

## The new NATO Response Force: Challenges for and Reactions from Europe

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*“Who wins this battle  
will determine the shape  
of the future EU.”*

Janet Bush, euobserver, 19.11.2002

### I. Introduction

“The United States wants NATO to be important. We believe in the Alliance and want it to succeed. [...] If NATO does not have a force that is quick and agile, which can deploy in days or weeks instead of month or years, then it will not have much to offer the world in the 21th century.”<sup>1</sup>

With these words US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld opened his speech at the informal North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) defense ministerial meeting in Warsaw on 24 September 2002. He went on putting forward a proposal to be discussed at the North Atlantic Council meeting in Prague, 21/22 November 2002. NATO's Prague summit was originally thought as a platform to invite another round of seven new members<sup>2</sup> to join the Alliance and to discuss a new defense capabilities initiative. Now, it's agenda has been broaden by another major topic: Rumsfelds proposal aims at setting up a NATO “Response Force” (NRF). A four pages report had already been transmitted to the European allies several days ahead of the Warsaw meeting, précising the Pentagon's plans of the Response Forces structure and tasks.

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<sup>1</sup> BBC News World Edition, 25.9.2002.

<sup>2</sup> At Prague summit Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Rumania and Bulgaria will be invited to join the Atlantic Alliance.

What exactly will this NATO Response Force be? What will it look like and what will be its tasks? In order to be able to understand how the European NATO members reacted to this proposal, this paper's first chapter is designated to give a descriptive picture of the Response Force.

What is the proposal's main challenge? Does the NATO Response Force challenge the European Allies militarily enhancing the capabilities gap between the US and Europe? This paper argues that NATO Response Force's crucial challenge is a political one. In the following it will be claimed that NATO's Response Force and EU's European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) with its military component the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF) will – on the long run – be politically incompatible. The two are based on completely different concepts of security. If the European NATO member vote in favor of the NRF in Prague, ESDP's future and Europe's future as a political actor are more uncertain than ever before. "Who wins this battle will determine the shape of the future EU" Janet Bush rightly points out.<sup>3</sup>

For this reason it matters to draw a careful look on Great-Britain's, France's and Germany's reactions on Rumsfeld's proposal in a second chapter. These three European core countries differ most in their views on NATO's and ESDP's military and political roles and functions. Will the Response Force be built up at the Prague summit? And what do their reactions teach us on the future of ESDP? Is there a chance that the three agree on a complementary view especially on ESDP?

The consequences of their reactions on both NATO Response Force's and ESDP's future will be discussed in this paper's final chapter. Whereas the international scientific community in its majority foresees a transformation of NATO "from an essentially military organization to an essentially political one"<sup>4</sup> and stresses that "Washington is likely further to reduce its military presence in Europe"<sup>5</sup>, this paper claims that the opposite will happen. Howorth states that "[a]n Alliance with less US military involvement and with more involvement from former Warsaw Pact members will be a very different actor from the body founded in 1949 and even from the

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<sup>3</sup> euobserver.com, 20.11.2002.

<sup>4</sup> Foster, Wallace (2001-2002): 107.

<sup>5</sup> Howorth (2002): 3.

body reinvented in April 1999.”<sup>6</sup> The enlargement will undoubtedly transform NATO, but proposing the building of a Response Force is the contrary of a lesser US military involvement. Even though NATO will transform, it will survive as a military Alliance. Giving the same statement on the military future of the EU is much more risqué as will be shown in the following.

## II. NATO’s Response Force: A US vision on the future of the Atlantic Alliance

NATO’s new Response Force will include a military personnel of 20.000 prepared to deal with conflicts ‘at the high end of the spectrum’, or, in different words, to fight in ‘high intensity conflicts’. It will have secure deployable communications, protections for nuclear, chemical and biological emergencies, precision-strike capabilities and good airlift transportation. The new force as envisaged should be non-permanent (which means that after training together, the units return to their original assignments), joint and combined. It would differ from NATO’s fledgling rapid response force, because it would only be used for short-term operations in a range of 7-to-30 days, whereas the existing ACE Rapid Reaction Corps might deploy for as many as 90 days. The NATO Response Force would be deployed to theatres with no geographical limitation, thus acting out-of-area. To be able to sustain high-intensity combat operations on its own for at least one month and to be able to act, if necessary, as a bridgehead for a much larger intrusive mission, the NRF would be tailored according to the situation drawing on pre-identified land, maritime or air-components that would be deployed depending upon the nature of the mission. But not only will the NATO Response Force act as a bridgehead. It is especially designed for pre-emptive strikes against any ‘failed state’ or threat and shall not depend on UN Security Council’s authorization.

