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European Defence: Visions and Realities?

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Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is a real honour for me to be here today to address you on the complex subject of European Defence: Vision and Realities. I am grateful as ever to Bertel Heurlin and David Munis Zepernick for arranging this chance to discuss with you European defence at what is a crucial moment. Last time I was here I spoke a lot about visions, so today, as you will hear, the emphasis will be on realities rather than visions.

Since Nice European defence has caused a lot of both consternation and confusion. I, for one, do not pretend otherwise. However, we need to distinguish the rhetoric from the reality. To that end, I will attempt to answer three pivotal questions for you today:

First, what is European defence today?

Second, what it is not?

Third, what are the dynamics that will control both the extent and the direction of its development?

I will split the presentation into two distinct parts: the technical and the political. I do not apologise for spending at least some time assessing the technical status because I think it is important that we are clear about the difference between European defence and a European Army, particularly in countries such as Denmark and the UK where it is particularly sensitive.

First, what is European defence today. Or, to be more accurate, what is the European Rapid Reaction Force? Your colleague, Rachel Lutz, has done some excellent work on this and she will no doubt correct me if I am wrong.

Nice confirmed the following. The ERRF is, in effect, a combined joint task force of corps-size (c60,000 men) answerable to the European Council of the European Union, i.e., the intergovernmental supreme political control body of the European Union. There are 14 of the 15 EU member-states signed up to it, Denmark having exercised its right to opt-out. It is charged with undertaking the so-called Petersberg Tasks of rescue and humanitarian missions, peacekeeping and the role of combat troops in peacekeeping.

The land element will be comprised of 15 brigades (c60, 000 men). The air force element will incorporate up to 300 combat and support aircraft, whilst the naval element will include up to 80 units, mainly principal surface craft, including carriers and amphibious ships.

Deploying the force will be based upon the concept of graduated readiness with three targets:

- a) special force deployments at one to three days (very high readiness);
- b) smaller rapid response elements at seven days (high readiness);
- c) full corps deployment at 60 days.

There are sustainability targets (i.e. the length of time that the force will stay in the field) for a deployed ERRF in theatre based upon the level of re-supply required:

- a) tactical sustainability will require the creation of sufficient forces to enable the ERRF to operate until initial re-supply (10 days by air and 28 days by sea);
- b) strategic sustainability, the length of time the ERRF can be deployed when provided with appropriate logistics and support will be 1 year.

Force Rotation will be on a six-monthly basis with one force set in operations, one force set in training and ready for deployment

and one force set recovering from deployment and ready for training.

The fundamental dependent variable in all of this will be Host Nation Support.

There are two key planning assumptions:

- a) a full deployment in (and around) Europe, although that has yet to be defined;
- b) a smaller deployment elsewhere (East Timor, Sierra Leone).

The planning assumptions are based upon a scenario-led planning process known as Illustrative Mission Profiles.

There are no new force pools other than the four non-NATO, EU members.

DSACEUR or another European general, i.e. French, will act as Operations Commander on EU-led operations.

The force will be declared operational for low-end Petersberg Tasks as early as December 2001 but will not be fully operational until the Headline Goal target of July 2003 (December 2003 at the latest).

Force structure will be based upon the concept of task-sharing. Why am I boring you with this? Well, because not only are Europe's ambitions very small but we are having trouble meeting even that target at present and I will not disguise my disappointment. For example, the quality of forces available vary markedly, particularly between those in NATO and those outside NATO.

Thus, there will be no European army. In effect, EU-led operations will be modular coalitions of the willing and able built around the UK and France as coalition leaders and/or framework providers. As such, it faces the same planning and working up problems that NATO faces; with any number of potential coalition permutations and any number of missions that must be undertaken. One of the challenges we face is defining the Petersberg Tasks which, at the top end of the scale could mean anything up to a Kosovo-type operation or even a Major Theatre War. It will be built around good old-fashioned nation-states.

Let me now turn to the problems and shortfalls.

As currently envisaged any decision to use a European chain of command (even for an EU-led mission) would require the

approval of SACEUR. The French believe this undermines autonomy.

The non-EU, NATO 'six' are demanding some form of assured participation in return for assured access for an EU operation to NATO assets.

The Framework Agreement between the EU and NATO provides for an operational relationship but is insufficiently detailed to be effective and, in any case, lacks legal status.

Planning is the most contentious area of the ERRF. There is no explicit operational planning function within the Headline Goal, although there is a force planning framework. France wants a truly autonomous planning capacity, whereas the majority of the others want SHAPE tasked for the purpose.

There are two Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQs), one British, one French, that will, in effect, be double-hatted so that they can serve as Operational Headquarters (OHQs). There are seven multinational Force Headquarters (FHQs) available to the EU but Europe lacks any Component Command Headquarters (CCHQs) such as the USS Mount Whitney.

Other Force Requirements and Shortfalls are well documented and include:

Battlefield mobility and fire support assets and capabilities;

Large Multi-Service naval air platforms;

Precision-guided munitions;  
Suppression of enemy air defences;  
Air-to-air refuelling.

In addition, there are weaknesses in operational and support shortfalls in areas such as:

Deployed C4  
Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance  
Satellite imagery  
Battle management capabilities  
Strategic sea and air lift capabilities,  
Tactical air-lift capabilities and  
Fast sea lift and amphibious assault capabilities.

However, before you write this off as yet another example of Euro-babble let me point out a couple of things:

- a) many of the shortfalls are by comparison with the US and many Europeans would say that is a pointless comparison;
- b) look what the UK achieved in the Falklands in 1982 through a lot of ad hocery and political will (dangerous I know, but do-able).

My point being that, in spite of all the problems, Western Europe can already do a lot more than it pretends if it turned its mind to it and showed sufficient political will to act.

This brings me to the political aspects of the ERRF that are expressed through the EU's Common European Security and Defence Policy (what you often refer to as the ESDP).

There are two fundamental pillars:

First, there is a purely political aspect. The CESDP is part of the process of European Union. No denying that. But I very much doubt that any of us will still be here when the EU will be able to genuinely say that it has a common defence. The ERRF is merely a step on a road. The creation of a crisis management concept that falls far short of a European Strategic Concept.

Second, Europeans are increasingly aghast at US security and defence policy. The US seems to be preparing for a war that may never come and yet seems unwilling to undertake actions that are here today. Thus, paradigmatically, there is an emerging gulf between the US emphasis on hi-tech warfighting and European emphasis in peacekeeping.

I said that much depends on US policy, but it is by no means all. There are four main political dynamics driving the ESDP process underline the nature of contemporary transatlantic relations that, although marked by divergence and diversity, are, I continue to believe, still basically sound.

- a) the external security environment, i.e. threats;
- b) European integration (you might not like it and you may have contempt for it but it is there);
- c) The state of NATO; and (of course);
- d) US policy.

So, let me deal with each one in turn.

First, threat perception.

Today, we do not perceive the same threats. Then again, we are not in the same position. The problem is that America's very power makes it feel uniquely powerful and uniquely vulnerable and its very vulnerability (or at least sense of it) drives Americans to dominate. It is reinforced by a political culture that seems to see security as a series of zero-sum absolutes; one either has it or one does not. We Europeans do not get that. We are:

- a) used to living with vulnerability;
- b) assess such threats/risks in a different way;
- c) approach their management differently;
- d) (and I must say it) used to taking risks with security; and
- e) accept that security management is a constant process of managing uncertainties that makes the pursuits of absolutes not only self-defeating but can be dangerously so.

That is the essence of the split. The defining feature that bound us together in the Cold War, a clear and present danger commonly perceived has certainly gone and, moreover, any vestige of automaticity in what is now a collective security debate rather than a collective defence response.

