

Defence



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“We do not have the luxury of unlimited political energy or finances to indulge in unnecessary duplication, double-hatting or institutional empire building,”

Rt Hon Liam Fox MP,
Secretary of State for Defence, Munich, 4 February 2011

**In the real world, the EU
should have nothing to do
with defence**



EU tries to fast-track military integration

The EU ambition to force the pace of European political integration creates real dilemmas for Conservative government ministers seeking to do the best for our country's future.

For the EU, every crisis is an opportunity. Just as the earthquake in the eurozone is seen as the moment to push ahead with an integrated EU tax and budget system for the eurozone countries, so the same approach is being attempted with defence.

In the real world, the EU should have nothing to do with defence. Our armed forces are the ultimate expression of our national sovereignty and security and our ability to project influence in the world.

Our natural and most reliable allies are the English-speaking nations, not least the United States. We also have interests in common with many European countries. When we need to demonstrate international solidarity in the face of security threats or engage in international military operations with these allies we have the long-standing and well-tested structures of the NATO alliance.

NATO has enlarged from its original 12 members in 1949 to 28 today. Its vital core roles are the defence of its members' territory and response to serious international security crises.

Since its foundation there has been concern about 'burden-sharing' – is every member contributing its fair share? Are the continental European nations pulling their weight or do they just want a free ride?

If I thought for a moment that the EU's Common Security & Defence Policy (CSDP) was designed to make the Europeans more capable and effective NATO contributors, then I might have some good to say about it. Indeed, when the last Labour Government tried to explain to the British people why it had actively encouraged an autonomous EU defence, contrary to the policy of all its predecessors, its excuse was that this was a way of getting Europeans to share more of the defence burden. Not surprisingly, this was a hollow claim.

In spite of EU blarney, CSDP is not about military capability, it's all about EU political ambition. German, French, Belgian and Spanish governments, as well as top Eurocrats, are not shy in describing the real reason for EU defence policy – to take forward the process of European integration and to help establish the EU as an actor on the world stage.

There is no evidence that the creation of the EU's duplicative and expensive defence structures have increased allied defence capabilities by one soldier or one aircraft. On the contrary, we continue to see defence budgets being slashed across Europe. Most significantly, CSDP has been a constant distraction from NATO and many European allies have failed to give wholehearted support to NATO operations.

"Talking up the EU as an alternative route and adding new institutional structures does not address diminishing defence budgets. As my colleague, Liam Fox, has said, "Double-hatting doesn't increase capacity or capability. It doesn't create one more bullet, one more gun, one more plane,"

Gerald Howarth MP, Minister for International Security Strategy, London, 12 September 2011

Geoffrey Van Orden with Libyan interim Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril



The Libya operations



Apache attack helicopters take off from HMS Ocean off the coast of Libya

The most topical example of this has been NATO's Operation *Unified Protector* in Libya. Extraordinarily, Germany alone among European countries on the UN Security Council, failed to support the UN Security Council Resolution 1973 (17 March 2011). This established the no-fly zone and arms embargo on Libya and authorised "all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack". NATO responded to this call and the brunt of its operations has been borne by France, the US, Britain, Denmark, Norway and Canada, with major contributions from many other NATO nations as well as Sweden and the United Arab Emirates. The most significant exceptions were Poland and Germany, two NATO countries with sizeable military capabilities that could have shared the burden of military operations – but their thoughts were elsewhere.

Not surprisingly, it is Poland (which has the EU Presidency from 1 July-31 December 2011), with strong German backing, that has now taken the initiative in pushing for establishment of an "EU operational headquarters" (OHQ), duplicating NATO's well-established capability at SHAPE, Mons. The more insidious danger is the call for more rapid EU defence integration through a Lisbon Treaty mechanism called "permanent structured cooperation" (PSC). Poland, Germany, France, Italy and Spain have supported this move. Britain has so far managed to block the OHQ initiative but is now put in a quandary over PSC.

The recipe for an "EU Army" – Permanent Structured Cooperation (PSC)

Permanent Structured Cooperation (PSC) is an ingenious insertion in the Treaty of Lisbon – a key innovation and *recipe for "an EU Army" designed to enable a small group of federalist governments to fast-track defence integration and bypass the objections of countries such as the UK.* The problem for them is

that, without the UK, European defence doesn't have much muscle. The problem for the UK is concern about exclusion, particularly from defence markets.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE UK'S DEFENCE INDUSTRIES

“Just as we take pride in the job that our Armed Forces do – it is right that we take pride in those in industry who support them and provide the tools that keep us safe. From those who research and design solutions that may well save lives, to those who engineer, produce and support equipment and capabilities too. It is not only that this maintains over 300,000 jobs across the country – in all parts of the United Kingdom. It is not only that this pays around £2bn a year in taxes to the exchequer and a £35bn contribution to the wider economy.”

Liam Fox MP, Secretary of State for Defence, London, 13 September 2011.

Also in NATO, we could see a group of European countries ganging-up on other members, because they have pre-cooked their position in the EU's PSC caucus. The assumption had been that decisions relating to EU defence policy would have to be agreed by all members (Article 42/4 of the EU (Lisbon) Treaty). However, according to Article 46/2, PSC can be set up by qualified majority and not by the unanimity required of other EU military decisions. The UK can therefore be out-voted. And once the PSC caucus has been established, its members can exclusively decide who might subsequently join them.

