Chapter Sixteen

THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION

With the onset of any new U.S. administration, for a time progress in U.S.-European relations comes to a virtual standstill. The allies want time to take the measure of the new U.S. president and his team; and the new team will itself take time, both to be constituted (the appointment and confirmation processes are long and drawn out) and to revisit old propositions about security relations with Europe before, almost always, ratifying at least most of what the last administration has done.\(^1\) This time, there was also virtue in a breathing space in the development of relations between NATO and EU/ESDP, given that the latter institution had been developing at such a breakneck speed (and still needs to sort out many of its own internal relationships, in both theory and practice), and given that no one could yet predict for certain how those ESDP-NATO procedures already agreed upon—or provisionally so, subject to the “principle” that nothing is agreed upon until all is agreed upon—would actually work.

But two things were clear by the beginning of 2001: The European Union had moved far and fast in the direction of creating a military institution that would have the capacity for autonomous \(\textit{decision}\)—if not, in fact, yet much autonomous \(\textit{action}\)—and the rise of this institution was posing some complex problems for NATO and for its

---

\(^1\)This has also happened in the George W. Bush administration, as testified to by the president’s speech at Warsaw University on June 15, 2001: It could very likely have been given word for word, in terms of policy, by his predecessor, President Clinton. See The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, \textit{Remarks by the President in Address to Faculty and Students of Warsaw University}, Warsaw, June 15, 2001.
sense of primacy. In particular, there was a special point of procedure: When, in the development of a crisis and the response to it by both NATO and the EU (with the latter having a capacity that the former lacks for civilian/diplomatic as well as military crisis management), would it become relevant to pose the question whether the alliance as a “whole” would or would not be “engaged?” Indeed, the development of any but the most clear-cut crises, in terms of magnitude and palpable challenge, would likely be so ambiguous that the CFSP and ESDP mechanisms would be well into play before NATO would become formally seized of a need to be involved. Its primacy, therefore, might have to be regained, or asserted, or simply conceded by default, after another institution was already exercising its responsibilities. This is a ready-made formula for “competition” in practice if not in theory.

Early indications of thinking in the new Bush administration came at the beginning of February 2001, when the new secretary of defense, Donald H. Rumsfeld (who had served before as both defense secretary and as ambassador to NATO, 1973–74), attended the annual Munich Conference on European Security Policy. In his brief address, he noted, appropriately, that he was “not yet as knowledgeable enough to discuss [ESDI] in great detail.” But he did have some basic beliefs—which mirrored those of the preceding administration, in particular with regard to NATO’s core importance, to efforts that strengthen it, to problems of duplication or those that could “perturb” the transatlantic link, and to the importance that all NATO allies wanting to take part in ESDI activities should be able to do so:

Our European allies and partners know that NATO is at the heart of Europe’s defenses. Therefore, to sustain our past success into the future we must first and foremost maintain NATO as the core of Europe’s security structures for Europe. I favor efforts that strengthen NATO. What happens within our Alliance and what happens to it must comport with its continued strength, resilience, and effectiveness. Actions that could reduce NATO’s effectiveness by confusing duplication or by perturbing the transatlantic link would not be positive. Indeed they run the risk of injecting instability into an enormously important Alliance. And . . . whatever shape
the effort may finally take . . . it should be inclusive—open to all NATO members who wish to take part.²

Furthermore, Rumsfeld stressed two other key U.S. themes to reporters traveling with him: the need for increases in real European military capabilities and a planning process that works:

If I saw more dollars coming in, in budgets that would net increase the strength of NATO nations, that would be encouraging. I have not seen that. I am more interested in addition than subtraction. . . . I [also] think the planning process would be terribly important, to the extent it were separate. I think you could end up with the gears not meshing well, and to the extent it was common, I think that the gears conceivably would mesh better.³

These were preliminary positions of the new U.S. administration; but they tracked with what its predecessor had suggested as touchstones for judging the development of ESDP.

The first top-level commentary came during a visit to the United States by British Prime Minister Blair—now fully cognizant of the role that his position on ESDP would play in his impending national reelection campaign: Just as he had embraced ESDP fully at St. Mâlo in December 1998 in part as a surrogate for Britain’s abstention from the Euro, so it could be argued that Tory questioning about UK support for ESDP had become a surrogate for the same broader debate on the Euro and Britain’s overall relationship within the European Union.

