

SDA - ECFR Evening Debate

Re-energising European security and defence policy

Held on 27 October, 2008



This roundtable was organised with the support of Thales

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Re-energising Europe's security and defence policy

Evening Debate - Monday, 27 October 2008, Stanhope Hotel, Brussels

17:30 Registration

18:00-19:30 Debate

19:30 Cocktail Reception

As conflict continues to rage in Chad and Afghanistan and the threat of terrorism at home persists, maximising the effectiveness of the current European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) remains a high priority. With the United States calling for a stronger, more cohesive approach, is it time to redefine European security priorities? How can a collective European security and defence strategy take into consideration the capabilities, weaknesses and resources of individual member states? What more could be done to achieve the Lisbon Treaty provision of "permanent structured cooperation" while simultaneously tackling complex security threats at home and abroad?

Nick Witney, Senior Fellow of the European Council on Foreign Relations presented his recent report "Re-energizing Europe's security and defence policy"

Moderated by: **Ana Gomes**, MEP and Vice-Chair of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence in the European Parliament, and **Giles Merritt**, Director, Security and Defence Agenda (SDA)

Respondents:

Véronique Roger-Lacan – Deputy Assistant Director in charge of the French EU Presidency, French Ministry of Defence

Dick Zandee – Head of Planning & Policy Unit, European Defence Agency

Edgar Buckley – Senior Vice President for EU, NATO and European Cooperation – European Business Development, Thales Group

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Executive summary

Re-energising Europe's security and defence policy (ESDP) was the title of the evening debate organised by the Security & Defence Agenda (SDA) and the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) at the Stanhope Hotel, Brussels, on 27 October 2008. Moderator Giles Merritt, Director of the SDA, introduced the debate by describing Nick Witney's paper on the ESDP as one of the rare occasions when a paper is written by an insider. Co-moderator and MEP Ana Gomes, Vice-Chair of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Security and Defence, said that the paper, by the European Defence Agency's (EDA) first director, was "very energising".

Opening the debate, Nick Witney set out some of the main points of his paper, which he described as an attempt at a balance sheet after the first ten years of the ESDP. "It is not a very flattering verdict," he said. There have been some 20 operations launched under the ESDP but Witney sees that as "a drop in the ocean" compared to the size of the need and the size of the militaries. Georgia illustrated the point: the EU's decision to send 10 judges in 2004 at the time of the 'Rose Revolution' was an inadequate response; the EU could have pre-empted what has happened since if it had been thoroughly engaged on the ground.

He said that his criticism was directed mainly at the member states rather than those in Brussels. Similarly, it was the member states who were failing to reform their military. More than half of Europe's 200bn Euros spent annually on defence went into manpower, most of it



Giles Merritt, Director,
Security & Defence Agenda

undeployable and therefore of no value. Europe's challenge was not to spend more but "to spend better." That must include getting rid of old Cold War equipment such as tanks, and pooling and sharing more.

He indicated that the European Security Strategy of 2003, which talks of the EU being more capable, coherent and active, had not been taken as seriously as it might have been but he saw the revision of the strategy at the end of 2008 as offering a second chance.

In terms of operations/capabilities, Witney called for a number of things:

- More units to be rostered on standby
- A civilian reserve corps - the European Parliament has been calling for it for years and it is not difficult - so why not?
- A civ/mil operational headquarters in Brussels and a lessons learnt unit



The panel discusses the future of European security and defence

- A move away from the emphasis on catalogues and headline goals and more focus on improving and acquiring key missing capabilities
- Giving the EDA more resources and authority
- Re-invigorating defence industry consolidation, which has stalled in the last six years or so
- Using pioneer groups as motivation for member states not to get left behind

On the French Presidency of the EU, he noted that European defence was a priority. In his view, the problem for France is that defence cooperation only works if two of the three big countries are on board, and neither the UK nor Germany currently offer much support. "This puts severe constraints on what France can hope to achieve," he said.

Nonetheless, he believed that some good ideas had been discussed at the informal defence ministers meeting in Deauville (1 and 2 October).

