One significant way in which the duplication issue has remained important emerged from the introduction of another factor. By the time of St. Mâlo and the first U.S. formal response to it, the NATO Alliance was also “seized of” concerns about its own military resources and capacities. Having successfully completed the design phase of adapting the NATO Alliance to meet the challenges of the post–cold war era,¹ the allied states had to consider the scope of possible NATO military actions in the future and, in particular, the capabilities needed to undertake such actions. These concerns arose even before the alliance decided, beyond generalities, upon potential areas for military action (other than requirements that could arise under the Washington Treaty’s Article 5) or the geographic limits of such action. The need to give reality to alliance “adaptation”—in this case creating the appropriate military capabilities—begged those questions, which remain unresolved.

But the allies did understand, in general, that a renovated NATO Alliance would need to maintain a significant level of military capabilities and that individual nation’s armed forces would need to undergo modernization, simply to achieve the indispensable goal that the alliance should continue, along with its integrated military com-

mand structure and the ability of the military forces of different allied states to fight effectively together. At the very least, some minimal level of defense capabilities was necessary to keep the alliance viable. But stress on creating serious military capabilities came especially from the United States, primarily on three scores. One—which in fact proved to be the least important of the three—was prompted by NATO’s decision to admit three new members, with the prospect of admitting still more. The debate on NATO enlargement, especially within the U.S. Congress, focused to a considerable degree on military questions that might not otherwise have arisen: Would NATO be able to honor its new commitments and how much would it cost? Would the United States have to bear the brunt of the new commitments, or would allied forces also step up to the mark? And what would be the future of the alliance—including its military future—into which new allies would be entering?

A second factor leading the United States to focus on pressing for the creation of serious NATO military capabilities for the future was the belief that, should the alliance be called upon to act militarily, it would be more likely to take place outside the alliance’s traditional sphere of action rather than inside. Geographically, this could still be in “Europe,” a concept clearly embracing the Former Yugoslavia and the Balkans, generally; but it could also extend to regions beyond. In part, this assessment recalled what allies had been required to do, without warning, in the Persian Gulf in 1990–91; in part it reflected concerns about other potential sources of tension and conflict affecting Western interests beyond the Mediterranean and well into the western part of Asia. Indeed, there has been a running debate within the alliance on this point, highlighted by Secretary Albright’s presentation to the December 1997 NATO foreign ministers’ meeting—“Our nations share global interests”; by more limited expecta-

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2 European discussions of the Petersburg Tasks have presumed the possibility of military action beyond the European continent, but this has almost always related to actions such as rescuing civilians from conflict situations and other low-level military operations. The one geographic area where the Europeans might get involved militarily, where the United States (and hence NATO) might stand aloof is presumed to be North Africa and parts of sub-Saharan Africa, especially francophone countries.

3 Continuing the quote: “that require us to work together with the same degree of solidarity that we have long maintained on this continent” (Secretary of State Albright, North Atlantic Council Ministerial Meeting, Brussels, December 16, 1997).
tions she expressed a year later; and by an uneasy compromise reached at the April 1999 Washington summit where, in their revision to the NATO Strategic Concept, the allies agreed only that “Alliance security must . . . take account of the global context. Alliance security interests can be affected by . . . risks of a wider nature.”

Third and most important, the United States, more than any other ally, was concerned that the differential pace of military modernization within the alliance risked rendering the various allies less capable of working and fighting together. At the most practical level, this difference in pace had become apparent during military operations in Bosnia, especially in areas such as communications and sustainability of military operations. The point was reinforced later, and

4Secretary Albright’s remarks to the North Atlantic Council Ministerial Meeting, Brussels, December 8, 1998:

[T]here are those who try to suggest that . . . by talking about common Euro-Atlantic interests beyond collective defense, we are somehow tinkering with the original intent of the North Atlantic Treaty. . . . I will repeat it again today: this is hogwash. . . . We are neither altering the North Atlantic Treaty, nor attempting to create some kind of a new “global” NATO. What we are doing is using the flexibility the Treaty always offered to adapt this Alliance to the realities of a new strategic environment and the challenges we must face together in the twenty-first century.

5In particular:

The security of the Alliance remains subject to a wide variety of military and non-military risks which are multi-directional and often difficult to predict. These risks include uncertainty and instability in and around the Euro-Atlantic area and the possibility of regional crises at the periphery of the Alliance, which could evolve rapidly. Some countries in and around the Euro-Atlantic area face serious economic, social and political difficulties. Ethnic and religious rivalries, territorial disputes, inadequate or failed efforts at reform, the abuse of human rights, and the dissolution of states can lead to local and even regional instability. The resulting tensions could lead to crises affecting Euro-Atlantic stability, to human suffering, and to armed conflicts. Such conflicts could affect the security of the Alliance by spilling over into neighboring countries, including NATO countries, or in other ways, and could also affect the security of other states.

See NATO, April 24, 1999, op. cit., paragraph 20.


First, we need to really improve the interoperability of our forces . . . In the early days of the deployment to Bosnia, we had great difficulty communicating with one another because we had incompatible equipment. . . . [F]orces
much more intensely, during the Kosovo conflict. Furthermore, with its global reach, the United States had a clear incentive to continue modernizing its military forces, and it was embarking on its Revolution in Military Affairs and other efforts, with an accent on taking advantage of a wide range of technological advances in sensors, computation, communication, and the capacity effectively to integrate and act upon great quantities of information. This has included spending sums on military research and development that are more than triple the comparable spending by the rest of the NATO allies combined.

To be sure, the issue of “interoperability” had bedeviled the Atlantic Alliance almost since its inception; but the problem is arguably more serious in the post–cold war environment, at least in terms of relations among militaries if not also in terms of the stakes involved, because of the rate at which U.S. military capabilities have been diverging from those of most other allies. Furthermore, in the most likely kinds of warfare in the future, coordination among the forces of different allies will have to be broader, deeper, and more comprehensive than would have been true in the notional European conflict of the cold war. Then, allied forces connected with one another largely at the level of divisions or corps, not companies and Platoons, and without today’s accent on integrating forces in air, land, sea, and space in “real time” and otherwise putting such heavy reliance on a common base of information technology in all of NATO’s key military applications. This coordination would be important particularly in two areas: peacekeeping within Europe (as in the former Yugoslavia), or coalition operations outside of Europe (so far not agreed to within the alliance, but a major U.S. aspiration).

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still need to share more information and data more efficiently. So one of our goals has to be to improve our ability to communicate, not through a complete commonality of equipment, but through the compatibility of overall systems. Second, we need to enhance our ability to sustain the operations of our deployed forces. Again, Bosnia reminds us that operations can last for a long period of time and they can challenge even the best-prepared logistics pipelines. . . . So we have to ensure that our forces are backed up by the most advanced logistics supply systems in a seamless flow of critical information between those in the supply lines and troops on the front lines.

7The term “C3ISR”—command, control, communications, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance—captured a major part of these developments.
With these considerations very much in mind, the United States proposed, and the allies agreed to, a new “initiative on defence capabilities” at the December 1998 NATO defense ministers’ meeting, focusing in particular on technology and interoperability, in all the areas “which are critical to the successful execution of joint military operations.”8 This program and a framework for action were formally adopted at the April 1999 Washington summit, which also set up a High-Level Steering Group to foster its implementation within the alliance.9

DCI aims in particular to improve alliance capabilities in the following five, overlapping areas:

- “Mobility and deployability”: i.e., the ability to deploy forces quickly to where they are needed, including areas outside alliance territory.

- “Sustainability”: i.e., the ability to maintain and supply forces far from their home bases and to ensure that sufficient fresh forces are available for long-duration operations.

