

Permanent Structured Cooperation and the Future of ESDP

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**PERMANENT STRUCTURED COOPERATION
AND THE FUTURE OF ESDP**

Sven BISCOP



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1. Introduction

The efficiency problem of Europe's armed forces is well known: of an impressive overall number of over two million men and women in uniform in the EU-27, only a meagre 10 to 15% are estimated to be deployable. The causes are manifold: the low cost-effectiveness of a plethora of small-scale capabilities, unnecessary intra-EU duplications, the presence of large numbers of quasi non-deployable conscripts, capability gaps in terms of 'enablers' (strategic transport, command, control and communications), and, although all EU Member States are conscious of the challenge and are implementing measures, slow transformation nonetheless from territorial defence to expeditionary warfare. The question must be asked whether the existing mechanisms, in ESDP as well as NATO, are sufficient to achieve the required transformation within a reasonable timeframe.

This paper will argue (1) that the primary cause of this problematic state of affairs is the still almost exclusively national focus of defence planning, while capability gaps at the aggregate EU- and NATO-level are being ignored, and (2) that the only way to achieve the quantum leap that is necessary to realise defence transformation is through pooling which, by reducing intra-European duplications, can produce much more deployable capabilities within the current combined defence budget. From that point of view, it will analyse the potential of *Permanent Structured Cooperation*,¹ the new mechanism to be established by the Lisbon Treaty for 'those Member States whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions' (Art. 28A §6). One could argue that the solutions to Europe's capability conundrum are in effect well known – the question is whether *PermStrucCoop* can be the platform that convinces the Member States to implement them.

Sven BISCOP²

1. Even in a text as full of jargon as the Treaty on European Union, *Permanent Structured Cooperation* stands out as especially awkward, all the more so as its logical acronym, PSC, already exists, referring to the Political and Security Committee. Even though the latter is widely known as COPS, in order to avoid confusion this article will opt for Soviet-style abbreviation, hence *PermStrucCoop*.

2. Prof. Dr. Sven Biscop is a senior research fellow at Egmont – The Royal Institute for International Relations in Brussels and a visiting professor at the College of Europe in Bruges. The author thanks Daniel Keohane of the EU Institute for Security Studies and various officials in Belgian Defence and Belgian Foreign Affairs for their indispensable comments and suggestions. The text, including its mistakes, is the full responsibility of the author only.

2. *PermStrucCoop* in the Lisbon Treaty

The text of the Treaty certainly is ambitious, which underlines the political significance of *PermStrucCoop* as a statement of conviction vis-à-vis ESDP. The preamble to the Protocol attached to the Treaty that outlines the objectives of *PermStrucCoop* and the criteria for participation speaks of “a more assertive Union role in security and defence matters” and even of “embarking on a new stage in the development of the European security and defence policy”. The Protocol’s Article 1 translates this into two objectives, one general, i.e. to proceed “more intensively” with capability development, and one specific, i.e. to supply (part of) a battle group by 2010.

Article 2 then states how these objectives are to be achieved, or in other words what the Member States willing to take part in *PermStrucCoop* should commit to:

- To agree on objectives for the level of investment in defence equipment;
- To “bring their defence apparatus into line with each other as far as possible”, by harmonizing military needs, pooling, and, “where appropriate”, specialization;
- To enhance their forces’ availability, interoperability, flexibility and deployability, notably by setting “common objectives regarding the commitment of forces”;
- To address the shortfalls identified by the Capability Development Mechanism (CDM), including through multinational approaches;
- To take part, “where appropriate”, in equipment programmes in the context of the European Defence Agency (EDA).

The final Article 3 states that the EDA “shall contribute to” a regular assessment of participating Member States’ contributions.

From the general nature of the wording of the Protocol and the absence of any figures it is evident that the crucial decisions have yet to be made: how to operationalize the commitments of Article 2 and translate them into concrete criteria for participation?

