

BACKGROUND

Beginning in 1993, the United States began giving strong support to the development of a vigorous “European pillar” within the Atlantic Alliance. In June 1996, NATO and the WEU negotiated framework agreements that served as the basis for creating this European pillar within the alliance. This pillar would potentially draw upon NATO military capabilities that could be “separable from but not separate from” the alliance. The WEU would be permitted to make use of certain NATO assets—including staff officers, military equipment not available to the WEU states, the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and NATO’s new Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) headquarters. These would be available to help the WEU undertake so-called Petersberg Tasks, ranging from humanitarian missions to peacemaking, in circumstances when NATO as a whole—in effect, the United States—chose not to be involved.

Two years later, French President Chirac and British Prime Minister Blair took a step further, declaring that the European Security and Defense Policy should also have the capacity for “autonomous” action. And at the end of 1999, the European Union states agreed to create a Headline Goal Task Force—popularly called “the European rapid reaction force”—that would be ready, from 2003 onward, to undertake some of the Petersberg Tasks.

For the last several years, there has been intense debate across the Atlantic about the relationship between NATO and the European Union, in regard to the latter’s ESDP; about how ESDP should func-

tion—what it should do and, equally important, what tasks it should leave to NATO; about the proper role for the Headline Goal Task Force; about the level of European defense spending and the equipment that a European force should “duplicate” rather than draw from NATO; and—beneath the surface of the debate—the relative distribution of political influence, both within Europe and between the United States and its European allies.

As ESDP has developed, at least 11 separate purposes have emerged as central:

- Move the process of European integration forward.
- Lay the basis for the EU’s eventually having a truly functioning “European” foreign policy.
- Provide one framework for adjusting relative political influence within the European Union.
- Enable the Europeans to have an added insurance policy so that they could act with some military force if NATO (meaning, in practice, the United States) chose not to be engaged.²
- Address the constant refrain from the United States about “burden sharing” within the alliance.
- Provide added political incentive for modernizing European military forces and ensuring that, to the degree possible, they remain interoperable with more rapidly modernizing U.S. military forces.
- Give the Europeans some more say in decisions reached within NATO.
- Give European governments a greater say regarding a legal mandate for military action.

²By common agreement, NATO retains responsibility for the collective defense of the alliance, as covered by Article 5 of the Treaty of Washington. But regarding the tasks that the EU might undertake under the Petersberg Tasks, there is no formal separation—or division of labor—between what operations the EU could undertake as opposed to those that NATO could undertake. However, as part of the understanding within the alliance that there should be “one NATO, not two” is the implication that, at some level of military action, an EU operation could have to engage NATO with its much more extensive and robust capabilities.

- Buttress the process of EU enlargement into Central Europe.
- Spur the consolidation of European armaments industries, provide some added demand for military equipment, and create a political framework for competing and cooperating with their American counterparts.
- Tackle the long-standing question of the relative distribution of influence within the broader Atlantic Alliance.

U.S. ASSESSMENT

The United States should accept and support most if not all of these ESDP goals. Since the 1940s, the United States has promoted European integration. It clearly welcomes efforts that will reduce recurrent European fears that the United States will “decouple” its security from Europe’s. It welcomes incentives to increase European defense spending, especially to demonstrate adequate burden sharing within the alliance and to help European militaries be interoperable with U.S. forces.

The United States should also welcome the development of a Headline Goal Task Force that focuses on development of military capabilities that can also contribute to NATO. The United States should welcome development of an ESDP and a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) that can lead Europe to play a more active role beyond the European continent. The United States should also welcome a European capability for crisis management, especially civilian aspects, and even the use of military force in situations that fall below the threshold where NATO—meaning, in practice, the United States—would need to become engaged.