He understood that half an OHQ might be achieved – a civ/mil capability in Brussels to plan operations, but not yet to conduct them. He saw the progress being made by France as providing enough bounce to get France back into NATO although "it would not solve the problems of European defence per se."

Witney also pointed to the global financial crisis and suggested that the defence budgets would be under severe pressure.

On Georgia, he said that an important lesson was the EU had not engaged in 2005 when it had the chance to field a peacekeeping operation there. He added that Russia's "resurgence" should not be overestimated; the economic crisis had hit Russia very hard, and Gazprom had lost two thirds of its capitalisation.

Witney did not see defence as a priority for the next EU Presidency, run by the Czechs, but is hopeful of progress under the Swedish and Spanish presidencies. He concluded by saying that the biggest determinant for the ESDP was whether or not the new

US president would take the EU and the ESDP seriously. He indicated that it would be beneficial for the US president to invest in direct strategic dialogue with the EU because if the US takes the EU more seriously, Europe will take itself more seriously.

Ana Gomes agreed that the economic crisis was likely to put constraints on defence budgets and for that reason, spending better and spending European was even more important.

Véronique Roger-Lacan, Assistant Director in charge of the French EU Presidency, French Ministry of Defence, was the next speaker on the panel. She referred back to the speech by French President Nicolas Sarkozy to the conference of ambassadors in August 2007, in which he set out defence as one of four priorities for the French Presidency of the EU. Other points that Sarkozy highlighted at the time were:

- The need to strengthen the ESDP, to renovate NATO and NATO's relationship with France
- The importance of updating the European Security Strategy with a contribution from the French White Paper on defence possible contribution from the French White Paper on defence
- The need to foster interoperability
- The need for a true European armament policy
- The need to reinforce EU planning and conduct capabilities

She said that Witney's paper came at a key moment for the French EU Presidency as the scenario was looking bleak in terms of strengthening European defence capabilities. She highlighted a number of points made by the paper:

- The Lisbon Treaty still exists and should be kept in mind – permanent structured cooperation and variable geometry is the only way forward in an EU of 27 member states
- There is a need to invent or put in concrete terms this strategy of variable geometry in the production of capabilities
- The pooling and sharing of resources is the only way forward – it is important that armies accept that this
- There has been no true acknowledgement at the political level that pooling and sharing resources is the solution to producing defence capabilities in Europe
- Nick Witney's plea for European capabilities development issues to be raised at the level of the Council was shared by France
- Nick Witney's call for an effective industrial policy in the field of European defence was also key.

She was confident that there would be results at the end of the French presidency. She mentioned that the French presidency would embark upon a new path of strengthening European defence that the following presidencies would need to implement. This new path included four essential points that

were mentioned in Nick Witney's report:

- There would be a Council declaration on European Defence. That meant that the Heads of State and Government would be taking the lead in this field, which was badly needed;
- Variable geography in the form of different capabilities projects on aircraft carrier interoperability, European strategic lift, tactical helicopters, and others would enter into the European defence reality;
- This variable geography would in practice lead to the recognition of mutualisation and specialisation at Council level;
- And for the first time, it would be recognised that rationalising and restructuring European defence industries as well as fostering European defence research and technology was part of European defence.

Dick Zandee, Head of the Planning and Policy Unit at the European Defence Agency, spoke next. He described Witney's paper as "provocative" but "realistic in its recommendations, and to the point." He stated that the paper was providing too black and white a picture of the European countries' efforts to provide better capabilities. He pointed to a recent IISS report that labelled capabilities improvement in Europe (from 1995 to 2005) as "qualified progress." But he agreed that the process needed to be accelerated.

In Zandee's view, an important

recommendation in the Witney paper was the involvement of the European Council in ESDP. Instead of six-monthly factual reports on the achievements of the Presidency of the EU, it would be better if the EU Heads of State and Government would discuss concrete defence subjects. For example, they could address the helicopter problem. There are hundreds in Europe, but the problem is that some pilots need to be trained to fly in environments such as the Middle East or Afghanistan. Some helicopters also need technical upgrades to fly in those environments. Costs will depend on the type, but at least five million Euro will be needed for upgrading one helicopter. The European Council could address the financing of a programme through an EU-wide fund, with a volume of money not for upgrading just a few helicopters, but large numbers.

