



Select Committee on the European Union

External Affairs Sub-Committee

Corrected oral evidence

Brexit: Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions

Thursday 11 January 2018

10.30 am

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Members present: Baroness Verma (The Chairman); Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top; Baroness Brown of Cambridge; Lord Dubs; Lord Horam; Baroness Manzoor; Earl of Oxford and Asquith; Lord Stirrup; Baroness Suttie; Lord Triesman.

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Heard in Public

Questions 1 - 10

Witnesses

I: Mr Angus Lapsley, Director, Defence and International Security, Foreign and Commonwealth Office; Mr Giles Ahern, Head of the Joint Unit on Euro-Atlantic Security Policy, Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Examination of witnesses

Mr Giles Ahern and Mr Angus Lapsley.

Q1 The Chairman: Good morning, Mr Giles Ahern and Mr Angus Lapsley. Thank you very much for coming to this evidence session. The session will be held in public. You will be given a transcript after the session and, if there are any corrections, please send those back to us. You have had sight of the proposed questions. However, I warn you that the Committee does not always stick to the questions that you have been given sight of, and Members might come up with questions of their own. We do not tend to have opening statements but perhaps you would like to give a little background to your work before we go into the questions. Mr Lapsley, perhaps you would like to start.

Mr Angus Lapsley: Good morning, Lord Chairman and Members of the Committee. We are very pleased that you are looking at this issue. It is going to be an important set of issues as we work through the Brexit negotiations, and it is good that we are scrutinising them. Very briefly, I am from the Foreign Office. My responsibilities in the Foreign Office cover defence, international security and some regional issues. Until the end of August, I was the UK's Ambassador to the EU's Political and Security Committee so I have been steeped in these issues over the past couple of years. One of the things I do is to oversee the joint unit between the MoD¹ and the FCO² that covers Euro-Atlantic security; that means essentially NATO³ policy and EU policy, which I will hand over to Giles.

Mr Giles Ahern: Good morning. I am a Ministry of Defence civil servant but, as Angus alluded to, I am the head of the joint MoD and Foreign and Commonwealth Office team with responsibility for NATO policy, EU Common Security and Defence Policy, and elements of arms control at the OSCE.⁴

The Chairman: The first question you have definitely had sight of. How important are EU Common Security and Defence Policy missions to the UK's pursuit of its foreign policy priorities? Could you tell us the main advantages of these missions for the UK?

Mr Angus Lapsley: Thank you for the advance sight of the questions, which definitely helps in preparation. I was struck that the question was about the importance of these missions to our foreign policy, not our defence. It is an interesting distinction, but it points to one of the underlying facts, which is that in the 15 years or so for which we have been part of the ESDP⁵ and the new CSDP, it has never been central to the UK's defence effort. It has never been as significant as what we do nationally, through coalitions or through NATO. However, it has been

¹ Ministry of Defence.

² Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

³ North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

⁴ Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

⁵ The European Security and Defence Policy, the predecessor to the CSDP.



more significant from the point of view of foreign policy in a broader sense because it has offered us a crisis management tool, if you like—something in the toolbox that we could mobilise to add value in a number of crisis or stabilisation situations around the world, where you needed to try to mobilise a mix of military, civilian, development, political and diplomatic tools—and it is that ability to meld tools which the European Union has been trying to develop over the past 15 years or so. Most of the missions have been valuable to the UK from that perspective. That might have been stabilisation or capacity-building in sub-Saharan Africa, some of the maritime security missions, in particular Atalanta in the Indian Ocean, or the civilian CSDP role, which has also developed during this time and has tended to be about mobilising resource and expertise in areas such as the rule of law, justice, prosecution, policing, et cetera. The first answer is that this has been a way of mobilising a particular set of instruments that are not central to defence but have been pretty useful more broadly.

The second point that has been important to us in these missions and it goes back to the initial rationale for setting up the CSDP in the late 1990s and early 2000s, is that it has been a way of mobilising a wider range of European countries to get involved in crisis management. It is easy to forget, but if you go back to the 1990s very few European countries thought out of the immediate NATO area. Of course, quite a lot of them were not even members of NATO or the European Union. Now you can see that Sweden, for example, has used these missions to develop an out-of-area expeditionary capability and a battlegroup. Countries such as Ireland and Greece have taken on command roles in sub-Saharan Africa in a way that would have been inconceivable 20 years ago. That has always been quite an important part of why the UK has supported and invested in these missions. Often the answer has not been that the UK needs to be doing something through the CSDP, but actually mobilising the Europeans more widely has been a key aspect of it.

The Chairman: So where do you see the disadvantages?

Mr Angus Lapsley: Of course, there has never been a CSDP mission that we did not support because by definition all CSDP missions have to be agreed by consensus among the Member States. We have once or twice said no to launching a mission. But it is probably fair to say that not all of them have been such a high priority for us. We have sometimes worried about sucking resources away from theatres that we felt were more important. For quite a long period we were very focused, understandably, on getting as much resource into Afghanistan as possible and were therefore slightly leery about new military commitments in, for example, sub-Saharan Africa. Sometimes there has been an opportunity cost, if you like, and it has certainly taken up quite a lot of diplomatic and political effort to get these missions into the right place. You would probably agree that that was a disadvantage. Sometimes there have been issues and quite painful debates about whether the EU or NATO was the right multilateral vehicle for mobilising a response. So the downside has been the amount of effort it has sometimes taken to keep this



pointing in a direction that the UK was happy with. But, as I said, we have never had to do anything we really did not want to do in the CSDP, because that is just not the way it works.

