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The United States and the European Security and Defense Policy:

Old Fears and New Approaches

F. Stephen Larrabee

The US attitude toward the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) has been and continues to be marked by ambivalence. The United States has never quite been able to decide whether ESDP was NATO's companion or competitor.¹ In principle, the United States wants – and needs – a strong European partner to help manage the new security threats, most of which emanate from beyond Europe's borders. At the same time, Washington does not want to see ESDP evolve in a way that would undermine NATO and has reacted strongly to any attempt by the EU to develop an autonomous capability not closely linked to NATO.

On the whole, the fears that ESDP could become a rival to NATO have predominated. These concerns were reflected in the US reaction to the Franco-British summit at St Malo in December 1998. While the Clinton administration generally supported the development of a strong and cohesive European partner, many American officials worried that the summit represented an attempt to develop an autonomous European military capability outside of NATO.

¹ See Robert E. Hunter, *The European Security and Defense Policy: NATO's Companion – or Competitor?* (Santa Monica: RAND, MR-1463-NDRI/RE, 2002).

These concerns were temporarily defused at the EU summit in Helsinki a year later. At the summit, the EU announced that it would only act when “NATO as a whole is not involved”. This statement seemed to indicate that NATO would be given priority in any crisis and that the EU would only act if NATO decided it did not want to get involved. It thus diminished – but did not entirely eliminate – the US fear that ESDP might develop as a rival to NATO.

These fears resurfaced most dramatically in the spring of 2003. The proposal by France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg at the so-called “chocolate mini-summit” in April 2003 that the EU should set up a separate operational planning cell at Tervuren, a suburb of Brussels, set off alarm bells in Washington. The US Permanent Representative to NATO Nicholas Burns charged that the proposal was ‘one of the most serious dangers to the transatlantic relationship’.²

The proposal seemed to signal a move away from the “Berlin Plus” formula, whereby the EU could draw on NATO assets to manage a crisis if NATO did not want to become involved. In the eyes of many US officials, it appeared to be the first step down the slippery slope toward the creation of a European military capability outside of NATO – and thus a threat to NATO’s primacy as the key forum for transatlantic security cooperation. In addition, it seemed to put the emphasis on new institutions rather than capabilities.

The Counterweight Fallacy

The strong US reaction to the proposal to establish a planning cell at Tervuren also reflected a broader concern that some members of the EU, especially France, were seeking to establish the EU as a “counterweight” to NATO. These fears were reinforced by President Chirac’s emphasis on “multipolarity” – a codeword for balancing or containing US power – and by Franco-German opposition to the US invasion of Iraq. Even Congressmen, who had traditionally seen France as a strong and loyal ally, albeit a difficult one, began to question France’s motives.³ In the eyes of some US officials, France appeared to have moved from being a cantankerous ally to an outright opponent of US policy.

2 Judy Dempsey, “NATO Urged to Challenge European Defense Plan,” in *Financial Time* (October 17, 2003).

3 See, in particular, Douglas Bereuter and John Lis, “Broadening the Transatlantic Relationship”, in *The Washington Quarterly* (vol. 27, no.1, Winter 2003-04), pp. 147-62. Bereuter (R-Nebraska) was chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe of the House Committee on International Relations and president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly at the time this article was published.

These fears, however, seem exaggerated. The EU lacks the military muscle to act as a counterweight to the United States. Moreover, France does not have the weight and influence to drive EU policy – a fact even some French officials acknowledge.⁴ As a result of the recent round of EU enlargement, France's influence within the EU has been reduced. In a EU of 25 members – and possibly more soon – France and Germany can no longer act as the motor of EU integration the way they could in the past.⁵ Most of the new members from Central and Eastern Europe are strongly Atlanticist and pro-American. They want to keep the United States engaged in Europe and do not want to see ESDP driven in an anti-American direction.

