



Ben Hayes, report's author and a member of Statewatch

“The arms industry has lobbied for the establishment of an EU military budget for R&D”[±]

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“Addressing poverty, inequality and despair as part of a broader “human security” strategy would do far more to reduce these “threats” than the current military and corporate security agenda”.

P.- What has been the role played by the arms industry lobby on the design of the External and Security Policy of the European Union?

R.- Broadly, the arms industry has been lobbying for the development of the EU military capability, the establishment of an EU budget for military R&D and procurement, and the involvement of the defence sector in EU policies on security and space policies. This is precisely the trajectory of current EU policy.

What have been the main stages on the definition of such policy and the increase of the military industry lobby?

Following the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999, we have witnessed the rapid militarization of the EU - a de facto EU defence ministry has been set-up in Brussels, EU military forces have been deployed and the European Defence Agency has been created. These initiatives have been accompanied by an increasing role for the military industry in the development and implementation of EU policy. The big four EU arms companies (BAE systems, EADS, Thales and Finmeccanica), for example, were part of the EU Advisory Group on Aerospace, while BAE and EADS were among the few “experts” called by the EU Constitution’s working group on defence. All four companies were part of the unprecedented “Group of Personalities” convened to advise the EU on “security research” and three of them are now represented on the European Security Research Advisory Board. With the establishment of the EU Security Research budget we now see these companies and many others from the defence sector being paid by the EU to develop “security technologies” and advise the EU on security policies. We also see the big arms companies cropping-up in the EU’s space programme - two-thirds of the money for the EU’s “Galileo” satellite system, for instance, has come from a military-led consortia in what was the EU’s

[±] Ben Hayes’ report *Arming Big Brother: The EU’s Security Research Program* is available at the Peace Research Center (CIP-FUHEM) webpage.

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first “public-private partnership” (the so-called “third way” championed by “New Labour” in Britain).

What is the main ambition of the different programs on defence and security created by the EU?

There are different strands and perspectives. First there is the so-called EU “area of freedom, justice and security”, which is supposed to be about police and judicial cooperation between the member states to combat terrorism and organised crime. Then there is the “common foreign and security policy” which has been expanded to include “peacekeeping” and “crisis management” - the rationale behind the EU military capability.

However, in practise the boundaries between these two areas, between “internal security” (policing) and “external security” (defence), are increasingly blurred. The EU “Security strategy” of 2003 basically merges the “threats” of “terrorism”, “failed states”, regional conflicts and “organised crime” and proscribes as a solution - not unlike the “Neo-cons” in the US - global policing, pre-emptive action and “threat prevention”, including military intervention where necessary. At the same time, as I’ve just explained, we see this increasing role for the “military industry complex” in both internal and external security.

What are the most dangerous risks of such programs and policy?

The danger is that the policy agenda is skewed towards a particular brand of security based on military, police and corporate logics rather than Europe’s supposed “common values” - democracy, human rights, social justice and so on.

We can already see that the new EU security agenda is very different to the one envisaged by the EU treaties. Our internal security policy now includes, for example, mandatory fingerprinting of all EU passport holders and the mandatory retention of all telecommunications traffic data for law enforcement access. Barely reported, these are among the most intrusive laws in the world and are transforming policing at the expense of civil liberties and privacy. We are also witnessing the creation of a host of EU police bodies and databases. Our external security policy, meanwhile, has quickly developed from “peacekeeping” and “crisis management” capabilities to preparations for the deployment of EU “battlegroups” (from 2007).

At the same time, the EU’s traditional foreign policy approach - aid, trade and development - is in crisis and is increasingly being hijacked by security demands (such as “counter-terrorism” and migration management commitments from third states) and military plans for external intervention.

How would you describe the role played by Mr. Javier Solana on the definition of the security programs of the European Union and his relation with the arms industry lobby?

The EU security strategy of 2003 is often referred to as the “Solana strategy” and certainly originated from his office and reverberated through his speeches. I think the role of Mr. Solana and his advisors has been one of bridging the political gap between the various elements of this agenda. It helps that he was previously head of NATO and now simultaneously occupies the position of Secretary-General of the Council of the EU, High Representative of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy and head of the European Defence Agency. This I think keeps him too busy to have much to do with the arms industry. Certain names do appear time and again in connection with the military industry lobby but it is of course difficult to document.

In your report, you inform that the European Parliament and the civil society have not been implied on the debate about the defence and security policies. Since the publication of your report has this position changed? In other words, do you feel that you have somehow raised an alarm?

The report has been downloaded over 25,000 times from the Statewatch website alone and attracted a fair bit of media attention so there has certainly a lot of interest. It has certainly led to some debate inside and outside the Parliament but this an area where - with the crucial exception of expenditure - the Parliament has little say. So it remains to be seen whether the effect we've had is any more than a ripple.

You say that the philosophy of preventive attacks has influenced the EU external policy nowadays. In what way?

As I suggested earlier, we see this philosophy clearly in the EU security strategy. It is based on a crude Cold War logic that says the only way of preserving "our way of life" is to counter the threats of organised crime, terrorism, failed states etc. at their source. Just as in the Cold War era this philosophy barely masks the broader economic and geo-strategic agenda.

What can be the way to oppose the increasing power of the military-industry lobby on the European Union?

First of all the EU must be held accountable. EU expenditure on military research in any guise is extremely dubious from a legal perspective and pressure from parliaments could force the issue at the European level. We also need full scrutiny of EU military policy and meaningful debate about its current and future trajectory. At present, however, the EU is largely unaccountable, there is only minimal interest from parliaments and the media in this issue and there is no public debate whatsoever. So civil society is in a very difficult and defensive position; all we can really do is try to develop coalitions and campaigns and raise awareness. But organised resistance to neo-liberalism and the European Union is growing and will continue to do so as long as the political agenda favours the needs of elites and multinationals above those of the people of Europe.

You say in your report that EU seems to imitate the USA and wants to be at the Washington level in the defence industry and militar investments. What would be the "European way" to oppose threats such as terrorism and war? What would be, in your opinion, the main principles of an ideal European Security Policy?

Of course everyone agrees with proportionate steps to increase security but these must be accompanied by attempts to address the root causes of complex phenomena like terrorism and crime. Addressing poverty, inequality and despair as part of a broader "human security" strategy would do far more to reduce these "threats" than the current military and corporate security agenda.