

DEBATE CLUB
THE EU AT THE CROSSROADS

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| Topic 1 | European Defence Force |
| Summary | Should the European Union have its own standing army? |
| Context | In recent years, there has been much discussion regarding the concept of a European Defence Force (sometimes referred to as the “Euro Corps” or EDF). Such a standing armed force would be drawn from EU member-nations and operate under EU control, in contrast to the existing NATO grouping which has the United States as a prominent and influential member. As is often the case with matters of national and regional defence, there is much controversy as to whether the European Defence Force is a good idea. Debates on the Euro Corps can often revolve around the proposed role of NATO in the post-Cold War era, and it is important to realise that the significance of the EDF may resonate beyond the borders of the European Union. |
| Motion | The European Union needs a dedicated Defence Force. |
| Useful Sites | Eurocorps. <i>Headquarters Eurocorps</i> . Accessed September 7, 2011 http://www.eurocorps.org/ Ioannides, I. (4 September, 2002). ‘The European Rapid Reaction Force: Implications for Democratic Accountability’, <i>BICC Working Paper</i> , No.24, Accessed September 7, 2011 http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1398915 The UN Refugee Agency (31 January, 2008) <i>Comoros: Military invasion of Anjouan imminent, government warns</i> . Accessed September 7, 2011 http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,...COM,47b4614c0.0.html Wagner, W. (May 19, 2007). <i>The Democratic Deficit in the EU’s Security and Defense Policy – why bother?</i> , <i>EUSA Tenth Biennial International Conference Montreal Canada</i> , Accessed September 7, 2011 http://aei.pitt.edu/8061/1/wagner-w-07b.pdf |

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| Topic 2 | European Parliament Elections |
| Summary | Should European elections be held in one voting district across the whole of Europe? |
| Context | The European Parliament is the democratic organ of the European Union. Elections are done using proportional representation meaning there are multiple candidates elected from each constituency. In the European Union’s case each constituency can be very large with the biggest covering the whole of Germany. There is a lot of standardization, but the member states still control some aspects of the elections such as deciding constituencies within certain limits (as with the overall system they need to be proportional to population, so the UK could not give Scotland more seats than London and the South East). From 2014 voters will have the opportunity to elect the President of the European Commission even if this is only indirectly because it will depend on which party wins most seats in the European Parliament. The proposal for this debate is that the current mishmash of differing voting districts decided by member states be replaced with one single voting district across the whole of Europe. Every elector’s vote would count for the same and would be voting for the same options. The electoral system would remain proportional representation as it is at the moment. There have been proposals for this in the past, in 2010 there was a proposal by Andrew Duff of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs that 25 MEPs should be elected by transnational lists however this would hardly be a sweeping change across the whole parliament. There may be some quite far reaching consequences of this system; for example it would make a lot of sense if rather than every party competing for votes each block within the European Parliament should compete. |
| Motion | The current system of differing voting districts should be replaced by the system ‘one person – one vote’ across Europe as one constituency. |

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| Useful Sites | <p>‘EU elections: Polling day will stay on Thursday, insists government’, <i>BBC News</i>, 13 March 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21764632</p> <p>Directorate-General for Communication Public Opinion Monitoring Unit, ‘European Parliament Eurobarometer: One year to go until the 2014 European elections’, <i>European Parliament</i>, EB 79.5, 21 August 2013 http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2013/election/synth_finale_en.pdf</p> <p>Duff, Andrew, ‘Draft Report on a proposal for a modification of the Act concerning the election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage of 20 September 1976’, <i>Committee on Constitutional Affairs</i>, 12 April 2010, http://andrewduff.eu/en/document/european-parliament-electoral-reform/draft-report-european-parliamentary-reform.pdf</p> <p>‘European elections 2014: Different this time?’, <i>EurActive.com</i>, 18 September 2013, http://www.euractiv.com/eu-elections-2014/eu-elections-2014-time-different-links dossier-530239</p> <p>‘Member countries of the European Union’, Europa.eu, http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/member-countries/index_en.htm, accessed 7 May 2013</p> <p>European Parliament, ‘How many MEPs will each country get after European Parliament elections in 2014?’, <i>Europarl.europa.eu</i>, 13 March 2013, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/content/20130308STO06280/html/How-many-MEPs-will-each-country-get-after-European-Parliament-elections-in-2014</p> |
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| Topic 3 | European Federalism |
| Summary | Should the European Union become the United States of Europe? |
| Context | <p>At a minimum a federal Europe would involve the loss of national vetoes and a considerable strengthening of the powers of the EU Commission, probably with direct Europe-wide elections for an EU Federal Government (perhaps with a President on the U.S. model?). A European Government would be responsible for defence, foreign policy, economic policy, agriculture and external trade, immigration, and the central taxation and justice systems needed to support these functions – much as the federal governments of states such as the U.S.A, Canada, Germany and Australia are at present. Federalism implies a strong degree of subsidiarity, with power devolved to the lowest appropriate level, rather than a very centralised state (such as France or Britain were before reforms in the 1990s). This implies that the current states within the EU, while losing overall independence, would retain considerable powers over issues such as culture, education, law and order, infrastructure, and the taxation and justice systems required to support these, as the states within the U.S.A do today. The location of powers over welfare, pensions and other social issues is less clear, as is the federal government’s relationship with the existing European Central Bank. Devotees of subsidiarity would, however, also wish national governments to devolve other existing powers downwards to their regions and local authorities, further weakening the role of today’s national politicians within a future federal Europe. It is, therefore, very important for a Proposition on this topic to clarify what kind of federal Europe is at issue.</p> |
| Motion | The European Union should become a federation of states speaking with one voice on the international arena. |
| Useful Sites | <p>Speech: more integration would boost European cooperation</p> <p>European 'federalism' isn't what you've been told it is</p> <p>Interview: Federalism? What Federalism? A European debate</p> <p>Europe's Federalism Debate Revived - Social Europe Journal</p> <p>Papers on Federalism in Europe and the World</p> |

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| Topic 4 | A Referendum on UK Membership in the EU |
| Summary | Should the UK hold a referendum on its membership in the EU? |

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| Context | The United Kingdom held its first national referendum, or direct-democracy vote, in 1975. This vote confirmed UK membership of the European Economic Community (EEC). Since 1975, the EEC has evolved into the European Union (EU), a political as well as economic coalition of countries that fundamentally alters its member states' sovereignty. The concept of parliamentary sovereignty, the right of Parliament to make or unmake any law, has traditionally been the cornerstone of the British political system. But given that EU law now supersedes UK law, proponents of holding a referendum argue that the political system and even the social contract have been fundamentally altered without the permission of UK citizens. ¹ Meanwhile, opponents of the referendum insist that EU membership is too important to gamble on uninformed public opinion and that referendums are inconsistent with the British tradition of representative democracy. |
| Motion | The UK government should hold a referendum on EU membership and maintain or end membership of the EU dependent upon which option receives the most votes. |
| Useful Sites | BBC NEWS DESK, February 1, 2011. "MPs reject Tory MP's call for 'in-out' EU referendum." The BBC, accessed June 15, 2011. BOWLBY, CHRIS, November 16, 2009. "If the UK left the EU what would the consequences be?" The BBC, accessed June 16, 2011. CHAPMAN, JAMES, February 11, 2011. "Day we stood up to Europe" The Daily Mail, Accessed June 27, 2011. CLEGG, NICK, October 15, 2003. "We need an EU referendum." The Guardian, accessed June 14, 2011. DAILY MAIL COMMENT, March 14, 2011. "Europe and the case for a referendum." The Daily Mail, accessed June 22, 2011. ELLIOTT, MARK, 2004. "United Kingdom: Parliamentary Sovereignty Under Pressure." International Journal of Constitutional Law, Volume 2, Issue 3, pp 545-627. FORSYTH, JAMES, January 2, 2011. "Two rebellions ready to wreck Cameron's 2011." The Daily Mail, accessed June 21, 2011. LITOBARSKI, JOE, February 18, 2011. "In or out? Labour shouldn't fear a referendum on Europe." The Guardian, accessed June 15, 2011. |

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| Topic 5 | EU Constitution |
| Summary | Should the European Union (EU) adopt a Constitution? |
| Context | <p>The European Constitution is an attempt to provide an overall restructuring of the current EU institutional layout in order to deal with important challenges such as continuing EU enlargement, the EU integration process and the increasing role the EU is expected to play in world affairs. The first proposition for a Constitutional Treaty was signed in Rome on the 29th October 2004. It combines and extends the different treaties on which the EU is currently based and presents it as one document that needs to be ratified by all member states in order to take action.</p> <p>The treaty document proposes a series of important reforms. These include combining the three pillars into which current EU policy is divided, and clarifying in more detail the role of the EU Parliament, Council and Commission, giving almost exclusive legislative initiative and executive power to the Commission.</p> <p>The Constitutional Treaty was ratified by national parliaments or referenda in eighteen EU member states, but has been rejected in referenda by two more. The 'no' votes need not have stopped the ratification process elsewhere, but a Constitutional Treaty cannot come into effect without the approval of all 28 EU states so in practice the proposed constitution was dead.</p> <p>The situation with EU law has undergone a major change in 2009 when the Lisbon treaty came in action. The Lisbon treaty contains many of the changes the constitution attempted to introduce, for example: A politician chosen to be president of the European Council for two-and-a-half years; a new post - called High Representative - to give the EU more influence on the world stage and others. However there are also differences between the Constitution and the Lisbon treaty, which made the ratification of the treaty a fact. On an examination of the text of both documents, it seems that the substance of the Lisbon Treaty is largely similar to that of, the now defunct, the European Constitution in terms of the reforms it institutes. However, much of the symbolism of the Constitution has not been reproduced in the Lisbon Treaty. More significant perhaps, is the fact that the term "Constitution" appears nowhere in the text of the Lisbon Treaty. The Lisbon Treaty possesses several distinct features which are highly indicative of the fact that it is not a formal constitution as such. In addition to its lack of symbolism, the Lisbon treaty was not designed to stand alone but rather, merely, to amend the existing treaties.</p> |

