VOJENSKÁ INTERVENCE EU NA STŘEDNÍM VÝCHODĚ? LIMITY „NÍZKÉ BEZPEČNOSTNÍ POLITIKY"

EU MILITARY INTERVENTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST? THE LIMITS OF 'LOW SECURITY POLICY'

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Abstrakt

Projektování ozbrojených sil představuje jeden z hlavních nástrojů Evropské bezpečnostní a obranné politiky, i když plánovité použití sil Evropskou unií je omezené a je tak vhodné označit ESDP jako "nízkou bezpečnostní politiku". Článek si klade otázku, jestli je za těchto podmínek uskutečnitelná vojenská intervence EU na Středním východě. Konkrétně se zaměřuje na posouzení vlivu Evropské bezpečnostní strategie na Evropskou bezpečnostní a obrannou politiku; uvádí přehled dosud realizovaných vojenských misí Unie a v neposlední řadě porovnává výslednou matici s krizemi objevujícími se v regionu širšího Středního východu. Závěrečné hodnocení konstatuje, že i v rámci těchto omezených schopností nesmí být vojenské akce EU z této oblasti vyloučeny.

Abstract

Projection of military force is one of the main tools of the European Security and Defence policy, yet, the planned use of force by the European Union is limited and it is appropriate to define ESDP as 'low security policy'. The article asks whether an EU military intervention in the Middle East is feasible under these conditions. It focuses on the influence of the European Security Strategy on European Security and Defence Policy, reviews the military missions, which the Union has deployed so far, and compares the resulting matrix against the crises looming in the region of Greater Middle East. It concludes that even with its limited capabilities, an EU military action in the area does not have to be ruled out.

Klíčová slova
Evropská bezpečnostní a obranná politika, Evropská bezpečnostní strategie, Střední východ, teorie integrace, vojenské schopnosti EU.

Keywords
EU military capabilities, European Security and Defence Policy, European Security Strategy, Integration theories, Middle East.

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INTRODUCTION

EU member states agreed on pursuing the new European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in order to compensate for their incapacity to undertake the (primarily) military missions originally formulated by the Western European Union in 1992 and formally transferred into the text of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) by the Intergovernmental Conference in Amsterdam, commonly known as the Petersberg Tasks. These foresee EU activities in the field of peacekeeping, humanitarian and rescue operations and crisis management, including peacemaking (Art. 17 TEU). As is evident from the list, the functional definition of the Petersberg Tasks is rather vague. Even less clear, however, at least at the first sight, is the territorial dimension of the ESDP. On the one

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hand, the 2003 European Security Strategy proudly claims that by its population and especially size of its economy, "the European Union is inevitably a global player". On the other hand, the deficiencies of the armed forces of the EU member states (at least as compared to those of the United States of America) are widely acknowledged. Hence, an inevitable question comes forth: When the EU aspires to the status of a global power, does this claim include the activities within the European Security and Defence Policy?

The Middle East can be regarded as a crucial test of the maturity of EU security and defence policy. The region has stood on the 'front burner' of global political agenda for – at least - the past sixty years. From the strained and at times openly confrontational relations between the State of Israel and its Arab neighbours through enmity between many of the Arab states themselves to the threat of terrorism, the region has remained a truly demanding political environment where an intervention by external powers has proved most complicated. Current problems of the United States in managing the post-Saddam Hussein Iraq, as well as the apparent inability of the Western countries to effectively confront Iran's nuclear ambitions are among the most recent proofs. Were the EU able to promote its political interests, even more so by military means, in this region, its credibility as a relevant global player could hardly be doubted any more.

Hence, this article deals with a single question: How probable is an EU military action in the region of the Middle East? By the 'EU military action' I mean an operation decided upon within the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy and using military assets of the EU member states.[1] Firstly, I outline a theoretical framework for the subsequent analysis, using a transformed concept of 'high' and 'low politics' originally developed by Stanley Hoffmann. I then move to the survey of existing or past ESDP missions and try to formulate a general pattern under which these missions have been established. Finally, I compare this matrix against the current situation in the Middle East with the aim of deciding whether there is a specific niche where the EU might apply its military capabilities.

ESDP IN 2003: OUTLINING THE CONCEPT OF 'LOW SECURITY POLICY'

It is quite surprising how often is the tension surrounding U.S. intervention in Iraq in 2003 interpreted as a conflict between the American and the European point of view when, in reality, the rift went rather across Europe. The issue of Iraq divided Europe into two blocs, one composed of 'fringe' European states (Britain, Italy, Spain, Eastern European countries) and supporting the U.S., the other comprising mainly France and Germany and seeking a political backing in Moscow. As noted by Crowe, this situation was hardly unanticipated since the differences in the positions of key European states were long held and both France, and Britain sought to maintain the issue off the EU negotiating table and in the competence of the U.N. Security Council.[2] From the point of view of International Relations theories, this situation clearly fits the realist paradigm and can be interpreted as a formation of two antagonistic *ad hoc* coalitions whose positions are determined by their relationship to the key player in international politics – the United States of America.