One thing is clear though: *PermStrucCoop* must be inclusive, allowing as many Member States as possible to participate. This was the consensus that emerged from the political debate following initial proposals in the European Convention in 2002 for a “defence Euro-zone”, which had a much more exclusive flavour to them but provoked fears of too deep divisions within the EU.³ Inclusive-

3. European Convention, *Final Report of Working Group VIII – Defence* (CONV 461/02). Brussels, Convention Secretariat, 16 December 2002.

ness seems to be the right choice, for the more Member States participate, the greater the potential for the creation of synergies and effects of scale and thus the more added value. The best *PermStrucCoop* is that at 27, to borrow a Belgian general's *boutade*. An all too exclusive *avant-garde* of just a few like-minded Member States – *if* those could be found – could probably achieve deeper integration and would thus yield more immediate results, but those would equally probably be obscured by the negative political fall-out which it would generate, as it would be likely to widen the intra-EU divide between those more and those less in favour of ESDP. Alternatively, *PermStrucCoop* between France, Germany, the UK, Spain, Italy and Poland, as apparently proposed by certain French and, earlier, Spanish actors,⁴ would not just ignore the potential of the other countries and the proportionately large contributions to ESDP operations of many of them, but, by pitting the “big six” against the smaller Member States, would be very divisive. Such an idea goes directly against the spirit of the European project.

The justifiable choice for inclusiveness carries with it a risk though. It must not lead to setting the bar for participation so low that it no longer entails any commitment to make additional efforts on behalf of the Member States. If one can participate by virtue of one's existing capabilities, without having to undertake to increase the number of deployable forces, *PermStrucCoop* serves no purpose. The challenge therefore is to reconcile inclusiveness and commitment, to agree on criteria that allow all Member States to participate, each at his own level of means, but that do imply a substantial commitment to make available more usable capabilities.

4. Lucia Kubosova, “France to Push for Intervention Force Created by EU Big Six”. In: *EU Observer*, 15 February 2008.

3. Committing Criteria

Attempting to define criteria that reconcile serious commitment with maximum participation, three considerations arise:

1. General budgetary criteria are either evidently unfeasible or by themselves cannot be expected to yield substantial results in terms of accelerated transformation. Setting a defence budget of 2% GDP as threshold for participation e.g. – an often mentioned figure – will lead to *PermStrucCoop* between just France, the UK, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania. For countries like Germany and Belgium, this amounts to almost a doubling of the defence budget – which will not happen. Alternatively, achieving a sound balance between personnel costs, operational costs and investments *within* the defence budget – like the often cited 50-25-25 division – is very laudable, but has been a goal of many Member States for a long time and has not proved to be easily achievable, nor has it directly generated additional capabilities. Limited defence budgets and the need for a socially acceptable solution to personnel issues mean that only a very slow evolution towards the “ideal” balance – if that *überhaupt* exists – is possible.
2. In the same vein, criteria applied to the whole of participating States’ armed forces appear to have limited potential for achieving concrete results within a reasonable timeframe. The objective of 40% deployability and 8% sustainability, i.e. 40% of the armed forces have to be deployable and one fifth of those or 8% of the total must be deployed at any one time, seems equally laudable but has been cited for years, notably with regard to land forces, without triggering substantial improvements. The means for a quantum leap in the whole of the armed forces at once are simply not available in any Member State.
3. For the same reason, it does not seem realistic to demand Member States to fulfil all criteria at the moment of entry into *PermStrucCoop*. The comparison with monetary union can illustrate this: if all convergence criteria had to be fulfilled at the moment of entry, many long-standing members of the Eurozone would still not have been able to join the single currency.

Criteria must be quantifiable and verifiable to have an impact. But for criteria to be achievable by a majority of Member States and to have the potential to drive transformation and produce additional deployable capabilities in the medium term, at the same time:

1. They have to be aimed at precise qualitative objectives.
2. They must apply to the specific capabilities for which Member States undertake commitments in the framework of *PermStrucCoop*, to the precise targets that they set for themselves, rather than to the total of their armed forces.

