

Joachim Koops · Johannes Varwick

# Ten Years of SHIRBRIG

Lessons Learned, Development Prospects  
and Strategic Opportunities for Germany

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# Table of Contents

<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS SHIRBRIG? .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 Background and Origins: SHIRBRIG in Historical Context .....	7
1.2 Organizational Structure and Membership .....	11
1.3 Aims and Mandate .....	15
1.4 SHIRBRIG in Flux? .....	16
<b>2. SHIRBRIG’S MISSIONS, ACTIVITIES, AND LESSONS LEARNED .....</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1 Military Missions .....	17
2.2 SHIRBRIG’s African Capacity Building: ECOBRIG and EASBRIG .....	21
2.3. Lessons Learned .....	22
<b>3 SHIRBRIG’S LIMITATIONS AND CURRENT CHALLENGES .....</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 Limitations .....	23
3.2 Current Challenges .....	24
<b>4. SHIRBRIG’S VALUE AND FUTURE POTENTIAL .....</b>	<b>28</b>
4.1 SHIRBRIG’s Value .....	28
4.2 SHIRBRIG’s Future Potential .....	31
<b>5. CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS: GERMANY’S MOMENT? .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>ABOUT THE GLOBAL PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>GPPI RESEARCH PAPER SERIES .....</b>	<b>38</b>

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## Summary

In 1996, seven nations, including Austria, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden, founded the Multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade for United Nations Operations, or SHIRBRIG. Based at Høvelte Barracks in Denmark, SHIRBRIG aims to provide the United Nations (UN) with a rapidly deployable peacekeeping force. Since its inception, SHIRBRIG has grown to 23 members, participated in five peacekeeping missions, and led military capacity building initiatives in Africa. It now enjoys a reputation among African military staffs, policy-makers and military experts as an effective, experienced and impartial partner. Despite these successes, however, SHIRBRIG also faces several external and internal limitations and challenges.

This report analyses and assesses SHIRBRIG's past, present, and future achievements, limitations and value from a distinctly German perspective.

The report consists of five main sections. The first section provides an overview of SHIRBRIG's origins, its key elements, its membership and the changing nature of its aims and focus as a result of its activities and experience in practice during the last ten years. The second section surveys SHIRBRIG's main missions, activities and lessons learned. The third section analyses SHIRBRIG's inherent limitations and current challenges in depth, addressing issues such as public diplomacy, its membership base, and institutional rivalries. The fourth section examines SHIRBRIG's core contribution, comparative advantage and potential future role. The concluding section presents the implications and options for Germany.

Through the course of this analysis, the authors put forth three overarching recommendations:

1. Germany should examine the possibility of joining SHIRBRIG (either as Observer or full Participant). SHIRBRIG could provide Germany with a cohesive, experienced and effective platform for contributing to UN-gearred peacekeeping and AU-gearred capacity-building as well as enhancing Germany's role as an international peacekeeping actor. It would make sense to define the conditions and the (financial) scope for a potential German role. This could be seen as a strategic investment that could demonstrate Germany's will to support 'UN-centred Effective Multilateralism'.
2. To this end, an initial, informal meeting between SHIRBRIG's Chief of Staff and the relevant administrative, political, and military layer in Germany should be convened for

exploring potential formal/informal cooperation and participation options. A more in-depth follow-up ‘feasibility study’ should—in close cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Defence—be conducted to examine the benefits and drawbacks of potential German participation in SHIRBRIG.

3. Irrespective of the question of German participation in SHIRBRIG, Germany should lobby for more EU attention to be given to SHIRBRIG. It also should coordinate the strategic development of the EU-Battlegroup concept with the needs and experiences of SHIRBRIG. This could include joint military training exercises between EU Battlegroups and SHIRBRIG.

This report is part of a larger research project titled “*10 Years of SHIRBRIG: Past Lessons and Future Potentials of the Standby High Readiness Brigade for UN Operations*,” led by Joachim Koops at the Department of Political Science, University of Kiel. In preparing the report, the authors conducted in-depth interviews with SHIRBRIG senior officers, members of the European Union (EU) Council Secretariat, NATO’s Crisis Management Unit, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), and various national peacekeeping experts.

# 1 Introduction: What is SHIRBRIG?

This introductory section provides a brief overview of the origins and main features of the Multi-National Standby High Readiness Brigade for UN Operations (SHIRBRIG). Specifically, this section places the origins of the Danish-led SHIRBRIG initiative into a wider historical context, summarizes SHIRBRIG's organizational structure and membership, and briefly highlights the changing nature of SHIRBRIG during the last 10 years.

SHIRBRIG is a multinational brigade (4,000 to 5,000 troops at maximum strength) dedicated to rapid deployment (within 15-30 days of approval) for UN Peace Operations under Chapter VI or, also more recently, Chapter VII of the UN Charter.<sup>1</sup> It is self-sustainable in theatre for up to 60 days and is envisaged to be readily deployed for no longer than six months, allowing regular, long-term UN Units to form and succeed the brigade. In 1996, seven nations, including Austria, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden, founded SHIRBRIG in response to the peacekeeping disasters in Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda and as a result of a Danish-led initiative launched in 1994-95. SHIRBRIG's declared aim and mandate is to "provide the UN with a well-prepared, rapidly deployable capability for peacekeeping operations mandated by the UN Security Council."<sup>2</sup> Although SHIRBRIG is not a formal organ of the UN System, it was nevertheless developed in close coordination with the UN Secretariat and within the framework of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations' (DPKO) UN Standby Arrangement System (UNSAS).<sup>3</sup>

SHIRBRIG thus offers a committed pool of experts and forces which are extensively familiar with the UN DPKO's structures and needs and which share the same operational standards and level of training. SHIRBRIG's Contact Group, consisting of SHIRBRIG's participating nations' Permanent Representatives to the UN in New York, ensures the brigade's close liaison and coordination with the DPKO. SHIRBRIG has already deployed in five UN missions, undertaken planning assistance for the DPKO, and extensively engaged in the capacity-building of two of the five regional African Standby Forces of the African Union (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2 below). Although the different national troop units of the brigade are on-call and not stationed together permanently, SHIRBRIG's most valuable component is its *standing* headquarters—the so-called Planning Element—which consists of 15 officers, including SHIRBRIG's Commander and

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<sup>1</sup> Although some pain-staking debates have taken place about whether SHIRBRIG should only be deployed for Chapter VI (traditional peacekeeping) mandated missions as originally envisaged, or rather under Chapter VII (robust peace enforcement), the distinction has become increasingly blurred and superficial. As more and more UN missions are supplied with a Chapter VII mandate and as UN troops are increasingly expected and required to secure their own security with force, Chapter VII mandates are becoming the norm. Yet, troop contributing member states are still more reluctant to commit troops under a 'robust' mandate, fearing a higher risk to their troops. SHIRBRIG has partially solved this issue by enshrining the requirement that it must have "the inherent capability of extended self-defence."

<sup>2</sup> See SHIRBRIG Mandate, at [http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/sb\\_intro.htm](http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/sb_intro.htm).

<sup>3</sup> This system, introduced in 1993-4, is based on pledges of troops and equipment which are explicitly earmarked by participating member states for UN Peacekeeping Operations. There are three levels of participation, ranging from a simple indication of resources to a commitment through an MoU. Experience has highlighted that the System remains unreliable due to member states' lack of definite commitment. For more information see UNSAS website at [http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/milad/fgs2/unsas\\_files/sba.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/milad/fgs2/unsas_files/sba.htm).

Chief of Staff, and which is permanently based at the Høvelte Barracks near Copenhagen (for more detail, see Section 1.2 below). In essence, despite SHIRBRIG's limitations and current challenges (see Sections 3.1 and 3.2 below), numerous military experts have pointed out that "SHIRBRIG is the most advanced multinational mechanism for UN peace operations developed to date."<sup>4</sup> This assessment becomes particularly apparent when placing the SHIRBRIG experience in the historical context of the preceding failed initiatives to establish similar UN rapid reaction mechanisms.

### **1.1 Background and Origins: SHIRBRIG in Historical Context**

The establishment of SHIRBRIG in the mid-1990s should be viewed in the historical context of all preceding efforts to provide the UN with reliable, readily available, and rapidly deployable military means for guaranteeing and swiftly restoring international peace and security. The earliest attempts to establish such a force are indeed as old as the UN system itself. Article 43 of the UN Charter states, "All Members of the United Nations, in order to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, undertake to make available to the Security Council, on its call and in accordance with a special agreement or agreements, armed forces, assistance, and facilities [...] necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security."<sup>5</sup> In effect, this article represented the first attempt to provide a standby rapid reaction force pool for the United Nations. Yet, due to the ensuing Cold War tensions, member states—and particularly the two dominant Security Council members, the United States and the Soviet Union—were unwilling to commit their national troops to a supranational mechanism. Hence, Article 43, which was to be implemented 'as soon as possible on the initiative of the Security Council,'<sup>6</sup> proved dysfunctional from the very beginning. However, since then, various proposals ranging from the extreme suggestion of a permanent *standing* UN Army to a more loosely arranged *standby* system have resurfaced throughout the last 60 years (as outlined by Table 1 below).

These positions correspond, in UN parlance, to earmarked troops being 'fully reliable' (standing army) and 'more reliable' (pledged troops on standby).<sup>7</sup> When reviewing the past initiatives for improving the availability and rapidness of military forces for UN operations, it becomes clear that the rather radical proposals for a 'fully reliable' UN standing army were consistently rejected by member-states. Although a standing UN Army doubtlessly represents the most effective and most reliable option, the history of UN rapid response proposals has highlighted that it simply remains an unrealistic ideal. Member states will almost certainly continue to oppose this proposal due to the fear of

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<sup>4</sup> H. Peter Langille and Tania Keefe (2003) *The Future of Peacekeeping: An Experts' Discussion to Contribute to the Dialogue on Foreign Policy*, Report, 21st March 2003, p 2, available at <http://action.web.ca/home/cpcc/attach/The%20Future%20of%20Peacekeeping.doc>.

<sup>5</sup> See Article 43 (1), Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, available online at <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, Article 43 (3).

<sup>7</sup> For further detail on this distinction, see Patrick A McCarthy (2000) *Building a Reliable Rapid-Reaction Capability for the United Nations*, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol 7, No 2, Summer 2000, pp 139-154.

eroding sovereignty as well as a plethora of insurmountable legal, political and operational issues.<sup>8</sup>

As a result, the formation of a pre-pledged and pre-earmarked pool of troops on ‘standby’ and on a level of ‘high readiness,’ deployable at a short notice request by the Security Council remains the only realistic policy option. This concept first emerged in earnest at the Ottawa Conference on UN Peacekeeping Forces in 1964 at the initiative of the Canadian government. Although 23 like-minded states (out of which nine are members or observers of SHIRBRIG today) agreed on the need for more readily available standby forces, no concrete measures were taken. Indeed, it took the cumulative impact of the international community’s inability to prevent the mass atrocities in Somalia, Yugoslavia, and Rwanda to motivate these countries to press ahead with the idea of standby forces — 30 years after having been first proposed.

