

SDA Monthly Roundtable

Security and defence priorities during France's EU Presidency



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SECURITY & DEFENCE AGENDA

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Monthly Roundtable - Monday, 15 September 2008, Bibliothèque Solvay, 12:00-16:00

Security and defence priorities during France's EU Presidency

Session I

12:00-13:30

What are the chief ESDP weaknesses to be challenged?

The EU's efforts to fashion a defence identity have been more successful than many observers expected. EU-badged peacekeeping missions have become commonplace, and are complemented by the European Defence Agency's drive to end EU governments' protectionist arms procurement practices. But what of the EU's plan to establish its own military HQ comparable to NATO's command and control arrangements? And what steps could counteract defence spending cutbacks across Europe and make the EU's military outreach truly credible?

SDA Members Lunch—13:30—14:30

Session II

14:30-16:00

What will be the impact of France's return to NATO?

TRANSATLANTIC SESSION VIA SATELLITE WITH WASHINGTON DC

President Sarkozy has balanced his intention to return to NATO's military structure after 40 years' absence with a call for the EU's 'Big Six' countries to spearhead the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain and Poland would all commit to a joint intervention force and to spending 2% of their GDPs on defence. Is the United States as enthusiastic about the latter proposal as it has been about the former? Is it possible that these two French initiatives could break down the stalemate between NATO and the EU's embryo defence effort?



Executive summary

The clock is ticking on the French presidency's ambitious security and defence initiatives

The latest SDA roundtable focused on the ESDP and the French Presidency's plans to revitalise both Security and Defence Policy and EU-NATO relations. With the need for an 'entente amicale' looming large on the agenda, French MilRep **Patrick de Rousiers** and **Véronique Roger-Lacan**, Deputy Defence Policy Director in the French MOD laid out their country's ambitious plans to develop the ESDP's future operational capacities, planning processes and training capabilities. UK MilRep **Bob Tizard**, however, wanted an immediate focus on doing things better today and cautioned about being over ambitious. Giving an industry view, EADS' **Bruno Masnou** argued that shared programmes and a focus on interoperability were essential.

NATO's **Jean Francois Bureau** reasoned that the French Presidency's plans were just that – too ambitious - and argued that within the Alliance, progress might have to wait until 2010 and beyond. That horrified the Atlantic Council's **Jim Townsend**, who wanted real progress in 2008 – before the French Presidency ended.

Events in Georgia could hijack the Presidency's defence agenda, so it was no surprise that the SDA's latest roundtable almost suffered a similar fate. Several speakers mentioned Georgia with the IISS's **Jim Chipman** arguing that it was unlikely that events in the Caucuses would encourage Member States to reach their 2% of



Giles Merritt, Director,
Security & Defence Agenda

GDP targets.

With the focus turning to the need to review defence and security strategies, both within the EU and NATO, the INSS's **Leo Michel** called for positive actions on improving the capabilities, as that would deliver more than strategy papers. Concluding that relationships mattered, many voices agreed that the French Presidency's call for informal high-level meetings between NATO and EU leaders was a way forward; the clock was ticking and events such as Georgia should not be allowed to interrupt the French Presidency's initiatives.

SESSION I - BRUSSELS: What are the chief ESDP weaknesses to be tackled?

Background

Security and defence is high on the French EU Presidency agenda. Following France's White Paper¹, the EU December summit will see a package of measures in this area. Introducing the SDA debate, its Director **Giles Merritt** said expectations were great, noting that the French initiative had put paid to the



The panel talks to Washington via a satellite link-up during the second session.

idea of a rivalry between the EU and NATO.

Indeed, the EU's efforts to fashion a defence identity have been more successful than many observers expected. EU-badged peacekeeping missions have become commonplace, and are complemented by the European Defence Agency's (EDA's) drive to end EU governments' protectionist arms procurement practices. Despite this, the defence-spending cutbacks across Europe remain a thorny problem.

