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ESDP and NATO

Assuring Complementarity

F. STEPHEN LARRABEE

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ESDP and NATO: Assuring Complementarity

F. Stephen Larrabee*

Since its inception, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) has generated controversy and concern, especially in the United States. The American attitude has been ambivalent. On the one hand, Washington has wanted a stronger European partner and pressed its European allies to enhance their military capabilities. On the other hand, it has worried that a stronger ESDP could undermine NATO and weaken the transatlantic link.¹

US concerns were particularly visible in the aftermath of the Franco-British summit in St. Malo in December 1998. Many American officials worried that the summit marked an attempt to develop an autonomous military capability outside NATO. These concerns were temporarily defused at the EU summit in Helsinki in December 1999. At the summit, the EU announced that it would act only when "NATO as a whole is not

* F. Stephen Larrabee holds the Corporate Chair in European Security at the RAND Corporation. This is a revised version of a paper presented at the conference on "Transatlantic Security Cooperation: Facing The New Challenges", Rome, 17 Nov. 2003, jointly organised by the IAI, the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EU-ISS) and the Centro Militare Studi Strategici (CeMiSS) with the support of the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), the Compagnia di San Paolo, the Rome office of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the US Embassy in Rome. The views expressed here are the author's and do not reflect those of RAND or of its sponsors.

¹ For a detailed analysis, see R. Hunter, *The European Security and Defense Policy: NATO's Companion – or Competitor?* MR-1463-NDRI/RE, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002).

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engaged". This statement significantly reduced – but did not entirely eliminate – US fears that ESDP might develop as a rival to NATO.

Since the spring of 2003, ESDP has again emerged as a source of discord in transatlantic relations. The proposal by France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg at the controversial mini-summit in April 2003 to establish a separate EU operational planning headquarters in Tervuren provoked a strong negative reaction in Washington.² The US permanent representative to NATO, Nicholas Burns, went so far as to call the plan "one of the most serious dangers to the transatlantic relationship".³ His views were echoed by other high-ranking US officials.

While the controversy over the establishment of a military headquarters at Tervuren has been defused – thanks in large part to the mediation of British Prime Minister Tony Blair – ESDP is likely to remain an important item on the transatlantic agenda. The principle has been established that the EU can develop a stronger defence identity independent of NATO, even if at the moment this capacity is rather limited. Moreover, the creation of a stronger European defence policy has strong support within European publics and governments.

The key issue is whether this capacity will be developed as a complement to NATO or as a rival to it. This is likely to remain the critical consideration for Washington and many other European governments, especially Britain. At the same time, the EU is becoming an increasingly important security actor. In the future, European defence policies and decisions are likely to be increasingly made within a European framework. This will require NATO and the EU to coordinate their security policies and priorities more closely. The United States will also need to develop a stronger security relationship with the EU.

The political context

The current debate over ESDP must be seen in a broader strategic context. At heart, it is about the future of Europe – how Europe will organise itself in defence and security matters – and the nature of security cooperation between Europe and the United States. Both issues are currently in the process of redefinition. But ESDP has also been influenced by broader strategic trends. Several in particular have been important:

² For the text of the communiqué issued at the summit, see <<http://www.elysee.fr/actus/dep/2003/etranger.04-brussel/0304EUDFANG.htm>>.

³ J. Dempsey, "NATO Urged to Challenge European Defense Plan", *Financial Times*, 17 October 2003.

- The war in Kosovo

The Kosovo conflict underscored European military weakness and dependence on the United States. Nearly 80 percent of the intelligence and high-risk combat sorties were conducted by the United States.⁴ Moreover, much of the planning for the war was done in US, not NATO channels. This convinced many Europeans, especially British Prime Minister Blair, that Europe needed to improve its military capabilities. Otherwise, it would always be dependent on the United States. This led to the decision at the EU summit in Helsinki (December 1999) to create a 60,000 man Rapid Reaction Force to conduct humanitarian, peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions.

- The effort to strengthen CFSP

Many Europeans feel that the EU cannot have a serious foreign policy without a credible defence component. The EU constitutional convention has given the push for closer European defence integration. In the past, European defence was never part of the EU integration process. However, several EU members, particularly France and Germany, would like a "core group" or vanguard to have the ability to proceed with closer defence cooperation ahead, if necessary, of other EU members (structured cooperation). This was part of the motivation behind the mini-summit in Brussels in April 2003. Britain now supports the idea as well. Britain's support for structured cooperation is likely to give new momentum to closer defence cooperation within the EU in the future.

- The reorientation of US strategic interests

The reorientation of US defence policy after the Cold War also contributed to the acceleration of ESDP. As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the democratisation of Eastern Europe, Europe has become increasingly stable. Today the main threats are no longer in Europe but emanate from beyond Europe's borders. As a result, the US is increasingly focused on challenges outside Europe.⁵ This reorientation has reinforced Europe's desire to look after its own security and hedge against a weakening of US interest in Europe and the transatlantic relationship.⁶

⁴ For a detailed discussion, see J. E. Peters, S. Johnson, N. Bensahel, T. Liston and T. Williams, *European Contributions to Operation Allied Force MR-1391-AF* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001).

⁵ For a discussion of the broader impact of this reorientation on US-European relations, see J. Thomson, "U.S. Interests and the Fate of the Alliance", *Survival*, vol. 45, no.4, 2003-04, pp. 207-20.

⁶ As Rob de Wijk has noted, "Internal European security unification is founded on the recognition that Europe is no longer the United States' top priority and therefore has no choice but to develop more potent military capabilities." See R. de Wijk, "European Military Reform for a Global Partnership", *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2003-04, p. 205.

- The Bush administration's policy

The Bush administration's penchant for unilateral action, its suspicion of international law and multinational organisations, and its tendency to regard NATO as a "toolbox" from which Washington can selectively draw as it sees fit have reinforced the European desire to develop their own military capability. To some extent, ESDP has become a hedge against what many Europeans perceive as an increasingly unilateralist US foreign policy.

The administration's handling of the Afghanistan crisis – particularly its unwillingness to use NATO in the conflict – seemed to indicate that the administration was downgrading NATO in its strategic planning. In general, the administration gave the impression that it regarded the Alliance as less important and less suited to dealing with the new threats that have emerged since 11 September. This has accentuated European concerns about how much importance the administration attaches to relations with Europe and given new impetus to efforts toward European defence integration and ESDP. Increasingly, a stronger European defence component is seen by many Europeans as a prerequisite for a more equal partnership with the United States.

The impact of the Iraq crisis

While the Iraq crisis exposed deep divisions within Europe over security policy and relations with the United States, it also spurred new efforts to develop a stronger security and defence policy. This has been reflected in particular in the closer cooperation between France and Germany in the defence area. Together with Belgium, the two countries have been the main motor behind the push for "structured cooperation" in defence within the EU. Some French officials have even begun to talk of the possibility of forming a "French-German union" in certain policy areas.⁷

This closer Franco-German cooperation has been accompanied by – and to a certain extent reflected – a significant shift in German attitudes toward the United States. According to a recent poll conducted by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, in 2002, 68 percent of Germans thought a strong US leadership role in the world was desirable.⁸ In 2003, this

⁷ See H. de Bresson and A. Leparmentier, "Paris et Berlin réfléchissent à une 'union franco-allemande'", *Le Monde*, 13 November 2003; also "'Frankland' oder 'Deutschreich'?", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 4 November 2003 and "Keine deutsch-französische Union", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 22-23 November 2003. For a similar call by a leading French intellectual, see J. Juillard, *Rupture dans la Civilization* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003) p. 66.

⁸ *Transatlantic Trends 2003* (Washington, DC: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2003) pp. 10-11.

percentage dropped to 45 percent – a decline of more than 20 percent. Even more significantly, according to the same poll, there has been a pronounced shift in support for the EU over the United States. When asked whether the US or the EU was more important to German vital interests, an overwhelming majority – 81 percent (vs. 55 percent in 2002) said the EU was more important and only 9 percent (vs. 20 percent in 2002) said the US.⁹

Other polls show similar results. A poll by the IPOS Institute Mannheim revealed that only 59 percent of those polled felt relations with the United States were good. By contrast, 91 percent thought relations with France were good or very good.¹⁰ 75 percent said that there was more common ground between Germany and its West European neighbours than between Germany and the US, and 81 percent of the respondents said it was more important for Germany to create a united Europe than to have good relations with the United States.

In short, today the majority of Germans see the EU as much more important to their security and future prosperity than the United States. At the same time, France has replaced the United States as Germany's most important ally in the minds of the overwhelming majority of German citizens. Thus the United States can no longer automatically rely on the strong German support that it could in the past. This is a major structural change whose political implications go beyond differences over Iraq and which is bound to have long-term consequences not only for ESDP but also for US-European relations more broadly.

At the same time, Britain has recently adopted a more flexible position toward ESDP. In part to offset his isolation over Iraq and repair ties to France and Germany, Blair has given stronger support to the creation of an autonomous EU defence capability for crisis management in cases where NATO does not want to be involved and also to structured cooperation in defence. This support has given ESDP new momentum and a new dynamic. In addition, Britain has strengthened trilateral cooperation with France and Germany, especially in the defence area. This reflects the need for greater strategic leadership in the face of the challenges posed by enlargement. However, it has generated fears among some EU members such as Italy, Spain and some of the smaller EU countries that it represents a veiled effort by the Big Three to establish a *directoire* – a move they strongly oppose. Hence, as the trilateral cooperation proceeds, the Big Three will need to avoid giving the impression that they are forming an exclusive club designed to impose their views on the rest of the EU.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Institut für Praxisorientierte Sozialforschung, *Germany Update*, no. 13, December 2003.

The new EU security strategy

The new EU security strategy, written under the supervision of Javier Solana, the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, also shows an evolution in EU thinking about security. Of particular note is the emphasis on the global nature of the threats facing Europe. The document stresses that "in an era of globalisation, distant threats may be as much a concern as those that are near at hand" and that "the first line of defence will often be abroad". In addition, the idea of Europe as a purely civil power has been largely abandoned. As Nicole Gnesotto has noted, "the great debate of the 1980s over Europe as a civil and military power seems to be a thing of the past. Few today challenge the EU's need to be able to act externally as a global player that can call upon a complete range of resources, including military."¹¹ Rather, the key issue is whether the EU will develop the military capabilities to back up its global ambitions.

However, there are important differences between the initial version of the strategy document presented in June 2003 and the final text approved in December 2003. When the draft of the Solana document was first unveiled at the EU summit in Thessaloniki in June 2003,¹² it was widely viewed as the EU's answer to the US "National Security Strategy", released in September 2002.¹³ However, the final text has been significantly watered down.¹⁴ While the emphasis in the final text on the dangers posed by terrorism, WMD and rogue states is quite similar to the American threat analysis, the document now says very little about the use of force, an issue that has divided the EU and US – as well as the EU itself – since Kosovo. Instead, it emphasises "effective multilateralism" as the means to combat most threats.

The most important change is the elimination of the reference to pre-emption. The original version stated that "pre-emptive engagement can avoid more serious problems in the future". This sentence was widely hailed

¹¹ N. Gnesotto, "European strategy as a model", Newsletter no. 9 (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, January 2004).

¹² For the original draft, see "A Secure Europe in a Better World", Draft European Security Strategy presented by the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, to the European Council, 20 June 2003, in Thessaloniki, Greece <<http://ue.eu.int/pressdata/EN/reports/78367.pdf>>.

¹³ National Security Strategy of the United States. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/NSC/NSS.pdf>>.

¹⁴ For the final text, see <<http://ue.eu.int/pressdata/EN/reports/78367.pdf>>. For a detailed discussion, see K.-P. Schwarz, "Die erste Sicherheitsstrategie der EU", SWP-Aktuell 47 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, November 2003) and L. Zecchini, "L'EU va adopter une version moins guerrière de sa stratégie de sécurité", *Le Monde*, 9 December 2003.

in Washington as demonstrating the EU's greater realism and resolve to address new threats. However, the sentence on pre-emption was dropped in the final version, largely at the insistence of France and Germany. The final text puts emphasis on "preventive engagement" and diplomatic action to head off crises. It stresses that the new threats "cannot be tackled only by military means. Each requires a mixture of instruments." This reflects a European consensus that military power is only one means among many to be used -- and not necessarily the first.

Despite these modifications in the final text, overall the Solana document demonstrates that the EU is beginning to think globally and move beyond peacekeeping. This evolution should be welcomed in Washington. The final draft is also frank about the EU's military weaknesses and what needs to be done to overcome them. It stresses that Europe has to become more capable by transforming its militaries into more flexible, mobile forces and acknowledges that more resources need to be devoted to defence. Finally, it calls for "an effective and balanced partnership" with the United States.

These statements all point in the right direction. The key question is whether these well-meaning phrases will be translated into effective action. To do this, Europe will not only need to spend more on defence, but also to spend it differently. Europe does not lack military forces; the problem is that it doesn't have the right type of forces. Only about 10 percent of European forces are deployable overseas. Thus the ultimate test will be if the EU succeeds in creating more deployable forces which can give teeth to the global role for the EU embodied in the strategy document.

The view from Washington

In principle, the US supports a strong European defence identity and wants to see an improvement in European military capabilities. However, Washington has been concerned that ESDP not develop in a way that could weaken NATO or lead to unnecessary duplication and has reacted neutrally to efforts by the EU to develop an autonomous capability not linked to NATO. The "Berlin Plus" arrangement¹⁵ -- which provides for EU access to NATO assets and planning if NATO chooses not to get involved in a crisis -- initially defused many of Washington's concerns by ensuring a smooth link between NATO and EU crisis management processes.

However, the proposal by France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg at

¹⁵ The Berlin Plus arrangement was agreed upon in June 1996 but its implementation was prevented by differences between Greece and Turkey. These differences were finally overcome at the EU summit in Copenhagen in December 2002.

the mini-summit in April 2003 to establish a separate EU operational planning headquarters at Tervuren seemed to signal a move away from the "Berlin Plus" formula. In the eyes of many US officials, it appeared to be the first step down the slippery slope toward the creation of a European military capability outside of NATO – and thus as an implicit threat to NATO. In addition, the initiative seemed to put the emphasis on institutions rather than capabilities. What Europe needs, in the US view, is not more new institutions, but more deployable forces.

Washington's strong reaction to the Tervuren issue should be seen within the context of differences with France and Germany – especially France – over Iraq. President Chirac's emphasis on "multipolarity" was seen by many US officials as an attempt to marginalise US influence in the world and establish the EU as a "counterweight" to the United States. Even Congressmen who had traditionally considered France America's oldest ally – albeit often a difficult one – began to look at French policy in a new light and question the motives behind French policy.¹⁶ In the eyes of some American officials, France appeared to have moved to outright opposition to US policy.

US fears about France, however, seem exaggerated. The EU lacks the military muscle to act as a military counterweight to the United States. Moreover, with the recent round of EU enlargement, France's influence in the EU will be diluted. Most of the new members from Central and Eastern Europe are pro-American and strongly Atlanticist. They have made clear that they want a say in the construction of the new Europe and they are not likely to allow ESDP to be driven in an anti-US, anti-NATO direction.

Moreover, France appears to recognise that it overplayed its hand during the Iraq crisis and has adopted a much more conciliatory tone in relations with Washington lately. To accommodate British and US objections, it dropped its plan to establish a separate EU operational planning capacity at Tervuren and agreed instead to the creation of an EU planning cell at SHAPE Headquarters at Mons. Recent statements by high-ranking French officials have stressed the need to renew transatlantic relations and maintain a strong NATO.¹⁷ At the 40th Munich conference on security (Wehrkunde)

¹⁶ See, in particular, D. Bereuter and J. Lis, "Broadening the Transatlantic Relationship", *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 27, no.1, Winter 2003-04, pp. 147-62. Bereuter (R-Nebraska) is chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe of the House Committee on International Relations and president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

¹⁷ See in particular the address by French Minister of Defence Michelle Alliot-Marie, "Renewing the Transatlantic Security Partnership", Center for Strategic and International Affairs, 16 January 2004, also A. Borowiec, "France Eases Rift with United States", *Washington Times*, 22 January 2004.

in February 2004, French Defence Minister Michelle Alliot-Marie asserted that France intended to be the "motor of a revitalised NATO" and stressed the complementarity between ESDP and NATO.¹⁸ France has also committed the most troops to NATO's NRF and will send two top generals and 100 other officers to join NATO's military staff – a move which could lead to France's closer military cooperation with the Alliance.

Finally, a strong European defence identity cannot be built without Britain. Even France has come to realise that. Since mid-2003, France and Germany have both made a conscious attempt to include Britain in the effort to deepen EU defence cooperation and strengthen ESDP. This has helped to narrow differences between the three and given ESDP new momentum. At the same time, it has allowed London to influence ESDP and push it in a more NATO-friendly direction.

Britain's stronger support for ESDP has worried some US officials. However, Blair has made clear that he will not do anything to weaken NATO and there is little reason to doubt his sincerity. Britain's stronger involvement in ESDP is very much in the American interest. It acts as an important brake on French ambitions and ensures that ESDP will not be pushed in an anti-NATO direction. It also increases the chance that Europe will focus more intensively on building more deployable forces – something Washington has long advocated.

However, there is not a clear, unified view toward ESDP within the US government. Officials in the Department of Defense tend to be more concerned that ESDP could undermine NATO while those in the NSC or State Department generally take a more relaxed view of the dangers presented by ESDP. Congressional attitudes toward ESDP also tend to be more sceptical. These internal differences are likely to continue to shape US policy toward ESDP in the future, even if there is a change of administration in November 2004.

Operational planning

Operational planning is one of the most important US concerns. Some EU countries, particularly France, argue that the EU needs its own capacity for operational planning for contingencies where the US does not want NATO to be involved in managing a crisis. The US has traditionally opposed such an arrangement, fearing that it would complicate planning, result in wasteful

¹⁸ Speech to the 40th Munich Conference on Security, 7 February 2004; see also her interview, "Europäische Verteidigung auch im Interesse der NATO", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6 February 2004.

duplication, and create confusion in a crisis. This was one reason why Washington so strongly objected to the proposal put forward at the April 2003 mini-summit to establish a separate EU operational planning headquarters at Tervuren. Instead, it has wanted military planning done at SHAPE Headquarters in Mons.

The arrangements agreed to by France, Britain and Germany in the run up to the EU summit in Brussels in December 2003 represent a compromise between these two positions. As noted earlier, in deference to British and US objections France dropped the plan to set up an EU military headquarters at Tervuren and agreed that an EU planning cell would be established at SHAPE Headquarters. This arrangement should facilitate better cooperation and coordination between NATO and the EU in the future.

At the same time, the United States grudgingly gave its tacit blessing to the establishment of a small planning cell at the EU's military staff (EUMS) in Brussels. This will give the EU a limited capacity to conduct military operations independently of NATO. The establishment of this capacity represents a significant breakthrough. For the first time, the principle has been accepted that the EU can conduct operations that are independent of NATO. While initially this capacity will be small – some 30-40 officers – it is likely to grow over time.¹⁹ This will put a premium on maintaining transparency and close coordination in operational planning between NATO and the EU in the future in order to avoid confusion and crossed wires.

The right of first refusal

As the EU's capacity for crisis management increases, NATO and the EU will need to work out a more systematic division of labour regarding crisis management. The US has traditionally regarded NATO as the organisation of choice – in effect, demanding an informal "right of first refusal" for NATO. However, France and some members of the EU have opposed this on the grounds that it subordinated the EU to NATO.

The Helsinki summit in December 1999 seemed to resolve this dispute by establishing the principle that the EU would get involved in managing crises only "when NATO as a whole is not involved". This was widely interpreted as meaning that the EU would only take the lead in a crisis if NATO did not want to get involved. However, France and several other members of the EU were never really comfortable with this interpretation,

¹⁹ As one French diplomat aptly put it: "The worm will be in the apple and it will grow. That's what we want." L. Zecchini, "Defense: Londres dit "oui", à l'accord Paris-Berlin", *Le Monde*, 12 December 2003.

which they felt constricted the EU's freedom of action.

France pushed hard for the EU to get involved in the Congo crisis in June 2003 – the first EU deployment outside of Europe – and provided the bulk of the troops for the operation (Operation Artemis). The Congo operation was conducted without recourse to NATO assets and without consultation with NATO. While it is unlikely that the United States would have wanted to involve NATO in the crisis, the lack of consultation annoyed some US and NATO officials and set a bad precedent. If problems are to be avoided in the future, there will need to be closer consultation between NATO and the EU on crisis management.

In most crises, especially those involving peace enforcement and combat operations, NATO is likely to take the lead, since it has the more capable assets and infrastructure for dealing with such crises. In cases where the US does not want to use NATO, these operations could be conducted by the EU under Berlin Plus, drawing on NATO assets, or by the EU acting autonomously without recourse to NATO assets. However, the decision regarding which organisation takes the lead in managing a crisis should be the result of close consultation between NATO and the EU rather than the product of a *fait accompli* by one or the other organisation. The establishment of the EU planning cell at SHAPE should make such cooperation and consultation much easier in the future.

Collective defence

Collective defence has been a core mission of NATO since its founding in 1949. However, the draft of the EU Constitutional Treaty contains a "solidarity clause" which obligates member states to "provide aid and assistance by all means in their power", in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, if a member state is the victim of "armed aggression".²⁰ While the solidarity clause states that commitments under the clause shall be consistent with commitments under NATO for members of the EU who are also members of NATO, and that NATO shall remain the foundation of their collective defence, the clause raises a number of important issues.

First, what type of aid and assistance are the member states obliged to provide? The phrase "by all means in their power" suggests that military aid is expected – or at least not excluded. However, the EU currently does not have the military capacity to provide for the collective defence of its

²⁰ Presidency note of 9 Dec. 2003 <<http://ue.eu.int/19cpdf/03/cg00/cg0060-ad01.en03.pdf>>.

members – a fact which most members readily acknowledge. Some European officials argue that there is no danger in making such a commitment because there is no imminent danger of armed attack. Thus, they maintain, the issue is largely "theoretical". However, it is extremely unwise to make military commitments that cannot be carried out, even if the probability that they will ever have to be implemented is low.

Second, while the solidarity clause acknowledges that NATO will remain the foundation of collective defence for EU members who are members of NATO, the clause seems to overlap with Article 5 of the Washington (NATO) treaty, without adding any significant capability for European defence. Moreover, it opens up the problem of "backdoor commitments": if an EU member who is not a member of NATO were the victim of attack, NATO and the US could be dragged in "through the backdoor". This has been a long-standing US concern, especially in the Congress, which is likely to re-emerge if the clause is kept in the treaty or is not significantly modified.²¹

Third, the issue of what constitutes "armed aggression" is not clearly defined. Does it include acts of terrorism by non-state actors? What would happen if some terrorist group located on the territory of another state far from European shores launched an attack against a major European city? How would the EU respond? The EU does not have the military capacity to carry out the type of campaign that the United States launched against the Taliban in Afghanistan. This issue needs further clarification.

European caucus

ESDP also raises the possibility that a stronger ESDP could lead to the formation of a "European caucus" within NATO – that is, that non-EU members of NATO could be faced with a unified front on the part of EU members in discussions within NATO. Such a caucus has been strongly

²¹ The current wording contained in the Presidency note of 9 December 2003 was a compromise. The original text of the clause contained in the draft was Franco-German inspired and unacceptable to both pro-Atlanticist members of the EU and the neutrals. In response to the demands of the pro-Atlanticists, the references to the primacy of NATO were strengthened and further caveats were invented to satisfy the neutrals. However, since there remain a number of disagreements on other parts of the draft Constitutional Treaty, the draft text – including the solidarity clause – remains unapproved and could be subject to further modification. I am grateful to Stephan De Spiegeleire and Antonio Missiroli for their helpful comments on the background and evolution of the wording of the clause.

opposed by successive US administrations because it could significantly complicate Alliance decision-making. European allies who are members of the EU might be unwilling to compromise on hard-won positions within the EU. In addition, a European caucus could slow the process of Alliance decision-making if the Alliance had to wait until the EU had first come to a position before it could act. Finally, a European caucus could be internally divisive, pitting EU members of the Alliance against non-EU Alliance members such as Turkey, Iceland and Norway, etc.

The formation of a European caucus could have a particularly disruptive impact on relations with the United States. It might provoke a strong backlash in the Congress and result in reduced support for both NATO and the EU. Indeed, if a European caucus were to develop, the US could begin to openly oppose ESDP. EU enlargement, however, is likely to diminish the prospect of such a caucus emerging. The pro-Atlanticist countries in the EU, especially Britain, Spain and the new invitees from Central and Eastern Europe are not likely to agree to any position on defence or security matters that would be openly opposed by the United States.

The ERRF and NRF

As ESDP advances, maintaining complementarity and avoiding unnecessary competition between NATO and EU will be increasingly important. At its summit in Helsinki in December 1999, the EU Council decided to create a 60,000 man European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF) which would be able to be deployed within 60 days and sustain itself for up to a year. The force was declared operational in May 2003. However, shortfalls constrain its ability to carry out operations at the upper end of the Petersberg spectrum.

The ERRF has been the flagship of ESDP. However, the ERRF was designed with the Balkans in mind. It primarily focuses on carrying out the Petersberg tasks – humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping and crisis management, most of which are at the lower end of the conflict spectrum. This agenda, however, has been overtaken by events. Today the key threats to Euro-Atlantic security are not in Europe or on its periphery but beyond its borders.

The EU has shown signs of recognising this fact. The ESDP Presidency Report issued in Dec. 2003 specifically notes the need for the EU to enhance capabilities at the upper end of the conflict spectrum (point 7).²² In line with this, key European force providers have begun to put greater emphasis on transforming their forces for expeditionary warfare, including in conflicts at

²² <<http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/makeFrame.asp?MAX=1&BID=75&DID=78343&LANG=1&File=/pressData/en/misc/78343.pdf&Picture=0>>.

the high end of the conflict spectrum.²³ While this transformation process is likely to take a long time, it points in the right direction.

NATO too, has recently begun to focus on developing better capabilities for expeditionary warfare. At the NATO summit in Prague in November 2002, the US launched an initiative to create a NATO Response Force (NRF). The NRF will consist of 21,000 troops capable of deployment anywhere in the world on short notice – within 5 to 21 days – and sustaining itself for 30 days. The force is aimed at spearheading European Force transformation.²⁴ A prototype of the NRF was stood up, that is, activated, in October 2003. The NRF is expected to achieve full operational readiness in October 2006.

A key issue is how these two forces will relate to one another. Some Europeans fear that the NRF will undermine the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF).²⁵ However, this need not be the case. The two forces have very different purposes and are designed to address very different challenges. The NRF is a strike force to conduct high-intensity combat operations far from NATO's shores. The ERRF, by contrast, is principally aimed at carrying out stability operations on Europe's periphery. However, both the NRF and ERRF draw on the same pool of forces. If one force is deployed, forces will not be available for the other. Thus care will have to be taken that forces that are "dual hatted" are not given conflicting assignments for crisis response.

The Balkans mission

The Balkans represent an area where NATO and the EU have cooperated effectively in recent years and where the EU has begun to take over more military responsibility. In March 2003, the EU took over the Macedonian mission (Operation Concordia), which was completed on 15 December

²³ For instance, as part of its new reform of the Bundeswehr, Germany is planning to create a 35,000 man intervention force (Eingreifkräfte) for high intensity warfare. Statement by Defence Minister Peter Struck at the press conference on 13. January 2004 on the Conception and further development of the Bundeswehr <http://www.bmvg.de/archiv/reden/minister/040113_Bpk_Struck.php>. Germany is also considering abolishing conscription by 2010 – a move once regarded as politically taboo: "Struck: Freiwilligenarmee bis 2010 möglich," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 30 December 2003.

²⁴ For a detailed discussion, see H. Binnendijk and R. Kugler, *The Next Phase of Transformation: A New Dual Track Strategy for NATO* (Washington, DC: The Center for Technology and National Security Policy, National Defense University, September 2003).

²⁵ De Wijk, "European Military Reform for Global Partnership", pp 207-8.

2003. It has also provided police forces in Bosnia (EUPM) and may take over the military mission there in the near future.

In principle, transferring greater responsibility to the EU for missions in the Balkans makes sense. As the US increasingly focuses its attention elsewhere – especially on Iraq and the Middle East – pressures are likely to grow for Washington to reduce its troop commitment in the Balkans. The EU can pick up some of the slack, allowing the US to re-deploy its troops to regions where they are increasingly needed. But Western leaders need to be careful not to transfer responsibility for the Balkan mission to the EU before it is able to meet these challenges. This could undermine regional stability as well as erode support for ESDP.

Western policy should be driven by the security situation in the region not by a desire to use the Balkans as a testing ground for ESDP. This caveat applies particularly to Kosovo. The situation in Kosovo is more volatile than in Bosnia. Moreover, the status of Kosovo is still a matter of dispute. Thus, NATO should retain command of the Kosovo mission at least until the status issue has been resolved, and quite possibly beyond that, depending on how the situation on the ground in Kosovo evolves.

Most EU-led operations, moreover, will need to draw on NATO assets under the Berlin Plus arrangement. Some EU officials have argued that the Congo mission – which was conducted without the use of NATO assets – proves that the EU can operate on its own without recourse to NATO assets. However, the Congo mission was a small operation (1000 troops) for a limited time (three months). If the EU were to undertake a more demanding mission, it would require access to NATO assets, especially long-range lift and command structures.

The Mediterranean and the Middle East

There is also a need to ensure complementarity between the EU and NATO in the Mediterranean and Middle East. The EU and NATO both have Mediterranean initiatives.²⁶ While the EU's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, often referred to as the "Barcelona Process", is much broader in scope than NATO's Mediterranean initiative, it also has a security dimension. Thus there is a risk of duplication and competition between the two initiatives.

While the Mediterranean and Middle East have not been major priorities

²⁶ For a detailed discussion of NATO's Mediterranean Initiative, see F. S. Larrabee, J. D. Green, I. O. Lesser, and M. Zanini, *NATO's Mediterranean Initiative: Policy Issues and Dilemmas* MR-957-IMD (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1998) and by the same authors, *The Future of NATO's Mediterranean Initiative* MR-1164-SMD (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000).

for either ESDP or NATO in the past, both regions are likely to become more important in the future for several reasons. First, many of the main security challenges facing Western governments in the future – WMD, terrorism, ethnic strife – emanate from the Middle East. Second, the boundaries between European and Middle Eastern security are becoming increasingly blurred. Third, the stabilisation and democratisation of the Middle East is likely to be a major strategic priority for the Western governments, especially the United States, in the coming decade.

Both organisations have begun to give the Mediterranean and Middle East greater attention lately. During the Italian Presidency in the fall of 2003, the EU sponsored several seminars and meetings on the Mediterranean.²⁷ On the NATO side, there is increasing pressure from the countries participating in NATO's Mediterranean Initiative to move from dialogue to more concrete forms of military cooperation. The US is also pressing NATO to expand its outreach and training programs to the countries of the Greater Middle East and it is likely that NATO will launch a new initiative toward the Middle East at the Istanbul summit in June 2004. German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer has also called for a transatlantic initiative designed to enhance stability and democracy in the Middle East.²⁸

The more active involvement of the EU and NATO in the Mediterranean and Middle East in the future will make coordination of policy and priorities all the more necessary to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity.²⁹ In general, there would seem to be a natural division of labour between the two initiatives. Many of the key challenges in the Mediterranean and Middle East are economic and social in nature – migration, trade, unemployment, weakness of civil society, etc. The EU is much better positioned to deal with these challenges than NATO, whose comparative advantage is in "hard security" and defence. This is the area on which it should concentrate.

At the same time, the more militarily capable and outwardly oriented ESDP becomes, the greater wariness and suspicion it may provoke among the populations of the Mediterranean and Middle East.³⁰ This is particularly

²⁷ ESDP Presidency Report, COSDP 741/PESC777/CIVCOM206, 9 December 2003.

²⁸ Speech at the 40th Munich Conference on Security, 7 February 2004; P. Bocev, "Fischer lance une initiative globale", *Le Figaro*, 9 February 2004.

²⁹ Indeed, some countries, especially France, appear to be worried that a more active policy by the US and NATO could overshadow or displace the EU's Mediterranean Partnership. See J. Hoagland, "Doubt vs. Hope in the Middle East", *The Washington Post*, 15 January 2004.

³⁰ The initial critical reaction in the Middle East to the formation of EUROFOR and EUMARFOR highlights the dilemmas in this regard.

true if anti-Muslim sentiment in Europe increases. Thus both the EU and NATO will need to intensify their dialogue with the countries in the Mediterranean and Middle East to offset any negative perceptions generated by their enhanced military involvement in the region.

Capabilities and interoperability

The development of ESDP also raises important issues related to deployability and interoperability. As noted earlier, Europe's main problem is not a lack of peacekeepers, but a lack of deployable forces. Europe has over 1.7 million men and women under arms but only about 10 percent of those forces are deployable abroad. Most of these troops are incapable of operating in a coalition with US forces in high-intensity conflicts – one reason why the US preferred to conduct the Afghanistan campaign with a select group of allies rather than through NATO.

If European forces are to become more interoperable with US forces, Europe will have to put greater emphasis on their transformation. This will require additional investments, especially in areas such as C4ISR, precision-guided weapons, and air transport. Some Europeans argue that the resources for this transformation can only be found if EU members no longer organise their defence nationally but strive for a European defence. European defence integration, they maintain, will help Europe rationalise its defence procurement policies and overcome its inefficient defence spending. Thus greater European capabilities cannot be created only through NATO. They will also come about through greater defence cooperation within the EU.

Thus, if Washington really wants to see increased European military capabilities, it will need to accept a greater degree of European defence integration. This may be the only way to free up the investment funds needed for transformation of European forces. At the same time, it will be important to ensure that European force development priorities are closely harmonised with those of NATO and the US. This will require close coordination between the force development process under the EU's European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP) and the efforts undertaken by NATO through the Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC), launched at the Prague summit (Nov. 2002).

This cooperation should be carried out within the framework of the EU-NATO Capabilities Group. However, a lot of force transformation is handled outside of NATO, either nationally or through the US Joint Forces Command (JFC) and/or the Multilateral Interoperability Council (MIC), which includes a few key NATO members plus Australia and some other Asian countries. Thus it will be important to maintain linkages with these processes as well.

Partnership or a new division of labour?

The capability gap between the US and its European allies has led some Europeans to call for a new division of labour in which Europe concentrates on peacekeeping and stability operations while the US focuses on high-intensity combat operations.³¹ Others have suggested a "Monroe doctrine for Europe", in which Europe looks after its own security and the US takes responsibility for security outside of Europe.

However, there are a number of problems with the idea of a division of labour along the lines suggested above. First, such a division of labour undermines the idea of the indivisibility of security, which has been the cornerstone of NATO and transatlantic relations for the past fifty years. It thus weakens the prospects for the emergence of a genuine partnership between Europe and the United States to deal with global challenges over the long term.

It would leave Europe dependent on the United States for global security and reduce Europe's ability to influence US policy and global events. In effect, Europe would be relegated essentially to "doing the dishes", that is, cleaning up after the United States, but would have little say in major combat operations outside of Europe affecting its own security.

It would also remove the incentive for Europe to develop deployable forces capable of conducting high-intensity combat operations beyond Europe. These operations would be conducted by the United States, while Europe would concentrate on stability operations in and around Europe. Hence, the scheme would perpetuate the current capability gap. Indeed, the gap would grow as the US continues to transform its forces.

At the same time, such a division of labour is politically unsustainable in the United States. The American public is not likely to support a partnership in which Europe concentrates on low-risk stability operations while the US undertakes the dangerous combat operations. The result could be an erosion of US public support for NATO.

Finally, such a division of labour would encourage US unilateralism. With its European allies unable to contribute to addressing security threats beyond Europe, the US would be even more inclined to act unilaterally and less willing to take European views into consideration. This could lead to a serious weakening of transatlantic ties.

Instead of a division of labour in which the Europeans do stability operations and the US focuses on high-intensity combat operations, the US and Europe need to develop a genuine partnership, one which is more global

³¹ De Wijk, "European Military Reform for Global Partnership".

and more equal, to deal with new challenges.³² To achieve such a partnership, Europe needs to develop more deployable forces which can operate alongside US forces in a broad spectrum of contingencies, including high-intensity combat operations. Otherwise, the US will have little choice but to act unilaterally and Europe will be perpetually relegated to the role of the "clean-up brigade".

At the same time, if such a partnership is to develop, the United States needs to be willing to share responsibility genuinely with its allies and take their views more seriously into consideration in formulating its global strategy. This does not mean giving its European allies a veto over US policy. But it will require the US to give greater priority to working more closely with its European allies and to develop a more comprehensive global strategy which balances hard power with soft power and effective diplomacy.

The way ahead

As ESDP proceeds, the US and Europe need to ensure that it strengthens, rather than weakens, transatlantic relations. Four steps, in particular, are necessary.

- First, the United States needs to accept that Europe needs to have some autonomous operational planning capacity outside of NATO. Given US preoccupation with Iraq and the war on terrorism, the European concern that the US will not want to be involved in some contingencies is justified. Thus for those few instances when the US does not want NATO to be involved in managing a crisis, the Europeans need the capacity to act on their own. The key task is to ensure that ESDP develops in an open and transparent manner and in a way which does not weaken NATO.

- Second, US and European defence transformation processes and priorities need to be closely harmonised. The US and Europe need to develop common threat perceptions and common, or at least compatible, military doctrines. The new EU security strategy paper is a step in the right direction. It represents the beginnings of what Paul Cornish and Geoffrey Edwards have called a "European strategic culture".³³ The task now is to translate these basic guidelines into deployable forces and coordinate their

³² For a comprehensive discussion, see D. C. Gompert and F. S. Larrabee, *Europe and America. A Partnership for a New Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³³ See P. Cornish and G. Edwards, "Beyond the EU/NATO Dichotomy: the Beginnings of a European Strategic Culture", *International Affairs*, vol. 77, no. 3, 2001, pp. 587-603. For a more sceptical view, see S. Rynning, "The European Union: Towards a Strategic Culture?" *Security Dialogue*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2003, pp. 479-96.

development with US and NATO force development.

- Third, how ESDP develops, whether as a complement or rival to NATO, will depend in part on US policy. A unilateralist US approach to global challenges is likely to reinforce the inclination among many European countries – and not just France – to develop a more autonomous ESDP outside of NATO. If the US wants to avoid such a development, it needs to return to some of the basic principles that have guided its policy in the past: respect for multilateral institutions and building a strong partnership with Europe.

At the same time, it should resist the temptation to play one part of Europe off against the other ("New Europe" vs. "Old Europe"). This tactic is likely to create resentment not only among many members of "Old Europe" but also among the members of "New Europe" in Central and Eastern Europe. They do not want to be forced to choose between the United States and Europe; they want good relations with both.

- Finally, Europe needs to eschew efforts to develop the EU as a counterweight to the United States. No US president, Democrat or Republican, will support a policy that is aimed at counterbalancing or containing US power. Moreover, such a policy will divide Europe. Many European countries, especially Britain, Spain, Italy and most countries in Central and Eastern Europe, will not support a policy aimed at counterbalancing the United States. The end result of such a policy will not only be a more acrimonious transatlantic relationship, but a weaker and more divided Europe, one less able to play the larger political role to which it aspires.

A lot will also depend on developments within the EU, especially the final outcome of the negotiations over an EU Constitutional Treaty. The collapse of the EU summit in Brussels in December 2003 has underscored that the EU still remains marked by strong national differences. If these differences cannot be overcome, France and Germany and a few other EU members may be tempted to form a "pioneer group" and proceed with closer integration on their own. Such a development could split Europe and lead to a multi-speed Europe of shifting alliances, making it much more difficult for the EU to act as a coherent global actor.



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RP-1107

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Corporate Headquarters
1700 Main Street
P.O. Box 2138
Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138
V 310.393.0411
F 310.393.4818

Washington Office
1200 South Hayes Street
Arlington, VA 22202-5050
V 703.413.1100
F 703.413.8111

Pittsburgh Office
201 North Craig Street
Suite 202
Pittsburgh, PA 15213-1516
V 412.683.2300
F 412.683.2800

New York Office
215 Lexington Avenue, 21st Floor
New York, NY 10016-6023
V (Council for Aid to Education):
212.661.5800
V (New York External Affairs):
212.661.3166
F 212.661.9766

RAND-Qatar Policy Institute
P.O. Box 23644
Doha, Qatar
V +974.492.7400
F +974.492.7410

RAND Europe—Berlin
Uhlandstrasse 14
10623 Berlin
Germany
V +49.30.310.1910
F +49.30.310.19119

RAND Europe—Cambridge
Grafton House
64 Maids Causeway
Cambridge CB5 8DD
United Kingdom
V +44.1223.353.329
F +44.1223.358.845

RAND Europe—Leiden
Newtonweg 1
2333 CP Leiden
The Netherlands
V +31.71.524.5151
F +31.71.524.5191

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