On 'pioneer groups' he said that the EDA already worked with smaller groups as the Agency's projects were based on the cooperation of a limited number of member states. He did not agree with Witney on a rigid application of just a single criterion such as a minimum spending on defence of 1% of a country's GDP, whereby failing to reach such a percentage, Member States would be considered out of the game. This would contradict European solidarity. But perhaps even more importantly, it would not help at all to accelerate capability improvement by the "slow movers." If countries were to be kicked out, there would be no incentives for them to join the "fast runners." They would not only be left out, but they would also be left alone by the defence-minded states.



Edgar Buckley, Senior Vice President for EU, NATO, and European Cooperation—European Business Development, Thales Group

“The last thing that the US or the EU wants, except for those ultra-protectionists, is a fortress Europe versus a fortress US.”

Edgar Buckley

Edgar Buckley, Senior Vice President for EU, NATO and European Cooperation – European Business Development, Thales Group, was the last of the four panellists to speak.

Buckley said that he liked various aspects of Witney’s paper:

- Recognition of the need for urgent action to address capability shortfalls – we should not wait for Lisbon Treaty ratification
- Pioneer groups of countries to drive European defence forward (Italy has been calling for this for some time and asked for a permanent contact group)

- Thales has been advocating the pooling of technology capabilities – share them or lose them in Europe
- We cannot afford to allow European defence to go at the speed of the slowest member state

He also said that the important role of industry needed to be recognised. He pointed out that if you do a word search in the European Security Strategy for 2003, you will not find the word ‘technology’ or ‘industry’. He welcomed a statement by the EU’s High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, that there could be no credible ESDP without the appropriate capabilities and an autonomous and competitive European Defence Technology and Industry Base (EDTIB). He said that industry had been saying this for years but that it was good that it had been recognised.

Buckley could not see anyone disagreeing with the importance of reducing duplication, better management of research and technology spending, and increasing the size of the European defence market by largely eradicating national protectionism. However, he did question how these objectives would be accomplished.

He was critical of the active intervention by EU governments to prevent the consolidation that the defence industry needs. He said that EU governments needed assurances that they would have access to EDTIB facilities and that they would get a fair share of the benefits deriving from consolidation. He said that they also needed assurance about how consolidation would be dealt with under EU competition rules. He argued that none of this was impossible but that it



Nick Witney explains the critical points of his recent report on re-energising ESDP

Nick Witney described his report as a “not very flattering” depiction of the first 10 years of European security and defence policy.

needed careful thought. He advocated a domain by domain approach, i.e. ‘sonar’ rather than the maritime industry as a whole and ‘airborne electronics’ rather than the air industry as a whole. He said that the EDA has a critical role since it can represent the European interest in discussions, can offer best practice advice and can be “a midwife for change”.

The Q & A session

SDA Director Giles Merritt asked what the barriers were to progress on the ESDP in terms of industrial cooperation and then called on Nick Witney to respond to the other panellists’ comments.

Nick Witney referred to the UK’s new Defence Minister, John Hutton, and his positive comments about European defence. He saw this as encouraging.

He understood Dick Zandee’s point about keeping pioneer groups as inclusive as possible but argued that letting everyone in to a pioneer group [without criteria] meant that you lost the motivating factor of exclusion. He accepted that pioneer groups would not be discussed for now as everyone was “walking on eggshells” in connection with Ireland and the Lisbon Treaty.

He agreed with Edgar Buckley that the defence industry did need a green light regarding consolidation, adding that industry was more far-sighted than governments on this point. He commented that while defence integration is an interesting concept for governments, for industry it is a matter of survival, keeping its order book going, keeping factories running and people in work. At the political level, he said that the dynamic had been poor, with Germany reluctant to cede control of some of its main defence industry in the last few years and with France’s economic nationalism being inimical to consolidation.