Typically, this EU activity is a complete distraction from the real task of generating more defence capability, having the political will to meet serious security challenges, and guaranteeing the future vitality and cohesion of NATO. And it totally confuses our American allies and other friends.

Background to EU defence policy

In December 1998, Mr Blair tripped across the Channel to meet the French President in St Malo. Between them they agreed that the EU should have an autonomous military capability. We have yet to discover what Britain got in return for this major concession to a long-standing French foreign policy ambition.

From 1999 onwards, the development of EU Defence Policy – what is now known as the Common European Security and Defence Policy or CSDP – has been high on the EU agenda. I have consistently led the opposition to this EU meddling in defence – a divisive and wasteful distraction at a time when resources are stretched and we need to focus on meeting real security threats. **CSDP is primarily an instrument of European political integration, dressed up as an effort to improve military capabilities.**

We are the first to recognise that engagement with our continental European allies is vital for our security. But we must always distinguish between the concept of Europe – which includes key NATO members such as Norway and Turkey – and the EU – an ambitious political institution which involves its Council, Commission, Parliament, and Court of Justice in defence matters.

There is no military excuse for CSDP. Twenty one of the EUs twenty seven members are also NATO members (the exceptions are the four 'neutrals' – Irish Republic, Finland, Sweden, Austria – as well as the Republic of Cyprus and Malta). Even the 'neutrals' have participated at some stage in NATO operations.

For example, Swedish fighters were engaged in the Libya operations. Even France, a difficult NATO member which for so long tried to exclude the US from European security through its sponsorship of a separate European defence policy, has now rejoined the integrated military structure of the Alliance.

When I am told I am exaggerating, that military decision-making rests with national governments and that no-one is talking about an EU Defence Force under an EU flag, I recall the words of the German Foreign Minister in 2010. He was speaking at the Munich Security Conference and stated that “the long term goal is the establishment of a European army under full parliamentary control.” You cannot get any clearer than that.

CSDP generates no additional military capabilities

The EU owns no military forces. These belong to the nations. There is only one set of military forces in each nation for the full range of military tasks. If troops are made available for an EU operation then clearly they are not available for NATO or other tasks. EU talk of a 60,000 strong rapid reaction force or indeed its less ambitious 'battle group' concept is smoke and mirrors in that these draw on precisely the same forces that a country might also make available for NATO, UN, or indeed national military tasks.

Visiting the military training mission for Somali recruits



CSDP merely places an additional burden on our existing armed forces and does not generate any additional capacity.

Unnecessary EU Military Operations

The EU is busy creating a plausible narrative of CSDP. It would be too easy to take this at face value. The EU boasts that “with some 20 missions on 3 continents the EU’s role as a security player is rapidly expanding”. Yet most of these “EU operations” are on a small-scale, most are civil missions operating under the CSDP mandate, and only a handful has been purely military in nature. These are either French operations which have been sub-contracted to the EU; recent NATO operations which have effectively been wound up or with which the EU seeks to compete; or the result of the EU scouring the globe for opportunities to plant its flag – sometimes all three of these.

The one operation that is trumpeted as a great success by the EU is the counter-piracy naval force off Somalia – Operation Atalanta:

ATALANTA After various military missions, France was anxious to give the EU a naval dimension during its EU Presidency in 2008. As its main military base in Africa was in Djibouti, on the Red Sea coast, the growing threat to humanitarian and commercial shipping from pirates in that region presented an opportunity. EU

Naval Force ATALANTA was conceived and became operational in December 2008. National navies, including the Royal Navy, contribute ships to the force, supported by maritime patrol aircraft.

All this sounds very helpful until it is recalled that all the navies currently providing ships to the EU force are from NATO and NATO itself had already deployed one of its two Standing Naval Maritime Groups to the Red Sea with warships from Germany, Greece, Italy, UK, Turkey and the US. And NATO continues to provide a major presence under Operation *Ocean Shield*.

When I questioned him in September 2009, Chairman of the EU Military Committee, General Henri Bentegeat admitted that the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia was a regrettable case of multiple military operations, with particular reference to the NATO and EU missions which he described as “sometimes competing and harming”.

Furthermore, the operation has not been effective – piracy has increased!

I repeat the point that the EU contributes no additional military capabilities – it merely draws on diminishing national armies, navies, and air forces in order to inflate its own political ambitions and has had to duplicate NATO command and control structures in order to do this. ●●

TOP 10 MILITARY BUDGETS 2010

Rank	Country	Spending \$ billion	% Change 2001-2010	Rank according to purchasing power parity (PPP)	PPP \$ billion spending
1	USA	698	81.3	1. USA	698
2	China	119	189	2. China	210
3	UK	59.6	21.9	3. India	116
4	France	59.3	3.3	4. Saudi Arabia	64.6
5	Russia	58.7	82.4	5. UK	57.6
6	Japan	54.5	-1.7	6. France	49.8
7	Saudi Arabia	45.2	63.0	7. Japan	43.6
8	Germany	45.2	-2.7	8. South Korea	40.8
9	India	41.3	54.3	9. Germany	40
10	Italy	37.0	-5.8	10. Brazil	36.2

Note:

1. Source SIPRI – some figures are estimates
2. PPP measures exchange rates based on relative price levels of two countries, for example, \$1 spent in India buys far more than \$1 spent in the USA – it costs less to build a tank in China than in the USA. It is a useful but rough estimate.



Comment and contact

Geoffrey would like to hear your views on these issues. Please contact him at:

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