Logically, one could expect that such developments would lead to a paralysis of ESDP. But this argument does not withstand a detailed examination. It was during 2003 when a number of crucial, groundbreaking initiatives concerning ESDP occurred. In February 2003, British prime minister and French president met in Le Touquet and proposed that EU member states should raise the level of defence expenditures **and speed up the rapid reaction mechanism within ESDP: instead of the 30 days proposed in Helsinki in 1999, the EU should be able to react within 5 to 10 days**. The political leaders also suggested that Britain and France may contribute to the mechanism by founding a joint standing naval group, including an aircraft carrier. Even the highly controversial idea of an autonomous EU operation headquarters, raised by the Belgian-French-German-Luxembourg summit in April 2003, quickly became a basis for serious negotiations among Britain, France and Germany who reached a working compromise in November that year.

A small EU liaison cell would be established within NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and a core operational team of civilians and military experts would exist within the EU Military Staff.[3] Besides that, during 2003 the EU has deployed its first ESDP operations and in December the member states adopted a crucial strategic document – the European Security Strategy (see below).

An attempt to apply theoretical approaches for the explanation of these developments ends up in paradoxical conclusions. The realist tradition is very apt at interpreting the divisions within Europe concerning the U.S. intervention in Iraq but is of no help in relation to the undeniable progress of integration within ESDP. On the other hand, the neofunctionalism-inspired integration theories[4] shed some light on the evolution of security and defence cooperation, but their insistence that such integration progressively minimizes the risk of open conflicts among the EU member states apparently runs against the reality of the deep rift over Iraq.

How to solve this dilemma? We can use as a guide Stanley Hoffmann's concept of 'high and low politics'.[5] Hoffmann introduced his 'intergovernmentalist approach' in 1960s as a critique of the prevailing neofunctionalist paradigm. His theory is clearly inspired by the realist tradition of thought about international relations but at the same time cannot be considered identical. One of the crucial components of Hoffmann's theory is the concept of 'high and low politics'. Unlike neofunctionalism - which foresees a gradual transformation of the interstate system in a new type of political community, a process that would start at the level of 'low politics' but subsequently would reach 'high politics' as well – Hoffmann erects a clear barrier between the two. Within 'low politics' the state may be willing to cease control to supranational bodies and subject this category of interactions to the 'logic of integration', but at the level of 'high politics' this option is all but impossible.[6]

Hoffmann adopts the neofunctionalist definition of 'low politics' as the pursuit of welfare, and 'high politics' as ensuring security.[7] To update Hoffmann's thesis for the purpose of analyzing the current EU foreign and security policy, there is a simple step to be taken: to presume that the division of 'high' and 'low' politics leads not *between* the foreign and security policy on one side and economic integration on the other, but *across* the foreign and security policy as such. The key to understanding of the seemingly illogical correlation between the evolution of ESDP in 2003 and the behaviour of the EU member states in relation to Iraq is a based on a rather trivial finding that the 'European Security and Defence policy' and the 'security and defence policy of the EU member states' are not the same category. In other words, only a limited portion of the security agenda was transferred by the member states to the EU. This transfer of competence was *only* possible because this part of the agenda ceased to be a part of 'high' security politics. Apart from this sphere of security agenda, subject to integrative processes in the EU, the member states have reserved a domain where sovereignty and defence of national interest are still the rules of the game.

In her highly inspirational article, Hanna Ojanen points out one of the paradoxes of the European integration process in 1990s, i.e. that the integration in the sphere of defence got relatively easy.[8] One of the reasons is the change in the global balance of power after the end of the Cold War. The situation of superpower competition did not leave many security or defence topics, which could be functionally separated from it. To the contrary, since the beginning of 1990s the range of such topics grew considerably wider. New topics (protection of humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, peace enforcement) occurred with no direct connection to the defence of national interest and for whose solution integration seemed to offer new possibilities. Consequently, these concerns were formulated in a set of typified military operations, which concentrate on the maintenance of peaceful environment and protection of civilian populations outside the territory of the member states. These missions were summed up already at the beginning of 1990s in the form of the so-called Petersberg Tasks.

The transformation of the structure of the international system was accompanied by the changing character of the European armies, which were progressively reduced and in many cases professionalized. Concurrently, their focus shifted away from territorial defence and towards low-

intensity warfare and expeditional tasks, mostly in the form of peacekeeping operations. Quite paradoxically, the European armed forces, traditionally considered a core part of state sovereignty, became – in their capacity of 'peacekeepers' – part of the EU 'low security policy'. The 2003 *European Security Strategy* was supposed to provide a clear strategic guidance for this new EU armed force.

A GENERAL DEFENCE GUIDANCE, EUROPEAN SECURITY STRATEGY

AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

In December 2003, the EU member states adopted the document called A Secure Europe in a Better World: The European Security Strategy, which one of the commentators described as *"something of a milestone in the development of a common European foreign and defence policy"*.[9] The document was being prepared throughout the year by a team under the auspices of the High Representative for CFSP, Javier Solana. The resulting text was – perhaps surprisingly, given EU officials' knack for a rather inaccessible and formal language – a brief and eloquent statement of basic EU security concerns and goals. For the first time in its history, the European Union formally outlined its own, collective perspective of international security and the role of itself in it.

