

**CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S REVIEW OF THE
BALANCE OF COMPETENCES BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM
AND THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Foreign Policy Report
Includes Defence and Civil Protection Issues**

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European Parliament**

The task you set

"To explore the current state of competence between the EU and Member States in foreign policy (Common Foreign and Security Policy, Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and broad issues arising from EU external action pursuant to TFEU in areas such as trade, development and the environment)".

I shall focus on CSDP. I note that in your questions you do not ask the most basic one - is there really any need for CSDP?

My capacity to respond

As Conservative Defence Spokesman in the European Parliament since 1999, as a Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and of the Defence Sub-Committee of the European Parliament, as a Member of the Parliament's Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and as a former senior officer on the International Military Staff at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, while serving as a Brigadier in the British Army, I have closely followed, over two decades, the development of EU defence policy (now the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)) as well as the fortunes of NATO.

Introduction

While it may correctly be argued that decisions on CSDP are, for the most part but not exclusively¹, taken by unanimity, the concern is that the EU subtly acquires additional competence. The pillars that once kept the Commission out of defence have collapsed. The Vice President of the Commission is double-hatted and oversees CSDP. New structures have been created (EU Military Staff; EU Military Committee; operational planning headquarters - all duplicating NATO); defence ministers and officials meet under EU auspices, and there is a narrative of EU-badged military activity. There has been agreement to create a common European defence culture and to develop common doctrine – forgetting perhaps that our closest operational ally is the United States. If care is not taken, before long there will be EU scrutiny of national defence programmes, an overt EU defence budget, and a further shift in European emphasis from NATO to CSDP. The ratchet effect of EU integration is powerful if it is not properly resisted at an early stage. Pressure to create a European Army will be irresistible as nations commit fewer and fewer resources to defence. The same logic that created the Euro is being applied to defence.

¹ Under PESCO, for example, decisions would be taken by QMV

Governments constantly reaffirm their commitment to national control of defence and their opposition to any thought of a "European Army". However, the creation of just such a structure is a key strand of EU policy and over the years there has been gradual movement in that direction. Not surprisingly, CSDP is now an accepted part of the EU scene, supported by an expanding bureaucracy constantly seeking new ways in which to enlarge the EU role.

To add comedy to farce, we now have to have coordination structures between the EU and NATO - more or less the same countries talking to themselves about the same things in the same city.

These curious developments may be explained in a number of ways. Firstly, the political ambition and will of a small number of governments, in particular France, the complacency of others, and the driving motive of the bureaucracies of the European institutions. Secondly, patience and subtlety - what Monnet called "small steps". Thirdly, the importance of institutions - while the British tend to identify a task and ask how this might best be accomplished, others believe in creating structures which then find a task! Fourthly, the fear of being left out of the club or attracting disfavour in regard to other areas of policy.

Discussion of CSDP, even in otherwise useful policy analyses, now tends to accept the EU's own description and narrative of the state of affairs.

Attitudes towards CSDP will of course be conditioned by one's general approach to the EU. Those that favour "ever closer union", a highly integrated state-like EU, will welcome CSDP and seek to find justification for it on practical grounds. Those that believe that the EU has already gone too far in taking competences from the nations, that are concerned at the constant erosion of national sovereignty, and attach importance to NATO and a close strategic relationship with the United States, will take a rather different view of CSDP.

The efforts to 'federalise' defence?

There have been a number of recent developments which underline the concern that we should all have about the direction in which CSDP is moving. We should be under no illusions that it is seen as a flagship policy in terms of European integration, which I trust the Review of Competences is designed to reverse.

On September 12, President of the European Commission Barroso, in his "State of the Union address to the European Parliament, declared that: "a deep and genuine economic and monetary union, a political union with a coherent foreign and defence policy, means ultimately that the present EU must evolve. Let us not be afraid of the word: we will need to move towards a federation of nation states. This is what must guide our work in the years to come ... Today, I call for a federation of nation states".

On 17 September the Foreign Ministers of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain stated: "In the long term, we should seek more majority decisions in the CFSP sphere, joint representation in international organizations, where possible, and a European defence policy. For some members of the Group this could eventually involve a European army".

Just as the Eurocrisis is seen by some as the opportunity to accelerate European integration in the areas of financial and economic policy, some also seek to advance on other fronts, including defence.