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8See Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Defence Ministers’ Session, December 17, 1998, op. cit., paragraph 20:

To support the ability of the Alliance to undertake the full range of its missions, work has been set in train to develop proposals for an initiative on defence capabilities which could be adopted at the Washington Summit. Building on progress to date, such an initiative could aim at developing a common assessment of requirements for the full range of military operations and, with a particular emphasis on technology and interoperability, especially in such areas as logistics and command, control and communications, address capabilities which are critical to the successful execution of joint military operations, such as readiness, deployability, mobility, sustainability, survivability, and effective engagement.

An unspoken but critical subtext is the U.S. desire that NATO be able to undertake coalition operations beyond Europe.


The Group, which is made up of senior officials from national capitals and chaired by the Deputy Secretary General, meets every few weeks to review progress and guide the process (“NATO’s Defence Capabilities Initiative.” NATO Fact Sheet, August 9, 2000, www.nato.int/docu/facts/2000/nato-dci.htm).
“Effective engagement”: i.e., the ability to successfully engage an adversary in all types of operations, from high to low intensity.

“Survivability”: i.e., the ability to protect forces and infrastructure against current and future threats.

“Interoperable communications”: i.e., command, control, and information systems that are compatible with each other, to enable forces from different countries to work effectively together.10

This Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) was not created because of debate on ESDI, although that was clearly a factor in terms of its design, along with all other potential needs for NATO forces. But for the United States, developing these capabilities for military effectiveness—both for “power projection” and to preserve a functioning military alliance in an environment of rapid (and differential) technological change in allied militaries—was far more important than preparing to help the Europeans in their efforts to advance integration in the field of foreign policy and defense. Yet the link was there—as Secretary Albright had said at NATO soon after the St. Målo declaration: “The key to a successful [European Security and Defense Initiative] is to focus on practical military capabilities.”11 Indeed, allied progress—meaning the Europeans’ progress—on DCI has remained a touchstone of U.S. judgments about the worth of ESDP and, conversely, the risks it could, in Washington’s judgment, pose to the effectiveness of the Atlantic Alliance.

Furthermore, of the several dozen items that have come to be the basic list of DCI items for action, some at the top can be said to be of a “double duty” quality: notably in strategic air- and sealift.12 It would

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10See also “NATO on Defense Capabilities Initiative,” NATO Fact Sheet, April 24, 1999, Washington NATO summit web site (www.fas.org/man/nato/natodocs/99042408.htm).
11Text of Secretary Albright’s remarks to the North Atlantic Council ministerial meeting, Brussels, December 8, 1998.
be possible for the United States to argue that for the Europeans to build their own large air transport (the “Future Large Aircraft,” or A400M) would not be a good use of resources—both because of industrial inefficiencies and the availability of U.S. aircraft (C-17, C-130J), or even the Ukrainian Antonov AN-124, which could roughly provide whatever capabilities the Europeans would need. Nevertheless, the U.S. argument against “unnecessary duplication” would also have to be measured against the political and industrial-based goals of European states, as well as against the possibility that, if there were no indigenous European airlift candidate, perhaps the ESDP states would simply divert the money to nondefense spending. Within reason, this has been the European trump card on the issue of “duplication.” As discussed earlier, a major motive for the United States’ turnaround on the idea of having a viable “European pillar” within the alliance was that this could provide a political incentive for creating defense capabilities that would otherwise not likely exist, for lack of domestic political support. Like democracy itself, processes in democratic states of creating defense capabilities cannot be held up as models of “efficiency.”

Defense Policy, Nice, December 2000, paragraph I (1). Relating NATO DCI goals to those of ESDI—including the Headline Goal Task Force decided upon at the December 1999 Helsinki European Council—has been a critical problem. Thus, U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen told the 36th Munich Conference on Security Policy in February 2000 that NATO members and other participants in the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy need to turn their program priorities—which, importantly, are largely identical and compatible with the DCI areas—into concrete and achievable goals [emphasis added] (U.S. Department of Defense, February 7, 2000).

13 The United States would also need to reinforce—beyond the commitments made at the time of the Berlin-Brussels “grand bargain”—the point that U.S. strategic lift aircraft would indeed be made available to the EU through ESDP, even in circumstances far afield and of relatively low strategic interest to the United States—e.g., parts of Africa.