First of all, the document defines the security threats, which the Union considers most urgent and dangerous. Like the 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy, it lists among the threats terrorism, proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction and regional conflicts. Unlike its American counterpart, the European strategy does not use the term 'rogue states' but instead identifies state failure as one of the key problems. The list is complemented by an emphasis on organized crime, also regarded as a strategic challenge. The overall stress is on the dangers resulting from intermingling of these phenomena, which, as the document warns, would result in *"a very radical threat indeed"*.

Secondly, in rather broad terms, the European Security Strategy outlines the preferred EU reaction to these global threats, which could be described in two words as 'multidimensional' and 'multilateral'.   In contrast to the U.S. National Security Strategy, which is frequently (though not entirely fairly) characterized as unilateral, the European Security Strategy strongly relies on the idea of *"effective multilateralism",* which can be regarded as a counterweight to the phrase *"balance of power that favours freedom"* from the U.S. document. While the U.S. approach presents a rather novel combination of realist perception of international politics (hence the 'balance of power') put in service of idealist policy goals (value-based promotion of 'freedom'), EU member states opted for a vision of the world which is based on their own unique experience of overcoming centuries-old tradition of power competition and mutual warfare in favour of institutionalized, structured cooperation. Thus we can understand the notion of 'effective multilateralism' as an expression of the Union's wish to replicate its own mode of functioning as far as possible. In practice, this leads to a strong emphasis on cooperation with other international institutions, primarily the United Nations. The close relationship between the EU and the UN has subsequently developed into a more precise 'doctrine' on joint approach to crisis management, as is evident from the working documents on this matter.[10]

The other crucial term, 'multidimensional', refers to the EU's preferred self-perception as an actor who has at its disposal a unique mix of civilian, economic, diplomatic but also military capabilities. In relation to each of the threats, the document makes it clear that for their successful suppression the Union will have to use tools from this portfolio in its whole variety. What is important and new, at least from the perspective of the EU as a 'civilian power', is a clear emphasis on the necessity to use military force when necessary. Despite the fact that ESS is significantly less

'militarized' than its American counterpart, one can conclude that it openly and explicitly legitimizes the use of armed force as a means of EU foreign and security policy seems.[11]

1. Nevertheless, even a brief survey of documents available at the website of the High Representative for CSFP reveals that the adoption of the European Security Strategy has not inspired further doctrinal effort to transform the general formulations into a practical and practicable defence strategy. Unlike politicians who clearly missed this chance for intensive policy action, academics have used the anticipated window of opportunity opened by the new strategy to formulate their own visions of where the European Security and Defence Policy should move and how. Among the most remarkable pieces there stands a collective work of a team of analysts from the EU Institute for Security Studies headed by its director Nicole Gnesotto, and a proposal for a European Defence Strategy co-authored by Julian Lindley-French and Franco Algieri.[12]

Lindley-French and Algieri bring forward a number of suggestions which, if put into practice, would significantly transform the design and functioning of ESDP. Among institutional proposals figure ideas such as an EU Security Council or an EU Homeland Security Agency. The authors also suggest progressive broadening of EU military tasks, and, consequently, increasing the number of combat-ready European forces to 170000. According to their vision, this force would operate under a new EU-NATO Operational Planning and Command Centre (EUNOPS) that would ultimately replace NATO's SHAPE. Such an EU military force would not reach the technological level of United States' Network Centric Warfare, but, using its own European Network Enabling Capability[13] would still present a cohesive, respectable military force capable of undertaking a far broader range of missions than is now expected according to the Petersberg Tasks.

The underlying ethos of the paper by Gnesotto and her team from the EU Institute for Security Studies comes remarkably close to the former. At its core stand five elaborate strategic scenarios: a large-scale peace support operation, a high-intensity humanitarian intervention, regional warfare in the defence of strategic European interests, and homeland defence. Each of them describes a situation at the upper end of the spectrum of demands, which the EU would have to meet. According to the authors, none of these go beyond the scope presumed in the European Security Strategy. However, but in some cases (particularly scenarios two and three), an additional effort (especially in the form of increasing defence budgets) would be necessary to make such an intervention feasible. The paper does not expect that the European Union would be able to lead its own war-fighting operation in a remote region, but rather suggests that even in the necessary cooperation with the U.S. the European forces should operate under a unified military command, basically reducing the complexity of transatlantic defence relations to an U.S.-to-EU relationship.

Both aforementioned papers clearly signal a wish among parts of ESDP-centric experts that the European Union would be able to move from mere talk in the European Security Strategy to serious work that would facilitate its future capacity of action. They can also be both described as grandiose, in the best meaning of the expression. It is therefore interesting to compare these visions with actual developments of EU military operational engagement since 2003.

