

Position Paper

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Country: France Role: Foreign Minister Topic: CFSP

1. Introduction:

As numerous crises of both a man-made and natural variety consistently menace the European Union and the international community, EU officials, often lacking the organizational wherewithal to deal with such crises, continually scramble to coordinate speedy responses and fully utilize their resources at home and abroad. Despite various competency strongholds maintained by the EU, current events remind member states that security remains of paramount concern and must be a shared responsibility. In the wake of major man-made and natural crises shaking the very foundations of European security and prosperity, the time is ripe for major reforms to the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. France, committed to both the creation of a Common Crisis Response Center and the introduction of obligatory participation in EU battlegroups, stands united in support for these pressing CFSP reforms.

Heard by many as a deafening call for a more robust European response, the 2013 Ebola outbreak revealed major fault lines in the EU's ability to provide an immediate, coordinated, and planned response in the event of a disaster. While French President François Hollande possessed the means to commit soldiers to Southern Guinea in September, 2014 (the origin of the 2013 virus outbreak), France could not tackle the crisis alone; a problem exasperated by the fact that the whole of the European response proved too little too late, lacking in both coordination and adequate action.¹ Taking this example into consideration, an EU Crisis Response Center is essential; the proposed Crisis Response Center would provide coordination among EU member states, ultimately allowing the EU to assume a central role as an international actor in providing timely, cohesive, and effective responses to issues of global concern. Additionally, a permanent headquarters would permit member states to effectively pool their resources during a time of financial austerity; a luxury that the current and costly practice of rotating the Operational Headquarters from member state to member state fails to allow. France, possessing a formidable Situation Center of its own, dedicated to providing the country with real-time information on events abroad while coordinating humanitarian policy, understands the benefits of a central center charged with delivering security and risk assessment intelligence. France thereby supports the creation of a permanent center at the EU level.²

¹ Andrew Higgins, "European Leaders Scramble to Upgrade Response to Ebola Crisis," *The New York Times*, October 8, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/09/world/european-leaders-scramble-to-upgrade-response-to-ebola-crisis.html>.

² "The Crisis Centre - France-Diplomatie - Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development," accessed January 22, 2015, <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-158/the-crisis-centre/>.

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2. Position:

As a co-creator of the battlegroup (or tactical group) concept aimed to ameliorate Europe's notoriously lethargic response to crises by grouping units of 1,500 soldiers deployable at a moment's notice, France believes that the concept, outlined in partnership with Britain in 2004, provides the EU with an opportunity to streamline security and defense responsibilities.³ Evinced by the successful 2008 deployment of EU troops to the war-torn areas of Chad and the Central African Republic, a collective European response remains feasible, hinting at the enormous potential of a reformed CFSP; after all, the European Union Force Chad/CAR mission, 3,700 troops strong, owed its success to the cooperation of a total of 23 EU member states before the operation's scheduled handover to UN forces took place on March 15, 2009.⁴

Yet battlegroups themselves, while officially launched in 2007, have yet to be used as European officials continually scale back military ambitions "amid dwindling defense budgets," ultimately failing to put battlegroups to their intended use.⁵ As a result, France, a leader in defense, repeatedly finds itself "alone at the front."⁶ The 2013 French intervention in Mali provides a noteworthy example of this. Despite the existence and readiness of the "Weimar battlegroup," spearheaded by Poland with contributions from France and Germany, only the French provided troops in an attempt to push back against militants in the area.⁷ With a demand for force abroad and a platform to streamline and provide a European response in the form of battlegroups, the failure to utilize the available rapid-response units remains erroneous and detrimental to the security of France, the EU, and the global community.

3. Plan of action:

France, bearing in mind the aforementioned positions, supports the two CFSP reforms presented by the Presidency and suggests the following proposals:

- I. France supports the creation of a single, Operational Headquarters as a common Crisis Response Center in Brussels, Belgium; furthermore, France supports the creation of such a center not only to bolster a sense of cooperation among international institutions but also to ensure the integration of various individual member state competencies in the realm of security intelligence while best pooling each member states' financial resources during a time of financial austerity.

³ "The Depressing Saga of Europe's Battle Groups," *Carnegie Europe*, accessed January 26, 2015, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=53975>.

⁴ "EU@UN - EU Council Conclusions on Operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA," accessed January 28, 2015, http://eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_8570_en.htm.

⁵ "France and Germany Seek to Revive EU Defense Policy," accessed January 26, 2015, <https://euobserver.com/defence/121009>.

⁶ "Europe in a Foreign Field," *The Economist*, January 19, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21569718-europeans-ability-deploy-force-abroad-falling-mali-shows-it-still-needed-europe>.

⁷ "Europe in a Foreign Field."

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- a. To finance the creation of the center, France insists on an expansion within the CFSP.
- II. France thoroughly supports the strengthening of the military arm of the Crisis Response System in insisting that EU battlegroups be made obligatory for member states. This obligation will ensure that current resources are utilized to their fullest capacity. France believes that the EU, as an established international actor, cannot continue to rely on NATO or the United States for defensive purposes, especially given the latter's intention to "intensify its role in the Asia-Pacific region," leaving Europe to deal with affairs in its own neighborhood.⁸
 - a. To supply the manpower for the battlegroups, France suggests that each member state contribute personnel proportionate to its capacity to contribute.
 - b. Larger assets may be contributed on a case by case basis depending on the capacity of the individual member state to contribute. Additionally, France supports the prioritization of EU assets over non-EU military assets (for example, those belonging to NATO).
 - c. France supports an expansion within the CFSP to pay for larger the assets required for the successful operation of these battlegroups.
 - III. Lastly, to enable cooperative defense and promote the progression of policy, France calls for constructive abstention in both agenda items, thereby allowing member states to abstain from a vote without barring a unanimous decision.

To bolster European security, stability, and prosperity, member state cooperation remains essential. Committed to both the creation of a Common Crisis Response Center and the introduction of obligatory participation in EU battlegroups, France stands united in support for the pressing CFSP reforms currently listed on the Working Agenda. It is our hope that negotiations will lead to member state consensus and initiate new opportunities for further growth, integration, and prosperity in the realms of security and defense policy. Various crises show the pressing need for such cooperation. Now is the time for the European Union to assume a central role as an international actor in current and pressing global affairs.

⁸ "France and Germany Seek to Revive EU Defense Policy."