



The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy: A Fresh Impetus?

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The European Council Summit is due to be held on 19-20 December 2013. Among the main issues for debate is the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). It will be the first time in five years that EU leaders have comprehensively discussed EU defence policy, amid criticisms that CSDP has lost momentum due to a lack of consensus over its strategic direction, an unwillingness on the part of Member States to commit the necessary resources and the prevailing economic crisis which has seen defence budgets fall across Europe and capabilities cut.

The hope is that EU leaders will take this opportunity to inject fresh impetus into EU defence policy and agree recommendations, set out in a report from the EU High Representative in October 2013, on strengthening CSDP, improving the availability of civilian and military capabilities, and strengthening Europe's defence industry.

However, the prospect of achieving significant progress at the summit has been viewed by many as difficult. Much will depend on the stance of individual Member States, where their interests converge and how much they are willing to push their own agendas. As the largest EU military powers, the attitudes of the UK, France and Germany will be crucial if a fresh impetus to CSDP is to be achieved.

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1 Background

The EU's security and defence policy has had a chequered past. First set down as an aspiration in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the intergovernmental nature of this policy area has meant that its evolution has been entirely dependent upon political will and the convergence of competing national interests among the EU Member States, in particular the UK, France and Germany.

The major turning points for CSDP over the last ten years have come about largely as a result of Franco-British proposals. While generally supportive, successive UK governments have also been cautious in their approach to greater European defence integration. The development of an EU defence policy has been regarded as entirely complementary to NATO and essential for strengthening European military capabilities within that alliance, as

opposed to the more pro-European, and French view, that the EU should establish an independent military capability outside of the NATO framework.¹

1.1 Progress Since Lisbon

The Lisbon treaty, which was agreed in 2008, was the last time that any major review or revision of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was undertaken.

While CSDP remains an intergovernmental area of EU competence, that treaty did however open up the potential for greater military cooperation, specifically in capabilities development and planning, through the mechanism of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PSC). Under that concept a smaller group of eligible Member States would be able to adopt decisions regarding greater military cooperation, therefore moving forward in certain areas without the full approval of all EU Member States. Among the aspirations for PSC were capability harmonisation, the pooling of assets, cooperation in training and logistics, regular assessments of national defence expenditure and the development of flexibility, interoperability and deployability among forces.

However, analysts largely concur that over the last five years, rather than seize upon the opportunities provided by Lisbon, the EU's defence policy has lost much of its momentum. While there has been progress in civilian crisis management, with the EU becoming a notable 'soft power' actor,² and in efforts to achieve greater regulation of the defence market;³ arguably very little notable progress has been made in developing the 'hard power' aspects of CSDP. Despite over a decade of work on capabilities development the EU collectively still suffers from major capability shortfalls and the flagship EU battlegroups have never been deployed in nearly six years since their creation. Crucially, there continues to be no consensual EU approach to foreign policy crises⁴ or, in the longer term, a vision for CSDP at the highest political level. While the EU Treaty makes reference to the development of "a common defence, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides",⁵ sharp divisions remain among EU Member States about what they want CSDP to achieve. As outlined above the UK, for example, seeks to develop CSDP as the European pillar of NATO; while others seek to give the EU a more independent military voice. Decision making also remains cumbersome and the financing of operations is complex, often resulting in a reluctance to commit assets.

The approach of the major European military powers to events in Libya and Mali over the last three years have been seized upon by many as evidence of the EU's inertia in this area. A collective EU response has been largely absent with France and the UK opting to pursue military action in Libya and Mali outside of the EU framework. The EU battlegroups, which were devised with Africa in mind, remained un-utilised. Both campaigns also highlighted

¹ The history of CSDP is charted in a number of Library briefings: RP00/20, *European Defence: From Pörschach to Helsinki*; RP00/84, *Common European Security and Defence Policy: A Progress Report*; RP01/50, *European Security and Defence Policy: Nice and Beyond*; RP06/32, *European Security and Defence Policy: Developments Since 2003*; RP08/09, *The Treaty of Lisbon: amendments to the Treaty on European Union*, SN04807, *Priorities for ESDP under the French Presidency of the EU* and RP13/42, *Leaving the EU*.

² The EU has launched 30 ESDP missions in Africa, Asia and Europe, the majority of which are focused on crisis management, security sector reform, training, monitoring and humanitarian aid. Further information is available at: http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/index_en.htm

³ In 2009 the European Commission passed two directives aimed at regulating defence procurement across the EU and the intra-community transfer of defence goods and services. Further information is available in Library briefing SN04640, *EC Defence Equipment Directives*, June 2011

⁴ This was discussed by Stokes and Whitman in "Transatlantic Triage?", *International Affairs*, 89:5, 2013

⁵ Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Article 28A

Europe's lack of key enabling capabilities, including intelligence and reconnaissance assets and air-to-air refuelling.⁶ The EU's involvement in both theatres has instead focused on the delivery of soft power initiatives such as border assistance (EUBAM in Libya),⁷ and training (EUTM in Mali).⁸ As Olivier de France and Nick Witney observed in a recent article for the European Council on Foreign Relations:

The crisis in Mali once again exposed the hollowness of Europe's military pretensions. The crisis might almost have designed as the long-sought opportunity for the EU to deploy one of its battlegroups...The United Nations and the broader international community were unanimous on the need for military intervention. Yet so divorced has talk of European defence become from any practical application in the real world that the option of despatching the battle group seems to have been discounted without any real consideration, and the job was left to France. Part of the reason for this divorce is simply the lack of a shared strategic culture in Europe.⁹

Marcin Terlikowski of the Polish Institute of International Affairs also commented:

Never in the last twenty years have European been as divided with regards to defence as they are now. The two most recent interventions initiated and led by Europeans have revealed the rifts in full light. The 2011 Libya mission, ultimately executed under NATO command, on the one hand demonstrated the indifference of France and the UK to common decision making forums within NATO and the EU, and on the other highlighted the lack of a shared threat perception, which prevented a number of states from contributing [...]