3. They must be results-oriented commitments, to be realized by an agreed deadline.

The next question then is: which precise qualitative objectives is *PermStrucCoop* to achieve? This must not be answered in terms of input – what is each Member State offering to contribute, i.e. without further ado replicating the bottom-up approach of the Headline Goal, which would simply result in another catalogue of theoretically available forces. The answer must be output-driven, i.e. which *tasks* do the Member States want to be able to do together, *how* do they want to be able to do these, and which sum total of capabilities is needed to that end? The EDA, which is given an important role in the Protocol, can provide this task-oriented basis on which each Member State can found the definition of its objectives in joining *PermStrucCoop*. Of course, these objectives will also be determined by which capabilities are already available, and by how many additional capabilities can realistically be expected. But in which areas the additional capabilities are to be created should be driven by the EDA-identified priorities on the basis of which tasks to be performed and how.

The end-result should be that in an agreed number of years and thus at a quicker pace than at present, in a number of agreed fields, more deployable capabilities are available than today, enabling the EU to implement its military tasks at a higher level than today in terms of numbers of troops and numbers of operations and to do so more effectively and efficiently.

4. Contributing to *PermStrucCoop*

The definition of the tasks to which the objectives of *PermStrucCoop* must be geared is also provided by the Lisbon Treaty, which in Article 28B §1 extends, or perhaps better said, defines in more detail the Petersberg Tasks: basically all military operations, across the full spectrum – including ‘the most demanding missions’, as mentioned in the Protocol – except for collective territorial defence. Within that framework, the broadest guidance, at horizon 2025, is provided by the EDA’s *Long-Term Vision*, which for six broad capability domains – command, inform, engage, protect, deploy and sustain – prescribes the characteristics of future capabilities: synergy, agility, selectivity and sustainability.

Different options for participation then present themselves; each Member State can select one or more of these:

1. The most immediate capability objective is to close the remaining shortfalls in the various specific capability areas listed in the Progress Catalogue. The lowest threshold for a Member State to participate in *PermStrucCoop* would thus be the willingness to contribute to that aim in one or more of those specific capability areas.
2. More broadly, participating Member States could also undertake to increase the deployability of existing units combining a range of capability areas, in other words to contribute a force package – today there exist many formations, often large-scale, that are not deployable and hence do not constitute a capability. E.g. Belgium has set the objective of achieving the deployability of one of its two army brigades, an aim that obviously concerns a number of capability areas. The aim need not necessarily be to create more *stand-by* forces – almost all Member States already fulfil the second objective of *PermStrucCoop*, i.e. taking part in a battle group, while the difficulties of the NATO Response Force (NRF) to achieve its desired strength of 21,000 show that in the current state of European capabilities, too large stand-by forces that are exclusively tied to one organization and cannot be deployed in other frameworks limit rather than enhance Europe’s ability to do operations.
3. More broadly still and existing force structures and capabilities set aside, Member States could adopt a more prospective approach and start planning for future capabilities. In this regard in particular the new Capability Development Plan (CDP) elaborated by the EDA can inform them. The four strands of the CDP are to provide the framework for planning at the national level, to function as a “plan for planning”: the Headline Goal 2010, i.e. existing capability objectives in the short to medium term; the technology trends, informing Member States which capabilities might be possible in the longer term; lessons learnt from operations in various frameworks (ESDP, NATO

etc.); and a database of Member States' current longer term plans and programmes.

Of major importance in all three options is the guidance provide by the EDA, in order to ensure that commitments are anchored in the EU framework, i.e. are focused on the capability shortfalls at the aggregate EU-level that are relevant for the EU's military tasks, rather than being based on national considerations only without reference to combined needs.

Rather than applying to the whole of the participating Member States' armed forces, criteria can then be tailored to the specific contribution each aims to make to *PermStrucCoop* and that regardless of the quantity of a Member State's planned contribution, allowing each to contribute at his own level of means. Thus criteria could set standards for the deployability, sustainability and interoperability of each contribution, however large or small. One can also imagine a minimal per capita investment in defence equipment for each contribution. Setting criteria only makes sense though if capabilities are pre-identified, for otherwise no effective evaluation by the EDA as foreseen in the Protocol is possible. This evaluation must be real indeed, for the Treaty foresees that participating Member States that no longer fulfil the criteria can be excluded. *PermStrucCoop* can build on the experience of the battle groups, which introduced the notion of pre-identified units in ESDP. Setting criteria applying to the specific pre-identified contributions of each Member State will bring real added value as compared to the existing "catalogue system" of ESDP.

5. Contributing through Pooling

Equally important again for all three options is that Member States can choose to achieve the objectives that they set for themselves on a national basis, by improving and creating national capabilities, but can also opt for *pooling* of assets with other participating Member States in order to create multinational capabilities.

One of the main causes of the low deployability of Europe's armed forces is that national thinking still dominates defence planning: most Member States aim to maintain a wide range of *nationally* organized capabilities in army, navy and air force, and take little or no account of EU – or, for that matter, NATO – guidelines in their national decision-making process. But because in most Member States the scale of the armed forces and the size of the defence budget are limited, this leads to what Pilegaard has tellingly dubbed 'mini-mass armies':⁵ Member States maintain the structures of their larger Cold War-time armed forces, but without the numbers below those structures to actually make up all the units. The overall result is one of fragmentation, duplication and very low cost-effectiveness. Only limited quantities of each capability can be maintained, but each small-scale deployable capability needs supporting services and many of the overhead costs are fixed: whether a Member State operates 1 or 100 tanks or fighters – in both cases a base is needed, personnel must be recruited and trained, supplies bought, and the paperwork done... If only 10 to 15% of Member States' armed forces are deployable, it is because small-scale capabilities cannot man a full rotation cycle if full units (battalions, squadrons) are deployed and will afterwards be out of the loop for a longer time or alternatively will only deploy sub-units in very limited numbers. Too large a share of personnel is devoted to overhead and supporting services that are unnecessarily duplicated within the EU – the true duplication debate. The budgets that are absorbed by those unnecessary duplications cannot be spent on the ongoing transformation from territorial defence to expeditionary warfare, which requires investment in equipment, recruitment, and training and manoeuvres – needs that are reflected in the capability shortfalls.

Pooling of assets, which is included in the Protocol on *PermStrucCoop*, appears the only way to overcome this problem of fragmentation and should therefore be actively stimulated. *PermStrucCoop* could thus function as a forum – a marriage agency – identifying opportunities for cooperation between Member States

5. Jess Pilegaard, 'The European Security and Defence Policy and the Development of a Security Strategy for Europe'. In: Jess Pilegaard (ed.), *The Politics of European Security*. Copenhagen, Danish Institute of International Studies, 2004, pp. 11-38.

once they have declared their intention to contribute in one or more areas, through one or more of the options described in §4. Such cooperation can take different forms, from joint procurement projects in order to equip national formations, to the creation of pooled multinational formations, and joint R&T projects. Obviously, pooling cannot be but voluntary. Furthermore, not all Member States participating in *PermStrucCoop* must cooperate in all fields: if Member States A, B, C and D find they share an interest in capability area X and establish a form of cooperation (i), at the same time Member States C, D, E and F can have a shared interest in area Y and cooperate in the form of (i), (ii) or (iii). A number of overlapping clusters would thus emerge, with the EDA responsible for maintaining the overview and evaluating contributions. The fourth strand of the CDP, the database of Member States' plans and programmes, will be of particular importance in this regard. Thus the aim is not that *PermStrucCoop* as a whole would constitute one single – e.g. corps-sized – force package that can be deployed as such. It is a framework, a tool, for capability development, not for operations – although one may reasonably expect those who participate to show more willingness to participate in operations.

