

# Re-energising Europe's Security and Defence Policy

Nick Witney  
POLICY PAPER



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# **RE-ENERGISING EUROPE'S SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY**

Nick Witney

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Ten years after the launch of the EU's defence effort at a Franco-British summit in St Malo, the European Security and Defence Policy badly needs a shot in the arm. Procrastination, weak coordination, and persistent absenteeism by some Member States have hobbled the Union's ability to tackle the real threats to its citizens' security, and to make a significant contribution to maintaining international peace.

Europe's leaders have agreed what is needed, in the 2003 European Security Strategy. They have acknowledged that security for Europeans today lies not in manning the ramparts or preparing to resist invasion, but in tackling crises abroad before they become breeding-grounds for terrorism, international trafficking, and unmanageable immigration flows.

Yet EU members have done too little to modernise their militaries for this role. Nearly two decades after the end of the Cold War, most European armies are still geared towards all-out warfare on the inner-German border rather than keeping the peace in Chad, or supporting security and development in Afghanistan. European defence resources still pay for a total of 10,000 tanks, 2,500 combat aircraft, and nearly two million men and women in uniform -- more than half a million more than the US hyper-power. Yet 70% of Europe's land forces are simply unable to operate outside national territory -- and transport aircraft, communications, surveillance drones and helicopters (not to mention policemen and experts in civil administration) remain in chronically short supply. This failure to modernise means that much of the €200 billion that Europe spends on defence each year is simply wasted.

As this report will argue, this situation demands a concerted effort to revitalise the European Union's Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The EU's individual Member States, even France and Britain, have lost and will never regain the ability to finance all the necessary new capabilities by themselves. Today, only cooperation amongst Europeans can eliminate the massive waste associated with the duplication of resources by Member States, and help transform Europe's armed forces into modern militaries capable of contributing to global security.

The Irish "No" vote to the Lisbon Treaty has opened up a period of new uncertainty about the prospects for the EU's institutional reform. But European defence is essentially a matter of voluntary cooperation between Member States.

The political environment offers important encouraging elements:

- France, one of the Union's two strongest military powers alongside Britain, has designated "l'Europe de la Défense" as a key priority for its Presidency of the Union in the second half of 2008.
- The United States is now calling for an ESDP with teeth, contradicting the argument that a stronger European defence means a weakened Atlantic alliance. "Europe needs, the United States needs, NATO needs, the democratic world needs -- a stronger, more capable European defence capacity. An ESDP with only 'soft power' is not enough," said the US Ambassador to NATO Victoria Nuland earlier this year<sup>1</sup>. Reflecting this crucial shift, the April Bucharest Summit followed up with NATO's first explicit statement of support for European defence.
- Finally, a growing number of close US allies in Europe have come to recognise that the security alliance with the Washington can no longer be the sole significant provider of European security.

So the basis has improved for a major new effort in European defence. One particular feature of the Lisbon Treaty, the provisions for "permanent structured cooperation" in defence, would be a particular help. In essence, this is about implementing a "pioneer group" approach – the idea that, just as no Member State should be compelled to do things in defence that it does not want, none should stand in the way of others who wish to develop their cooperation. This report will argue that, even if the new Treaty fails, elements of this approach can and should be imported into the existing workings of ESDP.

Any re-launch of ESDP must be based on an honest appraisal of the policy failures in the decade since St Malo. This report will show how Member States and Brussels institutions have ignored the need for coherent strategies, improvised important operations, and taken refuge in process as an easier option than delivering real-world change. It will highlight the strategic weaknesses that have arisen out of a lack of resolve to pool resources, modernise armed forces and deploy them. And it proposes practical, politically doable steps that can and should be taken to put the venture back on the rails.

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<sup>1</sup> In a speech to the Paris Press Club on 22 February 2008.



## **Pioneers needed**

Any re-design of ESDP must acknowledge two central facts. First, no Member State will allow itself to be forced to enter conflict, or to change how it spends its defence budget, by 'Brussels' – whether an EU institution, or a majority of its partners. And second, a significant minority of Member States demonstrate, by their reluctance to make any serious investment in defence, or by their tendency to sit on their hands when the call goes out for contributions to crisis-management operations, that they really do not want to be involved.

Such sovereign decisions should be respected. But there is a corollary: non-players should not insist on a seat at the table, and on holding the enterprise back to the pace of the slowest. So, in defence, it is time to move on from the traditional 'convoy' approach – to accept the reality of a 'multi-speed' Europe, and to allow 'pioneer groups' of the willing to move things forward when not all are ready to join in.

Debate since the pioneer group concept first appeared in the 'Constitution' have helped to clarify four key principles for the approach. First, just as no one should be forced to do more on defence, so no one should be allowed to hold back others who do. Second, the formation of pioneer groups needs to take account of the political willingness of different Member States; but it should be based on transparent and objective criteria, and specific commitments. Third, the formation of groups and the corresponding distribution of influence need to reflect the multi-faceted nature of European defence and security efforts, and the diversity of the Member States; the aim should be to include as many countries as possible, in any area where they have something worthwhile to offer. Fourth, inclusivity should nonetheless have its limits: non-contributing passengers should not be allowed to slow the enterprise down, and influence should be proportional to the stake each Member State holds in it.

Three criteria are fundamental: to spend enough on defence (measured by percentage of GDP); to take defence modernisation seriously, so as to produce useable armed forces (measured by investment per soldier); and to be prepared to use them (percentage deployed on operations). The construction of a multi-speed ESDP should be based less on past performance than on new commitments Member States are prepared to take on, as consensus develops on what criteria should be agreed, and what targets set for those who wish to be part of pioneer groups. It is important to pursue this debate

without interruption -- even if Lisbon falls, elements of the approach should be introduced into existing ways of working.

Three main steps are needed. First, some basic qualifying criteria should be set for securing a seat at the table. A sensible minimum requirement of spending at least 1% of GDP on defence would mean that currently, Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg and Malta would have to bow out. A further basic test could be a minimum level of deployment on operations; if this were set even as low as 1% of military manpower, then Bulgaria, Cyprus and Greece would also fail to qualify.

Second, specialist pioneer groups should be set up for each of the main arenas for boosting Europe's defence capabilities – military capability development, research and technology, armaments etc. Each such group would have its own qualifying criteria, such as spending a minimum percentage of the national defence budget on R&T, and qualifying commitments (to cooperate more closely, pooling efforts and resources).

Third, from these specialist groups, a core group could be established, embracing those Member States who contribute most to most areas of activity.

This is essentially a model for Lisbon's 'round permanent structured cooperation'. But even without the Treaty, it may be possible to import it into the workings of the European Defence Agency (EDA)<sup>2</sup> as presently constituted. Indeed, the Agency already reflects the concept. Belonging to the Agency is a matter of choice for each Member State (though all except Denmark have chosen to do so). Member States not measuring up to whatever basic criteria are agreed should be invited to withdraw until they do.

Under the EDA's 'big tent', different groups of Member States are able to form cooperations as they wish, with transparency for all but no obligation on the initiators of specific projects to accept additional members if they do not want to. It should be possible to extend this practice to create the specialist and core groups proposed above. Answering to the main areas of Agency activity, they would act as advisory boards, with a privileged role in setting the EDA's agendas, and preparing business for the Agency's Steering Board<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The body set up in 2004 to work with the Member States on improving their defence capabilities.

<sup>3</sup> The EDA's decision-taking body, which brings together national Defence Ministers under Javier Solana's chairmanship two or three times a year, and meets in more specialist formations – such as the national 'armaments directors' – between whiles.

Implementing these steps would require the support, or acquiescence, of all Member States, including the weak performers – but in current circumstances it would be particularly egregious to veto such developments. Little progress in a Europe of 27 will be possible if each Member State feels entitled to block the closer cooperation of others.

## **Capabilities – the Deep Sleep**

The need for a new approach is underlined by the EU's failure to live up to its defence ambitions and commitments on capabilities. Shamed by their collective inability to prevent Serbia's ethnic cleansing in Kosovo without American assistance, European leaders decided in 1999 at a Council summit in Helsinki to set themselves the goal of being able to field, by 2003, a fully capable 60,000 strong force. Nine years later, this "rapid reaction force" remains hypothetical and EU governments have in recent years focused on the smaller Battlegroups initiative<sup>4</sup> as something more achievable in the near term. But with the exception of some improvements to long-range transport for men and equipment, most of the deficiencies identified in the follow-up to Helsinki remain. As a result, there are still crippling shortages in such areas as helicopters, protection against nuclear, biological and chemical threats, intelligence and reconnaissance, equipment for air-to-air refuelling, precision munitions, and command-and-control systems.

This is not at bottom a problem of money. In 2006, total defence spending within the EU amounted to almost one quarter of global defence expenditure. But the money has been spent on Cold War-style militaries, rather than the modern, expeditionary forces that ESDP, and indeed NATO, now needs. And with Member States persisting in trying to "go it alone", duplication further reduces the yield on investment.

The aim to pool efforts and resources has been widely endorsed, and widely ignored. It should cover joint funding of defence research, armaments co-operations, sharing maintenance of common equipments, creating more multi-national forces and even sharing defence roles. Not everyone should try to maintain a national air force; those who rely on air policing provided by others can offer mine-warfare capabilities in exchange. On the industrial side,

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<sup>4</sup> The Battlegroups are forces of around 1500 personnel. Some are provided by a single Member State, some are multi-national. At any one time, two are ready to be deployed within 10 days. They have been fully operational since January 2007.

decades of protectionism and more recent under-investment have left much of the European defence industry weak and fragmented. There has been some progress towards establishing a fledgling internal market for defence goods and services; but industrial consolidation, successful in the aeronautics and electronics sectors, has stalled.

All this needs to change for the EU to become an effective defence player in the 21st century. EU Defence Ministers must:

- Demand urgent action on the key capability gaps. Since 1999, hundreds of defence staff across Europe have been busy listing the gaps between what Member States can offer and what ESDP operations need. But repeated reports to Chiefs of Staff and Defence Ministers have resulted in calls for further reviews rather than change. It is time to stop the analysis and to agree concrete plans for fixing the most glaring deficiencies.
- Insist that their staffs give real priority to pooling resources and sharing capabilities. As institutions, Defence Ministries prefer to do everything on a national basis. Working together or specialising and sharing are deeply counter-cultural. Ministers should ensure that the cooperative option has always been considered before any major spending decision.
- Exploit the European Defence Agency (EDA). This was set up to work with Member States to get defence budgets spent on the right things, and to promote cooperation from the research lab to the front line. The EDA needs more money to hire more high-quality staff if it is to fulfil its mission. Military Chiefs of Staff should be told to offer full support the Agency, rather than worry about erosion of their own authority. And Defence Ministers should mandate a systematic dialogue between the Agency and national defence planners, enabling the Agency to challenge spending priorities, and act as “match-maker” for joint efforts between Member States. The business of defence consolidation should itself be consolidated; other now redundant forums should be scrapped.<sup>5</sup> (Disclaimer: the author of this report was Chief Executive of the EDA until 2007.)

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<sup>5</sup> Notably the so-called Letter of Intent grouping of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the UK, which did good work in the '90s on defence industrial issues but has since become little but a touring discussion club for officials, unsupervised by ministers.

- Convene ‘summit’ meetings with industrial leaders to hammer out a plan for defence consolidation, drawing on the example of successful US defence consolidation after a ministerial ultimatum in the early 1990s.

Recognising how hard such changes are to make from inside the system, Heads of State and Government should give their Defence Ministers a helping hand. They should consider ordering fundamental defence reviews – and they should:

- Specify a proportion of national defence budgets that must be spent in common with European partners – or be handed back to the finance ministry.

### **Operations: the Triumph of Improvisation**

The EU has launched 20 crisis management operations to date. The majority have been successful; they have also been small in scale, improvised in execution and limited in their objectives. Only five of the 20 operations have involved more than one thousand personnel and nine have involved less than one hundred. The total number of troops deployed today, around 6,000, constitutes less than one third of one percent of European military manpower. Member States’ commitment and capacity have been inadequate, and systemic problems have added to the difficulties. Five structural deficiencies have proved particularly damaging.

First, EU members have operated in a strategic vacuum; there has been little evidence of any coherent plan underlying the EU’s interventions. Though the European Security Strategy provides a good set of general principles, this does not explain why, for example, five out of the 20 operations have been in Congo.

Second, operations have proved inordinately difficult to stand up, for lack of volunteers. The EU High Representative Javier Solana has often been reduced to phoning Defence Ministers in person to secure a single transport plane or field surgeon. The problems involved in getting enough troop contributions for the 2006 mission in Congo, or enough helicopters for Chad, have been public embarrassments.

Third, this reluctance to match words with deeds has been exacerbated by perverse financial incentives. The same governments that take risks by contributing soldiers or assets are also those required to pick up the tab. The current “costs lie where they fall” principle is inequitable, and a further disincentive to individual Member States to volunteer for operations. A common-funding mechanism (Athena) was agreed in 2004; but it has been applied to date to less than 10% of the extra costs of operations.

Fourth, planning and direction of EU operations has also been dogged by fragmented command and control. Military command can be farmed out to one of seven different military Headquarters in Europe, meaning dislocation and delay at the outset. Worse, civilian operations – those involving the deployment of police or judicial experts – are handled completely separately. The EU prides itself on its special ability to combine civilian skills and resources for reconstruction and development with military forces for security. It makes no sense to separate the two in the planning and management of operations.

Finally, ESDP operations suffer from “corporate amnesia” -- a collective reluctance to learn from the weaknesses of one operation and apply these lessons to the next. Some of the more spectacularly amateurish improvisations of the early days, such as financing the operation in Aceh on the personal credit cards of the advance party, have been addressed. But the collective preference for declaring each operation an unqualified success has meant that many persistent failings, such as shortage of transport and inadequate communications, have been repeatedly ignored.