The 2013 French intervention in crisis-torn Mali provided another example of the seeming irrelevance of EU crisis management procedures and capabilities; the Union ultimately launching an auxiliary training mission 'EUTM-Mali' but was once again unable to use its flagship military asset – the Battlegroups, specifically devised in 2007 to provide the EU with a rapid response capability in crisis situations.¹⁰

Predominantly, however, the lack of CSDP progress in the last five years has arguably been the result of waning political will in the light of the prevailing global economic crisis and its effect upon the eurozone. As Stokes and Whitman observed in an article for *International Affairs*: “the continuation of the eurozone crisis has ensured that the predominant focus for political energy and effort has continued to be the EU itself, rather than its immediate neighbourhood”.¹¹

Imposed fiscal constraints have subsequently resulted in defence budgets across the EU falling considerably and widespread cuts being made to military capabilities across the

⁶ In Libya the US provided nearly 80% of all air refuelling, almost 75% of aerial surveillance and 100% of all electronic warfare missions (Pentagon News briefing with Vice Adm. Gortney, 28 March 2011). The EU's military shortcomings are also discussed in greater detail in “Counting the cost – Lessons of Libya for European defence policy”, *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 9 June 2011. In Mali the French government requested US assistance in planning, logistics and air support in order to fill key capability gaps. The US subsequently deployed transport aircraft, air-to-air refuelling aircraft and intelligence support.

⁷ <http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eubam-libya/>

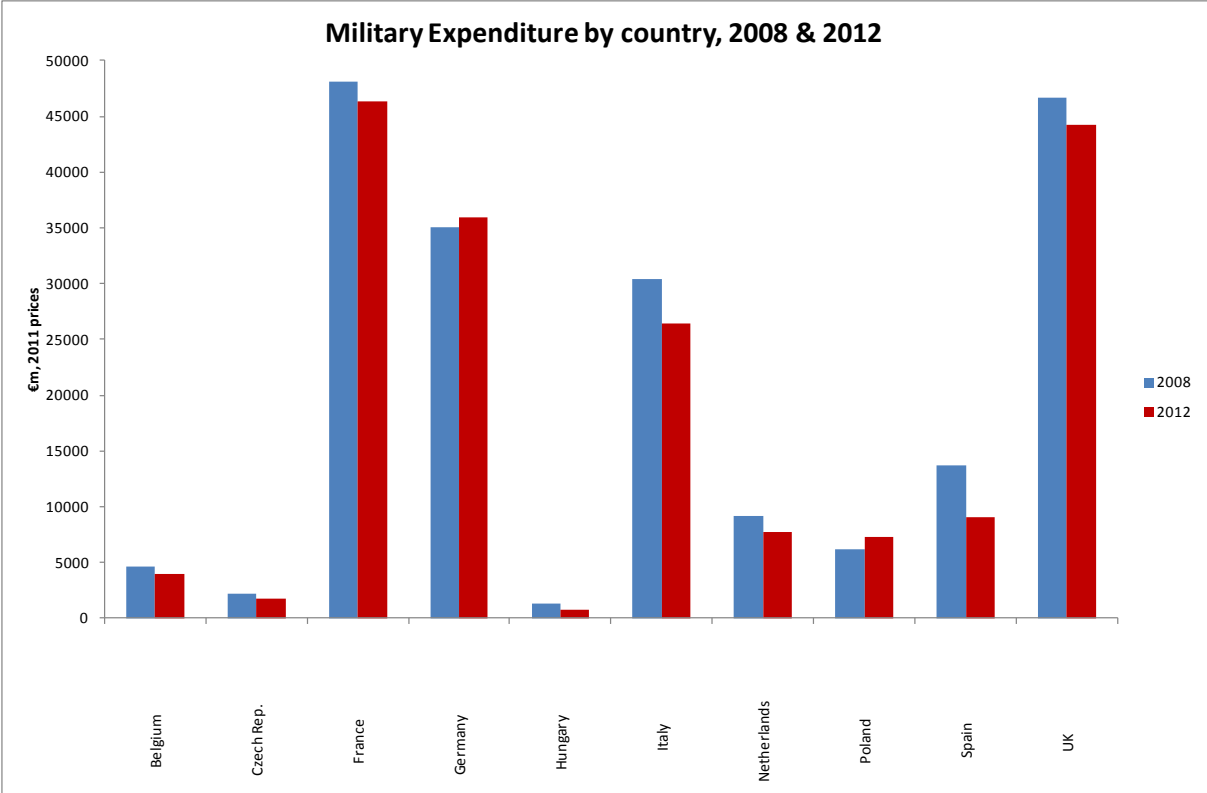
⁸ <http://www.eeas.europa.eu/csdp/missions-and-operations/eutm-mali/>

⁹ “Olivier de France and Nick Witney, “Europe's strategic cacophony”, European Council on Foreign Relations, April 2013

¹⁰ “No one left behind? European defence and ‘Brexit’, *RUSI Journal*, August/September 2013

¹¹ Stokes and Whitman, “Transatlantic Triage?”, *International Affairs*, 89:5, 2013

board.¹² Half of EU and European NATO states have cut their defence budgets by at least 10% since 2008, with Germany and Poland being the only notable exceptions.¹³



Source: SIPRI

Efforts to improve key European military capabilities, establish new EU military structures, and commit more forces to EU-led operations have therefore either been met with little enthusiasm, or have been sidelined by the bigger political agenda. In both 2008 and 2011 the French and Polish Presidencies of the EU attempted to generate fresh momentum in CSDP but to little avail. The French government’s ambitious plans for CSDP, including the proposal for a permanent operational headquarters and a revision of the European Security Strategy, were effectively dropped as its presidency became dominated by the Irish ‘no vote’ on the Lisbon treaty and the onset of the global financial crisis, specifically its effect on the eurozone.¹⁴ Polish initiatives in 2011 also suffered the same fate. Notably, the proposal, supported by the EU High Representative, for the creation of a permanent Operational Headquarters for EU-led missions was vetoed by the UK. Foreign Secretary, William Hague, stated at the time:

I have made very clear that the United Kingdom will not agree to such a permanent OHQ. We will not agree to it now, we will not agree to it in the future. That is a red line for us...