The fact is the UK position on the EU's defence policy (CSDP) is disingenuous. It does not present CSDP as it really is and instead tries to shrug off the more ambitious declarations from certain countries with a complacent "it'll never happen" or "it's all under national control". This disregards the developments that have taken place over the past 14 years, since St Malo in 1998, with absolute 'red lines' of successive British governments systematically erased. This process will continue and intensify as long as we allow it.

How is CSDP made acceptable to otherwise sceptical governments?

Over the years the EU has ranged over a variety of justifications for its activity in the defence field, each one designed to appeal to different member states and changing fashion. Of course, those that believe in the creation of a federal European state and the EU role on the world stage are baffled by any objection to developing a defence capability to back the EU's diplomatic service and foreign policy initiatives.

I submit that there are just two plausible justifications for CSDP:

1. The one that appeals to British governments - that it may encourage otherwise reluctant European allies to contribute more in the way of useful military capability. I believe this to be self-delusion and demonstrably untrue.
2. To enable the EU to play a state-like role as an autonomous global actor on the world stage. However, if the very concept of "ever closer union" is rejected, as it was explicitly by the Prime Minister on 23 January 2013, and if the aim is to turn back the trend towards a federal Europe, then this ambition must surely be rejected.

Various particular justifications for CSDP have been offered over the years.

The Comprehensive Approach

The justification that is currently in vogue and which seems to have traction is the so-called "comprehensive approach". There is nothing new in this concept and it does not need the EU to bring it about.

In 1832, Clausewitz was clear that war was the pursuit of policy by other means. In recent times, from 1948 onwards, "hearts and minds" has been a characteristic of counter insurgency policy. It is no surprise that NATO operations in Afghanistan have been carried out as an "International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)" with the role of assisting the Afghan government in maintaining security, reconstructing the country, training the national police and army, and providing a lawful environment for free and fair elections. The building blocks for this civil-military partnership have been the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, or PRTs. The EU has no relevance to this. But, as is always the case when high profile activity is taking place, the EU has tried to find roles for itself. The EU police mission, its flagship operation in Afghanistan, was a poorly

conceived, costly and ill-managed contribution that failed to properly coordinate with NATO and achieved little of substance.

As a sub-set of the comprehensive approach, it is suggested that the EU has a wider range of policy instruments available than NATO. For example, it has money and it can offer trade incentives, humanitarian aid and development programmes as part of its solution. It is, of course, the nations that have endowed the EU with these "soft-power" capabilities. It would be more productive if the EU were to concentrate on this much-needed civil assistance and leave international military operations to NATO.

The number of CSDP missions is evidence of demand

CSDP missions are entirely self-generated. Every time there is a crisis, the External Action Service looks for a CSDP role, and in between crises the EU Military Staff is constantly looking out for opportunities to plant the EU flag.

No EU CSDP mission bears proper scrutiny, and in any case all could have better been done by others. Of course, if you want to find things for the EU to do to add plausibility to its desire for a military capability, then there is no shortage of artificial possibilities. But there is no actual need for EU involvement in military matters.

In broad terms, CSDP missions (there have now been 28) fall into one of three categories:

- expired or duplicated NATO or UN military operations
- essentially civil missions
- French operations

The possible exception to these categories is EUTM Somalia (which is actually in Uganda, and which I have visited) which involves a small number of military personnel from national armed forces, training Somali recruits that have been enlisted and paid under United States auspices.

The EU might possibly play a useful role if it were to concentrate on civil tasks and get these right.

The EU creates much-needed additional military capabilities

With minor exceptions (e.g. AWACS), NATO owns no military forces, nor does the EU. 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 was always smoke and mirrors in that the troops involved were drawn from precisely the same forces that a country might also make available for NATO, UN or indeed national military tasks. CSDP merely places an additional burden on existing armed forces and does not generate any additional capacity.

However, the EU has now taken up the concept of "pooling and sharing" with enthusiasm. This merely replicates NATO's "smart defence". The idea that those European nations that don't have deployable military capabilities might join with others to create such a capacity is laudable. But like all collaborative defence projects, it does not

require any EU involvement. This merely adds unnecessary bureaucracy, complication and interference.

