CHAPTER EIGHT
American perspectives on the European Security and Defence Policy

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American political leaders and security experts are ambivalent about the European Union's project to build a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) – to the extent that they are paying any attention to it at all.

For the past half century, US political leaders have expressed support, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, for a more cohesive Europe that could act, effectively and confidently, as America's partner on the European continent and in the wider world. Yet when Europeans have actually moved to establish truly 'common' foreign security and defense policies, they have often been faced with American concerns that such coherence may become inward-looking and exclusive or based on 'lowest-common-denominator' consensus-building within the EU, and thus weaken the primacy of the NATO Alliance or impede US leadership and freedom of maneuver.

This ambivalence is reflected in the official attitude of both the Clinton and Bush Administration toward ESDP, which has been that of conditional support. The

1. This article updates an earlier chapter by the author in Esther Brimmer ed., *The EU's Search For A Strategic Role: ESDP and Its Implications for Transatlantic Relations*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2002.

Clinton Administration's support was conditioned by what Secretary of State Madeleine Albright termed the 'three D's': no *discrimination* against non-EU NATO members, no *decoupling* of European and North American security, and no *duplication* of NATO's operational planning system or its command structure. 'No duplication' was never defined, nor was it ever intended to mean that the EU should not develop certain capabilities that already existed in the Alliance; indeed many of the Clinton Administration's efforts, such as the NATO Defense Capability Initiative, sought to prod the Europeans into developing precisely such capabilities. This distinction has been lost on many analysts.[2]

The Clinton Administration used these concerns to frame and guide its support for a more cohesive and responsive European foreign policy, and above all, for a more capable European defense. The Kosovo war affirmed to American leaders that not enough European armed forces were ready for the diverse, rapidly evolving challenges of the post-Cold War world. In American eyes, Europe has been sluggish in its efforts to manage the shift away from the massed, terrain-based forces necessary for the Cold War toward more mobile, deployable and sustainable forces and improved lift, logistics and intelligence capabilities. Kosovo underscored European dependence on the US for precision-strike capability, surveillance and intelligence assets, refueling, lift, and high-end command and control systems.

Republican political leaders who were openly skeptical and even scornful of ESDP during the Clinton years have, since joining the Bush Administration, essentially continued the Clinton Administration's approach of conditional support tied to pressure for improved European military capabilities. President Bush basically reiterated the three D's during his first meeting with other NATO Heads of State and Government in Brussels on June 13th 2001:

2. Madeleine K. Albright, 'The right balance will secure NATO's future,' *Financial Times*, December 7th, 1998; the three D's were subsequently amended by NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson into the three 'I's': indivisibility of the transatlantic link; improvement of capabilities; and inclusiveness of all Allies'.

> 'We agreed that NATO and the European Union must work in common purpose. It is in NATO's interest for the European Union to develop a rapid reaction capability. A strong, capable European force integrated with NATO would give us more options for handling crises when NATO, as a whole, chooses not to engage. NATO must be generous in the help it gives the EU. *And similarly, the EU must welcome participation by NATO allies who are not members of the EU. And we must not waste scarce resources, duplicating effort or working at cross purposes.*'[3]

FOUR AMERICAN APPROACHES

Official US support for ESDP has been consistent, but it remains shallow. In part this reflects the domestic American struggle between a number of perspectives on ESDP. Any attempt to characterize such views as 'schools of thought' inevitably risks giving the debate more coherence and prominence than it really has, and it also risks downplaying the considerable overlap that exists between some of these perspectives. Nonetheless, drawing out such distinctions may help to illuminate the different ways in which American opinion leaders think about the issue.

ESDP supporters are primarily centrist Democrats and Republicans who believe that the United States needs a strong and coherent European Union as a partner on the European continent and beyond. They are concerned by Europe's relative weakness, and believe that US-European power asymmetries are not healthy for either side. They believe that American popular support for a continuing US role in Europe is related to the perception that America's European allies are willing and

3. Author's italics. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Press Availability with President Bush and NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, June 13th 2001.

able to assume more responsibility not only for their own security but also for defending common interests of the transatlantic community in the wider world, and see ESDP as a possible expression of that commitment. They accept that common foreign and security policy is a logical next step in the European integration process and that it can help to avoid the re-nationalization of European defense. They support ESDP as an initiative to improve European capabilities that, if developed with care, can also be mutually reinforcing with such NATO initiatives as the Prague Summit capability commitments and the NATO Response Force.