The Chairman: Mr Ahern, would you like to add anything to that?

Mr Giles Ahern: Not particularly. As Mr Lapsley said, nationally we commit through many other institutions, so by definition an additional commitment, however valuable, is an additional draw on our very important capabilities, but it is an opportunity to work alongside partners and gain additional experience from that. Perhaps I might venture to say that, partly because of a lack of understanding of what the European Union does, sometimes when we are asked to contribute to these EU operations it can result in criticism or very quick reporting of suggestions of it leading to an EU army, which clearly it is not. That is just one of the issues that we deal with. But, as was said, we contribute to the missions that we have supported because of consensual agreement to launch them, and we have played our part, as have many others, which we will come on to in later questions.

Q2 **Lord Stirrup:** Good morning, gentlemen. It is nice to see you. Along with France, the UK probably has the most significant military capability in the European Union, particularly in terms of certain key strategic assets, and arguably the greatest expertise in the wider security field. However, as you have mentioned, we do not necessarily contribute great quantities of that expertise to CSDP missions. So how would the absence of the UK, were it not to participate in future missions, affect the CSDP overall? How would its absence in future missions be viewed by the remaining members of the EU? What difference would it make to them, and are there variations in terms of geography in that regard?

Mr Angus Lapsley: I think you are right to suggest that what we have tended to contribute to the CSDP has been more about leadership and broader diplomatic support, both personal leadership but also intellectual leadership, trying to make sure that we think these missions through and get them right from the outset, and change course if we do not. I think it is fair to say that the UK has always been comfortable playing a challenge role within the EU if we felt that something was not going right. We are not alone in doing that; the French are also very capable of doing it. One issue is definitely who will play that role if we are not part of the debate about what the CSDP does.

We have often taken the view that the most useful thing we could offer to missions has been, for example, very high-quality staff officers, rather than putting in a lot of troops or assets, which other European Member States may well have, and our own are often more usefully used elsewhere.

Our diplomatic reach has sometimes been quite important to the CSDP. Along with France, we are very often the country that will pilot through the UN the necessary authorisation for a CSDP mission, certainly any missions that happen under Chapter VII of the UN charter. Those need



renewing every year and we are often the ones who patiently persuade the Russians or even sometimes the Americans that a mission is a good idea. A good example of that is that it is always a struggle to get the mandate for the Bosnia mission⁶ renewed in the UN each year.

We sometimes put more serious military assets into missions; for example, with ISR⁷ we have some quite capable ships that can provide niche roles. Sometimes our assets are definitely important.

We also make quite a substantial monetary contribution. We pay 16% of the common costs of military operations and a similar percentage of the budgetised costs for civilian operations, and we sometimes make exceptional contributions; for example, we have put £600,000 into a fund to help to support the training of the Libyan coastguard, which is part of the Operation Sophia set-up. If we were to play no role in the CSDP in future, there is a question mark about those contributions.

There is also something about the fact that the UK has rarely put a sizeable force into the CSDP. We did at the beginning of the Bosnia operation. We certainly had a battalion, I think, in Bosnia, in the early days of EUFOR when it was commanded by a British general on the ground, and by a British DSACEUR⁸ at the operational level. The fact that we have not chosen to put substantial forces into the CSDP over the past 15 years does not mean that the broader military capabilities that we have are not part of the backstop. For example, if any of the missions in the Balkans got into trouble, the UK still provides an over-the-horizon reserve. There is what we have contributed, but there is also what we might contribute, which should be taken into account.

The very last point, very quickly, is that I would not underestimate the role that our headquarters capability has provided. The role that PJHQ⁹ has played in providing the headquarters for Atalanta has been really significant, both intellectually and in terms of military capability.

Lord Stirrup: To an extent, you have described us as we like to see ourselves. I realise this is slightly unfair, but could you have a stab at how you think others see us? Would they agree with all that? Is that how our partners see us?

Mr Angus Lapsley: I think that by and large they would agree. Every so often you will hear other Europeans saying, "You never really put any troops into these missions, do you?", to which our response is, "That's not what you most need from us". There is no shortage of troops or tanks or aeroplanes in Europe. There are plenty of those; it is about mobilising the will to use them. With that caveat, I think most of our European partners would recognise what I have just said. I certainly hope so, anyway.

⁶ EUFOR Althea.

⁷ Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance.

⁸ Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

⁹ Permanent Joint Headquarters.



Q3 Lord Horam: The EULEX mission in Kosovo is a significant example of work in this area. How much did the UK contribute to that mission? Is it contributing to that mission? What overall view do you take of its utility and its importance from the point of view of UK interests?

Mr Angus Lapsley: EULEX rather neatly illustrates a number of the themes that we have been exploring. It was set up in 2008 at the moment of Kosovo's declaration of independence, which of course politically divided the European Union. To this day, five Member States do not recognise the independence of Kosovo. At that particular moment, there were two needs. One was to give the European Union a policy for Kosovo around which it could rally and which did not put the issue of recognition foursquare at the front. The other was to make a practical contribution to what we knew even then would be a big challenge in Kosovo: establishing the rule of law and making sure that that rule of law treated all the communities in Kosovo fairly, was effective and transparent and was not captured by corruption, et cetera. EULEX fitted the particular need that we had for Kosovo at that moment. I remember that there were people at the time who said, "In the absence of a policy, we'll send a mission". I think that was a little unfair, but it certainly helped.

Lord Horam: It was an alternative, really, was it not?

Mr Angus Lapsley: Exactly. The alternatives would have been a UN policing mission. NATO also had some role in the maintenance of internal order. But it felt right to use the European Union at that point. We did a lot of the driving, intellectually and politically, of that decision back then. I was in Brussels at the time and I remember it very well. We have never led the mission overall. It has always been led by the French or the Italians, but we have several times had the number two position within the mission. We chose to invest primarily in high-value secondees into the mission, such as very senior former police officers from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, who had experience of the kind of policing that Kosovo would need, or very senior judges, prosecutors, et cetera. By contrast, because we do not have a gendarmerie force in Britain, we were not one of the countries, such as Spain, France or Italy, which put in large formed units of gendarmerie. That is quite a good example of the choice that we have often made about the kind of contribution that we make being about strategic impact rather than numbers.

Today, EULEX is 10 years old, and it is a mission that has had a tough time. Establishing the rule of law and governance in Kosovo is not an easy job. We have learned some quite tough lessons about the mission. Its initial mandate was just too big; it had everything from customs to prisons to prosecution to police to justice. Trying to take all of that on was probably overambitious, and today we have a much smaller mission, which I think will continue, as far as it can, to hand over responsibility to the Kosovars. It is still valuable, and it is still important that we contribute to it. I think we have about a dozen people in EULEX today.



Lord Horam: Is there any defence angle to it?

Mr Angus Lapsley: EULEX does not have a defence mandate. Of course, KFOR¹⁰ is still in Kosovo, so there is still a substantial NATO force in Kosovo. The two interact when it comes to public order. The first responders to a public order incident are meant to be the Kosovars. If they cannot deal with it, it goes to EULEX. If it gets bigger than that, it goes to KFOR. But EULEX itself does not have a defence capacity-building role.

The Chairman: Mr Ahern, would you like to add anything?

Mr Giles Ahern: No.

The Chairman: We will go on to the next question. Lady Armstrong.

Q4 **Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top:** The other mission that we wanted to look at as a case study is Somalia. We wondered how EUTM Somalia and Operation Atalanta contribute to UK foreign policy objectives in Somalia and of course in the Horn of Africa. Somalia is next door to Kenya, which has always been quite important in Britain's foreign policy push in that part of Africa. Again, this builds on what you said about Kosovo, Mr Lapsley. Where do you think it was appropriate for the EU mission to be involved, and are there things that would have been more effective if they had been done through the UN or whatever? Those are the sorts of decisions that we will have to make in future.

Mr Angus Lapsley: First, the EU's role in Somalia is a good example of what I said about how the UK has been able to encourage and sometimes push our European colleagues to get more involved in a part of the world that we recognised was important. As you say, we have long been focused on Kenya and that region. In the last five or six years, we have focused much more on Somalia because of the terrorism threat that it posed. Along with Italy, we have primarily tried to exert a leadership role on EU policy in the region. I should add that as a maritime nation we were also one of the first nations to look at the piracy problem; the fact that we have Lloyd's here, a big shipping industry and so on meant that we were one of the countries that looked at that early on.

It is fair to say that the role of CSDP within that, and the role of the EU within the overall international effort on that region, has ebbed and flowed a bit. We would argue very strongly that the overall lead in terms of stabilising Somalia has to be a combination of the Somalis themselves and the UN. We have looked for ways in which the EU and other Europeans could add niche value to that. One of our preoccupations has always been that anything that the EU did fitted into that broader Somali-led and UN-supported process. Sometimes the right thing for the EU to do has been to be quite hands-off. I would argue that more important than the missions has been the EU's financial support for AMISOM¹¹ and

¹⁰ Kosovo Force (KFOR) is a NATO-led international peacekeeping force.

¹¹ The African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) is a peacekeeping mission operated



the UN peacekeeping mission; it is not unfair to say that the EU has kept AMISOM afloat financially over the last couple of years. That is the most important thing.

On the question of whether the missions have worked, Operation Atalanta is probably the CSDP mission about which it is easiest to say, "Look, it definitely worked". It is only three or four years ago that we were having 20 or 30 ships attacked a year going through the Somali Basin, but over the last two years there have been no successful piracy attacks. That is due to the deterrent effect and because we worked hard to ensure that we were not just stopping pirates and then putting them back on the beach so that they could start again but rather, with a lot of co-operation with Kenya, the Seychelles and others, setting up judicial processes to deal with them. That was a very largely UK-led effort. We did the diplomacy with Kenya, the Seychelles and others. We have contributed less to EUTM Somalia, the training mission, because we have our own defence capacity-building effort in Somalia. However, we have always supported it because it is excellent that countries such as Spain and Italy, which have been big contributors to that mission, have chosen to get involved in Somalia. The third mission, EUCAP, which has been looking at building coastguard capability, is probably the least convincing of the three missions. It has struggled at times to find the right role. There is a process under way in Brussels at the moment to take a strategic look at all three missions and how they move forward in future.

The Chairman: Mr Ahern, would you like to add anything?

Mr Giles Ahern: Perhaps just to reinforce the point that Angus made. In terms of UK objectives, both directly for Somalia and for the Horn of Africa, on counter-piracy, particularly the broader trade direct objectives, disrupting the pirates allowed the free flow of goods around the region. The legal finish point is very important. That is something that the EU can do that NATO certainly cannot, so again there is value to a CSDP mission. Now it is about bringing together the co-ordinated piece of the three missions for a comprehensive approach. While it can still be challenging to get the agreement of the 28, that is perhaps easier than getting the agreement of 193. On your question about the UN, the UN has an important role. The EU missions are supporting a number of UN activities and what we want, again with the UK having a leading voice in all these institutions to ensure that they are all joined up, is to have the best effect on the ground and in the littoral.

Mr Angus Lapsley: It is also a good example of how UK military thought leadership has sometimes been important. I remember that, when we set up Atalanta, within the EU there was not a much more sophisticated idea than that we would have a couple of frigates steaming around seeing if they could find some pirates. The UK and PJHQ took on the headquarters role. The first commander was the current First Sea Lord, Admiral Phil Jones, and that headquarters very quickly worked out a model for dealing



with piracy that was much more sophisticated, looking at legal finish and how to work with the shipping industry to change its behaviours to reduce the risk. A lot of Europeans at that time were very impressed with the quality of thought leadership that came out of the UK and the contribution that we were making.

Q5 **Baroness Manzoor:** I understand what you say about the UK playing both a strategic and a leadership role in CSDP and I was very interested in the process; it is always important to understand process in terms of delivery. Could you talk us through the development and establishment of a CSDP mission, including the role of the main decision-making bodies such as the Political and Security Committee? Could you say a little more about the UK's leadership role, both in the UN and in terms of what it learns from the UN and brings to the missions?

Mr Angus Lapsley: I am tempted to recall the Chinese proverb, "Be careful what you wish for", because I think that both Giles and I could speak to the Committee for days about the process by which CSDP missions are established. It may well be that this is an area where it is helpful for us to send you some flowcharts and background details so that you can read about it, because the process is quite complex and full of jargon. That is true of all multilateral organisations; the ways in which NATO and the UN set up operations are similarly complex.

At its heart, the best way of understanding it is to think of the Foreign Affairs Council—that is, Foreign Ministers meeting monthly, playing the role of Ministers in the British system—as being responsible for taking the political decision to launch a mission and to agree what its aims and objectives should be, its mandate, its scope and so on. Supporting them is quite complex machinery, at the apex of which is the Political and Security Committee, consisting of 28 ambassadors, which in turn is supported by a phalanx of expert committees that feed into it: the Military Committee has senior military representatives, but also a pol-mil group, a legal and financial group and so on. Essentially, you work through a predefined series of steps, which begin generally with a political discussion among Ministers: "There seems to be a problem in country X and the EU ought to contribute to it". Generally you capture that in some form of Council Conclusions. After that, a process gets set off in which you progressively work through the political context, what the role of CSDP might be in terms of contributing to any EU response, and then through various stages of granularity in terms of planning what the military options are and, if you are going to go for a particular option, what the plan for it might be, all the way through to a detailed plan by the commander of the operation. At each stage of that process, the relevant decisions and texts are brought back to the Political and Security Committee, and by consensus we agree whether we are happy with what is proposed. Then there are various points at which you have to go back to Ministers and to the Foreign Affairs Council and get them to sign off, politically and legally, on what you are doing.



The UK has always taken that process, which, as I said, is quite long and complicated, very seriously. We have had some success at influencing it over the past 15 years, so that it has progressively become more—to use the jargon—comprehensive. When CSDP was first set up, some Member States were clear that military is military, defence is defence, and it must be kept discrete from other things. We have progressively tried to integrate the political and the military side of this in that planning process, so that rather than, for example, jumping straight to the conclusion that you need a battalion sent to some part of the world, you crunch through whether there is any point sending a battalion unless there is some policing support—whether there is any point in training a bunch of people if no one will then fund their integration into the armed forces, in which case we will need money and so on. It is about that broader, comprehensive approach.

To be fair, the European Union has got much better at that now. Indeed, in many ways the key moment in this planning process now is when the External Action Service is charged with producing what we call a political framework for a crisis, which is then meant to look at the various components that the EU ought to bring to bear in dealing with this. That helps you not to jump straight to a military solution being the answer to everything. We have certainly been pretty successful in influencing those processes when we have needed to. As PSC Ambassador, I would expect always to be right at the heart of those debates as they work through. Does that answer your question?

On your point about the UN, there are some points of similarity; both in New York and in Brussels the UK expects to be one of the most important voices in shaping how a mission evolves. If anything, the EU tends to have tighter operational control by the Member States over missions than the UN does. The UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations, once a mission has been approved by the Security Council, has rather more latitude over planning than the EU does. The PSC has more granular control over missions than the UN does.

