Clingendael
Netherlands Institute of International Relations

Policy Brief

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DECEMBER 2019

Another solution with added value?

The European Intervention Initiative as a new kid on the block of multinational defence cooperation

European defence cooperation is characterised by a plethora of initiatives, in multilateral frameworks (the European Union, NATO) and in smaller bilateral or multinational formats. The European Intervention Initiative (EI2) is the latest kid on the block in European efforts to enhance defence cooperation. Earlier this year, the authors published a Clingendael Report on EI2.[1] The Report compared the national strategic cultures of the ten countries that had joined EI2 at that time to find entry points for strategic cultural convergence.

The aim of this Policy Brief is to assess how EI2 fits in the wider landscape of European defence cooperation formats.[2] The authors start by sketching the major European military cooperation formats, established in the last decade. Their main characteristics will be described. Next, they will be assessed on the basis of several success and failure criteria, making use of a Clingendael Report from 2016.[3] Consequently, the authors analyse the coherence and complementarity of these operational cooperation formats and how they relate to the EU and NATO – which is the key objective of this Policy Brief. Finally, the authors list several concluding recommendations on bringing more cohesion in the wider landscape of European military forces.

European military cooperation

The militaries of European countries operate together in multilateral organisations – the EU, NATO and the UN primarily – or in coalitions of the willing such as the anti-ISIS coalition. In order to be better prepared, trained and interoperable for real-life deployment they cooperate in all kinds of frameworks: e.g. in standby forces such as the EU Battlegroups or the NATO Response Force (NRF), but also in multinational formations. The Eurocorps, the Franco-German Brigade and the 1st (German-Netherlands) Corps are examples of the latter, all of them established in the late 1980s and in the 1990s. In the last decade austerity, the thinning of armed forces and the recognition that no European country has adequate forces to deal with all possible

1 Dick Zandee, Kimberley Kruijver, *The European Intervention Initiative – Developing a shared strategic culture for European defence*, Clingendael Report, September 2019.
2 Capability development cooperation (collaborative research & technology, the development and procurement of equipment, defence industrial production) is excluded.
3 Margriet Drent, Rob Hendriks, Dick Zandee, *Defence cooperation models. Lessons learned and usability*, Clingendael Report, October 2016.

scenarios on its own have resulted in several new multinational defence collaborations.[4] The Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, the Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nation Concept are examples of newly created and most sizeable multinational forces, involving Europe's largest military powers: France, Germany and the United Kingdom (UK). The European Intervention Initiative is the odd one out: its aim is not to establish a new military formation. EI2 will not create a European Intervention Force. Nevertheless, the question can be posed how EI2 could relate to the CJEF, the JEF and the FNC. A closer look at all four will help to answer the question.

The *Combined Joint Expeditionary Force* (CJEF) has been established under the Franco-British Lancaster House Treaty of 2010 that provides the overall context of the security and defence cooperation between the two countries. According to the Treaty the CJEF will be suitable "for a wide range of scenarios up to and including high intensity operations. (..) It will not involve standing forces but will be available at short notice for bilateral, NATO, European Union, United Nations or other operations."[5] The CJEF can operate for up to three months. Components of the CJEF are: a maritime component up to a naval task force; a land component of at least a UK battlegroup and a French battlegroup; an air component comprising an expeditionary air wing; and a logistics component serving both UK and French forces.[6] Over the years several exercises have been held, including by the Airborne CJEF (A-CJEF), consisting of the British 16 Air Assault Brigade and the French 11e Brigade Parachutiste.[7] The British support to the French counter-terrorism Operation Barkhane in the Sahel area can be seen as an offshoot of the CJEF.[8] According to the latest Franco-British Summit the CJEF "will deliver a force that could number over 10,000 with Full Operational Capability in crisis management operation involving early entry in a potentially hostile territory by 2020."[9]

The *Joint Expeditionary Force* (JEF) is led by the UK. The initiative dates back to late 2012. In June 2018 nine countries[10] signed the Comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding (C-MoU) that made the JEF fully operational. The JEF is not a standing force, but "a concept that draws on a pool of high readiness forces from the UK and like-minded Partner Nations to provide military options in peacetime or crisis."[11] Four different force types of the JEF exist: (i) UK national, calling on UK JEF forces; (ii) JEF PN (partner nations) with the UK as the framework nation[12] leading a JEF PN operation; (iii) Coalition/ Alliance framework, where the UK and PN are supporting a larger international operation such as in the NATO context; (iv) CJEF framework where the UK is in joint lead with France. The JEF can be used in all kinds of operations, from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to combat operations. The British national combat contribution to the JEF is delivered by 16 Air Assault Brigade and 3 Commando Brigade, capable of airborne as well as amphibious assault operations. Other JEF nations contribute with amphibious forces (the Netherlands) or land combat

4 Eva Hagström and Emma Sjökvist, *Military Cooperation Around Framework Nations – A European Solution to the Problem of Limited Defence Capabilities*, FOI-R-4672-SE, February 2019.