SHOWING TEETH, ESDP MISSIONS[14]

Compared to the aforementioned scenarios and proposals, it is clear that the European Union has not moved in the direction of demanding, large-scale military operations – and nothing suggests it will in the near future. This does not mean, however, that the current state of ESDP potential is inevitably gloomy. Since 2003, the EU has initiated four military operations, most of them in an unstable and sometimes dangerous political and security environment. The fact that the missions were limited in scale, territory of operations and number of soldiers deployed does not show that the ESDP is dysfunctional, just that the military ambitions and capabilities of the EU

(and, hence, its member states) are relatively modest and there is no clear intention of radically changing this state of affairs.

Of the four military operations since 2003, two were deployed in the Balkans and two in the Democratic Republic of Congo.[15] The first ever EU military mission, codenamed *Concordia*, took place in Macedonia from March till December 2003. Its task was to build on the previous NATO intervention, which aimed at preventing an escalation of violence between the government forces and armed elements of the minority Albanian population. The general objective was to support the political reconciliation between the two Macedonian nationalities, as defined in the Treaty of Ohrid from August 2004. The mission had a classical peacekeeping design, and a limited size – only 357 soldiers participated, 308 of them from the EU member states, and 49 from other countries. The mission relied on the 'Berlin Plus' mechanism of command, using the NATO DSACEUR, admiral Rainer Feist, as the operational commander (with French general Pierre Maral acting as the force commander on spot). Despite the limited scope and goals, the mission carried with it large symbolical value, having been the first EU military engagement ever. From this perspective, it was important that the mission went smoothly and did not get into any trouble (such as being caught in an armed conflict between the Macedonian government forces and Albanian guerrillas). After the military mission was terminated, it was replaced by a police mission (codename *Proxima*). The move clearly underscored the Union's declared effort to represent a complex, multi-faceted approach to peacekeeping tasks, including the incorporation of police (and other civilian) components.

The other mission in the Balkans, operation *Althea*, has been significantly more challenging. With it the European Union took over the NATO military administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina started as a result of the Dayton Accords in the form of the IFOR mission in 1995. The EU command replaced the previous SFOR II mission in the beginning of December 2004 with a view of a long-term commitment that should bring the war-torn country to a stable, functioning, self-sustaining multiethnic polity. To realize this goal, the European Union has almost 7000 soldiers under its command, including those from 11 non-EU countries. Just as in the case of the operation in Macedonia, operation *Althea* uses the NATO command structures (with the political direction resting in the hands of the Council of EU which delegates parts of its responsibilities to the Political and Security Committee and the Military Committee to which the operation's commander reports). From the political (or even prestige) point of view, it is noteworthy that the reporting from the soldiers in the field goes directly exclusively to the EU bodies, which then pass the information to their NATO counterparts.

The mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina is naturally only a part of a larger EU effort to stabilize the region of the Western Balkans, in which the most relevant role is played by non-military (i.e. mostly diplomatic and economic) means. For this reason, operation *Althea* closely coordinates its moves (such as the apprehension of suspected war crimes perpetrators) with the EU special representative in the region, Lord Ashdown. Equally important is the cooperation with the EU police mission in Bosnia (in this respect, it is worth mentioning that even soldiers from the *Althea* mission devote much of their time to tasks that can be easily designated as 'policing').

Unlike in the Balkans, where the EU intervened militarily in a relatively stable environment, which resulted from previous NATO operations, its engagement in the Democratic Republic of Congo presents a notably different picture. Both military missions here were undertaken without recourse to the EU-NATO command arrangements, relying instead on national (first French and later German) command capabilities. Both missions (operation *Artemis* and operation *EUFOR RDC*) carried with them higher risk of potential casualties and possible complications. However, both missions were completed without substantial problems and sent a clear signal that in a favourable context (see below) the European Union is ready and able to intervene far beyond its immediate neighbourhood.

Operation *Artemis* was started in close coordination with the UN Secretary General who sought rapid military intervention in the city of Bunia in the northeast of the DRC where clan-based

violence undermined the peacekeeping effort of the UN. It was initially France that was considering (and indeed planning) a military intervention by its own means, but eventually a compromise was found at the EU level (with Germany compromising on the matter, and even committing its troops). The mission was formally based on an UNSC resolution and decided upon by EU Council Joint Action 2003/423/CFSP from 5 June 2003. Due to previous French planning, the EU forces were able to move with remarkable speed, with the first forward units arriving in Bunia already on June 6. France quite naturally acted as the 'framework nation' for this operation and the mission's operational headquarters was based at its general staff in Paris. The operation encompassed 2060 soldiers, of whom about 1100 were directly fielded in DRC, while the rest remained in nearby Uganda, including potential air support forces consisting of French Mirage fighters.

Artemis has been the only mission so far, in which EU soldiers engaged in direct fighting: in compliance with the mandate defined by the UNSC resolution and the rules of engagement, French soldiers shot two members of local militia on 16 June 2003. At least from the short-term perspective, the operation's design, based on visible and resolute demonstration of military might, worked, and the EU units were able to establish stable security environment in their area of operations. Their success cleared the path for a newly defined and reinforced UN peacekeeping force.