¹² The UK’s 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), for example, recommended significant force reductions, in terms of both personnel and capabilities. Similar reforms are also currently being undertaken among the other major European military powers, notably in France (see [French Defence White Paper](#), July 2013)

¹³ A detailed discussion of European defence spending is available in the IISS, *Military Balance 2013*, p.92-96

¹⁴ Further information on the French presidency is available in Library briefing SN04807, *Priorities for ESDP During the French Presidency of the EU*, July 2008

We are opposed to this idea because we think it duplicates NATO structures and thirdly, a lot can be done by improving the structures that already exist.¹⁵

Instead of greater integration at the EU level there has instead been a trend toward bilateral/regional defence cooperation in order to address shortfalls and promote cooperation. In 2010 the UK and France, for example signed a defence cooperation treaty;¹⁶ while regional groupings such as NORDEF and the Weimar 'Plus' group of states (France, Germany, Spain, Poland and Italy) have increasingly become the focus of cooperation. This latter grouping has been particularly vocal about the need to revitalise CSDP and in November 2012 once again raised the subject of independent planning capabilities for the EU. Launching their initiative, the group of states argued:

We are convinced that the EU must set up, within a framework yet to be defined, true civilian-military structures to plan and conduct missions and operations. We should show preparedness to hold available, train, deploy and sustain in theatre the necessary civilian and military means [...]

This initiative should receive adequate political support at high level, in close cooperation with the high representative, and result in increased European political integration. In defence matters as well, we need more Europe. We are committed to working together in this direction.¹⁷

The group also called for national vetoes over defence issues to be abolished in any future treaty negotiations in order to stop countries, such as the UK, from vetoing such proposals in the future.

2 Preparing for the European Council Summit

At the European Council summit in December 2012, EU leaders reiterated their commitment to enhancing the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. Specifically, they highlighted the need for EU Member states to "provide future-oriented capabilities...strengthen cooperation in order to develop military capabilities and fill the critical gaps", while also highlighting the "benefits such cooperation may have for employment, growth, innovation and industrial competitiveness within the European Union".

As such, the Council tasked the High Representative with developing further proposals for strengthening CSDP, improving the availability of civilian and military capabilities, and strengthening Europe's defence industry. The High Representative was to report by September 2013 with the intention of EU leaders to review progress, in each of these three areas, at the European Council Summit in December 2013 and set a fresh course for CSDP in the longer term.¹⁸ This will be the first time that European leaders have comprehensively discussed CSDP in five years.

2.1 Final Report of the High Representative– October 2013

The High Representative's [Final Report](#) on CSDP was published on 15 October 2013.¹⁹ With acknowledgement of the EU's changing geostrategic context, the overriding conclusion of

¹⁵ "UK blocks bid for permanent EU security headquarters", *EurActiv*, 19 July 2011

¹⁶ Further detail is available in Library briefing SN05750, *Franco-British Defence Co-operation*, November 2010

¹⁷ "Pressure on Cameron to block EU army HQ plans", *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 November 2012

¹⁸ *European Council Summit Conclusions*, 13-14 December 2012, EUCO205/12

¹⁹ An interim report had previously been disseminated in July.

that report is that “Europe must assume greater responsibility for its own security and that of its neighbourhood” and that such developments “warrant a strategic debate among Heads of State and Government... [that] at the top level must set priorities”.

The report subsequently makes a number of recommendations for strengthening CSDP as a concept, enhancing military capabilities and reinforcing the European defence industry. It also calls for a more robust and frequent approach to monitoring progress of CSDP and providing renewed impetus to the initiative when necessary.

Proposals for Strengthening CSDP

The report makes seven recommendations on increasing the effectiveness, visibility and impact of CSDP:

1. Develop the Comprehensive Approach to conflict prevention and crisis management – Recognising that the EU has a number of external relations policies and tools at its disposal (including diplomatic, defence, trade, finance and aid), work on a new Joint Communication on the Comprehensive Approach is currently being undertaken by the Commission and the High Representative. A number of regional or thematic strategies, along the lines of the existing [Horn of Africa](#) and [Sahel](#) strategic frameworks, are also being developed in order to ensure closer cooperation between different CSDP missions and operations in a region.
2. Working with partners – in particular the UN, NATO and the African Union. Efforts should also be made to encourage the capacity building of local and regional partners, which is becoming a core capability.
3. Respond to upcoming security challenges – the security of cyber and space networks and energy security are all being addressed within the EU but at different levels of effort. The importance of these three areas for future European security is paramount. As such, it is essential that cyber infrastructure becomes more secure and resilient within critical EU infrastructure; the EU should consider developing an EU Cyber Defence Policy Framework; while at the same time preparing for any future role in space-related crisis management. Further incorporating energy security into foreign policy considerations should also be pursued.
4. Maritime and border security – the EU needs a strategic, coherent, functional and cost-effective approach to maritime security through the development of an EU Maritime Security Strategy. At the same time a more joined-up approach to capacity building in third states and regions in order to enable them to control their own territory and manage the flow of goods and people across their borders, should be pursued.
5. Deployability of crisis management assets – the timely and effective deployment of assets is paramount. Further work needs to be done on improving the planning, conduct and support of both civilian and military CSDP missions.

