

Developing an Intelligence Capability

The European Union

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Of all the prerogatives of states, security and defence policy is probably the one which least lends itself to a collective European approach; however, after the single currency, it is in this dimension that the Union has made the most rapid and spectacular progress over the last five years. -- Secretary

General / High Representative Dr. Javier Solana[1]

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Today, a European security and defense policy is not a vision, but a reality. In only a few years and at breathtaking speed, the European Union (EU) has put in place not only the conceptual framework for a new security strategy but also the instruments to deal with present challenges. Political and military committees are an expression of this development, as is the EU Military Staff.

The "pilgrims" of this architecture realized from the very beginning that functioning intelligence capabilities are a prerequisite for mission accomplishment. The EU Military Staff's Intelligence Division is recognized as *one of the instruments within an EU Intelligence Community*, bringing together various sources such as civilian services; law enforcement and

police authorities; diplomatic, economic, and political reporting; and, last but not least, what could be labeled “military intelligence.” From the start, the Intelligence Division has proactively pursued close cooperation and coordination with other EU early warning bodies, thus contributing to intelligence products needed for EU decisionmaking. It will remain a feature and strength of the European Union that it is the only multinational organization with economic, commercial, humanitarian, political, diplomatic, and military resources at its disposal. This multifaceted approach finds its reflection in the way the EU is dealing with intelligence requirements.

The Intelligence Division depends on EU member states and their defense intelligence organizations. The procedures in place allow for close cooperation with member states and day-to-day coordination among EU early warning bodies. As Europe’s security and defense policy develops further and structures and procedures are adapted to new circumstances and challenges, such close cooperation will become even more salient. The Division has found its place in what can be called an “orchestra of instruments” playing from the same “sheet of music” to provide comprehensive and timely intelligence for EU decisionmakers.

Origins

The EU General Secretariat’s main building in Brussels—the Justus Lipsius Building, located opposite the well-known Berlaymont and Charlemagne Buildings at the Schuman traffic circle—still holds some surprises for its visitors and employees. One of them is spotting colorful uniforms among the many business-suited people in the hallways and meeting rooms. Inevitably questions arise as to the reason for the presence of military officers within the EU environment. While some assume the uniformed individuals are “politically interested visitors,” they would, if asked, introduce themselves as members of the European Union Military Staff, working for Dr. Javier Solana on military matters related to European security and defense policy.

Three compelling political factors have fueled the relatively rapid development of an EU security and defense policy. First, a growing number of crises and situations of international instability have arisen in the EU’s strategic environment, both in its neighborhood and in more distant parts of the world. Second, in a globalized, chaotic world, it is no longer possible to artificially separate prosperity and security. The economic and

commercial influence now achieved by the EU's 25 members—which account for a quarter of the world's GNP and 450 million inhabitants—and the closer integration of their economies means that Europe can no longer stand comfortably aside from the world's convulsions or evade its political responsibilities. Finally, the EU's framework makes multilateralism logical and unavoidable in the management of international crises.

The decision by the Cologne European Council in June 1999 “to give the European Union the necessary means and capabilities to assume its responsibilities regarding a Common European Policy on Security and Defence” marked the starting point of an entirely new chapter in European history.[2] Indeed, the EU Security and Defence Policy of today is no longer a vision but a reality, as are its instruments, such as the new committees—namely, the Political and Security Committee, the Civil Committee, and the European Union Military Committee—and the new elements of the EU Council General Secretariat, such as the EU Policy Unit,[3] the Joint Situation Center, and the EU Military Staff, located just three blocks away from the Justus Lipsius Building on Corthenberg Avenue, Brussels.

A Distinct Departure

The establishment of the Military Staff within the EU structure marked the introduction of a military facet into what was formerly considered a strictly politico-diplomatic-economic organization. Notwithstanding the fact that EU members had clearly endorsed the introduction of a security policy into the overall EU framework and the establishment of the necessary staff elements, it took some time until the visible military presence within EU premises was taken for granted and the need for military advice and contributions in an overall EU crisis management process was fully acknowledged by all EU actors.