1944	Initial proposals for an <i>international army</i> at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference.
1945	Article 43 of the UN Charter calls for the establishment of military forces at the disposal of the Security Council. The Article remained a dead-letter ever since.
1948	More modest proposal by UN’s 1st Secretary-General Trygve Lie to create a <i>United Nations guard</i> to protect UN officials when deployed overseas.
1951-2	More radical proposals by Lie to create a permanent <i>UN legion</i> , later renamed a <i>UN volunteer reserve in 1952</i> .
1956	In the wake of the formation of the First United Nations Emergency Force in the Suez (UNEF I), which can be seen as the ‘birth of traditional UN peacekeeping,’ proposals for a <i>permanent peacekeeping force</i> re-emerged, but were once again discarded by the Security Council.
1964	Canada, under the leadership of Lester B. Pearson (Nobel Peace Prize winner for his role in the 1956 Suez Crisis) organized an international conference in Ottawa to consider the creation of a multinational standby force in order to tackle the slow reaction time of UN peacekeeping. Twenty-three states participated (Brazil, Canada, Columbia, Denmark, Finland, Ghana, India, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Liberia, Malaysia, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sweden, Tunisia and the United Arab Republic). No concrete follow-up results were achieved.
1964	British initiative for a Commonwealth standby battalion for the UN.
1970	The UN General Assembly recommends that the Security Council launches Article 43 negotiation process.
1974	Eleven States intend to earmark units for UN peace operations (Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iran, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and New Zealand).
1992	UN Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali’s <i>Agenda for Peace</i> calls for a reconsideration of Article 43 and for the creation of <i>peace enforcement units</i> .
1993	Former UN Undersecretary General Brian Urquhart again floats the idea of a permanent <i>UN volunteer force</i> in a series of articles in the New York Review of Books.
1994	The UN DPKO creates the UN Standby Arrangement System (UNSAS) – a database of member states’ earmarked troop and equipment contributions for peacekeeping missions. Following events in Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda, the Netherlands promote the idea of a permanent ‘UN Rapid Deployment Brigade’ outside the UNSAS system.

<sup>8</sup> Resistance to the idea of a standing army has constantly come to the fore since the idea was first floated at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in 1944.



1995	Boutros-Boutros Ghali calls in his <i>Supplement to an Agenda for Peace</i> for a UN rapid reaction force, consisting of national units using the same training standards and procedures. Canada suggests the creation of a 'Rapidly Deployable Mission Headquarters'. The Canadian and Dutch Foreign Ministers establish the 'Friends of Rapid Reaction Deployment (FORD),' of which Germany becomes a member. Denmark announces the plan for a Standby High Readiness Brigade.
1996	SHIRBRIG's six founding nations sign the Letter of Intent.
1997	SHIRBRIG's permanent Planning Element is officially opened by Kofi Annan.
2000	SHIRBRIG deploys to its first peacekeeping mission in Eritrea. The <i>Brahimi Report</i> singles out SHIRBRIG as an important role model for the establishment of similar arrangements elsewhere.

**Table 1: Overview of Past Proposals and Initiatives for a UN Rapid Military Capability**

In 1994, the Dutch conducted a national study on a permanent and fully reliable 'UN Rapid Deployment Brigade,'<sup>9</sup> and in 1995, the Canadians proposed a 'Rapidly Deployable Mission Headquarters (RDMHQ).'<sup>10</sup> The Danish initiative from 1995 to 1996 can be seen as a synthesis of these two proposals: the establishment of a 4,000-5,000 troops strong brigade on standby and readily available for UN Peace Operations, but nevertheless subject to prior national approval. Thus, the Danish proposal for a pre-established UN Standby Forces High Readiness Brigade represented an integrative compromise between the 'visionary' Dutch proposal of creating a robust standing UN Army under centralized UN command on the one hand and the more modest Canadian suggestion of strengthening the UNSAS arrangements with standby commitments and a rapidly deployable headquarters. A vanguard group of well equipped states with proven experience in peacekeeping missions would form the brigade and a permanent headquarters (which was later to become the Planning Element) would be established.

Just in time for the celebrations of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, the Danish proposal—actively promoted by the Danish Minister of Defence, Hans Haekkerup—advanced a compromise, which over a dozen attempts throughout the preceding five decades had failed to achieve. Of the thirteen middle-power states with extensive peacekeeping experience who participated in Denmark's working group on the establishment of SHIRBRIG in 1995, eleven eventually ended up joining as either full members or observers.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The Dutch report 'A UN Rapid Deployment Brigade: A Preliminary Study,' issued in April 1995, can be seen as reaching back to the early and more radical *UN legion* and *volunteer reserve* concepts of a standing army. The perseverance of the Dutch government's promotions of such an ambitious and binding proposal outside the existing UNSAS system must also be viewed in the context of the Netherlands' disastrous experience in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) mission in Bosnia from Spring 1992 to Autumn 1995. The Dutch had to acknowledge that the majority of member-states were unwilling to provide troops, despite their theoretical commitment to the UNSAS system. Moreover, the rather helpless role played by the Dutch battalion during the Srebrenica Massacre in 1995 explains the motivation by the Dutch government to press forward with the proposals of a robust, standing UN Army, with the overall aim of rehabilitating the Netherlands' reputation in international peacekeeping. For further details on the Dutch Proposal, see H. Peter Langille (2000) *Conflict Prevention: Options for Rapid Deployment and UN Standing Forces*, *International Peacekeeping*, 7:1, pp 222-3.

<sup>10</sup> The Canadian Study 'Towards a Rapid Reaction Capability for the United Nations,' issued in September 1995, was less radical and ambitious than the Dutch proposal and recommended building on and augmenting the existing UNSAS arrangements. The key idea was to link earmarked national 'vanguard' elements to a permanent, multinational rapid response headquarters. See Langille (2000), pp 223-4 and Ronald M Behringer (2005) *Middle Power Leadership on the Human Security Agenda, Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol 40, 3, p 313.

<sup>11</sup> The participants of the Working Group formed in 1995 were: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech

Parallel to the Danish Working Group, in which the DPKO also participated as an observer, the Dutch Foreign Minister Hans Van Mierlo and his Canadian counterpart André Ouellet set up an informal group called the 'Friends of Rapid Deployment' (FORD) with the aim of "promoting the idea of a UN rapid deployment brigade, especially among the major powers."<sup>12</sup> By autumn 1996, the group consisted of 26 members, including Germany — albeit the majority consisted of overwhelmingly medium-sized powers.<sup>13</sup>

After initially lobbying for the implementation of the Canadian proposal to set up a RDMHQ within the DPKO, FORD started supporting the Danish SHIRBRIG initiative from 1996 onwards. On 15 December 1996, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands and SHIRBRIG's other four founding nations, Austria, Norway, Poland and Sweden, signed a Letter of Intent to establish SHIRBRIG. A year later, Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General at the time, officially opened the permanent Planning Element, noting that "I truly believe that SHIRBRIG is a model arrangement. It will finally provide the instrument for swift and coordinated action that we all recognize is a condition for successful peacekeeping."<sup>14</sup>

In January 2000, SHIRBRIG was declared operational and after an informal UN inquiry regarding the brigade's availability for peacekeeping in Ethiopia and Eritrea, SHIRBRIG deployed to its first—and up to today, largest—peacekeeping mission in November 2000. As part of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), SHIRBRIG provided the force headquarters nucleus with 95 officers and participated with a Canadian-Dutch infantry battalion and a Danish headquarters company (see page 18 below). In addition, the United Nations appointed the Dutch Brigadier-General and SHIRBRIG Commander Patrick Cammaert to also serve as UNMEE's Force Commander.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, SHIRBRIG's first military mission underlined the particular commitment of Canada, Denmark, and the Netherlands, expanding upon their previous initiatives undertaken since the mid-1990s in promoting a UN Standby Force. It is indeed no coincidence that these three countries have emerged at the forefront of promoting SHIRBRIG, especially during the first five years of its existence (a more ambivalent attitude has recently emerged within Danish, and other Nordic member state circles - see page 26). All three countries have been described as so-called 'like-minded middle powers,' i.e. states with "[the] tendency to pursue multilateral solutions to international problems, [the] tendency to embrace compromise positions in international disputes"<sup>16</sup> and with a preference for

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Republic, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, and Sweden. While Belgium and New Zealand decided to abstain from joining SHIRBRIG, Austria, Canada, Denmark, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden became the founding members on 15<sup>th</sup> December, whilst the Czech Republic joined as an Observer and Ireland and Finland decided to join SHIRBRIG without committing officers to the Planning Element.

<sup>12</sup> Ronald M. Behringer (2005), p 314.

<sup>13</sup> The FORD members were Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Poland, Senegal, South Korea, Sweden, Ukraine and Zambia, see Ronald M. Behringer (2005), note 12.

<sup>14</sup> See UN Press Release SG/SM/6312 PKO/60, available online at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/1997/19970902.SGSM6312.html>.

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/unmee.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Cooper, Richard Higgot and Kim Richard Nossal (1993) *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order*, Vancouver: UBC Press, p.19, cited in Ronald M. Behringer (2005), p 307.

promoting initiatives within multilateral institutions and regional organizations. Furthermore, middle-powers have been linked to a comparatively benign and principled foreign policy with a marked absence of overt power projection. Interestingly, in our interviews, various SHIRBRIG officers repeatedly confirmed that they also regard Germany as *behaving* in such a typical middle-power fashion, particularly in the field of peacekeeping, where Germany is seen to be refraining from an obvious projection of *Machtpolitik*, despite its objective international power and weight (This will be examined in more detail when analyzing Germany's potential role vis-à-vis SHIRBRIG in pages 32 and 34).<sup>17</sup> Finally, middle-powers have traditionally been associated with a long history of and vast expertise in peacekeeping. This is particularly true for Canada and the Nordic countries<sup>18</sup>— all of which were participants in the UN's first effort in seeking 'like-minded' partners with similar expertise in peacekeeping. Invariably, this has led in the late 1990s to accusations—especially from large UN troop contributing countries such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh—that the SHIRBRIG initiative appeared to be an exclusive Northern coalition.<sup>19</sup> Whilst, in contrast to this, SHIRBRIG enjoys a high reputation and approval by African states (see Section 2.2 and page 30 below), schisms and rivalries between SHIRBRIG and various factions with vested interests within the DPKO still persist and go a long way in explaining some of the problems in SHIRBRIG-DPKO relations (see pages 24 and 25 below). Although the balance between maintaining a high quality of well-equipped and highly capable SHIRBRIG participants on the one hand and the need for an inclusive approach on the other hand is an important one to maintain, SHIRBRIG does need to realize and implement its ambitions for a more inclusive and geographically diverse membership base in the coming years.

## **1.2 Organizational Structure and Membership**

SHIRBRIG's organizational structure consists of four principal elements: the Brigade Pool of multi-national units, the Planning Element, the Steering Committee and a Contact Group. In the following sections, each element is briefly explained.