After a decade of launching and running EU operations on a wing and a prayer, it is time to move on to a more systematic and professional approach. This will require:

- Developing explicit strategies for EU interventions. EU operations must be launched on the basis of coherent and prioritised regional approaches, balancing prevention with intervention and combining aid and trade with diplomacy and crisis-management.
- Increasing the number of units on standby for deployment, particularly those always in short supply, such as helicopters, medics, and logisticians.
- Creating a European corps of civilian reservists (‘EuroAid’) to ensure that crucial personnel such as police and government experts are available.

- Compensating the defence budgets of Member States participating in operations, through more common funding and fairer national arrangements for handling unbudgeted costs.
- Establishing in Brussels an integrated, civilian/military, Operational Headquarters for command of all ESDP operations (except the biggest ones run with the help of NATO).
- Setting up a hand-picked ‘round lessons learned’ unit, with direct access to ministers, to tell the truth about how operations have gone, and what needs fixing for the future.

## **Political Will**

Integration of the EU’s security and defence efforts is essential if Member States truly wish to provide for their citizens’ security, defend their humanitarian values in the wider world, and keep the Atlantic alliance in good repair. For nearly a decade, European defence has bumped along the runway, never quite reaching take-off speed. Beginning with the failure to deliver the 60,000 strong EU force agreed in Helsinki in 1999, the pattern of under-achievement is by now familiar: EU leaders commit to ambitious defence goals and deadlines, celebrate inadequate outcomes, move the goal-posts, and authorise a further round of “reviews” and “roadmaps”.

Defence policy is particularly tough to change: political will repeatedly breaks on the rocks of financial, managerial, and operational complexity, cemented in place by vested interests. Few MPs want to argue in front of their constituents why their taxes should be spent on helicopters rather than the local hospital. Building European defence will require strong leadership from Member States, coming from the top. The EU’s presidents and prime ministers need to get personally involved, both within national administrations and in the European Council.

Agreeing to things in Brussels is rarely enough; in defence above all, it is vital to convince national parliaments, opinion leaders, and electorates. EU leaders will agree an update of the European Security Strategy at a European summit in December. It should be put to good use: 2009 should be the year in which Europe’s leaders remake the case for a more active, capable, and coherent European contribution to global security.

## INTRODUCTION: WHY SOFT POWER IS NOT ENOUGH

The EU's security and defence policy is based on the recognition that security is no longer a matter of preparing to resist invasion. It is about trying to contain, or suppress, violence elsewhere in the world before it irrupts into Europe in the form of terrorism, or international crime, or triggers unmanageable immigration flows. It is about conflict prevention; about intervening in crises to keep the peace or make it, if need be; and about helping to rebuild failed states and conflict-ravaged regions. It is about offering effective support to the UN's role. And it is about doing these things not only because they are in the interests of Europe's citizens, but because Europeans share strong humanitarian values.

The first step down this path was taken ten years ago, at the Franco-British summit at St Malo. The reality has failed to match the ambition. Member States readily agree on what they should be doing -- modernising European armed forces; training civilian experts such as policemen and engineers to help put war-torn societies back on their feet; spending money, and risking young people's lives when an operation is needed and the call for volunteers goes out. In practice – and with a few honourable exceptions – they find it more convenient to keep on spending their defence budgets in the same old way, producing capabilities which might have been useful in the days of the Cold War, but have no value in the security situation of the 21st century. The aim of a Europe which, in the words of the 2003 European Security Strategy, is “more active, more capable and more coherent”, remains obstinately unrealised.

So ESDP badly needs a shot in the arm – and the current uncertainty over the Lisbon Treaty argues for giving it an even higher priority. With reforms like the creation of the new foreign policy chief now in baulk, there is all the more reason to push on with other policies which will help make Europe a more effective international actor. And other developments conduce to giving ESDP just such a boost. The French Presidency of the EU has declared “l'Europe de la Défense” a priority; “New Europe” is beginning to show up some of the defence laggards amongst the old EU 15; and the US have finally accepted that European defence efforts do not undermine NATO and should be positively encouraged. For the first time, a NATO Summit communiqué has included a specific welcome for “European defence”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Paragraph 14, “Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest”, 3 April 2008, [http://www.summitbucharest.ro/en/doc\\_202.html](http://www.summitbucharest.ro/en/doc_202.html)



## **European Power: No Soft Option**

For many Member States, this shift in the US position is disquieting. Those who have adhered most closely to Washington's earlier line – the UK first among them -- now appear more royalist than the king. Others will be uncomfortable with American urgings for Europe to develop its “hard” power. For many Europeans, the lesson of Iraq and Afghanistan has been the impotence of military power in confronting the threats of terrorism and state failure. This unease is reflected in public polling: whilst two-thirds of Europeans favour a more active European ‘peace-keeping’ contribution to global security, three-quarters are opposed to fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan<sup>7</sup>.

In fact, a particular strength of ESDP has always been its recognition that, in today's world, military means are seldom, if ever, enough. The majority of operations carried out under an EU flag have been purely civilian in character, involving the deployment of policemen or administrative experts. There is a consensus within the EU that its comparative advantage in crisis-management and stabilisation operations should be its ability to blend civil and military means, in something called “the comprehensive approach”. The Lisbon Treaty follows the 2003 European Security Strategy in recognising that conflict prevention and post-conflict stabilisation are as much a part of crisis management as immediate fire-brigade interventions.

All this is wise and sensible – but it should not be confused with pacifism. The mismanagement by the Bush Administration of their overseas interventions is no basis for arguing that military power should have no place in the ESDP. For while we all now know that there is no security without development, the corollary is equally true. Unless Europeans are content to stand by in face of tragedies like those in the Congo or Darfur, then they must be prepared to deploy and if necessary use effective military power.

And it may not always be a case of distant disasters, which Europeans can choose to ignore if their consciences let them. It is too easy to forget that Europe's defence ambition was born in the aftermath of the Yugoslav War, and the shameful realisation that, without the US, Europeans would simply have been powerless to prevent Milosevic completing the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo.

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<sup>7</sup> German Marshall Fund 2007 Transatlantic Trends survey: [http://www.transatlantictrends.org/trends/index\\_archive.cfm?id=54](http://www.transatlantictrends.org/trends/index_archive.cfm?id=54)

ESDP therefore envisages not just peace-keeping but if necessary peace-making – the separation of warring factions by force. It would be wrong to assume that such a need will never arise again. Optimism is no basis for policy.

### **Time to Get Serious**

Defence modernisation is a tough business. But there has been a fundamental lack of seriousness about the ESDP project to date. From Ministers to generals to officials to industrialists, Europe's defence establishments – with some conspicuous exceptions – have been content to let matters drift. Prime Ministers, parliaments and publics acquiesce; and comfort themselves with the reflection that, if things turn nasty, there are always the Americans. A 20th century marked by two cataclysmic wars has burned into the European collective consciousness that when ultimate disaster threatens, America will ride to the rescue.

And so no doubt it would, in terms of the ultimate security guarantee to Europe, enshrined in Article 5 of the NATO treaty. But this is hardly the point. Europe's security now depends on defending the peace abroad rather than securing national borders. Washington can no longer do the job alone; nor does it always do it well. The next US President will inherit a country in economic crisis, with an unsustainable federal deficit and an exhausted military. A degree of retrenchment is inevitable. Europeans may find the next US President more reasonable in his approach to international security issues – but they may also find him more demanding that Europe takes a fairer share of the burden<sup>8</sup>.

It is a sobering thought that if the new Administration answered Europe's prayers by delivering a peace settlement for Palestine, thousands of European peacekeepers would be required to make the fragile deal stick; and that the response from defence ministries across the continent would be that they are not to be found. The 5% of Europe's nearly two million men and women in uniform who are currently overseas is the maximum that obsolete military machines can sustain.

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<sup>8</sup> Barack Obama spelled this out in his speech in Washington DC on 14 July, 2008: "It's time to strengthen NATO by asking more of our allies."

So it is not just “Europhiles”, or those concerned with Europe’s new vulnerabilities in a rapidly globalising world, who should support a stronger ESDP. Atlanticists too should reflect that the future of the transatlantic security partnership depends upon Europeans raising their game on defence.

## CHAPTER I: THE CASE FOR “PIONEER GROUPS” IN EUROPEAN DEFENCE

Of all the forms of European integration, none is more strictly a matter of cooperation between sovereign Member States than defence and security. ‘Brussels’ may propose and facilitate, catalyse or even goad; but action or inaction, success or failure, are ultimately down to decisions taken in 27<sup>9</sup> different national capitals. So this report begins by looking at the Member States.

It does so in the context of the proposal for ‘pioneer groups’, embodied in the Lisbon Treaty’s provisions for “permanent structured cooperation” in defence. Though the concept is clear – that those willing and able to move ahead and deepen their cooperation should be able to do so, without being held back to the pace of the slowest – the best way to implement the arrangement is not. With the Treaty following the Irish ‘No’ now poised on the edge of the ravine, governments are understandably nervous about pursuing the discussion. Yet it is important to do so, and not just in the hope that the Treaty is soon back on the road. The debate is important in itself: the concept of pioneer groups still needs clarification to be implemented; and a ‘multispeed’ approach to ESDP will be the right way forward even if Lisbon fails.

### The Pioneer Concept in the Lisbon Treaty

Increasing the number of EU Member States from 15 to 27 obviously makes compromises acceptable to all more difficult to achieve than before. The Lisbon Treaty acknowledges this and foresees abandoning the unanimity principle in favour of majority voting in many areas of European business. Defence, unsurprisingly, remains one of the exceptions.

Today, no Member State is prepared to allow its young men or women to be ordered into danger on the say-so of some European institution or office-holder without a specific national decision at the critical moment; all in effect retain the right to opt out of any particular operation, even if their people are part of a multinational unit or force. By extension, no Member State is going to submit to an unwelcome decision on any matter of substance on defence by being out-voted. All this, incidentally, means that no “EuroArmy” is possible today, despite all the recent scare stories on the subject.

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<sup>9</sup> For all military aspects of ESDP, 26 -- in view of Denmark’s opt-out under the Maastricht Treaty.

The idea behind the “pioneer group” is a trade-off: just as no Member State should be forced to act against their wishes in defence, so no Member State should be able to hold others back, or insist on a seat at the table if they are not prepared to make a real contribution. So the Lisbon text provides for the emergence of a self-selecting group of Member States “whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the more demanding operations”<sup>10</sup>. The Treaty also strongly emphasises the need for joint endeavours such as multinational formations, European equipment programmes, and other EDA activities. The ultimate aim, of course, is to improve defence capabilities across the board and to provide more operational forces, including Battlegroups.

### **Which Pioneers?**

In April 2003, at the height of the Iraq crisis, Belgium hosted France, Germany and Luxembourg for a summit that concluded with a joint call for a European Security and Defence Union<sup>11</sup>. The four evidently saw themselves as pioneers among the pioneers. More recently the French MP Pierre Lellouche, a defence spokesman for President Sarkozy’s UMP party, proposed a ‘big six’ grouping -- France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, and the UK. Neither of these groupings looks like a plausible candidate for an ESDP ‘advance guard’<sup>12</sup> – and nor indeed does any other a priori selection which does not pay proper regard to the ‘criteria’ and ‘commitments’ upon which the Lisbon Treaty rightly insists. Objective assessment and demonstrable merit must be the basis for forming a pioneer group of the most able and dedicated.

This is fine in principle – but a quick survey of the flock confirms that there is no easy way to separate the sheep from the goats. Indeed, the Member States are a strikingly heterogeneous collection. Those ready to spend more on defence are not necessarily the same as those ready to pool efforts and resources, or those willing to contribute to operations. So it is not obvious how to select an exclusive ‘hard core’ out of such a diverse population. Or, indeed, whether it would be sensible to do so. There is a real danger that an exclusive

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<sup>10</sup> The detailed provisions are summarised in Annex A.

<sup>11</sup> The British and Americans derisively labelled this meeting the “Chocolate Summit”.

<sup>12</sup> Belgium and Luxembourg are in reality amongst the weakest contributors of all Member States to European defence. The idea of a ‘big six’ has more currency (though it is naturally anathema to other Member States, especially those who are relatively stronger defence performers than some of the ‘big six’) – but it usually includes Sweden, whose credentials for inclusion in any pioneer group are unassailable.

pioneer model would in practice be counter-productive, licensing those not making the cut to sit on their hands and do nothing.

All this argues for a more inclusive system than a straightforward 'hard core', one offering more flexibility than the Treaty's drafters may have intended. However, there must also be limits to inclusivity. For if everyone is included, there are no pioneers, no focussed discussion or streamlined decision-taking, and no incentive for anyone to try harder.

### Which Criteria?

Objective criteria and standards require reliable data and this is in short supply<sup>13</sup>. There is, for example, no central record of who has contributed what to the 20 ESDP operations undertaken so far. The EDA<sup>14</sup> has gathered some of the best data from Member States on the basis of collectively-agreed definitions, which the Agency, however, cannot verify independently. Some Member States refuse to release part of their data, but estimates are usually possible; Denmark, not being an EDA member, does not provide any.

The categories are those agreed by the Defence Ministers to be most relevant to improving military capabilities -- how much Member States spend, what they spend it on, their personnel numbers, their record on cooperation, what percentage of forces can be deployed overseas, and what percentage actually are. These categories already suggest a set of criteria – a view of what 'merit' in European defence means. Using this data, it becomes possible to begin to see who has been pulling their weight in ESDP and who has not.

The vastly differing national levels of overall defence expenditure<sup>15</sup> underline the sheer disparity in size between Member States. The UK and France between them account for 45% of the total spend of €201 billion, whilst Germany and Italy contribute a further 28%. Spain, the Netherlands, Greece, Poland, and Sweden together cover a further 17%, leaving 17 smaller Member States to divide up the remaining €20 billion between them.

