

“Best thing might happen to the World is that Europe would become its third pole”

Lieutenant General (ESP Army) Francisco José Gan Pampols

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Spanish General José Enrique Ayala Marín (former Eurocorps' Chief of Staff during period 2001-2003) published an article advocating the creation of a European Operations Headquarters⁴. Shortly afterwards, a body for strategic planning and monitoring of EU Military Operations, called the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), was created within the EU Military Staff (EUMS).

Recent events have brought about very significant changes in the global geostrategic situation and have made General Ayala's proposal more topical and timely; they are the next:

- The United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, who maintained a blocking position towards the creation of a purely European Operational Headquarters^{5, 6}.
- The persistent situation of insecurity and political instability in the Sahel, despite the enormous and continuous efforts that the EU has been making in this area over the last decade.
- The growing political and economic influence of Russia and China on the African continent.
- The project launched in June 2020 at the meeting of EU Defense Ministers to agree on a "Strategic Compass for Europe's Security and Defense", which would specify the level of ambition of the EU as a security provider on the international stage⁷.
- The US withdrawal from Afghanistan, which has brought under analyst' scrutiny

⁴ AYALA MARÍN, Jose Enrique “Un nuevo paso hacia la Defensa Común Europea”. Work Document OPEX 79/2015. April 2016. Alternativas Foundation. Ministry of Defense of Spain.

<https://www.fundacionalternativas.org/observatorio-de-politica-externa-opex/documentos/documentos-de-trabajo?page=4>

⁵ *Ibidem*. Chapter 3 “La situación actual de la política común de seguridad y defensa” pag. 20.

⁶ GAVRILA, Anda “La integración diferenciada: una oportunidad para impulsar la política de defensa europea tras el brexit”. Anda Gavrilá. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE), Opinion Document 136/221. December 7th 2021. https://www.ieeee.es/publicaciones-new/documentos-de-opinion/2021/DIEEEO136_2021_ANDGAV_Integracion.html

⁷ PONTIJAS CALDERÓN, José Luis “La brújula estratégica de la Unión Europea”. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE), analysis document 45/2021 November 17th. “La brújula estratégica para la seguridad y la defensa” para. 1 pag 5. https://www.ieeee.es/publicaciones-new/documentos-de-analisis/2021/DIEEEA45_2021_JOSPON_Brujula.html

the duration and convenience of NATO's two largest and most important missions since its creation in 1946: ISAF and Resolute Support.

- Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has forced EU countries to urgently send military equipment and weaponry to Ukraine, and led the European Council on March 21st this year to approve the EU Strategic Compass⁸, several months ahead of schedule⁹.

Today, at last, the EU is willing to devote large amounts of money to its security, equipping Third Country's armies even with lethal weapons and ammunition¹⁰. The EUMS' MPCC, being at the strategic-military level, is above the optimal command level for detailed planning and control of investments and expenditures with such money (neither it has the structure to do so).

EPF: WHAT IS THIS? WHAT IS IT FOR? AND WHICH ARE ITS RESTRAINTS?

The great contribution of the EPF to EU military missions is that it opens the door and facilitates the evolution from purely training military missions (as they are nowadays) to training and equipping military missions. However, in order for this military equipping to Third Countries can be carried out, EPF rules require a thorough and lasting control of the equipment procured with it; also, a prior agreement must be signed between the EU and the Recipient State for such equipment delivery¹¹. In fact, along with EU Military Assistance actions and activities in Third Countries, the necessary control and assurance measures must be put in place to allow the control of the investment and the audit of the results; these measures must be presented at the highest political-diplomatic level of the EU: in the Political and Security Committee¹². For all these reasons, both the planning of Military Assistance activities themselves, as well as the actions for their monitoring and justification, will undoubtedly require their inclusion as a key area of Operational Planning.

⁸ COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION "A Strategic Compass for Security and Defense - For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security". Outcome of proceedings 7371/22 as of March 21st. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

⁹ Op cit 7. "La brújula estratégica propiamente dicha" para. 1 pag 10.