The connection between pre-emptive strikes and NATO’s Response Force has already been established in the ‘National Security Strategy of the United States of America’, presented to the world on September 20 by US-President George Bush. There the

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<sup>6</sup> Howorth (2002): 3.

White House states: “NATO’s core mission – collective defense of the transatlantic Alliance of democracies – remains, but NATO must develop new structures and capabilities to carry that mission under new circumstances. NATO must build a capability to field, at short notice, highly mobile, specially trained forces whenever they are needed to respond to a threat against any member of the Alliance. The Alliance must be able to act wherever our interests are threatened, creating coalitions under NATO’s own mandate, as well as contributing to mission-based coalitions.”<sup>7</sup>

Before becoming US official policy, the idea of creating a NATO ‘Spearhead Response Force’ has been discussed at the National Defense University in Washington. In the ‘Survival’ autumn 2002 issue Hans Binnendijk and Richard Kugler published an article entitled “Transforming European Forces” where they state: “[...], NATO should refocus its stalled Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) on using defense transformation to build a small ‘Spearhead Response Force’, that is, a European force capable of being a lead-element in assertive NATO efforts to cope with new threats. A new defense initiative will make little progress if it merely streamlines the NATO command structure and pursues a compressed list of DCI measures in unfocused ways. There must be a clear focus on the specific forces to be used for new missions, which must be fully equipped with the necessary capabilities.”<sup>8</sup>

Binnendijk and Kugler clearly stressed that “[t]his small force would consume only a minor fraction of Europe’s military manpower and defense budgets, but it could make a huge contribution toward enhancing NATO’s preparedness for new missions.”<sup>9</sup>

Binnendijk/Kugler’s argument of NATO’s Response Force’s low financial implication for the European allies has been stressed at the informal meeting in Warsaw. NATO-officials emphasized there, that the Response Force will not have to be newly created, but can be put together by existing capacities.<sup>10</sup>

European NATO-diplomats judge the US proposal as NATO’s last opportunity to prove its military relevance to the US. If the European NATO-Allies would refuse the creation of the NATO

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<sup>7</sup> The National Security Strategy of the United States of America: 25.

<sup>8</sup> Binnendijk, Kugler (2002): 118.

<sup>9</sup> Binnendijk, Kugler (2002): 118.

<sup>10</sup> Neue Züricher Zeitung, 25.9.2002.

Response Force at the Prague summit and thus refuse to enable NATO to react adequately to the asymmetric threats of the 21st century – international terrorism and distribution of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) – NATO is supposed to lose its relevance as a military organization, thus existing only as a ‘political discussion forum’ in which the US is not interested. In NATO’s diplomatic circles it is supposed that the US would gradually withdraw from Europe all by forging case-by-case ‘coalitions of the willing’ to fight wars against these new threats – a new ground broken with the ‘anti-terror-coalition’ fighting the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

This assessment of European diplomats is continually helped along by US officials. Stephen Hadly, deputy of President Bush’s security advisor Condoleezza Rice, stressed during an international NATO-hearing in Brussels in early October that the US still considers the Atlantic Alliance as an important organization – as long as NATO is willing to change and to adapt to the new conditions of a world post September 11. In his view, NATO doesn’t only need modern military capabilities, but also new structures, enabling the new capabilities to act in new kinds of missions.<sup>11</sup> US ambassador to NATO, Burnes clarified at the end of October during a visit in Berlin that the NATO Response Force is the heart of the changes NATO has to undergo.

In their Survival article Binnendijk and Kugler consider their ‘Spearhead Response Force’ being an opportunity for both sides of the Atlantic to revitalise the Alliance. “By collaborating on a transformational plan that will greatly improve Europe’s military capability to work with US forces in addressing new threats, the United States will get greater military help in crisis plus enhanced legitimacy for its policies. Conversely, the Europeans will gain influence over how their interests are protected as well as heightened credibility in the eyes of the United States and other countries.”<sup>12</sup>

If the benefits the US gets out of a NATO Response Force – military help, e.g. lower costs plus enhanced legitimacy – seem comprehensible, it is questionable, whether the European allies are satisfied with having more say in the protection of their interests and an enhanced credibility in the US.

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<sup>11</sup> Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 5.10.2002.

<sup>12</sup> Binnendijk, Kugler (2002): 118.

How did they comment Rumsfeld's proposal? To analyse their reactions at the Warsaw informal meeting and after allows us not only to uncover their visions on NATO and ESDP – is ESDP the European pillar in NATO, is it outside NATO, serving European to get the biggest amount of autonomy vis-à-vis NATO, are the two NATO and ESPD rivaling institutions? – but also to reveal the level on which the NATO Response Force challenges the European Security and Defense Policy.