Examples are sometimes produced of activities carried out, by the EDA for instance, which 'add value' and are of practical use. In almost every instance, the same activity is being carried out under NATO.

The EDA's Helicopter training programme has, to date, consisted of 5 multinational exercises, two international conferences on the subject of tactics, and a multinational Helicopter Tactics Course. Between 2009 and 2011, 76 aircrews who would not otherwise have been deemed mission-ready have been deployed to Afghanistan. But this did not require EU involvement. NATO has for a long time had Air Mentoring Teams to train Afghan personnel to plan air squadron-level operations, to organise routine technical maintenance works, and assist them in enhancing aircraft operation skills. It's all done through the effort of national armed forces.

The EU can act where the US can't

Here we see the prism of Iraq distorting the longer view. The United States must surely remain our most important strategic ally and this should be a major factor in military planning. There may well be occasions when US involvement is not advisable, but this does not necessitate a role for the EU. As in the Lebanon, UN operations can be led by individual European nations without reference to the EU. In certain circumstances, there is no reason why NATO military operations could not be conducted using just European forces, but with the political support and resources of the Alliance as a whole.

The point is now regularly made that the US is abandoning Europe and shifting focus to the Pacific or that the US welcomes the development of CSDP. The fact is that the US, since the Second World War, has wanted its European allies to pull their weight and share more of the burden. That's perfectly reasonable. More effort is required in NATO. CSDP is not the answer

Duplication of activity

The most immediate effect of CSDP has been a proliferation of unnecessary EU bodies. As at NATO, there is now an EU Military Committee, composed of national Chiefs of Defence represented on a day to day basis by their Military Representatives. Just as there is an International Military Staff at NATO, there is now an EU Military Staff, and, just as at NATO's SHAPE, there is now a not quite permanent EU Operations Centre.

The negative effects of this duplication are plain to see. Firstly, valuable resources and the time and effort of key commanders and senior staff are wasted. Secondly, differences are generated between those that are involved in one institutional arrangement but not the other. Thirdly, different political signals are transmitted to potential adversaries, offering scope for exploitation of divergences.

EU spokesmen are often at pains to state that NATO remains the cornerstone of collective defence while the EU would just take on limited crisis management operations. This conceals EU ambition. In any case, it would consign NATO to the unlikely territorial defence role while the EU carried out the day to day crisis response operations

that are so much in demand. For some, even this is not enough - the Lisbon Treaty even includes an EU mutual defence clause (to which Annex 2 of this document makes no reference although it does include the entirely separate and relatively benign Art. 222 'Solidarity Clause'.)

The so-called 'mutual assistance clause' aims at replicating NATO's most fundamental guarantee, Article 5, but without any credibility. This is both misleading and dangerous.

What is to be done?

There is an urgent need for the democracies to generate more defence capabilities, but the response of the EU has been to create more institutions. As one former senior US officer put it, the EU places "too much emphasis on the plumbing when there is no water!" European nations already spend very little on defence. Even the UK – among the most active military powers – is spending less now as a proportion of national wealth than at any time since the 1930s. But the UK's 2.6% of GDP puts it in a super league compared with Germany's 1.3% or Spain's 1%.²

Conclusion

In these straitened times we cannot afford to run two defence organisations in the same city, the one a pale imitation of the other. Equally, we cannot allow NATO to decline.

If the objective is to generate more military capability from reluctant European nations, there is no reason why this could not be done, and more distinctively, within NATO – thereby avoiding duplication, costs, and confusion.

Independent British military power, and the willingness to deploy it, coupled with strong defence industries, cannot be separated from wider questions of Britain's prestige, economic well-being, and the confidence of friends and allies around the globe. The enormous political, strategic and economic relevance of defence is underestimated.

The Government should signal that it does not wish to see any further development of CSDP, but instead wishes to see a reinvigoration of NATO. It should reduce direct institutional engagement in EU defence matters, and adopt a political declaration publicising its intention to take a non-participatory role in CSDP (just as France, after 1966, continued as a full member of NATO and as an active observer at all NATO meetings of the integrated military structure, in which it did not participate).

The European Union should be encouraged to focus on its civil capabilities which could complement the military capabilities of NATO and of coalitions of the willing.

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² Military Expenditure as % of GDP, 2011. World Bank data - accessed 28 February 2013. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS>