

CONSTRUCTIVE DUPLICATION:

Reducing EU reliance on
US military assets

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1. Summary

The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11th 2001 triggered an outpouring of public sympathy and government solidarity towards the US among its European allies. But the stirrings of a new transatlantic relationship were clear several months earlier, as the rancour that had accompanied the debate over a common European defence policy ebbed away. The Bush administration has taken a more positive approach than its predecessors to the European Union's attempts to develop its own military capacity. And the EU has worked to reassure the US that the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) will not undercut NATO.

These changes have created a more balanced and constructive relationship between the US and the EU. But they fail to address two serious problems that are threatening the ability and willingness of US and EU forces to work together: the divergence of European and US armed forces, and the question of 'assured access' to NATO and US military assets by the EU. Divergence means that US forces are developing in a fundamentally different way than their European counterparts, due to different budgets and policy priorities. This growing dissimilarity is already making joint military operations more difficult, and the gap is increasing steadily. Assured access means that a European defence force, operating on its own initiative, could be certain of getting NATO and US military support. However, that expectation may prove unrealistic, which could leave the EU with serious problems in the middle of a crisis.

The status quo is unsustainable. Substantial as the divergence between US and European forces is already, it will grow decisively as a result of the terrorist attacks of September 11th. American defence spending will increase dramatically, the changes occurring in US forces will accelerate, and US interest in and support for crisis-management missions will decline further. Moreover, while the attacks have reinforced European solidarity with the US, the military operations in retaliation may yet prove divisive. Few NATO allies have the ability to participate, and the US does not want to share intelligence with, or have its operational choices constrained by, states that are not directly involved in the operations.

The most productive way to redress these political and military problems is to encourage not only the emergence of a viable European military force, but also the duplication of capabilities already existing in NATO and US forces. Some duplication already exists; much more will be necessary if European defence policy is to be more than mere rhetoric. At present, duplication is regarded with suspicion, particularly in the US, which is worried that it might damage NATO. But a constructive approach to duplication could ameliorate the problems of both divergence and of European reliance on US assets. Europe should focus initially on logistical assets – for transport, communications and intelligence – that are essential for military operations and are scarce even in US forces.

This approach would allow the EU to conduct military operations without relying on US assistance. It would also increase European influence over US decisions about the use of force. For if EU states are able to participate in the more demanding sorts of combat, their views on how to conduct the military campaign would carry more weight in US decision-making.

2. A new approach to US national security

The Clinton administration's policy towards ESDP was marked by three major concerns, which Secretary of State Madeleine Albright described as "the three Ds". No duplication of NATO assets, no discrimination against non-EU NATO members (Turkey, in particular) and no actions that would decouple the US from Europe. This approach mellowed towards the end of the administration, but it continued to shape US thinking towards European defence policy.

Many in the EU hoped for a more positive approach from the incoming Bush administration. The first comments on EU defence aspirations, from Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, expressed serious concerns about the potentially damaging impact of ESDP on NATO. Addressing the Wehrkunde security conference on February 3rd 2001, just a week after taking office, Rumsfeld said:

"I favour 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 if I may add one more point: whatever shape the effort may finally take, I personally believe it should be inclusive/open to all NATO members who wish to take part."

ESDP supporters interpreted Rumsfeld's remarks as a disappointing regression to the strident days of the Clinton administration's three Ds policy. Many carped that the new team did not understand the post-Cold War evolution of the EU that had occurred in the eight years since Republicans were last in power. But Rumsfeld's comments accurately represent the continuing concerns many Americans have about the European defence initiative. Most US policy-makers and defence experts continue to be sceptical of the value of ESDP and wary of the problems associated with it. That is the baseline American reaction.

