

A LACK *of* MILITARY MUSCLE



A US F-14 Tom Cat fighter jet takes off while Europe's military capabilities remain grounded.

Can Europe bridge political divides and make progress on its fractured defence and security policy in 2003? *Daniel Keohane reports.*

The Iraq crisis is bringing out the worst in Europe. Divisions between "old" and "new" Europe make a common EU foreign policy look like a contradiction in terms. Transatlantic spats ensure that NATO is going the way of the dodo. Does all this doom and gloom

mean the European security and defence policy (ESDP) is ruined?

In fact, 2003 is a big year for the ESDP. Regardless of their divisions over Iraq, the Europeans have forged common - and fairly effective - policies in the Balkans, which have helped stabilise that

region. EU policemen are already deployed in Bosnia, and the Union is about to send soldiers to Macedonia - the EU's first military mission. Plans are afoot for the EU to take over NATO's military role in Bosnia during 2004 as well. Thus, the EU's much-derided defence policy will move from the drawing board into action.

However, if Member States want to be taken seriously in Washington, they need not only police the Balkans but also sharpen the cutting edge of their armed forces. Moreover, if the US is occupied with other crises elsewhere around the



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globe, Europeans cannot always expect Uncle Sam to save the day. This is part of the rationale behind the EU's defence policy - namely that the Europeans will be able to conduct autonomous military operations. But without new equipment European soldiers might not even get to the battlefield.

TAKING THE TRAIN

European troops needed US planes to take them to Macedonia in 2001, because most European armies don't have adequate transport capabilities. One newspaper put it thus: "the Americans take the plane,

while the Europeans take the train." The Macedonia story is only one example of a disturbing trend across Europe. European states need many new military capabilities but are struggling to come up with the goods. Any conflict in Iraq is bound to expose Europe's lack of military muscle even more than was the case in Kosovo and Afghanistan. EU leaders, therefore, should endorse the recent Franco-British proposal for a "capabilities and acquisitions agency", designed to put pressure on governments to enhance their military capabilities.

EU leaders also need to assess the suitability of the EU's military doctrine and institutions for the challenges it faces. The so-called Petersberg tasks set the parameters for EU military missions, which range from humanitarian relief to ending regional conflicts. But in the years to come the EU should develop the organisation and capabilities to combat threats like terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which are not covered by the Petersberg tasks.

The French and the Germans, amongst others, would like to insert a common defence clause - a commitment by Member States to defend each other in case of an external attack, similar to NATO's article five - into the EU treaties. However, the EU is unlikely to adopt a common defence clause, due to opposition from both the EU neutrals (Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden) - who do not want to join military alliances - and atlanticist countries like the Netherlands, the UK and some applicant states who argue that NATO provides adequate defence guarantees.

The Convention working group on defence, chaired by Commissioner Michel Barnier, has recommended that the EU adopt a less controversial "solidarity" clause. This clause would guarantee mutual assistance in case of a natural disaster or a terrorist attack on EU territory, but not in the case of an attack by an external state. Although seemingly innocuous in political terms, a "solidarity" clause is highly ambitious in practical

terms because terrorist attacks are more likely than a Russian invasion. To fulfil such a commitment, at a minimum the EU would need to be able to co-ordinate soldiers, policemen and emergency response services across borders, and create a high-level intelligence body. EU leaders should be wary of raising expectations that they cannot meet.

In the longer term, much of what happens to ESDP depends on NATO. The Americans will not use NATO for a serious conflict unless it offers them better military capabilities. Without beefed-up military assets NATO will be consigned to the role of post-conflict peacekeeping, such as helping to run a post-Saddam Iraq. Not only would this confirm that NATO is now a global actor instead of a regional one, but its primary task would be cleaning up after the Americans. And Europeans would provide most of the money and the troops. Such a scenario also suggests that the EU would be left to focus on conflicts in places where NATO would not go, such as Africa. NATO as "cleaning lady" may not prove acceptable to Europeans in the long term, and they may decide to develop the EU's role as a military actor instead.

But NATO and the EU are not in competition with each other. In the years to come they will sink or swim together. Almost any conceivable EU military mission will need to draw upon NATO assets such as the expertise of its military planners. And if the Europeans succeeded in boosting their military capabilities, American respect for NATO would grow; and the EU would benefit too since it would rely on the same military assets. If they fail, both NATO and the EU will suffer as a result.

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