I certainly do not dismiss missile defence as an over-reaction because I think Americans and Europeans are thinking in different timescales and it may well turn out that the United States is right. Certainly, non-proliferation is failing and will fail and we need to think how to manage a world in which no-one is safe from anyone. Where many Europeans take issue is over the approach to managing that scenario. US threat scenarios to justify MD remain, at best, theoretical and could become self-fulfilling. Again, it is the suspicion about motives that concerns many Europeans and that, once again, MD might be as much about money on the Hill and a technological imperative as it is about really providing security for Americans. We have certainly been here before. I found a quote in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists of 1964 that not only claimed that such a system would be technically feasible in five years but that it should be aimed against China. Déjà vu? Recently, the acronym AMD emerged from Washington as part of the MD charm

offensive. I could not decide whether the A stood for Allied of Afterthought.

Second, European integration.

However slow and frustrating European integration might appear to be it is happening. For all its undoubted complexity (and it drives me mad too) do not underestimate the scale of the achievement. Europe is doing something that Americans, for example, would not even contemplate – the voluntary pooling of significant sovereignty in pursuit of a secure, stable and prosperous Europe. Make no mistake, for old proud, countries that is an amazing feat. My grandfather who was an old grizzled Royal Navy man, who went through two world wars. He would not have believed the Europe of today was possible. Indeed, in many ways, sovereignty pooling is the quintessential act of burden-sharing.

In time, the European Union will become a major international military security actor. It is already a major international civil security actor. At the same time, the EU is not NATO and the ESDP is not about building military power per se. It is not, therefore, in itself, a competitor. It could become so but for the time-being ESDP must be seen as a complement to the overall efforts of the West to manage security. Equally, ESDP is

certainly part of an alternative emerging way of ‘doing’ security. An approach that might best be termed ‘security subsidiarity’ by which Europeans will act at the NATO level when necessary, the EU level where appropriate and the national level where possible. Here there is genuine divergence in the culture of security emerging between Europeans and Americans. This is reflected in the relative power enjoyed by the foreign and defence ministries on the two sides of the Atlantic. In the US the Pentagon (and its supporters) tend to have far more influence over foreign and security policy than the State Department. As a result, the United States has a tendency to over-militarise foreign and security policy. We Europeans, on the contrary, suffer from a reverse problem. Foreign ministries (or perhaps I should say Treasuries) tend to enjoy far more influence over defence ministries. Europe, therefore, tends to over-civilianise foreign and security policy. The US has always had a sense of its own ‘moral exceptionalism’ it is noticeable how, over the past ten years, that has been reinforced with a sense of ‘military exceptionalism’.

Third, the state of NATO

It has become a mantra in certain circles both here and in my own country, not to mention elsewhere in Europe, that nothing must be done that will damage NATO. But, what are we

preserving? NATO is in a mess. The Alliance remains essential for the unthinkable but we have to be clear for what else and then adapt and fund the solution. Certainly, it is not the tool that it should be for the co-ordination of transatlantic security policy and the effective implementation of allied military undertakings then certain realities need to be confronted.

- a) force and operational planning is a white elephant. Would you go to SHAPE for small-scale contingency planning? No; Even the Americans keep their own war plans very separate from NATO, precisely because of the problems that management of multinational coalitions create. The US cannot do that and expect Europe to remain blindly faithful to an institution that is not working. NATO must not become a political metaphor;
- b) the blocking of access to NATO assets is not going to change. First, it is not just Turkey (who will never give the EU-NATO members a carte blanche and who can blame them). Many so-called NATO assets are in fact American and how can Europe be sure that Congress will consistently allow European access to such assets? No one in this room can guarantee that C4ISR and lift will not be used as some form of control over European autonomy.
- c) Enlargement will fundamentally change the Alliance. First, it will dilute Article 5. Second, it will effectively de-couple the

nuclear guarantee at the core of the Alliance from conventional capabilities. Some would say fine, but for the sake of credibility let's face up to these things. If I was a Baltic state I would feel rather like Groucho Marks when he said that would not wish to be a member of any club that would have him. Through no fault of their own, the NATO that these states join will not be the NATO that they thought they were joining, precisely because they are joining.