But to assess relative effort, it is more instructive to look at the percentage of GDP each state devotes to defence.

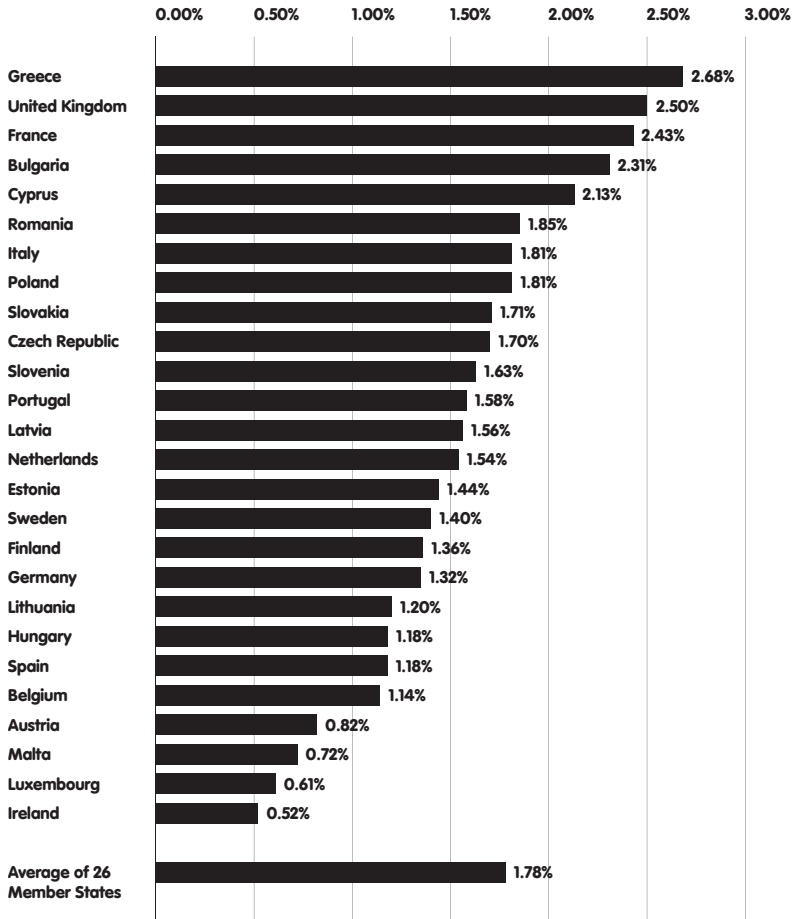
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<sup>13</sup> The just-published dossier of the International Institute for Strategic Studies on European Military Capabilities, the product of three years' research, is an important new source.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.eda.europa.eu/facts.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> See the first graph at Annex B, where a number of basic data sets are reproduced.

# European Defence Expenditure as a Percentage of GDP in 2006



Source: European Defence Agency (no data is available for Denmark, which is not a member of the EDA)

Only five Member States exceed the 2%-of-GDP target recognised by NATO (based on a more demanding definition): Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, and the UK. Three of the six main defence industrial nations (Germany, Spain, and Sweden) are well down in the bottom half of the table; Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg and Malta come in at under 1%.

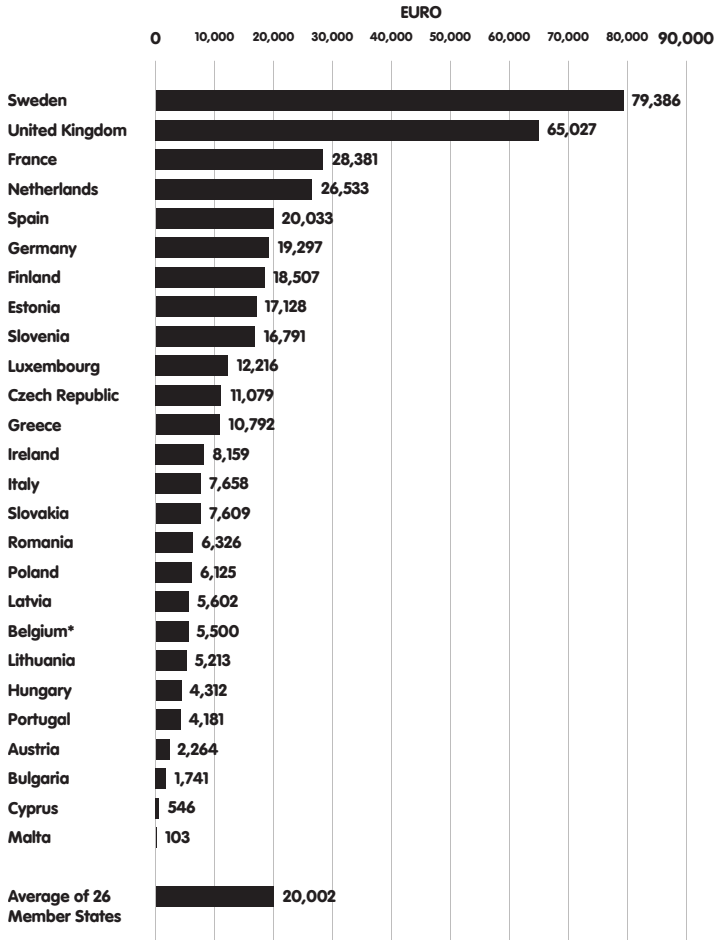
Annex B also shows the breakdown of expenditure on equipment (with the UK, France and Germany accounting for 60% of the total) and on research and development (the big two account for 80% of the total here, with Germany a distant third at 11%). Uniformed personnel numbers are also shown – a total of 1.94m across the 27, of which about 11% are gendarme/carabinieri-type forces. Even when such paramilitaries are excluded, France, Germany, and Italy clearly maintain the biggest numbers, with the UK, Poland, Greece, and Spain constituting a second tier in manpower terms. A further graph shows the percentage of defence budgets consumed by personnel costs – 70% or more in the cases of Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, and Portugal.

These various measures are linked. Large numbers constitute idle mouths, unless they are properly equipped with the means to deploy to distant crises, and then to operate safely and effectively. Overall, Europeans devote 55% of their defence budgets to maintaining 1.94m men and women in uniform; by contrast, the Americans spend only 20% of their budget on personnel. Conversely, the US spends over 29% of its budget on investment (weapons procurement and research and development combined), whilst Europeans manage only 19%.

Taken together, Europeans badly need to reduce their numbers in uniform and shift resources into equipment and research spend (as indeed the recent French defence review has just confirmed). An imperfect but indicative measure of progress in this regard is investment per soldier.



# European Investment (Equipment Procurement and R&D) per Soldier in 2006



\* Estimate

Source: European Defence Agency (no data is available for Denmark, which is not a member of the EDA)

Sweden and the UK are way out in front; France and the Netherlands follow; perhaps less predictably, Estonia and Slovenia join Finland, Germany and Spain in the third tier; while all the rest, Italy strikingly included, invested less than €13,000 per soldier in 2006. This compares with US investment per soldier of over €100,000.

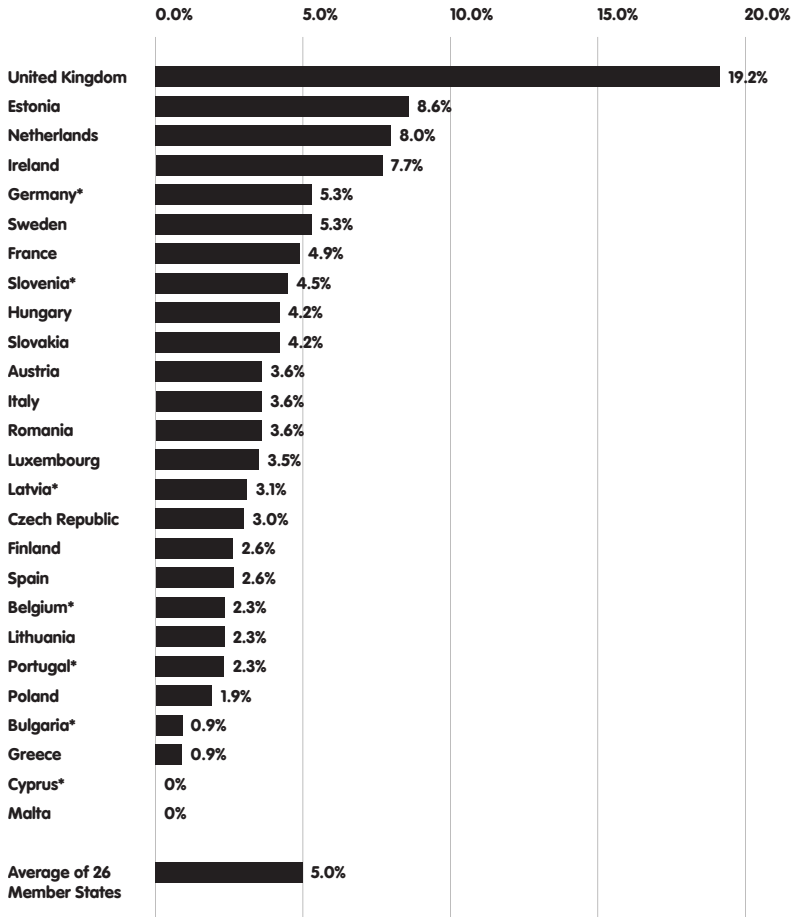
It is no use arguing that today's stabilisation operations require "boots on the ground" rather than fancy weapons. For one thing, demography will force the numbers down even if sensible re-balancing of expenditure does not. In any case, the boots in question are manifestly not made for walking. The chart of deployable land forces in Annex B reveals that a mere 30% of European manpower can operate outside of national territory. What the other 70% do with their days is a mystery: though the fact that only 10 Member States tell the EDA that they spend anything on "outsourcing" – putting such functions as maintenance and catering out to contract – gives a clue.

Ultimately, however, not even deployable troops are of value unless they are deployed. Annex B shows numbers deployed on average by each Member State outside Europe in 2006, garrisons as well as operations – about 98,000, or some 5% of the whole<sup>16</sup>. Individual Member States performance is, however, better revealed by comparing the percentage of national armed forces involved.

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<sup>16</sup> These figures include non-ESDP operations such as Afghanistan and Lebanon – most Member States argue they deserve 'credit' for participating in crisis-management operations, irrespective of the flag under which they are conducted.

# European Deployments as a Percentage of Total Military Personnel in 2006



\* Estimate : see relevant graphs at Annex B

Source: European Defence Agency (no data is available for Denmark, which is not a member of the EDA)

Ireland and Estonia show conspicuously well, along with the UK and Netherlands; Germany and Sweden are the only others to exceed the average of 5%. Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, and Malta all deployed less than 1%.

The data presented in the three Figures above tell us about three important criteria – which Member States are prepared to pay money for defence, risk their young people's lives, and invest in defence modernisation. Of course, a one-year snapshot is inadequate, especially regarding deployments which can fluctuate markedly year on year. Nonetheless, the pre-eminence of the UK and France on these measures is predictably obvious.

It is perhaps more surprising to find the Netherlands and Sweden so close upon the heels of the big two. Their levels of defence spending are no more than average; but both deploy their armed forces intensively, and their high levels of investment per soldier reflect the widely-admired defence modernisation processes each have undertaken in recent years. For Sweden, this has involved a fundamental change in national defence strategy from the armed neutrality of the last century to a new focus on multinational expeditionary operations – and new recommendations from the national Defence Commission propose a doubling of Sweden's "level of ambition" for international operations.

Germany and Italy are two other Member States who would expect admittance to any ESDP 'core grouping', and with some reason. Germany is doing much better on overseas deployments than is generally recognised (albeit showing poorly on defence spending as a percentage of GDP); Italy is committed both to spending and to operations, though with investment levels that suggest the need for more radical defence reform. Both join the UK, France and Sweden in the club of European nations with a substantial defence industry, the sixth member being Spain. The Spanish record on deployments and investment confirms the tendency of recent years to prioritise growing the domestic industry over use of the armed forces (deployments are capped at 3,000, not much over 2% of total strength).

The data reviewed above also indicates the increasingly important role being played by many of the 'new' Member States of east and central Europe. Estonia and Slovenia, as well as Romania and Slovakia, score creditably across the board. Estonia was second only to the UK in percentage of military manpower deployed in 2006. With their fast-growing economies, increasing economic interdependence with the EU 15 and obsolete Warsaw Pact

inventories, almost all the former Soviet bloc Member States understand, and are ready to act on, the logic of closer European defence integration.

Indeed, many of these Member States now out-perform the less prominent members of the EU 15. Greece tops the percentage of GDP table but, as the deployment data brings out, this investment is of little use to ESDP when it goes to sustaining forces against Turkey (including 1,500 tanks, the biggest fleet in Europe). Austria, Belgium and Portugal all come towards the back of the pack on an average of the measures used.

Such an analysis, though indicative, should not be used as basis for a pioneer selection process. First, because it is retrospective – it sheds light on past performance, but says nothing about what may be expected in future. And the point of the pioneer approach, as laid out in the Lisbon Treaty, is not so much to reward earlier efforts, but to encourage future improvement; which is why the Treaty talks of commitments as well as criteria.

Second, these particular measures, though important, tell us nothing about the readiness of individual Member States to work together, or to cooperate in pooling their efforts and resources. The EDA publishes charts on participation in armaments and research and technology cooperation, but so many Member States have withheld their data from publication as to make these of little value. And the Member States do not permit the Agency to publish details of who participates, and who does not, in the wide range of projects and initiatives conducted under its roof. More importantly, there no statistical way of measuring more general political commitment – the underlying willingness, or lack of it, to work to make a success of ESDP.