In many areas, cooperation, including pooling, does not have to start from scratch but can be based on existing initiatives that can be widened and deepened. The least sensitive field is probably that of training, where many countries already cooperate, e.g. France and Belgium for the training of pilots; additional synergies should be easy to find. In the field of logistics and support, many initiatives exist as well, but more can be done. An interesting model could be the creation of the European Air Transport Command (EATC) by Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands, which will assume effective command over a certain share of the transport aircraft of the participating countries. This example of pooling could be both deepened, by gradually transferring a larger share of national capability to EATC as well as by integrating further fields such as maintenance etc., and widened, by inviting additional countries to participate. In February 2008 the EDA Steering Board notably decided to set up a project team to investigate how to develop a “European Air Transport Fleet” through pooled ownership of the new A400M transport aircraft that several Member States are acquiring.⁶ Fighter aircraft are the next logical field for cooperation: one can imagine that Member States that are struggling to preserve a capability in this area – an objective which in itself is justifiable – could more easily remain active in this field, and like Belgium e.g. could in the future replace their current aircraft, if they pool their efforts to build one multinational fighter force to

6. *EU Governments Seek to Improve Air Transport Capacity for Military Operations*. EDA Press Release, 15 February 2008.

which each participating country contributes (a number of) “national” squadrons but which is supported by single integrated logistics, maintenance etc.

If the actual combat units thus remain national – and there is no need for multinationalization below the squadron or battalion level – synergies can still be found by anchoring these in a multinational structure – wing or brigade – with single multinational support and logistics behind it, creating substantial synergies and effects of scale, as well as integrated command & control arrangements. This can apply to the army as well. The objective of achieving full deployability of a Belgian brigade e.g. can be more easily achieved if that brigade is more fully anchored in the Eurocorps, and the Belgian support structures merged into one Eurocorps structure. Such formats link back to some of the more constructive Convention proposals, which mentioned “participation in multinational forces with integrated command and control capabilities” as a possible focus for *PermStrucCoop*. An added advantage of contributing to *PermStrucCoop* not simply with pre-identified assets, but by pooling those, is that force packages can be created which include pre-identified arrangements and options for command & control – see e.g. the current debate on the role of the Eurocorps’ FHQ – and for strategic transport. In a way, such forms of pooling are a continuation of the battle groups, a major experiment in military integration, but now at a larger scale. The battle groups actually predict the pattern of the clusters that are likely to emerge, for in the battle groups the “usual suspects”, those that have a tradition of working together, have already found each other – witness the battle group based on the framework nations that also constitute the Eurocorps.

Pooling can actually increase Member States’ sovereignty. Today, many Member States on their own are no longer capable of mounting a sizable operation of some duration – the sovereignty that some cling to is largely illusory. Through pooling however, the efficiency of the national defence budgets can be substantially enhanced, i.e. in term pooling will generate more deployable capabilities within the same budget, and will allow Member States to continue to remain active in a broader range of capability fields, but each at his own level of means. Furthermore, it allows them to operate at levels, e.g. the corps, which are beyond the scope of their national armed forces. As essentially command & control and support & logistics would be merged while the frontline battalions and squadrons would each still be composed of one nationality, there would be sufficient flexibility to allow Member States not to commit frontline capabilities to every operation in which the multinational formation takes part; e.g. an integrated FHQ can still run national operations, as is the case in Admiral Benelux, the far-reaching integration of the Dutch and Belgian navies. Vice versa the possibility of contributing only through the multinational command & control or

support structures would make it easier for Member States to support more operations.

