

Parliamentary Update May

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In response to the growing interest of the European Parliament in security and defence matters, the 'Parliamentary Update' provides a short report on the latest discussions of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and in particular of its Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) on these issues.

1. Contribution of space to ESDP

The SEDE's public hearing on the contribution of space to ESDP on 2 May followed on the heels of the joint proposal for a European Space Policy put forward by the Commission and the European Space Agency on 26 April. This proposal focuses on pooling the latent but disaggregated resources inside the EU to develop a common space strategy: one that acknowledges the security dimension of space.

The SEDE received presentations from Francois Roelants du Vivier (Chairman of the Committee on External Relations and Defence of the Belgian Senate), Guillaume Dandrieux (EU Military Staff), Xavier Pasco (Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique), Frank Asbeck (Director of the EU Satellite Centre), Paul Weissenberg (Director of DG Enterprise and Industry, European Commission), Tim Waugh (NATO), Giovanni Gasparini and Jean-Pierre Darnis (both Istituto Affari Internazionali) and Rebecca E. Johnson (Director of the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy).

During the debate a clear consensus emerged that satellites will play a crucial part in future ESDP missions via the provision of surveillance, signal interception, information collection and dissemination, radar and early warning. For EU Battle Groups terrain mapping is particularly valuable in order to know the 'lie of the land' before they are sent into action and to receive 'real time' information once deployed.

At present, national satellites are configured for national purposes. This means that the EU has to rely on Member States to provide information upon request and has to purchase commercial imagery for ESDP missions (75 per cent of which is drawn from US satellite sources). As this information cannot always be guaranteed and may not arrive in 'real time' and/or with sufficient resolution, it was suggested that the EU could become a shareholder i.e. invest in the capabilities of its Member States in order to guarantee a degree of access to information.

Addressing the issue of the weaponisation of space and threats to European space assets, Rebecca Johnson presented the findings of her study for the European Parliament

'Europe's Space Policies and their relevance to ESDP' (written in collaboration with ISIS Europe).¹ Johnson argued that space security is pre-eminently an issue of global security and international relations. The EU should formulate a common position, as it did with regard to WMD or Nuclear Non-Proliferation and either take the lead or seek partners within the multilateral framework to reinforce the outer space security regime and prohibit the weaponisation of space.

Johnson stressed that with each year that passes without a coherent policy, Europe risks losing ground and ceding our security future and space activities to be decided by military and industrial planners. While such actors have much to offer in expertise, advice and technological innovation, their goals may differ and some may be motivated by short-term, commercial or other objectives that can prove inconsistent with broader, longer-term security needs. While the contributions of such stakeholders must be considered she concluded that the essential guidelines of policy, resource allocation and objectives need to remain firmly and accountably in civilian hands.

2. Threats from EU neighbourhood

In the SEDE meeting on 3 May, Antonio Missiroli from the European Policy Centre presented a study for the European Parliament on *'The threats facing the EU in its geographical neighbourhood'*.² Missiroli referred to the relevance of the five key threats identified in the European Security Strategy to the EU's geographical neighbourhood - i.e. terrorism, WMD proliferation, regional conflicts, state failure and organized crime. These threats were 'more diverse, less visible and less predictable' than the traditional military ones. He also extended the list to include: the potential for problems arising in relation to Russia and the EU's energy security; the risks deriving from pandemics hitting EU populations; and growing security risks resulting from climate change.

He concluded that the main challenge for achieving a common EU threat assessment from its neighbourhood derives from different perceptions between Member States – depending on their geographic position, historical experiences, and so on. Finding policies that cater for these different perceptions has already proved a very demanding task for all involved. According to Missiroli, the latest EU enlargements have further widened the spectrum of perceptions, and probably make a shared assessment even more complicated to achieve.

Given the complexity and diversity of the threats, risks and hazards the EU is facing from its geographical neighbourhood, he suggested that the Commission and Council should

¹ A PDF version of this study is available via following link:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/organes/sede/sede_20070502_1500_audition.htm

Click on *Study: Europe's space policies and their relevance to ESDP*.

²A PDF version of this study is available via following link:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/organes/sede/sede_20070503_0900.htm

Click on *Study EXPO Policy Department: The threats facing the EU in its geographical neighbourhood*.

produce a joint threat assessment before the expiration of their current mandates in the spring of 2009.

In the following discussion Karl von Wogau, the chair of the SEDE, explained that the subcommittee will now provide greater focus on possible regional conflicts in the EU's neighbourhood. When questioned, Missiroli said that the most urgent matter for the SEDE to examine at the moment is the solution of the Kosovo status question, which may reactivate ethnic violence in the Balkans. He also pointed to the risk that, before they acquire full statehood, the Palestinian territories might turn into a 'failed state' over the next year to eighteen months. Nor is it impossible that 'frozen' conflicts as those in Transdnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh might escalate in the near future. Stating that "you cannot choose your neighbours", Missiroli stressed that Russia is not only part of the problem - as perceived by many Eastern European countries, but also part of the solution to the conflicts of this region.

3. EU-NATO relations

Claude France Arnould, the Director for Defence Aspects in the Council Secretariat, presented her views on the state of play of EU-NATO relations. According to Arnould, the partnership between the two organizations is generally working well with good cooperation on the ground.

She conceded, however, that there is a 'format problem', because currently Cyprus and Malta, which unlike the other neutral EU states are not members of the Partnership for Peace programme, cannot be part of formal consultations with NATO. As the meetings between the North Atlantic Council and the Political and Security Committee take place in the context of the 'Berlin Plus' arrangements, it is not possible to discuss anything other than Operation Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina within this format. Although efforts have been made to resolve this issue via informal staff meetings, this has proved to be very difficult to continue for some NATO countries.

On the question of complementarity of roles between the EU and NATO, Arnould said NATO's evolving role was a complicating factor. Whereas at the time of the 'Berlin Plus' agreement NATO was concentrating very much on its military role - due to the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan - there is now a growing awareness inside NATO that military means alone are insufficient. In order to develop civilian capabilities, therefore, NATO considered whether the EU could provide it with police and other civilian personnel in a 'reversed Berlin Plus' arrangement. However, this idea is now 'off the table' because it proved unacceptable to the EU.

In relation to support of the African Union (AU) mission in Sudan, Arnould said that the cooperation between the EU and NATO is focusing on the provision to the AU of strategic transport, planning support and advice on operation management. Although the EU and NATO are working well together here, there are practical difficulties due to the AU lacking the means to absorb the assistance.

In reply to questions on the future civilian ESDP mission to Kosovo, Arnould pointed out that it is in the interest of both the EU and NATO to avoid a security gap once UNMIK departs. Referring to current negotiations between the EU and NATO on a 'technical agreement' for Kosovo, Arnould expressed once more her hope that the "format problem" will not constitute a stumbling block for the success of the EU mission and that the exclusion of Malta and Cyprus will not be raised when it comes to an exchange of classified information.

The next SEDE meeting will take place on June 5. A hearing on 'Does Europe need a anti-missile defence shield?' will take place on June 28 in the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

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and to the WSI Brussels blog (<http://wsibrusselsblog.org/>).



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