The relative success of operation *Artemis* led to yet another deployment of EU forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo from June till November 2006, in the form of an *EUFOR RDC* tasked with maintaining stable environment during Congo's general elections, which the EU financially sponsored. Again, the EU did not use NATO for the operational command, instead relying on German operational headquarters in Potsdam (Germany acted as the 'framework nation' for this mission), which directed the 2400 soldiers on the ground. Generally, the objective of the EU mission was to support the MONUC peacekeeping forces, including potential protection of civilians, protection of the airport in Kinshasa or rescue operations in case of urgent need. The mission was complemented by two civilian ESDP operations, *EUPOL Kinshasa*, which trains the DRC's police force, and *EUSEC RD Congo* aimed at reforming the country's security system.
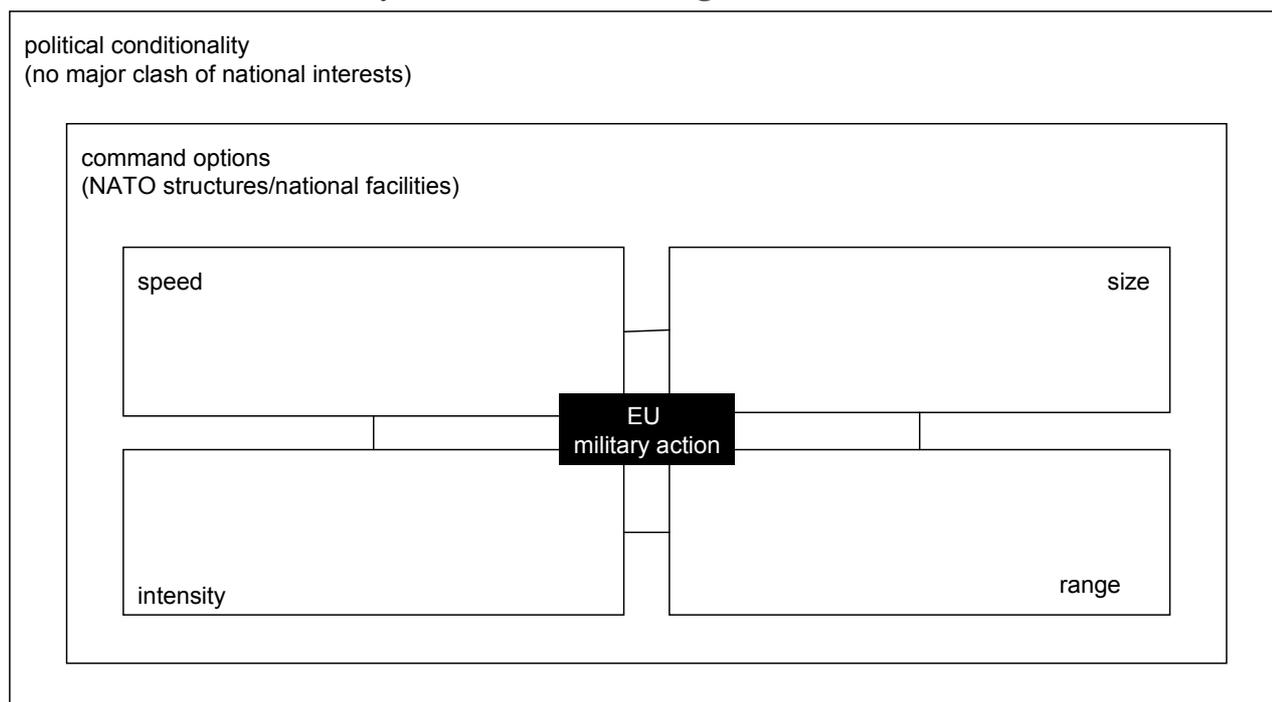
Generally speaking, all four EU military operations so far have proceeded rather smoothly and reached their (perhaps limited but hardly insignificant) goals. They have undeniably demonstrated the Union's capacity for autonomous military action, using different command structures (NATO headquarters or national assets) in different political and security environments. While definitely too little time has passed since the missions were initiated and implemented, it is nevertheless worth trying to identify some general features which the four missions have in common.

LOOKING FOR A MATRIX: A SET OF HYPOTHESES

ON EU MILITARY OPERATIONS

In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to establish a general pattern according to which the EU has acted and presumably will (at least in the near future) act militarily. It is, however, necessary to stress once again that such a constructions is to a large extent speculative and is based on a very limited set of examples (four operations so far). Moreover, it does not take into account possible abrupt changes in the overall international environment, such as an occurrence of major armed conflicts between global or regional powers or shifts in the balance of power.