President Sarkozy has balanced his intention to return to NATO's military structure after 40 years' absence with a call for the EU's 'Big Six'² countries to spearhead the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). With the EU and NATO seemingly becoming closer, the views of the US are of paramount importance. The SDA debate – taking place in Brussels and Washington DC

(via satellite) – therefore took on an added importance.

Introducing the '*entente amicale*'?

Véronique Roger-Lacan gave some background to the French Presidency's drive to improve Europe's security and defence options. Roger-Lacan gave four reasons for the initiative:

1. The EU needs to take action on the new security and defence needs
2. After 10 years of ESDP, the EU's strategic capabilities shortfalls still exist
3. Despite the success of the ESDP's 20 operations, the European planning and conduct systems are not effective enough and need to be improved
4. NATO and EU relations must be



Patrick de Rousiers, Military Representative,
Permanent Representation to of France to the EU

refreshed and strengthened in order to secure Europe's defence.

“

“the ESDP had proved its worth in Georgia but more work was necessary”.

General Patrick de Rousiers

”

She explained that hopefully, and with the support of the Member States, the result of the French Presidency would be a renewed commitment to European Defence, with:

- *complements to be added to the*

2003 European Security Strategy, for European citizens and Member States to be adequately protected;

- *a new level of ambition enabling the EU to act also in an efficient operational civil-military fashion*
- *new structuring capabilities projects*
- *new interoperability instruments such a military ERASMUS type programme*
- *renewed partnerships.*

Moving on to details of the programme, French MilRep, **General Patrick de Rousiers** described them as “extremely ambitious”. De Rousiers presented a series of solutions and proposals. These included:

- *The creation of an ERASMUS-type³ joint military training programme across Europe*
- *The creation of a European air transport fleet*
- *Greater interoperability between the European navies*
- *A joint UK-France initiative to improve the availability of helicopters*
- *Improved EU-NATO cooperation, spearheaded by informal meetings between the organisations' heads*

Ending on a positive note, De Rousiers said that the ESDP had proved its worth in Georgia but more work was necessary. During his introduction to the debate, Merritt had stressed the

importance of the UK to France's plans.

Presenting a UK view, **Air Commodore Bob Tizard**, Deputy UK MilRep, agreed that the ESDP had made much progress since St Malo but he warned that funding difficulties meant that ambitions had to be tempered. Stressing that the EU's strengths lay in stabilisation and reconstruction, he insisted that NATO's 'hard power' expertise was a vital component. Tizard suggested the future focus should be on improving today's weaknesses rather than on setting new goals:



Bob Tizard, Deputy UK Military Representative

1. Insufficient deployable troops: there had been less than 5,000 troops deployed in Chad. Quoting EDA statistics, Tizard said the UK and France accounted for almost 40% of the EU's deployable troops. He understood that smaller countries had limited means but Tizard wanted more equitable burden sharing.

2. Insufficient spending: The UK was spending 2.6% of GDP on defence; Tizard argued that 2% was a reasonable

Weaknesses of the ESDP

- Lack of interoperability of forces
- Insufficient expenditure by EU Member States
- The need for joint training of troops
- Lack of deployable troops
- Scarcity of key resources such as helicopters
- A greater focus required on implantation of the strategy
- Improved planning processes

target but the EU average was only 1.5% with some Member States spending less than 1%.

For both issues, Tizard pointed the finger at a lack of political will. After musing that perhaps the events in Georgia might change the situation in terms of defence spending, Tizard called for more effective multilateralism (including an updated security strategy and a ratified Lisbon Treaty) and greater engagement with multinational bodies such as UN, NATO and the AU.

An industry view

EADS' Bruno Masnou argued that shared programmes and a focus on interoperability were essential. Individual nations could no longer afford

to make such investments and, as an example, he quoted the need for a comprehensive border and maritime security approach. Masnou commented that security was receiving sufficient R&T funding via the FP7 programme but that defence spending was being



Bruno Masnou, Key Account Manager, France, EADS, Defence and Security

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“In order to defend EU citizens, the ESDP had to have more credibility and there should be stronger links between security and defence”.