¹⁰ SANTOPINTO, Federico & MARÉCHAL, Julien "EU Military Assistance Under the new European Peace Facility" Federico Santopinto & Julien Maréchal. Konrad Adenauer Foundation. February 16th 2021. 3.1, pag 12

<https://www.observatoire-boutros-ghali.org/sites/default/files/EU%20military%20assistance%20under%20the%20new%20european%20facility.pdf>

¹¹ Op Cit 1. Article 59 "Assistance Measures" pt. 7; Article 62 "Arrangements with beneficiaries"

¹² Op Cit 1. Article 56 "Objectives and Principles [of the assistance measures]" pt. 4.

Moreover: Military Assistance will be, if not the main one, one of the most important Lines of Operations in the Operational Design of the Mission.

On the other hand, the "first pillar" of the EPF takes over the former "ATHENA" instrument (extinguished with the creation of the EPF) which finances the common costs of EU Military Operations abroad¹³. This brings into competition the military structure created for Military Assistance to Third Countries on the one hand, and Military Assistance itself on the other, so that the balance, efficiency and coordination of investments and expenditures in both pillars will have paramount importance in both military and budgetary planning.

EPF AND STRATEGIC COMPASS

With regard to the EPF, the Strategic Compass, within its first pillar "Act", sets out the clear objective of using it increasingly (giving as an example the provision of military equipment to complement current training missions¹⁴) and mentions the need to increase the effectiveness of these missions¹⁵. At this point it is necessary to specify how much money is involved: the EPF has a planned expenditure of €5,272M over the next 6 years, with ceilings gradually increasing from €540M for this year to €1,132M by 2027¹⁶.

In order to meet this objective, it will be necessary to provide the EU military structure with a body capable, on the one hand, of programming in the medium term and subsequently executing, controlling and justifying the investments and expenditure made under each of the EPF pillars year after year¹⁷, and on the other hand, of increasing the effectiveness of such investments and expenditures.

Although the Strategic Compass mentions the MPCC as the preferred element for the Command, Planning and Control of Operations¹⁸, it also recognizes that it will not be in the position to do so before 2025¹⁹ and subsequently keeps the door open for using also for these tasks, the Operational Headquarters that Nations currently place at the EU's

¹³ Op Cit 1. Chapter 7 "Common costs and nation-borne costs".

¹⁴ Op Cit 8 Pto 2 "Acting Together" para 6 pag 15

¹⁵ Op Cit 8 Pto 2 "Acting Together" para 5 pag 15

¹⁶ Op Cit 1. Annex I.

¹⁷ Op Cit 1. Article 15 "Operation Commanders" & Chapter 8 "Management of funds and assets".

¹⁸ Op Cit 8 Pt. 2 para 13 pag 16

¹⁹ Op Cit 8 "Objectives – Act" Pt 3 pag 19

disposal on a rotational basis²⁰.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, the MPCC is a structure that belongs to the strategic level and whose Chief is also the Chief of Staff of the EUMS, therefore it will be a major challenge to reconcile the two decision cycles: the strategic and the operational²¹. Moreover, when the Strategic Compass gains momentum, both the EUMS and the MPCC are expected to become more involved in the military aspects of its other three pillars: 1. protection of all areas of interest, including space and cyberspace ("Secure"), 2. Defense investments by member states ("Invest") and 3. Bilateral collaboration with non-EU countries and other multinational security organizations ("Partner")²².

TASKS JUSTIFYING EU OPERATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Planning

- Military Assistance Measures: the starting point of which is military strategic advice on structures, military capabilities and force levels of the countries receiving EPF-financed Military Assistance, and which is continuously fed back with the monitoring and evaluation of the evolution of reforms in the Security and Defense Sector at the three levels of military command in these countries: strategic, operational and tactical. In the course of planning, it will be necessary too to identify the parameters for monitoring and evaluating these reforms²³.
- Military missions outside the EU, with particular attention to the compatibility of the "Non-Executive" nature of these Missions with the effectiveness of Military Assistance activities and actions²⁴.