Meanwhile, Germany's position has begun to shift in a more Atlanticist direction. Former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder gave priority to relations with the EU and France. However, his successor, Angela Merkel, has made clear that she intends to give priority to NATO and strengthen relations with the United States.⁶ This has led to a “rebalancing” of German foreign policy. Thus France can no longer rely on strong German support for its effort to balance US power the way it could under Schroeder.

Finally, a strong European Security and Defense Policy cannot be built without Britain. Even France has come to recognize that. Since mid 2003, France and Germany have made a conscious attempt to include Britain in efforts to deepen European defense cooperation. This has served to strengthen ESDP. At the same time, it has enhanced Britain's ability to influence ESDP.

Britain's stronger support for ESDP since 2003 has worried some American officials, who fear that Britain has gone “wobbly” on NATO. Such fears, however, are unwarranted. Britain favors an ESDP closely linked to NATO, and British officials have stressed that Britain will not undertake any action within ESDP that will weaken NATO. Rather than weakening NATO, Britain's stronger support for ESDP acts as a brake on French ambitions and ensures that ESDP will not be pushed in an anti-US or anti-NATO direction.

4 See Pierre Lellouche, *Illusions Gauloises* (Paris: Bernard Grassét, 2006), Chapter 2. Lellouche argues that French efforts to create a “pole de puissance,” inspired and managed by Paris, exceed France's capabilities and resources, pp. 94-95.

5 It is ironic that U.S. officials have tended to focus on French strength at a time when French observers have become obsessed with France's “decline” and loss of influence. The “declinist” debate which has raged in France in recent years has largely gone unnoticed in Washington. See Nicolas Baverez, *La France qui Tombe* (Paris: Perron, 2003); Alain Duhamel, *Le Desarroi Français* (Paris: Plon, 2003); Jean Boissonnat, *Plaidoyer pour une France qui doute* (Paris: Stock, 2006); and Lellouche, *Illusions Gauloises*.

6 See her address to the 42nd Munich Security Conference, “Europa und die Vereinigen Staaten: Die Erneuerung der transatlantischen Partnerschaft” (February 3-5, 2006).

U.S. Concerns

Beyond the worry that ESDP will weaken NATO, Washington has a number of specific concerns.

Operational Planning

Operational planning has been and remains one of the chief US concerns. Some EU members, particularly France, argue that the EU needs its own capacity to conduct operational planning for contingencies where the United States does not want to get involved. The United States has traditionally opposed such an arrangement, fearing that it would complicate planning and result in unnecessary duplication. This was one of the prime reasons it reacted so strongly to the proposal to set up an EU planning cell at Tervuren.

The outcome of the US protest was a compromise. In the face of strong US (and British) opposition, France dropped the idea of establishing a separate EU planning cell at Tervuren and agreed that an EU planning cell would be established at SHAPE Headquarters in Mons. At the same time, the United States grudgingly gave its blessing to the establishment of a small planning cell at the EU's military staff (EUMS) in Brussels. The establishment of the planning cell at EUMS was an important breakthrough. For the first time, the United States accepted the principle that the EU could conduct operations independent of NATO. While this capacity is at present small, it is likely to increase with time.⁷

Some important steps in this direction have recently been taken. The creation of the "battle groups" – units of 1,500 personnel, which can be deployed in five and be sustained for up to 120 days – will enhance the EU's ability to act autonomously. While this capacity is relatively modest – for larger, more demanding operations the EU will still need to draw on NATO assets under Berlin Plus – it nevertheless reflects the EU's desires to be able to act on its own without drawing on NATO assets. At the same time, it enhances the need for NATO and the EU to coordinate their policies and ensure greater synergies.

Crisis Management

The United States has traditionally regarded NATO as the organization of choice for crisis management and has, in effect, demanded an informal "right of first refusal". France and a number of other EU members have opposed this

⁷ As one French official put it at the time, 'The worm will be in the apple and it will grow. That's what we want.' See Laurent Zecchini, "Defense: Londres dit 'oui' a l'accord Paris-Berlin," in *Le Monde* (December 12, 2003).

claim on the grounds that it implicitly subordinates the EU to NATO – a status they firmly reject.