ESDP also raises some issues of serious concern for the United States that need to be resolved to ensure that NATO and EU actions through ESDP will be compatible with one another, that they will work toward the same basic objectives, and that transatlantic security and political relations will be strengthened, not weakened, by the development of ESDP. Notable are the following:

- ESDP may stimulate greater European defense spending, but that spending might go primarily to purchase capabilities that NATO already has in abundance; or it could be wasteful in terms

of efficient use of scarce resources; or it could stimulate European efforts to close or restrict arms markets to competition from outside, including the United States.

- By contrast, ESDP could lead some allies to believe that they can meet the military requirements of the Headline Goal Task Force without facing the more expensive demands of NATO force modernization, especially NATO's Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI), at a time of rapid U.S. modernization, thereby risking the "hollowing out" of alliance military capabilities.
- ESDP could, whether intended or not, cause competition with NATO's structures and processes.
- Differences regarding planning have special significance. First, potentially having more than one place where operational planning takes place could produce different outcomes that would complicate any situation in which the EU, acting through ESDP, had to hand over responsibility to NATO, or where NATO had to decide what forces it could usefully transfer to an ESDP operation without prejudicing its own ability to act. A compromise could be the use of "national" headquarters (Britain or France) for only some relatively low-level operations or for operations in some specific areas (such as parts of Africa) where there would be a low probability of NATO engagement, provided this planning were fully transparent to NATO. Second, if defense planning (i.e., determining force structure over time) were bifurcated, inconsistencies, incompatibilities, and inefficiencies could become worse.
- The demands of internal political cohesion within the EU could make it difficult to resolve the issue of full participation by non-EU NATO members—notably Turkey—thus risking a split in allied cohesion.
- Political impetus to make CFSP and ESDP effective could lead to a "European caucus" within NATO which, if truly pursued to meet the provisions of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union, could impair the capabilities of the North Atlantic Council and could tend to produce "least common denominator" outcomes.

- The process of relating crisis management to the use of force could complicate the issue of determining just how NATO would gain what the United States sees, but not all European allies see, as a necessary right of first refusal—i.e., when it would be determined that NATO as a whole is not prepared to be engaged.³
- European rhetoric about ESDP could become so exaggerated that some U.S. observers would (erroneously) believe that the EU, through ESDP, could take over more of the common burdens, and reduce those falling on U.S. shoulders, than would in fact be the case.
- Differences in the way in which the purposes of ESDP are characterized by different European states and political leaders could continue to sow confusion in the United States—especially risking that the EU, acting through ESDP, would be seen as a potential competitor for NATO.
- A reverse problem could arise if a “division of labor” developed between EU/ESDP and NATO (especially along the lines of concentration on relatively high and low military technologies). This “division of labor” could produce an implicit fracture in the assumption that providing security in Europe is a common good to be pursued by all allies. At the same time, what the United States is prepared to do in allied Balkan operations would have a significant impact on perceptions of the overall U.S. commitment to engage in “real life” NATO activities containing some degree of risk. In 2001, expressed U.S. doubts about putting troops at risk in a NATO force for Macedonia raised some concerns among other allies. However, some limited “division of labor” could be acceptable in crises or other challenges beyond Europe, where the United States would not want to be engaged, nor the allies require it. This is especially true in parts of Africa.
- The issue of the relative balance of influence between the United States and some or all European states could become sufficiently

³It may be unlikely that all the European allies would accept that NATO should have the right of first refusal—the assignment of responsibility being a matter for consultation in each instance. But as a practical matter, there seems to be no value for ESDP, and certainly not for NATO, in the EU’s insisting that it might “go it alone” militarily when NATO would be prepared to take the lead.

bound up with the structure and conduct of ESDP that crucial elements could be lost, such as the principles of common commitment by all allies to European security, broad risk sharing, and subordination of such issues as the balance of political influence to more-practical matters of getting the European security job done.

PRACTICAL STEPS

Nevertheless, on balance, for the United States the role of ESDP is strongly positive, *provided* that remaining problems can be resolved:

“NATO First”

There needs to be wholehearted, unambiguous European adherence to the principle that the Headline Goal Task Force will act only “where NATO as a whole is not engaged.” Many Europeans will resist the notion that this implies “NATO first”:⁴ But as a practical matter, it is important for preserving cohesion of the Alliance.

Shared Risks/No Division of Labor

There needs to be reaffirmation of the cardinal NATO principle that risks are to be shared by all allies and that there must not emerge, formally or informally, a “division of labor” between NATO and EU/ESDP, except in relatively marginal operations outside of Europe.

Furthermore, how the Bush administration develops policies toward the Balkans and peacekeeping/peacemaking roles for U.S. forces, in general, cannot be separated from its hopes for an ESDP that is compatible with its hopes for NATO. Any U.S. reluctance to share such risks and tasks, especially in the Balkans, would be incompatible with an effort to keep ESDP simply as a second-choice option for dealing with crisis and conflict in Europe.

⁴Helsinki European Council, *Presidency Conclusions*, December 10–11, 1999.

Cooperative Planning

Approaches to operational planning must not put NATO and EU/ESDP at loggerheads. In parallel, methods of defense planning must be mutually compatible, preferably with a single set of processes. Cooperation should include shared contingency planning, conducted by the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) Combined Joint Planning Staff, with full participation by the EU Military Staff. There should be only one methodology for command, control, communications, and intelligence (C³I). Also, the EU should predesignate NATO's Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) as force generator, strategic coordinator, and operational commander for all ESDP missions.

Defense Spending and Capabilities

European governments need to commit themselves to keep defense spending up or, where it is falling, to stop the slide (Germany is currently the highest priority). Emphasis needs to be put on outputs, on capabilities relevant to well-analyzed future requirements, and on interoperability. Even within existing budgets, efforts to promote the Defense Capabilities Initiative must not slacken. At the very least, priorities within the DCI should emphasize core NATO requirements, extending to doctrine, training, and style of operations as well as to force structure and equipment. The European allies should avoid duplicating those NATO assets that would be available to the EU (through the ESDP) where these divert defense moneys away from other critical areas; European development of the A400M transport aircraft is the most egregious current example. But if the United States wants ESDP to avoid "unnecessary duplication," it must reassure the Europeans that NATO would release NATO assets, including U.S. equipment operated by U.S. service members, especially large transport aircraft.

Interoperability

The EU under ESDP needs to concentrate its force modernization on interoperability with NATO, especially within the DCI. It is critical that two levels of interoperability do not develop—one for the United States and a handful of key European allies (notably the United

Kingdom), and one for the rest: This would be a sure recipe for bifurcation, an implicit if not explicit division of labor among alliance tasks, and a corrosion of the spirit of cohesion that has been an alliance hallmark. In addition to shared responsibility to meet DCI goals, the United States needs to share high technology with allies—this is a major priority.

NATO Crisis Management

NATO needs to develop means for being linked to a crisis management mechanism, paralleling the CFSP and ESDP. There must also be prior agreement that discussion and dialogue between NATO and the EU will be deep, wide, continuous, and effective at all stages of any emerging crisis that could affect both bodies.

Political Focus: EU/ESDP and NATO

There is a premium on the rapid completion of basic ESDP and CFSP institution building, so that attention can begin moving away from the current intense focus on developing bureaucratic structures related to ESDP and toward the what, the how, and the how much real resources of European security.

Political and Strategic Dialogues

There needs to be solid, sustained political and military dialogue between the EU—through ESDP/CFSP—and NATO and between national governments and parliaments. This is especially true regarding the U.S. Congress. In particular, the transatlantic dialogue on “burden sharing” has often been poisoned by different definitions of the term: with the United States’ focusing almost exclusively on military activity; and with the Europeans’ demanding credit for nonmilitary contributions to a broader definition of “security.” A thoughtful dialogue across the Atlantic is essential if burden sharing is not to become an increasing irritant in transatlantic relations.