From the very beginning, the Military Staff has been looked at as but *one* instrument in an orchestrated, multifaceted approach to security policy. Members of the Staff, seconded by EU member states, quickly came to consider themselves as part of an EU team, consisting of civilian, police, and military personnel, all working closely together to make security policy a reality. The full establishment of the Military Staff took about a year, after a short build-up period in 2001. During that time, decisions were made regarding such complex internal activities as designing infrastructure and information technology, managing the influx of

personnel, overseeing working conditions, and developing internal training.

By 2003, a common basis for EU-led crisis management operations had been laid. That year saw four EU operations launched: the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Operation CONCORDIA in the former Yugoslavia; Operation ARTEMIS in the Democratic Republic of Congo; and a second Police Mission, PROXIMA, in the Balkans. In July 2004, EUJUST THEMIS in Georgia represented the first EU rule-of-law mission in the context of European defense policy. And, finally, the transfer of authority from NATO-led forces to EU Operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2004 marked another major step in the evolution of European security policy. The EU Military Staff was a major player in the planning and coordination of these actions, especially Operations CONCORDIA, ARTEMIS, and ALTHEA.

Mission and Structure

Based on decisions of the December 1999 Helsinki European Council, the EU Military Staff provides military expertise and support for the implementation of security and defense policy, including the conduct of EU-led military crisis management operations. To this end, the Staff performs three tasks: early warning, situation assessment, and strategic planning.

As an integral element of the EU Council General Secretariat, the Military Staff is labeled a “General Directorate” and is headed by a “Director General” (DG) who is a three-star flag officer. The DG reports to the Secretary General/High Representative, Dr. Solana. At the same time, the Staff is what can be considered the “working muscle” of the European Union Military Committee, comprising the permanent representatives of the chiefs of defense of the 25 EU member states.[4]

It is important to note that the Military Staff has no subordinate standing headquarters to carry out any of its tasks. Instead, the EU crisis management procedures foresee a number of so-called “operations headquarters” that could be activated on the basis of an EU Council decision, if needed. For this purpose, five EU members have offered national headquarters, which would turn into multinational EU operations headquarters for a particular EU-led crisis management operation.[5] Likewise, lower echelon staffs, such as force headquarters, would be allocated to member states as an EU crisis management process

proceeds. In the particular case of an EU-led crisis management operation with recourse to NATO assets and capabilities, SHAPE at Mons/Belgium is the designated EU operations headquarters.[6]

Every now and then, people argue that the EU's organization is cumbersome, difficult to understand, and—at any rate—overstaffed. This is not quite right with regard to the Military Staff. The Staff was originally structured along classical military lines, with a director at three-star flag rank, a two-star deputy serving as chief of staff, and five divisions, each headed by a one-star director. The five divisions are: Policy and Plans; Intelligence; Operations and Exercises; Logistics and Resources; and Communications, Information, and Security.

Given the range of tasks allocated, the number of EU agencies and organizations to coordinate with, and the complexity of the EU crisis management decision process, the Military Staff is run by an astonishingly small number of people. Some 140 peacetime posts were approved by the member states, the providers of the personnel. These officers carry out a growing number of tasks in an increasingly visible EU security and defense policy environment. One of the greatest challenges, and a key feature of the Staff's work, is the requirement to coordinate and cooperate on a daily basis with civilian colleagues from other EU bodies. It cannot be emphasized enough that it is this unique mix of civilian and military capabilities that makes the difference between the European Union and other multinational organizations, and that constitutes the added value of EU security and defense policy activities.

The Intelligence Division

Common threat assessments are the best basis for common action. This requires improved sharing of intelligence among Member States and with partners.[7]

The Intelligence Division, comprising 33 individuals from 19 member states, is the largest component of the EU Military Staff, reflecting its tasks and particular working procedures. It will come as no surprise that the Military Staff's Intelligence Division follows a classic organizational pattern. Its three branches—Policy, Requirements, and Production—are led by full colonels. As a rule, positions of branch chief and above are “non-quota posts,” eligible to be filled by any member state on a three-year-turnover basis. Positions of action officers and non-commissioned officers are

“quota posts,” allocated to respective member states.

