to say the very least – modest. Headline Goal 2010 is, therefore, only a strategic down payment.

The Relationship between Headline Goal 2010 and the Strategic Environment

So, what is the relationship between Headline Goal 2010 and the strategic environment? Therein lies the dilemma. The Headline Goal process is still, in effect, a crisis management planning exercise with little thought given to strategic re-constitution. What is taking place inside NATO, admittedly not very successfully, is much more about intensity and reach. Consequently, states that are both NATO and EU members are undertaking two very different force planning exercises with the same forces. That might best be termed – creative.

The contradictions do not end there. Headline Goal 2010 states that as part of its process it will, (and I quote) “...generate the necessary analysis, adaptation and development of scenarios in view of the development of new Headline Goal Catalogues”. In other words, Headline Goal 2010 will only recognise as many scenarios as Europeans can afford. It is a bottom-up planning process. And yet, its opening sentence states: “The European Union is a global actor, ready to share in the responsibility for global security” [unquote]. Moreover, it goes on to say that in addition to developing an EU Capability Development Mechanism, “Building on the Headline Goal 2010, a longer-term vision beyond 2010 will be formulated with the objective of identifying trends in future capability developments and requirements and increasing convergence and coherence”.

Here is the nub of it. What Headline Goal 2010 seems to be saying is this; there might not be any overt linkage between the rapidly changing security environment and Europe’s security and defence herein BUT we may, at some point, conduct a blue skies planning exercise if things get really bad. Too late. Frankly, such an exercise should be going on now.

Seven Actions

To conclude, I would humbly suggest seven actions if we are to re-connect European security to world security and thereby prevent the crisis of institutionally organised security that the shift of power to Asia and the erosion of European security by social security is causing.

First, start the process of preparing a Headline Goal 2030 by reviewing the European Security Strategy in light of systemic change and establish a proper link between the ESS, the tasks so generated and the Headline Goal Process.

Second, recognising that Europe's security and defence is unlikely to find itself the beneficiary of a major resource input focus on better organisation and use of resources. Let the EDA start a study into intense military co-operation between Member States.

Third, let the big states lead. Euro-political correctness is killing strategic correctness. It is time for Britain and France to put Iraq behind them to re-consider Europe's military security place in the world seven years after St Malo. There will be no effective European security and defence without a strong and close working relationship between Paris and London. The Headline Goal process started at St Malo. A second St Malo is needed as a matter of urgency.

Fourth, the totality of security must be re-considered, not least the Civilian Headline Goal. Strategic structured co-operation is still needed to pioneer the development of civilian security capabilities and Germany, Italy and others should lead this process forward.

Fifth, the smaller European member-states must lead the way towards defence integration to: a) create real military effect on their limited force and resource bases; b) create a critical mass of political influence to keep the security and defence efforts of the major states within the institutional framework of the EU; and c) balance big state leadership.

Sixth, now that the enlargement period of NATO's transformation is over the Alliance must re-focus on the big military-security jobs. First and foremost, ensuring a) that Europeans and Americans can operate at every level of intensity and wherever they need to, whenever they agree to; and b) that Europeans and Americans have a forum for the ongoing and continual discussion of the big security picture that is and will emerge.

Finally, end the voluntary aspects of the Headline Goal process. Even if it is slightly contradictory find ways to punish those who do not live up to their commitments.

Assessment

My assessment is this. Battle Groups are a useful device to make virtue out of necessity and thus achieve Headline Goal 2010. The EU and its Member-States can ill afford another failure lest they lose credibility with themselves. However, the

build-up of a European defence capability must not stop at Headline Goal 2010, nor be defined by it, but form the foundation for a planning mechanism that properly links Europeans to the security environment in which they live.

NATO? NATO still has a vital job to do ensuring that North Americans and Europeans can act together in the big world of the 21st century. However, the likely centre of gravity of the European security and defence effort will almost certainly be the Union. The Headline Goal process will, therefore, be at the very centre of things. It must therefore be placed at the end of the pitch, not on the margins.