Nevertheless, the Bush administration very quickly adopted a more encouraging approach. At the first meeting between President Bush and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, just three weeks after Rumsfeld's comments, the two leaders expressed their support for ESDP, while affirming that "NATO will remain the essential foundation of transatlantic security".¹

In the press conference following the meeting, Bush and Blair outlined a transatlantic bargain on European defence. The US would support ESDP, on condition that it be limited to peacekeeping missions where NATO chose not to be involved. Blair made the terms reassuringly explicit:

"...the important thing to remember is that, as the President has just outlined to you, this 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 the sovereign decision of each nation is necessary for each operation. And speaking together as the founders of NATO, we would never do anything to undermine NATO. But where NATO as a whole chooses not to be engaged, it is impor-

¹ Joint statement, February 23rd 2001.

² Joint press conference at Camp David, February 23rd 2001.

tant 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."²

In return, President Bush unequivocally endorsed ESDP, saying: "I support what the Prime Minister has laid out. I think it makes a lot of sense for our country." What he endorsed is a very limited vision of ESDP – a back-up peacekeeping force for cases where the US does not want NATO involved. Whether all the other EU states, and notably France, will continue to accept that approach, remains to be seen. Still, this limited version of European defence policy allowed the Bush administration to be much more positive about a European military capability than its predecessor had been.

The architect of America's more affirmative approach, Secretary of State Colin Powell, has continued to assuage Europeans' concerns about US opposition to its defence plans. The sigh of relief was audible across the Atlantic after Powell's first trip to Brussels in February 2001, where he not only reaffirmed the new policy, but also assured Europeans that the US would not force an early test of EU capabilities by unilaterally withdrawing its troops from the Balkans (as had been suggested by both National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and Rumsfeld). Powell also left Brussels believing that all EU states had accepted Blair's version of ESDP.

European defence policy is now effectively off the transatlantic agenda. It is no longer a source of friction between the EU and US. The Bush administration has welcomed a leading role for EU High Representative Javier Solana in the Balkans, and backed away from internal EU deliberations about decision-making structures. The administration has also encouraged efforts to achieve the Helsinki Headline Goal which aims to create a rapid reaction force of 60,000 troops, deployable within 60 days and sustainable for up to a year, by 2003. The issue has been barely mentioned at subsequent NATO ministerial meetings, the G-8 summit in Genoa or in any of the intensive consultations following September 11th. The only time ESDP has been an issue was when the Bush administration endorsed the suggestion by the EU Balkans Representative François Leotard that the EU should take responsibility for the Macedonian mission. The EU declined.

It is striking, however, that despite the more sympathetic tone, the substance of US concerns about European defence policy remains largely unchanged. Even Secretary of State Powell has worries: after his first meetings in Brussels, he said the other NATO foreign ministers had agreed that the EU would "push this programme in a way that will be fully integrated within the planning activities of NATO. So, I leave comforted by that thought."³ At the NATO summit in June, President Bush further elaborated on US policy, saying:

"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."⁴

It is more graceful than the Clinton administration's 'three Ds', but President Bush hit all three concerns about a European force that needed to be integrated with NATO (decoupling), should welcome participation by NATO allies (discrimination), and should not duplicate NATO's efforts. Moreover, by asserting NATO's 'right of first refusal' over which missions to undertake, Bush gave a particular interpretation to the formula agreed at the Franco-British summit at St Malo in 1998, that a European force would act only 'when NATO as a whole is not engaged'.

³ Powell, Patten discuss ESDI and Iraq, February 27th, 2001 (uspolicy.usembassy.be).

⁴ President Bush, press conference with NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson, Brussels, June 13th, 2001.

In Bush's thinking, the EU would act only if NATO had decided against a leadership role. Less has changed in the US position than the upbeat tone of transatlantic discourse might suggest.

While the substance of policy has changed relatively little, the greatly improved tone is important because of what it demonstrates about the Bush administration's priorities. Despite misgivings about ESDP, it has chosen not to fight about it. That decision marks five significant developments in security policy:

- The Bush administration has greater confidence in the US's ability to lead when it chooses to. Consequently, it is less defensive about ensuring a US role and less inclined to intervene in internal EU developments. The Bush team knows that America's political, economic and military resources ensure it can play the dominant role in any security problem. This confidence was reinforced in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, as Bush successfully built a global anti-terror coalition, gained support in the UN Security Council, and received the first-ever invocation of NATO's 'Article V' mutual defence pledge.
- The Bush administration is less interested in dealing with the kinds of crisis management missions that ESDP is designed to address, because of concerns with the efficacy of intervening militarily in failing states, as well as burdens on the US military. The situation post-September 11th is further reducing this interest, as US requests for European forces to begin replacing American troops in the Balkans have demonstrated.
- President Bush has changed the terms of the US debate on ESDP by emphasising that a more capable European military force is in America's interests. If the US does not want to take a lead in dealing with many sorts of crises, it must foster means for others to manage them. The shortcomings of working through the United Nations became very evident in the Balkans in the early 1990s. The EU therefore appears to be the only alternative available to manage crises in Europe, if the US does not want NATO involved.
- The Bush administration is shifting greater responsibility for sustaining transatlantic relations on to Europe. If the Europeans want to work with the US on security issues, they will need to sustain that co-operation through NATO. If the Europeans don't keep NATO at the centre of the European security agenda, the US will simply not be involved. President Bush emphasized that *quid pro quo* at his February press conference with Prime Minister Blair, saying "he 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 actively engaged in NATO".
- The Bush administration has a less ambitious agenda for NATO than its predecessors. Clinton tried unsuccessfully to build a consensus for NATO action anywhere in the world that NATO allies had common interests and a willingness to use military force. The Bush administration, however, is likely to view the idea of giving NATO the job of managing military operations beyond Europe as too constraining on US freedom of action. NATO's political and military structures give European allies greater influence over decisions and the conduct of operations than exist over the US in any other arena. If NATO had a formal role beyond Europe's borders – in North Africa, the Caspian or Middle East, for example – the US would be obliged to seek consensus on policy before taking action. European governments' concerns about US policies outside Europe, and in particular the prominence of military force in American policy, would likely translate into efforts to forestall US action. The Bush administration places less emphasis on US-European partnership outside Europe, instead tending toward 'à la carte multilateralism' of temporary regional coalitions.

Since September 11th, NATO states have made very important contributions to the fight against

terror, but principally by using non-military means. Politically, the invocation of Article V bolstered US morale and made the construction of a broad international coalition easier, while diplomatic efforts by European statesmen have been particularly useful in the Middle East. Economically, European states were essential in stabilising the international financial system, for example by injecting liquidity and reducing interest rates in conjunction with the US, to reduce capital flows from the US. The swift and effective work of European law enforcement and intelligence agencies in collecting evidence, apprehending suspected conspirators, and sharing expertise has also been crucial in bringing terrorists to justice.

These police and judicial efforts contrast starkly with the limited military contributions of European states. Britain was the only European country that clearly participated in the opening campaign in Afghanistan. Few European armed forces have the capability to contribute substantially to high-intensity combat operations of the kind the US is carrying out; they lack the equipment and as a result operate very differently from US forces.

The September 11th attacks on the US, and Europe's response, have reinforced the above-mentioned tendencies in US policy. The US will be more likely to give the EU a leading role in crisis management in Europe, and less likely to put pressure on European allies to play a greater military role elsewhere. Perhaps the only remaining transatlantic obstacle to the development of Europe's defence policy is the dispute over links between NATO and the EU.

3. The Turkish veto

Turkey, a member of NATO but not the EU, held up an agreement between NATO and the EU during 2001 that would allow the EU assured access to NATO planning facilities, and presumed access to other NATO capabilities. The other 18 members of NATO signed up to this agreement in December 2000. After extensive mediation by the UK and US, and bilateral assurances from other EU states, Turkey accepted the NATO-EU agreement at the December 2001 meeting in Brussels of Alliance foreign ministers.

Turkey won assurances that the EU would not undertake a military operation against a NATO country such as Turkey. Turkey also accepted arrangements whereby the EU would consult it closely in any crisis, and would be likely to invite it to participate in an EU mission. The Turks backed down on their demand for the right to block autonomous EU missions in an area of strategic importance for Turkey, and did not gain an automatic right to join EU missions. As a NATO member, Turkey would be able to veto any EU mission that depended upon NATO, but unable to prevent EU operations that did not directly employ NATO assets.

However, Greece quickly rejected the December deal as too great a concession to Turkey, which means that at the time of writing the agreement on EU access to NATO assets is not in force. Greece appears to be concerned that the new deal with Turkey could prevent an EU force from being deployed in the Balkans, and it wants assurances that NATO could not act against its interests. It should not be beyond the wit of European and American diplomacy to give Greece the reassurances it needs. But there is a risk that, unless Greece signs up soon, Turkey could reconsider its acceptance of the deal. At any event, the problematic relationship between the EU and Turkey is likely to continue bedeviling the ESDP; numerous agreements on the implementation of NATO assistance to the EU still need to be settled.

Until the Turkey-Greece-NATO-EU problem is fully resolved, the EU will not have automatic access to NATO planning staffs and presumed access to other assets. This could have three damaging effects on the EU:

- an expensive duplication of NATO headquarters (which together currently have about 13,000 staff);
- estrangement between the US and EU, for the Bush administration would oppose duplication of NATO planning; and
- uncertainty on the part of potential adversaries that NATO would be willing to come to the aid of an EU operation.

It is unlikely that the US will want to do anything more to twist Turkey's arm on ESDP. Ankara and Washington have common interests in managing Turkey's neighbours (Iraq, Iran, and Syria), and both are strong supporters of Israel. Moreover, Turkey's strategic significance has increased since September 11th – it can offer practical support for military operations in Afghanistan and moral support as a Muslim country within the anti-terror coalition. Also, Americans are more sympathetic than EU states to Turkish concerns about ESDP; they believe that rights that had been granted to Turkey as an associate member of the Western European Union should be carried over to ESDP, and they are sceptical of the soundness of bringing Cyprus into the EU. (The WEU was a collective defence organisation with 10 member states. Since 1999 its crisis management functions and assets have been absorbed by the EU.)

Many in the EU have explained Turkish objections to its use of NATO assets solely as a tactic to promote the case of Turkish accession to the EU. They fail to appreciate that Ankara has legitimate concerns about the deployment of EU forces in the Aegean, especially if Cyprus becomes an EU member, and about EU intervention in the Caspian region or in support of Palestinians or Kurds.

In reality, however, Turkey's potential veto is not the major block to the development of a viable European defence force. Even though Turkey has agreed in principle to allow NATO assets to be used in support of EU military operations, two problems remain that could lead to serious transatlantic conflicts in the longer term: the divergence of US and European military forces, and the assumption of assured access by the EU to US assets. More generally, Turkey's potential veto forces the EU and the US to address the issue of the duplication of capabilities – and may therefore turn out to be beneficial in the long run.

4. Diverging European and US military forces

European military forces are losing the ability to work in coalitions with US forces. This is largely a result of efforts by the US to transform its military capabilities, and the speed of that transformation, but it has important consequences for Europe. If European forces are no longer able to form viable coalitions with US forces, European allies will become less valuable to the US. At the same time, they will grow more dependent on US support to fight wars.

America's armed forces have always been different to those of its European allies. Global responsibilities give US defence policy a strategic perspective shared only by Europe's former colonial powers. The public acceptability of high defence spending in America is a point of envy in most NATO defence ministries. Even as American voters express concern about the quality of medical care and the viability of social security pensions, there is almost no pressure to reduce defence spending.