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Bruno Masnou

virtually ignored. Other requirements for Masnou were: a) a stronger EDA with better links to OCCAR, and b) a permanent HQ for the ESDP staff.

Masnou acknowledged that the French Presidency was addressing these requirements, but he saw other needs

as well. In order to defend EU citizens, the ESDP had to have more credibility and there should be stronger links between security and defence. Integration was his answer, especially there was more and more overlap between civilian and military operations. Returning to the need for border and maritime security, Masnou said that solutions existed: an integrated system could initially serve to exchange data and then be adapted to allow full cooperation between civilian and naval forces via a common platform at the European level.

Although he saw the benefits of major programmes such as A400M, Masnou also saw a niche for simple cooperative programmes in the field. An example quoted was the Blue Force Tracking System⁴.

Questions and concerns from the floor

Timing

Initiating the debate, Merritt had said there was a feeling that it was “now or never” for the French Presidency as it was unlikely that the following EU presidencies would be able solve the problems. He argued that the French needed to initiate a new transatlantic political process with the incoming US Administration during the Presidency.

Mayer Brown Int. LLP’s **Günter Burghardt** argued that it would not be possible to make real progress in 2008 – in terms of improving relationships with the US – as it would take almost



Véronique Roger-Lacan, Deputy to the Director of Strategic Affairs in Charge of the French EU Presidency, French Ministry of Defence

“If Member States wished to put up a permanent European Defence and Security HQ, they had to make it known precisely and clearly.”

Véronique Roger-Lacan

12 months for the new US Administration to settle in.

WMD proliferation

MEP Ana Maria Gomes wanted to see the EU make progress in the areas of WMD proliferation (as both US

presidential candidates appeared to back reductions) and a legally binding enforcement of the code of conduct concerning the exports of small arms to the developing world.

Roger-Lacan agreed that there was a strong need to come up with a common position on WMD proliferation. This was the aim of France's proposal of a plan of action to implement the European strategy on the struggle against WMDs. As for the code of conduct, which France was taking on during its Presidency, she added that it was not obvious that all Member States wanted the code to be legally-binding.

Political follow-up to operations

Gomes also wanted a real political follow-up to the EU's Chad operations, as Oxfam was reporting that nothing of that kind was happening on the ground.

De Rousiers responded that Chad was a demanding operation but the EU was learning lessons. As for a follow-up, discussions with the UN were ongoing and these included the extent to which the French troops would be re-hatted.

A permanent Defence & Security HQ for the EU

In response to Gomes's question as to whether the French Presidency had "pushed" the creation of a permanent European HQ (for ESDP operations and planning), de Rousiers said the focus was on getting the various players to work more effectively together. Roger-Lacan said that the term Permanent

Defence and Security HQ was an option, but that there were others, and that France, as a Presidency, had to foster consensus. If Member States wished to put up a permanent European Defence and Security HQ, they had to make it known precisely and clearly.

EU-NATO relations

The Turkish Foreign Ministry's **Tomur Bayer** wanted to know more about the rationale for more meetings between the heads of NATO and the EU. As they met already, he could see the reason for additional "informal" meetings that would bypass natural NATO processes.

De Rousiers simply answered that more meetings between the leaders of the two organisations would be beneficial for future progress.

The need for greater integration within the EU

The UK Delegation to NATO's **Paul Flaherty** wanted more connection between S(ecurity) and D(efence), both internationally and internally. He wanted the Council and the Commission to be cooperating more closely as that was one of the main weaknesses today.

Roger-Lacan assured Flaherty that this improved S&D linkage was one of the aims of the Presidency. It was exactly there that the strategic change rested, hopefully then, the documents complementing the 2003 European Security Strategy would reflect this change truly. After having had a strategy

"for a better and safer world", now Europe needed a strategy to protect itself with "a better and safer Europe"

The Georgia fall-out



John Chipman, Director, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)

Responding to Tizard's comments regarding the impact of the Georgia crisis, the IISS's **Jim Chipman** argued that it was unlikely that events in the Caucasus would encourage Member States to reach their 2% of GDP targets. However, he felt it should inspire the French to look for new ways to encourage greater coordination between Member States.