As pooling gradually progresses, certain national structures in the field of support and command & control will be abolished in order to be merged into multinational structures, thus deepening integration as compared to most existing multinational formations, such as the Eurocorps today, which apart from small permanent elements – in the case of the Eurocorps, the FHQ – are a catalogue of forces without too many links between them, just as much as ESDP as a whole. If joining a multinational formation means nothing more than a new shoulder patch, no synergies and effects of scale and thus no added value will be created. In term, this process may lead to co-location of certain structures, going beyond HQs, on a reduced number of bases, entailing that for the Eurocorps e.g. a share of Belgian, Spanish and Luxembourg personnel hitherto based in their own countries might find themselves serving in bases in France or Germany. However, as many Member States, including Belgium, have had a very large share of their forces serving abroad, notably in Germany, for several decades, that ought not to pose a problem.

6. An EU-NATO-Neutral Project

PermStrucCoop is about creating more deployable capabilities in Europe, an objective that benefits both ESDP and NATO, as well as the UN, for even if they are generated through pooling, all of these capabilities can be deployed in all of these frameworks. Vice versa, capabilities generated in the NATO framework should also benefit European deployment in an ESDP or UN context, e.g. the initiative by seventeen NATO members and partners to purchase four Boeing C17 transport aircraft in order to create a Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC). In that sense, *PermStrucCoop* is basically neutral vis-à-vis the eternal EU-NATO debate.

That does not mean however that it will not have any effect on the relationship between the two. Currently, coordination on capability development between the EU and NATO is very limited, because of political blockages at the highest level. It is often said that this lack of coordination is less problematic than it seems, because as they identify the same capability gaps, the EU and NATO obviously come up with very similar guidelines. More realistically perhaps it could be said that it is not problematic simply because Member States largely ignore both NATO and EU guidelines anyway – the actual impact of either on national defence planning is marginal. *PermStrucCoop* has the potential to change that, because of the opportunity to set self-defined but concrete and verifiable objectives and to foster cooperation and pooling, and that within the Treaty, thus allowing the active involvement of EU institutions such as the EDA and, more generally, embedding defence in the overall political project of the EU. If *PermStrucCoop* succeeds in realizing that potential, it will have an important and gradually increasing impact on national decisions. The question then is: where does that leave NATO defence planning? In that event, a reconfiguration of defence planning seems in order.

Yet, even such a development need not be seen as a zero-sum game between NATO and the EU. It would rather signal the gradual evolution, already underway, towards a “two-pillar” NATO, composed of two pillars: the US and the EU. These are the two fully-fledged actors, both addressing the whole of foreign policy, from aid and trade to diplomacy and the military, and both building capabilities in all of those areas, which sometimes they will put to use jointly and sometimes not. The decision-making on Lebanon can serve to illustrate the trend: the UN having asked a European contribution to peacekeeping after the 2006 war, the European countries debated this, and decided to act – in the context of the EU, increasingly the political centre of gravity. Once that political decision taken, the framework in which to implement it was chosen – NATO, ESDP or the UN – which is an ad hoc decision, in function of what is most suited

to the case at hand – in the case of Lebanon, to send blue helmets. In view of this trend, and given the problem of the fragmentation of Europe’s defence effort and the potential offered by cooperation and integration among Europeans, it would seem logical that the EU Member States would increasingly build an ever more coordinated defence capacity in the ESDP context, which in those cases where the EU and the US decide to act jointly serves as the European military pillar within NATO.

In such a scenario, the US would lose a degree of influence, for it would be natural for an increasingly capable Europe to expect an increased say in decision-making – eventually one could even imagine the EU speaking with one voice in NATO. But the US would gain a much more capable partner with whom real burden-sharing, a long-standing US demand, would be possible. Recent declarations by Victoria Nuland, US Permanent Representative to NATO, appear to indicate that US thinking might be shifting in this direction.⁷ Pointing to the need for “a Europe that is as united as possible, ready and willing to bear its full measure of responsibility for defending our common security”, Ambassador Nuland called for “a stronger, more capable European defense capacity”, for “an ESDP with only soft power is not enough” – adding that “coalitions of the willing have their limitations”. If this is the course to be followed, the best a US administration could do is simply to tell the more Atlantic-oriented European countries not to worry about the impact on NATO or on their relationship with Washington, not to see things in terms of a zero-sum game, but to go ahead and participate fully in enhancing European capabilities through ESDP, for the US to afterwards have a real partner.