The US now spends 3 per cent of GDP on defence, roughly what NATO's European states spent during the Cold War (when US spending hit 6.7 per cent). Following the attacks of September 11th, Congress approved a \$40 billion supplemental spending bill, \$18 billion of which is allocated directly to the defence department, with at least \$10 billion a year more expected for a programme of improved national defence and military restructuring. In addition to this enormous budget, likely to be about \$340 billion in 2002, the economies of scale, the earlier adaptation to all-volunteer forces (in the 1970s) and the more rapid consolidation of the defence industry (during the 1990s), give the US dramatic advantages over the military forces of all European states.

Over the past decade the gap has been growing, largely due to US investment in research and development (R&D). The US accounts for the bulk of military R&D spending worldwide – \$26,800 per soldier, compared to \$4,000 in the EU.⁵ It buys large numbers of weapons systems that capitalise on the innovations; allocating \$47 billion for procurement alone in 1999 (compared with \$29 billion in the EU countries). As a result, the US has created dramatic improvements in its ability to see the battlefield more precisely from greater distances, transmit information securely to more widely dispersed forces, and identify and attack targets more accurately. Whether these advanced technologies represent a revolution comparable to the introduction of the long-bow or the blitzkrieg can be debated, but this technological advantage is unquestionably transforming American military forces.⁶

These innovations are beginning to affect how the US organises and trains for warfare, and even how it thinks about it – and the pace of change is accelerating. The accuracy and destructive power of conventional forces, for example, have made a nuclear response unnecessary in virtually every planning scenario. Even before September 11th, there were concerns that this military strength could prompt a skilled adversary to avoid engaging US military forces directly and instead use 'asymmetric' threats – such as terrorism, missile proliferation, computer warfare or other means of disrupting the army's ability to operate. Needless to say, the terrorist attacks have highlighted the need to improve capabilities for operating in areas where there are neither stationed troops nor support bases.

The impetus for innovation comes from the wars the US expects to have to fight. The most

⁵ John Dowdy of McKinsey, cited in "Impotent Europe", *Wall Street Journal Europe*, September 21st 2001.

⁶ See Lawrence Freedman, "The Revolution in Strategic Affairs", International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998.

likely conflict scenarios are no longer European in nature, which is certainly a development to be celebrated both in Europe and the US. Contingencies like defending Taiwan against Chinese amphibious assault or attack by ballistic missiles, or ensuring passage through the Straits of Hormuz when Iran becomes a nuclear power, pose very demanding challenges for the most advanced US forces.

The need to prepare for and conduct asymmetric warfare will also transform US forces. Initially, only a small part of the US forces will undergo a radical transformation, but it is this part that will be used for the most demanding missions and be the engine of change. In the longer term, the new approach will be incorporated into doctrine and organisation, further reshaping US forces. The US Navy's network-centric warfare, the US Army's experiments with advanced information systems (termed 'digitisation'), and creation of the Joint Forces Command to experiment with different doctrines are only three examples of the change occurring.

The Bush administration has placed innovation high on its defence agenda, even before the election. In his Citadel speech, candidate Bush said: "I will set three goals: I will renew the bond of trust between the American president and the American military. I will defend the American people against missiles and terror. And I will begin creating the military of the next century."⁷

The Quadrennial Defence Review, the blueprint of US defence strategy and spending, that Secretary Rumsfeld presented to Congress on September 30th, 2001, reiterated the need for innovation. This establishes a new deputy to the Secretary of Defence to foster innovation and experimentation, and it requires all the military services to create road maps against which progress in their transformation can be measured.

Although the defence programme outlined in the review was completed before September 11th, Rumsfeld emphasised that the war against terrorism "requires the transformation of US forces, capabilities, and institutions to extend America's asymmetric advantages well into the future." The terrorist attacks, he said, "will require us to move forward more rapidly in these directions".

The post-September 11th climate also gives Rumsfeld a much freer hand in reshaping US military forces. Opponents of radical transformation and entrenched bureaucratic or Congressional interests that might have held back the pace of change will have less support. No member of Congress will want to deny the Pentagon resources to do its job well in the aftermath of the attacks, nor want to be seen as an impediment to changing US forces so that they can fight terrorism successfully.