### *Brigade Pool*

The Brigade Pool contains 4,000 to 5,000 troops and is comprised of several units earmarked by those SHIRBRIG members who have signed the 'Memorandum of Understanding on SHIRBRIG' (MOU/SB). When fully deployed, SHIRBRIG will consist of about 4000 to 5000 troops comprising a headquarters unit with communication facilities, infantry battalions, reconnaissance units, medical, engineering and logistical support, as well as helicopters and military police. These units are currently provided by Austria, Canada, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden,

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<sup>17</sup> Interviews with Planning Element officers at Høvelte in November 2007 and with the Chief of Staff in June 2008.

<sup>18</sup> The Nordic Countries are Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. On their special tradition in peacekeeping and the so-called 'Nordic Model,' see Peter Viggo Jakobsen (2007) Still Punching Above their Weight? Nordic Cooperation in Peace Operation after the Cold War, *International Peacekeeping*, 14, 4, pp 458-475 and Andreas Andersson (2007) The Nordic Peace Support Operations Record 1991-99, *International Peacekeeping*, 14, 4, pp 476-492.

<sup>19</sup> See H. Peter Langille (2000), p. 227.

Finland, Lithuania and Slovenia (see Table 3, below). When not deployed, troop units remain under national command. The contributing nations must ensure a high standard of training and the units must fulfil UN standards in terms of quality of equipment, capabilities and self-sustainability (up to 60 days in theatre). Unit Commanders must routinely attend conferences and training exercises organised by SHIRBRIG's Planning Element to ensure the brigade's cohesion. Although full deployment of the brigade as an integrated unit is the goal, troop numbers may be tailored according to the requirements of the mission. As the Planning Element itself notes, "SHIRBRIG nations realize that for a variety of reasons, full brigade deployment may not be likely or even desired under some circumstances."<sup>20</sup> A Defence and Security Company (currently provided by Romania) and a Headquarters Company (provided by Denmark) are also drawn from the force pool and form the rapidly deployable 'SHIRBRIG Headquarters package' together with the Planning Element, the non-permanent and commissioned staff officers, the specialist clerks, and the SHIRBRIG Commander.

#### *Permanent Planning Element*

The Commander and the permanent staff of officers from ten current SHIRBRIG member states constitute the multinational, standing core of the Brigade. The permanent Planning Element is located at the Danish Høvelte Barracks, near Copenhagen. In addition to the Chief of Staff and SHIRBRIG's Commander, it consists of around 15 Senior Staff officers working there during normal non-deployment. This core of officers, supplied by contributing SHIRBRIG countries who have signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Planning Element (MOU/PE currently signed by Austria, Canada, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain and Sweden, see table 3 below), is responsible for planning the brigade's common Standing operation procedures (SOPs) and its Concept of Operations (CONOPS) during non-/pre-deployment periods. Furthermore, it carries out operational preparations for deployment and mission planning, including country studies and fact finding missions for potential deployments. Officers also work on the improvement of logistical challenges for the rapid set-up of mission headquarters. The permanent officers also conceptualize, organize and conduct the common training exercises. Overall, the Planning Element is responsible for ensuring the coordination and harmonization of the multinational troop units in order to facilitate the brigade's common standards and cohesiveness. In addition, the Planning Element's officers have gained a reputation for being a 'cohesive and well-practiced team providing additional planning assistance and military expertise to the UN DPKO'.<sup>21</sup> In recent years the Planning Element has also increasingly been involved in aiding the capacity-building process of other standby brigades, which use SHIRBRIG as a model (see Section 2.2 and page 30 below). The officers are assigned for a period of 2 to 3 years and rotations take place in a way to maintain a high degree of

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<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/brigpool.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> William Van Dullemen (2006) Military Multinational Cooperation – The Experience of SHIRBRIG, in Günther Greindl (eds.) Multilateral Cooperation in Peace Support Operations: Challenges and Limitations, p. 170.

continuity.<sup>22</sup> The Commander and the Chief of Staff positions rotate by nation every two years (see Table 2 of SHIRBRIG Commanders below).

1997-1999	Brigadier-General F. Særmark-Thomsen (Denmark)
1999-2001	Brigadier-General P.C. Cammaert (Netherlands)
2001-2003	Brigadier-General S. Edholm (Sweden)
2003-2006	Brigadier-General G. Mitchell (Canada)
2006-2008	Brigadier-General F. Kochanowski (Poland)
From August 2008	Brigadier-General Torben Lund (Denmark)

**Table 2: Overview of SHIRBRIG Commanders, 1997-2008**

During deployment times, the core of the Planning Element is augmented by up to 85 pre-assigned non-permanent staff and non-commissioned officers to form the hub of the brigade's mission headquarters in the field.<sup>23</sup> These non-permanent staff members work in their own nations, but undergo annual training with the Planning Element's permanent staff. SHIRBRIG views the permanent Planning Element and the augmented, readily deployable headquarters option as SHIRBRIG's real strength: "it is a cohesive, well-structured, flexible organization working together in unison, based on common processes and procedures, and an excellent nucleus of a command and control capability for peace support operations."<sup>24</sup> The African Union has also identified and recognized the "particular utility" of SHIRBRIG's Planning Element, "as it is a full time staff with no other function than to prepare for UN missions"<sup>25</sup> (see also Section 2.2 and page 25 below).

#### *Steering Committee*

The Steering Committee (SC) is SHIRBRIG's executive decision-making body. It gives the overall strategic direction for SHIRBRIG's development, activities, evolution of its basic concepts and guiding principles, and for issues related to force generation and new membership. The SC is a political-military entity, composed of Defence and Foreign Affairs representatives of those SHIRBRIG Member States who have signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Steering Committee (MOU/SC). The Steering Committee is headed by the Presidency, which rotates among the MOU/SC signatories annually. Currently, the Presidency is held by Austria. The Steering Committee convenes and meets at least three times annually.

#### *Contact Group*

The Contact Group is based in New York and consists of the ambassadors and military advisers of the SHIRBRIG nations' Permanent Missions to the UN. It is chaired by the ambassador of the nation holding the SHIRBRIG SC Presidency (in 2008 held by Aus-

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/brigpool.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> See Ronald M. Behringer (2005), p 314.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/brigpool.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> African Union (2003) Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and The Military Staff Committee, Part II – Annexes, adopted by the Third Meeting of the African Chiefs of Defence Staff, 15-16 May 2003, Addis-Ababa, available online at [http://www.africanunion.org/root/AU/AUC/Departments/PSC/Asf/doc/POLICY%20FRAMEWORK%20FINAL%20ANNEXES%20\(PART%20II\).doc](http://www.africanunion.org/root/AU/AUC/Departments/PSC/Asf/doc/POLICY%20FRAMEWORK%20FINAL%20ANNEXES%20(PART%20II).doc), para 15.

tria). The Contact Group is supposed to provide a coordinating and liaison mechanism between SHIRBRIG and the UN organs, particularly the DPKO. However, our research and interviews point to the conclusion that the Contact Group is at present ineffective in coherently ensuring close coordination and cooperation between the DPKO and SHIRBRIG. This gives rise to one of the key problems SHIRBRIG is currently facing (see pages 25 and 26 below).

### *Membership Overview*

Table 3 below summarizes the membership of SHIRBRIG as of June 2008. Currently SHIRBRIG consists of 23 members and observers. Argentina has currently suspended its membership. Depending on the amount and type of memoranda signed, states can participate on five different levels of membership, with troop commitments, Steering Committee membership and Planning Element support representing the highest form of participation. In addition to the founding members Austria, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden, three other states have become full members: Italy, Romania and Spain. Our interviews and research have also pointed to different levels of commitment and support for the idea of SHIRBRIG, irrespective of the member states' formal pledges.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, several key officers in the Planning Element have expressed their eagerness to increase SHIRBRIG's membership, which is expected to boost SHIRBRIG's momentum and ensure continuing impact.<sup>27</sup> Brazil and Chile have indicated their interest. Any interest from Germany's side, (even in only tentatively becoming an observer) would be viewed as particularly welcome and immensely beneficial for SHIRBRIG.<sup>28</sup> However, considering SHIRBRIG's extensive capacity-building collaboration with those African countries who participate in the East African Brigade (EASBRIG) and the West African Brigade (ECOBRIX) within the framework of African Standby Force, it is surprising that Senegal (who is a member of ECOBRIG) is the only African country directly participating in SHIRBRIG as an observer. While the selection of fully participating members is understandably based on strict criteria of peacekeeping experience and the ability to make strong contributions in terms of money and advanced equipment, one must also recognize, and, to some extent, institutionally reward the several states of ECOBRIG and EASBRIG that are making rapid improvements in terms of their military capacities.

	Membership Status	LOI	MOU/SC	MOU/SB	MOU/PE
Austria	Full (Founding ) Member	X	X	X	X
Canada	Full (Founding) Member	X	X	X	X
Denmark	Full (Founding) Member	X	X	X	X
Italy	Full Member	X	X	X	X
Netherlands	Full (Founding) Member	X	X	X	X
Norway	Full (Founding) Member	X	X	X	X

<sup>26</sup> Austria, Canada, Ireland, Romania and, to some extent, Poland were singled out as the most enthusiastic supporters of SHIRBRIG, whilst several member states—even amongst the Nordic States, seem attempt to limit SHIRBRIG's continuation (for a more thorough discussion of these internal dynamics, see page 27).

<sup>27</sup> Interviews in Høvelte, November 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Interviews, June 2008.

Poland	Full (Founding) Member	X	X	X	X
Romania	Full Member	X	X	X	X
Spain	Full Member	X	X	X	X
Sweden	Full (Founding) Member	X	X	X	X
<b>Members without Officers at Planning Element</b>					
Finland	Member (incl. Troop Pledge)	X	X	X	-
Lithuania	Member (incl. Troop Pledge)	X	X	X	-
Slovenia	Member (incl. Troop Pledge)	X	X	X	-
<b>Steering Committee Member</b>					
Ireland	Steering Committee Member	X	X	-	-
<b>Letter of Intent Only</b>					
Portugal	Letter of Intent Signatory	X	-	-	-
<b>Observers</b>					
Chile	Observer	-	-	-	-
Croatia	Observer	-	-	-	-
Czech Rep.	Observer	-	-	-	-
Egypt	Observer	-	-	-	-
Jordan	Observer	-	-	-	-
Latvia	Observer	-	-	-	-
Senegal	Observer	-	-	-	-
<b>Membership Currently Suspended</b>					
Argentina	Full Member (suspended)	X	X	X	X

**Table 3: Overview of SHIRBRIG Members and their Membership Status.<sup>29</sup>**

One option that should be considered by SHIRBRIG is to invite the most advanced EASBRIG and ECOBRIG members to at least become ‘observers’ within SHIRBRIG. As SHIRBRIG is closely involved with the countries of both African regional brigades through the capacity-building arrangements, awarding at least an observer status would facilitate further coherence and harmonization between SHIRBRIG and EASBRIG/ECOBRIIG members. In the long-term, SHIRBRIG’s goal should be to include the most advanced EASBRIG/ECOBRIIG countries as fully participating SHIRBRIG members, thereby also contributing to the enhancement of interoperability and shared standards between SHIRBRIG and the ASF’s regional brigades.<sup>30</sup>

### **1.3 Aims and Mandate**

SHIRBRIG’s originally aimed to “provide the UN with a well-prepared, rapidly deployable capability for peacekeeping operations mandated by the UN Security Council.”<sup>31</sup> Whilst initially restricted to Chapter VI missions, the Steering Committee has also agreed to expand SHIRBRIG’s scope to more robust Chapter VII missions, dependent on a case-by-case analysis, however. Thus, potential missions range from preventive deployments, cease-fire monitoring, and the supervision of the separation of forces and humanitarian aid operations to more robust interventions. In any case, a key principle of SHIRBRIG is that it “must have the inherent capability of extended self-defence, and

<sup>29</sup> LOI =Letter of Intent; MOU/SC = Memorandum of Understanding on the Steering Committee; MOU/SB = Memorandum of Understanding on SHIRBRIG (Commitment of Troops to the Brigade); MOU/PE = Memorandum of Understanding on Planning Element (PLANELM).