The two leaders exchanged ritual—but critical—pledges. President Bush said that the British prime minister assured me that NATO is going to be the primary way to keep the peace in Europe, and . . . I assured him the United States will be

---

³“Media Availability with Secretary Rumsfeld en Route to Munich, Germany,” DefenseLINK, February 2, 2001.
actively engaged in NATO, remain engaged in Europe with our allies.4

But the two leaders went further:

He [Blair] also assured me [Bush] that the European defense would no way undermine NATO. He also assured me that there would be a joint command, that planning would take place within NATO, and that should all NATO not wish to go on a mission, that would then serve as a catalyst for the defense forces moving on their own. And finally, I was very hopeful when we discussed the Prime Minister’s vision that such a vision would encourage our NATO allies and friends to bolster their defense budgets, perhaps.5

For his part, Prime Minister Blair noted:

the important thing to remember is that, as the President has just outlined to you, this [the employment of EU/ESDP forces] is in circumstances where NATO as a whole chooses not to be engaged; it is limited to the peacekeeping and humanitarian tasks that are set out. It is not a standing army, it is a capability that Europe should have. . . . But where NATO as a whole chooses not to be engaged, it is important that we have the capability, where it’s right and within these limited tasks that I’ve set out, to be able to act, should we choose to do so ourselves. And I think, done in that way, it is something that can strengthen NATO, give us an additional string to our bow in circumstances where NATO doesn’t want to be involved. And I think the President is absolutely right in a sense to put it up to us in Europe and say, well, if we are going to do this, then let us make sure that our capabilities match our aspirations.6

Notable in this exchange are the British pledge about “where NATO as a whole chooses not to be engaged”; the emphasis on capabilities;

4The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Remarks by the President and Prime Minister Blair in Joint Press Conference, Green Top Camp Dining Hall, Camp David, Maryland, February 23, 2001.
5Ibid. President Bush was incorrect in saying that “there would be a joint [NATO-EU] command” and also that “planning would take place within NATO.” Neither has been agreed upon.
6Ibid. Blair was incorrect in saying that ESDP would be limited to “peacekeeping and humanitarian tasks.” In theory, as discussed earlier, Petersberg Tasks could go further.
and one apparent misunderstanding by President Bush of what was then the prevailing situation—the idea that “planning would take place within NATO”—and a misstatement: “that there would be a joint command.” Not clear, however, is whether these last two statements represented misperceptions by Bush of what Blair had told him; or a lapse in Blair’s presentation—which clearly happened when he implicitly ruled out the most ambitious of the Petersberg Tasks: “tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking [emphasis added].” But these matters do underscore the continued problem of communication across the Atlantic about ESDP—what it will do and what it will not do—as well as the slippery business of which European states want what from this new venture, and which European states find themselves caught between visions broadly represented by France, on the one hand, and most of the rest of the alliance on the other.

A month later, the new administration had the chance to try pinning down Germany—often the “swing ally” in relations between France and the United States, although careful, whenever possible, not to have to choose between them. In a written statement in Washington on March 29, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and President Bush endorsed ESDP

---

7Title V: Provisions on a Common Foreign and Security Policy. Maastricht (The Single European Act of 1992) laid out the framework for CFSP and set as a goal “the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence” (Article J.4.1). The WEU was asked “to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications” (Article J.4.2). However, member state obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty were respected, and EU policy was to be “compatible with the common security and defence policy established within that [North Atlantic Treaty] framework” (Article J.4.4) At the same time, the Maastricht Treaty’s “Final Act” included a declaration by the then nine members of the WEU that the “Member States of WEU welcome the development of the European security and defence identity” (ibid.). Thus the term ESDI was launched.

The Amsterdam Treaty went beyond Maastricht, referring to the “progressive framing of a common defence policy . . . which might lead to a common defence, should the European Council so decide” (paragraph 17.1, Title V of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union). Amsterdam provided for “the possibility of the integration of the WEU into the Union, should the European Council so decide” (ibid.). Also, “The progressive framing of a common defence policy will be supported, as Member States consider appropriate, by cooperation between them in the field of armaments” (ibid.). In addition, when the EU used the WEU “to elaborate and implement decisions of the Union,” all member states would be “entitled to participate fully in the tasks in question” (ibid., paragraph 17.3). That meant inclusion of EU members that are not also members of NATO.
as an important contribution to sharing the burden of security and peace which will strengthen the Atlantic Alliance, . . . [and they welcomed] the efforts of the European Union to assume greater responsibility for crisis management by strengthening capabilities and developing the ability to take actions where NATO as a whole chooses not to engage.8