As such, the operational planning of EU missions becomes more complicated:

- 1) The financing of the common costs of EU military operations abroad under the first pillar of the EPF²⁵, automatically makes the Operations Plan (OPLAN) the main

²⁰ Op Cit 8 Pt. 2 para 3 pag 14

²¹ This conflict between the strategic and operational levels arose in NATO's mission in Afghanistan (ISAF) when it was integrated with the US mission there and an Operational Command subordinated to COMISAF had to be created: the ISAF Joint Command (IJC).

The structure of the Spanish Armed Forces is also clear in this regard, with the CHOD having two distinct dependent commands: on the one hand the Chief of the Joint Staff and on the other the Command for Operations, each of them with its own HQ.

²² Op Cit. 8

²³ Op Cit 1 Article 59 "Assistance Measures" & Article 62 "Arrangements with beneficiaries"

²⁴ Op Cit 1 Article 60 "Implementation of an assistance measure by an operation".

²⁵ Op Cit.1 Article 18 "Annual budget" pts 2,3 and 4.

military technical document to justify each and every one of these common costs; In practice this means that the OPLAN, in addition to assigning the missions and tasks to the subordinate Units and setting up the coordination details for their execution, must identify each and every one of the requirements of all kinds (infrastructure, military capabilities to be deployed, civilian capabilities in the deployment area, transport, logistical support, sustainment... etc.) necessary to carry out the operation successfully.

- 2) If the Operation in regard is linked to Military Assistance Measures funded under the second pillar of the EPF²⁶, it will imply that during the first phase of its Operational Planning process, the Comprehensive Preparation of the Operational Environment-(CPOE) a complete study of the military capabilities at the operational and tactical levels of the Armed and Security Forces of the State to be supported, must be carried out in order to identify critical shortfalls, which will be those that should be satisfied through these Military Assistance Measures.

In short: it will be necessary, on the one hand, to draw up medium-term Operation Plans (OPLANS) which make possible to budget the expenditure and investments of the "first pillar" of the EPF and, on the other, to plan in detail the military capabilities to be procured to the Armed Forces of Third Countries with the "second pillar", so that these Armed Forces are capable of achieving the political-strategic objectives defined by the EU²⁷.

In this regard, it must be reminded that the largest expenditures against the first pillar of the EPF are those devoted to the provision, construction and maintenance of infrastructure needed for the accommodation, work and protection of the deployed EU Military Forces and all those related to communications and computer networks, i.e. the bases and barracks for the deployment of EU Headquarters and Units and the means of liaison between them. Due to the long periods of time required for the effective planning and execution of these infrastructures and networks in comparison with the duration of the rotations of the personnel commissioned to the deployed HQs, the drafting, staffing and further control of the execution of the Master Plans for Infrastructure and Communications and Information in each of the missions can only be done efficiently through specialized and permanent Engineers and CIS branches²⁸.

²⁶ Op Cit 1 Article 60 "Implementation of an assistance measure by an operation" & Article 59 "Assistance Measures".

²⁷ Op Cit 1 Article 56 "Objectives and principles" pts 1c and 2a.

²⁸ See paragraph below about operations' duration vs personnel rotations.

Liaison and Coordination

- To ensure the consistency of the Operation's Military Planning with its feasibility, the military planning process should run parallel to the planning and decision cycle of the second pillar of the EPF. In other words, before the military planning process could proceed, the EU would have to share with the Recipient State the conclusions of the analysis of its capabilities regarding its security and defense shortfalls, leading to the establishment of a Support Arrangement at the highest level between the EU and the Recipient State²⁹.
- On the other hand, there are dozens of bodies within the EEAS with responsibility for the EU's substantial financial contributions to cooperation and development in countries eligible for EU military assistance. The Integrated Approach to Military Operations requires close and constant interaction with these bodies, both during planning and during execution of Military Operations, so that the synergy of EU economic efforts in Third Countries is ensured.
- It is worth mentioning the role of the EU Delegations (EUDELS, true embassies of the EU) in the countries where the EU Military Forces are deployed: the absence of Military Attaché Offices in them is a shortcoming that, to date, is mitigated by the Commander of the European Military Force deployed.