A helpful framework for the analysis of the probability and possible shape of an EU military action might look like this:

Picture 1: EU military action - constraining factors

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┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ political conditionality                                                   │
│ (no major clash of national interests)                                     │
│                                                                            │
│   ┌────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐  │
│   │ command options                                                     │  │
│   │ (NATO structures/national facilities)                               │  │
│   │                                                                     │  │
│   │   ┌─────────────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────────┐   │  │
│   │   │ speed                       │    │                    size  │   │  │
│   │   │                             │    │                          │   │  │
│   │   │                    ┌────────┴────┴────────┐                  │   │  │
│   │   │                    │        EU            │                  │   │  │
│   │   │                    │  military action     │                  │   │  │
│   │   │                    └────────┬────┬────────┘                  │   │  │
│   │   │ intensity                   │    │            range         │   │  │
│   │   └─────────────────────────────┘    └──────────────────────────┘   │  │
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First of all, it is worth mentioning the general political context in which EU military operations take place. Concerning defence issues, the matter of paramount importance for EU member states is the relationship between the Union and the NATO, or, more precisely, the United States of America. I believe, it can be predicted that there will be no EU military action in a region or a situation where a substantial conflict with the interests of the United States would occur. The experience of 2003 demonstrates that the EU member states clearly hold different views of their position vis-à-vis the U.S., with Britain still maintaining the policy of special relationship, while France (joined in the case of the Iraq war by Germany) preferring to (try to) act as a counterweight to American power. Because these national positions have been held for decades, it is safe to presume that they will not be subject to sudden change in the near future (except for a case of major turbulences in international politics).

What does this imply for the ESDP? The U.S. is *the* Great Power of our time; hence the relation to American foreign policy is inevitably a defining principle of national foreign and security policies of practically every state. Since there is a substantial disagreement within the EU in how to deal with the U.S. might, the ESDP as a collective mechanism shared by the member states had to be exempted from this sphere of security 'high politics'. Instead, it focuses on issues and regions where intervention is politically uncontroversial and does not create unnecessary rift in the EU membership. All four military interventions undertaken fit this pattern and so will, much likely, the future ones. In short, we might define the ESDP, including its military element, a sphere of 'low security policy'. This, logically, also holds true for other sources of a conflict of interests among the member states, especially the big ones.

Secondly, it is necessary to consider the command options, which the EU has at its hand. As far as the experience goes, there are only two of them: Either the EU will use the 'Berlin Plus' mechanism and rely on the NATO command structures, or it will utilize the national assets of (most likely) the big member states. We can also presume that a NATO-backed EU military operation would more likely be a follow-up mission, in which the EU would take over as a 'specialist' in the mix of military and civilian capabilities, which clearly was the case in both operations in the Balkans, and will probably be repeated in Kosovo. In such cases, we might think

of the EU as a sort of a 'Europeanizer' of NATO – using the Alliance's military assets while bringing the added value of civilian support, most importantly economic development.

If NATO does not get involved, the EU will presumably use the existing national (or perhaps multinational, such those of the *Eurocorps*) command assets. It makes sense to envisage that such interventions would also require strong national interest of at least one big member state (accompanied by open or at least tacit support or at least acquiescence by the rest of the member states, including most importantly the other great powers), which would have at its disposal not just the necessary command structures but also sufficient knowledge of local conditions and, ideally, military facilities in close vicinity of the area of operations. This was the case with the first EU operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which was a French-prepared, planned and led undertaking. If it were not for the post-colonial French interests in Africa, including their continuing military presence and available intelligence and forward bases in the region, the intervention would hardly have been possible. However, given the design of the second operation in Congo which was German-led, one might presume that the previous EU operation would probably facilitate a repeated intervention in the region.

Thirdly, the size, speed, range and intensity of EU operations should be considered. Of the four operations already implemented or in place, only the *Althea* mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina significantly exceeds the size of a battlegroup (approximately 1500 soldiers). The pattern seems to be clear: Either the EU will take over a rather stabilized area with no significant risks to its soldiers for a longer term, most likely from the NATO, and than it will have no serious problem in committing a more sizeable military force. Or it will intervene for a short term (and, as was demonstrated, at short notice, if necessary) with a battalion-size force that can act as an entry force for a larger peacekeeping mission or an on-call or extraction force to be used in case of emergency. The EU military planning has been focusing on this alternative ever since the adoption of the Headline Goal 2010 with its core concept of EU battlegroups. To sum up, the range of EU military options is defined by low-risk, long-term, larger peacekeeping (or peacebuilding) operations on one end, and medium-risk, short-term intensive peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations on the other end. Unlike the papers quoted above, I do not expect any EU-led operation that would be significantly more demanding than either of these two options.

Again, this is not to deride or ridicule the EU military effort. At the least, the EU has an undeniable experience in using its military operations as a pretext for further engagement. All the military operations so far have been followed by police missions (mostly focusing on the training of local police forces) and other civilian operations. The focus on 'multidimensional' peacekeeping is clearly one of the Union's greatest assets, and in practice most of the ESDP operations have been civilian in nature (14 out of 18). Nevertheless, the truth is that the EU practice so far does not offer any indications that the Union (or, rather, its member states) is ready for demanding, high-risk, war-fighting operations. Taking this into account, we can now move to the issue of a possible EU intervention in the Middle East.

HOW DOES THE MIDDLE EAST FIT IN?

Formally speaking, the EU has already been involved through the European Security and Defence Policy in the Middle East. There are currently two missions in the Palestinian territories – a police mission with a training and assistance mandate, and a border assistance mission at the Rafah border crossing point - a rule of law mission in Iraq, and a police mission in Afghanistan. These missions are limited both in their size (generally several tens of people) and their mandates. Moreover, their relevance in the context of the prevailing political dynamics in the area of deployment is rather doubtful.