As for the difficulties of making progress on ESDP in terms of industrial cooperation, Witney said that it was a very complex business and a tough management challenge even on a national basis, let alone at the European level. He said that there was a strong tribal ethos in the armed services and that it would take a brave and imaginative top admiral to say that half the fleet was not needed. His view is that chiefs of staff may say yes to changes -



Jamie Shea questions the panel on Transatlantic defence cooperation

but not too fast.

Jamie Shea, Director of Policy Planning at NATO, asked how likely it would be for the French Presidency of the EU to make progress on freeing up the defence market and to what extent Europe has the technological know-how. He also asked how much the EU needs Transatlantic cooperation.

On the defence market, Nick Witney said that the European Commission's 'defence package' would no doubt be helpful but also highlighted the EDA's voluntary code of conduct and its electronic marketplace for crossborder tenders. He believes that the major contribution of the package may be in cutting red tape on cross-border transfers.

As for the EDTIB, he said that Europe had leading industries in helicopters, electronics and aircraft and had recently won several major contracts with the US. EADS winning the air-to-air refuellers' contract with the US had looked like a breakthrough – until it went for review.

"If it does not go back to EADS, it will be hugely damaging to Transatlantic trade," he said, adding that it was not lost and it was up to the next US president to pronounce on.

Bob Bell, Senior Vice President European Business Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), gave examples of where US restrictions on trade with Europe were being eased (such as a Pentagon memorandum of understanding with Italy) but pointed out problems such as ITAR (International Traffic in Arms Regulations) and the tanker deal. He asked if, without consolidation, it was realistic that the ESDP could be strengthened.

Nick Witney said that since 2000, levels of EU spending had remained fairly steady. In his view, the 200 billion euro that EU governments as a whole spend is adequate but that the key issue is about what to spend that money on.

Edgar Buckley argued that there was a need for better Transatlantic cooperation in the defence industry for business and technology reasons. "The last thing that the US or the EU wants, except for those ultra-protectionists, is a fortress Europe versus a fortress US," he said. He commented that there was a technology gap between the US and Europe as the US spends seven times more than Europe on R&D. He referred to a technology readiness level (TRL) set of ratings, in which the number one was given to nascent ideas and nine to technology already in service. The average gap between the EU and US is three TRLs. Since it takes around 12 to 18 months to move from one TRL to the next, the EU would still be three or four years behind if it could spend all the money that it wanted to. Without

naming his source, he said that he had been told that when defence ministers meet they tend to talk about operations and never about technological or structural issues.

Véronique Roger-Lacan said that France's Defence Minister Hervé Morin had obtained concrete and precise commitments from defence ministers on various initiatives when he chaired the Deauville informal meeting of EU defence ministers on October 1st and 2nd. This was new in European defence history. She said that there had so far been no consensus at Council level on the issue of restructuring the industry but that the French EU Presidency was about to obtain results. She disagreed with Bob Bell and agreed with Nick Witney that repeatedly stressing the issue of increasing defence budgets was a lost cause. As Nick Witney stated, ten billion Euros per year were already spent by the 27 member states in the field of defence. The issue was not to spend more, but to spend better, and together. France would thus focus on how to share/pool resources and specialise.

Dick Zandee said that in Europe money was being spent wrongly (55% on personnel) and that too much investment, such as for research and technology, was done nationally rather than by EU countries spending together. He also pointed out that most of the R&T investment in Europe was made by the civilian sector (while in the US the Department of Defense was a big spender on research and technology) and that increasingly this was the driving force in new technologies for military use.

Giles Merritt asked if research could be done on what sort of things could be



Dick Zandee, Head of Planning & Policy Unit, European Defence Agency, and **Véronique Roger-Lacan**, Assistant Director in charge of the French EU Presidency, French Ministry of Defence

scrapped [to reprioritise defence spending].

Nick Witney said that it would not be too difficult to develop a programme of work on what could be scrapped. In his view, governments would not use dumb bombs (but would use smart munitions) any more as it would be seen as a war crime. He thinks that many of Europe's 2500 combat aircraft and associated air bases could be phased out, but notes that this would be deeply resisted.