### III. European Reactions on the US proposal

European official reactions on the Pentagon's proposal to build up a NATO Response Force have been sparse both in Warsaw and after. This, of course, has to be seen in the light of the proposal's character. The creation of a NATO Response Force has been presented during an informal, therefore unofficial, NATO defense ministerial meeting, designated to exchange views. It is now discussed and negotiated within NATO and will just be official at NATO's summit in Prague on 21/22 November.

It is very well-known that the North Atlantic Council has, for the first time in history, activated on 12 September 2001 Article 5 of the NATO-treaty, one day after the US had been hit by terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. On various occasions the European allies have repeated their support of the US struggle against international terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

Therefore, it is not surprising that newspapers all stress that the proposal to create a Response Force has been positively welcomed by NATO's defense ministers in Warsaw. But different opinions are held concerning the question which member states immediately, during the Warsaw informal meeting, assured their unconditional support and those who reacted in a more distant way.

Whereas the *Financial Times* neutrally wrote that a dozen defense ministers had supported Rumsfelds proposal<sup>13</sup>, the French *Le Monde* reported that Great-Britain, Poland, Turkey and Spain had

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<sup>13</sup> Financial Times, 24.9.2002.

declared to support the proposal.<sup>14</sup> The *Financial Times Deutschland* only mentioned Italy and Spain as being entirely in favor of the project.<sup>15</sup> One day later the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* declared that Spain, together with the France, Germany and the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Solana, had voiced concern about the US proposal. The NATO Response Force should not be in conflict with EU's Rapid Reaction Force.<sup>16</sup> The British *The Independent* stressed that the American plan presents an acute dilemma for several NATO countries, with Germany and France uneasy at Washington's apparent desire to see Alliance forces take pre-emptive action against ill-defined terrorist threats.<sup>17</sup>

Great-Britain, France and Germany differ most in their views on NATO's and ESDP's role and function. In order to be able to answer this paper's question on the future of both institutions it seems best to analyse these countries reactions on the proposal to build up a NATO Response Force closely. Will those three be able to agree on a common position on NATO's role in the 21th century?

If they do, this paper claims that it is likely that EU's European Security and Defense Policy also has a future in the new century. Because once they agreed on a complementary position on NATO, the path towards a common vision on ESDP seems very short. But if they don't agree on a position on NATO, and if at the same time they don't agree on a common spending for defense capabilities and if third the US gets the support it needs to make NATO's Response Force operational in 2006, then the future of the embryonic European Security and Defense Policy is today more uncertain then it has ever been. Before we come to analyse in which way the NATO Response Force challenges ESDP, Great-Britain's, France's and Germany's statements on NATO and ESDP post-Warsaw have to be investigated.

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<sup>14</sup> Le Monde, 26.9.2002.

<sup>15</sup> Financial Times Deutschland, 24.9.2002.

<sup>16</sup> Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 25.9.2002.

<sup>17</sup> The Independent, 24.9.2002.

## Great-Britain

In May 2002 the Foreign & Commonwealth Office has published a paper with the title "The Future of NATO: A UK-Spanish Vision". In this paper Prime Ministers Blair and Aznar stated that NATO is "the key transatlantic guarantee of security for its members, and the ultimate guardian of the values enshrined in the Washington Treaty of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law." They called the Prague Summit a unique opportunity to achieve the transformation of NATO according to their vision and proposed that the Alliance should agree at Prague to "[a]n effective NATO role against the new threats presented by international terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction; [r]enewed efforts to enhance flexible, deployable military capabilities; [...]." Furthermore they proposed that at Prague the allies should promote an "[i]ncreased NATO preparedness against terrorist and WMD attack, developed in close co-operation with the EU to ensure that respective capabilities are complementary." The European Defense in their view "supports NATO and is supported by NATO, creating true partnership" and it "helps to spread peace and stability, and counter the conditions that give rise to terrorism, using all the instruments of the EU."

In a 'Memorandum on the Future of NATO' on 27 June 2002 the Ministry of Defense presents the Government's views on the future of the Atlantic Alliance. According to this Memorandum, the UK Government must, along with other objectives, invest for the future by "[m]aking the Alliance more effective against the new threats of terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction; [r]enewing our collective efforts to enhance military capabilities."

The Memorandum goes beyond Mays 'UK-Spanish Vision' by stating that "it is clear following 11 September that NATO needs to improve its preparedness and capabilities against new threats, including terrorist and WMD attack." Furthermore, the paper does not contain any reflections on political complementarities between NATO and ESDP.