Supporters also believe that ESDP could equip the EU to assume the lead in the Balkans or to engage, if necessary, in areas such as Africa, where the US is unlikely to play a prominent role. They believe the United States should welcome a European capability for crisis management in situations where NATO – meaning, in practice, the United States – would decide not to become engaged. They welcomed the EU's civilian headline goal, as set forth at the June 2000 Feira and June 2001 Göteborg European Council meetings, that EU member states should by 2003 be able to make available up to 5,000 police officers (of which 1,000 within 30 days) for EU contributions led by international organizations (UN or OSCE) or for autonomous EU missions; provide up to 200 experts in the rule of law field; establish a pool of experts to undertake civilian administrative tasks; and make available civil protection intervention teams of up to 2,000 persons that can be deployed at very short notice. Looking to future challenges, supporters believe that ESDP and the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) could both become vehicles for both US-EU and NATO-EU efforts to counter terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and to cooperate in civil emergency disaster relief, humanitarian relief and information security – all potential elements of collaboration under what one might term 'transatlantic homeland security.' In short, supporters believe that if ESDP and CFSP are developed and implemented properly, they can become the vehicles for a stronger, outward-looking Europe and a more balanced, global partnership with the United States.

Skeptics include conservative Atlanticists and many members of Congress, who question the wisdom of ESDP and the prospects of its success. They don't believe

that the Europeans have the will or the wallet to achieve their goals. They are weary of repeated European capability pledges that go unfulfilled. They are concerned that ESDP could lead European governments to close or restrict European arms markets to U.S. competition. In short, they believe ESDP at best to be a meddlesome distraction from more serious security challenges, and at worst as a pernicious effort to counter US influence. According to this perspective, ESDP is simply one more example that the grand project of European integration has gone off the rails and is being defined less in terms of positive European ideals and transatlantic partnership and more in terms of 'autonomy' and as a counter to US power.

While the skeptics are concerned with what they see as divisive trends, another group – one could call them 'the decouplers' – believe that such divisions could benefit the transatlantic relationship. They believe that Europe is basically secure and that the U.S. faces more serious challenges elsewhere – the Greater Middle East, South Asia, and the Asia-Pacific region. They don't believe that tiresome battles with the French or with Brussels bureaucrats over the arcane details of ESDP are worth their time or energy. Decouplers believe that if Europe can use ESDP to improve its own capacities and provide stability on its own continent, this could free the US to devote its own energies to these other, more serious regional threats.

For the decouplers, ESDP has become a convenient excuse for American burden-shedding in Europe. Decouplers seize on European rhetorical excesses – such as the EU's declaration of 'some operational capabilities' for ESDP at the Laeken European Council in December 2001 – as ammunition for their domestic argument that the EU is ready and willing to take over certain US responsibilities. They welcome the Bush Administration's concept of 'backfilling', which would assign to Europeans the prime responsibility for low-intensity missions and operations, notably in the Balkans, and thus free US military forces for high-intensity combat missions, and more generally for the management of 'hard' security issues, particularly in the Middle East and Asia. According to this view, such 'backfilling' could be the first step toward a new transatlantic 'division of labour' whereby

Europeans take on certain missions and Americans others. Decouplers are not numerous, but they do occupy influential positions in the upper reaches of the Pentagon and the White House and include a number of US Senators.

A fourth group, rising in prominence, are the 'transformationists'. They include many defense intellectuals and senior military officers. They view ESDP through the prism of the revolution in military affairs that is transforming the entire way the US military approaches preparedness and warfare. This tremendous change is sparked by various factors, including massive US defense spending, the introduction of advanced technologies, and accompanying revolutions in the communications and information industries. Transformation is not only about money, technology or capability, however. These innovations are beginning to affect how the US organizes and trains for warfare, even how it thinks about it – and the pace of change is accelerating.

US military services are making dramatic strides in changing the way they fight. They are shifting from force-oriented to capability-oriented approaches to military planning; from attrition-based force-on-force warfare to effects-based operations; from terrain-based to time-based capabilities; and from segmented land, sea and air services to shared awareness and coordination across all military services, or what is termed the 'joint' force. They are focusing more on asymmetric threats. They are focusing on smart weapons, space-based systems, and C4I (command, control, communications, computers and intelligence) capabilities that can be used to synchronize and 'leverage' the capabilities of the entire force, and technologies and practices that can save manpower and increase lethality and survivability.[4]

4. Former SACEUR Joseph Ralston describes these processes in 'Keeping NATO's Military Edge Intact in the 21st Century', Presentation to the NATO/GMFUS Brussels Conference, October 3rd, 2002, available at http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s021003d.htm. For further discussion of effects-based operations, see Paul K. Davis, *Effects-Based Operations (EBO): A Grand Challenge for the Analytic Communit*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002.

The US Navy's new doctrine of network-centric warfare, the US Army's shift toward light, flexible and quickly deployable units that can be integrated into information networks, the US Air Force's development of the global strike task force, the US Marine Corps' shift from intermediate staging bases to direct projection of naval combat power on to onshore targets, the creation of the US Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM), and the replacement of NATO's Atlantic Command with Allied Command Transformation to experiment with different doctrines and to drive transformation throughout the US military and NATO as well are only a few examples of the changes underway. These innovations are fueled by large increases in spending and a $400 billion defense budget.

Seen from this perspective, ESDP seems almost quaint – and largely irrelevant. Transformationists question whether America's European partners have truly grasped the dimensions of change underway and wonder whether they are prepared to make the decisions needed to fight alongside the Americans or even to be militarily valuable partners for the United States. The 2001 US Congressional Budget Office report on burden-sharing, which on the whole provides a balanced picture of European contributions, concludes that 'a failure by many of NATO's European members to keep up with technological advances could render them incapable of operating alongside US forces in future military conflicts'.[5]

The gaps are striking. First, there are gaps in sheer spending. Although Europe's overall economic potential rivals that of the United States, European spending on military power is half that of the United States. Second, there are wide gaps in defense research and development (R&D) spending. The US spends close to six times what EU nations spend on military R&D. US expenditure on military R&D alone is greater than Germany's entire defense budget. Third, there are spending gaps per service member. US spending per active duty service member is almost four times that of Europe's. Fourth, there are gaps in the cost-effectiveness of spending. Although Europeans spend about half what the US spends, they get less

5. US Congressional Budget Office, 'NATO Burden-sharing After Enlargement,' 2001.

than 50% return in terms of capability, and little of it is spent on the power-projection missions of most relevance to the US.[6]

These disparities add up to an enormous gap in capabilities between US forces and even the most modern of European NATO forces. This transatlantic divide, in turn, is exacerbated by equally wide gaps among European forces themselves. Proportionately, whatever the measure of effort, the discrepancies between European leaders and laggards are even greater than those between Europe and the United States.

As a result, transformationists are increasingly resigned to transatlantic military divergence. They do not fault Europeans for failing to deal with the challenges faced in the past – they simply believe that US and European leaders have different future priorities for their military forces. Most European governments do not perceive the same magnitude of new threats or imagine themselves fighting the kinds of wars that are driving US innovation. Therefore, adapting their military forces to ensure they could win those wars is not a priority. Even if expectations were more closely aligned, Europeans would be constrained by the size and allocation of funds in their defense budgets. As a result, the Europeans are developing fewer innovations and experiencing less change in the most advanced military capabilities.

According to this perspective, ESDP is not responsible for the divergence between the US and European forces, but it could aggravate the problem. While the US is concentrating on high-technology improvements – such as striking targets precisely from great distances and integrating air and ground operations – rather than

6. Ralston, op. cit.; James Appathurai, 'Closing the capabilities gap,' *NATO Review*, Autumn 2002, http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2002/issue3/english/art1.html. NATO Assistant Secretary General Robert G. Bell, *The Pursuit of Enhanced Defense Capabilities*, January 24, 2002. For an American perspective on transformation and NATO's capability gaps, including detailed figures on allied capabilities, see Charles L. Barry, 'Coordinating with NATO,' in Hans Binnendijk (ed.), *Transforming America's Military*, Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2002, pp. 230-58.

focusing on peacekeeping, the EU is focusing on crisis-management – getting forces into a region in a timely way and establishing basic communications for passing information within a multinational force. While EU defense planners concentrate on constructing multinational forces that can operate together at the lower end of the conflict spectrum, the US armed forces are accelerating their efforts to exploit the information and communications technologies that are transforming US forces at the higher end.

In short, the transformationists believe that the US and European militaries are no longer looking at the same military tasks, which means that the two sides are becoming progressively less able to plan, train and operate together. If this is the case, they believe, then it won't really matter whether a neat new set of NATO-EU cooperative mechanisms are agreed, because neither side will be likely to resort to them. They are much more focused on a new transatlantic gap – not merely a capability gap, but a looming 'transformation gap', that is, a potential breach in strategic orientation, spending priorities, conceptual and operational planning and training.

CONTINUED AMBIVALENCE

Despite their quite different starting points, these approaches do share some common ground. All are concerned more with the tensions arising from Europe's current relative weakness than from any potential – and quite theoretical – tensions resulting from future European strength. Most believe that the US should welcome further European political and economic integration within the EU to the degree that it is accompanied by EU commitment to share international security and defense burdens. But even those who support ESDP's potential are concerned that European force commitments and capability pledges too often tend to be little more than empty exercises in European self-assertion. Americans across the board are weary of repeated European efforts and pledges that seem to melt away with the next spring thaw. Experience has shown that, when European rhetoric exceeds European reality, the US usually has to pick up the pieces.

All – even most American supporters of ESDP – believe such efforts must avoid creating an EU caucus within NATO. This has been a key US concern – the potential for European views on security, and especially defense, to develop into fixed or semi-fixed positions, integrally tied into the intricate political trade-offs involved in European integration, without sufficient transparency to the US, and before the US engages in the process via NATO. US officials are concerned that such a dynamic has the potential to transform Alliance deliberations into formal negotiations between autonomous parties. They are also concerned about the opposite dynamic – that the EU *fails* to agree on a position, thus blocking potential NATO action through sheer indecision.

Concern is also shared about duplicative operational planning, which would contribute to the very transatlantic divergences many Europeans ostensibly seek to avoid. Having more than one place where operational planning takes place could produce different outcomes that would complicate any situation involving NATO-EU cooperation, especially escalation of a crisis from an Article 4 to an Article 5 contingency.

American ambivalence has been showcased over the past few years. On the positive side of the ledger, a set of key NATO-EU cooperation documents, known in the jargon as the 'Berlin-plus' package launched during the Clinton Administration, was finalized after rather painful and prolonged negotiations on March 17, 2003.[7] The 'Berlin-plus' arrangements comprise four elements: assuring EU access to NATO operational planning; making NATO capabilities and common assets available to the EU; developing NATO European command options for EU-led operations, including the European role of NATO's Deputy Supreme Allied

7. The term 'Berlin-plus' is a reference to the site of the 1996 meeting where NATO ministers agreed to create a European Security and Defense Identity and make Alliance assets available for that purpose. The EU and NATO established formal relations in January 2001, but the breakthrough came in December 2002, with the adoption of the EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP (for full text, see *NATO Press Release* (2002) 142).

Commander Europe (DSACEUR); and adapting the NATO defense planning system to allow for EU-run operations.

These cooperative arrangements facilitated the EU's Operation Concordia in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a peacekeeping mission it assumed from NATO on April 1st, 2003. Daily EU-NATO operational coordination takes place in Bosnia and Herzegovina (where NATO-led forces are deployed in SFOR and the European Union has a police mission) and in Kosovo (where NATO-led forces are deployed in KFOR and the European Union is responsible for economic reconstruction). The EU conducted an 'autonomous' peacekeeping operation in the Congo in the summer of 2003 and is set to take over from NATO in Bosnia in mid-2004, with the UK as the lead nation. NATO and EU experts are working together on the EU's European Capabilities Action Plan and NATO's Prague Capabilities Commitments.

Tensions resumed during the raw months of the transatlantic crisis over Iraq, however, when those European nations most opposed to US intervention in Iraq proposed the establishment of an independent military headquarters, with an independent planning capacity, for a new small core of EU nations committed to deeper defense integration. The Bush Administration reacted with alarm, and US Ambassador to NATO Nicholas Burns labelled the effort 'the greatest threat to the future of the alliance'.[8]

An uneasy resolution was finally reached in December 2003: a small EU operational planning cell is being established within SHAPE to plan for 'Berlin-plus' contingencies, and NATO can liaise with the EU Military Staff in Brussels, which will have additional planning capacity for EU civilian operations and civil-military missions. This bitter interlude underscored once again how difficult it is to advance real partnership between NATO and the EU, despite the hard-won practical

8. Ian Black, 'Rumsfeld Tries to Cool Row over EU Military Plan,' *The Guardian*, December 2, 2003, www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,1097703,00.html.

arrangements now in place. Differences over strategy and respective roles have been shelved, not solved.

ESDP: TEAPOT TEMPEST OR TRANSATLANTIC BELLWETHER?

At times, the almost mind-numbing detail associated with efforts at NATO-EU cooperation makes it easy to reduce this issue to a policy wonk's nightmare: hopeless, but not serious. But ESDP and NATO-EU cooperation are not marginal technical issues. They are emblematic of a central debate: how – and whether – Europe and the United States can align the grand experiment of European integration with a strategic shift of the transatlantic partnership to tackle together the challenges posed by the post-Cold War, post-9/11 world. Unfortunately, the allies are ducking this fundamental question, preferring instead to squabble over technical details.

Those in Europe who believe that they must weaken NATO to strengthen ESDP are only likely to achieve an insecure and incapable Europe unsure of itself and its role in the world. If they want Washington to support ESDP, they must produce real capabilities and assume real peacekeeping responsibilities, for instance in Bosnia. Those in the United States who believe that strengthening ESDP means weakening NATO are only likely to achieve a lonely superpower unable to count on the added abilities and resources of its allies when it comes to facing new threats and risks.[9] If they want European support for US initiatives, they must be willing to allow allies to develop the capacity to do so.

ESDP was originally intended to address challenges posed by the post-Cold War strategic transformation of the 1990s, when the grand transatlantic Alliance lost the

9. Julian Lindley-French, 'The ties that bind,' *NATO Review*, Autumn 2003, http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2003/issue3/english/art2.html

enemy that held it together, Europe was beset by continuing turbulence across the European continent and great human tragedy in the Balkans, and West Europeans discovered that they remained unable themselves to stabilize their continent. The strategic debate at the time revolved around the question whether the United States and Europe were prepared to adapt and expand their partnership to the threats and opportunities posed by the collapse of communism and Soviet power in the eastern half of the continent. After great hemming and hawing, and tremendous human tragedy, the answer was 'yes'. Europeans and Americans engaged in the Balkans, defined a new partnership with Russia, and expanded the zone of stability that once encompassed half of Europe to embrace the entire continent. In the process, they deepened and broadened their partnership beyond the traditional NATO model and included closer US-EU cooperation as part of a dense network of institutional cooperation that also spawned the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Security and Defense Policy.

While the original Petersberg tasks guiding the development of ESDP are broad and vague enough to incorporate the full spectrum of military activity, the clear focus of ESDP's headline goal and accompanying activities is to equip the EU with a capacity for regional stabilization on or near its borders. Such a capacity would be a vast improvement on the EU's record during the 1990s and should be welcomed by Americans.

Since September 11th, however, Europe and America find themselves in a second period of strategic transformation and redefinition. The post-9/11 strategic issue is whether the United States and Europe are once again prepared to adapt their partnership to address a diverse and dangerous set of challenges ranging far beyond the European continent.[10] As this debate unfolds, there is some question in the United States how – and whether – ESDP as originally conceived will be relevant to this new agenda.

10. See Daniel S. Hamilton, 'Reconciling 9/11 and 11/9,' in Simon Serfaty and Christina Balis (eds.), *Visions of America and Europe: September 11, Iraq, and Transatlantic Relations*, Washington, D.C.: CSIS Press, 2004.

If ESDP was primarily about stabilizing the periphery of an increasingly stable Europe, can it also become the vehicle to equip Europeans to act far beyond their continent? If ESDP was originally intended to make Europeans marginally more effective at policing their own backyard, can it or should it be adapted to defend European societies from elusive terrorists, failed states or aggressive dictators in regions far away from the European homeland? If ESDP was originally intended to prevent future Bosnias, can it be adapted to prevent future Afghanistans? Or future Iraqs? Europeans are ambivalent about the answers to these questions, which in turn exacerbates American ambivalence about the entire ESDP enterprise.

A synergistic relationship between the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF) and the NATO Response Force could reconcile this mutual ambivalence. The NRF is not intended to interfere with the ERRF; their missions are different. The NRF is designed for high-intensity combat and expeditionary strike missions, whereas the ERRF is currently intended primarily for peacekeeping and other Petersberg tasks. The NRF, with only 21,000 troops, will also be much smaller than the ERRF, which will have 60,000 ground troops and enough air and naval assets to bring the total to 100,000. The two are also structured differently: the NRF will be assigned to NATO's integrated command; the ERRF is intended to advance EU goals. Each could be used to advance common transatlantic interests, regardless of institutional affiliation. The NRF is smaller, so its budget costs will be low, totaling $3-4 billion per year for investments. Since the forces assigned to the NRF already exist, there is no requirement for extra spending on manpower or operations. Certainly Europeans have to set priorities, but they possess the manpower and budgets to support both the NRF and the ERRF, and should not have to choose between them. The key is ensuring that the 'dual-hatting' of forces does not result in conflicting crisis-response duties.[11]

11. See Hans Binnendijk and Richard L. Kugler, 'The Next Phase of Transformation: A New Dual-Track Strategy for NATO', in Daniel S. Hamilton (ed.), *Transatlantic Transformations: Equipping NATO for the 21st Century*, Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins University Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2004.

In short, there are ways to reconcile an evolving ESDP with diverse national interests within Europe and across the Atlantic, if the political will is there to do so. The United States is likely to continue its conditional support of an evolving ESDP, but the conditions of such support remain important. Although there are different American perspectives on ESDP, and much more of a debate within US leadership circles about its desirability than seems to be appreciated in Europe, there are some shared concerns about ESDP and what it may say about Europe's ability to engage on the most vital challenges facing the transatlantic partnership.