

**Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Security and Defence.**

Public Hearing

**The European Security Strategy and the Future of the European Security and
Defence Policy.**

Thursday, 13 July 2006

Title of section: How can we improve the ESDP?

Speaker: Mrs Nicole GNESOTTO, Director of the EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris

SUMMARY

Mrs Gnesotto challenged the view that there was something wrong with the ESDP. She stressed that the ESDP was a success story, even taking into account the failure of the European Constitution. She reminded the audience that the ESDP is supported by more than 70 per cent of the European public. In her evaluation, the past criticism voiced against the ESDP was that the policy would militarise the EU but from her perspective this has not happened because the EU has successfully struck a balance between the military and the civilian elements.

She argued that the main problem was not the ESDP per se but rather the European Union Foreign Policy itself. As she explained: "What I mean is that you can have the best efficient and rapid response armed forces but it will not do any good if the Member States do not agree on where and when to deploy them." She explained the challenges by categorising them under three headings: missions, capacity and operations.

Missions

She described the need for a balance between the national element in the ESDP, national sovereignty, and the European dimension. She asked: "Can we do more than the 'Petersberg tasks'¹? Can the EU do article 5 operations?² Should the Common Foreign and Security Policy defend Europe?". In her view it was odd that in the eyes of the public the EU can do so much to act outside its borders but was unable to act efficiently to provide internal security. However, she argued that the demand for joining internal and external security was not politically viable. As she stated: "ESDP should be able to defend people at home but this is not a reality politically at present..

¹ The Petersberg Tasks were humanitarian, peacekeeping and peace-enforcement tasks agreed by the Western European Union Council in 1992. With the development of the ESDP, the EU took over these tasks and expanded their definition. Hence in the Draft Constitutional Treaty, the Petersberg Tasks are defined as including: "joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces undertaken for crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilization. All these tasks may contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories." Article III-210 (ex-Article 17 TEU). Draft Constitution.

² Article Five refers to the defence of the Union's own territory; it implies that an attack on a Member States would be treated as an attack on all EU Member States.

It is not realistic... It is better to engage in battles that one has a chance of winning elsewhere."

Despite this statement, Mrs Gnesotto supported Mr Karl von Wogau's position, expressed in his own-initiative report for the Subcommittee on Security and Defence of the European Parliament, that there was a link between internal and external security. In her view, there was no real obstacle to the ESDP being effective in internal security, i.e. to manage crises within the Union. For example, there was the case of the use of ESDP resources for national disasters and the case of terrorism. She stated: "There is no reasons why the link between ESDP and prevention, protection and assistance in cases of terrorism should not be reinforced particularly when it comes to protecting crucial EU infrastructures, in shorthand: homeland security." She stressed that there was no need to resort to some kind of Article 5 but rather what was required was to use the ESDP more for internal security purposes.

Capacity

In the Helsinki Headline Goals agreed in 1999, Member States committed themselves to acquiring the following military capabilities: 60,000 troops, with reserve, 400 aircraft, about 100 ships. She described such a commitment as a substantial one. In 2003 Member States agreed to develop two battlegroups, approximately 3,000 troops, to be at high readiness and rotating every six months. In her view, these decisions represent two models that have been developed for two different scenarios: the first is based on the model of IFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina in which forces are deployed for peace-keeping and peace-support operations, the second model, based on the battlegroups, is a model for crisis intervention to stop a crisis from deteriorating. She estimated that both models were necessary and they did not exclude one another. At the same time she was concerned that, in the process of creating the battlegroups, the objectives agreed at Helsinki would be overridden. She said: "Just because we have the battlegroups one does not have to loose sight of the greater ambitions, the idea of a European Army and I fear that that might happen in the process of putting the battlegroups together....I think that Europe deserves better than 3,000 troops."

Operations

She pointed out that in this area it is quite normal for Member States to give priority to national sovereignty because Member States did not want their soldiers to be killed on the basis of a decision taken by qualified majority voting. Nevertheless she argued that this principle of national sovereignty should not prevent the emergence of a European dimension. She took as examples the decisions to create a European Security and Defence College and the European Defence Agency and regretted that in both cases Member States have been reluctant to put at the disposal of the two bodies the resources necessary for them to achieve their aims.

On the question of the financing of ESDP military operations, Mrs Gnesotto deplored that at present such financing is non transparent and totally incomprehensible. There was no simple answer to the problem but she suggested that more trust between the Member States and the European Parliament would be helpful.

In her conclusion she emphasised that there was neither a need for a new legislation on defence and security nor a need for an update of the European Security Strategy. Rather what was required was to apply what had been agreed at St. Malo under

paragraph 3.³ She said: "We need to apply the European Security Strategy and the problem today is the weakness of European Foreign Policy, particularly everything which is happening in the Middle East. Member States are not willing to shoulder the responsibility that they have laid down on paper."

³ Article 3 of the British-French summit St-Malo Declaration, 3-4 December 1998 states: "In order for the European Union to take decisions and approve military action where the Alliance as a whole is not engaged, the Union must be given appropriate structures and a capacity for analysis of situations, sources of intelligence, and a capacity for relevant strategic planning, without unnecessarily duplication, taking into account of the existing assets of the WEU and the evolution of its relations with the EU. In this regard, the European Union will also need to have recourse to suitable military means (European capabilities pre-designated within NATO's European pillar or national or multinational European means outside the NATO framework)."