In a speech at the Chicago Council for Foreign Relations on 15 October 2002, Foreign Secretary Straw said: "The problems of proliferation, global terrorism and state failure are not susceptible to easy solutions. As the US National Security Strategy paper outlines, a unilateral approach is least likely to work. Cooperation across



borders, infusions of peacekeeping troops, aid and trade agreements and intelligence sharing are the hallmarks of multilateralism. A vigorous transatlantic Alliance – with NATO at its center – should form the frontline of our efforts.” Straw referred to Robert Kagan’s essay ‘Power and Weakness’ where Kagan concludes that Europe’s security is based almost entirely on US power, and that America’s military superiority makes it the only country qualified to work in the Hobbesian world of chaos.<sup>18</sup> To all those Europeans who think that exercising influence through ‘civilian power’ is sufficient, Kagan replies: “civilian assistance is no substitute for effective armed forces. Nor does such civilian power compensate for the fact that the military capabilities European allies bring to NATO are an increasingly inadequate response to the threats we face. A relationship, where one side of the Alliance disproportionately shoulders the military burden is a recipe for resentment. [...] Europe has to understand that the disparity between effective military contributions to the Alliance is something that it should not view with equanimity.”<sup>19</sup> Concerning the roles of NATO and ESDP Straw stated: “[...] ESDP is emphatically not NATO’s replacement. However effective Europe becomes as a regional or global actor, we cannot expect to make a real difference without regular, close and systematic co-operation with the US in NATO, higher and more focused defense spending and greater efficiency in Europe’s armed forces. The Prague summit [...] is a vital opportunity for the European members of the Alliance to deliver on their commitment to strengthen military capabilities.” Straw closed his speech by saying: “Conflict prevention and deterrence were founding principles of the transatlantic Alliance and NATO. But succeeding generations of American and European statesmen also recognised that the credibility of our foreign policy depended on military capability.”

British officials don’t want Europeans to play just a ‘soft-power role’, but a role as an important military actor. The European Security and Defense Policy does not, at least in their optic, challenge the Atlantic Alliance, because ESDP and NATO are complementary, they reinforce one another. ESDP is the European pillar in NATO, it’s task is to fight wars together with the US under NATO command. ESDP can’t exist without NATO. NATO has to

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<sup>18</sup> Kagan (2002).

<sup>19</sup> Kagan (2002).

transform in order to be able to react adequately to the new threats of international terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction. Therefore it needs a rapidly deployable force.

### France

This view is not shared by France. French minister of defense, Aillot-Marie was the only one who expressed serious concerns directly in Warsaw. She asked for a “mutual form of cooperation and support”<sup>20</sup> between NATO and ESDP. Furthermore she stated: “NATO has to keep it’s original geographical limitation.”<sup>21</sup> “Extremely dangerous” in her eyes is the possibility to integrate NATO in Washington’s concept of pre-emptive strikes. Le Monde quotes her saying: “This enables every strike one can imagine: Who will judge?”<sup>22</sup>

She repeated these concerns several days later in Washington where she delivered a speech at the National Defense University entitled “Why America and Europe need each other”.

“On both sides of the Atlantic, talents and capabilities may not be identical but they certainly are complementary and can be made to converge.” She names these differences: “The US is second to none in military power and declares that it is ready to lead and take risks. Europeans are ready to do their duty within an international legal framework. [...] Europeans also believe they can do a lot to promote development and nation-building. Europeans think that soft power can make serious contributions.” She expressed her profound conviction that when it comes to challenges from countries with WMD, “most European countries and certainly France would be perfectly willing and able to play a role in a strategy that would have been determined jointly. We thus would act as full partners over times.” But she also criticizes European states for not spending enough money on defense matters. “The forces we provide now to NATO operations are the same as those which are being readied for the European Union. Their capabilities should be insignificantly

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<sup>20</sup> Author’s translation. The original sentence was: „forme de cooperation et de soutien réciproque“.

<sup>21</sup> „Il faut que l’OTAN garde sa finalité géographique première.”

<sup>22</sup> Le Monde, 26.9.2002: „Cela ouvrirait la voie à n’importe quel cas de figure: qui va juger?”

enhanced. We do not pay sufficient attention to the need to transform our forces. We have to fully take into account the fact that future wars will be fought in coalitions, either within NATO or among European Union member states.” In her view it is necessary that both sides consult each other and act together with the combined strength of transatlantic allies. “But we also need to unlock the European potential within NATO and create the capability for Europeans to act as Europeans, where NATO as a whole is not engaged.” “After September 11, the case for Europe to act with the United States when necessary, and on its own when you are engaged elsewhere, is even stronger”, she said. The development of the ESDP is the only real chance for the US to see the Europeans accepting at last their full share of responsibilities and increasing their capabilities. “The EU security and defense dimension is in the interest of the United States”, she said. According to her, “NATO should be the natural forum for in depth discussions of the threats that affect all of its members and of the best strategy for action.” At the same time she criticized US behavior in NATO’s decision-making process indirectly: “Joint fighting and sacrifices entail joint decision-making.” “Can nations seriously be expected to risk the life of their soldiers if they are given no voice in why and how they will be engaged?” she asked the audience at the National Defense University.

It is easily perceptible that the new right-wing French government takes a stricter position towards NATO. In his speech given to the audience of the Parisian Institut des Hautes Etudes de Défense Nationale (IHEDN), which is at the same time the most important speech the French Prime Ministers deliver on security and defense matters, Prime Minister Raffarin named the principles guiding his governments actions: “First, our defense is and stays autonomous, it is not solitaire; The reference of our military as well as of our political choices stays Europe; Respecting our international engagements is our coherence.”<sup>23</sup> Autonomy, in his eyes, is the capacity to act whenever there is a specific threat, together with allies, partners, or alone. Prime Minister Raffarin stressed: “France

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<sup>23</sup> Author’s translation. „D’abord, notre défense est et reste autonome, elle n’est pas solitaire; Le référence de nos choix militaires comme de nos choix politiques reste l’Europe; Le respect de nos engagements internationaux est notre coherence.”

is free to join every coalition. This is its liberty.”<sup>24</sup> The European solidarity has to allow “Europe to take its responsibility in the field of security policy, to show a common vision and to create the means for this vision. It [Europe’s vision, R.K.] is in complete coherence with transatlantic solidarity.”<sup>25</sup> He says that he can understand that the US is traumatized since September 11. Therefore, the US seems trying to legitimize the unilateral and preventive use of force. “If France shares the US natural will to answer the attack it has been victim of, France nevertheless hopes that the US sticks to a vision of collective security which is grounded on law, the cooperation of states and the authority of the UN’s Security Council.”<sup>26</sup>

These citations clearly show that France is reluctant towards a NATO Response Force acting outside any UN-Security Council resolution and/or doing preemptive strikes. It is therefore very likely that France actually tries to negotiate to link the NATO Response Force’s actions to an UN-Security Council mandate. But one can also imagine that French President Chirac is going to opt his country out of the NRF during the NATO-Summit in Prague. This is at least the focus under which Raffarin’s insistence on France’s autonomy in all security and defense matters has to be read. As a non-integrated member of the Alliance France might demand the right to choose when and under which conditions its army will fight NATO Response Force tasks. This will however certainly not prevent French soldiers from training in NRF constellations.

Generally speaking, France has always been reluctant to assign the primary political and military role in NATO to the US. The various French governments always fought for a more pronounced European military role. France is very much in favor of the ESDP because of ESDP’s headline goal of military independence from the US. ESDP has to be able to resolve conflicts without the US – all in relying on NATO’s capabilities for as long as Europe still lacks them.

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<sup>24</sup> Author’s translation. “La France reste libre de rejoindre toutes coalitions. C’est sa liberté.”

<sup>25</sup> Author’s translation. „Permettre à l’Europe de prendre ses responsabilités en matière de sécurité, en affichant une vision commune et en s’en donnant les moyens. Elle est en pleine coherence avec la solidarité transatlantique.”

<sup>26</sup> Author’s translation. “Si la France partage la volonté naturelle des Etats-Unis de répondre à l’attaque don’t ils ont été victimes, la France souhaite qu’ils restent fidèles à une vision de la sécurité collective qui repose sur la droit, la coopération des Etats et l’autorité du Conseil de sécurité.”

## Germany

Due to it's "No" to a German participation in a military strike against Saddam Hussein's Iraq during the election campaign, the re-elected government of Chancellor Schröder is actually more than ever constrained to improve its transatlantic relations. There seems no doubt that the German government is voting in favor of the NATO Response Force, this is at least what Mr. Struck, German Minister of Defense told journalists during a press-conference in Washington on 9 November.

Coming to this "Yes" to a NATO Response Force must have been painful for the German government. In Warsaw itself, where it just turned out that the government had been confirmed in the election, Mr. Struck only qualified Rumsfelds proposal as 'interesting', précising that the Berlin administration is going to analyse it carefully. On 27 September, Mr. Voigt, the governments Coordinator for the German-American cooperation stressed in a speech entitled "The Common Foreign and Security Policy and the EU: Consequences for the Euroatlantic relationship"<sup>27</sup>: In the US a new debate on how to tackle these new threats [international terrorism and WMD, R.K.] and how to devise international security has been initiated. [...] Europe is invited to challenge these new ideas or security doctrines and the assessment on which they are based on. For instance, it is not in the interest even to the US to develop principles that grant every nation the right of preemption on the basis of it's own definition. [...] However, it is not enough merely to criticize, Europeans have to develop viable alternatives and position these on the market place of ideas, especially in Washington." At the same time, Voigt is of the opinion that "the EU has a role to play and to meet expectations, be it from elsewhere in Europe, be it out of self-esteem. And our own global interests demand that we play a global role. Increasing Europe's scope for action is not intended to build up Europe as a counterweight to the US, but rather to make this Europe a more effective partner for the US. With additional capabilities, Europe would become more relevant in the eyes of Washington. This would lay to rest the recurring question of the relevance of NATO; supporters of multilateralism would then gain ground in the US." On the topic of

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<sup>27</sup> He participated on a conference „European security – Cosequences for the Euroatlantic relationship?“ in Copenhagen.

NATO he went on saying: “NATO has undergone reforms since the end of Cold War. I am confident that it will continue to reform itself in order to be able to respond adequately to new risks.” On 15 October Voigt spoke at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London. There he said: “We have to discuss when the threat of military action in an option in case in which preventive action, cultural dialogue, development aid or police missions do not achieve the desired result. [...], the reluctance to military engagements still exists in Germany, and is quite virulent in the New Bundesländer. This sentiment is probably greater in Germany than in most other European countries and especially in comparison to the US. Against this popular sentiment – [...] – we need an open and frank discussion about if, when and under which circumstances military action is necessary.”

In their coalition agreement signed on 16 October the two governing parties agreed that the Atlantic Alliance is essential for European stability and security as well as for the creation of a sustainable area of peace in Europe. Both parties reinforce, that the federal government will do its utmost to succeed NATO’s necessary adaptation to a changing security environment and that it keeps its significance for European security. At the same time they state that the Bundeswehr’s prime task is the defense of the country and the Alliance and international conflict-prevention and crisis-management mandated by the Charta of the United Nations.

But the government’s attitude shifted around October 20. On 23 October the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote on the front page that Washington had sent a list to Berlin, asking the federal governments support for Turkey becoming a member of the EU as soon as possible, for the decision in favor of the creation of a NATO Response Force which will be put on the agenda at the Prague Summit. In Prague the government is also demanded not to veto a decision allowing NATO strikes against Iraq. Even though the existence of this list was denied the following day by foreign minister Fischer<sup>28</sup>, the government moderated its tone towards the United States. After a meeting with NATO’s Secretary General Robertson on 4 November, Chancellor Schröder referred to the American idea of creating rapid reaction forces as generally “right and appropriate to the objectives at hand”, adding that the way they relate to European security and defense policy, how they are to be equipped,

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<sup>28</sup> Financial Times Deutschland, 24.10.2002.

and the volume of capabilities to be created are questions that will need further discussion. Five days later defense minister Struck assured Rumsfeld on the occasion of his visit in the US of German support for the NATO Response Force in Prague.

Although Germany was at first quite silent towards the Pentagon's proposal of creating a NATO Response Force because – still due to its past – its preference is soft power, peace-keeping and peace-enforcement in the framework of ESDP, it had to give way to apparent US and European pressures. Not only did Bush not congratulate Schröder to his re-election, but also France's President Chirac as well as Britain's Prime Minister Blair asked the German government to improve relations with the US.

#### IV. Does the NATO Response Force challenge the European Security and Defense Policy?

The statements shown above make it more than likely that the creation of a NATO Response Force in Prague will be voted for<sup>29</sup> – although the French government might insist on its position of a non-integrated member and 'opt-out' of the force, demanding the right for the President of the Republic to decide when and wherever French troops will participate in NRF's missions.

What consequences does the setting up of a NATO Response Force entail for the European Security and Defense Policy? This paper has argued that once Great-Britain, France and Germany will agree on a common position on NATO's future role, a more explicit profile for ESDP is likely to be found in the near future. But, as has been shown above, these countries are far from a common view on NATO – cynically speaking, it is precisely due to the lack of a common position that the creation of NATO's Response Force is possible. Thus, is the paper's pessimistic prediction that without a common position on NATO the future of embryonic ESDP is today more uncertain than it has ever been becoming reality?