They also agreed that EU capabilities should be developed “in a manner that is fully coordinated, compatible, and transparent with NATO”; that there should be “the fullest possible participation by non-EU European NATO members in the operational planning and execution of EU-led exercises and operations”; and that ESDP also means “improv[ing] Europe’s capabilities and enabl[ing] the EU to act where NATO as a whole is not engaged.”9 This statement provided the United States with much of what it wanted—although it was silent on contentious issues like planning. Also, on “participation by non-EU European NATO members,” the qualifier “fullest possible” did not, on the face of it, resolve Turkish concerns.10 As well, the Chancellor preempted another key U.S. concern: capabilities, and especially the fall in the German defense budget. Schroeder countered by describing everything else that Germany does to contribute to European security.11

---

9Ibid.
10See also U.S. State Department, “Background Briefing by Senior Administration Official on President’s Meeting with Chancellor Schroeder of Germany,” Washington File, March 29, 2001:
The Chancellor wanted to explain to the President that the concern expressed by some Americans that this [ESDP] is somehow intended by the Europeans as a competitor to NATO, or to weaken NATO, or to undermine NATO, to do something bad to NATO is not the case. And he said quite forcefully, this is the German position. . . . And our position is that the United States supports and welcomes ESDP, provided it does what the Chancellor said it does.
11Ibid.: The Chancellor . . . did make the point that Germany’s contribution to European security and the definition of security should be seen more broadly. He said, you shouldn’t just look at our military budget, you should look at what we’ve done to integrate the former East Germany; look what we’ve done to try to help bring democracy to Russia. These are also related
President Bush’s trip to Europe in June 2001 provided a further occasion for repeating the key themes of the emerging relationship. Following a brief summit meeting with the other NATO heads of state and government in Brussels on June 13, the president summarized his interpretation of allied discussion:

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. Our work together in the Balkans shows how much the 23 nations of NATO and the EU can achieve when we combine our efforts.12

Notable, of course, was the president’s reference to a “capable European force integrated with NATO,” with its sense of “separable but not separate” military capabilities.

A day later, however, the joint statement of the United States and the European Union from the Göteborg summit—the first-ever summit

---

12The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Press Availability with President Bush and NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, June 13, 2001. He also underscored the Balkans commitment, a point on which there had been some European doubts—an underscoring not irrelevant to issues of ESDI-ESDP:

Our work together in the Balkans reminds me that I’m going to commit to the line that Colin Powell said: We came in together, and we will leave together. It is the pledge of our government, and it’s a pledge that I will keep.

Further, he touched on the transatlantic defense market:

It shouldn’t be a question of whether to buy American or buy European, it should be a question of how to buy transatlantic. North American and European companies should collaborate to produce the most advanced systems at the lowest costs (ibid.).

President Bush was not correct in referring to a “European force integrated with NATO.” The EU rapid reaction force would not, in fact, have this relationship to NATO.
of a U.S. president with all of the heads of state and government of the EU—left it to the United States to mark the central issues, without EU endorsement:

The U.S. welcomes . . . [etc.,] where NATO as a whole is not engaged, and in a manner that is fully coordinated, where NATO interests are involved, and transparent with NATO, and that provides for the fullest possible participation of non-EU European allies.\(^{13}\)

And in Warsaw, one day after the EU summit, President Bush repeated his formulation: "We welcome a greater role for the EU in European security, properly integrated with NATO [emphasis added]."\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\)The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Göteborg Statement, Summit of the United States of America and the European Union, Göteborg, Sweden, June 14, 2001. The full paragraph:

> The EU is working to acquire a civilian and military crisis management capability, which will reinforce the Union’s ability to contribute to international peace and security in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter and make the EU a stronger, more capable partner in deterring and managing crises, thereby also enhancing the security of the Transatlantic Community. The U.S. welcomes the efforts of the EU to strengthen its capabilities and to develop the ability to manage crises, including through military operations, where NATO as a whole is not engaged, and in a manner that is fully coordinated, where NATO interests are involved, and transparent with NATO, and that provides for the fullest possible participation of non-EU European allies. In particular, the commitments made by the EU Member States concerning military capabilities will, as they are implemented, strengthen both the EU and the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance (ibid.).

\(^{14}\)The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Remarks by the President in Address to Faculty and Students of Warsaw University, Warsaw, Poland, June 15, 2001:

> All nations should understand that there is no conflict between membership in NATO and membership in the European Union. My nation welcomes the consolidation of European unity, and the stability it brings. We welcome a greater role for the EU in European security, properly integrated with NATO.

The reference to “no conflict between membership” could have related, in part, to the pressures that some EU aspirant nations have been put under to show preference to the EU’s activities in ESDP over NATO.