5 *UK-France Summit 2010 Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation*, 2 November 2010, paragraph 8.

6 https://military.wikia.org/wiki/Combined_Joint_Expeditionary_Force.

7 *British and French paratroopers ready for joint operations,* https://www.army.mod.uk/news-and-events/news/2018/11/british-and-french-paratroopers-ready-for-joint-operations/.

8 David Reynolds, 'Shaping the future – Briefing The UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force', in: *Defense News*, 27 February 2019, p.23.

9 *United Kingdom-France Summit Communique*, Royal Military Sandhurst, 18 January 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674880/2018_UK-FR_Summit_Communique.pdf.

10 Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

11 *The Joint Expeditionary Force – June 2018,* Ministry of Defence, https://kam.lt/download/64335/jef-booklet.pdf. Subsequent details on the JEF in this section are from the same source document unless indicated otherwise.

12 A framework nation provides the core element of a multinational formation, to which other participating countries can plug in their contributions.

units (e.g. Denmark and Lithuania).[13] NATO describes the JEF as a "rapidly deployable force capable of conducting the full spectrum of operations, including high intensity operations".[14] In terms of size the JEF has the ability to deploy an integrated joint force of up to 10,000 troops for smaller "niche" up to joint medium-sized operations.[15] In 2014 a joint British-led operation with the participation of Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands was organised, following the Ebola outbreak in West-Africa. This Operation Gridlock took place before the JEF was formally established, but it showed the potential of a rapidly deployable multinational force built around a UK core.[16]

The *Framework Nation Concept* (FNC) was adopted by NATO in 2014 with the aim of setting up a multinational formation for "the joint development of forces and capabilities required by the Alliance" under the leadership of a framework nation.[17] The FNC under German leadership provides a structured framework for both joint capability development among European states and the setting up of larger formations of forces. It encompasses 21 participants (NATO and non-NATO member countries).[18] The original aim was to focus on identified capability shortfalls in the NATO Defence Planning Process through a structured approach. Since 2014 – the year of the Russian annexation of the Crimea – Germany has redirected the FNC to be more closely connected to collective defence and the generation of follow-on forces for NATO's Eastern flank. Thus, the FNC intends to create a robust multinational capacity – which contributes to NATO's deterrence and defence posture – to counter the Russian threat. However, according to a 2018 planning document for the German Armed Forces, the FNC will ultimately also contribute to achieving the EU's level of ambition.[19]

By 2032, the FNC must lead to combined and joint forces consisting of three mechanised divisions, each capable of commanding up to five armoured brigades.[20] In the air domain Germany has offered to set up a Multinational Air Group (MAG), capable of conducting 350 sorties per day. Germany would make its four tactical wings available to the MAG and provide 75% of its forces. In the maritime domain the Baltic Maritime Component Command (BMCC) has been proposed as a multinational HQ, co-located with the German national maritime HQ in Rostock. The BMCC should become part of the NATO force structure. A Joint Logistical Support Group (located in Carlstedt, Germany), and a Multinational Medical Coordination Centre (Koblenz, Germany) will also be created. Ten NATO members have already started to link forces up to brigade level to the German land force structure. The Netherlands, Norway and Poland have the closest defence cooperation with the German Armed Forces.[21]

The *European Intervention Initiative* (EI2) is the most recent defence cooperation format somehow related to operational output. It was launched by President Emmanuel Macron in September 2017. Originally consisting of nine founding members, the number of EI2 participants has grown in a short timespan to twelve.[22] When Italy joins in the short term, this number will be thirteen. The ultimate aim of EI2 is to