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<sup>29</sup> Newspapers already stated that the NATO Response Force has already been voted by the 19 NATO-Ambassadors on Tuesday, 19.11.2002. See for example Financial Times Deutschland 20.11.2002.

Since Warsaw it has been stated on various occasions that the planned NATO Response Force will not be in competition with EU's Rapid Reaction Force. NATO's Secretary General Robertson gave the most telling statement on this subject towards the European parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee where he dismissed such claims as "complete rubbish". Calling the proposed NATO force "another sharp tool in the tool box", the Secretary General said the aim is that the two forces "complement" each other. He went on emphasizing that the fundamental differences between the two are that the European Rapid Reaction Force does not contain any American soldiers and that its only purpose is to carry out the Petersberg tasks – peacekeeping, humanitarian response and crisis management. NATO's new force, on the other hand, would be deployable within seven days, it would complement existing structures such as Eurocorps in Strasbourg, and it would be used to defuse troubled spots.<sup>30</sup>

General Hägglund, the Finnish Chairman of the EU Military Committee, supports the creation of a NATO Response Force with approximately the same line of argumentation. During his visit to Finland he explained on 22 October: "When a speedy reaction is required, the EU is toothless. It lacks the necessary organization. In such a situation the NATO Response Force could be used as the spearhead. If needed, the EU could then assume the responsibility for further measures."<sup>31</sup>

Is then everything in perfect order? NATO's Response Force acts as a spearhead, the European Rapid Reaction Force takes on any further measures. Perfect compatibility!? Both institutions will survive and this papers pessimism is unjustified?

In a military optic, there might be compatibility between the two forces, especially if the ERRF at the same time as being EU's military branch is the European component of the NATO Response Force. But are the two forces also compatible from a political point of view? This paper claims that they are not at all. On the contrary: what is at stake with the establishment of a NATO Response Force is the political future of the European Security and Defense Policy. In other words: building up a NATO Response Force on the one hand, the EU states that at the same time are NATO members might on the other hand give the death-blow to ESDP. In what way?

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<sup>30</sup> euobserver.com, 8.10.2002.

<sup>31</sup> euobserver.com, 23.10.2002.



No (military) proposal coming from the Pentagon is *politically* innocent. Therefore it is essential to study the political side of NATO's Response Force carefully. What is it on?

The US Ministry of Defense's proposal asks its European allies in NATO three questions:

- a) are you willing to fight the asymmetric threats of international terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction globally and – where- and whenever necessary – with preemptive strikes?
- b) are you willing to change your security-policy focus from crisis management to active fighting?
- c) are you willing to make resources and further funds available for military actions that go beyond Article 5?

As has been shown previously it is very likely that these three questions, that NATO's Response Force implicitly contains, will be affirmatively answered in Prague. But agreeing to Rumsfeld's proposal will in the long run be a pointing the way ahead of one specific security concept.

In its stance and its tasks, the NATO Response Force is designed in the logic of an US concept of security. According to this concept

- security is assured through a global ability to act, via active fighting under the military leadership of the US.

This security concept has since the end of the Cold War been challenged by a genuinely European concept of security that finds its expression in the European Security and Defense Policy. This European concept of security can also be subsumed under three keywords:

- The European's aim is to intervene locally in given or looming conflicts, the European army's task is peacekeeping and not active fighting and the basic characteristic is the European autonomy of action.

This paper is of the opinion that a parallel maintenance of a security conception based on military fighting on the one hand and of a security conception based civil-military actions conceptualized for peacekeeping and peace enforcement on the other hand is not possible in the long run – neither from an analytical view nor under the aspect of Europe's political credibility. How is it possible in the

optic of political credibility that European soldiers – with the ‘helmets’ of NATO Response Force – fight wars or do preemptive strikes against a state, then change the NATO Response Force ‘helmets’ in order to do – on the same ground – peacekeeping and peace enforcement with European Rapid Reaction Force’s hats?

Wouldn’t it in this optic be easier for those European NATO Allies struggling for a political implementation of the European Security and Defense Policy to establish a ‘peacekeeping-track’ inside NATO, to transfer the Petersberg task’s from ESDP to NATO? This question sounds provocative, but transferring a peacekeeping/Petersberg security concept from ESDP to NATO would finally enable the ESDP’s member states to act in their civil-military conception. They would no longer depend on either a Greek or a Turkish veto constantly paralyzing the ‘Berlin plus process’ because they could (and should) under these conditions use NATO capabilities freely.