The salience of such factors is nowhere so apparent as in comparing France and the UK. No-one doubts the reality of France's embrace of the European defence logic, and readiness to embed it in national policies and actions (though it is not only the Germans who will look for a hidden national agenda when France advocates a European intervention in Africa, or a stronger European defence industrial policy). In ESDP, everyone knows that France leads. Whilst the UK – vetoing any strengthening of the EDA or an EU Operational Headquarters, declining to participate in the joint defence research investment programme that came out of its own EU Presidency, pointing to prior engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan to justify its absence from EU operations – seems to have gone sour on the whole enterprise.

Poland and Finland represent two other, positive, examples. Neither is a stellar performer by the measures reviewed above – the former weighed down by the Warsaw Pact legacy of large and unwieldy armed forces, the latter with too much of the Winter War still in the national psyche to have fully made the commitment to expeditionary armed forces (the Finns still maintain the largest artillery in Europe). But Poland has become a “go to” player in European defence – always ready to contribute, whether to a new operation or a new collaboration. Whether in NATO or in ESDP -- Poland sees no contradiction -- its determination to achieve front-rank status in defence is palpable. And Finland has established a reputation as one of the most consistently constructive ESDP partners, regularly bringing new ideas to the table.

In sum, criteria are one thing, and readiness to undertake new commitments are another; and any effective model for applying the pioneer approach in European defence must allow for both.

### **... And What Cooperation?**

Pioneers are meant to pioneer for a purpose. They should be breaking new ground in the pooling of efforts and resources. But the interests and aptitudes of the different Member States are as wide as the range of possible cooperations: those ready and willing to participate in a jointly-funded research programme may not be the same as the Member States able or inclined to participate in a joint helicopter force.

So not one, but a number of pioneer groups are needed – one for research and technology, one for armaments cooperation, one for the defence industry, and several to develop the range of civilian and military capabilities. The latter could encompass everything from promoting joint education and training to setting up a joint air-refuelling force to establishing shared support facilities for the new A400M airlifter. At first glance, such a constellation of specialised cooperative groupings seems a rather different proposition from the single pioneer group that the Lisbon Treaty describes. In fact, the constellation is necessary, so that the single group can be derived from it. For the single group will have legitimacy only if it demonstrably comprises those who contribute most to most aspects of the European defence effort—and the best way to

establish that will be to see who involves themselves in the largest number of specialist sub-groups.<sup>17</sup>

The model described above offers a way to include the diverse contributions of as many Member States as possible; to preserve the efficiency of relatively small pioneer groups; and to derive a single core group on an objective and transparent basis. It would need to be strengthened with real discipline for those whose contribution to ESDP is slight or negligible – often, perversely, those most ready to hijack meetings in pursuit of some narrow national concern. To encourage the faint-hearted and keep the most persistent laggards out, participation should depend on satisfying a small number of basic criteria – fundamental tests of whether a Member State is prepared to take ESDP seriously at all.

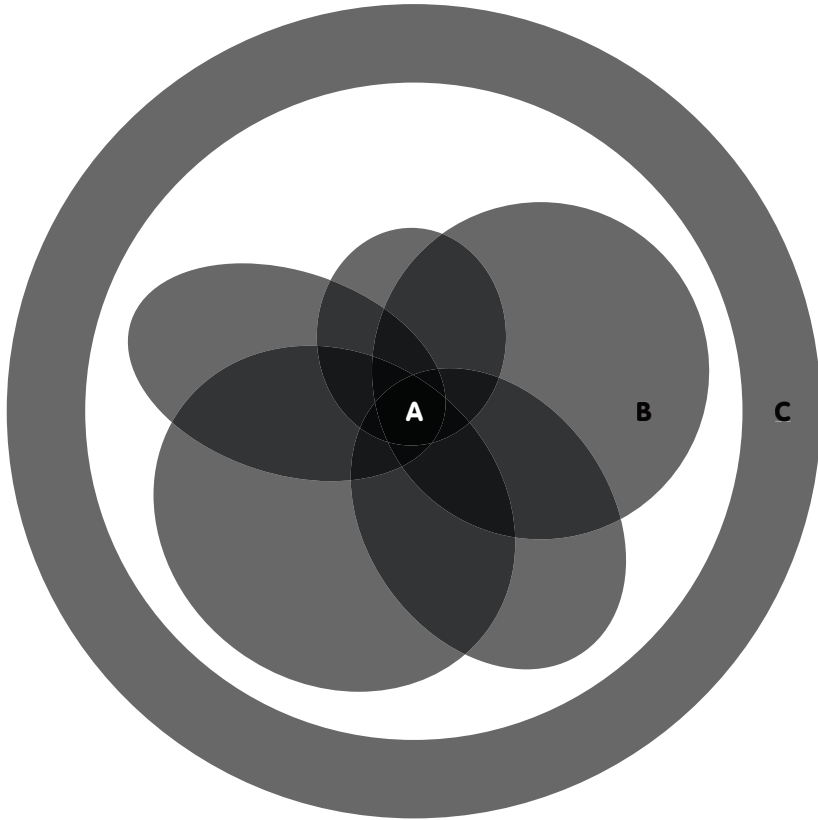
Such tests might include a minimum percentage of GDP devoted to defence, and a minimum percentage of military personnel deployed on operations. If the bar were set at 1% in each case, then on the evidence reviewed above the first criterion would filter out Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Malta. The second would additionally exclude Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Greece. That said, as with the Eurozone convergence criteria, Member States which commit to meet the basic criteria within a specific timeframe should be allowed in.

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<sup>17</sup> Of course, 'involvement' should not be just a matter of choosing to join any particular sub-group. All sub-group memberships should be subject to 'criteria and commitments'. Thus, for example, the research and technology sub-group should be open only to those who spend, or will commit to spend, x % of their defence budgets on research, and then undertake to spend y % of that sum collaboratively with others.

In summary, the model just described can be represented thus:

## A Model for Pioneer Groups in European Defence



**A**  
The core grouping  
of Member States:  
those who contribute  
most to most

**B**  
Different sub-groups  
cooperating on e.g.  
defence research,  
or shared capabilities

**C**  
Member States not  
yet satisfying the initial  
entry criteria



This model would be a good way of implementing the “permanent structured cooperation” envisaged by the Lisbon Treaty. If the Treaty is badly delayed or worse, then the model should be developed anyway – so that as much as possible of it can be integrated into the working of ESDP as currently constituted. ESDP badly needs its pioneer groups, and the basis for implementing the approach proposed already exists in the European Defence Agency. Within the EDA, sub-groups of Member States are already encouraged to come together to cooperate; and there is explicitly no obligation on the initiators of a project to admit an extra participant if they do not believe the applicant has any real contribution to make. Moreover, membership of the Agency itself is optional (though all except Denmark have elected to participate).

Subject, then, to the political willingness of the Member States, it would be open to the Agency’s Steering Board to discuss and agree qualifying standards, and to invite those who failed to measure up to ‘consider their positions’. Similarly, the Steering Board is free to create ‘sub-committees’ of participating Member States – so specialised groups could readily come into being, given a preparedness by weaker performers to bow out if they fall short of the criteria. Whether such preparedness would be forthcoming, in the hypothetical circumstances of a Europe trying to come to terms with the loss of the Lisbon Treaty, is hard to predict today. But in signing up to the Treaty, 27 governments have already signed up to the pioneer principle -- so it would be strikingly shameless behaviour if any were to thwart the salvage of that approach from a Lisbon shipwreck.

For the Agency, the proposed structure of specialised groups would provide a ready-made set of advisory groups with whom the Agency staff could work on specific agendas. The groups would have a privileged role in preparing business going to the Steering Board. And the core group of those contributing most to most would perform the same role in relation to the overall strategic direction of the Agency – determining its strategies, priorities and resources (and, along with that, a big piece of ESDP as a whole).

The ideas sketched out in this chapter need further elaboration – work which only the Member States themselves can do. The key point is that this work needs to go ahead. If the Treaty comes into law, the preparations for “permanent structured cooperation” will have been made. Alternatively, the principles and practices of pioneer groups should be implemented within the European Defence Agency. The Irish ‘no’ has shown the difficulty of getting 27 runners and riders to the same starting gate at the same time. And, for

those with a genuine interest in making Europe's security and defence policy more effective, this proposed system of pioneer group working should offer a more rewarding context in which to do business.

## **CHAPTER II: BUILDING EUROPEAN MILITARY CAPABILITIES - THE DEEP SLEEP**

Without the tools to do the job, European defence will remain an illusion. France and the UK stated from the start that ambition alone would be useless: “The Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces.”<sup>18</sup> Within a year of the St Malo agreement, European leaders took the cue and set the Helsinki Headline Goal. The aim was that by 2003 Europe should be able to field within 60 days a force of 60,000 and sustain it for a year of deployment.

With almost two million men and women in uniform in Europe, this might not appear particularly challenging. In fact, adapting to the sort of “expeditionary operations” called for by the Headline Goal implies a fundamental rethink of the military’s role as well as new plans and investment programmes in every European defence ministry. For more than forty years, European armed forces were geared towards fighting an all-out war in central Europe and the North Atlantic. Defence spending focussed on heavy metal and high explosive – lots of tanks and combat aircraft, lots of frigates and destroyers. The forces lacked mobility but this hardly mattered – they were based where they would fight. National armies did not need to know how to work or even communicate very much with each other. Provided each held its assigned front sector, the job would be done. In the envisaged Armageddon, avoiding casualties, military or civilian, was not a big priority.

All of these requirements and assumptions are now obsolete. Effective crisis management operations require forces that can move fast and far; survive in a difficult environment for months; and operate under tight constraints. Any application of force must be limited and precise, or it becomes counterproductive – the political fallout may prejudice the whole operation if you miss the tank and hit the tractor. Confusion is the norm; the effectiveness and safety of the troops depend more than ever on intelligence, satellite information and other observation systems. Excellent communications are paramount. And the troops have to be good at far more than fighting, as they need to work with non-governmental organisations and other civilians.

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<sup>18</sup> Franco-British Summit Joint Declaration, St Malo, 4 December 1998.

In 2006, Member States agreed a so-called “Long-Term Vision” for capability needs<sup>19</sup> which illustrates the scale of the challenge. Communications and intelligence systems; precision weapons and self-protection; proper transport and logistics – these are the keys to success in coming years<sup>20</sup>. Yet these are precisely the areas where most national militaries are now weakest. The outdated requirements of the Cold War still dominate both inventories and mindsets. European armed forces between them still own more than 10,000 main battle tanks and around 2,500 combat aircraft.

Having agreed the Helsinki Headline Goal, Member States embarked on a detailed analysis of what was needed for the envisaged force. They established a Requirements Catalogue setting out all the necessary elements, including everything from engineers to medical units. Each then put its name down against elements it was “in principle” ready to provide. And the resultant gaps were summarised in a third list misleadingly called the Progress Catalogue. The European Capabilities Action Programme (ECAP) was set up to encourage Member States to come up with solutions under the guidance of the EU Military Committee (EUMC).

The endeavour failed<sup>21</sup>. The latest public report<sup>22</sup>, appearing in 2006, noted that a mere 12 of the 64 original deficiencies were tackled successfully, and even then sometimes only partially. The remaining 52 cover such crucial areas as helicopters, protection against nuclear, biological and chemical threats, intelligence and reconnaissance, air-to-air refuelling, precision munitions and command-and-control systems.

Meanwhile, in 2004, Member States replaced the original target with a new Headline Goal 2010. This focuses on “quality rather than quantity”, containing no numerical targets at all. So the goalposts were not so much moved as dismantled altogether. This vague new goal was accompanied by a further protracted round of analysis (including computer modelling of a range of possible scenarios for EU operations), as a basis for another round of cataloguing. Member States switched their real attention to the Battlegroups initiative as something more achievable in the near term.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.eda.europa.eu/genericitem.aspx?id=146>

<sup>20</sup> In passing, it is interesting to compare this ESDP “vision document” with the Comprehensive Political Guidance <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b061129e.htm> agreed by NATO only weeks later – the message is identical.

<sup>21</sup> Or, as the European Council preferred to describe it when the target date of 2003 arrived, endowed the EU with an operational capability “limited and constrained by recognised shortfalls. (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/Declaration%20on%20EU%20Military%20Capabilities%20-%20May%202003>)

<sup>22</sup> The Capabilities Improvement Chart, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/esdp/89603.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/esdp/89603.pdf)

In tacit recognition of their failure on the Helsinki Headline Goal, the Member States also decided in 2003 to create the European Defence Agency (EDA). The Agency, tasked to help the Member States develop their defence capabilities, was conceived as a “back office” of European defence – to complement the “front office” occupied by diplomats and generals working on policy and operations. The EDA has achieved progress of a kind with the Long-Term Vision; all Member States are now on the same page about the capabilities they need. Following up, the Agency has led an 18-month effort to translate the broad guidance of the Vision into a hard, prioritised agenda; the mandate was to produce “actionable conclusions”<sup>23</sup>. The initial product<sup>24</sup> looks like half a loaf, at best – a first tranche of 12 priority areas is listed, without indication of what results are to be delivered, or when or how. Perhaps some of the more obvious omissions will be rectified in the second tranche<sup>25</sup>. So it remains an open question as to whether the Agency can succeed in exerting real influence on how Member States decide to spend their national defence budgets.

The results of these persistent failures to grasp the nettle, and the persistent resort to analysis and cataloguing as an alibi for avoiding tough decisions, were highlighted in Chapter I – much of Europe’s collective annual spend on defence of some €200 billion is wasted on maintaining obsolete weapons and excessive numbers of underequipped soldiers who are incapable of operating outside national territory.

The picture is not wholly bleak. The Battlegroups initiative has, in some cases, helped to catalyse defence modernisation, and to ensure that national contingents can work together effectively. But while the Nordic Battlegroup, led by Sweden, has been exemplary, some other Battlegroups have the look of paper formations, likely to fail in even minimally demanding operations.

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<sup>23</sup> See Council Guidelines for the EDA’s Work in 2008. <http://www.eda.europa.eu/documents.aspx>

<sup>24</sup> “EU governments endorse capability plan for future military needs, pledge joint efforts” -- <http://www.eda.europa.eu/newsitem.aspx?id=385>

<sup>25</sup> There is, for example, no indication that the Member States have yet recognised the need to equip themselves with precision-guided munitions. After the ban on cluster bombs, few believe that European airforces will ever again drop ‘dumb’ (unguided) bombs – they are simply too inaccurate. Yet such munitions still constitute the vast bulk of European air arsenals – and a significant proportion of European combat aircraft are not even wired to deliver anything else.

Modernising armed forces is a tough challenge at the best of times. Investment programmes take many years to come to fruition; defence establishments are naturally risk averse and suspicious of change. After all, their *raison d'être* is to protect the status quo. They are loath to give anything up – even when this would free resources for something more useful<sup>26</sup>. Such a conservative mindset is the natural ally of procrastination. And there is also a social phenomenon at work; endless analysis provides comfortable employment for staff officers.

Chronic financial indiscipline adds to the difficulties. Defence ministries seem incapable of preventing themselves from committing to more procurement projects than they can afford. These are often more about prestige and business interests than utility – aircraft carriers being a prominent example. The result is permanent financial crisis, with programmes downsized and delayed. Worse, ministries leave themselves with no margin for manoeuvre: they know they should be spending more on, say, surveillance drones, but simply cannot find the cash to do so.

The problems are compounded by the fact that all defence management is enmeshed in numerous vested interests. For half a century, all European states have been struggling, often in vain, to centralise their defence management so as to overcome inter-Service rivalry. Powerful defence industries lobby for new equipment programmes. Politicians are sharply aware of how their re-election prospects will be affected by a timely new contract or an unwelcome base closure.

### **Three Essential Steps for Defence Ministers**

In short, if defence ministers really want to change things – to live up to their governments' commitments to a more active and capable European defence, and to derive useful output from their national defence budgets – then they must steel themselves for a tough and sustained effort to overcome the natural inertia and resistance within the machinery of defence. There will be no quick victories. But to succeed, defence ministers must:

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<sup>26</sup> The phenomenon is not a new one. De Gaulle, then a colonel in the French army, noted the armed forces' resistance to change in the 1930s: "Individual open-mindedness coexists with a collective caution. Stability, conformity, and tradition are their life-blood, and the armed forces instinctively reject anything that tends to modify their structures". Philippe Barrès, Charles de Gaulle, Brentano's, New York, 1941

- **Demand urgent action on the key capability gaps.** This may seem obvious but the crucial shortcomings have been consistently ignored as the institutional preference for analysis over tough decisions repeatedly prevails<sup>27</sup>. It is time for all involved with European defence to focus on delivering the top priorities: better transport, both to and within the theatre of operations; better protection and support for the forces on the ground; better communications; better operational intelligence at all levels; better logistics; and more accurate weapons.

Follow-up on the EDA's Capability Development Plan is too important to be left to the generals (who will anyway delegate it to the colonels and majors). Ministers must themselves review the initial output, against the priorities listed above. If the EDA does not come up with a clear, short list of the main problems to tackle, and credible plans for achieving concrete results, they should be told to try again. The recent Franco-British initiative singling out the chronic shortage of support helicopters for priority attention is an excellent example of the right approach. Ministers should be more eager to exploit the Agency in this way, tasking it to find solutions under tight deadlines.

- **Insist on Pooling Efforts and Resources.** No European nation – not even the largest – can any longer afford a full range of military capabilities. Trying (and failing) to have everything results only in wasteful duplication and isolated national units which are too small to have independent operational value yet incapable of working together. Yet it is clear that exclusively national operations, except on the smallest scale, are a thing of the past (even the US now has recourse to “coalitions”). Since national armies will continue to operate together, it is logical that they should plan and build together, achieving better value and improved efficiency through pooled resources.

Member States have not ignored this imperative completely. The approach can be worked in many ways, from familiar armaments collaborations to multinational formations such as the Dutch/Belgian joint naval command or, indeed, the Battlegroups. “Clubs” of nations have come together aiming to jointly buy or hire capabilities such as transportation to distant operational theatres, or to “mutualise” support activities, whether on a functional basis (French/Belgian pilot training; materiel test facilities) or regionally (as with the current Nordic efforts to share maintenance and logistics). Four Member

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<sup>27</sup> A good recent example is provided by the group of French officers anonymously (Le Figaro, 19 June 2008) attacking the conclusions of the French defence and security ‘white book’, which include a major reduction in personnel numbers, on the basis that the analysis, conducted over almost a year, is superficial.

States – Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands – are in the process of establishing a joint Air Transport Command – and there are even moves toward a degree of commonality in the support and maintenance arrangements for the new A400M airlifter.

The practice of “role specialisation” is another useful trend. Drawing on the example of the Lithuanian water purification unit and Czech expertise in nuclear and chemical defence, Member States should agree to develop similar niche capabilities. A variant of this approach has been displayed by the Baltic countries which have foregone the purchase of new combat aircraft in exchange for air-policing by allies – an example that Bulgaria and Romania should follow, assigning the earmarked budgets to more useful purposes.

Such arrangements are logical but tough to bring about. Relying on someone else is a difficult leap of faith in defence. Some multinational formations may turn out to be too cumbersome to use – the EuroCorps is a case in point. So there is no magic fix. What is needed is a process of encouragement, and of identifying and advertising best practice. Defence ministries should thus commit to working with a central “matchmaking” body – a natural role for the EDA. The Agency should be given an unambiguous mandate to catalogue and assess existing pooling efforts beyond research and armaments, where it is already closely involved. It should report regularly to defence ministers, with an emphasis on highlighting successes that could be replicated, developing standard models and engaging with each Member State’s defence programmers to identify the opportunities for cooperation.

- **Exploit the European Defence Agency (EDA).** The EDA was set up precisely to assist Member States in repairing military deficiencies, and to do it together. It therefore makes sense to use it. As Javier Solana, in his role as Head of the Agency, reported to the Council in May 2007: “the Agency is now demonstrating itself to be a highly effective instrument, which will be as productive as we are ambitious for it.”<sup>28</sup> But national defence bureaucracies are naturally inclined to view most Agency activities as intrusive – and there is a risk Member States will simply lose interest once the novelty wears off.



To ensure the Agency remains effective and relevant, and builds on progress to date, four things are required:

**1. Consolidated Cooperation:** It is wasteful and unproductive to maintain separate defence cooperation networks such as the Letter of Intent group<sup>29</sup>. Their activities should be brought under the aegis of the EDA, which should rightfully become the one stop shop for defence cooperation. The Agency can then monitor and catalyse progress, and ensure transparency and accountability to ministers.

**2. Moral Support:** Defence ministers' support is not always echoed elsewhere in national ministries. To date, national chiefs of defence staff have been wary of the Agency, seeing it as a threat to the EU Military Committee where they hold sway. But this latter body is shackled by a need for consensus and a lack of supporting staff. The chiefs should embrace the EDA as the most effective vehicle for promoting cooperation on capabilities. They should start by themselves attending the Agency's Steering Board when it meets on capabilities issues.

**3. A Proper Dialogue** between the Agency and defence planners in national ministries. Since everything ultimately comes down to how sovereign Member States choose to spend their defence budgets, defence ministers must mandate the Agency to engage systematically with the relevant staffs in their own ministries, to recall the agreed priorities and to promote pooling and cooperations by performing the role of matchmaker.

**4. More Staff:** The British must drop their veto on additional recruitment. If the Agency is to broker a wider range of cooperation agreements, it will need many more personnel than the current 100. And defence ministers must push their bureaucracies to offer high-quality candidates; jobs in Brussels are still too often seen as sinecures for dutiful but uninspired veterans.

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<sup>29</sup> Formed by France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the UK in 1998 to facilitate defence industry restructuring.

## One Essential Step for Heads of Government

Finally, and recognising the difficulty their defence ministers will always face in forcing change through the system, heads of government should themselves:

- **Apply leverage via the defence budget.** They should make extra money available, subject to achievement of specific targets for faster defence modernisation, more investment, higher levels of deployability and more international collaboration. And they should insist that a rising proportion of the procurement budget (for buying equipment and research) should be spent on joint projects with European partners – or be returned to the finance ministry.

## Industry and Technology

Almost thirty years ago, at the January 1979 Guadeloupe summit of the four biggest Western powers, Chancellor Schmidt, President Giscard d'Estaing and Prime Minister Callaghan, took time out to discuss the European defence industry. It was folly, they agreed, to persist in competing programmes to produce different combat aircraft, different tanks and different frigates. They concurred that it made obvious sense to specialise, with one country producing all the aircraft, another all the ships, and so on. And they concluded that the idea was sound but much too difficult to implement.

The consequences of this failure of leadership are felt today, as the makers of Europe's three combat aircraft (Eurofighter, Rafale and Gripen) commit fratricide in export markets, trying to recoup their investments and reduce the crippling unit cost to European defence ministries. As President Sarkozy observed at the Le Bourget Airshow soon after taking office: "Europe cannot afford the luxury of five ground-to-air missile programmes, three combat aircraft programmes, six attack submarine programmes, and twenty-odd armoured vehicle programmes"<sup>31</sup>.

The production of armoured vehicles – which are smaller than a tank, but bigger than a jeep – is particularly absurd. A dozen separate European manufacturers are involved, all trying to develop the same new technology.

This duplication entails a massive waste of resources and inflated prices. It also means the companies themselves are weak and vulnerable – a number have already been taken over by the US General Dynamics.

There is an impact in the field as well. Europeans are deployed on multinational operations with a medley of vehicles, each requiring a different set of spare parts provided through a separate logistic pipeline back to Europe. Different mounted guns may be unable to share ammunition. Radios, where fitted, will probably be unable to talk to each other. Such disorganisation can put lives at risk.

This fragmentation in the European defence industry has been compounded, since the end of the Cold War, by a serious lack of investment. The US now spends six times as much on defence research and technology as all the Europeans combined. Indeed, the combined European defence research budgets are exceeded by that of a single US agency, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

Yet all is not failure. When it comes to aerospace, helicopters, missiles and electronics – not coincidentally, where the main industry consolidation has occurred – Europe is still a world leader. Defence industrialists are alive to the problems and recognise the need for Europeans to cooperate more closely. Politicians seem more ready than before to listen to them. In last year’s “Strategy for the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base”, defence ministers declared that “we recognise that a point has now been reached when we need fundamental change in how we manage the ‘business aspects’ of defence in Europe – and that time is not on our side.”<sup>32</sup>

The strategy urges defence consolidation on both the demand and supply sides – governments need to buy much more of their equipment together, with the defence industry consolidating in response – and calls for a pan-European defence equipment market as an essential part of this process. For half a century, the rest of European industry has enjoyed the benefits of the single market. But a “national security” exemption has allowed European governments to flout these rules in their defence purchases, and protect local industry. The result has been a textbook case of how protectionism can enfeeble what it seeks to preserve.

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.eda.europa.eu/documents.aspx>

Member States have woken up to the danger and, while not yet ready to give up the legal exemption, have promised to open their defence equipment markets to each other on a voluntary and reciprocal basis through an “electronic marketplace”. Hosted on the EDA’s website, this currently offers nearly 300 defence contracts, worth over €10 billion, for which suppliers all over Europe can bid. And the first examples of defence ministries actually awarding contracts to non-national bidders are beginning to come through. The EU Commission is also exploring complementary measures.

However, progress on industrial consolidation has stalled. The positive experience in the aerospace and electronics sectors, where pan-European companies like EADS, Thales, MBDA and AgustaWestland show the benefits of harnessing talents and capacities from across Europe, has not yet rubbed off on the land- and sea-systems sectors. Governments generally insist that it is up to industry leaders to consolidate their companies according to commercial considerations. But the same politicians use taxpayers’ money to try to ensure that, when the inevitable industry contraction and consolidation occurs, their own “national champion” is among the last men standing.

Such waste and inefficiency should not be allowed to continue. Governments need to make a decisive intervention and the US provides a ready template. In 1993, Defense Secretary Aspin convened 15 industry chief executives for what became known in defence circles as the “Last Supper”. Aspin gave them an ultimatum: consolidate or liquidate. With the post-Cold War cuts in defence expenditure, the Pentagon was not prepared to pay the overheads of so many competitors. The industrialists were ordered to go away and work out their mergers and consolidations, or the Pentagon would use its monopoly to do this for them, putting many of them out of business. The defence industry got the message and Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and an expanded Boeing emerged over the following years.

- **A European “Last Supper”** is now required. National defence ministers would take the place of the defense secretary and a heavyweight neutral figure should chair the discussion, which, for simplicity’s sake, should begin with two separate sessions – one for land equipment and one for the sea systems. The circumstances may be different but the principle is the same: share it or lose it.

### **CHAPTER III: ESDP OPERATIONS – THE TRIUMPH OF IMPROVISATION**

Intervening in crises to restore security and rebuild societies is the point and purpose of Europe's defence policy; so the operational record on missions abroad is the key measure of the policy's success. And the list of operations launched over the past five years looks impressive; there have been 20 ESDP missions to date, half of them currently underway. But a closer look at the record – what has been done, and how it has been done – reveals how far short Europeans remain of their ambition to make a major contribution to global security. Only five of the 20 missions have involved more than one thousand personnel and nine have mobilised less than one hundred. Though 11 operations are currently underway, the total number of troops involved, around 6,000, constitutes less than one-third of 1% of European military manpower.