The Helsinki summit in December 1999 seemed to resolve this dispute by establishing the principle that the EU would get involved in managing crises “when NATO as a whole was not involved...” This was widely interpreted as meaning that the EU would only take the lead in managing a crisis when NATO did not want to get involved. However, France and several other EU members never felt comfortable with this interpretation because it constricted the EU’s freedom of action and implied that the EU was subordinate to NATO.

France pushed hard for the EU to get involved in the Democratic Republic of Congo crisis in June 2003 – the first EU deployment outside of Europe – and provided the bulk of troops for the operation (Operation Artemis). The DR Congo operation was conducted without recourse to NATO assets and without consultation with NATO. While it is unlikely that the United States would have wanted to involve NATO in the crisis, the lack of consultation annoyed some US and NATO officials and set a bad precedent.

Since then, efforts have been made to ensure greater consultation and complementarity. The North Atlantic Council (NATO) and the Political and Security Committee (EU) meet regularly. Consultations are also conducted at lower levels. However, this cooperation leaves much to be desired – as the crisis in Darfur (West Sudan) demonstrated. The crisis initially led to an unseemly “beauty contest” between the two organizations. The United States saw the crisis as an opportunity for NATO to demonstrate its continued relevance and more global orientation, while France argued that the EU, not NATO, should take the lead in managing the crisis.⁸ In the end, two airlifts were conducted – one by NATO and one by the EU.

To some extent, the differences over Darfur represented a continuation of the long-standing feud between Washington and Paris over NATO’s role in the post-Cold War era, with the United States pushing for an expanded global role for NATO and France trying to limit that role and carve out a larger role for the EU. However, these tensions could intensify if NATO gets more deeply involved in humanitarian missions – an area where the EU has traditionally been quite active – as it has recently begun to do. This is all the more true because the EU sees Africa as a region where it expects to be increasingly active and part of its area of strategic interest.

8 These divergences were particularly evident during the discussion at the NATO Foreign Ministers’ meeting in Vilnius on April 21, 2005. See Horst Bacia, “Noch nie so gut debattiert”, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (April 22, 2005). Also Laurent Zecchini, “Washington veut que l’OTAN s’implique au Proche-Orient et au Dafour”, in *Le Monde* (April 23, 2005). See also Daniel Dombey, “NATO-EU spat hits airlift to Darfur”, in *Financial Times* (June 8, 2005).

At the same time, the differences over Darfur underscore the limitations of relying on ad hoc arrangements. If future problems are to be avoided, mechanisms agreed upon in advance, including joint planning and force generation, will need to be set up. Without such arrangements, NATO and the EU may find it difficult to agree on how to cooperate – as was initially the case in Darfur.⁹

A European Caucus

US officials also worry that a stronger ESDP could lead to the formation of a “European caucus” within NATO – that is, that non-EU members of NATO could be faced with a unified front on the part of EU members in discussions within NATO. Such a caucus has been strongly opposed by successive US administrations because it could significantly complicate Alliance decision-making. European allies who are members of the EU might be unwilling to compromise on hard-won positions within the EU. In addition, a European caucus could slow the process of Alliance decision-making if the Alliance had to wait until the EU had first come to a position before it could act.

The formation of a European caucus could have a particularly disruptive impact on relations with the United States. It might provoke a strong backlash in the Congress and result in reduced support for both NATO and the EU. Indeed, if a European caucus were to develop, the US could begin to openly oppose ESDP. EU enlargement, however, is likely to diminish the prospect of such a caucus emerging. The pro-Atlanticist countries in the EU, especially Britain, Spain, and the new invitees from Central and Eastern Europe are not likely to agree to any position on defense or security matters that would be openly opposed by the United States.

Collective Defense

Collective defense has been a core mission of NATO since its founding. However, some EU politicians and analysts have suggested that the EU should provide a security guarantee to its members. The EU Constitution – still unratified – also contained a clause obligating all member states to ‘provide aid and assistance *by all means in their power* if a member state is a victim of ‘armed aggression’.¹⁰ There are several problems, however, with this idea.

9 For a detailed discussion of this point, see Frances G. Burwell et al., *Transatlantic Transformation: Building a NATO-EU Security Architecture*, (Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council of the United States, February 2006) pp. 15-16.

10 Presidency note of December 9, 2003, at <http://uc.eu.int/c9cpdf/03/cg00/cg0060-adop.en03.pdf>.

First, the EU currently does not have the military capacity to provide for the collective defense of its members. Some European members argue that there is no danger in making such a commitment because there is no imminent danger of attack. However, it is extremely dangerous to make military commitments that cannot be carried out even if the probability that they will have to be implemented is low.

Second, such a commitment overlaps with Article 5 of the Washington Treaty (NATO), without adding any significant capability for European defense. Moreover, some Americans fear that such a commitment risks opening up the problem of “backdoor commitments” – that is, if an EU member who is not a member of NATO were the victim of an attack, the United States could be dragged into the conflict “through the backdoor.” These concerns have been particularly strong within the US Congress.

The Balkan Mission

The Balkans has been an area where the EU has been increasingly active in recent years and where it has begun to assume more military responsibility. In March 2003, the EU took over the Macedonia mission (Operation Concordia), which was completed in December 2003. It also provided police forces in Bosnia (EUPM). And in December 2004, it took over the SFOR mission in Bosnia from NATO.

In principle, transferring more responsibility to the EU for missions in the Balkans makes sense. As the United States increasingly focuses its attention on areas beyond Europe – especially Iraq and the Middle East – pressures are likely to grow for Washington to reduce its troop commitment in the Balkans. The EU can pick up some of the slack, allowing the United States to deploy its troops where they are increasingly needed.

Once again, however, American ambivalence about ESDP can be seen. On the one hand, the United States wanted to reduce its role in Bosnia, and was looking for a convenient way to do it. On the other, it was wary of turning full control of the Bosnia operation over to the EU, fearing this would weaken NATO. Thus it insisted that a small NATO headquarters remain in Sarajevo – a fact that complicated implementation of the mission and irritated many EU officials, who wanted the Bosnia mission to be a fully EU-led operation.

On the whole, cooperation between the EU and NATO in Bosnia has worked well. Some initial problems were posed by the fact that the mandate of the NATO mission in Sarajevo overlapped in some areas – defense reform, counterterrorism, and detention of persons indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia – with that of EUFOR. But the

commanders of the two forces resolved these issues pragmatically and cooperation since has generally been good.¹¹

Indeed, if final status negotiations can be completed in Kosovo in the near future, the EU could eventually take over the Kosovo mission from NATO. There is a danger, however, in asking the EU to do too much. This could mean overstressing its capacities, especially at a time when it is expanding its involvement in other areas such as Aceh, the DR Congo, and Darfur. It will be important, therefore, to ensure that Kosovo is really stabilized before NATO forces are fully withdrawn.

The Capabilities Gap

Washington has also been concerned about the growing capabilities gap between the US and its European allies.¹² Europe has nearly 1.7 million men under arms. However, only about 10 percent of these are deployable. While efforts have been made to address this problem in the last several years, important deficiencies remain, particularly in the areas of strategic transport, strategic intelligence and command and control.

Given the current economic and political climate in Europe, there is little chance that defense spending in Europe will rise in the near future. Raising taxes or cutting social expenditures in order to increase defense outlays would not find support among European publics. The only way to find the necessary resources for defense improvements, many Europeans argue, is for the European members not to organize their defense nationally but strive to create a more efficient European defense.¹³ European defense integration, in their view, will help Europe rationalize its defense procurement policies and overcome its inefficient defense spending. Greater capabilities cannot be created only through NATO; they must also come through greater defense cooperation within the EU.

