

European Security and Defence Policy

Since the collapse of Communism in the late 1980s, the EU has tried to expand its role in defence through part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) called the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The EU's weakness during the Balkan Wars of the 1990s, where the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the USA led operations, was seen to demonstrate the need for EU member states to work together on defence. However this has at times proved confusing and difficult as EU defence somewhat duplicates both NATO's and individual member states' existing defence activities.

History

ESDP came into being at the 1999 Helsinki European Council where member states set themselves a **defence capability** target called the Helsinki Headline Goal (HHG). This called for the EU to be able to deploy a Rapid Reaction Force of up to 60,000 combat troops at sixty days notice for missions including crisis management, **peacekeeping** and peace-making operations. However in June 2004 the HHG was reformed to replace large deployments with a series of European Battle-groups of 1,500 troops, provided either by single nations or by groups of nations (known as Headline Goal 2010).

Since 2003 the EU has conducted 22 civilian and military operations, including 5 military peacekeeping missions, in Macedonia (*Operation Concordia, 2003*), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (*Operation Artemis, 2003-6*), Bosnia-Herzegovina (*Operation Althea, 2004*), Eastern Chad (*EUFOR Tchad/RCA, 2008*) and the Somali Republic (*Operation Atlanta, 2008*). The EU acted independently in the case of DR Congo, Eastern Chad and the Somali Republic, but with access to NATO's equipment and command structures in the case of Macedonia and Bosnia. The EU is currently involved in a peacekeeping mission in Chad, on the western border of Darfur in Sudan, where genocide has been taking place since 2003. It is also conducting a police and justice mission in Kosovo, which declared independence from Serbia in February 2008. This mission was nearly compromised in April 2008 when Russia argued that it was illegal and that the UN should police Kosovo's transition to independence instead of the EU. In 2008, the EU launched its first ever naval mission to prevent piracy off the Somali coast.

The EU Lisbon Treaty (2007) changed the way decisions are made in the EU but, crucially, decisions on military or defence issues must still have the unanimous support of EU states.

How does ESDP work?

Headline Goal 2010 changed the military focus of ESDP to a more flexible approach. Through battle-groups, the aim is to allow the EU to run more than one operation concurrently and tackle a number of different scenarios, such as separating parties by force, conflict prevention

and reconstruction. The EU has also begun to look at improving areas of defence technology across member states. The European Defence Agency (EDA) was created at the Thessaloniki European Council in 2003 to create a common European agenda for research, development and production of new weapons; and to break down cross-border trade in military goods. At present, the EU relies on the Berlin Plus agreement of March 2003 to meet any military shortfalls, which allows the EU access to NATO planning and command structures and equipment during its operations.

Overall responsibility for the ESDP lies with the EU High Representative for the Union in Foreign and Security Policy, currently Catherine Ashton. It is co-ordinated by the Political and Security Committee (PSC), the EU Military Committee (EUMC) and the EU Military Staff (EUMS), which are made up of military personnel from the member states.

Arguments about ESDP

For

- All member states face the same security threats so they should work together to protect each other.
- The USA can no longer carry the majority of the burden of defence through NATO – the EU needs to pull its own weight.
- ESDP allows Europe to pursue its own defence agenda, rather than that laid down by the USA.

Against

- Democratically elected representatives should make decisions about war and peace. The ESDP is run by an unelected and therefore less accountable High Representative.
- ESDP diverts resources away from existing organisations such as NATO.

Quotations

'European countries need to make more of a contribution in terms of defence capabilities. It is not fair...to keep turning to our ally in the United States to contribute military forces to problems which involve our own security.' – Geoff Hoon, British Defence Secretary, 2004

'[ESDP] wastes already meagre continental European defence budgets on EU structures that mirror proven NATO institutions.' – Geoffrey van Orden MEP, 2003

Technical Terms

Defence capability: the combination of weapons, manpower and organisation that goes into a country's defence forces

Peacekeeping: when armed forces are deployed to help keep the peace without taking sides in a conflict.

Links

- <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.asp?id=261&lang=en&mode=g>
- <http://www.iss.europa.eu/index.php?id=185&L=0>
- http://www.cer.org.uk/articles/26_keohane.html