In other words, it would be necessary to influence the civilian agencies of the EEAS to achieve synergy of Military Assistance Measures funded under the 2nd pillar of the EPF with the other EU contributions to cooperation and development in the Recipient State.

Operations' Control and Conducting

- Assessment and evaluation of the parameters of compliance and effectiveness of the control measures for approved Military Assistance actions³⁰.
- The actions and tasks of European troops on the ground. The main characteristic of the execution of EUTM missions is their long duration (several years) as opposed to the continuous rotation of the units and personnel of the deployed HQs, whose stay in the Area of Operations rarely exceeds six months; this implies that

²⁹ Op Cit 1 Article 62 "Arrangements with beneficiaries"

³⁰ Op Cit 1 Article 63 "Reporting and follow-up"

continuity in knowledge management and decision-making at the military operational level would be much more effective if they were located in rearguard, in a permanent HQ of that level.

- Physical and financial control and monitoring of the infrastructure and equipment used by the European Forces deployed and acquired with European funds³¹: the large amount of material and equipment, both military and civilian, continuously acquired with funds from the first pillar of the EPF (i.e. not belonging to any particular country) for the benefit of the EU Forces deployed in the different Operations throughout their duration, makes the control and management of these "common" materials a task to which the Military Commanders of the Operations must devote particular attention and effort³². If we add to this the particular rigor of the EU's expenditure monitoring and control measures, it will be very difficult for deployed HQs to properly control the inventories of common materials.

EU OPERATIONAL HEADQUARTERS (EUOHQ) PLACEMENT IN EEAS STRUCTURE

In my view, there are three main factors in considering the organizational dependence of EUOHQ:

- The dependence of the EU Operation's Commander to the High Representative on everything related to Military Assistance Measures³³.
- EUOHQ's integration and interaction with the dozens of agencies that make up the EEAS and actively participate in the EU's Comprehensive Approach to External Actions. Among them, the ISP Department (Integrated approach for Security and Peace), which reports to the Manager Director for Crisis Response (CR) and Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP); in fact, the third section of this Department (ISP.3) is dedicated to their planning: Integrated Strategic Planning for CSDP and Stabilization³⁴.

³¹ Op Cit 1. Article 15 "Operation Commanders" & Chapter 8 "Management of funds and assets".

³² Op Cit 1. Article 15 "Operation Commanders" & Article 54 "Accounting"

³³ Op Cit 1 Article 63 "Reporting and follow-up" & Article 64 "Suspension and termination of assistance measures"

³⁴ EEAS structure: Available at https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/3602/organisation-chart-eeas_en

- The central importance of the planning and management of the EPF's financial resources, which are driven by the political level³⁵, whose visible head is the High Representative, who relies on the fifth section of the ISP Department (ISP.5: European Peace Facility) to lead the processes, receiving support from other EEAS bodies (e.g. EUDELs, MPCC, etc.).

THE EURCORPS HEADQUARTERS IN STRASBOURG: A CANDIDATE SOUND AND READY

Because of its established and consolidated procedures:

- 1) For the collective decision-making of the Strategic Military echelon, embodied in the Common Committee of the Eurocorps, where all the Framework Nations' CHODs meet annually; the decisions taken there are discussed beforehand throughout the year by Expert Officers from their Staffs, in physical and virtual meetings organised by the Eurocorps Staff Branches.
- 2) For multinational budget planning and programming, with a time horizon ranging from medium-term budget forecasting (five years ahead) to detailed programming of expenditure and investments for the following year; procedures that are very similar (and therefore easily adaptable) to those required by the EPF.