Thus if the United States really wants increased European defense capabilities, it will need to accept a greater degree of European defense integration. This may be the only way to free the investment funds needed for transformation. At the same time, it will be important to ensure that European force development priorities are closely harmonized with those of NATO and the United States.

11 For details, see *NATO and the European Union: Improving Practical Cooperation*, workshop organized by the Institute of National Strategic Studies of the National Defense University, in partnership with the Ministry of Defense of Finland (March 20-21, 2006) pp. 4-5.

12 See David C. Gompert, Richard L. Kugler, and Martin C. Libicki, *Mind the Gap* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1999).

13 See Rob de Wijk, "European Military Reform for Global Partnership", in *The Washington Quarterly*, (Vol. 22, No. 1, Winter 2004) pp. 197-210.

This will require close coordination between the force development process under the EU's European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP) and efforts within NATO undertaken by Allied Command Transformation (ACT) as well as the US Joint Forces Command (JFC).

The creation of the European Defense Agency (EDA), moreover, should help Europe to improve military capabilities, consolidate defense research and technology, and rationalize procurement policies. Currently, it is managing several initiatives, including the development of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and intelligence, surveillance, and targeting and reconnaissance systems (ISTAR); the enhancement of command, control, and communication capabilities and the production and development of commercial military off-the-shelf equipment.

The EDA has agreed on a new code of conduct aimed at creating a single EU defense market by opening competition for defense contracts worth more than \$1.2 million. The code is designed to constrain the use of Article 296 of the Treaties Establishing the European Communities (2002), which allows EU governments to invoke national security considerations to shield national defense industries from foreign competition.¹⁴ However, the code is voluntary and non-binding. Many European defense firms feel that only a binding agreement can prevent countries from evading open competition by declaring certain programs "politically sensitive".

Changing US Attitudes Toward Peacekeeping and ESDP

US-EU differences over ESDP in part reflect different defense priorities on the two sides of the Atlantic. The United States has concentrated on fighting major theater wars and high-intensity conflicts. Peacekeeping and stability operations have until very recently been neglected or given short shrift. The EU, by contrast, has taken a much more "holistic" approach to conflict management that emphasizes both military and *non-military* elements and resources.

US forces have generally been trained and equipped to deal with the high end of the conflict spectrum while the EU has emphasized the low end of the conflict spectrum, particularly peacekeeping and stability operations. As a consequence, US officials have tended to downplay EU military capabilities and contributions, regarding them as some sort of "lesser" form of military operations. This view was particularly pronounced in the first Bush administra-

¹⁴ Article 296 was formerly Article 223 of the Treaty of Rome (1957).

tion, which entered office with a strong aversion to peacekeeping and “nation building”.¹⁵

However, the US experience in Afghanistan and Iraq (especially the latter) has demonstrated the limitations of this approach and stimulated important changes in US thinking about conflict management. Today there is a growing recognition in the Pentagon of the importance of the post-combat and reconstruction phase and the need to transition rapidly from the former to latter.¹⁶ Stability operations have been upgraded and become a “core mission” on par with combat operations.¹⁷ As a result, peacekeeping has now become an integral part of US force planning.

At the same time, in the wake of Iraq, the United States has begun to realize that it cannot manage the current security challenges on its own and that it needs allies. This has led to a shift in thinking about ESDP. After years of denigrating ESDP, US officials are beginning to recognize that the EU, with its emphasis on civilian capabilities, has something to offer even if it cannot contribute much to dealing with conflicts at the high end of the conflict spectrum. In the post-Cold War period, many, if not most, of the conflicts the United States has confronted unconventional conflicts at the low end of the conflict spectrum. These operations require different capabilities than the combat phase – police, election monitoring, civil affairs units etc. NATO is not well equipped to handle these tasks, whereas the EU is.