13 David Reynolds, p. 24.
14 *Wales Summit Declaration*, NATO Press Release, 5 September 2014.
15 Eva Hagström Frisell and Emma Sjökvist, p.29.
16 David Reynolds, p. 24.
17 Wales Summit Declaration, para 67. The Framework Nation Concept was endorsed at the NATO Wales Summit based on three initiatives under the respective framework nations Germany, Italy and the UK. The FNC led by Germany is still labelled FNC, while the UK-led FNC is known under its name JEF.
18 Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland.
19 *Konzeption der Bundeswehr*, Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 2018, p. 8.
20 Eva Hagström Frisell and Emma Sjökvist, p. 23.
21 Eva Hagström Frisell and Emma Sjökvist, p. 19-21.
22 Originally France's invitation was accepted by: Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. These nine countries signed the EI2 Letter of Intent in June 2018. Finland joined later that year. Norway and Sweden joined in September 2019.

create 'a shared strategic culture' between the respective countries. In practice, EI2 is "about the enhancement of the ability of the participating European states to respond to future threats and crises so that, whenever necessary, European security interests can be better and faster protected within the chosen institutional frameworks."[23] EI2 can thus assist the EU, NATO, the UN, and coalitions of the willing.[24] However, this initiative stands outside of the existing structures of NATO and the EU. In essence, EI2 entails the enhancement of the ability to respond to future threats and crises. The aim of enhanced interaction between participating countries focuses on four main fields: 1) strategic foresight and intelligence sharing, 2) scenario development and planning, 3) support to operations, and 4) lessons learned and doctrine. The format is flexible, pragmatic, non-binding and resource-neutral whereby each member can initiate thematic or geographically oriented working groups. France has deliberately aimed for shared ownership, which is visible in thematic working groups such as on the Caribbean (led by the Netherlands), the Baltic Sea area (Estonia), the Sahel region (France). So far, two meetings at the level of EI2 Ministers of Defence have taken place: in June 2018 in Paris and in September 2019 in Hilversum, the Netherlands.

All four formats have a top-down political steering model combined with bottom-up military expert working structures. Naturally, the CJEF and JEF – which are regularly exercised and parts of which may be made available to e.g. the NRF – are more visible than the FNC or EI2 activities.

23 Dick Zandee, Kimberley Kruijver, p. 2.

24 Letter of Intent between the Defence Ministers of Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom concerning the development of the European Intervention Initiative (EI2), signed 24 June 2018.

Applying success and failure criteria

In 2016 the Clingendael Institute issued a report containing an extensive analysis of success and failure factors for multinational defence cooperation, focussing on operational formats.[25] Fifteen success and failure criteria were assessed, resulting in a more nuanced approach to their application based on five case studies.[26] The outcome of the 2016 report point to the following five factors as the most important success factors: (i) trust, confidence and solidarity; (ii) similarity of strategic culture, in particular for high-end interventions; (iii) the number of participants, in particular for combat formations; (iv) the combination of top-down political-military steering and bottom-up engagement of the military experts; (v) realism, clarity and seriousness of intentions. The four European military formats in this Policy Brief have been assessed and compared on the basis of these five factors. For deeper defence cooperation – including mutual dependencies – defence

25 Margriet Drent, Rob Hendriks, Dick Zandee, *Defence cooperation models. Lessons learned and usability*, Clingendael Report, October 2016.

26 The five case studies were: the Eurocorps, the Franco-German Brigade, the European Air Transport Command, the Belgian-Netherlands Navy Cooperation (Benesam) and Baltic Air Policing. The full list of fifteen criteria with a short appreciation: (1) trust, confidence and solidarity – the basis for success; (2) sovereignty and autonomy – not black and white; (3) similarity of strategic cultures – important, not crucial; (4) geography and history – influential but adaptable; (5) number of participants – the more, not always the better; (6) countries and forces of similar size and quality – not a golden rule; (7) top-down and bottom-up – both needed; (8) mindset, defence culture and organisation – very helpful indeed; (9) defence planning alignment – hand in hand with the deepest forms of cooperation; (10) standardisation and interoperability – multipliers for cooperation; (11) realism, clarity and seriousness of intentions – no doubt, required; (12) involvement of parliaments – case dependent; (13) EU or NATO deployment – possible adaptation problems; (14) international organisation as the guarantor of a capability – important in operational role specialisation; (15) costs – low, zero or reducing.

planning alignment, standardisation and interoperability are essential success factors, in particular by operating the same equipment. Other factors can play an important role as well, but are less decisive for the success or failure of multinational military cooperation.