<sup>30</sup> For a more in-depth discussion on the potentials of this aspect, see page 16 below.

<sup>31</sup> See [http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/sb\\_intro.htm](http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/sb_intro.htm).

should the occasion arise, to extricate its elements from untenable situations.”<sup>32</sup> Once deployed, SHIRBRIG will be placed under the operational control of the UN Mission Commander. Yet the duration of SHIRBRIG’s deployment is deliberately limited to a maximum of six months. SHIRBRIG should thus function as a rapid ‘first in-unit’ to set up the headquarters and to allow regular UN forces to take over after the initial period. SHIRBRIG’s decisions to take up a peacekeeping mission are reached by consensus without infringing upon national decision-making procedures for approval and without preventing a member-state from refraining to participate in a particular mission. While this overarching principle may slow down SHIRBRIG’s rapid reaction time and integrated, full deployment, it plays a key role in alleviating member states’ fear of losing sovereignty. This distinguishes SHIRBRIG’s mandate of a standby and ‘more reliable’ force from a ‘fully reliable’ standing army. While the core of the originally envisaged SHIRBRIG concept consisted of the deployment of a full brigade within 15-30 days and for a maximum duration of six months, in practice, SHIRBRIG has already evolved from this initial scope and mandate.

#### **1.4 SHIRBRIG in Flux?**

The deployment of the full brigade has become the exception, rather than the rule. Instead, several battalions of the force pool were used in the UNMEE mission, while SHIRBRIG also got increasingly involved in assisting the set-up of headquarters as well as planning assistance and capacity-building in Africa (see Section 2 for detail). Indeed, SHIRBRIG’s official statements already reflect the changing nature of its mandate, scope and activities —“SHIRBRIG forces can be used as follows:

- As a complete brigade or as a force smaller than brigade size.
- For an observer or monitoring mission.
- The SHIRBRIG Headquarters could be called upon to form the nucleus of a UN Force Level Headquarters, and the Planning Element could be used to assist UN Headquarters with the start-up of a new peacekeeping mission.”<sup>33</sup>

Although the original SHIRBRIG concept placed key emphasis on the utility of the multinational brigade pool, practical experience in recent years has highlighted the versatility and resourceful value of the Planning Element. Yet, the admission of new fully participating members could reinvigorate the importance of the force pool once again.

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<sup>32</sup> See Brigitte Juul (2003) The Danish Experience of Regional/multinational cooperation on peacekeeping capacity building, [www.geocities.com/womenpeacekeeping/ppjuul.doc](http://www.geocities.com/womenpeacekeeping/ppjuul.doc).

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/facts.htm>.



## 2. SHIRBRIG'S Missions, Activities, and Lessons Learned

This section provides a comprehensive overview of SHIRBRIG's past and ongoing activities since it was declared operational in January 2000. While SHIRBRIG's first mission, UNMEE from November 2000 to June 2001, can be seen as an early attempt to validate the original SHIRBRIG concept of deploying large multinational units rapidly, succeeding operations have differed markedly in size and nature. More recent missions have shied away from the ideal of providing the full brigade and rather more towards providing key personnel (particularly from the Planning Element) to form the nucleus of a UN Force headquarters on an 'interim basis,' i.e. until more UN or African Union troops arrive in theatre. Furthermore, recent Planning Element training and planning assistance to two regional brigades in Africa also highlights SHIRBRIG's increasingly influential status as a role model within the African peace and security architecture. The following sub-sections briefly examine SHIRBRIG's past and ongoing activities and outline the major lessons learned from SHIRBRIG's initiatives so far.

### 2.1 Military Missions

Although the SHIRBRIG concept explicitly stresses that it could in principle be used for peacekeeping missions around the globe, its missions and activities have so far exclusively focussed on West and East Africa. Yet, these areas have also been the most strenuous conflict hotspots where the UN's demand for peacekeeping support has been most acute. In this light, it should be noted that SHIRBRIG has so far been involved in half of all the UN's peacekeeping missions currently undertaken in Africa.

#### *United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), November 2000 – June 2001*

In May 1998, as a result of a border dispute, fighting erupted between the countries of Eritrea and Ethiopia. The peace agreement mediated by the Organization of African Unity, the predecessor to the African Union, which was founded in 2002, envisaged a United Nations force to monitor and secure the disputed territory between both parties. It was thus a rather 'classical' peacekeeping mission. In June 2000, the DPKO first indicated its interest in utilizing SHIRBRIG for the mission, and in July, members of SHIRBRIG's Planning Element conducted a fact-finding mission to assess the need for deployment. After agreeing to the formal request by the DPKO, and after the Security Council mandated the UNMEE deployment on 15 September 2000, members from SHIRBRIG deployed a Canadian-Dutch infantry battalion and a Danish headquarters company.<sup>34</sup> This force composition highlighted the strong interest on behalf of the Canadians, Dutch, and Danish in making UNMEE SHIRBRIG's first successful operational test-case. The permanent and non-permanent members were merged into the UN/HQ structure and the UN appointed SHIRBRIG's Commander at the time, Dutch Brigadier-General Patrick Cammaert, as UNMEE's Force Commander.<sup>35</sup> The SHIRBRIG com-

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<sup>34</sup> See <http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/unmee.htm>.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2000/sga135.html>.

ponent of UNMEE deployed for six months and withdrew in May 2001, thus adhering closely to the original stipulation requiring withdrawal from theatre after six months.

SHIRBRIG's first mission was generally considered a success, at least for breathing life into the hitherto untested SHIRBRIG concept.<sup>36</sup> Several SHIRBRIG internal lessons learned studies highlight various shortcomings, however. Although SHIRBRIG deployed 'comparatively' swiftly—almost within two months after the Security Council mandate—it still took double the time envisaged by the SHIRBRIG concept (within 30 days of national approvals). One important problem was the delay of national approval mechanisms. The deployment and general performance of SHIRBRIG's Planning Element officers in conjunction with the non-permanent staff proved to be successful, but lack of close cooperation between SHIRBRIG, the DPKO and national troop contributors also undermined the effectiveness of the planning and preparation stages. A key demand that emerged in the aftermath was that SHIRBRIG's Planning Element should be allowed to get involved with the DPKO's planning as early as possible. Misunderstandings about SHIRBRIG's characteristic mission conditions (strictly for six months, withdrawal of SHIRBRIG owned equipment) led to an unnecessary shortfall once SHIRBRIG withdrew from the mission. Furthermore, although pre-deployment training according to SHIRBRIG's common standards ensured a high level of cohesion and interoperability amongst the SHIRBRIG elements within the mission, it did not alleviate the severe gap between the SHIRBRIG units and those from other, non-SHIRBRIG troop providers.<sup>37</sup> Most importantly, however, the UNMEE mission highlighted that SHIRBRIG was unable to mobilize enough troop support from its member nations for the full brigade capacity. Apart from Canada's, Denmark's and the Netherlands' contributions, SHIRBRIG faced the reluctance of its participating member-states to provide the earmarked troops they had originally agreed to pledge for SHIRBRIG's brigade force pool. Hence, a key lesson of SHIRBRIG's first mission at the time was to view the future possibility of a full brigade deployment as unrealistic and to refocus full attention instead on the potential of the Planning Element. This explains the changing nature and more technical, limited scope of the missions that followed.

#### *United Nations Mission in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI), February - March 2003*

This mission consisted of SHIRBRIG's provision of key planning assistance to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for its Mission in Cote d'Ivoire and was embarked upon in response to a direct, formal request made by the DPKO in February 2003. It is crucial to keep in mind that the former SHIRBRIG Commander Patrick Cammaert had been appointed as Military Adviser in the DPKO in October 2002.<sup>38</sup> Thus, from 2002 until his departure from the DPKO in 2005, Cammaert's influence and pro-SHIRBRIG attitude ensured that SHIRBRIG was regularly kept in the loop and readily used for mission planning activities, such as those required for UNOCI. Yet, although this link guaranteed a more effective and more direct channel of commu-

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<sup>36</sup> See International Peace Academy (2002) Seminar on First Use of SHIRBRIG, available at [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/SKAI7DHL3C/\\$file/IPA\\_Shirbrig\\_UNMEE\\_July02.pdf?openement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/SKAI7DHL3C/$file/IPA_Shirbrig_UNMEE_July02.pdf?openement).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid; Interviews in Høvelte, November 2007.

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2002/sga821.html>.

nication and potential coordination than SHIRBRIG's Contact Group (with important lessons to be learned about the need for a permanent SHIRBRIG liaison officer at the DPKO), Cammaert's influence could not fundamentally alleviate the inherent tensions in the DPKO-SHIRBRIG relationship. This, incidentally, also highlighted the limitations of the Military Adviser's influence over the DPKO's staff, despite being one of the most senior positions within the UN peacekeeping bureaucracy.<sup>39</sup> However, it was on Cammaert's initiative that SHIRBRIG was considered for UNOCI. Within less than three weeks of the formal DPKO request, a SHIRBRIG planning team arrived at Abuja and liaised with the ECOWAS Headquarters. Within ten days of contact in the field, SHIRBRIG officers finalized the planning documents and handed them over to ECOWAS.<sup>40</sup> Thus, almost within a month in total, SHIRBRIG provided the planning required by ECOWAS. This small Planning Assistance Mission provided the officers of SHIRBRIG's Planning Element with the first experience of the requirements and needs for mission planning. It also served as an important precedent and first point of contact with ECOWAS, thus yielding an important foundation for the UNMIL mission, six months after SHIRBRIG's completion of its assistance to UNOCI.