The Chairman: Mr Ahern, would you like to add anything to that?

Mr Giles Ahern: Again, I would echo that. Having been in the European Union staff myself many years ago when there was very much a military/civilian split, I can say that it has moved on considerably since then and reflects the way the UK does business. A case in point is my joint unit, which bridges the Whitehall gap between the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office. When Angus was in Brussels, he always received joint advice from the two departments, having also consulted more widely. We try to engender that in the EU system as well. On the EU point, some Member States will not progress unless they have a very clear UN steer and top cover. Again, our role in securing that, so that we can get Member States' agreement and achieve consensus so that a mission or operation can move forward, has been very important.

Q6 **Lord Dubs:** Can we turn to the co-operation with third countries? What



are the existing precedents for third countries taking part in CSDP missions? How does this differ from the participation as an EU Member State, and at what point does one trigger a third country being involved at all?

Mr Angus Lapsley: The essential difference is that if you are a third country you are not part of the political decision-making chain, that process that I just talked through. If I remember correctly, about 18 countries have an overarching framework agreement with the European Union, which means that they are pretty much routinely asked whether they want to join missions. There is some consultation with them about what missions are going. Switzerland has signed a number of agreements with the European Union on participation in missions that are limited to particular missions. The key moment comes when the Council—Ministers—has to agree that a third country will be formally invited to contribute to a mission. Giles, do you remember at exactly what point we do that? Is it when the Crisis Management Concept is conducted?

Mr Giles Ahern: I believe so.

Mr Angus Lapsley: I think that it is when the Crisis Management Concept is adopted, which is the moment when the EU says, “Right. We are definitely going to have an EU mission here”. At that point, the Council has to decide whether it will invite particular third countries to join a mission. That is sometimes quite a controversial moment; it is not automatic.

So third countries can contribute, and they contribute based on two principles. First, there is what is called a Committee of the Contributors, to which they are invited on a regular basis to talk about oversight of the mission. We will probably explore a little the extent to which that really works. There are also arrangements for sharing confidential information, planning documents, the plan for the mission, and arrangements for finance—what contribution a third country makes to the costs of the mission and how that works.

Lord Dubs: Why would a decision be made to involve a third country at all? What is the rationale for it? In some instances, there is no question of a third country being involved. In other instances, it happens.

Mr Angus Lapsley: The essential driver is twofold. First, a third country may bring capability. It may be prepared to contribute forces and offer things that the EU would find useful. In Bosnia, for example, Turkey provides a couple of hundred troops, which is quite important to maintaining the size of that mission. Secondly, a third country can bring broader political support. It may want to be associated with what the European Union is doing. That is sometimes where it can get a little more controversial in the EU.

Q7 **Lord Triesman:** Good morning. I will in part follow up Lord Dubs’s question, but, first, given what you have said about the 18 third countries contributing and the Committee of the Contributors, when the Committee



of the Contributors meets, or indeed on any other appropriate occasion, do the third countries get much of a say in the planning and execution of the CSDP missions? Is that formal or informal, and to what extent can they exert influence? Is the influence through that committee or is that committee simply to co-ordinate them on the basis of influences that are determined elsewhere?

Mr Angus Lapsley: This question goes to the heart of how a future relationship between the EU and the UK might work in this area.

Lord Triesman: Absolutely, yes.

Mr Angus Lapsley: We were pretty consistent on this long before the decision was taken to leave the European Union. We were pretty consistent in our view that the European Union's offer to third countries is not terribly attractive, because although the Committee of the Contributors' model exists, it does not work very well. When it was set up, more than 10 years ago, the expectation was that it would be a very senior committee and that it would meet and give real impetus and guidance on how missions were being conducted. I remember the first couple of meetings of the Committee of the Contributors on missions such as Bosnia and Kosovo. Lots of ambassadors turned up and it was meant to be quite a serious thing. To be honest, 10 years on, the model has rather withered on the vine and most Member States do not take the meetings very seriously; they do not send very senior people. As a result, the third countries concerned have rather lost interest. I do not want to speak for those third countries, but in some cases the inadequacies of that model have led third countries to decide that they are not convinced that they want to take part in missions.

I would add two other points. First, even if the Committee of the Contributors was working properly, it would give third countries some voice in the oversight of missions and how they were being conducted, but it would not give them a voice in the planning of those missions. There is no provision at the moment for a third country to play any kind of role in planning.

However—my last point—where it probably works a bit better is that once a third country has joined a mission, generally, depending on the size of its contribution, it would have officers integrated into the operational headquarters for that mission. As is the way of these things, most European or NATO militaries are pretty used to working together, and if you put them all in the same headquarters those officers share information. Through participation in headquarters, a third country can get a reasonable insight into what a mission is up to and what is going on. That probably compensates a little for the fact that the formal political arrangements for involvement in oversight do not work terribly satisfactorily.

Lord Triesman: You are absolutely right that the question about existing third countries potentially becomes a question about us. I am grateful that you said that. A while ago you made the point that we expect to be a



key voice in New York and Brussels—I am paraphrasing slightly. Is there any way in which you can see us being in the role of a third country—given current experience, whatever the intention was 10 years ago—and having the sort of voice in New York or Brussels that you have discussed as a fairly natural role for us, particularly if we do not participate in the initial strategic issues? After all, broadly speaking, countries like to engage in things where they have had some say in the strategy to be followed.

Mr Angus Lapsley: I do not want to pre-empt answers to later questions, but I think it is quite clear that as a third country you are not going to have a formal political and legal decision-making role in the decision to launch a mission or the options that you adopt on how to conduct that mission. In that sense, the position we will be in in Brussels or any other third country will not be comparable to now or what we would expect in New York or at the other end of Brussels as a member of NATO. The EU will be conscious of protecting the integrity of its own autonomy in political and legal decision-making. The issue before us is whether there are, none the less, models that would allow a third country—not necessarily Britain but obviously we are concerned about that—to contribute to an operation and to have a reasonable and proportionate degree of influence over what that operation was doing. We can perhaps come later to some of the ideas about how that might work. It is clear at the moment that the existing way in which the European Union handles third countries would not allow us the kind of reasonable input that you are talking about.

The Earl of Oxford and Asquith: As far as I understand it, the US is involved in the Kosovo CSDP mission and it has informal involvement in the Horn of Africa—Somalia. Are you saying that that model, when a major player such as the US gets involved in a mission, has some tensions in it, or is it a model that could be developed?

Mr Angus Lapsley: I certainly do not want to speak for the US but, as I understand it, the US decision to contribute to the Kosovo mission, almost from the beginning, was because it wanted to send quite a strong message that it supported this mission and it was a good thing for the EU to be taking on. Its operational contribution now is pretty small—just a couple of experts. It probably started off with slightly higher expectations of the role it would play in the mission than turned out to be possible. The Kosovo example points to the tension that we will have to examine over the next couple of months or however long it takes us: is it possible to have a more substantial involvement of a third country in a mission?

There is a size issue here. If you are talking about putting a couple of experts into quite a big mission as a third country, you do not necessarily need very high degrees of access or influence over the steering of the mission as a whole, which I think is the view the Americans would take over Kosovo. But if you are prepared to put really substantial assets into a mission, it becomes rather different. Probably the biggest third-country contribution to a mission at the moment is the Turkish contribution to



EUFOR Bosnia, but one reason why that works is because EUFOR Bosnia is the one Berlin Plus operation. It is the one operation that is actually commanded at the strategic level by NATO—well, by SHAPE.¹² The Turks have a high degree of understanding and access to what is going on in that mission through the fact that they are also members of NATO. But if you look at the EU's autonomous missions—that is, the rest of them—none of them has a comparable size of contribution by a third country at the moment.

Mr Giles Ahern: A point of clarification with regard to the US: its contribution in Kosovo is on the civilian side, not the military side. You also alluded to the Horn of Africa, where it runs its own counterpiracy operation, which is complementary to the EU's Atalanta, and we work very closely with it on the military side, but it is not contributing to the EU mission there. It participates on the civilian side and we work very closely with it on military aspects.

Mr Angus Lapsley: Again, you would need to check with the Americans, but certainly 10 years ago they had a policy of contributing only to civilian missions. Their view on military missions was, "Well, if it's a military mission involving us and Europeans, we should use NATO".

Q8 **Baroness Suttie:** To a fairly large degree, the question I was going to ask about contributions by third countries has been covered. If you do not mind, I would like to ask a question that is not in the script, as it were. You have talked about the third-country system not working particularly effectively at the moment. With the UK leaving the European Union, do you think there will be much appetite in Brussels to review that and reform it?

Mr Angus Lapsley: That is not an easy question to answer at the moment because, as I am sure the Committee will be aware, the Brexit negotiations are being handled in phases. We have just moved through the first phase and we are now only beginning a discussion about what might happen in an implementation period and what might happen when it comes to a longer-term future partnership between the UK and the EU. The Member States are currently negotiating their negotiating mandate for that next phase. It means that they are not yet willing to talk to us about what the answer to your question might be. We can talk informally when we get people in an unguarded moment. We can look at the debates that are going on among experts in parliaments and so on around Europe about how our partners feel about this set of issues. But it is quite difficult for us at the moment to say with any great, definitive confidence, "Yes, they're going to be up for this or that". The process of negotiating with the EU is always quite dynamic anyway, because it will have its own internal debates and it is difficult for us, outside those debates, to predict exactly how they will land.

¹² Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) is the Headquarters of Allied Command Operations.



Having said all that—sorry, that is a very long but necessary set of caveats—I certainly pick up wide interest in the idea that it would be good to be able to carry on working with the UK on CSDP missions.

We are consistently saying to people, “That’s the position the Government have set out here as well”. The consultation paper that was published in September made it clear that the Government were open to finding models for doing this, but that they would be looking at the arrangements for doing so because they are not satisfactory at the moment. I have had no Member State say to me at any point, “Absolutely not. We’re not talking about that”. Equally, I would be misleading the Committee if I said anyone was promising us that we could look at those things. We are still at the stage where, to be honest, we need to work through them getting their mandate and then we can start talking about these things bit more openly.