The answer to the question of whether an EU military intervention in the Middle East is feasible must start with the identification of places and/or situations where such a force might be

deployed. First such places are the borders between Israel and the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon and Syria. Here the condition of suitable political conditions and low security risks clearly applies: An EU military operation can only be imagined in one case, and that is a traditional peacekeeping mission after a peace treaty between Israel and any of the neighbours mentioned has been signed. The EU units would act as a guarantee that would safeguard the border as defined by the treaty. If a peace treaty between Israel and Syria or Israel and the Palestinians were signed, such an EU operation is certainly not outside the scope of the imaginable. Moreover, in the case of the Palestinian Territories, the EU could streamline its mission with the overall effort to stabilize and support this entity through economic aid and civilian ESDP operations.

Such an operation would probably not face any serious problems from the military point of view (several hundreds to few thousands of soldiers would probably participate, and the region is relatively close to the EU territory) but the political risks might still be considered too grave by some of the member states to take. Most notably, for Germany the possibility that its troops (or at least the soldiers of 'its' European Union) might hypothetically clash with the Israelis might be too scary for historical reasons to bear. On the other hand, a successful operation in this fashion would significantly increase the political profile of the Union in the region and provide it with a greater leverage over its affairs. It would also perfectly fit into the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Barcelona Process. As such, it would complement and possibly enhance the political, economic and security dialogue between the EU and the states in the region.

Moving further to the east, one might ask whether an EU military intervention is possible in Iraq or Iran. In both cases, the answer is resolutely negative. In Iraq, the interests of the United States of America are so strongly embedded that an independent EU action can be ruled out solely for this single reason. It is also hard to imagine that the Union would be willing to establish a military operation in a place where foreign soldiers are repeatedly targeted and killed by the insurgents. Moreover, a small EU force would make no difference in the conflict. The same goes for Iran: besides various kinds of forward deterrence (such as demonstrations of naval and air power in the Gulf), in which individual EU member states might participate, but certainly not the Union as a whole, the only military action that can be imagined is an open warfare aimed at preventing Iran from reaching the status of a nuclear power. Despite the aforementioned eloquent scenarios crafted by Nicole Gnesotto and her colleagues, a collective EU participation in such a war is a thought too wild to imagine. EU did not create its security and defence policy for the purpose of warfighting, and its political and command structures are clearly not prepared for this option. Again, this does not necessarily rule out a participation of some of the European states in a hypothetical U.S.-led coalition of the willing, but it surely precludes an operation of the EU as a collective entity.

Last possibility to mention is Afghanistan. Given the current situation of continuous fight against the Taliban and the remnants of Al-Qaeda, an EU military operation seems to be a vision too bold to become real. On the other hand, the European states have led the UN-mandated peacekeeping ISAF operation since its establishment, and the EU member states have been heavily involved in the stabilization effort in the country ever since 2001. Technically, with the NATO planning and command support, an EU-led operation does not necessarily have to be ruled out. If the coalition forces were able to get the security situation in Afghanistan under control, the EU would even be better suited for the post-conflict peacebuilding effort than the NATO. After all, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), which stand at the core of Allied reconstruction activities, are much closer to the EU's idea of 'multidimensional' peacekeeping than the NATO military doctrine.

An EU operation in Afghanistan is certainly not something to be expected within the next couple of years. As a necessary precondition, the European Union would have to conclude its operations in the Balkans, or at least the one in Bosnia and Herzegovina. If the EU stabilization effort there were successful, it would provide the Union both with substantial political credit and military know-how, and at the same time free its hands to send more soldiers and also money to

Afghanistan. In any case, an EU-led operation in Afghanistan would send a clear signal that the Union's security and defence policy has reached its maturity. And, naturally, success in such an undertaking would elevate the Union to the position of a global security actor whose credibility could no longer be doubted.

Table 1: Potential for EU military action in the Middle East

CONFLICT AREA	POLITICAL CONTEXT	COMMAND OPTION	MILITARY FEASIBILITY
Iraq (scenario: *Intervention in Civil War*)	x	-	x
Iran (scenario: *Attack on nuclear facilities*)	x	-	x
Afghanistan (scenario: *Bosnia revisited*)	(+)	NATO	(+)
Israel & neighbours (scenario: *Securing a peace agreement*)	?	NATO/ lead nation	+

CONCLUSION

In assessing the EU's capacity for military action in the Middle East, one has to take into account the origins and developments of the European Security and Defence Policy. Despite repeated grandiose proclamations, only a limited set of defence tasks was transferred by the member states on the EU level. According to my analysis, the most appropriate understanding of this development is based on the notion of ESDP as 'low security policy', which is still largely limited by the so-called Petersberg Tasks. These are defined as mostly peacekeeping activities of armed forces, leaving high-intensity fighting outside the scope of what the EU plans and prepares for. The developments of ESDP during 2003 fit this presumption. The military operations that the EU has undertaken further support this view. All of them were limited in size (the operation *Althea* in Bosnia and Herzegovina with almost 7000 soldiers is an exception) and their goals. In achieving these goals they were nevertheless successful, were they commanded by the NATO structures or by national headquarters. They demonstrated both the EU's willingness to undertake military action, and its ability to do so.