For nearly a decade, the dialogue between NATO and the EU has focused on how NATO could help the EU conduct military operations. However, as James Dobbins has pointed out, of the two organizations it is NATO that needs EU assistance to successfully execute many of the tasks that it is called upon to perform today, not the reverse.¹⁸ As he notes, it is quite possible to envisage an EU-led operation being completed without the involvement of NATO. However, it is nearly impossible to imagine a nation-building operation being completed by NATO without the involvement of the EU.

In short, successful conflict management involves not just overthrowing a repressive regime and/or winning the combat phase, but also laying the foundation for the development of a stable democratic polity. This, in turn, depends on training and deploying of police forces, assistance in building rule of law,

15 This disdain toward peacekeeping was epitomized by Condoleezza Rice’s famous quip that the job of the 82nd Airborne Division was not to bring children to school.

16 See Hans Binnendijk and Stuart E. Johnson, *Transforming for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2004).

17 Defense Directive 3000.05 (November 25, 2005). See Thom Shanker and David S. Cloud, “Pentagon to Raise Importance of Stability Efforts in War”, in *New York Times* (November 30, 2005).

18 See James Dobbins, “Friends Again?” in Marcin Zabrowski (ed.), *Friends Again: EU-US Relations After the Crisis* (Paris: European Institute for Security Studies, 2006) p. 26.

promoting the development of civil society, organizing elections etc. Here, the EU, with its emphasis on civilian capabilities, has an important role to play.

US-EU Relations

The shift in the US attitude toward stability operations and ESDP has been accompanied by a shift in the US attitude toward the EU more broadly. As noted, in the past, the US has either ignored the EU or seen it as a threat to NATO and/or US influence in Europe. The latter fears were particularly prevalent in the early Bush years.¹⁹ Abandoning the principled support the Clinton administration had given the EU, the Bush Administration adopted a much more skeptical approach to European integration, fearing that a stronger EU would be a less compliant partner and undermine NATO. It was wary of efforts designed to strengthen European cohesion, especially in the security and defense field.

Instead of supporting European integration, the administration sought to “disaggregate” Europe, dividing it between “old” and “new” Europe. This effort, however, was largely counterproductive. It alienated some of America’s closest friends in Europe – including members of “new Europe” who did not want to be forced to choose between the United States and Europe – while at the same time strengthening the hand of the Euro-Gaullists.

Moreover, it fundamentally misperceived the basic problem. The problem is not that Europe is too strong but that it is too weak and inward-looking. In today’s complex world, the United States cannot solve most of the security challenges on its own. It needs strong and willing partners. As Ronald Asmus has noted, the key challenge for American policy is to encourage Europe to become a strong, cohesive and responsible partner, not encourage its weakness or seek to disaggregate it.²⁰

NATO has a vital role to play in managing the new security challenges facing the transatlantic community. But it is too narrow to be the sole instrument for dealing with these challenges. The challenges today – particularly the war against terrorism – require cooperation in many non-military areas: banking, immigration, intelligence, etc. In these areas, the EU, not NATO, is the criti-

19 For evidence that these suspicions remain alive and well in some quarters in Washington, see Jeffrey Cimbalò, “Saving NATO from Europe,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 6, November/December, 2004, pp. 111-120. For a strong rebuttal, see Ronald D. Asmus, Anthony J. Blinken and Philip H. Gordon, “Nothing to Fear: Washington Should Embrace the European Union,” in *Foreign Affairs* (Vol. 84, No. 1, January/February, 2005) pp 174-177.

20 See Ronald Asmus, “Rethinking the EU: Why Washington Needs to Support European Integration,” in *Survival* (Vol. 47, No. 3, Autumn 2005) pp. 93-102.

cal actor. Thus the emergence of a stronger, more cohesive European partner is clearly in the US interest.