America's European allies are not keeping pace with military innovation. The latest US Congressional Budget Office report on burden-sharing – generally sympathetic to European arguments – concludes that "a failure by many of NATO's European members to keep up with technological advances could render them incapable of operating alongside US forces in future military conflicts."⁸ Different ways of operating will mean that US forces face less risk than their European counterparts. A General Accounting Office report on Kosovo even suggests that operating within NATO required compromises that "impeded military operations and increased risk to alliance forces".⁹ The International Institute for Strategic Studies evaluation of the Kosovo campaign gives concrete examples which support the case that the risk to US and European forces increased in allied operations. Some European aircraft lacked the ability to encrypt their communications, which compromised the operational security of the air cam-

⁷ President Bush, "A Period of Consequences", Citadel speech, September 23rd, 2000.

⁸ Congressional Budget Office, "NATO Burden-sharing After Enlargement", 2001.

⁹ US General Accounting Office, "Kosovo Air Operations: Need to Maintain Alliance Cohesion resulted in Doctrinal Departures", GAO-01-784, July 27th 2001.

¹⁰ International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Strategic Survey 1999/2000".

paign. Even some British and French aircraft lacked basic technical links that make friendly aircraft distinguishable from enemies.¹⁰

The problem is not that European forces are failing to innovate: much creative planning has gone into the Helsinki rapid reaction force, and especially into improving the ability to deploy forces. The US is also not claiming that its European allies are failing to do their fair share in areas of common interest – Europeans have committed more than 80 per cent of the ground forces that have been deployed in Kosovo and are also bearing more than 80 per cent of the reconstruction and assistance costs. The point is that the US and its European allies have different priorities for their military forces.

Most European governments do not perceive the same magnitude of new threats or imagine themselves fighting the kinds of wars that are driving US innovation. Therefore, adapting their military forces to ensure they could win those wars is not a priority. Even if expectations were more closely aligned, Europeans would be constrained by the size and allocation of funds in their defence budgets. European NATO states spend much less on R&D, buy fewer weapons, and (as the US also does) tend to give preference to national companies in the purchase of their weaponry. As a result, the Europeans are developing fewer innovations and experiencing less change in the most advanced military capabilities.

In 1998, the US Department of Defence proposed a NATO investment programme to identify and fund European equipment that would prevent the divergence of military forces. The Defence Capabilities Initiative (DCI), approved by heads of government at the NATO Washington summit in 1999, established five areas as priorities: deployability and mobility; sustainability and logistics; effective engagement (the ability to attack targets while keeping risks of failure and unintended casualties low); survivability of forces and infrastructure; and command, control and information systems. It identified 58 specific projects for improvements. The point was to encourage the Europeans to develop the kind of military capabilities seen in US forces during the Kosovo air campaign, such as precision-guided munitions to attack from greater distances, ground surveillance systems that could give allies a common picture of the battlefield, improved air and sea lift to get European forces to the crisis more quickly, and command and control systems to pass information and intelligence securely to allied military forces. While predominantly a programme for the procurement of equipment, the DCI also identified training standards and other forms of co-operation that could enable allied forces to operate together relatively quickly and cheaply.

Its success has been minimal. Less than half of the goals identified in the DCI have been funded, and there is little prospect of improvement despite substantial pressure by both NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson and successive US Secretaries of Defense. While many European defence ministries hope that the terrorist attacks on the US will precipitate greater defence spending throughout NATO, European governments are more likely to increase spending on intelligence and policing, than on the reshaping of their armed forces in response to terrorism. Yet without investments of the magnitude and type outlined in the DCI, the connection between the US and European militaries will inevitably weaken.