- d) Interoperability is becoming ever more difficult. There are four levels of military-technical capability in NATO today and two fundamental doctrinal paradigms: warfighting and peacekeeping. The US, through the RMA, is vanishing off into the middle distance, the UK and France sit rather uncomfortably in the military-technical mid-Atlantic, the other Continental Western Europeans seem able only to act as force pools for basic peacekeeping in a permissive environment, whereas the new members can hardly do that.
- e) Finally, NATO will never be a political organisation in the way the EU is. Europeans and Americans simply do not share the same level of intense economic and political interaction. The irony, of course, is that in the absence of a systemic challenger NATO becomes more like the EU, in which everything is negotiable and everything is conditional. We are used to that, but I am not sure the United States is.

Fourth, US policy.

Yes, ESDP is also a comment on the state of US policy. The US is making choices about its foreign and security policy based on a range of factors:

- a) the unique position of the US in the world;
- b) the perceived threats I mentioned earlier;
- c) domestic factors, such as pork-barrel politics; To name but a few.

Moreover, the drive towards RMA-style technological solutions to reduce the risks to deployed US forces often gives the impression that the US is locked in an arms race with itself. Defence industrial giants certainly need no encouragement to convince the Hill that their latest bit of gadgetry will not only save the lives of Americans but ensure jobs in their congressional district.

This is the paradox of American policy which in many ways creates a niche in the market for an ESDP. The US seems to be preparing for a war that seems unlikely to happen for a very long-time and yet seems unwilling to undertake the kind of missions that represent the stuff of modern security – muddy boots peacekeeping.

Which brings me neatly to burden-sharing. Two weeks ago 300 British troops were despatched (yet again) to the border of Macedonia to monitor the border with Kosovo, along with a Nordic contingent. Three of them are now dead. In recent years Europeans have deployed in such far-flung places as East Timor and Sierra Leone, hardly ‘in-area’. Indeed, the British and French are becoming the peacemaking ‘shock-troops’ of peacekeeping. We go in, we stabilise the situation and then we move on leaving the rest of the job to other peacekeeping forces. Moreover, it is widely recognised that US forces are not good peacekeepers. Frankly, that glib throw away military line about peacekeeping being merely a sub-set of warfighting is plain wrong. Peacekeeping is a developed military task in its own right. The implications of this political dichotomy is that leadership of the Alliance by the US will be ceded progressively to the Europeans, because peacekeeping is what seems relevant to Europeans and, by and large, it is what they can do and will invest in. Something that will become even more acute as the Alliance expands.

Thus, given the political context in which we face a kind of reverse security dilemma, uncertain of US intentions it seems reasonable that the EU seeks a military crisis management tool that can reinforce its aid and diplomatic endeavours. How far and how fast it goes depends to a large extent on the decisions

that that US will make over the next year as it decides on the future shape and capabilities of US forces. The advantage of the ESDP for many European countries is that it gives them a choice between trying to achieve the kind of RMA bridging technologies implied in the DCI or the more basic capabilities implied by the Headline Goal for peacekeeping, i.e. what they spend on EU collective security efforts will really make a contribution, whereas trying to close impossible gaps inside NATO will not. It also makes it more likely that these countries will feel more comfortable about benchmarking defence expenditure inside the EU rather than NATO.

So, where are we?

The problem is that we have the worst of both worlds today. Americans seem unwilling to escalate down to the level of Petersberg Tasks/small scale contingencies, but at the same time seem unwilling to admit as much. Whereas, Europeans talk grandly about European defence but seem more interested in political autonomy than military efficiency with the result that they can only escalate some way up the Petersberg Task scale. It is no mean scale. The top end could mean anything up to a full Kosovo-type operation. Thus, the escalation ladder between European and American capabilities and between Petersberg Tasks and Article 5-type missions is breaking. You know, even

without the EU I am pretty that such a schism would have emerged within the Alliance given the divergence over strategic perception that is taking place.

Ultimately, it is these tensions, caused as they are by the poor states of both NATO and the ESDP that lead to the kind of ludicrous linkage of missile defence with ESDP...