Intelligence Policy Branch— Develops intelligence-related concepts, doctrines, and procedures, in coordination with relevant civilian EU bodies, and manages intelligence-related personnel, infrastructure, and communications matters. For crisis management procedures and EU-led operations, the Policy Branch creates appropriate intelligence architecture and procedures. For EU exercises, it prepares scenarios and intelligence specifications. It is responsible for coordinating the Intelligence Division’s contributions in support of other Military Staff elements. The Policy Branch also organizes the Military Staff’s Intelligence Directors Conclave, an annual informal exchange on EU intelligence matters between the directors of defense intelligence organizations in the member states and the EU Military Staff.

Requirements Branch—Fosters the relationship with EU member states’ defense intelligence organizations, including arranging regular bilateral meetings and maintaining a system of points-of-contact to ensure direct links with member intelligence organizations. The Requirements Branch handles the distribution of requests for information. It also coordinates with the EU satellite center at Torrejon, Spain, and develops Military Staff inputs for the EU ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance) process.

Production Branch—Develops the classified “EU Watchlist” in coordination with other EU early warning bodies, such as the Policy Unit, the Joint Situation Center, and the EU Commission. Updated on a regular basis, the Watchlist focuses on areas or issues of security concern. It is adopted by the Political and Security Committee. The Watchlist constitutes the common basis for intelligence exchanges with member states’ defense intelligence organizations. The Production Branch is organized into five task forces covering specific geographic regions and one task force for transnational issues. It contributes to all-source situation assessments, in cooperation mainly with the Joint Situation Center, and also produces regular intelligence briefs for the Military Staff and “on-the-spot” intelligence assessments for the Military Staff, the Military Committee, and the Secretary General.

Relations with Member States

Similar to other multinational military organizations, the EU Intelligence

Division does not have its own collection capabilities—with the exception of the aforementioned EU Satellite Center—and depends almost entirely on member states' intelligence contributions. This dependence parallels EU structures as a whole.

The Division's three main tasks—early warning, situation assessment, and strategic planning—can only be carried out appropriately if and when timely and comprehensive intelligence is available. The founders of the Intelligence Division quickly realized that it would take a particular type of relationship between the Military Staff and member states' defense intelligence organizations and particular procedures for EU intelligence production to meet this requirement.

The Intelligence Division works on strengthening critically needed collaboration in four ways:

First, the Division maintains strong links with national defense intelligence organizations through regular updates of what intelligence is required in terms of regions, issues, and timelines. Visits to capitals and, in turn, bilateral meetings in Brussels with member-state representatives support the development of a mutual understanding of EU Military Staff requirements, on the one hand, and the strengths (and sometimes limitations) of members' organizations, on the other hand. In this context, the EU Watchlist is a useful tool. The continuous dialog on Watchlist matters enables the EU Military Staff to submit requests for information on a case-by-case basis to those defense intelligence organizations that can contribute to a particular intelligence product.

Second, the Intelligence Division has refined its points-of-contact system so that officers seconded by member states and filling intelligence analyst posts for particular regions or subjects act in a secondary function as interfaces with (and representatives of) their home organizations, maintaining secure communication links to their parent services. This arrangement facilitates “on the spot” coordination, resulting in more responsive and precise intelligence products for EU purposes.

Third, taking into account the experiences of other multinational organizations, the Division never tries to produce “EU agreed intelligence products.” The Military Staff receives finished intelligence from members' defense intelligence organizations, which are marked releasable to the EU. The Production Branch then uses these inputs, without any reference to sources, for the development of its own intelligence products, labeled “EU

Military Staff Intelligence Division,” thereby taking full responsibility for their contents and conclusions. The same rule applies to the Division’s contributions to the Joint Situation Center’s all-source situation assessments. All finalized EU intelligence products are, in turn, sent to member defense intelligence organizations for their information.