Applied to the four European military formats, the following can be concluded:

- The **CJEF** scores positively on all five criteria. France and the UK perceive each other as trustworthy partners based on a long history of military operational cooperation. They share a comparable strategic culture: an expeditionary mentality and experience, including a readiness to conduct high-intensity operations when required.[27] The bilateral format keeps the number of participants at two, while the context of the Lancaster House Treaty assures top-down steering with bottom-up expertise. Finally, both countries are realistic and serious in terms of their intentions. As both operate different equipment, at least concerning major weapon systems, the format is less suitable for deeper defence cooperation at lower levels – at least for the moment.

- The **JEF** scores positively on most criteria. The Nordic countries and the Baltic States cooperate closely together. The same applies to the Netherlands and the UK, in particular in the naval area (including both marine corps). Trust, confidence and solidarity can be considered as high. The strategic cultures vary among the participants, in particular when it comes to the contribution to specific types of crisis management operations. For example, Finland has no record of participation in high-end interventions while Norway rarely deploys military forces for humanitarian support operations overseas. It should be noted that the flexible character of the JEF, whereby countries can 'plug in' and 'plug out' their armed forces, nullifies this failure factor. The JEF can operate with partner nations in a flexible manner as well. The number of participants (nine) is considerable. However, many partner nations have a long-standing military cooperation with framework nation the UK. The top-down and bottom-up combination is ensured. Participants share realism, clarity and seriousness, as shown e.g. in their contributions to and participation in exercises. Deeper forms of cooperation are only possible between a lower number of JEF participants, e.g. between the British and Dutch marines with their long-standing bilateral cooperation.

- The scores of the **FNC** led by Germany are mixed on the five criteria, but failure factors tend to turn into success factors due to the Concept's flexibility – i.e. that participants can hook up individually to the German core forces. Trust, confidence and solidarity are strong between some of the participating countries, but weaker between others also due to lower levels of cooperation in the past. The same applies to strategic culture, which is certainly not fully shared due to the large number of 21 participants, located in geographically wide-spread territory. On the other hand, the focus shift of the FNC to collective defence by contributing to NATO's follow-on forces reduces these risks as the impact of diverging strategic cultures primarily impacts on the willingness to deploy forces outside Europe, in particular in high-intensity operations. More attention to Article 5 will also favour the combination of political-military top-down steering and bottom-up military planning expertise to overcome the more bureaucratic orientation that the FNC originally had. Realism, clarity and seriousness of intent exist among all participants, as demonstrated by the willingness to contribute to the NATO deterrence and defence posture. The large format as such is unsuitable for deeper defence cooperation, but this is not the case within the FNC on a bilateral basis – such as between Germany and the Netherlands.

- The **EI2** also has a mixed score on the five criteria, but the format's flexibility balances the potential failure factors as different subgroups can exist within the overall EI2 context. Trust, confidence and solidarity exist. On the other hand strategic culture divergence

27 Dick Zandee, Kimberley Kruijver, p. 20.

– in particular regarding attitudes to high-intensity interventions outside Europe – makes EI2 as a group less coherent.[28] However, the flexible nature of cooperating in subgroups allows for the alignment of the like-minded participants. Furthermore, this factor is less important at the moment as EI2 is not an operational format. Top-down and bottom-up cooperation is well-organised. Realism and seriousness of intentions seem to vary between some of the EI2 participants, but, once more, it is not a show-stopper due to the flexibility of the format. The same applies to deepening defence cooperation.

In more general terms: small is still beautiful (CJEF), but formats with a larger composition can be successful when they offer enough flexibility in terms of operational deployment (JEF) or operational planning activities (FNC, EI2).

Organising European military forces

The armed forces of European countries have territorial defence tasks – collective and/or national – and they also contribute to crisis management operations outside Europe.[29] NATO remains the cornerstone for collective defence and even non-NATO countries such as Finland and Sweden are regularly participating in exercises organised by the Alliance. Crisis management operations are carried out by the EU and NATO or by other multilateral organisations such as the UN. Coalitions of the willing are organised under a lead nation and, in most cases, used for interventions at the high-end of the spectrum. The anti-ISIS air campaign coalition, led by the United States, is the most recent example.