7. Victoria Nuland, Speech at the London School of Economics, 25 February 2008. She gave a similar speech at the Press Club in Paris on 22 February.

7. Looking Forward: An EU Military Strategy?

The primary question underlying *PermStrucCoop* thus is not whether the EU should act through ESDP, NATO or the UN – that will always be an ad hoc decision – but what the EU’s military level of ambition is. What does Europe as a whole want to be able to do? Yet this is precisely where today there is a lack of vision: the Petersberg Tasks define the types of operations the EU wants to undertake, but not the scale. Quantitatively, ESDP is still limited to the 1999 Headline Goal, i.e. the aim to be able to project and sustain for a year 60,000 troops, which of course requires 3 times as many front-line troops, in view of rotation, plus the various support services. But, there is no vision on the total combined armed forces of the EU-27 – 2 million troops. Furthermore, if all ongoing operations in which EU Member States participate are counted, Europe already today deploys more than 60,000.

This means that even if today a task- or output-oriented approach to *PermStrucCoop* is adopted, capability development is still to some extent taking place in a void, because the official ambition in terms of output relates only to the Headline Goal – not to the 2 million. It also means that there is a missing link between capability development and the overall political objectives defined in the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS), which are very ambitious: “Europe should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security”. But what does that responsibility entail, in concrete terms? Ideally therefore, a wider political decision is in order, translating the ESS in a military level of ambition based on the full military potential of all Member States: whether they act through ESDP, NATO or the UN, how many forces should the EU-27 be able to muster for crisis management as well as for long-term peacekeeping, which reserves does this require, and which capacity must be maintained for territorial defence? Such a military – or perhaps better, civil-military – sub-strategy to the ESS would constitute a much more concrete framework within which the CDP can guide Member States’ efforts, be they national or multinational.

8. Summary and Conclusion

PermStrucCoop can be a very flexible instrument, allowing all EU Member States to participate, if they so choose, at their own level of means, in the way that they choose:

- Member States wanting to take part can declare which contribution, of which size, in which timeframe they are considering: in which specific capability areas, and/or with which force packages, and/or with regard to which longer-term, future capabilities.
- Simultaneously, the participating Member States, with the support of the EDA, can agree on criteria that apply to each specific contribution, regardless of size, in terms of deployability, sustainability, interoperability and per capita investment in equipment.
- The EDA can then assess the opportunities for different forms of cooperation and pooling in function of Member States' declared intentions, allowing Member States to decide which contributions they will offer on a national basis and which in cooperation, in which format, with other Member States.
- This will result in a set of concrete capability objectives, to be achieved by pre-identified units, some national, some multinational, in an agreed timeframe.
- The EDA is responsible for monitoring progress and assessing contributions against the agreed criteria and the evolving needs, as well as continuously updating and proposing opportunities for cooperation, in function of the CDP.

PermStrucCoop is not the silver bullet that will solve all problems of Europe's military. But because it is in the Treaty and Member States therefore have to consider whether and how to make use of it, it presents a window of opportunity to further ESDP. If a critical mass of Member States willing to go ahead with *PermStrucCoop* can be found, the desire to "be in" will probably lead many others to participate. Once in, peer pressure and the need to avoid exclusion for no longer fulfilling the criteria should stimulate Member States' efforts. The only "carrot" that can stimulate Member States to set demanding criteria in the first place however is the one that should appeal to Finance Ministers: the potential of increasing the efficiency of the defence budget. *PermStrucCoop* is not an end in itself, but a means towards generating more deployable forces – which itself is only a means towards deploying Europe's forces in the service of global peace and security. Ultimately therefore, even if the capabilities are available, political willingness, to commit troops where necessary and to act as EU, is the key. But the more integrated Europe's military capabilities will be, the more EU Member States will be pushed to act as one.