A roadmap has already been established to tackle the gaps in setting up civilian CSDP missions, in particular in the areas of finance, logistics and staff selection. However, further work is required and renewed political impetus may be needed at the December summit. One such area of further work is on Crisis Management Procedures in order to improve access to funding thereby allowing the earlier

deployment of a core advisory team in theatre and the earlier appointment of a Head of Mission to oversee the build-up of an operation.

The ability to rapidly respond at a military level remains crucial. The EU Battlegroups are recognised as the primary tool for doing so. However, they have yet to be deployed, despite achieving operational capability in 2007. Several proposals are under consideration for making the battlegroups more useable, including more proportionate contributions from Member States, improving advanced planning and developing interoperability, in particular with NATO. The paper also proposes the creation of civil-military rapid reaction assessment teams and the need to address the issue of common funding. It also highlights the potential that exists within [Article 44](#) of the Lisbon Treaty for the Council to entrust the implementation of a task to a small group of Member States that have both the capabilities and willingness to undertake that particular mission.

6. Increase the focus on conflict prevention and post conflict management – extend the use of conflict analysis including the development of an early warning system that will identify early response options.
7. Improve CSDP visibility – it remains important to communicate that security and defence ‘matters’ even if no immediate external security threat currently exists.

Development of military capabilities

The report highlights four areas for action with respect to the development of military capabilities. In summary, it suggests:

1. Systematic and long term defence cooperation – the current strategic context and the impact of the financial crisis have made cooperation in capability development even more compelling. Impetus is required at the European Council to embed the concept of Pooling and Sharing within the defence planning and decision making processes of each Member State (through the application of the [Code of Conduct on Pooling and Sharing](#)) and to deliver key capabilities through major cooperative projects. The report also proposes that Member States should be encouraged to share their future capability plans and that there should be greater transparency on budget cuts, national defence strategies and defence procurement and modernisation plans. In order to make cooperation more systematic, the High Representative also recommends that the European Council agree on incentives for European defence cooperation such as VAT exemptions and protecting cooperative projects from national budget cuts.

A review of the Capability Development Plan, which identifies shortfalls, is currently underway but longer term cooperation could be supported by a strategic level Defence Roadmap, approved by the European Council and underpinned by agreed priorities and milestones. The paper also highlights the potential for permanent structured cooperation, as set out in the Lisbon Treaty, but for which the political appetite to move forward remains limited.

2. Delivering key capabilities – greater commitment to cooperative projects in air-to-air refuelling, satellite communication, remotely piloted air systems (UAVs) and cyber defence, is now required.

3. Bilateral, multilateral and regional initiatives – regional or thematic cooperation is considered to offer the best prospect for coordination and sharing or reform processes. Such capabilities developed in regional or thematic groups could also be used for EU-led operations.
4. Civilian capabilities – the majority of CSDP missions are civilian in nature and generating the requisite capabilities remains the priority. Further work is necessary on strengthening the ties between CSDP and the areas of freedom, security and justice, including the greater involvement of EU agencies such as Interpol, in CSDP missions and EU external relations in general.

Although a past advocate of creating an independent operational HQ for the EU, a position supported by many European countries, the High Representative doesn't make this recommendation in her Final Report.

European Defence Industry

The European Commission published a Communication on the defence industry in July 2013, which highlighted a number of measures intended to reinforce the European defence technological and industrial base (see section 2.2 below for further detail). In her final report the High Representative set out a number of actions intended to complement the work of the Commission, all of which will be considered by the European Council:

1. Sustainability and competitiveness of the European defence industry – it is recognised that the evolution of the European defence supply chain needs to be monitored at European level in order to maintain and develop the key industrial skills and competencies that will be necessary in the future to meet emerging military capability needs. As such the paper recommends establishing a Defence skills Network between key stakeholders that will identify and address the key skills at risk. Recognising the importance of SMEs in the supply chain is also highlighted in the report, along with the need to incentivise the European defence industry to undertake more collaborative procurement programmes.
2. Civilian and defence research and technology – more than 85% of R&T is still undertaken nationally, while research and development spending has decreased consistently since 2005.²⁰ The report therefore considers that pooling resources would generate economies of scale and recommends greater cooperation between Member States and the establishment of a multinational R&T funding programme, particularly in the area of critical defence technologies. It also calls for greater synergies between civil and defence research to be exploited, particularly in the areas of energy security, cyber security and remotely piloted air systems.

2.2 European Commission Communication on the Defence Industry

Since 2005 the European Commission has made several moves to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the EU defence market and industrial base, including the adoption of two EU defence directives in 2009 aimed at opening up the defence market.²¹ In response to the global financial crisis and falling European defence budgets, in 2011 the European

²⁰ The European Commission has estimated that R&D spending has decreased 14% since 2005 to €9 billion and that the US spends seven times more on defence R&D than all of the EU Member states combined (European Commission Memo 13/722)

²¹ Further detail on both of these directives is available in Library briefing SN04640, [EC Defence Equipment Directives](#). Both of those directives were transposed into UK law in 2011.

Commission established a Task Force on Defence Industries and Markets to explore the different policy options available to the Commission in order to further strengthen the European defence equipment market and enhance the competitiveness of the sector. The Commission noted:

For CSDP to be credible, Europe needs a strong defence industrial and technological base. To achieve this objective, it is crucial to further develop the European Defence Industrial Base. To maintain a competitive industry capable of producing at affordable prices the capabilities we need, it is essential to strengthen the internal market for defence and security and to create conditions which enable European companies to operate freely in all Member States, while ensuring security of supply in Europe.²²

In July 2013 the Commission Task Force presented the outcome of its work in a [*Communication on the European Defence and Security Sector*](#). That document is expected to result in a formal Action Plan, once it has been considered at the European Council Summit in December. In summary, the EU Commission envisages the following initiatives:

- ***Strengthening the Internal Market***

Building upon the framework set down by the two defence directives, the Commission intends to monitor the openness of Member States' defence markets and assess how the new procurement rules are being applied. Specific guidance will also be published on government to government sales and international agreements in order to ensure that they are not exploited so as to circumvent the directives.

The Commission also intends to ensure the rapid phasing out of offsets and to ensure that all necessary conditions are fulfilled when member states invoke article 346 to justify the provision of state aid.

In addition, the Commission and the European Defence Agency (EDA) will launch a consultation aimed at the eventual political commitment by Member States to mutually assured security of supply. It will also publish a Green Paper on the control of and ownership of critical defence industrial assets, an idea that has been regarded as controversial.²³

- ***Strengthening the Competitiveness of European Industry***

The Commission intends to promote the development of 'hybrid standards' for dual-use products, along the lines of the hybrid standard for Software Defined Radio which was issued in 2012. The next phase could include airworthiness requirements, data sharing, and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear detection and sampling standards. It will also explore options with the EDA for establishing a mechanism to draft specific European standards that will be applicable to military products and applications; and assess the possibility of establishing a European certification system for military airworthiness.

²² European Commission Memo 13/722

²³ "European Commission policy statement on strengthening European market released", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 31 July 2013

The Commission also intends to screen raw materials critical for the defence sector and prepare targeted policy actions, within the context of the EU's overall raw [materials strategy](#).²⁴

Work will be done to promote the skills essential to the future of the industry and to establish how a European Strategic Cluster Partnership can be achieved with the aim of supporting defence related SMEs.

- ***Exploiting Dual-use Research***

The Commission intends to launch a pre-commercial procurement scheme to procure prototypes in a number of areas such as CBRD detection, remotely piloted air systems, and communications equipment based on software defined radio technology.

It will also explore the possibility of establishing civil-military cooperation groups in the areas of detection technologies and methods to counter improvised explosive devices, man-portable air defence systems and CBRN threats. The Commission will also undertake work with the European External Action Service on a joint assessment of dual-use capability needs which will result in a proposal for which capabilities could be best fulfilled by assets directly purchased, owned and operated by the EU.

In the area of space, the Commission intends to encourage the pooling of European military and security commercial satellite communication requirements; and explore the potential for developing the next generation of government owned military satellite capabilities at the European level.

More generally, for CSDP to be effective the Commission Communication highlights the need for CSDP to be underpinned “by a fully fledged Common European Capabilities and Armaments Policy as mentioned in Article 42 of the TEU”.²⁵

2.3 Meetings of the Council of the European Union – November 2013

The EU Foreign Affairs Council met, with the participation of EU Defence Ministers, on 18-19 November and discussed, among other things, the High Representative's report on CSDP and the Commission Communication on the defence industry.

The conclusions of that Council meeting revealed very little about the content of the debate, or indeed the reaction of individual Member States to the proposals that have been put forward. Defence Ministers reportedly focused on action to support the European defence industry; while more broadly the Council took note of the single progress report on the development of EU military capabilities and endorsed:

A note on EU rapid response capabilities and EU battlegroups, which sets out developments to the EU rapid response capabilities and to EU battlegroups, with a view to enhancing the Union's abilities to respond to crises and increasing the usability of battlegroups.

In addition, the Council agreed a declaration extending until 31 December 2014 arrangements concerning the financing of incremental transport costs for land, sea and air deployment of battlegroups at short notice to the joint area of operations. Under

²⁴ The current list of critical raw materials is expected to be revised at the end of 2013.

²⁵ European Commission Memo 13/722

certain conditions, these can be considered common costs and borne by the Athena financial mechanism.²⁶

Further discussion on CSDP subsequently took place following the Foreign Affairs Council meeting and more substantive [conclusions on CSDP](#) were thus adopted at the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 25-26 November.

Acknowledging that the EU “faces long standing and emerging security challenges, within a rapidly changing and complex geostrategic environment, while the financial crisis is posing challenges to the security and defence capabilities of the European countries”, Ministers agreed that there needs to be a renewed commitment on capabilities development and a more integrated and sustainable approach to the European defence industrial base. As such, the Council called for sustained military expenditure across the EU and a greater focus on cooperation and coordination in defence equipment planning and procurement. The Council also noted that “in order to effectively support these efforts, consideration should be given to more clearly defining the strategic role and priorities of the EU” and consequently called on the European Council during its December summit, to provide strategic guidance. A progress report on CSDP is recommended for mid-2014.

In line with some of the recommendations made in the High Representative’s report, the Council endorsed the need for improvements in the EU’s rapid response capabilities, in particular improving the operational usability and deployability of the EU battlegroups. The Council also noted “the possibility of looking into the appropriate use of relevant Treaty articles in the field of rapid response, including Article 44 TEU [permanent structured cooperation]” and called for the presentation of an EU Cyber Defence Policy Framework in 2014 and the adoption of an EU Maritime Strategy by June 2014.

3 Prospects for Progress

The challenges for CSDP going forward are complex. Many analysts have argued that, at the highest political level, it is first and foremost essential that EU leaders reconcile their differing long-term aims for CSDP with the political and financial realities that now exist. While the effects of the global economic crisis continue to be felt across EU defence budgets, at the same time the security context within which the EU operates continues to evolve. The US is increasingly focusing its attention on the Asia-Pacific region and has made clear that it expects Europe to take on more responsibility for its own defence and that of its ‘own backyard’.²⁷ In particular, the Arab Spring has had profound implications for the countries in Europe’s near abroad and how events in Syria continue to unfold, and how the EU responds to those, could have far reaching consequences for the geostrategic balance in this part of the world. Thus far the EU has been criticised for lacking a coherent, and collective, policy in Syria, and towards its southern flank more generally. As Richard Whitman writing in *The World Today* has observed:

The south is the key security challenge for Europeans. Yet European’s collective diplomatic and military capabilities are under-deployed in the region. Whether this is a temporary phenomenon, or intended to be a permanent policy choice, needs to be a topic of debate. At present there is strategic drift. Europeans are becoming bystanders

²⁶ Council of the European Union, Press Release, 16364/13

²⁷ See the discussion in *The World Today*, October/November 2013, p.22-27

irrelevant to the security needs of a region which geography determines they cannot ignore.²⁸

At the same time, new security challenges continue to present themselves. Energy security, cyber security, and emerging conflicts of interest in the Arctic, a region of vast potential untapped resources, have all been highlighted as issues for the EU to address.

As such several analysts have called for a re-evaluation of the strategic context within which the EU operates, and subsequent revisions to the European Security Strategy to be made. De France and Witney have argued:

Brussels continues to shun any elaboration of or revision of the ten-year old European Security Strategy. So the essential conceptual framework that should guide priorities in foreign and security policy, and the allocation of defence resources, is missing...Ultimately the European defence project is not going to work unless the 27 member states, or at any rate the bulk of them, can get themselves onto the same geostrategic page.²⁹

Anna Sundberg and Kristina Zetterlund, writing in the *RUSI Journal* also commented:

The frustration with the CSDP is considerable; the project seems to have lost momentum, and critics point to inadequate military capabilities and an absence of political agreement regarding when to intervene at a time when the EU more broadly needs to tackle the implications both of cuts to national defence budgets and of the American 'rebalancing' towards Asia [...]

In light of the apparent dearth of vision at this point in time, the importance of the [European council] meeting cannot be exaggerated.³⁰

Others have adopted a more pragmatic approach, however, advocating action at a more practical, and achievable, level as opposed to focusing on 'grand-strategising' and institution building. Calls for solid progress to be made at the Council summit in terms of capabilities development, funding, pooling and sharing and the deployability of assets have been paramount.³¹ NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, stated in May 2013:

The real challenge to Europe's CSDP place in the world is its shrinking defence industrial base and low research and development spending. We all know its nations don't have enough of the capabilities that are key to modern missions such as air-to-air refuelling, strategic transport and intelligence and reconnaissance assets, just to name a few. But if they are not willing to invest a sufficient amount in defence, then all the talk about a strengthened European defence will just be hot air.³²

He went on to state:

I am not an institutionalist. I don't care who does what as long as it produces the capabilities we need. My focal point is to fill our shortfalls, whether it is NATO or the

²⁸ Richard Whitman, "Caught in the headlights", *The World Today*, October/November 2013

²⁹ "Olivier de France and Nick Witney, "Europe's strategic cacophony", European Council on Foreign Relations, April 2013

³⁰ Sundberg and Zetterlund, "Losing an ally but not losing faith in the EU", *RUSI Journal*, August/September 2013

³¹ See for example [the ISIS Europe summary of the meeting of the European parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Subcommittee on Security and Defence](#), 5 November 2013

³² "NATO calls on EU to bolster its defence capabilities", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 8 May 2013

EU. Twenty-one countries belong to both organisations – that's only one set of taxpayers.³³

Professor Sven Biscop of the Royal Egmont Institute, also argued:

In terms of major equipment, nothing new has been launched in a decade. The only outcome from the December council should not be process. There needs to be a tangible result: something such as X countries plan to invest Y amount in project Z. Otherwise the public will simply say we've seen it all before.³⁴

This lack of consensus on what observers even want the European Council to achieve, let alone CSDP itself, is considered symptomatic of the fundamental problem underlying EU defence. Achieving significant progress at the summit has, therefore, been regarded by many as difficult. Much will depend on the stance of individual Member States, where their interests converge and how much they are willing to push their own agendas. As the largest EU military powers, the attitudes of the UK, France and Germany will be crucial if a fresh impetus to CSDP is to be achieved. The UK remains cautious in its attitudes towards CSDP reform, while France in its 2013 Defence White Paper stated that it “considers that building a European approach to defence and security is a priority”. That White paper goes on to state:

The impetus must come from the highest political level of the Union, i.e. the European Council. It must determine the role that Europe intends to play on the international stage and the nature of the world order that Europe wishes to promote in international forums and organisations and with respect to other States. It must, notably, initiate guidelines on three major topics: the missions of the CSDP, the capabilities to be developed in common and industrial strategies relating to defence. At a later time, a European Union White Paper, which would more clearly define the Union's interests and strategic objectives, could contribute to the European debate on security and defence and would be an opportunity to express a shared vision.

This impetus given at the highest political level must be supplemented by resolutely pragmatic implementation including prevention actions, joint external actions, common weapons programmes and, eventually, pooling of capabilities. France will strive to make progress in this area with Union Member States that share the same ambition. It suggests making better use of existing institutions and structures for consultation and capitalising on all the possibilities opened up by treaties, including permanent structured cooperation and enhanced cooperation.³⁵

At the Munich Security Conference in February 2013, the German Defence Minister, Thomas de Maizière, also set out a pro-active vision for European defence:

The main *political* home of Germany is the EU, its *security* home is NATO. This is why we want to *contribute* to promoting France's goodwill towards NATO and the United Kingdom's goodwill towards the EU.

Ladies and Gentlemen, one thing is clear: Among allies (and here I am referring to both EU *and* NATO) there must be no *uncoordinated* drawdown of capabilities. Therefore, we need to strengthen the existing instruments within NATO and we also need to co-operate more closely at EU level, particularly in the field of *planning*. As regards the *development of military capabilities*, decisions on Pooling & Sharing or Smart Defense have already been taken. From the start, Germany has played an active role in this process and is willing to do more. When it comes to military

³³ “NATO calls on EU to bolster its defence capabilities”, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 8 May 2013

³⁴ *ibid*

³⁵ [French White Paper, Defence and National Security 2013](#)

capabilities, however, it is not new visions we Europeans need, but a strategy of resolute pragmatism. We should first of all prudently and quickly implement the decisions which we have already taken [...]

We should focus our attention during the EU security policy summit in December on the following aspects:

In the future, we Europeans should be able to contribute something that others (NATO, for example) are *not* able to provide, as a complement to NATO, avoiding a duplication of effort. I am, in particular, thinking of civilian cooperation and civil-military cooperation, topics which are rather on the back burner in public perception and in terms of their practical implementation [...]

If we want to successfully implement and expand the comprehensive approach, we Europeans must, in the medium term, enhance our ability to *plan and conduct* CSDP operations. This does not only hold true for EU battle groups, but *also* for an intelligent use of infrastructure to plan *and conduct* *civil* or *civil-military* operations.

However, in a recent article in *RUSI Journal* Ronja Kempin and Jocelyn Mawdsley questioned Germany's commitment to CSDP reform:

In truth, whereas the British vision for the CSDP is clear (encompassing low-level intervention capabilities coupled with the resources that would allow Europeans to shoulder their share of the NATO burden), it is difficult to understand what the Germans really want the CSDP to do. The state remains uncomfortable with external military intervention, putting it increasingly at odds with the French over their more activist interpretation of the CSDP. Some Brussels commentators also point to a German tendency to express strong support for initiatives, but then to be unwilling to implement them in practice, notably with respect to the Ghent Framework on pooling and sharing. It is unclear whether this is because of discomfort at the possibility of being tied into commitments where military intervention may occur, or unwillingness to surrender national autonomy.³⁶

As such, progress at the Council summit is thought possible on non-controversial issues such as improving the deployability of EU battlegroups because all the major players appear to agree on the need for a renewed impetus, as demonstrated at the Council of Ministers meeting in November. A commitment to a more structured approach to reviewing CSDP, and on a more regular basis, is also expected. As one EU military official was quoted as suggesting "key to making this whole thing work will be regular reviews – every 12-18 months – by EU leaders. This summit cannot be a one-off thing or it will die on the vine for lack of pressure. We're counting on the leaders to come back for progress reports".³⁷

However, achieving consensus on the strategic direction of CSDP and the more controversial aspects of the Commission Communication and the High Representative's report is thought unlikely. In the midst of the ongoing financial crisis, the political appetite for spending money on defence remains limited.

While not officially a recommendation in the High Representative's report, many observers also expect proposals such as the independent operational HQ to be once again raised, in particular by those countries of the 'Weimar plus' group. As outlined above, those countries called for progress in this area at the end of 2012 and referred to it as a long term goal for

³⁶ Kempin and Mawdsley, "The UK, the EU and European Security: A German perspective", *RUSI Journal*, August 2013

³⁷ "EU seeks greater political backing for CSDP", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 18 October 2013

CSDP reform. At the very least the proposal is thought likely to be raised within the wider debate on the strategic direction of CSDP. However, developments in this area are opposed by the UK and so a reiteration of the UK's 'red lines' with respect to CSDP is a likely outcome.

3.1 Position of the British Government

Successive British Government's have always advocated the need for progress in CSDP to be complementary to NATO. Indeed, that has been the UK's overriding approach to this forthcoming summit. In a letter to the Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee in October 2013 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office stated:

Since 2011, the UK has been fundamental in shaping the direction of CSDP and the agenda for the December Council. Our starting point has been to ensure that the EU should play a complementary and reinforcing role to NATO and not a competing one. Through our efforts we have successfully moved the debate away from costly new bureaucracy and grand institutional initiatives such as a permanent EU Operational Headquarters. Instead, we have focused the EU on delivering concrete, incremental changes that as a package will deliver more effective CSDP missions, strengthen European capabilities and enhance NATO and EU co-operation.³⁸

In the House of Commons on 4 November 2013, the Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Defence, Dr Andrew Murrison, also commented:

The December Council summit is very important and I am pleased to say that we have been leading like-minded partner nations in the debate to set the agenda, which will be very much about capability and complementarity with NATO. It will most certainly not be about laying down more concrete, which is a prerogative of sovereign states, or, indeed, instituting more command wiring diagrams, which has absolutely nothing to do with our collective security and defence, and everything to do with the misguided political nostrum of ever-closer union.³⁹

In response to specific recommendations in the High Representative's report and the Commission Communication, Dr Murrison also stated in the House on 28 November 2013:

Discussing the defence industry in more detail than the previous day's joint Session with Foreign Ministers, Defence Ministers were broadly agreed on initiatives to improve small and medium-sized enterprise access to the defence market and on the need to avoid unnecessary new legislation. The UK backed measures to increase competition but expressed concern over the potential of some proposals to damage exports and opposed Commission ownership of high-end military or dual-use capabilities.

On common security and defence policy (CSDP) operations, the UK welcomed the extension of Althea's Executive mandate; supported the French view that European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM) should be extended, subject to a robust estimate of costs; and argued for a two-year extension to Atalanta's mandate with a conditions-based end state. The UK also supported remarks from the NATO Secretary-General, who attended the meeting, highlighting the importance of co-ordination and co-operation between the EU and NATO.⁴⁰

³⁸ European Scrutiny Committee, *Twenty Second Report*, HC83-xx

³⁹ HC Deb 4 November 2013, c19

⁴⁰ HC Deb 28 November 2013, c21WS

An FCO Explanatory Memorandum to the European Scrutiny Committee provided further detail:

The UK Government welcomes Baroness Ashton's report. It is a positive basis for further recommendations to the European Council.

The report includes a wide range of moderate but targeted proposals that collectively would improve the delivery and impact of CSDP. These broadly reflect UK priorities for the European Council [...]

The European Council should provide a renewed focus on where CSDP can best contribute to global security, through a full cycle approach to tackling conflict using the Comprehensive Approach and in a way that works with and complements NATO, which is the cornerstone of European and UK defence [...]

We want the European Council to deliver measures that make civilian and military CSDP missions more cost effective. The report includes various recommendations that will help improve planning and procurement practices and the development of civilian capabilities.

The European Council should commit to maintaining defence spending and progress joint cooperation on capability development that will help fill critical gaps in Europe's capabilities for the benefit of NATO and the EU. The report includes proposals for achieving this which the UK supports, including specific projects such as air to air refuelling and Single European Skies.

The European Council should deliver initiatives to improve competition and stimulate jobs, innovation and growth in an industry that is crucial to the UK economy as well as to our national security. The report includes helpful proposals for supporting SMEs, enhancing the visibility of future defence contracts and improving access to research and development funding.⁴¹

On the issue of 'red lines' for the UK, the memorandum goes on to state that while:

the report does not include proposals for new institutions or extension of competence by EU institutions, which are strong red lines for the UK... there are areas of concern. These include recommendations to consider extending the common funding arrangements available to the EU battlegroup and proposals relating to capabilities and the defence industry which could duplicate the work of NATO, or interfere in what should be Member State or industry driven activity. Given the high level nature of the report, we are also cautious about proposals that risk extending the EU institutions' roles too far into defence aspects of energy, cyber and space security. We will continue to strongly and vigorously resist any efforts to do so.

The Government is also concerned by some of the proposals...on the defence industry, which allude to the Commission using its research and development funds to seek a greater role in developing and owning defence and related dual use technologies.⁴²

The memorandum also made the following points:

The Government is sceptical about the need for use of Article 44 in the Lisbon Treaty [permanent structure cooperation]... whilst there could be value in such an arrangement depending on the task at hand, we would want to know more about how proper Member State oversight of these activities would be maintained [...]

⁴¹ [FCO Explanatory Memorandum on a European Document](#), 28 October 2013

⁴² *ibid*

The UK has consistently supported the EU Battlegroup... we agree with the need to make it more deployable and would like to address the issue of gaps in the battlegroup roster [...]

We will continue to view critically any calls for staff that could appear to be EU Defence Attachés which we consider to be a Member State responsibility [...]

We agree that greater coordination between member States on defence planning is prudent. But it is also crucial that such efforts are complementary and supportive of NATO and not duplicative... we do not support EU synchronisation of defence budget planning which would duplicate NATO efforts in this regard. While we support the principle of better co-ordinated defence planning, NATO should remain the main forum for this [...]

The Government is open to exploring ideas for financial incentives to induce greater cooperation on developing capabilities. But we would be wary of measures that reduce the incentives for European industry to become more efficient such as subsidising uncompetitive industry... accordingly we would be cautious on any proposals to remove or reduce VAT. Whilst some international programmes are already zero rated, an extension of this is likely to result in the distortion of the market [...]

The Government wants the December Council to set out clear, specific collaborative projects that will help fill critical gaps in Europe's military capabilities and increase the capacity of the EU and NATO to act when necessary [...] However, we have made it clear that we are firmly against the EU Commission owning high end military (or dual use civilian and military) capabilities [...]

We would be concerned about proposals that would require institutional intervention in the market. Member State should be free to consider collaborative programmes when appropriate, rather than an EU collaboration being mandated as a first choice solution. The decision on whether to opt for collaboration must remain at national discretion.⁴³

Elsewhere the Secretary of State for Defence, Philip Hammond, has also expressed the view, on the issue of pooling and sharing, that "large multilateral arrangements are difficult to put in place, and pooling and sharing is more about bilateral initiatives".⁴⁴

4 Suggested Reading

- "Over to You, Europe", *The World Today*, October/November 2013
- Sven Biscop, "Peace without money, war without Americans", *International Affairs*, September 2013
- Doug Stokes and Richard Whitman, "Transatlantic triage? European and UK 'grand strategy' after the US rebalance to Asia", *International Affairs*, September 2013
- Marcin Terlikowski, "No one left behind? European Defence and 'Brexit'", *RUSI Journal*, August/September 2013
- Kempin and Mawdsley, "The UK, the EU and European security: A German Perspective", *RUSI Journal*, August/September 2013

⁴³ FCO Explanatory Memorandum on a European Document, 28 October 2013

⁴⁴ Franco-British Defence Cooperation, *A conversation with Philip Hammond and Jean-Yves Le Drian*, May 2013

- Luis Simón, “Setting the tone: the 2013 French Defence White Paper and the Future of European Defence”, *RUSI Journal*, August/September 2013
- [“Recalibrating CSDP-NATO relations: the real pivot”](#), Royal Institute for International Relations, June 2013
- “Olivier de France and Nick Witney, [“Europe’s strategic cacophony”](#), European Council on Foreign Relations, April 2013
- Antonio Missiroli, “Guest Editorial: In Europe’s Defence”, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 18, No.3, 2013
- Nick Witney, [“Where does CSDP fit in EU foreign policy?”](#), European Council on Foreign Relations, February 2013
- House of Lords European Union Committee, *European Defence Capabilities: Lessons from the Past, Signposts for the Future*, HL Paper 292, Session 2010-2012