*United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), September - November 2003*

In September 2003, the DPKO requested SHIRBRIG assistance to form the core of an interim headquarters for the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Within three weeks of the request, SHIRBRIG deployed 17 officers and seven support personnel to assist ECOWAS' non-standing military force, ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), in setting up the headquarters.<sup>41</sup> SHIRBRIG's deployment lasted six weeks and ended with the successful establishment of an interim headquarters. This mission expanded SHIRBRIG's abilities and tool box with a new capacity: the rapid set-up of a 'nucleus' Interim Force Headquarters, which could then be readily used by new, incoming peacekeeping troops as the initial headquarters base for the mission. This mission also served as a significant first point of contact and collaboration with ECOWAS troops in the field. This formed the basis for more structured and long-term cooperation between SHIRBRIG and what was later to become ECOBRIG, within the framework of SHIRBRIG's capacity-building efforts (see Section 2.2 below). Important lessons for SHIRBRIG included the need for longer overlap in the transition phase between the outgoing and incoming force headquarter troops as well as the need for better knowledge of the terrain and country prior to deployment. Several misunderstandings between the DPKO and SHIRBRIG with regard to logistics were also noted. Overall, however, the mission was seen as a success.

*United Nations Advance Mission in Sudan (UNAMIS), July 2004 – February 2005*

SHIRBRIG deployed 17 members to Sudan from July 2004 to February 2005 as part of a 'special political mission,' the UN Advance Mission in Sudan (UNAMIS). The aim of

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<sup>39</sup> See also page 24.

<sup>40</sup> Internal SHIRBRIG Paper by the Senior Planning Officer, Colonel Helmut Anzeletti, SHIRBRIG.

<sup>41</sup> Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit (2004) Lessons Learned Study on the Start-Up Phase of the United Nations Missions in Liberia, p.6.

the mission was to facilitate contacts between the warring parties, following the signing of the 'Agreement on Wealth Sharing' on 7 January 2004 and the 'Protocol on Power Sharing' on 26 May 2004.<sup>42</sup> As part of 'a multidisciplinary team' of 27 members, the SHIRBRIG delegation developed and refined operational plans on the ground, "as well as prepared for the deployment of military and civilian personnel and provided effective forward support" to the envisaged UNMIS mission.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the mission should be seen in the context of UNMIS below.

#### *United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), April – December 2005*

As noted above, SHIRBRIG was formally requested by the DPKO to assist in the planning for a deployment of a UN mission in Sudan from July 2004 onwards. Following the Security Council authorization of the deployment of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) in March 2005, SHIRBRIG deployed from April to December 2005. It was asked once again to provide the nucleus of the Force Headquarters, as well as the Joint Military Coordination Office and the Integrated Support Services. SHIRBRIG's Commander, Brigadier-General Mitchell, served as UNMIS' Deputy Force Commander, while SHIRBRIG's Chief of Staff Colonel Lund was appointed as UNMIS Chief of Staff. Taken together, the mission was one of the more complex and demanding assignments for SHIRBRIG. Inevitably, many issues and problems arose. The most important one was that SHIRBRIG's Planning Element was not used as a coherent nucleus Force Headquarters, as initially assumed and briefed, but rather split up and distributed to fill vacant spots. This limited SHIRBRIG's effectiveness. Furthermore, SHIRBRIG noted that it was not included in the DPKO's early planning process, adding to the steady build-up of frictions and misunderstandings between SHIRBRIG and DPKO staff. A key lesson to be learned for SHIRBRIG was that it had to emphasize more clearly the purpose and advantages of its nucleus headquarters concept. However, SHIRBRIG's extensive contribution was duly recognized by the Security Council in the text of Resolution 1590.<sup>44</sup>

#### *Lessons Learned?*

SHIRBRIG's missions allowed the permanent staff to enhance their abilities and capacities for the planning of complex missions and the rapid provision of nucleus interim force headquarters. These activities have become important options in SHIRBRIG's rapid reaction peacekeeping toolbox. SHIRBRIG's focus on this type of mission can be explained due to a realization that the original SHIRBRIG concept of full brigade deployment would become increasingly unrealistic, due to shortfalls in member state commitments. Indeed, the missions have highlighted that SHIRBRIG's full brigade has so far not been deployed even once. Even for SHIRBRIG's largest participation in a mission to date (UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea from November 2000 to June 2001),

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<sup>42</sup> Security Council Resolution 1547, <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/386/26/PDF/N0438626.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmis/background.html>.

<sup>44</sup> "Expressing appreciation for the important contributions of the Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) towards the planning, preparation, and initial deployment of a peacekeeping operation, as well as the preparatory work by the United Nations Advance Mission in Sudan" UN SCR 1590.

only a Dutch-Canadian battalion and one Danish company were deployed (1,200 – 1,500 troops). In addition, however, SHIRBRIG initially staffed the Force Headquarters (95 officers) and SHIRBRIG's Commander served as the Force Commander of the overall UN mission. Despite being only partially deployed, SHIRBRIG's contribution was judged to be relatively rapid and effective. Yet, it was a disappointment in terms of force generation. The four remaining missions were more modest in size and consisted of planning assistance in the field (such as advising and planning for ECOWAS for the UN's Mission in Côte d'Ivoire in February 2003) or the rapid provision of a nucleus Force Headquarters for the start-up of a mission (as was the case in Liberia in 2003 and in Sudan in 2004 and 2005). Indeed, SHIRBRIG's concept of acting as a 'rapid interims force headquarters' to start up a UN mission until a regular UN force can take over has proved to be extremely useful and marked SHIRBRIG's real success in the field. One testimony to this is indeed the DPKO's recent decision to replicate this concept, as indicated in the UN Secretary General's report on the restructuring of the DPKO's Office of Military Affairs.<sup>45</sup> The pragmatic adjustment of SHIRBRIG's scope and mandate also highlights SHIRBRIG's flexibility and adaptability when faced with the reluctance of member states to provide a full brigade force. While the Liberia mission was judged a success and elicited the potential of close SHIRBRIG-ECOWAS cooperation, the missions in Sudan underlined growing tension, misunderstandings and coordination problems between SHIRBRIG and the DPKO. This tendency might also be one of the major reasons why the Planning Team is also increasingly putting a focus on capacity-building in Africa as an alternative to UN Peacekeeping missions and planning.

## **2.2. SHIRBRIG's African Capacity Building: ECOBRIG and EASBRIG**

SHIRBRIG has become actively involved in supporting, advancing and enhancing the development of the African Standby Force (ASF). The ASF concept was first developed during the African Chiefs of Defence and Security meeting in May 2003.<sup>46</sup> The concept envisages the creation of five regional standby brigades, which should by 2010 become operational for robust peacekeeping missions on the African continent under a joint African Union and UN Mandate. Thus, the ASF brigade concept offers a promising option for the regionalization of security on the African continent.<sup>47</sup>

This model is also in line with the recommendations of the UN's High Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which explicitly singled out the 'trend towards regional and sub-regional peacekeeping missions' and stresses the importance of regional capacity-

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<sup>45</sup> Report of the Comprehensive Analysis of the Office of Military Affairs in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Report of the Secretary-General for the Sixty-Second Session of the General Assembly, 17 March 2008, available at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/274/70/PDF/N0827470.pdf?OpenElement>, in particular pp15-16.

<sup>46</sup> African Union (2003) Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and The Military Staff Committee, Part II – Annexes, adopted by the Third Meeting of the African Chiefs of Defence Staff, 15-16 May 2003, Addis-Ababa, available online at [http://www.africa-union.org/root/AU/AUC/Departments/PSC/Asf/doc/POLICY%20FRAMEWORK%20FINAL%20ANNEXES%20\(PART%20II\).doc](http://www.africa-union.org/root/AU/AUC/Departments/PSC/Asf/doc/POLICY%20FRAMEWORK%20FINAL%20ANNEXES%20(PART%20II).doc).

<sup>47</sup> For an excellent analysis on this, see Benedikt Franke (2007) Competing Regionalisms in Africa and the Continent's Emerging Security Architecture, African Studies Quarterly, Volume 9, Issue 3, Spring 2007 as well as Enabling a Continent to Help Itself: US Military Capacity Building and Africa's Emerging Security Architecture, Strategic Insights, Volume 6, Issue 1, January 2007, Center for Contemporary Conflict.

building for meeting the international shortfalls in the number of peacekeepers.<sup>48</sup> The ASF's regional rapid reaction brigades have been modelled on the SHIRBRIG concept. As the retired Kenyan General Peter Marwa put it: "The concept of the Standby Force was developed with the assistance of the UN [...]. The SHIRBRIG model remains the best example for our regions to learn from."<sup>49</sup> Indeed, when comparing the organizational structures of SHIRBRIG, ECOBRIG and EASBRIG, it becomes clear that they are almost identical. This yields inherently strong potential for interoperability and brigade-to-brigade cooperation. SHIRBRIG has particularly focused its support and capacity-building activities on two brigades: ECOBRIG (under the regional responsibility of ECOWAS) and EASBRIG (under the regional auspice of an independent EASBRIG Coordination Mechanism, EASBRICOM). Officers from SHIRBRIG's Planning Element have assisted EASBRIG's and ECOBRIG's planning elements with their expertise at key stages of the brigade development. Apart from holding seminars, workshops and training together, officers from ECOBRIG and EASBRIG are also frequently invited to SHIRBRIG's headquarters for joint training.<sup>50</sup>

### **2.3. Lessons Learned**

In contrast to the mixed record of the missions, SHIRBRIG's African capacity-building initiatives with the East African Brigade (EASBRIG) and with the West African Brigade (ECOBRIG) have been very successful and continue to be SHIRBRIG's key achievements. EASBRIG's progress has been particularly encouraging. Thus, unsurprisingly, the key lessons learned have been to concentrate on and to reinforce SHIRBRIG's efforts on rapid mission headquarters start-ups and capacity-building within the African peace and security architecture. Yet, this further shifts SHIRBRIG's internal balance away from national troop contributions and more towards an emphasis on the Planning Elements' expertise.

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<sup>48</sup> 'Regional Cooperation' in *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, Report of the High Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, 2 December 2004, para 220, available at <http://www.un.org/secureworld/report.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Colonel Peter Marwa (2006) *Eastern Africa Standby Brigade, What Capacities Does it Require?* In Alfred C. Lugert... (ed.)... *Peacekeeping Forces - Today and Tomorrow*, pp 117-129, available online at [http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf\\_pool/publikationen/19\\_pkf\\_110\\_marwa.pdf](http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/19_pkf_110_marwa.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> See for example <http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/2008.htm>

## 3 SHIRBRIG'S Limitations and Current Challenges

### 3.1 Limitations

SHIRBRIG faces several inherent limitations, which can be seen as more or less typical of common problems a multi-national brigade will face.

#### *Deployment in Full Brigade Capacity*

As repeatedly highlighted during the missions and as the DPKO has also persistently pointed out. SHIRBRIG's major initial limitation has been its inability to deploy at full brigade level. Indeed, even at SHIRBRIG's deployment for UNMEE in 2000—which represented SHIRBRIG's largest mission to date—the troop strength only reached approximately 1,200 troops. It has become clear that SHIRBRIG's member states are unwilling or unable, due to organizational alternatives such as NATO and the EU, to provide the full brigade. While the full brigade concept has not been formally abandoned—a new impetus could be given by new members—the focus has definitely shifted towards Planning Element-led activities.