For Edgar Buckley, joint spending on R&T is not the answer although he would agree to sharing technologies so that effort was not duplicated. He did not agree with Nick Witney about dumb bombs. He pointed out that militaries ran out of smart bombs in Kosovo and were invited to drop dumb bombs with GPS targeting. He said that this had achieved good accuracy in certain situations, adding that dumb bombs were cheaper than smart bombs.

Véronique Roger-Lacan pointed to four of many priorities in terms of achievements at the end of the French Presidency of the EU:

- The Council's appropriation of European defence;
- At Deauville, a dozen projects were discussed. What was new was that five to ten countries stated that they were "in" for various projects – it is key for EU governments to work on capabilities together;
- New methods of pooling acknowledged at a high level;
- Restructuring of industry acknowledged at Council level

In response to Nick Witney's remark on the fact that France had not been able to count on the UK nor on Germany for its Presidency, she added that "European defence," as a policy originating from the UK, could not be carried out without the UK. Whilst acknowledging that there had been ups and downs since St. Malo, i.e. the intervention of the coalition in Iraq, the negotiation of the constitutional Lisbon Treaty, and the issue of the Permanent HQ (in Brussels), she commented that in the end, the UK had come on board. As far as Germany was concerned, she mentioned that there were various levels of negotiation, but that strong political support had been given by Germany to France. In the end, consensus had prevailed.

Dick Zandee said that he could not see a 'Euro defence zone' copying the euro-zone model in the near future. "We're talking about human lives and I can't see member states giving up their sovereignty over human life. Maybe one day, but it is far away," he said .

Giles Merritt said that the ESDP seemed to have run out of steam and asked where we could go from here. He also inquired as to who was to blame for the slow progress.

Robert Cooper, Director General of the Council of the European Union, said that he agreed with virtually everything that had been said, especially Nick Witney's comments, but disagreed with the title of the event. He could see the need to reenergise certain aspects of the ESDP and added that there has been a need to energise common procurement in Europe since as long as anyone could remember. In his view, the problem was not lack of energy – he pointed to energy and leadership of the French presidency of the EU – but was more to do with a lack of resources. He said that no one could complain about a lack of activity



Robert Cooper , Director General of the Council of the European Union



Ana Gomes, MEP and Vice-Chair of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence in the European Parliament

Ana Gomes expressed concern over the EU's "faltering" political strategy in addressing ongoing challenges like the conflict in Afghanistan and piracy in the Indian Ocean.

Nick Witney said that it would not be right to blame the European Commission because ESDP is fundamentally an inter-governmental undertaking. Nor would it be right to blame the EDA or the understaffed and under-resourced members of the Council Secretariat. For him, the problem came back to the 27 national governments. He saw 12 December as an important date for the European Council to try to put some energy back into the undertaking.

The question for him was how to keep up the momentum that France had generated in future EU presidencies. He said that there was a need for the Lisbon Treaty and a permanent President of the

Council to grasp the issues and make it a crusade at the levels of heads of state and government.

Edgar Buckley saw 4 November [US presidential elections] as being just as important as 12 December. He said that one could not separate ESDP from the problems of NATO defence. He expected the next US president to look at the whole picture and to say that they supported European security and defence initiatives but with specific conditions. In his opinion, this poses the biggest incentive for governments, who have been uninvolved to become more pro-active.

Ana Gomes said that we needed an external push from the US government to make governments, parliaments and institutions (such as the military) focus on what needs to be done. For her, it was not just about capabilities but about a political strategy, which is "faltering a lot".

She pointed to the need for EU strategic input on Afghanistan. As for the EU's current naval operation off Somalia, she saw the need for an integrated approach to the problems in the country. She commented that the Chairman of the EU's Military Committee, Henri Bentégeat, recently said that the piracy in coastal waters of East Africa cannot be ended until there is a strategy for lawlessness in Somalia. Gomes argued that both the US and the EU have failed to prioritize determining such a strategy.

List of Brussels Participants

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About the Security & Defence Agenda



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.

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About the European Council on Foreign Relations



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ECFR has developed a strategy with three distinctive elements that define its activities:

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