This realization has slowly begun to take root within American policy circles. During his trip to Europe in February 2005, President Bush not only paid a visit to NATO headquarters, but also visited the EU – the first visit ever by an American president. In his speech in Brussels, Bush explicitly stressed that the United States supported a strong, cohesive Europe.²¹

Bush's speech reflected an important shift away from the administration's early ambivalence toward European integration. This shift has been prompted by the changed strategic realities of the post-Cold War world, especially since 9/11 – the greater need for allies in order to address new security challenges, the EU's effort to develop a stronger security and defense dimension, and NATO's own limitations in meeting some of the new challenges. These developments have contributed to a growing recognition that a stronger, more cohesive European partner is in the US interest.

The shift also reflects the changing balance of power within the Bush administration. Many of the strongest Euro-skeptics in the Defense Department – such as Under Secretary Douglas Feith and Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz – have left or taken other jobs, while the top members of the new team at the State Department under Secretary Condoleezza Rice – Deputy Secretary Robert Zoellick, Under Secretary Nicholas Burns, and Assistant Secretary for European and Canadian Affairs Daniel Fried – are all proponents of a strong partnership with Europe.

However, the recognition of the need for a close partnership with a strong and cohesive EU is not limited to the upper echelons of the State Department. It is increasingly shared by many members, including conservative Republicans. As Senator John McCain (R-Arizona), a potential presidential candidate in 2008, stressed in April 2006:

Americans welcome a strong, capable, and independent Europe, a Europe able to wield significant influence around the globe. Not only do we seek European leadership, we believe it is necessary to make the world a better, safer place for our interests and values.²²

The irony is that this shift in US policy is occurring at the moment when the EU is facing a crisis of confidence – or at least identity. The French and Dutch referenda were an important wake-up call. They reflected popular concerns that

21 For the text of Bush's speech, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/02/20050221.html>

22 See his speech, "A Global Agenda for the United States and Europe: An American View," at the Brussels Forum, sponsored by the German Marshall Fund (April 28-30, 2006) at http://mccain.senate.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=NewsCenter.ViewPressRelease&Content_id=1705

the EU was moving too far too fast and are likely to result in a slowdown in the integration process as politicians in Brussels and national capitals regroup and try to sort out how best to proceed in the aftermath of the referenda. Thus they could lead to a less confident and less dynamic EU just at the time when Washington has come to realize that it needs a stronger, more cohesive European partner to manage the emerging new security challenges.

Division of Labor vs. Partnership

The capability gap between the US and its European allies has led some Europeans to call for a new division of labour in which Europe concentrates on peacekeeping and stability operations while the US focuses on high-intensity combat operations.²³ Others have suggested a “Monroe doctrine for Europe”, in which Europe looks after its own security and the US takes responsibility for security outside of Europe. However, there are a number of problems with the idea of a division of labour along these lines.

First, such a division of labour undermines the idea of the indivisibility of security, which has been the cornerstone of NATO and transatlantic relations for the past fifty years. It thus weakens the prospects for the emergence of a genuine partnership between Europe and the United States to deal with global challenges over the long term.

Second, it would leave Europe dependent on the United States for global security and reduce Europe’s ability to influence US policy and global events. In effect, Europe would be relegated essentially to “doing the dishes,” that is, cleaning up after the United States, but would have little say in major combat operations outside of Europe affecting its own security.

Third, it would remove the incentive for Europe to develop deployable forces capable of conducting high-intensity combat operations beyond Europe. These operations would be conducted by the United States, while Europe would concentrate on stability operations in and around Europe. Hence, the scheme would perpetuate the current capability gap. Indeed, the gap would grow as the US continues to transform its forces.

Fourth, such a division of labour is politically unsustainable in the United States. The American public is not likely to support a partnership in which Europe concentrates on low-risk stability operations while the US undertakes the dangerous combat operations. The result could be an erosion of US public support for NATO.

23 De Wijk, “European Military Reform for Global Partnership”.

Finally, such a division of labour would encourage US unilateralism. With its European allies unable to contribute to addressing security threats beyond Europe, the US would be even more inclined to act unilaterally and less willing to take European views into consideration. This could lead to a serious weakening of transatlantic ties.