#### *Troop Commitment by Member States*

SHIRBRIG has, in theory, over 5000 troops committed by its fully participating member states to its force pool. Yet, when called upon, most of these troops are not available for missions. This might be due to a general reluctance of troop contributing countries to actually commit their troops to any missions or it might be due to overstretched and 'double-earmarked' resources which are committed to several organizations at the same time. As Greindl rightly points out, "Unlike in the past, the UN and SHIRBRIG are nowadays in none of the participating countries seen as top priority for force contributions [...]. More commitment as opposed to mere participation will be a key problem to be resolved. Without renewed political commitment this unsatisfactory situation will be difficult to change."<sup>51</sup>

A further tendency associated with the regionalization of security providers is that various institutions with overlapping membership vie for the same military resources (i.e., EU, NATO, NORDCAPS).<sup>52</sup> Apart from issues of proper prioritisation—which ultimately should be both a military and political decision—a decisive widening of SHIRBRIG's membership base beyond Europe would perhaps contribute to countering this problem.

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<sup>51</sup> Günther Greindl (2006), *The Multinational Stand-by High Readiness Brigade for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (SHIRBRIG) - Concepts and Future Challengers*, in Alfred C. Lugert (ed.) *Peacekeeping Forces - Today and Tomorrow*, pp 83-94, here page 92.

<sup>52</sup> The European Union's military crisis management forces (so-called Battlegroups), NATO's Response Force and Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support (NORDCAPS) all seem to have similar and largely overlapping aims and mandates, whilst relying mostly on the same military resources from member states. Particularly Sweden's strengthening of NORDCAPS seems to be increasingly taking place to SHIRBRIG's detriment.

### *Geographic Spread: Quality vs. More Inclusive Geographic Representation*

SHIRBRIG has to solve its dilemma of whether to increase its global membership base and risk losing the cohesion of expertise currently ensured by the circle of well-equipped and experienced member states, or whether to continue insisting on the highest standards and thereby risking its global legitimacy.

### *Lack of Effective Public Relations and Visibility*

SHIRBRIG lacks an effective public relations approach to increase its visibility and public knowledge regarding its activities and contributions to international peace and security. Indeed, SHIRBRIG is little known among policy-makers and even specialists, let alone the wider public. Yet, disseminating knowledge about SHIRBRIG's concept, development and purpose is crucial for advancing and encouraging its use and support by external actors. This is also explicitly acknowledged by the current Steering Committee's Presidency.<sup>53</sup> SHIRBRIG should thus not be afraid of more assertive 'marketing' and 'branding' and should invest more in enhancing its visibility and spreading information on its concept, purpose and, indeed, existence. This could range from facilitating reports on SHIRBRIG in the media to organizing and participating in academic or public conferences and workshops. SHIRBRIG should also actively liaise with national parliaments and policy-makers and initiate more widespread briefings on its activities and value within current and potential new member state political circles. Increasing knowledge about SHIRBRIG is particularly crucial in the context of the current attempts by some member-states to phase out SHIRBRIG.<sup>54</sup>

## **3.2 Current Challenges**

This section outlines the most fundamental challenges SHIRBRIG is currently facing. These challenges are mostly with respect to SHIRBRIG's external relations and they are not insurmountable.

### *SHIRBRIG-DPKO Relations*

The relationship between SHIRBRIG and the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations is central and fundamental to SHIRBRIG's basic concept of being a dedicated UN-gearred brigade. Yet, even during the 'golden period' of SHIRBRIG-DPKO relations—with former SHIRBRIG Commander General Patrick Cammaert occupying the post of Military Advisor from late 2002 to early 2005—coordination and cooperation between SHIRBRIG and the DPKO was not tension-free. In many ways, it could be argued that, paradoxically, SHIRBRIG has become and is increasingly being perceived by DPKO staff as a competitor and not a partner. With the evolution towards an emphasis on mission planning and standardization, SHIRBRIG has ventured into a terrain which has been the expertise prerogative of the DPKO to date. To put it somewhat hyperbolically,

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<sup>53</sup> See Point 2 of the 'Work Plan 2008 for the SHIRBRIG Presidency 2008' by the Austrian Presidency of the SHIRBRIG Steering Committee, [http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/presidency\\_2008\\_workplan.htm](http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/presidency_2008_workplan.htm).

<sup>54</sup> See page 26 below.



the DPKO wants and needs troop contributors, not planners! The awkward competitive situation between SHIRBRIG and the DPKO in the realm of peacekeeping planning becomes further compounded in the context of the recent overhaul of the DPKO's Office of Military Affairs. In June 2008, The General Assembly adopted the recommendations of the Secretary-General's 'Report of the Comprehensive Analysis of the Office of Military Affairs in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations',<sup>55</sup> which, amongst other measures, provided for an increase of approximately 100 new posts and a new facility within the DPKO's Office of Military Affairs specifically dedicated to planning and *deploying* a nucleus start-up force headquarters (the so-called military mission start-up or surge capacity).<sup>56</sup> In other words, the DPKO has been equipped with the same capacities and concepts which SHIRBRIG had developed throughout its five missions during the last eight years. Thus, despite the possibility of improved relations between SHIRBRIG and the new Military Adviser, Obiakor, tensions and potentials for direct competition between SHIRBRIG and the DPKO seem to be prone to rise. Considering the vast demands for such rare capacities—indeed, enough to keep all DPKO Planners and a dozen of SHIRBRIGs busy for the next decade—such rivalries seem rather irrational. In the future, it will be a key question whether SHIRBRIG's Planning Element will shift its main focus even further towards African capacity-building and increasingly away from conducting peacekeeping missions itself.

1998-2000	Lieutenant-General Giulio Fraticelli (Italy)
2000-2002	Major-General Tim Ford (Australia)
2002-2005	Major-General Patrick Cammaert (The Netherlands)
2005-2006:	Major-General Randhir Kumar Mehta (India)
2006-2007	(Acting): General Per Arne Five (Norway)
2007-2008	Lieutenant-General Ahmad Shuja Pasha (Pakistan)
Since June 2008	Lieutenant-General Chikadibia Obiakor (Nigeria)

**Table 4: DPKO Military Advisers 1998-2008<sup>57</sup>**

### *Dysfunctional Contact Group*

The so-called SHIRBRIG Contact Group is supposed to serve as an essential communication link between SHIRBRIG and the UN. Our research has highlighted that SHIRBRIG's Contact Group—comprised of the ambassadors and military advisers of the national Permanent Representations to the UN of SHIRBRIG member states—is largely ineffective in practice as a coordinating liaison link between SHIRBRIG and the UN System. Often, SHIRBRIG's interests are not coherently or effectively articulated, and, in some instances, members of the Contact Group actively undermined SHIRBRIG's goals and interests. This further complicates and adds to the problems of the complex relationship between SHIRBRIG and the UN's DPKO. It has also become clear that the loose meetings of the various national groupings of members of the Permanent Representations cannot really be seen as a coherent Contact Group with a common and co-

<sup>55</sup> Report of the Comprehensive Analysis of the Office of Military Affairs in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Report of the Secretary-General for the Sixty-Second Session of the General Assembly, 17 March 2008, available at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/274/70/PDF/N0827470.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, pp. 15-16.

<sup>57</sup> Sources: Own research and collection from UN sources.

herent agenda. With the only institutionalized link and channel of communication between SHIRBRIG and the UN hampered, the SHIRBRIG Planning Element's coordination and day-to-day collaboration with the UN's DPKO is severely hampered. Thus, it is highly and urgently recommended that SHIRBRIG's Planning Element installs at least one liaison officer at the DPKO directly. While such an option has been contemplated, no direct action has been taken as of yet. The arrival of the DPKO's new Military Adviser provides an excellent opportunity for the fresh installation of a SHIRBRIG liaison officer. This should significantly improve SHIRBRIG-DPKO coordination and cooperation.

#### *Adverse Pressure from Several Member States*

Despite SHIRBRIG's external successes, it currently nevertheless faces internal pressures from Sweden and some of the Nordic participating countries to shut down. The motives are not entirely clear, but seem to be related to a renewed interest in a revival of the Scandinavian-led NORDCAPS brigade with a distinct focus on Africa and a similar scope and mandate to that of SHIRBRIG. Indeed, as the Nordic countries were traditionally considered to be at the forefront of supporting SHIRBRIG these current manoeuvres have contributed to a sense of uncertainty and urgency amongst SHIRBRIG's Senior Officers. Whilst Sweden and Finland have in the past been rather luke-warm supporters of SHIRBRIG<sup>58</sup>, a key question of existential importance is to what extent Denmark—who has been the main founder and hitherto one of the staunchest supporters of SHIRBRIG, and, conversely a rather sceptic participant in NORDCAPS—will change its policy preferences. A key danger, seen by several SHIRBRIG officers, is that these debates, which are fuelled by an underlying NORDCAPS-SHIRBRIG rivalry, will spill over into unnecessarily heated, more fundamental debates on SHIRBRIG's value and continued existence. In this light, many Senior Officers also view an expansion of SHIRBRIG's membership base as a vital and symbolic step for guaranteeing SHIRBRIG's continuing relevance. Particularly the impact of a potential German indication of interest in SHIRBRIG would, it was stressed, put the current internal struggles at rest.<sup>59</sup>

#### *SHIRBRIG's Relations with France and Britain*

Particularly as SHIRBRIG is venturing further into the field of capacity-building on the African continent, it has to take into account relations with the ex-colonial powers France and Britain, who are both still very active in capacity-building initiatives for the African Standby Force. Specifically, the strong British relationship with Kenya has an

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<sup>58</sup> Indeed, in 2003 and 2004 Sweden and Finland chose to make their contributions to UN Operations outside the SHIRBRIG framework. One explanation for the Finnish, Swedish and to some extent also Norwegian enthusiasm for NORDCAPS has been that it is seen as vehicle for "helping Finland and Sweden in NATO and Norway into the EU," see Peter Viggo Jakobsen (2007) Still Punching Above Their Weight? Nordic Cooperation in Peace Operations after the Cold War, *International Peacekeeping*, 14:4, p 467.

<sup>59</sup> SHIRBRIG is currently at a decisive cross-road. Internal pressures from the Northern States, in particular from Sweden, are aimed at closing down SHIRBRIG by the end of next year. Yet, Romania, Canada, Ireland and Austria are decidedly pro-SHIRBRIG. Our interviews with SHIRBRIG staff elicited that any German indication of interest in SHIRBRIG would be seen as a definite rescue – ending once and for all the internal struggles.

important impact on the development of EASBRIG. Kenya, along with Ethiopia aspires to hegemony within the region and, by implication, within the EASBRIG agreement. Further complication and complexity is added by the fact that EASBRIG's main components are split between Kenya and Ethiopia. While the brigade's Planning Element is based in Nairobi, the headquarters and the logistics base are located in Addis Ababa.<sup>60</sup> Britain commits substantial resources to the Planning Element in Nairobi as well as to the Peace Support Training Centre in Kenya and views SHIRBRIG as a potential meddler in what is seen as an essentially British domain.<sup>61</sup> Yet, there have also been encouraging signs of potential cooperation between SHIRBRIG and Britain towards EASBRIG, which, given the obvious synergies, should be further explored.<sup>62</sup> French interests focus mainly on central Africa (and its Central African Brigade) and seem to be less concerned with SHIRBRIG's activities.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> See Allehone Mulugeta (2008) Promises and Challenges of a Sub-Regional Force for the Horn of Africa, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol 15, No 2, April 2008, p 175.