To establish a ‘peacekeeping-track’ inside NATO would – sarcastically speaking – take pressure away from EU-Europe to start membership negotiations with Turkey. Also, the EU-enlargement process starting by 2004 would not dilute the embryonic European Security and Defense Policy. Still, ESDP’s institutional framework and its decision-taking process is far too complicated and therefore – in case of a crisis – much too slow. The future Middle/East European EU member states are either already NATO members or invited to join NATO as soon as possible. Traditionally, they are much more in favor of NATO – in particular they are very much interested in the US’s security guarantees – than of ESDP, where one still doesn’t really know what it is (for). The European security concept based on peacekeeping could be saved by its shifting from an ESDP to a NATO framework where it seems much easier to find a common ground (although this ground is all too often a US-inspired one) and where political ambitions have a military backing.

Under these circumstances, EU-Europe would meet its historical function: that of an area of peace and stability in Europe and would not become a political actor with a military branch.

This scenario seems likely and not all that detrimental for the European NATO and ESDP member states, but its realization is only possible if the EU member states – and especially its core members Great-Britain, France and Germany – would have a complementary vision on Europe as a ‘political actor’. It has been

shown that they differ very much in their views on NATO's role and tasks. Unfortunately, they also differ – nearly along the same line of argumentation – on ESDP's role and tasks.

Speaking in institutional theory terms, once an institution has been set up, its maintenance is cheaper – even if the institution does not function adequately – then its repeal.

Under these circumstances, it is difficult to imagine that the EU will give up its ambition to become a political actor. The EU's defense ministers decision to establish a political timetable for the European Rapid Reaction Force to be operational until mid-2003 has to be read in this logic of argumentation.<sup>32</sup> Another institution can also play an important role in the maintenance of both military organizations: the EU's Constitution Convent. After the presentation of the Convent's outline of a European Constitution it seems very likely that it will opt in favor of a more state actor like shape of the EU. As there are no compatible views on ESDP's future on the one side, but as there exists a huge institutional apparatus around the European Security and Defense Policy that wants to be maintained, transferring the European security concept from ESDP to NATO is unlikely to happen in a near future.

Nevertheless, for the long run, the establishment of a NATO Response Force along with the enlargement of both institutions – NATO and EU – on nearly the same member states will have significant influences on ESDP. To maintain both reaction forces – NATO Response Force and European Rapid Reaction Force – in parallel will be nearly impossible for Europe. The new member states are traditionally in favor of NATO, NATO's capabilities are required to enable ESDP militarily to “see and hear”. ESDP's institutional framework and decision making process both are too slow in case of a crisis. As paradox as it may sound: the European security concept could be saved inside NATO, inside a NATO which will thus have a military and a civil-military track. If this will happen depends not only on the European Allies, but also to a high extent on the actual US-Administration. The latter ignores the European security concept all too often, qualifying it as a sign of weakness.

Military deployments can accelerate political processes. As soon as possible, the EU wants to take the lead of the mission ‘Amber Fox’ in Macedonia, actually lead by NATO. The Macedonian

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<sup>32</sup> Financial Times Deutschland, 20.11.2002, euobserver, 19.11.2002.

government asked the international community to extend 'Amber Fox' in order to protect EU and OSCE observers on Macedonian ground. Due to its clear mandate and the relatively small number of soldiers involved, Amber Fox at first glance seems ideal for a first ESDP's mission. But as it is very likely that the number of the international observers in Macedonia will be reduced by the end of this year. If this happens, an ESDP lead 'Amber Fox' might be smaller in number of soldiers than the actual one. A reduced international military presence on the Macedonian ground might increase the frequency of conflicts between slavonic and albanian Macedonians. If their conflicts should escalate again, ESDP's force will have to be militarily assisted by NATO-lead KFOR, because it is very unlikely that the European's will be able to send their Rapid Reaction Force in order to protect their soldiers. Having to call NATO for aid would cement ESDP's total failure.

## V. Conclusion

From a military point of view, the European Security and Defense Policy is still very far from its aimed autonomy of US military supremacy. The EU's military insufficiency is politically challenged since the Warsaw informal meeting of NATO's defense ministers. The US proposal of a NATO Response Force asks the Europeans to choose between two security concepts: a US-American one based on global fighting, prevention and preemption and an European one based on local peacekeeping. In the optic of political credibility it is impossible to maintain or combine these two concepts. The only way for European's to give voice to their peacekeeping-based security option appears to be inside NATO. NATO's institutional framework, its decision making-process and its military capabilities enable peacekeeping operations, backed up militarily. With the building up of a NATO Response Force, European Security and Defense Policy is at the crossroads. Divided and weak Europe meets determined and potent US. Is there still a perspective for a European civil-military actor?

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