



## **Defense Matters**

The Square, Glass Entrance

Rue Mont des Arts 1, 1000 Brussels

November 26, 2013

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EUROPE**

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## **Background**

Defense spending is eminently easier to justify, especially to the general public, when there are concrete reasons for such expenditures. That is why the ideas of “conflict prevention” and “emerging threats” are so difficult to sell.

Consider that after 2014, NATO will find itself—for the first time in a long while—without a major operation to run. Add to that the U.S. pivot toward the Asia-Pacific. Top it off with the global financial crisis, which continues to place great strain on Alliance member and partner state economies, and it is clear that government leaders are going to find it increasingly difficult to justify continued (if not increased) defense spending. The layman’s rationale that NATO must contribute to the stability of the international system is no longer enough for national publics. Yet there is a wide gap between the reality of our global security landscape and perceptions of it at home.

It is within this context that in early 2013, NATO commissioned eight think tanks from different NATO member states—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States—to ask national business representatives, civil society members, and policymakers whether defense, and by interpretation NATO, is still important.

Six months later, the results of this research project are in; a summary of their findings is provided on page three. The basic message is: yes, defense matters. What is less clear is how and to what extent defense should take priority over issues that are closer to home for many people, like economic growth, health, and education.

With the current economic malaise, a majority of Europeans believe defense is logically and rightfully prone to spending cuts in times of crisis. But defense cannot just be about budgets. Defense also means safeguarding certain values and norms, and goes to the core of what the West stands for in terms of its way of life and outlook on the world.

## **Conference Purpose and Goal**

In a bid to contribute to this existing debate on defense in Europe and for NATO as a whole, Carnegie Europe will host a public conference in Brussels on November 26, 2013. The primary purpose of this meeting will be to reflect on the conclusions from the Defense Matters research project while stimulating a frank, critical, and constructive discussion on how and why defense matters for the citizens of both European and North American NATO allies.

This conference aims to give participants the opportunity to openly deliberate the role of defense and the part that countries can play in maximizing defense investment through national and international policies that safeguard our well-being and economic security.

It will convene some 150 representatives from NATO member states, European institutions, think tankers, defense and foreign policy communities, industry, and civil society.



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## Agenda

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1:30 – 2:00 p.m. **Registration**

2:00 – 2:05 p.m. **Welcome remarks**

Jan **Techau**, Director, Carnegie Europe

2:05 – 2:20 p.m. **Keynote**

Jamie **Shea**, Deputy Assistant Secretary General, Emerging Security Challenges Division, NATO

2:20 – 2:25 p.m. **Introduction**

General Knud **Bartels**, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee

2:30 – 4:00 p.m. **Session I: “Why Defense Actually Matters”**

*Discussants* Paul **Chapin**, Director, Atlantic Council of Canada

Ludwig **Decamps**, Director, Armament and Aerospace Capabilities Directorate, Defense Investment Division, NATO

Etienne **de Durand**, Senior Fellow and Director of Security Studies, Institut français des relations internationales

Jacob **Stokes**, Research Associate, Center for a New American Security

*Moderated by* Judy **Dempsey**, Nonresident Senior Associate, Carnegie Europe, and Editor in Chief, Strategic Europe

4:00 – 4:30 p.m. **Coffee and tea**

4:30 – 6:00 p.m. **Session II: “The Way Forward for Nations”**

*Discussants* Maria Eleni **Koppa**, Member of the European Parliament

Peter Viggo **Jakobsen**, Associate Professor, Institute for Strategy, Royal Danish Defense College

Alex **Nicoll**, Senior Fellow for Geo-economics and Defense Director, International Institute of Strategic Studies

Tomáš **Valášek**, Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to NATO

*Moderated by* Jan **Techau**, Director, Carnegie Europe

6:00 – 6:10 p.m. **Closing remarks**

*Led by* Jan **Techau**, Director, Carnegie Europe

6:10 p.m. **Cocktail reception**



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## Discussion Paper

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NATO has asked eight think tanks from eight different countries to assess the national debate on defense and to provide recommendations on how governments and NATO can help stimulate this debate.

The contributing think tanks include: the Atlantic Council of Canada (Canada); Institut français des relations internationales (France); Atlantic Initiative (Germany); Istituto Affari Internazionali (Italy); the Hague Center for Strategic Studies (the Netherlands); DemosEurope (Poland); the International Institute for Strategic Studies (United Kingdom); and the Center for a New American Security (United States).

This working paper summarizes the results—the eight reports—and is meant to kick-start the discussion at public conference hosted by Carnegie Europe in Brussels on November 26, 2013.

### Conclusions From the Eight Reports

The popular view of defense and the character of the strategic discourse among elites vary widely in the eight states. The national discourse on defense is an expression of a specific political culture. In Germany, for example, pacifist views dominate the political culture, while the British are “comfortable with British forces playing a robust combat role.”

Nevertheless, besides the differences, there are some general trends common to all eight countries:

1. There is broad support for NATO and defense in general.
2. But there is also a lack of interest in the specifics and details of defense among the wider public. In many countries, there is a lack of strategic debate.
3. The strategic community is often detached from the general public.
4. There is deep skepticism of military operations abroad, which has been reinforced by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
5. Threat perception is diverse, as traditional threats no longer seem to be dominant. It is unclear what threats NATO protects member states against.
6. Defense spending has some general support, but other (social) issues are seen as more pressing.

While support for allies still enjoys broad and solid backing in the United States, the Americans want the Europeans to increase their military capabilities. This can also be done by making better use of existing funds.

The economic argument that having a successful defense industry is good for a country's economy does not resonate equally everywhere: this argument is supported in France and Poland, but only partly in Germany and Italy.



The reports offer a number of recommendations on how to stimulate the debate in the eight countries. Among the recommendations are the following:

1. Improve the dissemination of information on NATO, defense, and operations.
2. Address policymakers and opinion leaders.
3. Bring military personnel in touch with the general public.
4. Use new media.
5. Talk more about success stories.
6. Talk more about threats, and specify threats and risks to NATO and its members.
7. Highlight individual countries' contributions to NATO.
8. Describe defense spending not as a cost but as an investment.
9. Emphasize NATO's role as an insurance.

## Stimulating the Debate

1. Does more information and more communication equal more support, or could more visibility also backfire, waking “sleeping dogs” and stimulating antimilitary views and emotions? Isn't there a risk that a broader public debate will weaken support for defense instead of strengthening it?
2. Does one size fit all? Is there only one way to stimulate the debate on defense and NATO in member states, or is each country an individual case that can only be addressed in a specific, tailor-made way?
3. Who should lead the process of making defense a more prominent matter in public discourse? Should NATO promote a debate, should national governments take the lead, or should think tanks be at the forefront?
4. What is the priority, stimulating debate among experts (the broader foreign policy community, policymakers, academics, and the media) or among the general public?
5. Can NATO talk more specifically about threats to the transatlantic community without provoking internal splits and offending important partners?
6. What are the top three recommendations to improve the public debate on defense?
7. Are national ambitions the key to convincing policymakers and populations that defense matters?

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