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| Motion | The European Union should adopt a Constitution. |
| Useful Sites | <p>Aznar, José María, 'Europe must reset the clock on stability and growth', FT.com, 16 May 2010, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/6e07c4f0-6115-11df-9b00-00144feab49a.html#axzz...</p> <p>BBC News, 'Ireland rejects EU reform treaty', 13 June 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7453560.stm</p> <p>Bellotti, Sarah M., and Dale, Reginald, 'U.S. Media Snubs New EU Leaders', Center for Strategic & International Studies, http://csis.org/blog/us-media-snubs-new-eu-leaders</p> <p>Europa.eu, 'Basic information on the European Union' http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/index_en.htm</p> <p>Free Europe, 'Building the EU SuperState: what leading EU politicians say about it', 26 September 2005, http://www.free-europe.org/english/2005/09/building-the-eu-superstate-wh...</p> <p>Gjørtler, Peter, 'Lisbon Treaty - the Reform Treaty of the European Union', grayston & company, November 2009 http://www.graystoncompany.com/gco/articles/G&C_article_Lisbon_Treaty_PG_</p> <p>Kovacheva, Ralitsa, 'Is the EU ready for a new Treaty?' euinside, 7 September 2011 http://www.euinside.eu/en/analyses/is-the-eu-ready-for-a-new-treaty</p> |

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| Topic 6 | A Referendum on Any New EU Treaty |
| Summary | Should EU treaties be ratified by public vote rather than by national parliaments? |
| Context | <p>The EU is the economic and political partnership of 28 member states, primarily based in Europe. Based on precedence set from treaties signed in the wake of the Second World War, the European Union established itself under its current title in 1993. Since this time it has grown in size and undergone several constitutional changes, most notably the Treaty of Lisbon, which came into force in 2009. Up until now the process through which proposed amendments are accepted has not been uniform. For example a draft Constitution drawn up in amended form at a European Summit in June 2004 caused a divide when some countries ratified the treaty through national parliaments while others opted for a referendum within their country. As a result the Treaty was rejected by popular vote in France and the Netherlands, and abandoned. In October 2007 the idea was again resurrected in the Lisbon Treaty that proposed similar reforms to the draft Constitution in order to streamline the workings of the European Union. However unlike the Reform Treaty, when the Lisbon Treaty needed to be ratified many member states including UK, Poland and the Czech Republic that had previously decided on holding a referendum passed the Treaty through national parliaments, leaving only Ireland and Denmark committed to holding a referendum on these important constitutional changes. In France and the Netherlands the decision to not repeat the public vote was broadly accepted, in spite of the previous no vote. However in Britain Gordon Brown's decision to not hold a referendum was met with heavy criticism. Proponents of holding a referendum for constitutional changes to the EU suggest that such important changes, which affect national sovereignty, need to be ratified by public vote in order to remain democratic. However opponents argue that referendums are ineffective and that the public know little about EU constitutional issues and therefore would not vote effectively.</p> |
| Motions | <p>New EU treaties should be put to public vote in the member states.</p> <p>Referendums are ineffective in dealing with EU constitutional issues.</p> |
| Useful Sites | <p>'An unloved Parliament', <i>The Economist</i> (7 May 2009), viewed on 13 June 2011 http://www.economist.com/node/13610228</p> <p>'Elections 2009', <i>eu4journalists</i> viewed on 13 June 2011 http://www.eu4journalists.eu/index.php/dossiers/english/C90/386/</p> <p>'The EU Reform Treaty – A Response to Criticisms', <i>Euromove</i> (October 2007), viewed on 13 June 2011 http://www.euromove.org.uk/index.php?id=6658</p> <p>'The EU treaty – what Lisbon contains', <i>the Economist</i> (25 October 2007), viewed on 13 June 2011 http://www.economist.com/node/10024471?story_id=10024471</p> <p>'The Further Enlargement of the EU: threat of opportunity?' <i>House of Lords European Union Committee</i> (23 November 2006) viewed on 13 June 2011 http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200506/ldselect/ldeucom/273/273.pdf</p> <p>'The Lisbon Treaty for Dummies', <i>The Independent</i> (15 May 2008), viewed on 13 June 2011 http://www.independent.ie/national-news/lisbon-treaty/the-lisbon-treaty-for-dummies-1376340.html</p> |

