

For the past several years, the United States, Canada, their European allies, and other countries belonging to the European Union (EU)<sup>1</sup> have resumed a long-standing debate about the relationship between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a whole and a European defense “pillar” of the Western alliance. Historically, this debate has always had several strands: Most prominent have been the characteristics and pace of the development of European integration, chiefly enshrined in the European Union; the management of security within the West—until 1991 focusing on the Soviet Union and now oriented more broadly; the sharing of common transatlantic defense burdens among the various countries of Western Europe and North America; and the distribution of political influence, both within the two key institutions—NATO and the EU—and in general between the United States and its partners.

In about 1993, the latest round of debate began in earnest, with two notable developments: widespread recognition that NATO still retained a purpose following the end of the cold war—to paraphrase

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<sup>1</sup>The first post–World War II Western security institution was Western Union (WU), created in 1948; this was enlarged and renamed the Western European Union (WEU) in 1954. During 2000–2001, the WEU was in the process of being absorbed within the European Union (EU). Regarding nonmilitary European integration, the first formal institution was the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) of 1951. Following negotiation of the Treaty of Rome in 1956, it was supplemented by the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). These became collectively referred to as the European Communities, or European Community (EC). In 1992, the three institutions were integrated and re-named the European Union.

Voltaire on God, “If NATO did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it”; and the European Union’s embarking on a new round of institutional creativity, both intensifying cooperation among its members and within its bodies and looking toward countries that had recently emerged from the wreckage of the Soviet Empire.

In NATO’s case, it was already becoming clear that retaining the alliance and its apparatus was necessary to achieve important post-cold war purposes—ensuring that the United States would remain engaged strategically on the European continent; preserving the best of the alliance’s past, including its integrated military command structure; reaching out to the newly sovereign states of Central Europe; and helping to shape Russia’s future, potentially the most consequential, long-term imponderable on the continent. To fulfill its various purposes, during the 1990s, NATO embarked on a series of interlocking efforts, each designed to provide some aspect of an overall concept of security, devoted, at heart, to pursuit of the historically unprecedented chance of creating—in the words of President George H.W. Bush—a Europe “whole and free.” Thus in a series of eight initiatives, NATO began taking in new members and kept the door open to others; invented the Partnership for Peace and created the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council; signed a Founding Act with Russia and a Charter with Ukraine; revamped its command arrangements; and, at the same time, saw wisdom in developing a new relationship with the key manifestation of the old “European pillar”—the Western European Union (WEU).<sup>2</sup>

For its part, the European Union reached another point in its development when, periodically, it seems necessary that it move forward lest it risk falling backward—a point at which earlier efforts have been sufficiently digested to permit a reaching out for something more. Thus at Maastricht in February 1992, the EU began to craft its own post-cold war destiny and, as part of that, to renew discussion about the possibilities of European integration, including the cre-

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<sup>2</sup>See, for instance, Robert E. Hunter, “Maximizing NATO,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 3, May/June 1999, pp. 190–203.

ation of capacities to conduct foreign policy and, at some point, include within it a defense dimension unique to the EU.<sup>3</sup>

Inevitably, the parallel processes in NATO and the EU began to have a profound impact on one another, given that they both reach the heart of some fundamental questions, including the nature of security in 21st-century Europe; the long-term relationships among European and transatlantic politics, economics, society, and military affairs; the role to be played by the United States in European security—both writ large (the corpus of relations) and small (military engagement); and the precise purposes to be developed in the new era for the two great institutions, entailing both the respective bounds that separate them and the processes and practices that can and do link them together.

Looking back over institutional change in NATO during the past decade, it is in this realm—the relationship between NATO and the European Union, represented in the defense area by the WEU and later by the EU through what NATO has called the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) and the EU has called the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP)<sup>4</sup>—that there has often seemed to

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<sup>3</sup>See *Treaty on European Union*, Maastricht, February 7, 1992, especially “Title 1: Common Provisions, Article B”:

The Union shall set itself the following objectives: . . . —to assert its identity on the international scene, in particular through the implementation of a common foreign and security policy including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence,

which is also contained in Article J.4.

<sup>4</sup>“European Security and Defense Identity,” “European Security and Defence Policy,” and “Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP)” are terms of art. NATO, which still proceeds with the preference for creating a European pillar within itself, potentially drawing upon military capabilities “separable but not separate” from the alliance, continues to use the term ESDI, which was first introduced in the Maastricht Treaty (*Treaty on European Union*, *op. cit.*) of February 7, 1992. The EU, by contrast, beginning with the Cologne European Council in June 1999, and formally at the December 1999 Helsinki European Council, shifted to using the term ESDP, to emphasize that this was a “policy” of the EU, and not just an “identity” derived from NATO. Adding the “C”—for common—does not change the sense of ESDP and thus has no great political significance; but it does bring “CESDP” into parallel with the overarching Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). It has also been argued that CESDP is an acronym easier to handle in some EU languages than ESDP. At NATO sometimes “identity” is used to denote NATO’s part of the relationship and “policy” to

be the least amount of clarity in transatlantic debate. In each of NATO's other key initiatives, listed above—or even in the allies' dealing with the vexing issues presented by the Balkans and, more particularly, the Former Yugoslavia—there has been greater common understanding between the United States and its European partners, at least on the questions at issue; and the road to resolution, while not always smooth, especially regarding Bosnia and Kosovo, has at least been relatively straightforward.

Not so in developing the European defense pillar and its relationship to NATO—including the relationship between the European participants in this “pillar” and the United States.<sup>5</sup> For the better part of a decade, each new development in the creation of ESDP and in NATO's response to it has been attended by a high degree of misunderstanding, at times even mistrust, often amounting to a proper *dialogue des sourds*—a dialogue of the deaf.<sup>6</sup> And in few if any other

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denote the EU's part. The terms will be used here in the sense that seems most appropriate to the text.

A senior official of NATO, who asked to remain anonymous, provides further discussion of the two terms:

As to ESDP and ESDI, it is worth recalling that ESDP is a term of art for which the EU has exclusive proprietary rights, and the E stands for European in the sense of EU (which does not exclude, but also does not guarantee, that the EU might allow other European countries to participate in shaping it). ESDI, on the other hand, is a term which at least in part has also been shaped by NATO. The new NATO Strategic Concept of 1991, which predates the Maastricht Summit, speaks of the “creation of a European identity in security and defence” in a paragraph (22) which addresses the roles of “other European institutions such as the EC, WEU and OSCE.” In 1996, we all agreed to build ESDI within the Alliance. The E in ESDI therefore has a broader connotation than in ESDP and definitely includes all European members of NATO, which unfortunately is not so clear (and in the view of some clearly not so) for ESDP (August 2001).

<sup>5</sup>This perception is especially striking because ten of the EU countries engaged in ESDP (eleven if Denmark, with its special status, is included) are also members of NATO. Ironically, this dual membership has not played a critical role in reducing difficulty and misunderstanding between NATO and the EU over the European pillar of the alliance; this misunderstanding clearly stems in part from the weight and influence of the United States within NATO, along with France's incomplete engagement in its integrated command structure; it may also stem in part from the habits and practices of institutions, the pull of bureaucracy, and the different cultures represented in the national delegations of the two institutions.

<sup>6</sup>Thus on December 5, 1998, the day after the Anglo-French summit at St. Malo, which was a critical turning point in the development of the European defense pillar, I

places has the lack of an intensive, open, and informed dialogue on these issues been more potentially damaging to allied comity than in the U.S. Congress. There, skepticism about ESDI-ESDP has been almost constant since about the time of the Franco-British St. Mâlo declaration (December 1998), if not before. Notably, widespread skepticism on Capitol Hill has two directly competing strands: either that ESDI will do so little that it will not make up for shortfalls in NATO capabilities—indeed, development of the European pillar could make matters worse by threatening to drain off a significant portion of what European resources are made available for defense; or that ESDI will try to do so much, at the expense of NATO’s primacy, that NATO would become less effective and U.S. influence in Europe would be decisively weakened.

Part of the problem may lie in the sheer complexity of the issues and institutional developments. These have related very much to the internal workings of NATO, the WEU,<sup>7</sup> and the EU, and they have drawn upon decades of process and practice; they engage what all three bodies in Brussels characterize as points of “theology,” of basic lore about what each institution does and what it does not do—recognizing that each is composed of sovereign states that nevertheless have learned over many years of trial and error to work effectively together, in critical and unprecedented ways. Part of the problem lies in the institutions’ resistance to cooperation with one another. Part, of course, lies with the ineffable quality called “influence.” This quality affects both nations and institutions and relates most profoundly to two matters: the role played by the United States in the affairs of nations on the other side of an ocean; and the classic interplay of relations among European states, now channeled at least in part through institutions designed in large part precisely for that purpose. It can also be fairly said that only a limited number of

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attended a conference in London on transatlantic economic and security relations, organized by the Transatlantic Policy Network (TPN). Following a presentation by a senior EU official of the *St. Mâlo Communiqué* and reflecting the views of a number of U.S. members of Congress present, I asked some questions, simply for clarification of what had been agreed upon the day before. The response from several Europeans present was instantaneous and intense: Once again, the United States was interfering in a European effort to organize itself in the foreign policy and defense area! This exchange was a foretaste of what was to come in discussion and debate on the content and implications of St. Mâlo and subsequent developments.

<sup>7</sup>The WEU is in the process of being absorbed within the EU, in almost all functions.

people on both sides of the Atlantic have penetrated to the heart of the detailed matters at issue in the development of ESDP and its relationship to the Atlantic Alliance; yet at the same time, the essence of the basic political and security relationships between NATO and the EU is sufficiently profound to command the attention of senior leaders in all the affected countries.

The discussion that follows is not designed to be the final word on the continuing debate between NATO and the European Union—and particularly the United States and its European partners—on development of ESDP and relations between the two institutions. It is told from the point of view of one American who has been engaged in studying the issues for nearly 40 years and who negotiated NATO-WEU relations for the United States during most of the critical period in the 1990s. The discussion is thus designed to present the critical factors and issues as they evolved, in order to help elucidate them and determine which are most important and which can be viewed as extraneous. It will do so from the perspective of interests and concerns that have emerged in the United States as ESDP has developed in recent years, helping to clarify those interests and concerns for Europeans and to assess their relevance and importance for Americans.

In the process, this discussion will also point toward means for helping both NATO and the EU—as well as the United States and its European partners—to find means of creating long-term relationships regarding ESDP that can reduce inevitable frictions, as deep questions like relative political influence are pondered; and that can benefit all parties as they pursue, together, the critical common cause of promoting European security for the 21st century.