Mr Giles Ahern: I think we will come on to a bit more about what our relationship as a third country will be. Just to follow up that point, though, there are two aspects. Partly this links back to Lord Stirrup’s question about absence, and there are two kinds of absence. One is us not participating in every mission at the moment, and as ever there is a balance between having more contributing nations acting together and the positive political message that that sends and—from a military perspective, or indeed from a civilian command-and-control aspect—the fact that the more parties you have, the more complicated it can get. So you have to have a balance regarding the effectiveness of the mission or operation by having more partners, as well as them bringing additional contributions. Overall, third parties, in very big handfuls, and of course this changes almost day by day, contribute about 250 people out of the 2,900 or so who are currently deployed on EU missions. It is those sorts of proportions, and you have that balance. In terms of the absence, though, there is also the question of us not being there in future negotiations. The UK contributes, or is shown to have, about 20% of the force catalogue—essentially, the size of the forces available to EU members. So we make a potentially significant contribution, and there is clearly a debate to be had about when that is not there because we are not a Member State. That, too, will factor into the negotiations as we move into the next phase.

Q9 **Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top:** In a sense, I am looking for you to develop what you have been saying. The Government produced a statement last September, *Foreign Policy, defence and development—a future partnership paper*, in which they say they are looking for a deep level of co-operation which would enable the UK to work with the EU during mandate development and detailed operational planning of CSDP missions. I want to tempt you to tell us a little more about what the Government’s thinking is around what we are seeking to negotiate in this matter. What do you think a deep and meaningful relationship will look like? What is it that we are seeking to contribute?



Mr Angus Lapsley: As I have said, we have not yet begun this phase of discussion with the EU. To some extent, how we answer the question of what options we might have for addressing the core problem of how we could feel comfortable if we participated substantially in a CSDP mission with a reasonable degree of understanding and influence over its mandate and conduct will depend on the kinds of parameters that the EU is prepared to work within in addressing that problem, and we just do not know the answer to that yet. We do not know whether the EU will begin by saying, "Well, you can have a standard third-country approach but no more", or whether it will be prepared to look at more creative options. There will be quite complex debates within the EU about this. I think Giles's point is absolutely spot-on about the EU worrying about the integrity and manageability of its own processes. Some countries will worry about precedents for other third countries, so that will come into play. There will also be an interaction between this part of the negotiation and the wider negotiation. The logic that people thinking about this from a foreign policy and defence perspective might have may be quite different from the logic of the overall negotiation and what both the UK and the EU are trying to get out of it. For all those reasons, I do not think we are yet at the stage where we want to start articulating in detail exactly what would meet the kind of objective that the Government set out in that paper.

However, I might suggest to the Committee that it is worth thinking about two models that are not to do with the EU at the moment, both of which I think could be sources of inspiration. The first is the relationship that Finland and Sweden have with NATO. They have become very close partners in NATO and have been contributing to NATO operations. They make a broader intellectual and political contribution, not least because in recent years NATO has, quite rightly, been focusing much more on the nature of the threat from Russia. In some ways Finland and Sweden have become more active than some allies within NATO. It is worth looking at how that works. They are regular participants in meetings of the NAC;¹³ they do not have a formal decision-making role within it but they are often there, contributing to debate. They have staff officers and secondees at all levels of the NATO hierarchy. They are able to exchange information with NATO, including confidential information, and they take part in exercises. Giles and I were in Brussels a few weeks ago for the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting, and it is quite striking that you have the NATO allies and then you have the Finnish and Swedish Foreign Ministers. So the relationship that those two countries have with NATO definitely has some lessons to be learned.

The other model that it is worth reflecting on a bit is the relationship that we have with the US. We have a historically close military and political relationship with the US. We are not part of any formal decision-making chain within the US Government; British officials do not sit on the National Security Council, we do not go to meetings of the Cabinet or

¹³ The North Atlantic Council (NAC) is the principal political decision-making body within NATO.



anything like that, and it is very clear that America is completely autonomous politically. However, over the years we have built up a culture of co-operation and sharing of information. We have legal mechanisms to allow us to second staff to each other and share very sensitive information. As a result of that, when the US is considering an operation in which it might want allies such as the UK to participate, we have a reasonable degree of insight into American thinking quite early on and are therefore able to make our own political decisions about whether or not that is something that we want to be part of.

Those two models—the NATO model for Sweden and Finland, which is quite formalistic and based on processes and structures because that is what you need in a multilateral organisation, and the UK model with the US, which is perhaps rather more based on intimacy of contact, consultation and discussion—are slightly different, but not incompatible. There are probably elements of both that one would want to work into a future relationship between the EU and the UK if one wanted it to be genuinely load-bearing in terms of what we could do together operationally.

- Q10 Lord Stirrup:** Those are two very interesting suggestions, but I would like to make a couple of propositions regarding them, and I would be interested in your response. First, in a military mission Governments are putting their citizens in harm's way and ultimately have to answer to Parliament and the electorate for the decisions that they make, particularly if things go wrong. Of course, so far, CSDP missions have been at the lower end of the risk spectrum, but they are not hazard-free. So the notion of a UK Government committing anything substantial in the way of military capability without some control over the strategic planning and the employment of those assets seems an extremely risky proposition. I would be interested in your response to that.