<sup>61</sup> See Ashley Jackson (2007) Peace Support Operations in Africa: A Joint British-Kenyan Initiative, *African Affairs*, 106/425, pp 705-707

<sup>62</sup> See [http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/4th\\_pstc\\_nairobi\\_cimic\\_course.htm](http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/4th_pstc_nairobi_cimic_course.htm)

<sup>63</sup> Interviews, Senior SHIRBRIG officer, Høvelte November 2007.

## 4. SHIRBRIG's Value and Future Potential

This section examines SHIRBRIG's advantages and future potential, with particular emphasis on the opportunities and possibilities for enhancing cooperation with other, similar peacekeeping instruments.

### 4.1 SHIRBRIG's Value

#### *Historic Achievement of SHIRBRIG's Creation*

Although SHIRBRIG is far from the ideal of a permanent, multinational standing army at the full, supranational disposal of the United Nations, it has to be recognized as a unique achievement in the 60-year history of similar international initiatives for equipping the UN with more reliable means for quick and effective peacekeeping. Indeed, the more than a dozen unsuccessful attempts of the past serve as an important reminder how difficult it has been to mobilize political will and generate consensus to create a standby arrangement for and within the wider UN-framework. As the political and organizational set-up costs of such an arrangement are extremely high, the very fact that a sizeable number of countries succeeded in creating and utilizing SHIRBRIG is an encouraging achievement in itself. Thus, SHIRBRIG, although far from ideal, should be taken seriously and constantly improved, modified and utilized. The political costs of abandoning it outright would be high.

#### *Proven Experience and Effectiveness in the Field*

SHIRBRIG has already amassed considerable experience in peacekeeping and can draw on a sizeable body of lessons learned. Although it has also shown numerous limitations, it seems to be more operational and less of a political and symbolic tool than similar, multinational arrangements of other international organizations. Furthermore, although the scope of SHIRBRIG's actual missions remains rather narrow and modest so far, it nevertheless proved its effectiveness as an enabler of other organizations' peacekeeping efforts, as an interim headquarters provider, and as part of an integrated UN Mission itself.

#### *Full Integration with U.N. Forces Upon Deployment*

A crucial advantage of SHIRBRIG is the fact that, upon deployment, SHIRBRIG elements cooperate and *integrate* fully with other UN forces in the mission area. This also means that the SHIRBRIG forces are then put under the command and control of the respective UN Force Commander. This is a fundamental difference compared to the rapid reaction units of NATO or the European Union, where a NATO-led or EU-led mission may be launched by the organizations *in support* of an existing UN mission. This implies that the organisations' missions run alongside of the UN mission without integrating or without placing the troops under UN Command. While this approach is understandable in terms of guaranteeing the decision-making autonomy and overall organisational control over the support mission, it is nevertheless a limiting factor for the over-

all cohesion and harmonization with the concurrent UN mission. In contrast, SHIRBRIG's value lies in its direct support of and integration into the mission. However, bearing the recent tendency of SHIRBRIG's activities to place more emphasis on the 'interim headquarters' concept and the limited use of the brigade force pool, this comparative advantage SHIRBRIG could offer to the UN over the EU and NATO option is diminished.

#### *High Quality of Common Peacekeeping Expertise*

Another key advantage of SHIRBRIG is the high quality of peacekeeping experience and expertise of SHIRBRIG's fully participating members. As a result of the 'like-minded nations' concept, there is a high level of cohesion and capacities. Furthermore, although the various units of the brigade are based in their respective nations and actual training remains the responsibility of the nation-states, the well-developed sets of common training standards and procedures enhance interoperability and harmonization. The common training exercises, organized at least once a year by the Planning Element, are a key asset for the unit commanders. However, experience has also shown that the strongest impact on advancing interoperability comes from actual participation in large-scale missions in the field. As UNMEE remains the only larger-scale mission involving the cooperation of large units from different member-states, the opportunities for a 'reality-check' on the progress of common standards remain limited. Yet, those elements that have deployed together more regularly—mostly Planning Element officers, augmented by the non-permanent, non-commissioned staff—have demonstrated a high level of effective collaboration and interoperability.

#### *'Non-Colonial' Impartiality and Reputation in African Regions*

Despite its current heavy membership bias on Nordic, wealthy Western nations, SHIRBRIG enjoys a relatively high reputation amongst policy-makers in the African regions. This reputation is based on its high level of expertise and collaborative approach. Several of our interviewees stressed that SHIRBRIG has the advantage of not being associated with a neo-colonial agenda or a seemingly patronizing approach that still seems to be attributed to actors such as France and the United Kingdom. SHIRBRIG is not perceived as operating according to a 'hidden agenda' in pursuit of overriding self-interests, other than supporting the African capacity-building process as a source of self-legitimization and a justification for SHIRBRIG's continued existence and usefulness. Whether this impression is indeed held by all of SHIRBRIG partners in Africa needs to be more widely tested. It is clear, however, that SHIRBRIG's reputation and image as a neutral and helpful capacity-builder has greatly enhanced SHIRBRIG's influence and effectiveness in the African regions.

#### *Role Model and Assistance for the Replication of Similar Arrangements*

Kofi Annan stressed the need for SHIRBRIG-like brigades in his Report 'In Larger Freedom' in 2005: "States with advanced military capacities should establish standby high readiness, self-sufficient battalions at up to brigade level that can reinforce United

Nations missions, and should place them at the disposal of the United Nations.”<sup>64</sup> Despite being a relatively young organization, SHIRBRIG seems to have already established itself as a model and key reference point for similar rapid reaction brigade initiatives. This is particularly true—as we have seen in Section 2.2—for the initiatives currently undertaken by two of the five regional brigades participating in the build-up of the African Standby Force (ASF). As the African Union’s Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and the Military Staff Committee stressed: “The SHIRBRIG concept acts as a very good model for the sub-regional standby brigade groups [...] In this respect, the indicative organizational structures and scheme of management of the SHIRBRIG, including its legal framework and training, could well influence and guide the operationalization of the ASF and other sub-regional organizations.”<sup>65</sup>

Yet, it is also pointed out that SHIRBRIG’s arrangement would have to be applied in a ‘modified manner,’ in such a way that it takes into account the “realities of the African situation, particularly as regards equipment and sustainability.”<sup>66</sup> This is exactly what the activities of the Planning Element aim at achieving, namely the replication of SHIRBRIG at the regional level, tailored and adapted for the different conditions in Africa. This, in turn, benefits SHIRBRIG in the long-run as it thereby trains its future partners in likely peace missions. By replicating itself, SHIRBRIG has the potential to contribute to the creation of an interoperable network of regional rapid capability brigades with similar standards and operational procedures. Or, as a former Austrian General put it, “Eventually more regional ‘SHIRBRIGS’ would be available and a network for training and know-how transfer could be established. A SHIRBRIG network would also be a great asset in any real mission deployment.”<sup>67</sup>

### *The Value of the Planning Element*

In recent years, the value of the Planning Element has become SHIRBRIG’s main strength. The permanent officers based at the Høvelte barracks not only demonstrate a high level of cohesion and multinational effectiveness, but they have also had a significant impact on capacity-building initiatives and the dissemination of common standards. Yet, it is important that the planning element does not become the sole focus of SHIRBRIG. The basic concept of providing a full brigade for rapid reaction missions is still an important objective, which senior officers and the Steering Committee’s Presidency have still not given up on.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> A more Secure World, p 86.

<sup>65</sup> African Union (2003) Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and The Military Staff Committee, Part II – Annexes, adopted by the Third Meeting of the African Chiefs of Defence Staff, 15-16 May 2003, Addis-Ababa, available online at [http://www.african-union.org/root/AU/AUC/Departments/PSC/Asf/doc/POLICY%20FRAMEWORK%](http://www.african-union.org/root/AU/AUC/Departments/PSC/Asf/doc/POLICY%20FRAMEWORK%20)

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Günther Greindl (2006), the Multinational Stand-by High Readiness Brigade for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (SHIRBRIG) - Concepts and Future Challengers, p 94.

<sup>68</sup> See Austrian Presidency’s Workplan 2008.

### *Cost-Effectiveness*

SHIRBRIG operates at low costs. While Denmark provides for the main headquarters at Høvelte, member nations are asked to contribute €50,000 annually. From the actual time of deployment, the UN pays all expenses for SHIRBRIG according to the existing UN rules.<sup>69</sup>

## **4.2 SHIRBRIG's Future Potential**

This section gives a brief outline of SHIRBRIG's future potential and opportunities.

### *New Nigerian Military Advisor: A New Dawn?*

The persistent rivalries between SHIRBRIG's Planning Element and the DPKO's Office of Military Affairs have been outlined above. Past experiences have highlighted that a large part of an effective SHIRBRIG-DPKO relationship depends on the attitude of the Military Adviser. After relations have been strained for the past 3 years, the restructuring of the Military Office and the arrival of the new Military Adviser, Chikadibia Obiakor from Nigeria, could provide a fresh opportunity for more conducive relations. This change is particularly promising as General Obiakor was a Force Commander of the UNMIL Mission in Liberia, in which SHIRBRIG was previously involved. As a result, he will have a clear knowledge of SHIRBRIG's activities as well as of its involvement in the African Standby Force process. It is reasonable to expect that both current SHIRBRIG staff and the new Military Adviser share the aim of renewing and strengthening the organization's focus on African capacity-building.

### *Inter-organizational Potential*

The opportunity to cooperate with other international organizations and arrangements promises the most potential for an enhanced system of rapid peacekeeping mechanisms.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the former UN Secretary-General called in his 'Larger Freedom' Report of 2005 explicitly for "the establishment of an interlocking system of peacekeeping capacities."<sup>71</sup> SHIRBRIG seems to be particularly well placed for the promotion of such a system. While many informal contacts already exist among key military staff,<sup>72</sup> a formalization of inter-organizational relations is often seen as highly sensitive in political terms, due to different preferences amongst member states. However, several promising developments have already taken place.

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<sup>69</sup> Brigitte Juul (2003) The Danish Experience of Regional/multinational cooperation on peacekeeping capacity building, [www.geocities.com/womenpeacekeeping/ppjuul.doc](http://www.geocities.com/womenpeacekeeping/ppjuul.doc).

<sup>70</sup> For more in-depth discussion of the theoretical and practical dimension of the phenomenon of Inter-organizationalism, see Joachim Koops (2008) 'Towards Effective and Integrative Inter-Organizationalism,' in Kathrin Brockmann, Hans Bastian Hauck and Stuart Reigeluth (eds) *From Conflict to Regional Stability: Linking Security and Development*, Berlin: German Council on Foreign Relations.

<sup>71</sup> Kofi Annan (2005) In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All, Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit, UN General Assembly, A/59/2005, p 31.