Fourth, the Division cooperates daily with civilian early warning bodies, ensuring that the requirement of a comprehensive, “joint” intelligence approach is met. Information available at the Joint Situation Center, the Policy Unit, and the EU Commission makes for quite a heterogeneous information picture, which is supplemented by “military intelligence.” Merging all these pieces of information into comprehensive and sound intelligence products is a considerable challenge. Apart from its role as a proactive player in the EU Intelligence Community, the Intelligence Division holds sole responsibility for assessments of the security situation in a given country or region. Especially in the event of an emerging crisis or an EU-led crisis management operation with a military component, the Military Staff carries the primary responsibility for assessing the risks and their implications for force and mission protection.

The Way Ahead

Only five years old, the EU security and defense policy is still just beginning. Crisis management activities are complex in nature and, in most cases, require the use of both civilian *and* military means and capabilities. As stated earlier, it is exactly this mix that makes the EU role in crisis management so unique. The European Council in December 2003 directed the Council General Secretariat to “enhance the capacity of the [Military Staff] to conduct early warning, situation assessment, and strategic planning through the establishment . . . of a cell with civil/military components.” This new civil/military cell, established in the summer of 2005 as an additional division of the EU Military Staff, is headed by a one-star flag officer with a civilian deputy and comprises some 30 military and civilian personnel. Beside its strategic tasks— contingency planning and crisis response planning—the cell provides temporary reinforcement to national operations headquarters and support for the generation of an EU operations center when needed to oversee autonomous EU operations, in particular when a joint civilian-military response is required and no national headquarters has been identified. The civil/military cell is slated to include one intelligence planner, and the operations center is to have a

a limited, but self-sustainable, intelligence working element, provided by both the EU Intelligence Division (“double-hatted”) and member states. The new cell and the operations center, when activated, will constitute additional recipients for EU intelligence products.

It goes without saying that the intelligence element in the new civil/military cell will rely heavily on the expertise and manpower of the EU Intelligence Division. In this regard, current relations with other Military Staff divisions will not significantly alter; however, they will become more focused on this “new” division. It remains to be seen what impact staffing demands will have on the remaining Division personnel still fulfilling “regular” staff work and tasks beyond crisis management operations.

Clearly, cooperation and coordination among the various EU early warning bodies is likely to become even more important. Indeed, the Intelligence Division is determined to work to this end, bringing its own expertise even closer together with the significant capabilities available to the Joint Situation Center, the Policy Unit, and especially the EU Commission. The latter has considerable information gathering capabilities, mainly through its comprehensive open-source exploitation mechanism. In addition, the EU Commission is a main addressee of frequent and substantial situation reporting provided by its mission delegations around the globe.

So far, the EU Intelligence Division has not done badly and has developed a recognized standing as an expert on military and security issues. It remains a challenge, however, to develop EU intelligence capabilities further in order to meet the challenges of tomorrow’s problems.

Footnotes

[1]Preface to EU Security and Defence Policy–The First Five Years (1999–2004) (Paris: Institute for Strategic Studies, 2004).

[2]It was also at the Cologne Council meeting that Dr. Solana was appointed the first Secretary General/High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

[3]The full title being the Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit of the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy.

[4]Most of the EU member states’ military representatives on the EU Military Committee are “double-hatted,” representing their chiefs of defense also on the NATO Military Committee.

[5]France, Germany, Greece, Italy, and the UK. Operation ARTEMIS, for example, was conducted by an EU operations headquarters in Paris.

[6]This was successfully exercised in Operation CONCORDIA. An even more challenging operation for the EU operations headquarters at SHAPE commenced in December 2004 with the transfer of authority from NATO to EU Operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

[7]From “A Secure Europe in a Better World,” the European security strategy adopted by EU heads of state and government at the Brussels European Council, 12 December 2003.

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