Instead of a division of labour in which the Europeans do stability operations and the United States focuses on high-intensity combat operations, the US and Europe need to develop a genuine partnership, one which is more global and more equal, to deal with new challenges.²⁴ To achieve such a partnership, Europe needs to develop more deployable forces, which can operate alongside US forces in a broad spectrum of contingencies, including high-intensity combat operations. Otherwise, the US will have little choice but to act unilaterally and Europe will be perpetually relegated to the role of the “clean-up brigade”.

At the same time, if such a partnership is to develop, the United States needs to be willing to share responsibility genuinely with its allies and take their views more seriously into consideration in formulating its global strategy. This does not mean giving its European allies a veto over US policy. But it does require the United States to give greater priority to working more closely with its European allies and to develop a more comprehensive global strategy which balances hard power with soft power and effective diplomacy.

The Way Ahead

As ESDP proceeds, the United States and Europe need to ensure that it strengthens, rather than weakens, transatlantic relations. Four steps, in particular, are necessary to ensure that this occurs. *First*, the United States should accept that Europe needs to have some autonomous operational planning capacity outside of NATO. Given US preoccupation with Iraq and the war on terrorism, the European concern that the United States will not want to be involved in some contingencies is justified. Thus for those few instances when the United States does not want NATO to be involved in managing a crisis, the Europeans need the capacity to act on their own. The key task is to ensure that ESDP develops in an open and transparent manner and in a way, which strengthens the capacity of the United States and Europe to effectively address future security challenges.

Second, US and European defense transformation processes and priorities need to be closely harmonized. The United States and Europe need to develop

²⁴ For a comprehensive discussion, see David C. Gompert and F. Stephen Larrabee, *Europe and America: A Partnership for a New Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

common threat perceptions and common, or at least compatible, military doctrines. The new EU security strategy paper is a step in the right direction. It represents the beginnings of what Paul Cornish and Geoffrey Edwards have called a "European strategic culture".²⁵ Moreover, many of the threats identified in the paper are very similar to the ones identified in the US National Security Strategy published in September 2002.

Third, NATO and the EU need to develop mechanisms that will allow for a rapid coordinated response in times of crisis. This should involve developing mechanisms for planning and force generation as well as enhanced political consultation. Unless such advanced planning is undertaken, NATO and the EU are likely to find it difficult to cooperate in the future and many of the problems that occurred during the Darfur operation are likely to be repeated.

Fourth, the United States needs to recognize that the EU is becoming an increasingly political and security actor. In the future, European defense policies and decisions will be increasingly made within a European framework. This will require the United States to develop a stronger security relationship with the EU.

However, how ESDP develops, whether as a complement or rival to NATO, will depend in part on US policy. A unilateralist US approach to global challenges is likely to reinforce the inclination among many European countries – and not just France – to develop a more autonomous ESDP outside of NATO. If the US wants to avoid such a development, it needs to build a strong partnership with Europe and promote closer cooperation between NATO and ESDP rather than viewing ESDP as a threat or rival to NATO.

At the same time, Europe needs to eschew efforts to develop the EU as a counterweight to the United States. No US president, Democrat or Republican, will support a policy that is aimed at counterbalancing or containing US power. Moreover, such a policy will divide Europe. Many European countries, especially Britain, Spain, Italy and most countries in Central and Eastern Europe, will not support a policy aimed at counterbalancing the United States. The end result of such a policy will not only be a more acrimonious transatlantic relationship, but a weaker and more divided Europe, one less able to play the larger political role to which it aspires.

25 See Paul Cornish and Geoffrey Edwards, "Beyond the EU/NATO Dichotomy: the Beginnings of a European Strategic Culture", in *International Affairs* (vol. 77, no. 3, 2001) pp. 587-603. For a more sceptical view, see Sten Rynning, "The European Union: Towards a Strategic Culture?", in *Security Dialogue* (vol. 34, no.4, 2003) pp. 479-96.