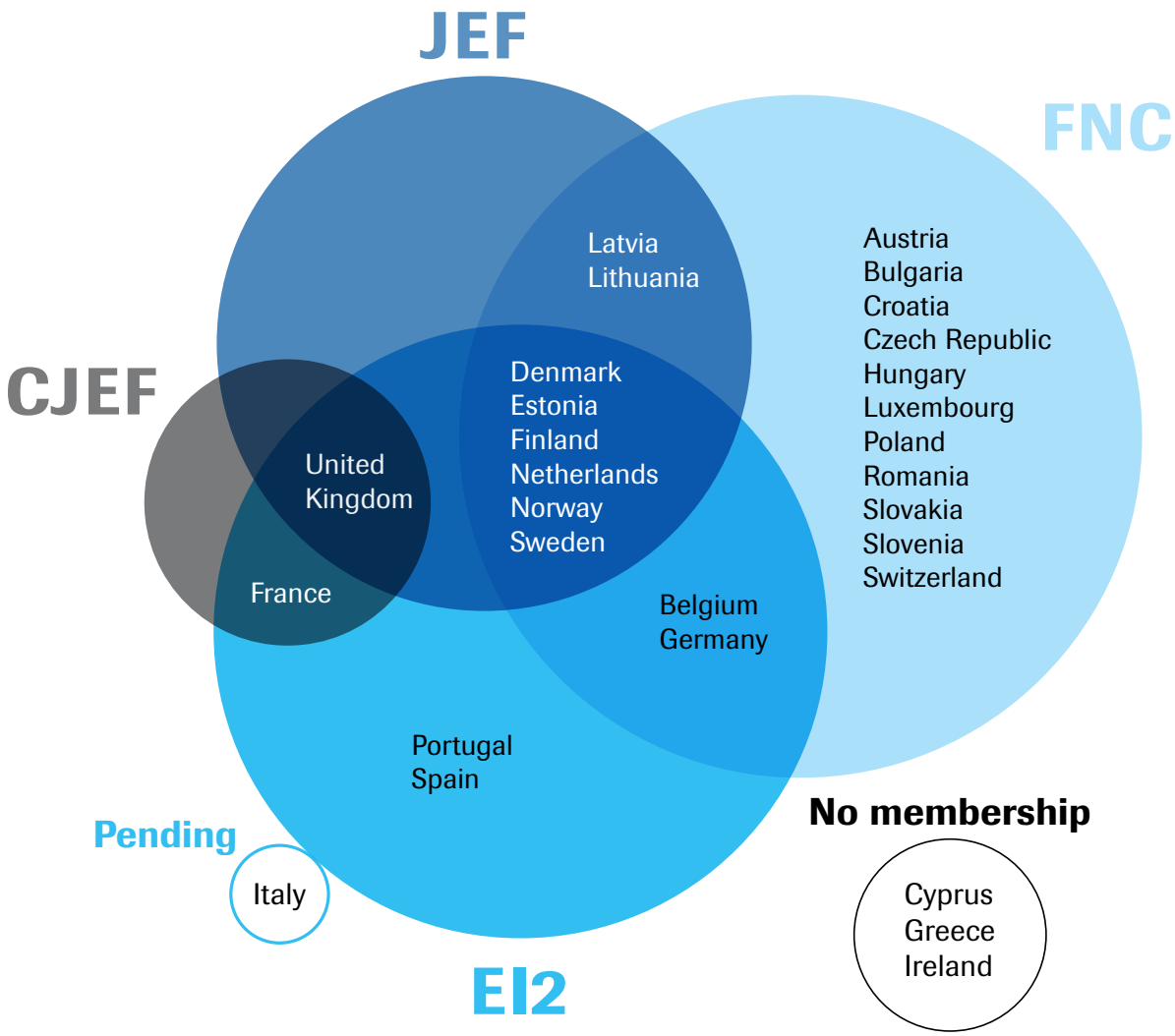
The three European operationally oriented formats analysed in this Policy Brief – the CJEF, the JEF and the German-led FNC – are principally suited to contribute to operations in all these international frameworks. However, there is a difference with regard to the scenarios they are focussing on in terms of planning and, in applicable cases, training and exercises. The CJEF and the JEF are very comparable in that respect. They both deliver initial entry capabilities, suited to operations across the whole spectrum. Both could be deployed in crisis situations for NATO's Article 5 core task, but the NRF already has the task of rapid deployment to reinforce the defence of Allied territory. By their very nature the CJEF and JEF – in particular their highly mobile components – are very suitable for deployment outside Europe, up to interventions at the high-end of the spectrum. The multi-service character (sea, land, air components) provides the CJEF and the JEF with flexibility with regard to land/air- or sea-dominated scenarios. The German FNC is oriented on strengthening the Alliance's follow-on forces for collective defence. Its focus is on constructing multinational heavy land/air forces and a maritime component for a dedicated region (the Baltic region). The FNC will become part of the NATO force structure, which underlines its Article 5 function. EI2 is not a format establishing a multinational military formation, but rather a forum focused on enhancing the ability to respond to future threats and crises. Thus, it can support the possible deployment of forces, e.g. by strategic foresight and scenario planning activities.