“

“It was unlikely that events in the Caucasus would encourage Member States to reach their 2% of GDP targets”.

”

John Chipman

Chipman also reasoned that it would soon be accepted that Georgia started the recent crisis against advice from the US. He felt that this could have adverse consequences concerning Georgia's request to join NATO. Overall, Chipman recommended a new look at how NATO engaged with the Caucasus and South Asia.

The University of Aberdeen's **James Wyllie** to his own research which showed that public opinion was firmly against further enlargement and that there has been a feeling of relief that Georgia was not an existing member of the Alliance. Wyllie said that the public would not have been willing to see support for that country.

The University of Aberdeen's **James Wyllie** to his own research which showed that public opinion was firmly against further enlargement and that there has been a feeling of relief that Georgia was not an existing member of the Alliance. Wyllie said that the public would not have been willing to see support for that country.

Industrial concerns

Eurocopter's **Arnaud Hibon** wanted to know why the EU was using non-western helicopters, as this could be giving everyone the wrong signal. He also asked whether the defence package was on the Agenda of the French Presidency of the EU.

De Rousiers agreed there might be a long-term risk but he insisted on the need to achieve a short-term objective. The EU had to develop comprehensive

solutions and gaps in capabilities had to be resolved. Tizard agreed; the EU needed a "bridging capability" and the helicopters in question were proven on the ground. Véronique Roger-Lacan confirmed that the Defence Package was a priority of the French EU Presidency in the field of defence. Restructuring and rationalising European defence industry was high on the agenda. The negotiations of the Defence Package were well on track.



Arnaud Hibon , Vice President, EU /NATO Affairs, Eurocopter

SESSION 2 – BRUSSELS AND WASHINGTON DC: What will be the impact of France's return to NATO?

The second session made use of a satellite link with Washington DC and was co-hosted by the SDA in Brussels and the Atlantic Council in Washington. DC

EU-NATO relationships – the next steps

Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, NATO, Jean-François

Bureau – speaking personally - said that France's new relationship with NATO has raised expectations. He saw a challenge in that NATO was meeting more and more complex missions and there was a risk that resources would not meet demands. Bureau wanted a discussion on capabilities and a debate about processes. On the positive side, Bureau said the EU-NATO relationship was being openly discussed at high levels, as both organisations wanted more efficiency.



Jean-Francois Bureau, Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, NATO

“the EU-NATO relationship was being openly discussed at high levels, as both organisations wanted more efficiency”

Jean-Francois Bureau

Striking a note of caution, however, Bureau felt that the French Presidency might be trying to address too many issues. He felt it was time to coordinate the pending reviews of the EU's Strategy Paper and NATO's Strategic Concept. Bureau's final message was

that expectations had to be “kept under control”. He could not see real progress in NATO on these issues until 2010 and beyond.

Over in Washington DC, the Atlantic Council's **Jim Townsend** was concerned about Bureau's suggested timing for progress; 2010 was far too late and EU-NATO relationships had to be boosted during the French Presidency.

ACUS's **Frances Burwell** welcomed the fact that the US was paying attention to the EU during the French Presidency. However, noting that the boost given by Sarkozy's Presidency may not be sustainable, Burwell focused on two issues:

Georgia: Burwell felt that under the French Presidency, the EU and the US could move forward together on this issue. However, Russia was a key player and she could see no short-term solution there.

France and NATO: Burwell was also concerned that expectations might be set too high, especially as progress in the ESDP had been limited to-date. Experiences in Afghanistan had shown that only the UK and France were fully committed.

Bringing the issues together, Burwell felt that with president Sarkozy focusing on Georgia, France's initiative to “rejoin” NATO might go off the boil.