Managing Rhetoric and Ambition

The European Union needs to exercise restraint—and provide clarity—in its rhetoric about what ESDP is and what it is not, especially in dealing with the United States and, more particularly, the U.S. Congress. There is a risk that inflated declarations of ESDP aspirations will be taken for reality, where that is not justified; alternatively, shortfalls in ESDP, relative to declared aspirations, can intensify U.S. congressional criticism that the Europeans are not pulling their weight. It is especially important that those members of the EU that care most about preserving the vitality and cohesion of the transatlantic relationship, as well as NATO's primacy, ensure that “autonomy” for EU decision and action through ESDP not become the central focus of the European pillar; this aspiration needs to be kept in perspective in relation to other European security goals. A parallel risk is that some members of the U.S. Congress will read into excessive ESDP rhetoric more of a challenge to NATO's primacy than any European leader intends, thus deepening suspicions.

The U.S. government also needs to speak with as much of “one voice” as is possible for Washington. Certainly key officials should present U.S. support and aspirations for ESDP and concerns about its development clearly and consistently. President Bush's leadership on this issue needs to be followed throughout the bureaucracy. The administration must also help ensure that debate on Capitol Hill centers on the facts of ESDP, not misperceptions about it.

Defense-Cooperation “Code of Conduct”

An effective transatlantic dialogue and a NATO-EU defense-cooperation code of conduct need to be developed for governments and industry. This code should focus on five principles: (1) keep U.S. and European arms markets open to each other; (2) share as much defense high technology within the alliance as possible; (3) develop common standards and measures for protecting shared technologies; (4) emphasize interoperability within transatlantic defense cooperation; and (5) focus on at least ensuring “open architecture”—i.e., the design of new technologies to be compatible with other allies' military equipment—to minimize the risks of a technologically two-tiered alliance. In time, there should be common NATO and

EU/ESDP acquisition planning to help harmonize requirements and responses.

Uses of Military Power

There needs to be a continuing, broad strategic dialogue within NATO about the purposes of military capabilities and defense spending. For both NATO and EU/ESDP, building, training, sustaining, and exercising military forces must be clearly related to what these forces are expected, at some point, to do. For democracies to continue spending significant funds on defense—and potentially to risk the lives of young men and women in military combat—strategic analysis, political vision, and dialogue among nations and institutions are indispensable.

Leadership

Finally, these recommendations for defusing the disagreements within the alliance about ESDP need to be followed at the highest levels of government until key differences are resolved, so that there is a productive, mutually reinforcing relationship between NATO and EU/ESDP, even if not always tension-free. Allied and EU leaders should focus on six key “cooperations” between NATO and the European Union: (1) operational planning, (2) contingency planning, (3) defense and capabilities planning, (4) acquisition planning and a transatlantic defense-cooperation code of conduct, (5) North Atlantic Council–Political and Security Committee interaction that ideally also engages the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, and (6) joint crisis management.

“Getting ESDP right” is a necessary goal on its own. That should be gained with sufficient leadership, understanding, and commitment on both sides of the Atlantic. But it is also essential for the allies to “get right” other critical disagreements on such matters as threats to allied territories from beyond Europe, missile defenses, defense investments by European allies, the risk of a “hollowed out” NATO, NATO enlargement, engaging Russia, stability in the Balkans, and the long-term perspectives both of European security and of overall U.S. relations with Europe, including the European Union.

Finally, resolving current issues in NATO–EU/ESDP relations is, at least for the near and medium term, more about political will and tactics than about long-term goals and strategy. On this effort, three points stand out:

- The ESDI-ESDP issue should not be allowed to divide the United States and European allies in any fundamental way.
- Getting ESDP right should be high on the current transatlantic agenda and for political action by leaders on both sides of the Atlantic.
- 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 EU (acting through ESDP) and NATO that works for all and for overall security in the transatlantic region.