



The next step for the Common Security and Defence Policy  
**PRIORITISING EUROPEAN  
DEFENCE COOPERATION**

**The European Council's decisions on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in December 2013 and the process that now follows should be used by EU member states as a means to progressively empower the CSDP within a short-term future.**

European defence cooperation is at a crossroads. The shift in global military power from Europe to Asia, the complex crises in the wider European neighbourhood, as well as the deep defence budget cuts ongoing in European states, all mean that coordination and cooperation on defence has never been more pivotal for EU member states. However, the political case for defence cooperation has become weaker over the last years. The financial crisis as well as failed or semi-failed international interventions in the recent decade

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The civilian aspects of CSDP crisis management should be strengthened, while not neglecting the military dimension, both in terms of operations and capability development.
- Further discussions on the joint capability projects identified by the European Council must become more concrete, financially sustainable and results-oriented.
- EU actors are important players in the current process of strengthening the European defence industry, and cooperation and division of labour between these players must be strengthened.

# Coordination and cooperation on defence has never been more pivotal for EU member states. However, the political case for defence cooperation has become weaker over the past years.

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has led to a declining interest and willingness to pay for an effective and technologically advanced European defence. Adding to this, the CSDP has long been a difficult project, where EU member states have often disagreed about the strategic vision for CSDP in terms of ends, means, and the question of which parts of their security-affected neighbourhood to intervene in first.

At the December 2013 European Council summit, EU heads of states took the decision to put European defence on the top-level political agenda for the first time since 2008, in order to discuss how to strengthen EU military cooperation. The summit was accused by some experts of not living up to expectations that it would provide a 'coup de théâtre' in European defence. Nevertheless, it constitutes an interesting 'leap forward', since it provides a systemised process in

which European leaders have committed themselves to discuss how to empower the CSDP over the next few years, with the next appointment foreseen in mid-2015.

Assessing the overall direction of European defence cooperation is therefore directly linked with the current process of empowering the CSDP, as initiated at the December summit by EU leaders.

## The civilian way forward?

A recurrent conundrum for defence cooperation in Europe is what the common vision for CSDP should be. Initially, missions were mainly foreseen to be both military and civilian, but the 29 operations carried out since 2003, have mainly been civilian. Today, the trend suggests that the CSDP might be drifting further towards the 'softer' kind of civilian crisis management,

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE DECEMBER 2013 EU SUMMIT:

The outcome of the summit was the defining of a number of priority actions agreed upon by the member states, built around 3 clusters:

1. Increasing the effectiveness, visibility and impact of the CSDP through: further developing the comprehensive approach to crisis management, increase focus on the emerging security challenges with a focus on networked security (i.e. space, cyber and energy), maritime security, developing an early warning system, and creating a more holistic approach to missions.
2. Enhancing the development of capabilities through: support to member states in developing and acquiring common capabilities, closer coordination between EU's 'pooling and sharing' and NATO's 'smart defence', and commitment to major projects on key enablers, including air-to-air refuelling, drones, cyber security and satellite communication.
3. Strengthening Europe's defence industry through: focusing on a strong and competitive European Defence and Technological Industrial base, and work towards standardization and certification of European defence markets.



and away from functions normally associated with the military, including territorial defence and deterrence, which still falls within the remit of NATO. The strictly military dimension of CSDP is formally acknowledged as one of the many components of the EU's 'comprehensive approach' to conflicts, but in practice there is a risk that the EU's predominant focus on non-military solutions to security could have a negative impact on the availability of cutting-edge military instruments and weaken the operational case for further developing European key-enabling capabilities in the areas identified by the 2013 European Council Conclusions.

Taking into account the current political reality in which member states find themselves, however, this preference for promoting the civilian aspects of CSDP is not necessarily a wrong strategy. The simple reason is that there is no other option, because the civilian approach to crisis management is often the upper limit to what member states can agree on. Moreover, and importantly so, civilian crisis management offers the possibility for the EU to deploy a wide range of tools at its disposal in the areas of policing, rule of law enforcement, civil administration and civil protection, thus contributing to long-term stability and development.

Overall, although it makes sense for the EU to retain and further develop its paraded niche capacities in civilian crisis management, it is necessary that the 'door remains open' towards strengthening CSDP's military dimension. This is crucial for a number of reasons, including EU's institutional learning in the military sphere, the need for a solid connection between CSDP operations and EU-led capability development processes (including in its industrial dimension), as well as the overall legitimacy and credibility of CSDP as a holistic security actor.

#### **Closer EU cooperation in defence investments**

Efforts to develop common capabilities have continued and intensified through the collaborative projects endorsed by the heads of states at the 2013 December summit, potentially also via their stated intent to foster long-term and systematic defence cooperation. Here, EU actors, most notably the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Defence Agency (EDA), play a crucial role in preparing analyses and plans for implementation.

Furthering the development of common capabilities is indeed a crucial measure for the EU's success in consolidating CSDP and European defence cooperation in general.



Operation Atalanta – EU's counter-piracy Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) intercepted one skiff with five suspected pirates on board - Dec 2012

The piecemeal capability projects now launched are still relatively small in scale and surrounded by many open-ended questions that need to be addressed by member states. As an example, the current intent to develop a European drone by 2025 is an ambitious project as it appears on paper, but the heads of states will need to further address crucial issues, such as the questions of which member states and companies should develop the drone, how to generate the financial resources needed, how to organise and manage the relevant multinational process of industrial collaboration, and whether a European version will be able to compete with non-European 'off-the-shelf' models on the global market.

It is thus necessary for EU member states to address these concrete (and difficult) questions in the near future, in order to move forward with the common defence investments needed.

### **The future of the European defence industry**

Fostering more integration among EU countries' still fragmented defence markets will not only save money, but will also further the general goal of obtaining genuine European defence cooperation via advanced technological and industrial capacities. The current state of the industry is locked in a downward spiral of high costs and declining national defence spending in response to the economic crisis. Integration in this area is not an easy process, though. It is difficult to achieve consensus among member states with divergent security perceptions, operational capacities and national industries, and there also exists a range of clear political constraints to rationalising national defence markets, such as the possible closing-down of factories and loss of jobs and professional skills.

The EU institutions, most notably the EU Commission and the European Defence Agency (EDA), are playing a major role in this field, and have some promising opportunities for furthering the rationalisation of the common defence industry. Cooperation between the two institutions, is however challenging, as the Commission is interested in 'communitarising' the sector as much as possible, while the EDA seeks to push developments in this area in an intergovernmental direction, making sure not to lose grounds to the Commission. The fact that there is a multiplicity of actors involved in the process can be an encouraging signal of EU policy attention to the dossier, but it is crucial that the working relations between the Commission and the EDA are strengthened. This could be done by establishing a clearer division of labour between the two, e.g. on the monitoring of public defence procurement contracts.

### **Looking ahead**

Having a continuous debate between national capitals and EU institutions can provide a credible political message in support of the CSDP, leading the way to further developing the policy in the coming years. In order for this to happen, EU leaders must be prepared to put action behind their conclusions, including via overdue reforms of their military structures, based on the information gained and the recommendations made by EU institutions.

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