Transposing these findings into the context of the Greater Middle East, it is safe to say that no EU intervention by military means can be expected in situations of intense warfighting, such as present Iraq or a potential conflict with Iran. On the other hand, an EU peacekeeping operation might be possible to guarantee a peace agreement concluded between Israel and its neighbours (Syria, Lebanon or Palestinian Territories) where political sensitivities might be overcome by a clear mandate, compatibility with general EU regional policies and potential political gains. Ultimately, it is also possible to contemplate an EU military operation in Afghanistan where it would take over from the NATO. Though not relevant in the short term, it is important not to forget that European NATO members have been heavily involved in the country, which gives them the necessary expertise and political leverage to handle such a transfer of political authority of the mission.

NOTES

[1] ZÁVĚŠICKÝ, Jan, Ambice a schopnosti Evropské unie: Analýza vojenských operací na podporu míru, s. 35.
[2] CROWE, Brian, A common European foreign policy after Iraq?, 534–535.
[3] GRANT, Charles, Reviving European Defence Cooperation.
[4] ØHRGAARD, Jakob, ‚Less than Supranational, More than Intergovernmental': European Political Cooperation and the Dynamics of Intergovernmental Integration; SMITH, Michael C., *Europe's Foreign and Security Policy. The Institutionalization of Cooperation.*
[5] HOFFMANN, Stanley, The European Process at Atlantic Crosspurposes, s. 85; HOFFMANN, Stanley, Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation State and the Case of Western Europe, s. 866.
[6] HOFFMANN, Stanley, *The European Sisyphus: Essays on Europe, 1964–1994*, s. 41.
[7] HOFFMANN, Stanley, Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation State and the Case of Western Europe, s. 886; HOFFMANN, Stanley, *The European Sisyphus: Essays on Europe, 1964–1994*, s. 41.
[8] OJANEN, Hanna, *Theories at loss? EU-NATO fusion and the ‚low-politicisation' of security and defence policy in European integration.*
[9] ELLNER, Andrea, The European Security Strategy: Multilateral Security with Teeth?, s. 223.
[10] *EU-UN Co-operation in Military Crisis Management Operations: Elements of Implementation of the EU-UN Joint Declaration*; *Joint Declaration on UN-EU Co-operation in Crisis Management*; *Joint Statement on UN-EU cooperation in Crisis Management.*
[11] The same conclusion was reached by authors who see this development as at least potentially dangerous and detrimental to EU external posture. See e.g. DE WILDE, Jaap H., Orwellian Risks in European Conflict Prevention Discourse, or TREACHER, Adrian, From Civilian to Military Actor: The EU's Resistable Transformation.
[12] GNESOTTO, Nicole, *European defence: A proposal for a White Paper*; LINDLEY-FRENCH, Julian, ALGIERI, Franco, *A European Defence Strategy.*
[13] This capability would represent systems commonly known as C4ISTAR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, target acquisition, reconnaissance).
[14] This chapter relies extensively on the analysis presented by Jan *Závěšický* in his recent paper – ZÁVĚŠICKÝ, Jan, Ambice a schopnosti Evropské unie: Analýza vojenských operací na podporu míru.
[15] See the complete list of ESDP operations at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=268&lang=EN&mode=g>.

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[2]   *EU Battlegroups (EU Council Secretariat Factsheet).* Accessible at WWW: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/Battlegroups_February_07-factsheet.pdf, February 2007>.

[3]   *EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP.* Accessible at WWW: <http//www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002> (NATO official website), 16 December 2002.

[4]   *Eurocorps. A Force for the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance.* Accessible at WWW: <http://www.eurocorps.org> (Eurocorps official website).

[5]   *EU-UN Co-operation in Military Crisis Management Operations: Elements of Implementation of the EU-UN Joint Declaration.* Accessible at WWW: <http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/EU-UN_co-operation_in_Military_Crisis_Management_Operations.pdf, June 2004>.

[6] *From Copenhagen to Brussels. European Defence: core documents, vol. IV (Chaillot Paper 67)*, (compiled by Antonio Missiroli). Accessible at WWW: <http://www.iss-eu.org> (EU Institute for Security Studies), December 2003.

[7] *Headline Goal 2010.* Accessible at WWW:
< http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/2010%20Headlines%20goals.pdf>, 20 May 2004.

[8] *Helsinki Headline Goal.* Accessible at WWW:
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[9] *Joint Declaration on UN-EU Co-operation in Crisis Management.* Accessible at WWW:
<http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/EU-UNstatmntoncrsmngmnt.pdf>,
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[10] *Joint Statement on UN-EU cooperation in Crisis Management.* Brussels. Accessible at WWW: <http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/st12730.en03.pdf>, 7 June 2007.

[11] *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy.* Accessible at WWW: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf> (EU official website), 12 December 2003.

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