TABLE 1

# European Crisis-Management Operations<sup>33</sup>

DATE	NAME	COUNTRY	PERSONNEL
Jan 03 - Date	EJ Police Mission	Bosnia	525
Mar 03 - Dec 03	Concordia	Macedonia	400
Jun 03 - Sep 03	Artemis	Congo	1800
Dec 03 - Dec 05	Proxima	Macedonia	200
Jul 04 - Jul 05	EJJUST Themis	Georgia	10
Dec 04 - Date	EUFOR Althea	Bosnia	7000 - 2500
Feb 05 - Date	EJJUST Lex	Iraq	20
Apr 05 - Jun 07	EUPOL Kinshasa	Congo	30
Jun 05 - Date	EUSEC RD Congo	Congo	40
Jun 05 - Jun 06	AMIS	Sudan/Darfur	20
Sep 05 - Mar 06	Aceh MM	Indonesia	130
Nov 05 - Date	EUBAM Rafah	Palestine	75
Dec 05 - Jun 06	EUPAT	Macedonia	30
Jan 06 - Date	EUPOL COPPS	Palestine	75
Jun 06 - Dec 06	EUFOR RD Congo	Congo	2000
Jun 07 - Date	EUPOL Afghanistan	Afghanistan	195
Jul 07 - Date	EUPOL RD Congo	Congo	40
Mar 08 - Date	EUFOR Tchad/RCA	Chad	3700
Mar 08 - Date	EUSSR Guinea-Bissau	Guinea-Bissau	15
Jun 08 - Date	EULEX Kosovo	Kosovo	1900
<b>CIVIL OPERATIONS</b>			
<b>MILITARY OPERATIONS</b>			

Most of these operations can claim success. It is true that there have been setbacks, such as the months of delay in getting the EU police training mission in Afghanistan onto the ground and operating; and the International Crisis Group's evaluation of the police mission in Bosnia was scathing in its criticisms<sup>34</sup>. But operations launched with limited objectives and a clear timeframe have achieved what they set out to do. Examples include the 2003 and 2006 missions in the Congo<sup>35</sup>, the 2003 disarmament effort in Macedonia, and the civilian ceasefire monitoring mission in Aceh. The largest military operation to date, the assumption from NATO of responsibility for peacekeeping in Bosnia, has so far succeeded in its aims of ensuring stability, while allowing for a simultaneous reduction of troop levels involved. At the other end of the scale, the border assistance mission at Rafah has enabled the (intermittent) opening of the border between Egypt and Gaza – something which only EU intervention could have achieved.

The issue with this operational record as a whole is its lack of ambition. Many of the civilian operations in the table above have been so small as to be little more than political gestures; and the military operations have been so carefully circumscribed in mission and duration that their impact has been equally limited. As one analyst has recently pointed out<sup>36</sup>, the EU's soldiers have, Chad apart, gone only where others have prepared the ground ahead of them – NATO in Macedonia and Bosnia, the UN in the Congo. Worse, the experience of putting together even this modest series of operations has exposed real problems with the commitment and capacity of the Member States who must supply the people and resources – while also highlighting some fundamental systemic problems in how EU operations are decided, launched and conducted.

## **The Strategic Vacuum**

It was not until five years after St Malo that the Member States agreed the first clear statement of the rationale for European defence, in the 2003 European Security Strategy. This document analyses the new threats facing Europe in the post-Cold War world – terrorism, nuclear proliferation, regional conflict,

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<sup>34</sup> International Crisis Group, "Bosnia's Stalled Police Reform: No Progress, No EU", Europe Report 164, 6 September 2005

<sup>35</sup> Operation Artemis in 2003 helped stabilise the East of the country after a dangerous outbreak of interethnic violence; the 2006 operation provided a military presence in Kinshasa to support the UN over the election period.

<sup>36</sup> James Dobbins, 'Europe's Role in Nation-building', Survival June/July 2008

state failure and organised crime – and argues for Europeans, working with international partners, to be “more active, more capable, and more coherent” in confronting them. It emphasises that “the first line of defence will often be abroad”<sup>37</sup>. The text is brief and clear; it is a good statement of principles, but offers little on how, or where, these principles should be applied. Looming policy issues like energy security, climate change and the risks of cyber-attack get only the briefest mentions.

The French EU Presidency is launching a review of the Security Strategy. But it will take more than the updating of one document to fix the real problem: the absence of any evident plan or priority in how the EU’s all-too-limited crisis management capabilities are applied. Congo is an obvious example. Five out of the 20 EU operations to date have taken place there: the two military interventions noted above; a limited police training effort in Kinshasa replaced by a mission to the country as a whole; and a continuing security sector reform operation. This level of operational priority suggests that the EU believes it has clear interests and responsibilities there, and that it can help. But essential questions remain unanswered: what are those interests and responsibilities; and how can they best be secured, with what combination of diplomacy, trade, aid and physical intervention? In a country of 2.4 million square kilometres and 66 million people, emerging from a 40-year civil war with a ravaged economy and devastated infrastructure, it is hard to see serious policy intent embodied in the residual police mission and a security sector reform team, each numbering about forty personnel.

Unless the EU – Member States and Brussels institutions between them – can develop a better sense of strategic context and priority for EU operations, they will continue to find it difficult to generate support for seemingly haphazard adventures.

- **Clearer Strategies.** A key purpose of the Lisbon Treaty is to improve the EU’s ability to formulate and execute common foreign policy – the necessary frame for ESDP. But, with or without the Lisbon improvements, the EU should no longer put off the production of a set of policy documents filling out the broad principles and approaches of the European Security Strategy. The effort should cover a range of regional strategies – defining, for example, how the EU sees its interests and objectives in Africa, and how it intends

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<sup>37</sup> p 8, European Security Strategy, Brussels, 12 December 2003, <http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>



to pursue them – and the development of a European doctrine for crisis management, from preventive engagement and peace-making to peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction. Only this sort of exercise, undertaken jointly by the Member States and the Brussels institutions, will ensure that European power is effectively applied. It would be wrong to weigh down the European Security Strategy itself with such detail; but heads of government should use this autumn’s review of the Security Strategy to commission the work and set deadlines for it.

### **The Participation Deficit**

The lack of a compelling strategy may be one reason why Member States have tended to heed the old soldier’s adage – “never volunteer”. Obtaining the necessary forces and personnel for each operation has been inordinately difficult. EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana has often been reduced to ringing round defence ministers in person to secure a single transport plane or field surgeon.

Such assets are abundant in the Catalogues of what each Member State is prepared to contribute in principle; but the commitments tend to evaporate when the pledges are called in. The problems involved in securing enough troop contributions for the 2006 mission in the Congo, or enough helicopters for Chad, have been public embarrassments. The fact that two EU Battlegroups are now on standby for rapid deployment at any one time is a step in the right direction – though none of the Battlegroups has actually been deployed since they became operational a year-and-a-half ago.

On the civilian side, things are little better. Plans to set up a European Gendarmerie Force<sup>38</sup> are a positive move; but the combined pledges of Member States to provide a total of 5,000 police for ESDP deployments have turned out to be as illusory as the combat surgeons. 1500 are earmarked for Kosovo; and European leaders have recently agreed to scrape together a further 200, to double the size of the police-training effort in Afghanistan – accepting that, with that, the reservoir is effectively drained. Nor are the officers available always suitable or trained for the role. A competent policeman in Genoa or Hamburg is not necessarily adept at law enforcement in the midst of a civil war in Africa.

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<sup>38</sup> This Dutch, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish initiative should eventually provide a 800-strong paramilitary police force which can be deployed at a month’s notice, either to preserve public order or to advise and train local police units. To date, the Gendarmerie Force has been involved in one mission to date, contributing personnel to the peace-keeping operating in Bosnia.

Whether civilian or military, effective EU operations badly need a better system for ensuring that the right sort of units or individuals are genuinely available when the need arises. And the need will come into sharper focus if the French EU Presidency makes headway with their idea that the EU should set itself a “level of ambition” for operations – specifying the number, size and duration of operations that the EU should ready itself to run concurrently.

- **More Units on Standby.** Member States need to step up their commitments and keep more units on standby. The Battlegroups system is a step in the right direction. With a pre-planned roster ensuring that there are always two Battlegroups on standby at any one time, there is no doubt about whose name is in the frame when the need arises. But short Battlegroup interventions may be required less often than longer-duration stabilisation operations. The latter will require a variety of support units – from helicopter squadrons to logisticians to intelligence or security advisory teams – at lower levels of readiness to deploy, but able to spend longer in theatre before handing over to a relieving unit.

So the Battlegroup roster should be complemented by a parallel rotation of support units. As with the Battlegroups, smaller nations could band together to offer such elements. The definition of the nature and size of the relevant units should be left to the EU Military Committee and the EU Military Staff. But Ministers should set a tight timescale for the design of this new system – to prevent this from becoming, as is the tendency in Brussels, a self-sustaining industry for generations of staff officers and functionaries.

- **A Civilian Reserve Force.** A similar approach should be applied to building up Europe’s capacity to mount civilian missions, such as deployments of police or experts in civil reconstruction. The box below suggests how the idea of a “civilian reserve corps”, long sought by the European Parliament among others<sup>39</sup>, could be put into practice.

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<sup>39</sup> And recently advocated by Prime Minister Brown, albeit in a UN context (<http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page15303.asp>)

## A EUROPEAN CIVILIAN RESERVE

By Daniel Korski

Helping fragile, failing, and post-conflict states is both a humanitarian imperative and an increasingly necessary contribution to the EU's own security. For instability in these countries does not just harm the lives of their own inhabitants – 870 million people, or 14% of the world's population, according to the World Bank. It also affects the lives of Europeans by creating refugee flows, terrorist hideouts, and hubs for drug trafficking.

To manage crises in the world's troublespots, the EU needs to dispatch the right people, with the right skills, to support local governments as soon as trouble starts. Civilian specialists can offer invaluable assistance in establishing court systems and public administration, rebuilding infrastructure, and organising community policing. Without them, it falls to the military to perform tasks for which they are not properly trained.

Progress in building civilian capacity has been slow. Despite commitments made at the Feira and Gothenburg Councils in 1999 and 2001, it remains difficult to find high-quality staff for missions, as the experience of EULEX in Kosovo and EUPOL in Kabul shows. Some Member States do not bother sending people to training course; the selection process for missions is often indiscriminate; and follow-up or refresher training is rare. When citizens are deployed on missions, they are regularly assigned tasks which do not match their training.

The time has come to set up a European civilian reserve – a corps of perhaps 2,000 civilian specialists to begin with. Like the military reserves, reservists would be private citizens who sign a contract to be on stand-by for a set period.

Reservists should be able to deploy either individually or as teams. The reservists would undergo standardized introductory, annual, and pre-deployment training. They would remain in their day jobs until mobilized for training or deployment.

The Union itself or Member States could take responsibility for recruitment. In the latter case, each Member State would receive a recruitment target – 100 for Germany, 30 for Denmark, etc. With at least 2000 people trained, people already adequately formed could form the nucleus of the reserve, until the number is expanded.

Reservists would be recruited, trained and certified according to standards developed by the Council Secretariat and the Commission. This would mean that even personnel recruited by the EU states and deployed only for homeland tasks, such as civil emergencies, would have common backgrounds and could collaborate if required.

To complement national training programmes, the European Security and Defence College should create a Crisis Management Training Centre to offer specialized training and education for reservists.

## Perverse Financial Incentives

Those Member States who contribute people or assets to operations are running risks, for the benefit of all. It is perverse that they should also be left to pick up the tab. Some of the more spectacularly amateurish early financial improvisations have been addressed – there should, for example, be no need to repeat the Aceh experience, where the operation was initially financed on the personal credit cards of mission personnel along with a loan from the entertainment allowance of the British ambassador in Jakarta. Nonetheless, the “costs lie where they fall” principle is clearly inequitable and a major disincentive for Member States to step forward for operations.

A common-funding mechanism called “Athena”<sup>40</sup> was agreed in 2004, to cover a limited range of costs, such as those of field headquarters. Athena provides for covering other costs such as transporting and accommodating troops – but this requires unanimous agreement by EU ministers on a case-by-case basis, which simply does not happen. It is estimated that Athena has covered less than 10% of the extra costs of EU operations to date.

As well as discouraging participation, the failure to share costs is inefficient. In theory, the lead nation for each Battlegroup is responsible for ensuring that adequate airlift capacity and long-range communications are available during the six-month period when the Battlegroup is on standby. When it becomes the turn of the next Battlegroup, the responsibility shifts to another lead nation. In practice, most Member States just hope to be able to beg, hire or borrow what they require if and when the need arises (raising big question marks over the feasibility of deploying these units within 10 days of the order to do so).

In any case, the current model entails a wasteful duplication of resources. Centrally provided and commonly funded airlift, communications and logistic capacity would save everyone money and ensure that these crucial tools are available when needed. The same goes for procuring, shipping and maintaining such basic items as vehicles and shelters for EU operations, which are currently paid for out of the national purse. This contrasts with the system for UN peacekeeping operations, where such supplies are jointly acquired and pre-stocked. And, as ESDP comes to undertake longer operations where one national contingent relieves another, the EU will confront the sort of issue

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<sup>40</sup> All Member States contribute, on the basis of their GDP.

that NATO is facing in Afghanistan, where one nation's hospital installation is torn out to be replaced by another's.

- **Fairer Funding.** Europe's defence efforts will never really flourish as long as contributing to operations involves shouldering nearly all the costs as well as the risks. The Athena mechanism for common funding comes up for review this autumn. National representatives should agree to make collective responsibility for costs the rule rather than the exception, reversing the current need for Council approval of common-funded items. A thorough-going review is required to establish the full range of goods (communications, vehicles) and services (strategic lift) that would more efficiently and more equitably be provided in common. The EU would also do well to learn from the UN and consider pre-stocking essential pieces of kit. The whole issue could usefully be debated with NATO, as the Atlantic Alliance faces similar problems.