An audit of assets and capabilities compiled in 1999 by the Western European Union (WEU) gave a similar message as the DCI. The audit painted a detailed picture of the key gaps between US and European forces. It characterised European capabilities as “very limited: in strategic and operational intelligence, secure communications that could be deployed to the theatre of operations, air mobility, psychological operations, headquarters that could incorporate multinational forces from more than one branch of the military, electronic and signals intelligence, and the ability to evacuate forces in emergencies.”¹¹ All of these are assets that the

¹¹ Hans-Christian Hagman, “Increasing European Capabilities”, forthcoming Adelphi Paper for the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

EU would likely wait for the US to provide, so that the EU could conduct its own operations. But with US forces organising and training differently to their European allies, it will be increasingly hard to make the US pieces of an operation work closely with the European pieces. The ESDP is not responsible for the divergence between the US and European forces, but it could aggravate the problem. The US is concentrating on high-technology improvements – such as striking targets precisely from great distances, and integrating air and ground operations – and eschewing peacekeeping. The EU, on the other hand, is focusing on crisis-management – getting forces into a region in a timely way and establishing basic communications for passing information within a multinational force. While EU defence planners concentrate on constructing multinational forces that can operate together at the lower end of the conflict spectrum, the US armed forces are accelerating their efforts to exploit the information and communications technologies that are transforming US forces at the higher end.

5. The fallacy of assured access

At their 1994 summit, the NATO countries' heads of government gave their approval to European attempts to develop 'separable but not separate' defence capabilities through the WEU. Behind that approval lay the US proposal for combined joint task forces (CJTFs), that would allow NATO allies to work in smaller, variable coalitions that drew on NATO assets. The US thought that by agreeing to second NATO assets to other organisations (like the WEU, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the UN) for specific missions, it would prevent competition and duplication between NATO and the Europeans. In particular, the CJTF concept was intended to remove any rationale for the WEU developing headquarters and military staffs that would duplicate those in NATO. The concept also aimed to involve NATO headquarters in the planning and management of non-Article V missions, such as peace-keeping. The project had the beneficial effect of facilitating participation by France, which is not integrated into the commands, as well as non-NATO allies edging closer to alliance structures through the Partnership for Peace (the club which links 26 European and Central Asian states to NATO).

Initially, the concept of combined joint task forces seemed promising. The WEU would rely on NATO headquarters rather than challenge NATO's primacy by building competing structures. NATO headquarters would become more mobile (in order to deploy forces in crisis regions) and flexible (to incorporate non-integrated states for specific operations). And NATO would promise that if the WEU undertook an operation, it could count on NATO assets. But the elegant political solution quickly ran into difficulties over practical questions:

- who would decide whether NATO or another organisation undertook an operation?
- would NATO assets automatically be handed over to the WEU or other organisations, even if NATO allies did not support the mission or believed it undermined its ability to defend its Article V commitments?
- how long would NATO be obliged to support the operations of another organisation?
- what constitutes NATO assets: are they just the headquarters or also the military units assigned to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR)?¹²
- would US assets (on which NATO operations fundamentally depend) be made available for operations by other institutions?
- would NATO and individual states, whose assets were seconded to other organisations, be paid for their use, and if so, how much?
- how would NATO or an individual state recall its assets if a higher-priority mission occurred?
- would the lending of NATO military capabilities to other institutions create an implicit obligation on the part of NATO countries to give unlimited military help?
- how would operations led by other institutions be monitored to ensure that NATO states felt comfortable with the use of their assets?
- how would a failed mission affect the credibility of NATO guarantees?

The answers to these questions are complicated by the extent to which NATO operations depend on US assets. Aside from headquarters, 'NATO assets' generally refers to US military

¹² Most NATO military capabilities are national assets that would transfer to SACEUR and other military commanders' authority. SACEUR does, however, command the early warning aircraft units (AWACs), a small multinational immediate reaction force, and a standing naval force in the Mediterranean.

capabilities such as strategic intelligence collection and assessment, theatre reconnaissance capabilities, communications equipment, and airlift and logistics to sustain deployed forces. These are not only expensive, and scarce even in the US forces, but they also require trained military personnel to run them. It would be impossible for a US president to assign assets automatically to a mission where the US might have no say over whether and how US troops were engaged. Congress would never permit it.

