

As this study has sought to demonstrate, resolving current issues in NATO–EU/ESDP relations, including U.S. interests and concerns about the EU’s ventures in foreign policy and defense, is, at least for the near and medium terms, more about political will and tactics than about long-term goals and strategy. At some point, the European Union is likely to have its own foreign policy—and, in some areas of economics-as-foreign-policy, it already does. Even beyond Europe, there continues to be a high degree of common strategic perspective among the United States, Canada, the European allies, the non-NATO members of the European Union, and the aspirants to join both organizations. But it is not clear precisely how much common strategic perspective there will be in the years ahead—in terms of what to do about emerging threats and challenges if not also about the nature of those threats and challenges themselves: The transatlantic debate on missile defenses—especially as it relates to the Middle East, Russia, China, and multilateral regimes (e.g., arms control)—is a case in point. Furthermore, as the European Union gains cohesion, economic coherence, and political potential—both within the European continent and beyond—questions of relative influence between Europe and the United States will grow apace. This trend will continue even if (as is likely) the strategic presence of the United States on the continent is still required, especially to help shape Russia’s future, and even if the transatlantic economic relationship continues to move generally in the direction of interdependence (and motives for a large measure of cooperation) rather than division (and motives for corrosive competition).

The issue of influence also points in another direction. The architecture of NATO's future is essentially completed—although much work and many critical decisions still lie ahead in turning plans into reality; there are no fundamental strategic fault lines across the Atlantic; the European Union is growing in power, performance, wealth, and stature and is moving forward in key areas of both “widening” and “deepening”—with the latter including adoption of the Euro and the early steps in creating CFSP and ESDP. At the same time, an increasing share of the overall transatlantic relationship is shifting toward U.S. relations with the EU, not so much because of ESDP, but because (1) much of the strategic architecture is in place; yet (2) much of the long-term transatlantic economic relationship has not been defined. Thus, in the period ahead, it is likely that a larger part of adjustments in influence between the various parties to the transatlantic relationship will take place within areas that are EU-focused—and EU/U.S.-focused—as opposed to the classic strategic and political-military areas that have so much dominated the past. This is a further argument for breaking down traditional barriers between NATO and the EU, as well as within the U.S. and allied governments in terms of approaches to political-military and political-economic matters.

But none of these issues, fundamental to the long-term nature of transatlantic relationships, needs finally to be resolved now to draw a basic lesson about immediate developments in relations between NATO and EU/ESDP—and between the United States and its European partners in the field of defense and military affairs. Three points stand out:

- The ESDI-ESDP issue should not be dividing the United States and European allies in any fundamental way.
- “Getting ESDP right” should thus be high on the current transatlantic agenda, for political action by leaders on both sides of the Atlantic, designed to reduce this irritant to the degree possible and remove it as a complicating factor in addressing other transatlantic problems.
- There is no apparent reason why serious efforts by U.S. and EU leaders should not produce the desired results—a mutually reinforcing relationship between the European Union, acting

through ESDP, and NATO that works for all and for overall security in the transatlantic region.