<sup>72</sup> As was pointed out to us during interviews with a former EU liaison officer to the African Union, NATO Crisis Management staff and SHIRBRIG officers, key military staff from these organizations often sit in the same capacity seminars and maintain regular contact and exchange.

### *European Union (EU)*

The EU's potential for strengthening and developing SHIRBRIG's capacities are compelling. Not only are currently 15 out of SHIRBRIG's 23 participating and observer countries EU member states, but the EU as a whole has also repeatedly reiterated its commitment to strengthening the UN's crisis management capabilities — particularly since the adoption of the European Security Strategy in December 2003 and its new foreign policy philosophy of 'effective multilateralism.' In this context, the EU has not only issued numerous EU-UN statements of intention, including most notably the Declaration on Cooperation in Crisis Management, but has also recently enhanced EU-UN cooperation in the practical realm by developing the so-called 'battlegroups.' These compact EU forces could either be used for autonomous EU crisis intervention missions or could be deployed under Chapter VII mandates in support of pressurised UN troops. Therefore, the EU could be an effective crisis management actor and UN partner in crisis hotspots such as the Congo, Lebanon or Darfur.<sup>73</sup> SHIRBRIG officers have expressed their interest in conducting joint planning exercises, but also note that EU-SHIRBRIG cooperation is viewed by several member states as a highly sensitive issue.<sup>74</sup> Yet, if a direct cooperation scheme seems unfeasible due to political constraints, indirect cooperation should at least be encouraged in the context of the EU's capacity-building initiatives in Africa. As the EU is directly supporting the African Peace and Security Architecture through the EU-AU African Peace Facility,<sup>75</sup> the potential for synergies between SHIRBRIG and the EU seems obvious. Lastly, in March 2008, SHIRBRIG's Planning Element deployed Lars Schmidt, a Danish officer, to the UN Headquarters in N'Djamena, Chad on a six-month fact finding mission and to act as the liaison officer between the European Union (which has launched the EUFOR Chad mission) and the United Nations (which is conducting the Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad – MINURCAT).<sup>76</sup>

### *U.S.-Africa Command (AFRICOM)*

In February 2007, U.S. President George Bush announced the creation of a U.S.-Africa Command (AFRICOM), which would underline US military presence on the African continent.<sup>77</sup> While initially viewed with mutual suspicion, AFRICOM launched a formal request to SHIRBRIG to be allowed to participate as an observer at SHIRBRIG's annual staff exercise 'White Dove' in Norway in December 2007. This request might indicate the beginning of more frequent inter-organizational collaboration and exchange.

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<sup>73</sup> On more detail on the potentials and realities of EU-SHIRBRIG cooperation, see Joachim Koops (2007) UN SHIRBRIG and EU Battlegroups, OCGG Security Recommendation, 6, Oxford: Oxford Council on Good Governance. Available at <http://www.oxfordgovernance.org/fileadmin/Publications/SR006.pdf>

<sup>74</sup> Interviews at Høvelte, November 2007.

<sup>75</sup> See Alex Vines and Roger Middleton (2008) Options for the EU to Support the African Peace and Security Architecture, p 26.

<sup>76</sup> [http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/mission\\_minurcat\\_08.htm](http://www.shirbrig.dk/html/mission_minurcat_08.htm).

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.africom.mil/AboutAFRICOM.asp>.



### *SEEBRIG and NATO*

The South Eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG), which was founded in 1999, originally trained in close cooperation with NATO, but has also recently indicated its readiness to participate in UN-led missions. To this end, SEEBRIG has already visited SHIRBRIG's permanent Planning Element to be briefed on SHIRBRIG's experience in UN missions. SHIRBRIG-SEEBRIG relations are promising for two interrelated reasons. First, SEEBRIG represents a comparatively strong and cohesive brigade in its own right. Secondly, cooperation could be an important step towards wider SHIRBRIG-NATO cooperation. With Romania acting as a central player within SEEBRIG and an enthusiastic supporter of SHIRBRIG, a cooperative partnership could pave the way to a closer SHIRBRIG relationship with NATO.

In terms of Germany's contribution, it is also important to explore potential synergies with the NATO-gear Polish-Danish-German Brigade (based near the German-Polish border, in Stettin), with an eye towards organizing an exchange with SHIRBRIG officers, for example.

### *SADCBRIG*

In early 2008, SHIRBRIG was approached by military officials from the Southern African Brigade (SADCBRIG)—the Standby Brigade of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)—who have informally expressed an interest in entering into a relationship with SHIRBRIG in order to gain from its capacity-building expertise.<sup>78</sup> Help would in particular be needed with respect to the finalization of the Standby Concept and with training on planning capabilities. SADCBRIG was officially launched on 17 August 2007<sup>79</sup> and represents one of the five regional brigades under the African Standby Force. With South Africa as a member and with a strong and coherent Secretariat, SADCBRIG already possesses some crucial preconditions for becoming an effective standby force.<sup>80</sup> Yet, for the time being, SHIRBRIG is reluctant to enter into a direct relationship with SADCBRIG, as Zimbabwe, under the objectionable leadership of Robert Mugabe, is also an active member of SADC and SADCBRIG. Denmark, in particular, objects to SHIRBRIG's engagement with SADCBRIG under these circumstances. However, should the situation change in Zimbabwe after Mugabe's departure in the future, SHIRBRIG-SADCBRIG cooperation would be very promising indeed. Regional overlap in membership portends additional benefit. Three members of SADCBRIG (Madagascar, Mauritius and Tanzania) are also members of EASBRIG, the East African Brigade, with which SHIRBRIG has established the closest links so far. Consequently, cooperation with SADCBRIG at some point in the future would make inter-organizational sense.

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with SHIRBRIG's Chief of Staff, 25th June 2008.

<sup>79</sup> See Memorandum of Understanding Amongst the Southern African Development Community Member States on the Establishment of a Southern African Development Community Standby Brigade, available online at [http://www.sadc.int/news/news\\_details.php?news\\_id=1056](http://www.sadc.int/news/news_details.php?news_id=1056).

<sup>80</sup> See Alex Vines and Roger Middleton (2008), p. 23.

### *Expanding, Enhancing, and Utilizing the 'Observer Status'*

In addition to facilitating interlocking, inter-organizational cooperation, SHIRBRIG should re-think the value of the observer status in its organization. While a comparatively low level of commitment and participation is required from the state deciding to become an observer, it nevertheless ensures the opportunity to familiarize the observer state with SHIRBRIG's common procedures, standards and training. It should also be seen as an important first step towards full membership. Broadening the observer base would also enhance SHIRBRIG's reach, thereby making the organization more inclusive. Particularly, African countries already participating successfully in either ECOBRIG or EASBRIG should be encouraged to join SHIRBRIG as an observer, thus deepening the network of interoperable brigades and standards.

### *New Impetus through New Member States*

Ultimately, however, SHIRBRIG needs to broaden its membership and must strive for global representation. This has been stressed in numerous memoranda, presidency workplans and by several senior officers. As discussed above, this is particularly vital at present, when SHIRBRIG is at a crossroads, facing internal criticisms and pressures to shut-down. The accession of a new, influential participant such as Germany would mean a substantial boost for SHIRBRIG's future relevance.

## 5. Conclusions and Final Recommendations: Germany's Moment?

This report provided a comprehensive analysis of the Multi-National Standby High Readiness Brigade for UN Operations (SHIRBRIG). It examined SHIRBRIG's origins and creation in the context of the half-decade long endeavour to provide the UN with a more reliable rapid military capacity. It also outlined SHIRBRIG's key characteristics, aims and mandates. A review of SHIRBRIG's missions, activities and learned lessons highlighted that, due to a faltering troop commitment by its member states, SHIRBRIG has been forced to depart from its original concept, which envisaged the rapid deployment of a full 5,000 troop strong brigade for Chapter VI or VII missions. Instead SHIRBRIG specialized in the rapid provision of force headquarters nucleus and planning assistance for the start-up of peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, SHIRBRIG's permanent Planning Element has embarked, in conjunction with the Steering Committee, on valuable and rather effective long-term planning, standardization and training assistance and capacity-building initiatives for two major African regional brigades of the African Standby Force (ASF). By 2010, the ASF is supposed to become fully operational and will be used by the African Union, in close cooperation with the United Nations Security Council, for rapid deployments within Chapter VII peacekeeping missions. Overall, the report highlighted that SHIRBRIG possesses several comparative advantages and future potential as a multinational and multifunctional peacekeeping and capacity-building force. This is particularly clear when viewing SHIRBRIG as one of many building blocks within a potentially interlocking system of rapid military capacities. Similar arrangements, such as the EU's battlegroups, NATO's response force, regional brigades such as SEEBRIG, and even the newly established U.S.-Africa Command are all potential competitors, but also potential partners for an effective peacekeeping capability system.

This leaves Germany with another serious institutional option to contemplate. Indeed, Germany is in the position of being able to choose between several partnership options for its peacekeeping activities, including NATO, the EU and the UN. So far, Germany's emphasis has been mainly on the EU and NATO for its peacekeeping and crisis management engagements. However, the report stresses that German participation in SHIRBRIG (initially at observer status) would provide Germany with an attractive and effective opportunity for strengthening its international role within the UN system, as well as demonstrate its commitment to the support of UN peacekeeping endeavours and long-term capacity building on the African continent. Our interviews and discussions with key SHIRBRIG staff have confirmed that SHIRBRIG would readily welcome any interest on Germany's part. German membership is seen by SHIRBRIG's senior officers as an immense reinforcement and enhancement of SHIRBRIG's capacities, influence and future sustainability. Supporting SHIRBRIG would not only benefit the already overstretched UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, but also the long-term efforts of strengthening the African Peace and Security Architecture. In particular, the African Standby Force (ASF) arrangements and its rapid deployment capabilities, for which SHIRBRIG's Planning Element has served as a central capacity-builder, adviser and role

model, would also benefit. In turn, SHIRBRIG provides Germany with a viable institutional option for increasing Germany's influence, reputation and impact in these areas.

Hence, the report would like to make the following three recommendations:

**Final Recommendations:**

1. Germany should examine the possibility of joining SHIRBRIG (either as an observer or full participant). SHIRBRIG could provide Germany with a cohesive, experienced and effective platform for contributing to UN-gearred peacekeeping and AU-gearred capacity-building and enhance Germany's role as an international peacekeeping actor. It would make sense to define the conditions and the financial scope for a potential German role. This could be seen as strategic investments that could demonstrate Germany's will to support 'UN-centered, effective multilateralism'.
2. To this end, an initial, informal meeting between SHIRBRIG's Chief of Staff and the relevant administrative, political, and military layer in Germany should be convened for exploring potential formal and informal cooperation and participation options. A more in-depth follow-up feasibility study should be conducted in close cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Defense to examine the benefits and drawbacks of potential German participation in SHIRBRIG.
3. Irrespective of the question of German participation in SHIRBRIG, Germany should lobby for more EU attention to be given to SHIRBRIG. It also should coordinate the strategic development of the EU-Battlegroup concept with the needs and experiences of SHIRBRIG. This could include joint military training exercises between EU Battlegroups and SHIRBRIG.

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