

We should not barter away our defence forces

Bernard Jenkin spoke to the Conference about the need to distance ourselves from the European army which lies behind the Common defence and Security policy of the EU.

He reminded us that out of NATO's total annual spend of \$912 billion, the current EU only accounts for around \$165bn, with the UK contributing \$61bn. The EU is keen to keep us locked into their defence ambitions, given the relative scale of our contribution.

The EU Negotiating mandate has gone beyond the Political declaration of the Withdrawal Agreement, and asks for a EU/UK Security Partnership. The UK Negotiating Mandate includes no such item. Defence is not mentioned separately, but is covered by the general provisions about "standard third country participation in certain Union programmes".

The UK does not wish to be part of PESCO, permanent structured co-operation. The UK may be willing to join EU led task forces or missions as an ally, or may invite EU forces to join in missions we are planning. The main thrust of UK military activity will continue to be through NATO. We rely on NATO support for our defence against potential major global aggressors, and work closely with our NATO allies and the UN on peace keeping and peace making missions around the world.

There are some in the official government of the UK keen to bind us into European common defence procurement, as a first step to making us more interdependent with the smaller and less versatile forces of the continental countries outside France. The present UK government has set out a mandate to move us more in the direction of independent forces collaborating closely through NATO.