Before the debate had moved over to Washington DC, Merritt had raised three questions: What did the US expect from Europe? What was the Afghanistan strategy now? What impact would Russia have? In Washington, the German Marshall Fund's **Karen**

Donfried responded:

US expectations: Donfried suggested that Europe should review its 2003 Strategy Paper with a heavier accent on implementation as she felt that the current EU missions were taking place in a strategic vacuum. She also wanted Europe to present its ideas on Iraq, as the situation had moved on from 2003.

Afghanistan: In a recent GMF poll, European and American publics were in line on all the Afghanistan issues (the need for reconstruction, a drive against narcotics and more training on the ground) except one – that being participation in the combat against the Taliban: US gave a 76% approval rating compared to just 43% in Europe. Four EU Member States, in fact, had shown majority support for combat: France (52%), UK (64%), the Netherlands (69%) and Portugal (53%). In that context, Donfried was optimistic about France's "return" to NATO, as it could be a major boost.

Russia: on this issue, Donfried agreed with Burwell – the French Presidency was a great opportunity to make some progress, but it was ironic that Georgia was perhaps hijacking France's proposed Mediterranean Initiative.

Back in Brussels, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs' **Muriel Domenach** reminded the roundtable that France had never left NATO. It had simply not been part of the Integrated Military Structure. Now, President Sarkozy saw the benefit of France playing a full role in NATO and the "White Paper" had concluded that France would fully participate. Domenach insisted that it

had always been a case of NATO and European defence rather than NATO or European defence. Commenting on EU-NATO relationships, she reasoned that the proposals for high-level informal meetings were a way of achieving concrete results and making progress in areas such as Georgia.



“France had never left NATO. It had simply not been part of the Integrated Military Structure.the “White Paper” had concluded that France would fully participate.””

Muriel Domenach

The final speaker, the INSS's **Leo Michel**, argued that the US was now agreeing with France's position, i.e. there was a need for a stronger EU defence policy. As for NATO's Strategic Concept and the EU's Strategy Paper, Michel saw them both as useful;

however, he wanted the focus to be on results rather than strategies. To this end, he saw a benefit in France making concrete intellectual progress by focusing on capabilities.

Michel also saw progress in that France was no longer fundamentally opposed to common funding of operations and capabilities in NATO. Its integration within the Alliance was at too low a level. Previously it had just put sufficient resources into NATO in order to protect its own interests; this had to change. Michel wanted France to take its full place for the benefit of the Alliance as a whole; he warned, however, against France putting a price - ESDP-wise - on its return to the fold.

Questions from both sides of the Atlantic

France's return to NATO

The Turkish Foreign Ministry's **Tomur Bayer** picked up on France's return to NATO's Integrated Military Structure, as he felt this would certainly strengthen NATO and help Turkey. He asked if an official announcement could be expected in the near future.

Domenach responded by saying it was not possible for a Deputy Director of Policy Planning Staff to answer such a question and that the forthcoming Strasbourg/Kiel summit would be the right place for such decisions / announcements.

On the same subject, European Security and Defence Policy consultant **Hartmut**

Bühl commented that France had to decide how it returned to NATO and that it needed help from both the US and from the EU to do this.

Towards a common threat assessment

From the floor in Washington DC, **Ambassador Beecroft**, now of L-3 Corporation, asked if the time was right – as only four EU Member States appeared to back the use of 'hard power' – to attempt to develop a common threat analysis. Bureau commented that both organisations were facing the same questions and issues, and that threat assessments and strategies were vital for the future of both. He felt that the forthcoming Strasbourg/Kiel summit would be the right place and time to evaluate the future of the Alliance and how the EU (ESDP) could assist it to move forward. Both organisations had to work together and now that France was saying, "this Alliance is our Alliance", Bureau saw a more positive mood.

Conclusions

Merritt saw a US-EU climate that was improving compared to that at the beginning of the year. As for the common threat assessment, Merritt reasoned that the EU and the US agreed about Afghanistan and Georgia, but did not see eye to eye on Iraq and Iran. He felt that this might be insufficient for a genuine strategic partnership.

Over in Washington DC, Townsend saw a need to focus more on the nature of transatlantic relationships rather than

on the state of current events. Burwell tended to agree, but added that while responses to threats might differ, the assessments on both sides of the Atlantic tended to be the same. Although she saw views coming together, Burwell felt the future transatlantic relationship would be different: both sides would disagree in some areas and it would never be similar to the relationship at the time of Cold War. Michel was optimistic as he reasoned that military people in Europe now saw the need for a “comprehensive approach”, although tactics on either side of the Atlantic might differ.

Overall, Townsend did not want expectations to be lowered; there was a window of opportunity with the French Presidency and the chance had to be seized. The summit to celebrate NATO's 60th anniversary could be a launching pad for such progress. It was time for the “informal” high-level meetings to start.



Participants in Washington and Brussels exchange views.



The Polish Ministry of Defence's Cezary Lusinski reacts during the first session



IISS' John Chipman talks with SDA Director Giles Merritt



France's Patrick de Rousiers speaks with the AFP's Pascal Mallet



Keeping track of the teleconferencing during session II



Taking notes during the second session



Brussels participants listen to Washington panellists



Participants network over lunch



Lockheed's Scott Harris chats with ASD's Francois Gayet

Endnotes

1. See: http://www.ambafrance-ca.org/IMG/pdf/Livre_blanç_Press_kit_english_version.pdf for a full version.
2. France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain and Poland.
3. Erasmus is the EU's flagship education and training programme, enabling two hundred thousand students to study and work abroad each year – see http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc80_en.htm
4. **Blue Force Tracker** is a military system that helps to provide commanders with information about their forces.

List of Brussels Participants

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The Atlantic Council of the United States promotes constructive U.S. leadership and engagement in international affairs based on the central role of the Atlantic community in meeting the international challenges of the 21st century. The Council embodies a non-partisan network of leaders who aim to bring ideas to power and to give power to ideas by:

- stimulating dialogue and discussion about critical international issues with a view to enriching public debate and promoting consensus on appropriate responses in the Administration, the Congress, the corporate and non-profit sectors, and the media in the United States and among leaders in Europe, Asia, and the Americas;
- conducting educational and exchange programs for successor generations of U.S. leaders so that they will come to value U.S. international engagement and have the knowledge and understanding necessary to develop effective policies.

Through its diverse networks, the Council builds broad constituencies to support constructive U.S. leadership and policies.

Its program offices publish informational analyses, convene conferences among current and/or future leaders, and contribute to the public debate in order to integrate the views of knowledgeable individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds, interests and experiences.

Important contributions by the Council include:

- identifying and shaping responses to major issues facing the Atlantic Alliance and transatlantic relations;
- building consensus on U.S. policy towards Russia, China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan;
- promoting balanced responses to growing energy needs and environmental protection;
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- engaging students from across the Euro-Atlantic area in the processes of NATO transformation and enlargement.

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The Security & Defence Agenda (SDA) is the only specialist Brussels-based think-tank where EU institutions, NATO, national governments, industry, specialised and international media, think tanks, academia and NGOs gather to discuss the future of European and transatlantic security and defence policies in Europe and worldwide.

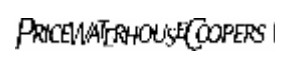
Building on the combined expertise and authority of those involved in our meetings, the SDA gives greater prominence to the complex questions of how EU and NATO policies can complement one another, and how transatlantic challenges such as terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction can be met.

By offering a high-level and neutral platform for debate, the SDA sets out to clarify policy positions, stimulate discussion and ensure a wider understanding of defence and security issues by the press and public opinion.

SDA Activities:

- Monthly Roundtables and Evening debates
- Press Dinners and Lunches
- International Conferences
- Reporting Groups and special events

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