With regard to where one goes from there with CSDP missions, both the models you have mentioned have required substantial investment. In the relationship with the United States, it is not just about having a degree of common history and feeling nice about one another. We have substantial investment in personnel in the United States in exchange tours; with our nuclear programme, as you will be only too well aware; and with intelligence-sharing and all the rest of it. We get far more out of it than we put in, but we have to put a lot in. Similarly, I imagine that Finland and Sweden make quite a big investment in headquarters staff and permanent presence, perhaps within the Justus Lipsius building and elsewhere.

Presumably, if the UK wanted to follow some sort of hybrid model between those two, it would have to make a substantial investment. It would require staff, possibly even more staff than it contributes at the moment. Perhaps it would be necessary to agree in advance to continue to contribute the 16% that we already do of shared costs. My question is: is the supposition correct that if we are to arrive at a conclusion that allows us to participate in CSDP missions because it is in our foreign



policy interest to do so, and we are to have a chance of sufficient sway over those missions, it is going to take a substantial degree of investment?

Mr Angus Lapsley: Those are two excellent questions that definitely go to the heart of the discussions that we are going to have. On political accountability, as you hint, Lord Stirrup, there is probably a difference between civilian missions or military missions that do not have an executive mandate—capacity-building or training missions—and missions where you are actually asking service personnel to put themselves at risk or to carry out executive or kinetic operations. It is clear that the further down that line we go, the higher the degree of political oversight that we would need. It is already the case now as a Member State that if we put our personnel into a CSDP mission we reserve the ultimate right to stop them doing whatever they are doing or to pull them out. Obviously, that is also the case for third countries.

This may be where the analogy with the American model is worth thinking about. We sometimes put our service personnel into coalition situations with the Americans, and we have to work out what we are prepared to have them do under American command and at what point we want to exert direct political control over what they are doing. That is exactly the kind of issue that we would need to work through with the EU.

Your investment point is also really interesting. When I cite the analogy of our involvement with the US, I would not expect us to be anywhere near that level of investment with the EU. We have 800 to 900 secondees to the military in the US. We are not talking about that scale at all with the EU. Indeed, in the European security space, our absolute priority is NATO and making sure that the UK has people in the right places and in the right jobs within the NATO system. So I think we would be talking at a much smaller scale than that.

The other point I would make is that there is perhaps a difference between what you are prepared to invest in permanent structures—for example, having secondees in the European Union military staff or in INTCEN, which is the body that handles intelligence material—and putting people into a particular mission. If you are looking mission-by-mission or operation-by-operation, you can scale it according to the level of interest that you have in an operation. If we were ever to do anything at scale—the highest end of the European scale, really, is a battlegroup operation—and if you were to go anywhere near that kind of scale obviously you would need very substantial insight into the operation and its political control. Equally, if you are contributing a couple of people to a mission, you can probably do with something a bit lighter. So we need to look at that distinction between what we need to invest structurally and how we would scale things operation-by-operation.

Lord Stirrup: My point was really on the structural side. If you want to have, come the day, the degree of influence that we would seek, it is no



good seeking it on the day. You have to establish your position in advance, which means investment in people and some degree of permanence, and it perhaps means investment in overall basic funding. That is my question, I suppose: would you agree with that?

Mr Angus Lapsley: I agree. If we were to go down this route, and if it were what the European Union also wanted to do, we would have to reach judgments on what scale of investment in a structural presence in Brussels was needed. On the common funding point, the current arrangements for third countries are that they do not contribute to the Athena common costs mechanism for a military operation if the European Union judges that their contribution to the mission as a whole is significant. I think I am right in saying that so far the EU has always judged that a third country's contribution is significant, for the fairly obvious reason that if a third country offers to put some people into a mission and is then told, "Right, according to your GDP scale, that means you are on the hook for 10% or 15% of the overall costs of the mission", that is a fairly powerful disincentive to make the offer in the first place.

Lord Stirrup: I am sorry to hammer the nail completely through the table, but my point is that surely if we were to agree in advance that we would continue to contribute, that might be quite a strong incentive for the EU to reach an accommodation with us on the overall relationship—or do you think they do not really care about our money?

Mr Angus Lapsley: Oh no, we definitely care about our money—

Lord Stirrup: No, do they care about our money.

Mr Angus Lapsley: Oh, they care about our money, too. I think everyone cares about money. The scale of our people contribution, the scale of our financial contribution and the level at which we might be prepared to consider contributing to operations in the future are the kinds of things that will be on one side of the scales as we look at this negotiation, and on the other side of the scales will be the degree of access and insight into and oversight of missions that the EU is prepared to give us. But it is quite hard to answer in the abstract where we will come out.

Lord Stirrup: I understand. Thank you.

The Chairman: That brings us to the end of this evidence session. Thank you both very much for coming in today. It is the first of our sessions on the Committee's new inquiry into Brexit Common Security and Defence Policy missions. I think we might have some more questions to ask as we see the negotiations progress. Given the time, I will not ask this question, but you might bear it in mind: if you had a wish list, how would you like to see the role of the UK as a third country, and would you prefer that we were not even having this discussion at all? I will leave it at that. This public session is coming to a close. I remind you that the transcript will be sent to you for any corrections. Thank you very much for coming in this morning.