The related issue of how national governments meet the unplanned costs of operations – whether the defence ministry is compensated from central government funds, or has to swallow the costs itself – is obviously for individual Member States to decide. When the British deploy to Afghanistan, or the Italians to South Lebanon, the extra costs are picked up by the national finance ministry; but most European defence ministries are simply required to swallow the costs of deployments as they arise. So the reward for volunteering can be enforced cuts to the national defence programme, such as postponement of new equipment buys. Given the impact of national budgetary choices both on partners and on EU policy as a whole, EU heads of state and government should debate the subject in the European Council on the basis of a report prepared by the defence ministers.

### **Fragmented Command**

The aspect of the Chocolate Summit of 2003 which particularly incensed London and Washington was the proposal to establish an EU military Operational Headquarters (OHQ) in Brussels. For this institution would allow EU operations to be planned and commanded independently of NATO. The Baghdad-bound allies saw this as a violation of the recent deal to allow European defence to emerge without undermining NATO through the creation of duplicate structures.

Since then, the wound opened by the issue of the OHQ has continued to fester, proving to be a particularly sore point in Anglo-French relations. Though couched in arguments about “efficiency”, the dispute has taken on a totemic quality, symbolising diverging views towards the question of EU defence autonomy – and wasting much time and energy in the process.

Against this background, a series of awkward compromises has produced a system for the planning and direction of EU operations that is disjointed, unstable and plainly transitional. An undersized EU Military Operations Centre has been set up but kept in mothballs – as one of no fewer than seven different possible options for command and control of EU military operations. Unless delegated to NATO, the initial stages of advance planning have to be carried out in the EU Military Staff – before being handed off to the chosen headquarters. The Battlegroups have been left to cast around for themselves to find a superior headquarters somewhere in Europe prepared to command and control them. And the need for greater professionalism in the management of civilian operations has led to the creation, on an entirely separate basis, of a “Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability”, tenuously linked to the military side through a “Civ/Mil Cell”. The first civilian operations commander was finally appointed in May 2008.

No one can say with certainty that this tangle of responsibilities is actually dangerous, since the “system” has yet to be tested under stress; all EU operations to date have been conducted in remarkably benign conditions. (The recent loss of a French soldier on the Chad operation was, strikingly, the first ESDP death in action.) What is clear, however, is that the present situation inhibits effective pre-planning of operations, and inevitably means loss of continuity and momentum while the choice of OHQ for each operation is made, and the chosen headquarters then gears itself up. And the persistent division between civilian and military planning and direction represent the antithesis of the integrated approach which is supposed to be the EU’s strength.

• **A fully integrated EU Operational Headquarters in Brussels.**

The patchwork of authorities for the planning and command of EU operations should be consolidated into one properly integrated OHQ in Brussels, under the authority of Javier Solana. This OHQ should be responsible for all EU operations, both military and civilian (other than the most demanding military missions, where it makes sense to use NATO facilities).

There will inevitably be objections to this proposal from all sides. Some British will detect the fingerprints of the Chocolate Summiteers, and an anti-NATO agenda. Some French will worry that integrating the civil with the military will smother the development of European “hard power” under soft pillows. Civilian crisis managers will fear being subjected to bureaucratic military procedures, while generals will fret over the integrity of the military chain of command (perhaps forgetting that in democratic societies all military chains of command must end somewhere with the civil authority).

All will need to take a reality check. The old arguments about EU military autonomy and the risks of undermining NATO should now be history, as the recent US support for European defence makes clear. And it is equally past time that military and civilian crisis managers overcame their tribal suspicions. The military chain of command can be preserved as the spinal column of the OHQ, with command of purely civilian operations (to the extent that the distinction can ever validly be made) appropriately delegated. The key thing is to integrate the disciplines, so that all operations are conceived and directed with both military and civilian dimensions constantly in mind. The EU prides itself on its ability to take a comprehensive approach to crisis management, simultaneously deploying military forces, police and experts in restoring public administration and the rule of law. It defies logic to embrace this doctrine, and yet maintain a rigid separation at the top level of command and control between operations deemed “military” and those labelled “civilian”. In the words of the European Security Strategy, “In a crisis there is no substitute for unity of command”<sup>41</sup>.

## **Corporate Amnesia**

Finally, it is time for the EU to put in place serious arrangements for learning from experience – robust assessment of what worked and what did not in each operation, and systematic follow-up to fix the problems. Every single crisis management operation conducted in the past decade has been seriously hampered by a lack of support helicopters; yet ministers have only just ordered the search for a solution. In the same way, the shortage of adequate,

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<sup>41</sup> The key challenge for this headquarters will be to get all the EU actors in Brussels pulling in the same direction. So arguments for siting such a headquarters out at Mons, alongside the NATO headquarters, should be rejected. EU/NATO coordination is important – but EU/EU coherence is even more so.

interoperable communications is rediscovered with every operation – and then forgotten in the general desire to declare “mission accomplished”<sup>42</sup>.

There is a similar reluctance to assess the effects of national “caveats” – restrictions imposed by Member States on what their forces can and cannot do in the field. In the absence of professional evaluation, there is no incentive for governments to relax their restrictions – and the field is left free for anecdotal slurs about the “uselessness” of such-and-such a national contingent. ESDP operations will not make the transition from amateur improvisation to real professionalism until an effective capacity is established to learn, and to act on, the lessons of experience.

- **A Capacity to Learn.** Member States need to agree on a more rigorous and de-politicised system to ensure that operational experience is applied to capability development and preparations for subsequent operations. A small, elite unit should be established within the Council’s General Secretariat, mandated to report regularly and directly to ministers about the main problems and deficiencies encountered on operations, the impact of “caveats”, and the progress of remedial action to date.

ESDP has got through five years of operations on a wing and a prayer, thanks to good luck, ingenuity on the part of many individuals who have found ways to work the unworkable, and a collective readiness to settle for the relatively safe and unambitious. The steps proposed above are now essential, if the EU truly wishes to move beyond rehearsals to playing a serious role in the maintenance of global security.

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<sup>42</sup> The just-published IISS report on European Military Capabilities quotes a Dutch general recalling “I had to have nine different systems sitting on my desk just to communicate with all my units[in Afghanistan]. All these different national systems are useless, and it is unacceptable that we don’t have a common operational network...”. This is a good example of the sort of awkward elephant in the room which EU staffs working on improving military capabilities are adept at ignoring.



## **CHAPTER IV: UPDATING THE EUROPEAN SECURITY STRATEGY**

The moral, said Napoleon, is to the material as three is to one. His Prussian contemporary, Clausewitz, shared this view. Warfare, he noted, was beset by friction, elements of drag which would mire the campaign unless the general overcame them with an “iron will”. As in war, so in the contemporary conduct of defence. The talk today is of “political will” – and the record suggests that, despite the rhetoric, there has not been much of it applied during ESDP’s opening decade.

This is hardly surprising. Operations involve costs and the risk of casualties. Pooling efforts and resources implies commitment and constraint. It is hard enough to manage and renew defence on a national basis without adding the complications of working with others. Only an iron political will underpinned by a clear sense of direction can make the strategic case prevail over the near-term inconvenience.

Providing that sense of direction was a key purpose of the 2003 European Security Strategy. It is an unusual European text, both in itself – it is short, clear and largely unqualified – and in its genesis. This was achieved by Solana bypassing the usual Brussels drafting committees, and having the heads of state and government agree his own team’s draft – something perhaps possible only in the general yearning for consensus after a year of rows about Iraq.

Such a process has its downside. National capitals had little chance to absorb the Strategy’s messages. They assented with their heads, but not necessarily with their hearts. National parliaments largely ignored it. Wider publics were generally unaware of it – or simply did not buy it, or care. And with no league tables or finger-pointing in European defence, it has proved all too easy for too many Member States to sing the hymns but pass the collection plate straight on. Moreover, five years is a long time in the EU. Every single defence minister has changed in that period. So too have almost all heads of government, foreign ministers, top generals and senior officials. Many of today’s decision-makers will never have read the Security Strategy: some may be unaware of its existence. This matters: ESDP needs governments to commit resources, volunteer effort, take risks and justify all this at home.

During the French EU Presidency, the European Security Strategy will be updated. The amended document may or may not be an improvement on its predecessor. But it will be “new” – and its unveiling will provide an essential opportunity for administrations, parliaments and publics in the Member States to re-engage with the rationale for European security and defence. It should not be left to defence ministers alone to make the case for it. Two or three decades ago, the defence minister was one of the three or four main cabinet positions in all European governments. No longer – as lists of Cabinet precedence show.

The European Security Strategy will be agreed by the heads of state and government. It is for them, as well as for their defence and foreign ministers, to find their voices on this subject and explain to their own electorates the importance of what they have agreed. They need, as the phrase goes, to “take ownership” of the strategy – or decide that they do not agree with it, and save European taxpayers a great deal of money by dispensing with much of their militaries.



## ANNEX A

### PRINCIPAL FEATURES OF PERMANENT STRUCTURED COOPERATION (PESCO) AS SET OUT IN THE LISBON TREATY

(NB References are to Articles of the Treaty on European Union, as amended by the Lisbon Treaty, and to Protocol (No 10) added to the TEU)

#### Article 42

1. CSDP an “integral part” of CFSP. Provides operational capacity for EU missions “outside the Union”. Member States (MS) to provide the capabilities.
2. Perspective of common defence.
3. MS to provide civil and military capabilities – including multinational forces.

MS to undertake to improve their military capabilities.

The European Defence Agency (EDA):

- identifies operational requirements;
  - promotes measures to satisfy them;
  - identifies/implements measures to strengthen the defence technological and industrial base (DTIB);
  - helps define a European armaments policy;
  - helps the Council evaluate capability improvement.
4. CSDP decisions by unanimity (including operations).
  5. The Council may entrust a mission (“task”) to a group of MS.
  6. MS “whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria” and which “have made more binding commitments to one another in this area” shall establish PESCO.
  7. Mutual assistance in face of armed aggression.

#### Article 43

1. The spectrum of CSDP mission (“tasks”) – peace keeping, peace-making, etc.
2. Council decides, new foreign policy chief coordinates.

## **Article 44**

1. Option for Council to delegate “task” to group of MS.
2. Interaction between group and Council.

## **Article 45**

1. EDA tasks:
  - a) capability development (objectives and evaluation);
  - b) harmonisation of military requirements, alignment of procurement methods;
  - c) propose (and sometimes manage) multinational solutions;
  - d) support R&T, coordinate and plan joint R&T;
  - e) identify/implement measures to strengthen DTIB, and for improving the effectiveness of military expenditure.
2. New Council decision, by QMV, on EDA’s statute, seat and operational rules. To “take account of the level of effective participation in the Agency’s activities”. Specific groups within the Agency.

## **Article 46**

1. MS wishing to take part in PESCO, who meet the criteria and make the commitments, inform the Council and the foreign policy chief.
2. QMV decision within 3 months.
3. QMV decision (by PESCO members only) on latecomers.
4. QMV decision (PESCO members only) to suspend an MS which “no longer fulfils the criteria or is no longer able to meet the commitments”.
5. Provision for withdrawal.
6. Other Council PESCO decisions by unanimity

## **Protocol No. 10 on PESCO**

- Open to all MS who undertake:
  - 1) to proceed more intensively with defence capability development through:
    - development of national contributions; and

- participation, where appropriate, in:
  - multinational forces
  - the main European equipment programmes
  - EDA activity; and
- 2) to provide, at the latest by 2010, battlegroups or components for multinational battlegroups.

[Article 1]

- MS participating in PESCO shall undertake to:
  - a) work together to meet “approved objectives” on investment in defence equipment;
  - b) align their defence apparatus, particularly by
    - harmonisation of military requirements
    - pooling/specialising
    - cooperating in training and logistics;
  - c) take steps to enhance their forces’ usefulness, including “common objectives regarding the commitment of forces”(eg, reviewing national decision-making procedures);
  - d) rectify capability shortfalls, including through multinational approaches;
  - e) take part in major joint or European equipment programmes, in EDA framework.

[Article 2]

EDA to contribute to assessment of MS capability contributions – “in particular contributions to be made in accordance with the criteria to be established, inter alia, on the basis of Article 2”- and to report once a year. Council recommendations and decisions may follow.