(Possible Cut off point)

So, what is to be done? My few proposals are pretty modest because there is little point in much else at present. Europe will learn as much by doing as by planning. I only hope Europe does not learn by disaster.

First, the NATO planning process must become very much more flexible and develop planning regimes that can cope with variable coalitions preparing for variable missions with NATO acting as an interoperability nexus;

Second, the US should agree to the creation of a force and operational planning capability within the EU that is compatible with a reformed NATO DPP. First, it will encourage the Europeans to generate capabilities, about which the US is absolutely correct. Second, it will ensure that France can act as a coalition leader within the framework of the ESDP in a way that allows all NATO Member-States (and others) to participate.

Remember, only the UK and France have the necessary Permanent Joint Headquarters capabilities to act as coalition leaders in the absence of the United States. Third, it would plug France back into the IMS without all the political baggage that goes along with it. As you Americans say, ultimately, it is all about capabilities, even if they are not the one that you think we need.

Third, the US must accept that affordable constructive and creative duplication is a good thing, whilst Europe must accept that political autonomy comes at a price because political autonomy without military efficiency is not only pointless but dangerous. To that end we must split the need for strategic assets from more affordable force projection capabilities such as deployable C4, SEAD, force protection and air-to-air refuelling. We certainly need access to strategic capabilities and in time we will develop our own systems. But for most PSOs we can explore the use of civilian assets if necessary while we de from wherever they may come.

Fourth, the Europeans must do everything they can to re-assure the US (and Turkey) that however autonomous ESDP is it is compatible with NATO. I would certainly reinforce calls for transparency. We cannot expect the US just to step into an operation when it gets too big on us. The US and Canada have

the right to representation at all levels of the EU planning process and this is where NATO-US Permanent Arrangements can play an important role. However, they must be more effectively defined and given a stronger legal basis.

Fifth, a proper debate needs to get underway within the EU about European defence after 2003. If Europe really wants to walk its talk that debate will include hard questions over benchmarking defence expenditure. Why not have the debate inside NATO? First, we will. Second, Europe needs to truly assess its own security needs outside of the transatlantic filter. Don't be afraid of it. We need a European Strategic Defence Review.

Sixth, we need to start actively considering what we intend to do after 2003. Where are we really going to go. No-one seriously thinks that the process is going to stop there. To that end, I am involved in a Task Force looking at the creation of a European Security Concept (not a Strategic Concept, for that would involve common defence, as well as other more esoteric items, such as a nuclear policy, and we are still a very long way from that). Such a concept will help to identify when, where and how European forces will be deployed and under what auspices.

Seventh, we need a mechanism for post-2003 expansion. That mechanism must be built around a military task-list to which forces and units are allocated based upon their realistic ability to fulfil the function. In time, as the quality of forces provided by certain countries improves the tasklist can be progressively expanded. Indeed, there will be no truly effective ESDP until all member-states share all the risks equally. There are too many free-riders, the most notable being Germany, who talk big and buck their responsibilities.

One final point. I said it last time I was here and I will say it again. We need you Danes in. Your experience and sound common sense will help keep this thing grounded in reality so that when it grows it does so on the basis of the achievable rather than the unbelievable. You are only doing yourselves and Europe a disservice by staying outside.

To conclude, I do not under-estimate the challenges ahead of us. That is the point of this speech. However, the status quo ante is not an option. Nostalgic calls for the preservation of an old NATO are, frankly, pointless. The past is another country. Life moves on.

Certainly, I do not under-estimate the challenges facing we Europeans so let me finish with a short story that rather neatly

encapsulates it. I was recently in a pub in my native Sheffield and I was talking to a lad who I have known for many years. He was curious about my work. “What do you do then?” I replied that I was an academic interested in how Europe can build a new European security team of nations that can help make Europe and the world a safer place. He looked at me quizzically and after a suitable pause for reflection said, “What, like Star Trek?”

Will the ERRF be a collaborator or competitor? Well, much of that still depends on you. Thank you.