Because its permanent structure and capabilities:

- 1) With an Engineers Branch responsible during last 30 years for, among other tasks, planning, budgeting and control of the construction and maintenance of Eurocorps infrastructure in Strasbourg; extending the spatial scope of these tasks to the EU military bases in Mali, CAR, Somalia, etc., would simply require reinforcement of personnel in this Engineers Branch up to reach Crisis Establishment manning.
- 2) With a CIS Branch responsible for the design, daily maintenance and deployment for exercises of the two Eurocorps' owned Command and Control networks, one of which is

³⁵ Op cit 1 Article 11 "Facility Committee"

accredited to host and transmit classified information up to Confidential level, in accordance with NATO and EU security standards.

3) With a Material and Equipment Accounting Cell for those of Eurocorps' ownership (procured with multinational funds and not belonging to any particular Framework Nation) performing inventory control and estimation of the economic value of such materials and equipment throughout their life span; extending these tasks to materials currently in service in EU missions, and those to be procured in the future with the EPF, is easily feasible.

4) With a Procurement Office, used and familiarized to purchasing civilian and military materials and equipment and contracting services with multinational funds both directly and through agencies such as NSPA³⁶.

5) With the Units, means and personnel necessary for the immediate deployment of an Initial Command Element (ICE) capable of exercising Command and Control of the assigned Forces anywhere in the world, and of being the most visible head of the new European strategic autonomy. The deployable vocation of this element makes it ideal to lead the objective of available Forces for action set by the Strategic Compass: the deployment in a hostile zone of a modular Military Force of up to 5,000 men³⁷.

Because of its experience:

- 1) At EU military missions
- 2) At NATO missions
- 3) In Military planning at the Operational and Tactical levels
- 4) In Writing and getting the endorsement of various types of Technical Arrangements between the Eurocorps' Framework Nations.

Because of its history:

The Eurocorps, when created 30 years ago, was the first purely European and fully multinational military instrument of the European Union's Common Security and Defence

³⁶ There is a Technical Arrangement in place for the support from NSPA (NATO Support and Procurement Agency) to the Eurocorps

³⁷ Op Cit 8 "Objectives – Act" pt 1 pag 19.

Policy³⁸. The EU, at this historic moment in time, again needs a pioneer of Common European Military Defence to pave the way for its "Strategic Compass"; if the Eurocorps were to be transformed into Euromcops³⁹, it would once again be that element.

CONCLUSION

For both the planning and the conduct of EPF-funded military operations, a permanent Operational Level HQ dedicated to EU Military Missions Abroad is necessary, with sufficient quantity and quality of personnel to have all the capabilities and to carry out every tasks identified above, on an exclusive, continuous and permanent basis, for each and every EU Military Mission (air, sea, land and joint) and which must be well integrated into the EPF economic decision chain⁴⁰. However, the EU's Strategic Compass does not forecast the current EU military structure to achieve these capabilities until 2025, which opens a window of opportunity for the Eurocorps, as of its 30th birthday, to become the sight of this Compass (where the needle will most likely be the General Directorate for CSDP and crisis response of the EEAS), consolidating itself definitively as the spearhead of the European Union's military tool.

*Jesús Serrano del Río**

Colonel (ESP Army) Engineer, Joint Staffs Graduate
Deputy Chief of the Advisory Task Force to the Malian Armdded Forces within EUTMM
from July to December 2021

³⁸ La Rochelle Report, May 1992

³⁹ EUROpean Military Command for OPerationS

⁴⁰ The latter would be fully achieved if the EUOHQ had dependence on the CR & CSDP Department, without losing (albeit) the functional dependence on the Strategic Military level (embodied in the EUMS) in all matters relating to dimension of European military forces to deploy and determination of the strategic military objectives to achieve.