[Article 3]



**ANNEX B**

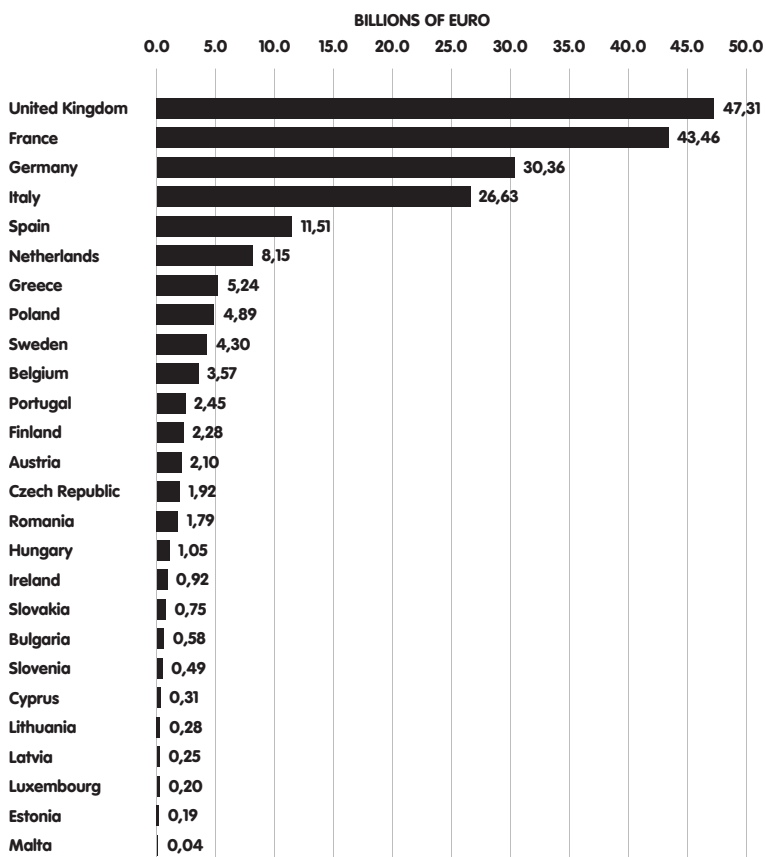
**Source: European Defence Agency, 2006**

**(lists do not include Denmark, which is not a member of EDA)**

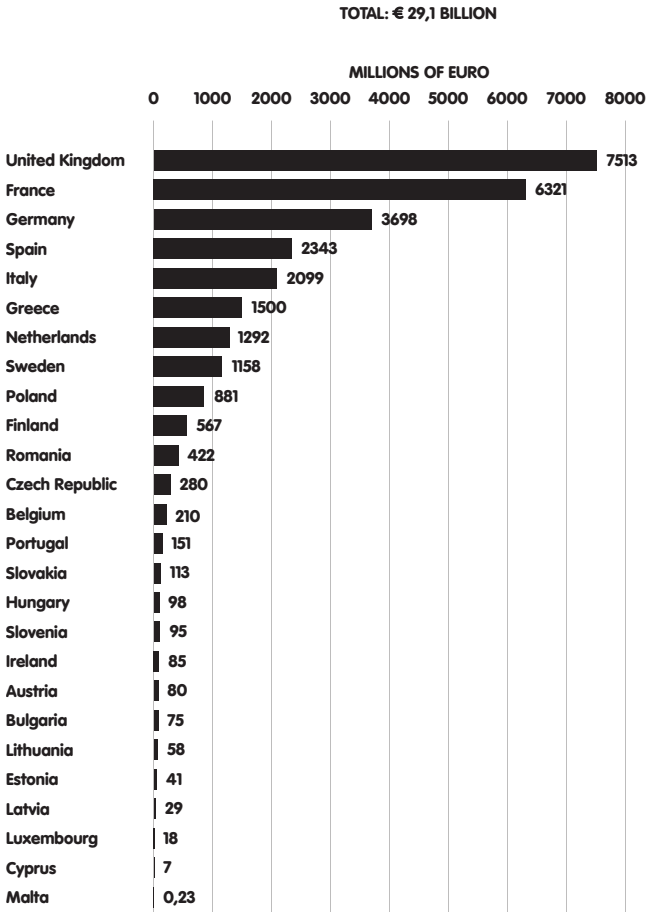


# European Defence Spending in 2006

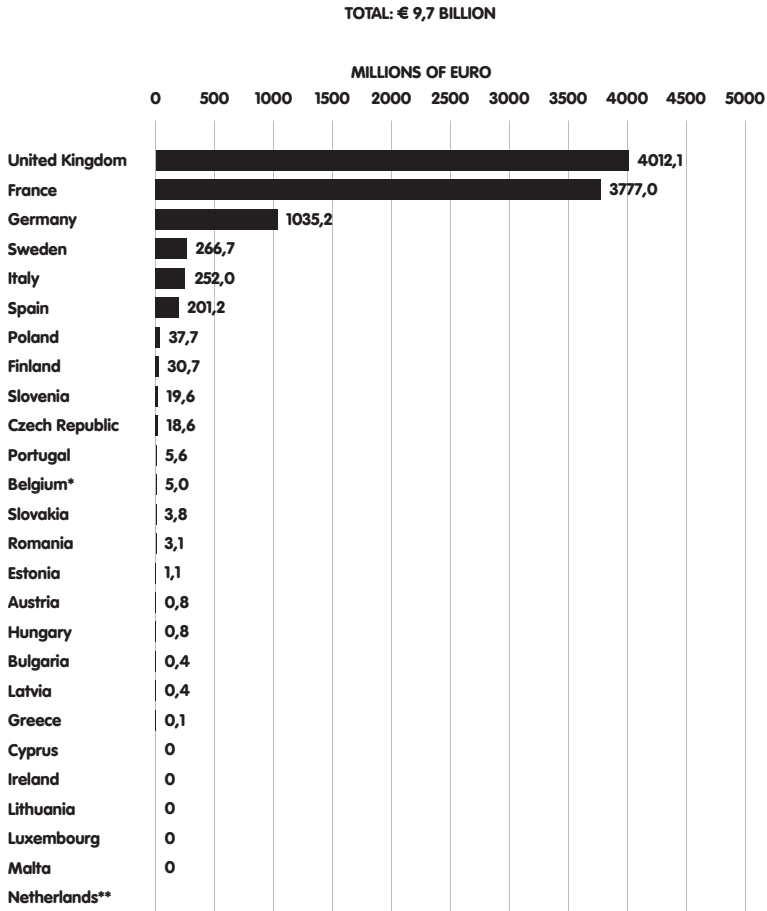
TOTAL: € 201 BILLION



# European Defence Equipment Procurement in 2006



# European Research and Development Spend in 2006

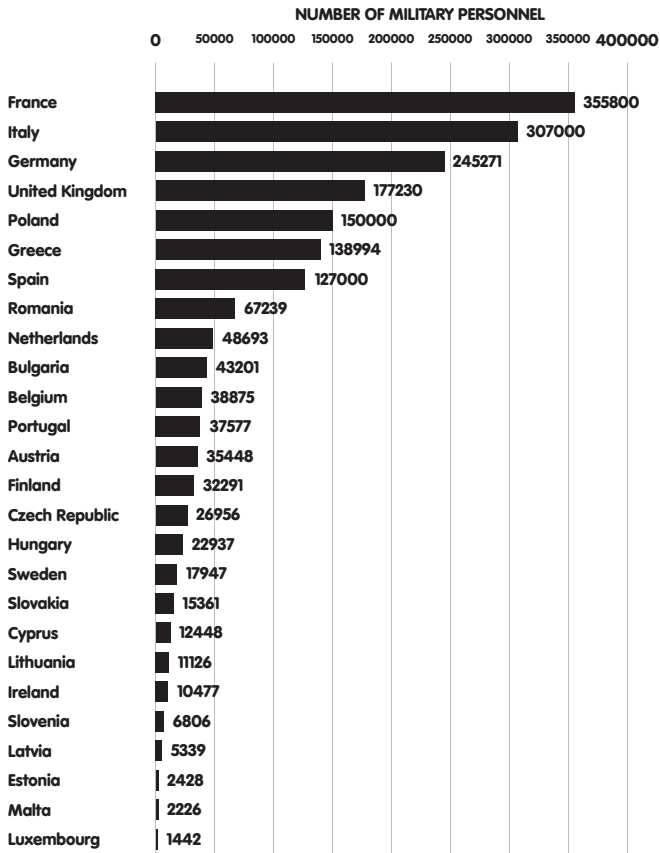


\* Figure withheld from publication by Belgium - estimate

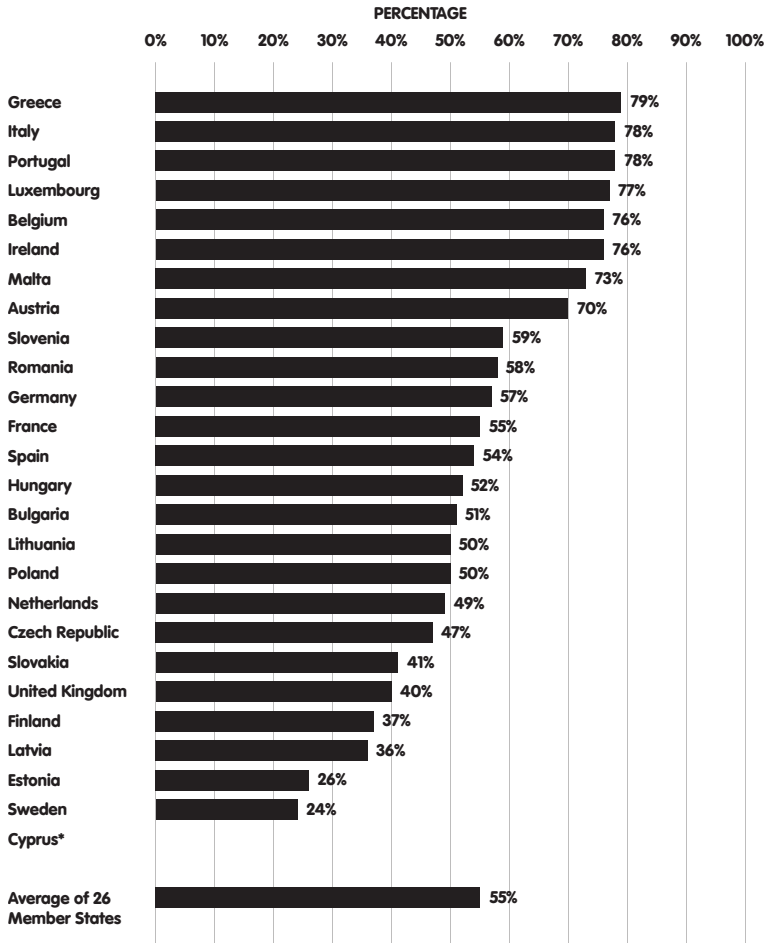
\*\* Figure unavailable

# European Military Personnel in 2006

TOTAL: 1,940,112

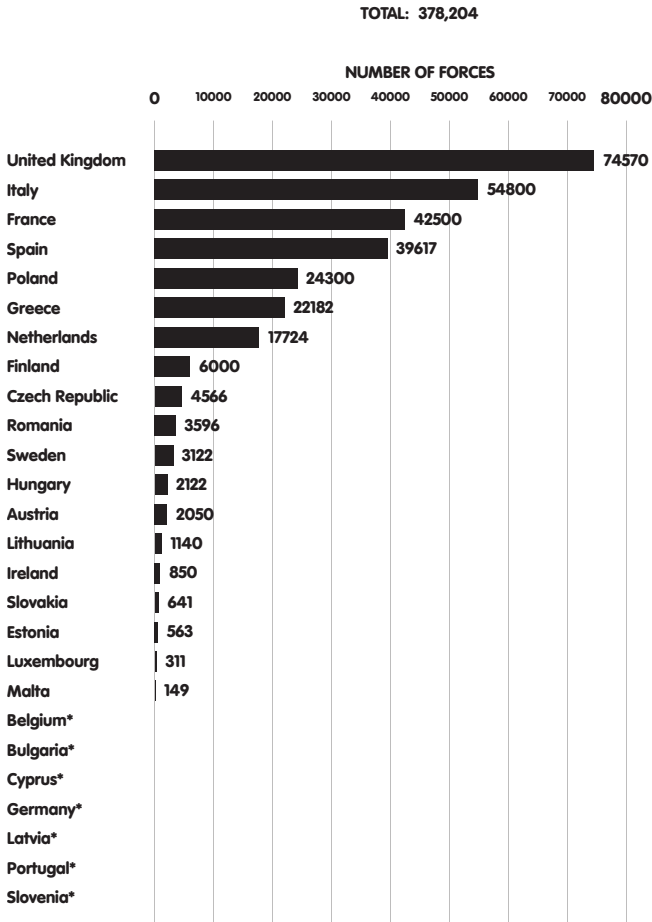


# European Personnel Expenditure as a Percentage of Total Defence Expenditure 2006



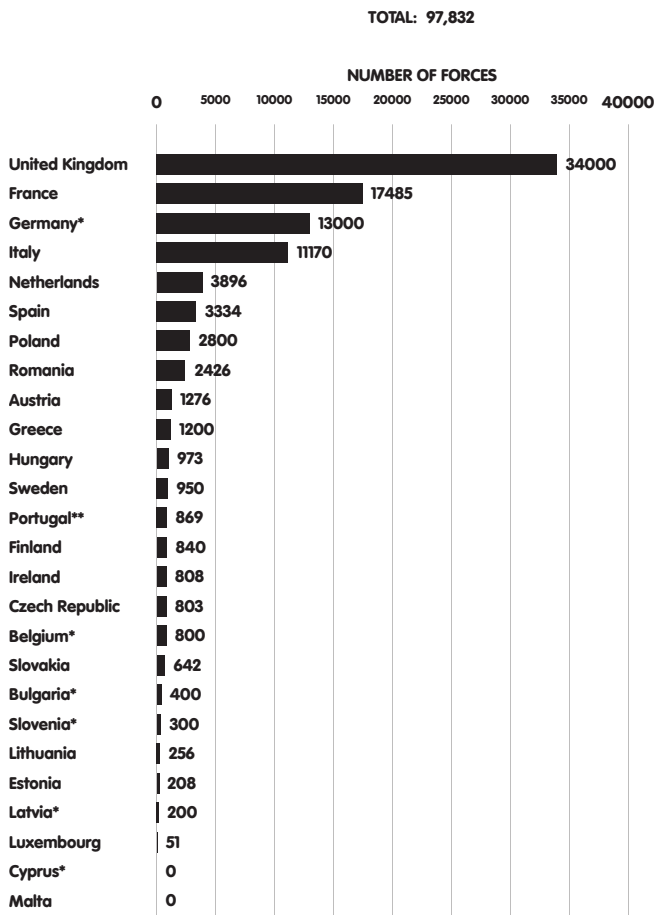
\* Withheld

# Total Number of Deployable (Land) Forces in 2006



\* Withheld

# Average Number of Troops Deployed in 2006



\* Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Latvia and Slovenia withheld permission for the EDA to publish their individual numbers. But they are included in the Total. The distribution of the combined 14,714 is estimated from other sources.

\*\* Portugal supplied no number to the EDA. This figure, separately obtained, is therefore not included in the total.

## About the author

'Nick Witney is a Senior Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. He joined ECFR from the European Defence Agency, which he was responsible for setting up in 2004, and then ran as its first Chief Executive. His earlier career was divided between the UK diplomatic service (in the Middle East and Washington DC), and the UK Ministry of Defence; his last post before moving to Brussels was as Director-General for International Security Policy.'

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