Memberships of the four formats partly overlap as depicted in figure 1. France and the UK are in the core circle, which can be seen as Europe's key expeditionary force available for all scenarios. The JEF in any PN composition brings other like-minded European partners into the European expeditionary capability with further multiplier effect if deployed in the CJEF framework or in another international coalition or organisation. The FNC creates a European key capability for collective defence follow-on forces and is becoming a central element of the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture. EI2 supports rapid deployment of forces for various scenarios.

28 Dick Zandee, Kimberley Kruijver, p. 20.

29 Additionally, in most countries the armed forces have another task, i.e. to support the civil authorities in charge of national security such as in the case of natural disasters.

Figure 1 European membership of the CJEF, JEF, EI2 and FNC



In terms of their functions the CJEF, JEF and FNC are complementary: the CJEF and the JEF with a primary focus on initial entry in any scenario, be it in the EU, NATO, UN or in a coalition of the willing, while the FNC will first and foremost deliver a dedicated Article 5 capability for NATO. The JEF gives the UK the option to lead an operation on its own or with partner nations. British forces in the JEF can also contribute to the CJEF. So far, the JEF partner nations have not been involved in CJEF exercises, which might be a consideration for the future once the CJEF has been declared fully operational in 2020.

In terms of membership the participation of non-NATO countries (Austria, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland) in the FNC is raising questions about its focus on NATO's Article 5 collective defence mission, though the flexible plug in-plug out character allows for their exclusion of the FNC listing in the

Alliance's force posture. Germany's absence in the JEF is in line with the country's military orientation on collective defence as the main driver for defence planning and the restructuring of the *Bundeswehr* in the next decade. However, the German participation in EI2 seems to contradict the territorial defence focus to a certain extent. As stated in the first Clingendael EI2 report, German participation in EI2 had other reasons, i.e. a legitimising role. One could also argue that EI2 offers a format in which Germany can be influenced to become more expeditionary oriented in its thinking about future European defence cooperation.[30]

The debate on European defence cooperation is often blurred by the advocacy for or a rejection of an European Army. In reality, there is no European Army in the make but *European military forces* of various compositions and with a different primary operational focus already exist. The four formats analysed in this Policy Brief are examples of such European military forces – once more with the caveat that EI2 is source-neutral and not aimed at creating a European intervention force. The similarity of the CJEF and the JEF – expeditionary, suitable for all scenarios in all possible theatres – make both formations very suitable for crisis management. In that sense they could be considered as the core of a *European Intervention Force*. The German-led FNC with its focus on strengthening follow-on forces for NATO's collective defence can be seen as a *European Collective Defence Force*. Together they can constitute the core force components of the European part of a better burden-sharing in the Alliance, which can be further expanded in the future. At the same time they could deliver the key elements of European military capability to back up EU strategic autonomy, albeit substantial investment will be required to provide Europe with all the enabling and high-end forces in that role.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. The Franco-British Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) and the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) deliver two formations that are very suitable for initial entry operations. They can be deployed in all scenarios and to all theatres, inside and outside Europe. The CJEF and JEF can be seen as the core of a *European Intervention Force.*

2. A next step in the development of the CJEF should be to involve the JEF partner nations in future exercises and other CJEF activities.

3. The German-led Framework Nation Concept (FNC) is part of NATO's force posture and provides the cooperation model for planning and constructing a key European contribution to the Alliance's follow-on forces for Article 5 territorial defence. The FNC delivers a key *European Collective Defence Force.*

4. The CJEF, the JEF and FNC together constitute core elements of the European military capability contributing to *a better Transatlantic burden-sharing* as well as to the construction of *an EU autonomous capacity* in the area of security and defence.

5. The European Intervention Initiative (EI2) is not meant to deliver operational formations, but has the purpose to enhance the ability to respond to future threats and crises. By conducting strategic foresight and scenario planning, this format could help to prepare any deployment of multinational European forces, but *results of EI2 activities should in particular feed into the CJEF, JEF and FNC formats as well into the EU and NATO*.

30 Dick Zandee, Kimberley Kruijver, p. 4.

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Disclaimer: This Report has been commissioned by the Netherlands Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence within the PROGRESS framework agreement, lot 4, 2019. Responsibility for the contents and for the opinions expressed rests solely with the authors; publication does not constitute an endorsement by the Netherlands Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence.