Autonomous Defense?
The Role of Military Forces in EU External Affairs

Sten Rynning
Research Fellow
Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI)

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Why has the EU developed a defense dimension that makes military forces an integral part of the EU’s
eexternal relations and the integration project itself? One answer is that the defense dimension simply is
a logical consequence of the common foreign and security policy under development since the early
1990s. Thus, from the Maastricht Treaty’s reference to “the eventual framing of a common defense
policy, which might in time lead to a common defense,” the EU has gradually embraced defense
policy. NATO and EU negotiations have at times been tortuous, but at bottom the 1990s could be seen
as harboring an “inevitability” trend in Europe toward “emancipation” and “autonomy in defense”
(Cogan 2001, 134).

This answer may be inaccurate: “emancipation” – in the sense of US disengagement – may lead to
disorganization or new types of dependency rather than meaningful autonomy. To probe the substance
of claims to autonomy I critically assess the motivations that underpin EU defense policy. Why did the
ESDP come about, and why did all EU states, including states with strong Atlantic ties and traditions of
neutrality, accept its articulation? The assessment leads to the conclusion that the trend toward
autonomy may not be so “inevitability” after all.

The analysis asks to what extent the ESDP is the outcome of a revisionist reaction to the Atlantic status quo. Institutions in this framework become focal points for revisionism, especially dominating
institutions like NATO, because powerful states have used these institutions to limit the choices of less
powerful states (Gruber 2000). There are two basic motivations for opposing an institution like
NATO. First, states may strategically oppose it because they desire a new international order more
compatible with their domestic ideas and perspectives. Second, states may tactically oppose an
institution because they feel that it does not do enough to perpetuate the international order. Strategic
revisionism aims to replace the existing order; tactical revisionism to reform it.

Change in the dominant order (i.e., NATO’s position) requires a weakening of “strategic” support,
which in turn inspires “tactical” revisionism. The emergence of new institutions (i.e., the EU’s ESDP)
is thereby facilitated but its strength and durability depends on the compatibility of state preferences
(Tams 1999). In short, an institution that rests on a fragile constellation of motivations—tactical and

1 I rely on classical realist theory. Classical realism is “classical” because it aims to understand the meanings
behind social action, thus to interpret human beliefs, values, hopes and fear, and believes that social science is
inherently imperfect because human relations are in flux (Jackson 1996, 208-209; Bull 1966). Classical realism is
“realist” because it views the world as a potentially dangerous place characterized by group competition and the
absence of authority (anarchy). Since social action is meaningful, however, “sont political thought must be based
on elements of both utopia and reality” (Carr 1991, 93), and sound analysis must examine both power and purpose.
2 Institutions are thus seen as reflections of underlying power structures. This is in contrast to neo-liberalism and
neo-realism where institutions are seen as frameworks for distributing gains from cooperation.
3 I argue like Hoffmann (1974, 368) and Gruber (2000, 259) that people who govern are strongly constrained by
their “national situation” but also capable of articulating distinct policies within it.
4 Tams (1999, 81) argues that “state preferences for institutional form vary with preferences for institutional
functions.” In other words, what institutions are supposed to do is more important to states than their form. This
point ties in with the use of strategic and tactical motives in this analysis (these motives pointing to different
institutional functions). The approach is rooted in classical realist theory, as noted in footnote 1, but also in the
strategic revisionism—will itself be fragile. I arrive at the conclusion that the ESDP rests on such fragile foundations and that Europe in many ways has been brought back to the 1950s. Governments are faced with an opportunity to organize a European defense—currently the ESDP; in the 1950s the European Defense Community—but a failure to agree will, like in the 1950s, hand the initiative back to NATO.

Four analytical sections trace the evolution of revisionism and status quo up through the 1990s. The first section examines the way in which NATO emerged as dominant in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War and thus overshadowed the EU’s new Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). NATO was supported because a few states made a strategic commitment to it while other allies relied on habit rather than strategic analysis. Revisionism thus had little impact. The second section analyses the creation of a European pillar within NATO in the mid-1990s. Strategic support for NATO had weakened and gave new credence to European revisionism in modest doses. The third section then investigates how this pillar moved from NATO into the EU in the shape of the ESDP. I find that ambiguous strategic support for NATO combined with tactical revisionism created the momentum that led to the ESDP. The momentum was not one of strategic revisionism, however, and the final section reflects on the future trajectory of European defense and the role of military forces in EU external affairs in light of US preeminence, the fight against terrorism, and EU enlargement.

NATO’s preeminence, 1989-1993

The European Union came into being in the early 1990s when geopolitical upheaval invited change in foreign policies and institutional designs. NATO was not, however, overshadowed by the EU, primarily because the strategic support for NATO was strong and strategic revisionism failed to mobilize support. Before specifying this argument I examine the evolution of the EU’s security dimension and NATO in this period.

Common Foreign and Security Policy

The Treaty on European Union (TEU) (EU 1993) contains in Title V provisions for a CFSP that builds on previous political cooperation (EPC) and its provisions in the Single European Act (Title III). Article J.4 of the TEU states ambitiously that the CFSP concerns “all questions related to the security of the Union, including the eventual framing of a common defense policy, which might in time lead to a common defense.” To realize the CFSP the member states can take “common positions,” which refer to EPC practice, with member states being urged to take into account these positions in their national

Weberian concept of “elective affinity.” Weber argued that religious and economic ideas may attract each other; here I argue that ideas embedded in institutions may attract—or repulse—actors depending on political ideas developed within their “national situation.” As Max Weber (1978, 911) argued, “the striving for prestige pertains to all specific power structures and hence to all political structures.” The question here is whether states as political structures find it possible and desirable to strive for prestige within certain institutions, and to which extent they can mobilize support for institutional change.
policies. Member states, as a new measure, can also resort to “joint actions,” which are “operational” initiatives that “bind” member state policies (art. J.3 and J.4).

To realize the defense dimension, the EU member states made reference to the Western European Union (WEU), which was endowed with the responsibility of elaborating and implementing defense policies (art. J.7). The WEU on its part, with a membership that was not fully congruent with that of the EU, decided six months after the signing of the TEU to articulate its understanding of defense policy. In its Petersberg Declaration of June 1992 the WEU singled out “humanitarian actions, peacekeeping and –making operations” as its specialty (WEU 1992). In brief, the WEU situated itself in the crisis management area located between the foreign policy of the CFSP and the traditional conception of defense associated with NATO.

These advances – the CFSP coupled with the WEU – were ambiguous. Observers did not fail to notice that the voting procedure behind the “joint actions” was tortuous and the concept of joint action itself poorly defined. Treaty provisions, in short, “give rise to grave doubts about their practicability” (Edwards and Nuttall 1994, 95). Moreover, the poor integration of defense into the CFSP and the uncertainty surrounding the WEU’s long term role – the TEU referred this question to the next intergovernmental conference of 1996-1997 – bore witness to underlying disunity.

NATO, the US, and France

CFSP agreement was weak because most political effort was channeled into the reconfiguration of NATO. The US was a prime mover behind the rejuvenation of the Atlantic Alliance and its adaptation to the new Europe. NATO, in short, was a key pillar in the vision of a new world order that President Bush announced in the wake of the Gulf War in early 1991. Previous to this vision the Bush administration had demonstrated its determination to make NATO the primary interlocutor of the Soviet Union (which became Russia in December 1991), the institutional anchor for a united Germany, and the framework for allied defense planning. In all respects US policy ran up against French designs for a new European order.

The question of securing NATO’s preeminence in relation to the Soviet Union became acute already in 1988-1989. At this stage the Gorbachev vision of a “common European house,” launched in the mid-1980s, spread to Western Europe. In his speech to the UN in December 1988 Gorbachev linked unilateral military cuts to a vision of “defensive defense” and “mutual security” that, in effect, was Gorbachev’s strategy for negotiating “the entry of the Soviet Union into the Western-led community” (Blacker 1993, 105). This entry, likely along with a new security architecture, was a challenge to NATO.

There were indications that Gorbachev’s revisionism found support among important NATO allies. German Foreign Minister Genscher argued “consistently that a stable post-cold war European order had to include at its heart the Soviet Union as an equal partner in the management of European security” (Forster and Niblett 2001, 28). The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was in many ways an ideal framework for such a vision. The CSCE combined arms control
and humanitarian issues in a “package” in which all NATO and Warsaw Pact members took part. Humanitarian agreement was encouraged by Gorbachev’s domestic reforms and culminated, via a series of Conferences on the Human Dimension, in the Copenhagen Document of June 1990 – representing “the essence of Western democratic practice” (Dean 1994, 210). Arms control conducted under the auspices of the CSCE expanded past confidence building measures to arrive at regional conventional force limits written into the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty of November 1990.

France supported this new CSCE role because it could provide the framework of stability within which the Soviet Union (Russia) along with newly independent states could articulate peaceful policies, while European integration continued deepening as a means to anchor Germany in strong institutions. Deepening led to the European Union. Widening, Mitterrand suggested in his New Year’s speech, 31 December 1989, should be the task of a “European Confederation.” This vision, rooted in past French designs of an European order from the Atlantic to the Urals (Rupnik 1998, 200), was subsequently strongly criticized for excluding Eastern Europe from the EU hothouse of integration, but it was, according to Mitterrand’s advisor, conceived of to support Gorbachev and the role of the CSCE (Védrine 1996, 446).

Yet the combined EU-WEU-CSCE challenge to NATO failed to make a dent and NATO instead emerged strengthened. This is visible notably in two respects. First, NATO in November 1991 agreed to a new Strategic Concept that acknowledges the role of other institutions such as the EU and the CSCE but then stated that NATO, in terms of “membership” and “capabilities” is in a position to perform all security functions and must remain “the essential forum for consultation among the Allies” (NATO 1991b, paragraph 21). NATO’s fundamental role in European security was further enhanced during 1992 when the Alliance decided to offer itself for out-of-area crisis management operations authorized by the United Nations. The North Atlantic Council offered first in June 1992 to support CSCE peacekeeping activities, then followed up in December 1992 with a similar but by nature also more general commitment to UN. From November 1991 to December 1992 NATO effectively agreed to be the cornerstone of European security and also to enter the new and pressing business of peacekeeping.

Second, NATO reformed its military infrastructure to match these new political designs. NATO’s Defense Planning Committee (DPC) argued already in May 1990 that the greater use of multinational forces was desirable, not least because they would prevent the integrated military structures from disintegrating (Smith 2000, 68). A month later the North Atlantic Council endorsed a thorough going

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5 These security functions refer to four “fundamental tasks” identified in the Strategic Concept (paragraph 20): to provide one of the indispensable pillars of European security, to provide a transatlantic forum for security consultations, to deter and defend against any threat of aggression against the territory of any NATO member state, and to preserve the strategic balance within Europe.

6 Out-of-area refers to Article 6 of the NATO Treaty defining the area from within which armed attacks on one or more members are deemed an attack on all. The area is essentially the national territories, the Mediterranean Sea, and the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer. Logically, the NATO allies always had the possibility of conducting out-of-area operations in unity by invoking the consultation clause in Article 4 and then deciding on common action. However, the events of 1992 remain important because they turn this implicit possibility into an explicit and mutually recognized option (Dean 1994, 256-257).
reform in this direction (NATO 1991a, paragraph 9). In a new force structure NATO would be able to call on “augmentation forces” from the US to assist “main defense forces” within Europe, but the real novelty was found in the organization of Rapid Reaction Forces. A part of these forces was a creature of the past – the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force (AMF) – but a significant new force came into being – the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) – and was composed of a series of national divisions along with a new multinational division (Smith 2000, 84).

NATO’s vigor and the relative weakness of the CFSP were not least the result of the US’s strategic support for NATO and its consistent opposition to autonomous European defense plans. Since France was the lead country behind the autonomous option, US policy to a great extent targeted France. The US sought to grant NATO a new political and military role where France wished to maintain NATO as a territorial defense framework out of which new institutions could spring. Controversy ensued. In October 1990, after having outlined his New Atlanticist vision to French President Mitterrand in the spring, President Bush suggested, to Mitterrand’s great consternation, that significant EC initiatives should be coordinated with the US (Védrine 1996, 444). During the Gulf War, in February 1991, a warning delivered to European governments by US Undersecretary of State for Security Affairs Reginald Bartholomew was in Paris seen as a manifestation of American triumphalism (Cogan 2001, 49). Mitterrand later recalled that the US, in their bilateral diplomacy as well as through NATO, “increased political pressure” to make sure they could control European developments. “The propositions of George Bush … limited the freedom of action of our common institutions [the EU], in particular the first link in a common defense” (Mitterrand 1996, 138).

NATO and Europe

Allied governments reacting according to old habit reinforced the US position. Great Britain was naturally important as a key ally within NATO, and as a key military actor. Prime Minister Thatcher reacted to German unification and the Franco-German decision to respond to it by deepening the EC with rejection rather than vision. Thatcher recalls being dismayed at Mitterrand’s dismissal of her offer to create a new balance of power against the greater Germany: Mitterrand allegedly thereby betrayed the Gaullist “defence of French sovereignty” in favor of “a federal Europe” (Thatcher 1993, 791 and 798). Habit did not prevent Great Britain from acting quickly and decisively within NATO, however. By jumping “very very very quickly” according to a NATO official, Great Britain secured the command of NATO’s new ARRC and thus a prominent position in the new NATO (Smith 2000, 77). Still, the legacy of Thatcher’s longstanding hostility to European integration prevented British policymakers, also after her political fall in November 1990, from lifting “their eyes to the broader picture” and redefine British policy on NATO and the EU (Forster and Wallace 2001, 144).

Other states rallied to the American position because of transatlantic habits. Naturally, allies like Turkey and Norway were always inclined to support the US and NATO in light of their lacking membership of the EU and their focus on territorial defense for obvious geographical reasons. Small countries like the Benelux, with their strong atlanticist traditions, or Denmark, where atlanticism historically has been checked by traditions of neutrality, saw in the US presence a means to balance the
political influence of big neighbors. One might add that the general inability of the large EU countries to take control of their involvement in the break-up of Yugoslavia in the course of 1991 eroded confidence in their leadership capacity and certainly made the US victory in the Gulf War, not even a year earlier, appear all the more impressive.

France was not alone in supporting the CFSP, however – in that case it would never have materialized – but it was difficult, if not impossible for France to mold this support into a coherent whole. France supported full governmental control of the CFSP, which was also the outcome in the EU’s second pillar, and received support from Great Britain. Britain, however, opposed any tight connection between the EU and the WEU, as did Portugal, Denmark, and Ireland. Similarly, France supported the greater autonomy of the EU in CFSP affairs, and in this received support from Germany, Spain, Belgium, and Italy. By insisting on an intergovernmental pillar, however, France came into conflict with the more federalist ambition of these countries.

The lack of French alignment with the policies of Germany and Spain deserve a further comment because it reveals a basic ambiguity in French policy that policy-makers of that era simply failed to address. France wanted more Europe but feared that France would lose as Europe gained. This was a different and negative vision that did not dominate in Berlin and Madrid.

Germany wanted both NATO and the EU in the belief that Germany would gain in the process. Germany thus played its traditional straddling role between France and the US. With France, Germany became the engine in the drive for political and economic union, repeatedly setting an ambitious defense agenda and offering to upgrade Franco-German military cooperation in order to replace French (occupation) forces stationed on German soil. This upgrade took the shape of a Eurocorps that, when announced in October 1991, appeared to be a force structure intended to balance NATO’s new force structure, announced May 1991. But Germany never wavered on its political commitment to NATO and militarily remained fully integrated with the NATO force structure, taking command of the air component of the ARRC and participating in the organization of multinational units in support of NATO’s “main defense forces.”

Spain was an enthusiastic supporter of European integration in the context of Maastricht and even supported the creation of a Common Defense Policy along with a shared and integrated EU military structure (Holman 1996, 119). Spain also shared the French dislike for NATO for the reason that the US had long cooperated with Franco, against which the new political leadership reacted. Yet there was no strategic agreement between Paris and Madrid, albeit Spain generally supported Franco-German initiatives. Spain supported a degree of military “integration” that France since 1954 (EDC) and 1966 (NATO) has explicitly rejected, and it is doubtful that Paris took the “Latin option” seriously.

7 For an overview of the Maastricht negotiations see Pryce 1994.
8 This Franco-German declaration did not emerge as a bolt out of the blue in Washington because it had been presented to National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft ten days earlier (Védrine 1996, 466). Scowcroft “strongly wished” for the EC/EU to refrain from making the WEU its defense instrument, something which the French government resisted, but which was picked up by Great Britain and also Italy in the concluding negotiations on the EU-WEU relationship.
9 If it did on occasions in 1990 it was for tactical reasons and in order to gain diplomatic support from the Soviet Union (see Zelikow and Rice 1998, xi).
Gabriel Robin, French Ambassador to NATO 1987-1993, argues that the French leadership at this stage was so confident that “the tide of history” favored France and French designs that they simply adopted a passive attitude (Robin 1996). France thus entered the NATO reform process late, in March 1991. Once inside, it managed to obtain some recognition of NATO’s European security and defense identity (ESDI) but it was too little too late. NATO was reformed and reinvigorated while France struggled to reach a new deal with European partners on the CFSP.

If NATO was in command in the course of 1992, one might in conclusion ask why the WEU managed to agree to a crisis management “Petersberg” agenda in June 1992. The agreement was not due to an overlooked residue of revisionism. Petersberg was essentially a reaction of the member states to the agenda set earlier in the same month by NATO, that out-of-area missions needed to be taken into account by the Western allies. Moreover, Germany, host to the Petersberg summit, used the occasion to promote full transparency in the European debate vis-à-vis the US and other NATO members, and thus succeeded in obtaining US consent to the Petersberg agenda (Laurent 2001, 151). Petersberg left the WEU with a minor role in relation to NATO, whose privileged domain of heavy military operations and territorial defense was undisputed, and represented as much a transatlantic as a European compromise. Typical of the German role in creating consensus, in the fall of 1992 France resigned to the inevitable and agreed with Germany to assign the French-German Eurocorps to NATO as well as to EU missions (Le Monde, 2 October 1992).

The CFSP had thus come into being in the period 1989-1993 but it was a promise with an uncertain potential. Decision-making procedures were tortuous and defense policy was deposited in the WEU, which lacked significant political support. Thanks to US and German strategic support, along with British and other support rooted in habit rather than vision, and to divisions within the camp of Europeanists, NATO emerged reinforced. In 1993 the EU had few if any prospects of involving military force in its external affairs, and it appeared much more likely that NATO would exert influence on the EU’s CFSP in the context of crisis management.

NATO’s European pillar, 1994-1997

The mid-1990s witnessed the continued strengthening of NATO and lingering in European defense cooperation. The Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 only marginally strengthened the CFSP, and the WEU was drawn into NATO’s rather than the EU’s orbit. By 1997 it appeared that the EU was destined to become a “civilian actor” relying on occasional backup from NATO and lacking the ability to realize the Maastricht defense ambition. Why did this happen? First of all because American strategic leadership continued and in fact provided a blueprint for a way in which a reformed NATO could serve regional security tasks. Moreover, revisionism in Europe was at a low tide. American involvement in the Dayton peace settlement of 1995 seemed to demonstrate the futility of “autonomy,” and the key revisionist proponent, France, was engaged in domestic military reforms that led to a rapprochement with NATO. Revisionism, from France and beyond, now took the shape of demands for greater “voice” within NATO. However, US policy-makers, with great faith in their design for a new NATO, found
few problems in arresting European revolt by arguing that influence must be based on capability, something which the Europeans notoriously lack in comparison with the US.

Advances in Amsterdam

The Amsterdam Treaty (EU 1997) essentially made a few modest advances on the CFSP and largely left defense policy outside its framework. The CFSP was strengthened in a number of respects. First, greater flexibility was introduced in CFSP decision-making. Qualified majority voting (QMV) now applied not only to the implementation of “joint actions” but also to the adoption of a joint action itself if it follows from a “common strategy” adopted by the European Council (Article 23.2). Moreover, flexibility was enhanced as member states now could abstain from joining CFSP decisions. This is known as “constructive abstention” according to which members will not be obliged to accept a decision but allows it to move forward (Article 23.1). The CFSP was strengthened also by the appointment of a High Representative for the CFSP who henceforth represents the day-to-day nub of CFSP affairs, and is in this role strengthened by his dual capacity as Secretary General of the Council.

These advances were checked by elaborate opt-out mechanisms, however. Constructive abstention and QMV were balanced by the possibility to defer votes in cases where important “reasons of national policy” are in play (Article 23.2). Likewise, QMV in joint action follows only once a “strategy” has been adopted by unanimity and is in any case hostage to the same national security opt-out clause.

Advances in the defense area were even more modest. Perhaps the most significant advance concerned the incorporation into the EU of the Petersberg tasks: “humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking” (Article 17.2). However, the relationship between the EU and the WEU remained unresolved (Article 17.1). Although the WEU was “an integral part of the development of the Union,” it remained on the sideline and a rapprochement required unanimity in the European Council.

The Amsterdam Treaty had thus delivered little of the improvements outlined in original agenda, and the defense arm, the WEU, had instead been drawn much closer to NATO, as we will see below. As Jean Klein (1997, 199) observed, “we must recognize the fact that the CFSP is malfunctioning and that NATO represents the only remaining military structure in Europe.” EU defense problems were once again intimately connected to NATO’s vigor. The status quo was significantly stronger than revisionism.

US and NATO’s European Pillar

A shift in US policy explains much of this development. It occurred most visible when the US became engaged on the ground in Bosnia as a consequence of its decision to promote a peace settlement, the Dayton agreement of November 1995. But the shift had been in the making before the fall of 1995. It had begun in late 1993 when the Clinton administration reacted to allied acrimony in the context of
Yugoslav crisis management and sought to demonstrate that NATO was an alliance of substantial as well as symbolic value. The root problem was the US insistence on NATO’s primacy while developing crisis management policies that the European allies saw as threatening to their own security. In late 1993 the Clinton administration shifted stance and suggested a transatlantic bargain: it, the US, would help NATO become a useful tool for managing European security, including creating partnership agreements with Central and East European countries, and in return the EU would take the lead on managing the economic transformation in these same countries (Laurent 2001, 152).

NATO’s geographical outreach thus began with Partnership for Peace programs that in January 1994 were offered to all former Warsaw Pact members, and President Clinton indicated that NATO enlargement no longer was a question of “whether” but “when and how.” Once Clinton had assembled a domestic majority and taken the lead on creating a NATO-Russia agreement allowing the enlargement to move ahead, NATO in 1996-1997 provided answers to the “when and how” (see Goldgeier 1999).

But the old European allies were also concerned to secure an alliance that would allow them to operate and solve concrete problems. The US again took the lead with the development of a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF), presented in October 1993 and endorsed by NATO at a summit in January 1994. A flexible military infrastructure would naturally lend itself to enhanced “European” action, but, being proposed by the US, there is no doubt that American policy-makers perceived above all that the concept would be useful for NATO as a whole.

Filling in the NATO framework was then a question of recognizing the need for a stronger European pillar. This recognition was also forthcoming in January 1994 when the NATO heads of state declared (NATO 1994, paragraphs 4-5):

We give our full support to the development of a European Security and Defence Identity which, as called for in the Maastricht Treaty, in the longer term perspective of a common defence policy within the European Union, might in time lead to a common defence compatible with that of the Atlantic Alliance

We support strengthening the European pillar of the Alliance through the Western European Union, which is being developed as the defence component of the European Union. The Alliance's organisation and resources will be adjusted so as to facilitate this.

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10 Common Strategies adopted by the European Council were also a novelty introduced by the treaty.

11 Specifically, the US advocated in early 1993 a policy of “lift and strike” in Bosnia at a time when European allies had forces on the ground. European governments feared that the lifting of the arms embargo along with NATO strikes would increase fighting and make European peacekeepers targets in it.

12 The CJTF concept was not new within the US armed forces where it had represented an effort to enhance interoperability. In NATO the concept took on a slightly different meaning, not least because of the alliance’s multinational setting. A “task force” is defined as a group organized for a specific operation of a limited duration. It is “joint” when two or more military services participate (army, navy, and air), and it is “combined” when several nations participate. Out-of-area operations, the argument was, could be undertaken only by several countries at a time, and these countries were likely to offer disparate forces for the task. Concretely, CJTF work within NATO focused on developing headquarters that, apart from a permanent skeleton staff, would be able to operate with changing services and nationalities. These headquarters, moreover, would be geographically mobile, unlike NATO headquarters during the Cold War.
The path for operational flexibility in NATO was henceforth the implementation of the CJTF concept combined with a better integration of WEU and NATO planning, naturally with NATO as the framework organization. At a European political level, however, a much more complex debate on flexibility took off.

**Flexible Europe?**

Multi-speed Europe was the subject matter of a paper presented by the German CDU-CSU in September 1994, and it drew wide attention because it was correctly seen as defining a new theme in European integration. The debate subsequently split between those who believed in “reinforced cooperation” – a semi-institutional avant-garde capable of driving the integration process forward – and the adherents of “flexibility” – a more de-centralized model according to which states could opt in or out of varying issue areas. A “Reflection Group” preparing the Amsterdam negotiations turned out to be prophetic by arguing that flexibility should be a “last resort” option open in principle to everyone and always undertaken in respect for the *acquis communautaire* (Missiroli 2000, 6). The Reflection Group’s minimalist version prevailed for reasons of political disagreement. Britain and Greece consistently opposed the idea of flexibility within security and defense affairs while others were ambivalent in light of the prospect that they might be left behind in a structure increasingly dominated by a “CFSP directorate.”

In the end the debate over defense, security, and flexibility was postponed – flexibility was adopted in a minimalist version and did not apply to defense policy, of which the EU had none – because EU members focused on the EMU and feared that institutional overload would endanger the monetary “revolutionary step forward” (Forster and Niblett 2001, 40).

The WEU-EU relationship therefore floundered. Britain was strongly opposed to the idea of bringing the WEU into the EU at this time. Britain favored flexibility in its most de-centralized version and saw no need to create a structure, such as the EU-WEU, that one day might rival NATO. It was a policy crafted by “tacticians” in which “long-term thinking” was “abandoned,” concluded two observers (Forster and Wallace 2001, 142). Still, Britain was joined in its opposition to WEU-EU integration by the neutral countries – Ireland, Austria, Sweden, and Finland – and they combined were able to defeat the coalition for integration that formed in March 1997 and which included France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Luxembourg (see Klein 1997, 195-196).

France and Spain, two integration proponents, are illustrative of the underlying reality of NATO preeminence even in the debate on the European pillar. Both countries in this period significantly strengthened their relations to NATO in recognition of its operational superiority and thus the potential loss of influence resulting from standing apart. France began a process of NATO rapprochement

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13 As Missiroli (2000, 7) notes, the issue was widely recognized as extremely sensitive and no less than twenty-two documents along with a number of “non-papers” were submitted on the matter by the negotiating governments.

14 Denmark would no doubt have joined them had it not been for the Danish defense opt-out dating back to the Danish ratification of the TEU.

15 The coalition formed on the basis of a French-German proposal of December 1996.
following the election of President Chirac in 1995, leading to the full participation of France in NATO’s military command structure in the case of out-of-area operations. There is little doubt that the process was destined to go further: France was ready for full integration, thus also in the defense planning process, if NATO in return “Europeanized” its command structure. In the fall of 1995 France returned to the Military Committee and agreed to let its defense minister participate in the North Atlantic Council: it was even ready to discuss nuclear issues within NATO, traditionally a taboo within the French culture of independence. The new relationship failed to run its full course, however, because the command issue became a “test of wills” between France and the US (Tiersky 1997, 55). The many complex political reasons for this deadlock need not concern us here, more important is the fact that even France recognized that NATO had become the defining military framework.

Spain, like France, warmed to NATO but, unlike France, saw the process to its end: Spain integrated fully with NATO’s military command in 1997. The contrast to Spain’s previous ambition at Maastricht to create an EU military structure is significant. Spain now saw NATO not only as a temporary home for “Europeanization” but as a useful alliance in itself. The Atlantic turn in Spanish policy had several sources. Spain had been excluded from the Contact Group of big countries dealing with the former Yugoslavia, thus causing traditional Spanish hostility to “flexible European integration” to increase. A political change of government in Spain in 1996 enabled decision-makers to rely on new political constituencies and more clearly articulate an alliance policy of engagement (Niblett 2001, 225).16

Challenges to the NATO Framework

NATO’s embrace of the WEU therefore continued unabated. In 1996-1997 the WEU was effectively incorporated into NATO’s defense planning process, perhaps the clearest sign that the NATO machinery was dominant. In 1997 the WEU provided an input to NATO’s Ministerial Guidance – which is at the heart of the defense planning process – in order for this Guidance to contain a special section on European-led operations. This decision was, in fact, the outcome of the January 1994 summit decision to develop NATO’s European pillar.

In June 1996 the pillar took more concrete shape when NATO allies agreed to develop ESDI further on the basis, again, of the CJTF concept and specifically invited the WEU to become part of the planning process (NATO 1996, paragraphs 7-8). WEU members responded positively in November 1996 by noting that they “agreed that it would be valuable for WEU to become actively involved in the Alliance’s defense planning process in order to make use of this important tool for improving operational effectiveness” (WEU 1996, paragraph 15). From this point on the WEU was drawn into NATO planning, and NATO was the only credible military structure thanks to its increasingly flexible command arrangements along with the multinational and rapid reaction forces assigned to it.

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16 Niblett (2001, 226) notes that the policy soon paid off: Spanish candidates were selected in the following years for the positions as NATO Secretary General, EU Chief Representative in Bosnia, and EU special envoy to the Middle East. In short, “by assiduously improving its relations with the United States, [Spain] had carved out an influential place for itself alongside the group of leading powers in Europe.”
These events were driven by the US strategic commitment to NATO through reform. As in the early 1990s, the US received strong support from Britain and other Atlanticist allies who saw a virtue in NATO’s continued operation not only for symbolic reasons but also for the very practical purpose of engaging the US on the ground in areas like Bosnia and thus assuring that the allies operate together rather than in opposition. Neutral members of the EU likewise saw no need to develop defense policies within the EU. Potential and real revisionists were again hampered by their disagreement on EU developments and particularly the question of who should lead if the US does not. France, Tiersky concludes (1997, 55), wanted to be seen as America’s crucial European diplomatic and military partner, but as the flexibility debate revealed, the fear of a European directorate developing represented a formidable barrier to this French policy. Most allies de facto regarded the US as their most important “European” ally.

Important questions needed to be addressed at this stage, however, and this in spite of NATO’s apparent vigor. For one thing, was the US willing to follow through on its strategic leadership and articulate policies that take European points of view into account? The question was of essence because the new NATO of 1995-1996 was in many respects the outcome of an American recognition that continued US leadership depended on its recognition of a European pillar within the Alliance. Having secured the formal possibility for such a “separable but not separate” pillar would the US deliver in terms of policy? There were troubling signs already at this stage, according to Stanley Hoffmann (2000, 194): the US had run the show at Dayton in 1995 virtually unilaterally, the Dayton plan was essentially a re-write of earlier European proposals but now presented as an American document; and the US refused to consider European options for a wider enlargement of NATO in 1997. Still, the US had secured support for the “new” NATO and had at least a fine opportunity to substantiate its strategic design.

Another important question concerned institutional capacity. NATO had many advantages compared to the EU’s convoluted decision-making procedures and lack of a substantial organizational infrastructure. The EU’s High Representative, backed by a new Policy Unit and the Council secretariat, was not in the league of NATO with its international staff in Bruxelles and its extensive military expertise located in the commands of SHAPE, Mons, and SACLANT, Norfolk. In addition, as we have seen, the WEU was being integrated with NATO rather than the EU. But would it work? Would this impressive set-up deliver the capabilities and command arrangements needed to undertake European crisis management operations?

Problems arose in both respects in 1998-1999. They were in fact the root cause of the diplomatic constellations that produced the “autonomous” defense option in the shape of ESDP. However, the constellations are fundamentally fragile, as the next section argues.

Out of NATO into the EU, 1998-2001

NATO did not emerge unscathed from the turn of the century and the EU instead gained supposedly “autonomous” capabilities. This development was caused by the nature of the US strategic
commitment to NATO: it weakened in terms of practical policy in Kosovo, as US policymakers fought a campaign in disregard of European capabilities and frequent strategic objections. NATO was also weakened by the inertia of its organization: by being difficult to reform it lost support from otherwise pro-NATO countries, especially Britain, that then channeled defense efforts into the EU in order to salvage transatlantic relations. This latter shift had begun before the Kosovo crisis erupted, notably in 1997-1998, but the Kosovo experience significantly enhanced its momentum.

European Security and Defense Policy

The EU’s newfound “autonomy” refers to the development of a security and defense policy (ESDP) that is situated within the EU, unlike the European identity (ESDI) rooted in NATO. The ESDP, moreover, is supposed to be operational, a real policy of execution, compared to the ESDI’s emphasis on “identity.” In the following I briefly introduce three facets of the ESDP: policy, organization, and military capability.

The political roots are not new: they are essentially the Petersberg crisis management tasks of 1992. In 1992 the WEU articulated these tasks to keep up with NATO in out-of-area debates; in 1997 the tasks were brought inside the EU; and in 1999 the EU moved closer to developing the capacity to actually carry out these policies. A first step occurred in early December 1998 when Great Britain and France in St. Malo agreed that the EU should be better capable of playing “its full role on the international stage” (Britain 1998). More specifically (1998, paragraph 2): “the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises.”

This ambition to develop a capacity for autonomous action was then endorsed by all EU countries at their Cologne summit in June 1999, and it has since been the guiding light for the ESDP. The coronation of diplomatic efforts came in December 2000 when the Nice Treaty was negotiated, leading to the declaration that the CFSP now includes “the progressive framing of a defense policy” (EU 2001, Article 17). In respect of the upper limit of the Petersberg tasks, involving peacemaking but not war and collective defense, the treaty goes on to say that “a common defense” is not part of the policy, and also that the ESDP does not prejudice other engagements in, e.g., NATO.

The organization of the ESDP begins at the summit with of heads of state and then descends to the foreign ministers of the Council of Ministers. Foreign ministers are joined by their defense colleagues in cases of military crisis management. The real innovative steps have been taken below these political levels. A “political pillar” has been constructed to offer decision-makers advise and enhance their operational control. This pillar includes a Political and Security Committee (PSC), which is subordinated to the permanent ambassadors (COREPER) just below the Council. PSC meets weekly to discuss ESDP affairs and exercises strategic control with ESDP operations. PSC is informed by the
national chiefs of staff, the highest military authorities, who meet in the EU Military Committee (EUMC).

A “bureaucratic pillar” runs in parallel and is headed by the Council’s Secretary General (currently Javier Solana) who is also CFSP High Representative. The only organizational innovation in this pillar since St. Malo has been the establishment of an EU Military Staff (EUMS) composed of approximately 130 national officers. Solana formally heads the EUMS but it also refers directly to the EUMC.

Finally, in terms of military capabilities the EU has organized a force planning process. The starting point was the “Headline Goal” outlined in Helsinki in December 1999: the members should by 2003 “be able to deploy rapidly and then sustain forces capable of the full range of Petersberg tasks as set out in the Amsterdam Treaty, including the most demanding, in operations up to corps level (up to 15 brigades or 50,000-60,000 persons)” (EU 1999, annex 1 to annex IV). It should be noted that the EU also operates with civilian capabilities as a second capability leg of the ESDP. These involve the four dimensions of police forces, justice, protection, and administration. At the Feira summit in June 2000 the EU articulated a headline goal for police forces, aiming to be ready by 2003 to deploy up to 5000 policemen (see Hansen and Klyng 2001, chapter 4).

Since then the EU has negotiated the organization of a “capability development mechanism” that is supposed to provide a permanent “method” – its precise institutional contours are precisely the reason why agreement is delayed – for reaching the Headline Goal (Rynning forthcoming). At present the EU, in this case the EUMS, operates with force catalogues indicating what the EU wants (Petersberg mission capabilities), what they have, and what they need. Table 1 presents an overview of the ESDP.

Table 1
ESDP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Capabilities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Petersberg tasks: humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks, and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, incl. peacemaking.</td>
<td>“Political pillar” with Political and Security Committee (PSC) and Military Committee (EUMC)</td>
<td>Military ambition: to be able to deploy up to 60,000 troops in area of hostility. Permanent force planning mechanism is under development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy by heads of state;</td>
<td>“Bureaucratic pillar” headed by Secretary General with Military</td>
<td>Civilian ambition: broad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17 Naturally, the chiefs of staff mostly rely on permanent representatives.
18 The PSC, EUMC, and EUMS were all mentioned in the Cologne declaration of June 1999. They were then set up on an interim basis in early 2000 before being permanently established at the Nice December 2000 summit. These organs take over the planning functions of the WEU, which henceforth is fully marginalized within European security. The WEU will only contain some armaments cooperation, a defense clause (Article V), and a parliamentary assembly, although the latter is likely to whither.
19 These three catalogues are the Helsinki Headline Catalogue, the Headline Force Catalogue, and the Helsinki Progress Catalogue.
A New Special Relationship?

As mentioned in the introduction to this section the ESDP was made possible by a simultaneous shift in US strategic support for NATO and a tactical adjustment in Europe, especially in Britain, in favor of the ESDP. British motives had much to do with transatlantic cooperation. As Jolyon Howorth (2000, 34) notes, Tony Blair had reached the conclusion that the strengthening of the Atlantic Alliance now depended on the strengthening of the ESDP. This conclusion was reached because the US increasingly emphasized a security agenda foreign to European states, and also because the EU was seen as a more flexible framework for obtaining military advances.

The government of Tony Blair was elected in mid-1997, and it needed slightly more than a year to articulate its new approach to European security. What happened through this year, from mid-1997 to mid-1998? Above all, events of this year occurred on the background of Bosnia intervention where the US had arrived late and then with so overwhelming power that European diplomacy was sidetracked. In fact, even the British military felt sidetracked. These experiences were less traumatic in light of the Berlin agreement, 1996, to strengthen NATO’s European pillar. Events in 1997-1998 changed that.

NATO was in this period in the middle of its preparations for the Washington summit, April 1999, which included the definition of a new “Strategic Concept.” In May 1998 NATO foreign ministers simply noted that they had discussed “themes” to be included in this new concept. Half a year later, when a final outline was to be agreed, disagreement erupted. The conclusions of the North Atlantic Council 8 December 1998 were very broad, simply stating that the new Strategic Concept should be “consistent” with NATO’s new security environment, while reaffirming the commitment to collective defense (NATO 1998, paragraph 5). The problem lay in the interpretation of the security environment. European governments were generally focused on the European region and Yugoslav-style conflicts: NATO therefore needed to have a continued distinct regional focus and military crisis management capabilities.

The US looked beyond Europe and also beyond military crisis management. US Secretary of State Albright was particularly adamant that NATO needed to focus on threats to members’ vital interests, irrespective of the nature of these threats (Daily Telegraph and New York Times, 9 December 1998).

While Europe looked to the Balkans, the US looked to terrorist attacks on American embassies in

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20 The BBC reported in June 2001 that Great Britain had been upset by American unilateralism in the Balkans, notably as Great Britain was cut off from American intelligence sources and headquarters in Bosnia were bugged by US intelligence. Former UN commander British General Michael Rose recalls, “We were always very careful in what we said in that office. And if we did say something, it was with deliberate intent.” BBC News, “Deceiving your allies”, 22 June 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/audiovideo/programmes/correspondent
Kenya and Tanzania, North Korean missile tests, all in August 1998, as well as a renewed air war over Iraq in October 1998.

European governments were naturally capable of perceiving the American situation but they were also pulled back into the Balkans by the unfolding crisis in Kosovo during 1998. As General Wesley Clark (2001, 112), SACEUR at the time, recalls, European foreign ministers, including particularly the British and German, were determined in early 1998 to prevent another “Balkan tragedy.” Plans for an air operation were ready in June 1998, and they came close to unleashing a series of strikes in October 1998. Richard Holbrooke, the Dayton architect, had been negotiating in parallel, however, and managed to have Serb President Milosovic sign an agreement. The agreement was eventually violated and NATO commenced a bombing campaign in March 1999. But Holbrooke’s diplomacy, reminiscent of the Dayton debacle, had “annoyed” European governments (Hoffmann 2000, 194). France and Britain criticized the US for giving in too much in favor of the UCK, the Serbs’ opponents, and for pushing too hard for a bombing campaign outside a diplomatic framework (Information, 30 January 1999). Again, the parallel to Euro-US disputes over Bosnia is obvious, and the US (along with the Contact Group of great powers) revealingly handed France and Britain the task of conducting peace negotiations in February-March 1999.

It was in the midst of these diverging security perceptions that the St. Malo agreement came about. The ESDP was needed to make the EU more credible on its own as well as in the eyes of American decision-makers. Tony Blair was in no doubt concerning this dual motive in October 1998. “Nothing must happen that in any way impinges on the effectiveness of NATO.” However, Britain should be able to “put together an operation with, say, France, Belgium, Italy and Spain, in a way that meant we did not have to rely the whole time on the Americans.” French President Chirac put the emphasis on European autonomy. The ESDP represents an important step toward “the presence of the EU on the international stage, with a real foreign and defense policy that the European states are capable of implementing themselves” (Libération, 5-6 December 1998).

**US NATO Policy under Pressure**

The new French-British consensus was fragile but American policy-makers focused rather on its threatening potential. Secretary of State Albright was quick to outline the conditions of three “D’s” for the sake of protecting NATO: no de-coupling, no discrimination, and no duplication (Albright 1998). Strobe Talbott, Deputy Secretary of State, warned in October 1999 against the perspective that the European defense capability “comes into being first within NATO but then grows out of NATO and finally grows away from NATO” (Talbott 1999).

A similar effort to bolster NATO was visible in the efforts of US Secretary of Defense Cohen who in mid-1998 focused on military capabilities and notably the growing gap across the Atlantic. European

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21 In addition, France took command of the “extradition force” deployed to Macedonia in the fall of 1998 for the purpose of backing up OSCE observers in Kosovo.

governments perceived this gap as well as Cohen did, and they supported his idea of strengthening
NATO’s defense planning process. However, he had not foreseen and could not prevent EU
governments from setting up a new parallel and independent force planning mechanism (i.e., the
Helsinki Headline Goal process).

Cohen’s idea was to make NATO the centerpiece in capability reform, and he therefore outlined in
June 1998 the Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) that was later adopted at the NATO summit, April
1999. The DCI was designed to shake up NATO defense planning. In Cohen’s words (1998), NATO
must “ensure that the vision of the Strategic Concept” is “better reflected in the daily work” of the
Alliance. DCI therefore grafted a High Level Steering Group onto the regular planning process and
charged it with the task of promoting 58 reform priorities (i.e., 58 different military capabilities) linked
to mobility, interoperability, and sustainability. As late as in October 2000 Cohen (2000)
envisioned and called for a “unitary, coherent, and collaborative” approach to defense planning in the
form of a “European Security and Defense Planning System (ESDPS).” This ESDPS did not
materialize, as mentioned, because the EU started operating in parallel.

There are two particular reasons for this defeat of US NATO policy. One is the political divergence
that had produced the St. Malo agreement and that led to the “Berlin Plus” agreement in April 1999 by
which NATO agreed to assist the EU in a number of respects. Berlin Plus builds on the Berlin
agreement of 1996 but also goes further in that the European pillar now operates outside of NATO. The
determination to reshape the Alliance was boosted by the Kosovo war, which took place during the
April 1999 summit, and which demonstrated difficulties in operating militarily as an Alliance in crisis
management. While there was no consensus on using or threatening to use ground troops, Clinton’s
refusal to do so was particularly troubling to the strongest advocate of such an option, Britain’s Tony
Blair. Moreover, the difficulty of coordinating national policies in respect to bombing targets – lists
of which were decided by negotiation – produced a very graduated bombing campaign. This timidity
stood in stark contrast to the decisive attack plans urged by the US Department of Defense, notably
focusing on a full-scale invasion aiming at Belgrade or a full-scale “strategic” bombing campaign.
Pentagon plans for decisive strikes against the enemy’s “center of gravity” clashed with European
visions of crisis management. The result was NATO acrimony and the erosion of the operational
authority of the American general serving as NATO SACEUR, Wesley Clark (see Clark 2001).

The other reason is the perceived difficulty of using NATO as a mechanism for generating new
European capabilities. The fact that NATO is an entrenched organization in need of some reform is
reflected in Secretary Cohen’s DCI program. Also, and revealingly, the Berlin Plus agreement (see

23 The Berlin Plus agreement contains four points (NATO 1999, paragraph 10). (A) Assured EU access to NATO
planning capabilities. (B) The presumption of availability to the EU of pre-identified NATO capabilities and
assets. (C) Identification of a range of European command options for EU-led operations, further developing the
role of DSACEUR. (D) The further adaptation of NATO’s defense planning system to incorporate more
comprehensively the availability of forces for EU-led operations.
24 The role of the Clinton administration is subject to controversy. Stanley Sloan (2001, 20) believes that the
administration as a leader of NATO may be responsible for the prolonged air war but also that the basic problem
was one of alliance disunity. Christopher Layne (2000, 17-18) argues to the contrary that the administration, due to
“misinterpretations of Balkan history” and “flawed” readings, was largely responsible for a bombing campaign
based on “miscalculations.”
footnote XX) stated that the planning system needs to be “further adapted.” Defense planning and capability reform became a central issue as the Kosovo campaign displayed the marked gap in American and European capabilities. Some would argue that the gap in part was due to the way in which the campaign was carried out – that the air strategy was in distinct disfavor of European forces. Still, there was no doubt that the gap existed. Coupled with the widespread perception that NATO may be difficult to reform, EU members sought inspiration in the “convergence criteria” that previously had produced the common currency, the Euro. Why not use the EU as a “convergence mechanism” to produce new military capabilities?

Britain and France were early enthusiasts of the “convergence criteria” process. Britain along with Italy proposed in July 1999 the articulation of “European-wide goals” that would be “monitored by peer review” (Howorth 2000, 40). The French minister of defense, Alain Richard, supported the idea because it “can effectively incite European states to maintain or attain a credible and durable level of defense capability” (Le Monde, 14 July 1999). These designs then gave birth to the Helsinki Headline Goal of December 1999 and led to the (ongoing) development of a Capability Development Mechanism (CDM) within the EU.

NATO lost momentum in the period 1998-2001 because US strategic support waned or was channeled into positions poorly coordinated with European policy, especially in the case of the Kosovo intervention. NATO, moreover, did not become the single host to the European pillar, which otherwise appeared to be the case in 1996-1997, because the EU was seen as a more effective framework for achieving the capabilities that European governments needed. The outcome was a NATO in the balance, representing divergent political perspectives and witnessing the development of a parallel force planning mechanism. The outcome was also a European defense dimension in the shape of the ESDP that appeared set to develop the full range of policy, organization, and capabilities needed to carry out the Petersberg tasks on the peripheries of Europe. Defense “autonomy” was thus rooted in a distinct European security perspective (i.e., Petersberg) carved out in opposition to global US concerns (i.e., terrorism, regional wars, and WMD). The role of military forces would be different from traditional strategic operations in that they would be integrated with civilian components to form part of a larger crisis management and conflict resolution policy.

Emancipation or New Division of Labor?

European governments did not take the lead in the Kosovo air war but their dominance of the subsequent NATO peacekeeping force as well as the articulation of the ESDP led to the belief that the trajectory toward autonomy had crystallized. The self-evident need to work in partnership with the US in cases of large operations, based on the Berlin Plus agreement, would naturally circumscribe this autonomy. But still, the trend toward autonomy could appear ineluctable. In this section I offer an assessment of counter-trends: terrorist and other asymmetric threats, new US security priorities, and EU enlargement. We must ask whether the US will seek to revitalize NATO cooperation, and whether the strategic and tactical support for the EU is likely to continue.
A New American Security Agenda

The terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 changed the security perspective of the US. Regional wars now have to give way to asymmetrical threats defined by states of concern (also known as rogue states) and non-state groups and their efforts to have the US fight wars it is not prepared for. At the heart of these threats, arguably, lie terrorism and also the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The current administration is also intensely focused on the possibility that the latter may be delivered by ballistic missiles, a scenario providing the rationale for a missile defense.

It is important to note, however, that the terrorist attack accelerated policies already under consideration in the Bush administration. George W. Bush had campaigned against his predecessor’s focus on crisis management, derisively labeled “nation-building,” and promised to channel money into missile defense and new technology for new types of war. The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) that was published just weeks after the terrorist attack thus blended new thinking with the new attack (Pentagon 2001, page V):

In important ways, these attacks [September 11] confirm the strategic direction and planning principles that resulted from this review, particularly its emphasis on homeland defense, on surprise, on preparing for asymmetrical threats, on the need to develop new concepts of deterrence, on the need for a capabilities-based strategy, and on the need to balance deliberately the different dimensions of risk. However, the attack on the United States on September 11, 2001 will require us to move forward more rapidly in these directions, even while we are engaged in the war against terrorism.

A strategy based on capabilities is a challenge for transatlantic relations. The strategy, as the name indicates, will not be overtly concerned with specific actors and their intentions but will focus on capabilities. Such a capability may be WMD, such as biological weapons or small nuclear weapons, or a network infrastructure enabling terrorists to strike decisively in unexpected ways. This line of thinking naturally reaches the conclusion that a failure to provide a defense against such capabilities is amoral and irresponsible.

European diplomacy is traditionally focused on actors and their intentions, partly because this has been a classical approach to strategic analysis, partly because European governments never had the possibility to insure themselves against all capabilities. In a dense and interdependent strategic environment it made more sense to identify the revisionist – the actor who might use lethal capabilities – and then deter, contain, or defeat him.

European governments have not, of course, been blind to the American predicament in the case of global terrorism. By invoking NATO’s Article 5 they instantly recognized that the September attack had been an attack on all (NATO 2001a). In so doing they also upset the compromise reached in April 1999 concerning NATO’s primary purpose. European governments had succeeded in placing two new priorities into the “fundamental security tasks” of NATO: crisis management (akin to Petersberg) and a limited geographical focus: the “Euro-Atlantic area” (NATO 1999, paragraph 10). The American
agenda concerning terrorism and WMD, strongly promoted by Secretary Albright in December 1998, was relegated to a less important section of the Strategic Concept, “Security challenges and risks” (paragraphs 20-24). In the wake of the September attack and the Article 5 declaration there is no doubt that these “challenges” are at least as important and probably more so than the “fundamental task” of crisis management. Moreover, the new challenges are global and cannot be confined to the “Euro-Atlantic” area.

The US focuses on global threats and pushes NATO partners to do likewise. US President W. Bush has repeatedly spoken of a global confrontation between pro- versus anti-American forces. Other actors may still develop regional policies focused on other problems but they will have to take this confrontation into consideration. The issue was underscored by the Director of Policy Planning at the State Department, Richard Haas, who previously was seen, like his immediate superior, Colin Powell, as a counterweight to the worldview of “hawks” like Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and his superior, Donald Rumsfeld. Haas noted that there is now a successor idea to containment (quoted in Lemann 2002, 46):

It is the idea of integration. The goal of U.S. foreign policy should be to persuade the other major powers to sign on to certain key ideas as to how the world should operate: opposition to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, support for free trade, democracy, markets. Integration is about locking them into these policies and then building institutions that lock them in even more.

The message for European governments is fairly straightforward. The European security pillar must not grow out of NATO but should instead serve to strengthen NATO and global US security policy. Europe will be expected to provide diplomatic as well as military support for this US policy while taking greater responsibility for crisis management in the Euro-Atlantic area. The US will insist that the Atlantic status quo must be upheld and the ESDP must be integrated with NATO.

US policy is also revisionist, however, because the Bush administration is demanding European support for a new NATO, more global and focused on asymmetric threats. This revisionist substance is the key point here, and we must now assess whether European allies are more likely to support US designs or organize in opposition to them.

The EU: Cohesion under Siege

There are several reasons to suspect that the cohesion underpinning the ESDP is under severe pressure. One is the US demand that the European governments must look beyond Petersberg-type crisis management and engage the combat of asymmetric threats. The Petersberg agenda and ambition developed previously as a niche specialty with warfare in the former Yugoslavia serving to remind all actors involved that the ambition was important. Rather than reinforcing this focus, new asymmetric

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25 The European Union Select Committee of the British House of Lords thus concluded in January 2002 that “US forces might withdraw from Bosnia” and “European governments will need to do more to provide for their own
warfare challenges it. Moreover, the ESDP did build on a convergence between French strategic and British tactical considerations, and it is not clear that they will see eye to eye in the new security context. Finally, ESDP cohesion is challenged by EU enlargement, which is likely to take place in 2004 or 2005 with up to ten countries from Central and Eastern Europe. More countries with very different historical experiences compared to current EU members will make it more difficult to reach agreement on substantial “Common Strategies” as well as the purpose, scope, and duration of possible military actions. In June 1999 Stanley Hoffmann (1999) pinpointed the problem. An agreement between France, Britain, and Germany is insufficient: the EU must quickly “abandon the principle of unanimity that allows a ‘small’ state fearful of cold water or a ‘big’ preferring to swim longer but alone to block everything.”

These challenges bring the issue of flexible cooperation to the forefront. The Treaty of Nice brought significant advances in this domain by introducing the concept of “enhanced cooperation” (EU 2001, article 27) that – within some constraints – allows some EU members to act separately. However, the member states have denied this possibility in the defense dimension (article 27b): enhanced cooperation “shall not relate to matters having military or defense implications.” The reader will at this stage recall that the Amsterdam Treaty already prevented “joint action” by qualified majority voting, on the basis of unanimously adopted strategies, in the areas having, again, military or defense implications. EU member states have tied themselves to a demanding defense agenda: either they march in unity, or they do not march.

Will the EU be able to march in unity, either with or against the US, or will the ESDP simply whither because countries choose to take action elsewhere? The Nice Treaty (Article 17.4), it should be noted, allows such action:

> The provisions of this Article shall not prevent the development of closer cooperation between two or more Member States on a bilateral level, in the framework of the Western European Union (WEU) or NATO, provided such cooperation does not run counter to or impede that provided for in this Title.

Parallel action, in case-by-case coalitions may indeed be the most likely scenario because the strategic cohesion of the EU is weakening.

France and Great Britain have both supported the ESDP as a measure to enhance governmental control of EU external affairs – and indeed internal affairs. Neither is likely to support supranationalism in this pillar as a first step toward the federal *finalité* that German Foreign Minister Fischer has outlined and which some observers may hope that the current EU Convention will promote. France continues to cultivate on the one hand intergovernmentalism (often labeled a “Europe of nations”) and on the other the idea of a European “core” setting the pace for the common whole. Britain has not warmed to federalist thoughts either; and it entered the ESDP, as noted above, to strengthen the EU-NATO security, especially on the borders of Europe where US interests are not directly engaged” (House of Lords 2002, paragraph 16).

26 The most important constraints are that the particular action must: 1) serve the interests of “the Union as a whole,” 2) include as a minimum eight countries, and 3) be open to the participation of all member states.
Moreover, in May 2002 Britain and France agreed to “demand the creation of a powerful new president of the European Council” to “serve as the EU’s face in international affairs and take a key role in developing defence and foreign policies” (Financial Times, May 15, 2002). This intergovernmental design, not coordinated with Germany, is clearly intended to strengthen their control of the ESDP and counter notably the Commission’s more federalist design (Le Monde, May 18, 2002).

This British-French unity rests in part on the belief that actors in world politics must be able to fall back on military force and coercion. Britain is the most capable military actor in Europe and has no plans of changing emphasis. The 2001 paper Future Strategic Context (Britain 2001), which updated the Blair government’s 1997 Strategic Defence Review, thus echoed American ways of war by stating that Britain “will want to fight from a distance as long as possible.” In another paper from 2001, the Defense Department noted that “high intensity combat is a priority.” Britain was the most active ally next to the US in the 2001 war in Afghanistan, and revealingly also the only ally to gain physical access to the US military headquarters in Tampa, Florida.

France has since the mid-1990s sought to follow in British footsteps in the area of military reform. Small but important gains have been made. The Kosovo defense review of the French government noted that French air forces were first (au premier rang) among European forces, that France participated in all NATO ground operations, and that it was the only European country to employ the full range of intelligence gathering platforms (France 1999, introduction).

With the emphasis on “power politics” France and Britain are clearly distinguishing themselves from the remainder of the EU. Former French Foreign Minister Védrine noted in 1997 that apart one or two other countries, “no European country thinks like us.” European countries generally “abhor the idea of power” either because they are small and long ago turned their back to power politics or thrive on economic relations and now find power politics “almost obscene” (1997, 181). This conclusion still stands. Moreover, as a national official argued (in interview with author, April 2002), as long as the neutral or non-aligned countries (i.e., Sweden, Finland, Austria, and Ireland) along with other small countries have a say in the ESDP they will oppose the use of enhanced cooperation in order to prevent the development of a great power directorate.

Germany plays a pivotal role in the broadening of the ESDP base beyond France and Britain. Traditionally seen as a “civilian power” and a “trading state,” Germany has since unification gradually increased its military presence in operations outside German territory. In the spring of 2002 more than 10,000 German troops were operating out-of-area, among them elite troops tracking down al-Qaeda forces in Afghanistan, and Germany had since the fall of 2001 been in command of the NATO operation in Macedonia (The Economist, 4 May 2002, p. 32). This may not amount to a

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27 I asked a highly placed British official in January 2002 whether enlargement did not necessitate majority voting within the ESDP. The answer was negative in the belief that more countries would not qualitatively change the task of generating a consensus within the EU. In short, more members may enter but the political game, allegedly, remains the same.

28 Ireland currently blocks the ratification of the Nice Treaty because it was rejected in a referendum during which the EU’s new defense dimension played a large role.
“normalization” of Germany but it indicates that the power-dimension of civilian power is under development (Philippi 2001, 65).

But Germany alone will not suffice to mobilize support for a “power Europe” (*Europe puissance*). Such a Europe will emerge only if the ESDP finds popular roots, widely in Europe, as a means to address global problems and safeguard common European values (cf. Hoffmann 1999). This is a long-term vision surrounded by great uncertainty. In the shorter run Europe is likely to be split in strategic terms, with the most capable actors, Britain and France, finding it difficult to impregnate power politics on its partners while having no Treaty recourse to enhanced cooperation.

*In Search of a Force Multiplier*

Strategic disunity does not imply that the rationale of the ESDP will whither. First of all, there is a strong pressure on EU countries to at least consider in what ways crisis management needs military support. This will remain the case even if the ESDP does not produce a meaningful military dimension in itself but instead must rely on parallel coalitions and/or NATO. Secondly, the ESDP was originally seen as being a more efficient and effective mechanism for generating new European military capabilities, and this case may still be made with some confidence.

The Helsinki Headline Goal process has produced the number of troops and equipment that the high-end Petersberg ambition – peacemaking – demands. This occurred already at a Capabilities Commitment Conference in November 2000 in the run-up to the Nice Treaty conference. Shortfalls emerged, however, due to the quality of personnel and equipment. These were then addressed at a Capabilities Improvement Conference in November 2001, and the EU is currently playing host to a number of so-called Action Groups, which are voluntary groups of countries joining together to produce particular capabilities. Where 144 shortfalls were originally identified, 40 now remain to be remedied.

Great challenges lie ahead. The House of Lords (2001, chapter 2) notes that the remaining shortfalls are very costly and demand long procurement cycles, implying that the ESDP will not be fully operational before 2008 at the earliest. Moreover, the EU lacks command and control experience and infrastructure and will almost inevitably have to delegate command and control to NATO, Britain, or France.

Still, compared to NATO’s DCI program the EU is not doing poorly. The program has been criticized for spreading priorities too wide. In an alliance of 19 states this may be inevitable but it also hampers reform. Too few results have been achieved, which is also the message emerging from NATO defense ministers meeting in the NAC. In December 2001 they noted “an urgent need to make more progress in the development of more deployable forces to undertake the tasks we have set ourselves in the Ministerial Guidance last year” (NATO 2001b, paragraph 3, my italics). This urgent need is reinforced by another challenge, which they also underscored, namely to produce not only more deployable forces

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29 NATO has designated Deputy SACEUR, always a European general, to arrange command and control options for European operations, according to the Berlin Plus agreement. Britain and France could step in as lead-nations, using their Permanent Joint Headquarters, but in more limited operations.
for intervention but also capabilities able to deal with the “proliferation of NBC weapons and their delivery means.” NATO, in short, is not being successful in producing conventional capabilities and must now also give priority to new and different capabilities.

The EU’s advantage may lie in this respect, even though most EU countries are also NATO members. The EU has a narrower capability agenda – strictly Petersberg – and a track record of applying convergence criteria to obtain results. Other capabilities, such as missile defense, can then be discussed in NATO. The ESDP therefore has advantages but they lie in the direction of the “civilian power” model where military forces serve largely low-end Petersberg tasks. The ESDP could in principle go much further but the reality of strategic disunity, budgetary problems, and the fear that role specialization will create dependencies and federalist pressures will inhibit such a development.\(^30\)

**From One Dependency to Another: Transatlantic Cherry-Picking**

The conclusions of this section are that the US policy towards NATO is increasingly revisionist, that the countries most strongly supporting an autonomous ESDP lack responses to EU enlargement, but that the ESDP can attract support for producing common capabilities. The overall impression is one of institutional metamorphosis in which none of the key actors recognize themselves and are willing to make decisive investments. The US emphasizes NATO but does not use NATO for its own military missions and generally demands European support for a new and global NATO. France continues to speak of a strong Europe but is simultaneously keen to be seen as a capable military actor, and generally lacks a political response to the widening of the EU. Britain cultivates transatlantic relations in the context of the war on terrorism and seems content to let the ESDP provide European capabilities for joint action. Germany is redefining both its foreign and military policy, and it is likely to seek a compromise between federalist designs for the EU and a continued strong military partnership in NATO.

Rather than autonomy, the outcome is likely to be a new kind of transatlantic dependency in military operations. To be sure, the EU has the capacity to handle peacekeeping tasks autonomously. Projection and coercion, however, are real challenges that only increase with geographical scope and combat intensity.

The US will continue its stringent focus on new asymmetric threats and exploit to its fullest its ability to respond through new technologies and combat operations. European allies will participate depending on the context, which has two dimensions. First, will the individual ally have something to offer militarily? Most allies will have some capability to offer, however minor, particularly special units and other niche capabilities. Second, to what extent will the ally and the US agree politically on the purpose and scope of the operation?

\(^30\) The House of Lords (2002, paragraphs 58 and 66) urge caution on the issue of role specialization. Such specialization offers a way to get more military output for the same money but, as the report argues, political credibility of the ESDP will be undermined as long as members – with their particular pieces of the force puzzle – can opt out. Revealingly, the report does not pursue one logical consequence of this situation, that the EU should enhance political integration to make force specialization credible.
The US will need to act through international coalitions in most cases and will therefore encourage countries to join them. But they will pose conditions that are likely to produce tough diplomatic negotiations. In a thinly veiled criticism of NATO’s Kosovo war, Secretary Rumsfeld (2002, 31) underscores that “wars can benefit from coalitions of the willing, to be sure, but they should not be fought by committee.” Moreover, the US will want to act in anticipatory self-defense and eliminate threats before they strike at the US (or other countries). Allies will in consequence find it difficult to gain strategic leverage on US decisions. They will not be able to gain much influence via their military capabilities but they may gain influence because new wars “increasingly require all elements of national power: economic, diplomatic, financial, low enforcement, intelligence, and both overt and covert military operations” (Rumsfeld 2002, 30). Strategic influence can thus be shared but it will depend on the US realizing that it in fact is engaged in the “nation-building” exercises it once derided (i.e., in Afghanistan and possibly soon in Iraq) (see Walt 2001/02, 69) and the EU articulating how its broad, non-military means can be employed. But the military dimension will be ad hoc, with the US picking cherries – allies and capabilities – to suit the mission.

Conclusion

The trend toward EU autonomy in defense matters may not be so ineluctable as it appeared in 1999-2000. The Kosovo war produced widespread political support for the French-British desire for a stronger European pillar, born out of frustrations with the US in the former Yugoslavia and also NATO’s inability to incite capability reform in Europe. From a convergence of state preferences followed the ESDP with a policy focused on Petersberg tasks, new institutions within the EU, and a separate force planning mechanism.

However, the events of September 11, 2001 have exposed underlying tensions among European state preferences and the trajectory is likely to change, no longer moving toward autonomy but a new type of dependency. The US will offer little support for a security and defense policy that does not reinforce its new global strategy, and in this respect its revisionist stance vis-à-vis the European pillar will harden. The strategic design for European autonomy will suffer and reside mainly in a military design that French policy-makers support rhetorically or a more broadly based design for the EU as a “civilian power.” Military operations will occur in ad hoc coalitions that rely on both NATO and EU means, thus resulting in a type of institutional interdependence, but US superiority and European weakness will in the context of coercion create a new type of military dependency.

This conclusion is based on an examination of how states respond to new power configurations and opportunities and seek to enhance their influence and the scope for their domestically rooted values and worldviews. States support institutions such as NATO and the EU depending on the affinity between the ideas that these institutions harbor and the interests of states. To the extent that these ideas evolve

31 The exception is represented by the terrorist attack of September 2001 against which the US clearly had a right of legitimate self-defense. From a general perspective, however, the US must solicit political support in the UN and operational support from coalition allies.
32 The US appears to be determined to topple the Iraqi regime as a precautionary security policy.
away from state interests, the institution will lose support. The US policy on NATO is intended to break what US policy-makers perceive as a trend toward irrelevance. Likewise, Western European governments are currently realizing the extent to which enlargement of both the EU and NATO have changed the rationale of these institutions and thus made strategic support for them difficult. The result is a vacuum of leadership and commitment and, as pointed out, new patterns of dependency. A new Messina summit may produce a slimmer European security pillar that can establish a new affinity between state power and institutional purpose. Messina I occurred ten years following the change of world order, in 1945. Messina II has been and will continue to be longer in the waiting.

Literature


WEU (1996) *WEU Ministerial Council declaration, Ostend, 19 November 1996*