The experience of European allies in the Balkans changed the dynamic of the NATO-WEU debate, reminding the Europeans of the substantial benefits of managing crises within NATO. The intervention in Bosnia (1992-95), in particular, demonstrated to Europe's political leaders the extent of their military dependence on the US, the difficulty of ensuring military participation from the US other than through NATO, and the challenge of developing a common approach even among EU states. With the deployment of NATO's Implementation Force to the former Yugoslavia in 1995, the European debate became less about excluding US and NATO influence and more about ensuring US and NATO support for WEU operations.

As a result, both sides were willing to declare most of the practical problems about 'assured access' to NATO assets resolved in 1996, with the signing of the Berlin agreements. These NATO accords were part of an implicit deal by which the US would provide greater support for WEU defence initiatives, in exchange for France working in closer co-operation with – and possibly even returning to – NATO's integrated military structure.¹³ Specifically, the Berlin agreements committed NATO states to provide assured access to NATO planning staffs and advanced warning and command aircraft (AWACs), and covered the procedures for transferring political control of them to the WEU.

However, the Berlin agreements did not solve the practical problems of transferring NATO assets to the WEU. Not only did they not address many of the most difficult questions, they were no sooner concluded than WEU states began pressing Washington for a 'Berlin Plus' agreement to guarantee a broader range of NATO support. The 'Berlin Plus' agreements nailed down the practicalities of NATO support to EU operations, as the WEU disbanded and its crisis management responsibilities were absorbed into the EU. In particular they would delineate the specific NATO assets to which 'assured access' would apply, and outlined a second category of assets to which the EU would have 'presumed access' (meaning that they are less bindingly promised than headquarters). 'Berlin Plus' also identified the DSACEUR (the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander in Europe is always a European) to lead NATO planning and operational efforts in support of the EU. France had second thoughts about rejoining the military structure, and the US, which felt it had gone very far to meet EU interests at Berlin, became weary of the subject.

Moreover, the Berlin agreement did not – and probably could not – resolve the fundamental problem of assured access: how to guarantee the availability for European crisis-management of scarce assets that the US needs for fighting wars and managing crises globally. The Berlin agreements offered the WEU assured access to NATO assets, but in order to use them effectively, it would also need access to US assets.

A real assurance of availability would mean that the EU's crisis-management priorities would take precedence over the other global responsibilities and interests of the US. Take, for example, the Kosovo campaign. Although smaller in scope than most wars the US has planned for, it employed nearly the entire allocation of US air assets available for such a conflict. Had US commitments been challenged in Korea, the Persian Gulf or Taiwan, the US would have had to reduce the tempo of operations in Kosovo or, depending on the contingency, withdrawn alto-

¹³ See Jolyon Howarth, "European Integration and Defence: The Ultimate Challenge?". Chaillot Paper 43, Institute for Security Studies of the Western European Union, November 2000.

¹⁴ US Department of Defense, "Kosovo Lessons Learned", Report to Congress.

gether, because critical military assets would have been assigned to those higher-priority missions.¹⁴

If US commanders were worried about committing assets during a NATO operation, it is even more likely that the US would withhold or withdraw them from an EU operation. Following the attacks of September 11th, US willingness to commit assets to solving problems in areas of peripheral concern to Washington is likely to be highly limited. The priority for US troops is the war on terrorism. Not only will the US be less likely to participate in crisis-management operations, it will also be far less able to support NATO or EU missions with intelligence, communications and even political attention. Assured access is a faulty premise even for some NATO operations, much less for those in which the US is not directly involved. For example, the US has only a limited number of Predator unmanned aerial vehicles: because of the need to deploy them over Afghanistan, it could not offer them to the NATO force in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

6. An EU approach to warfare?

The defence budgets on which European states operate are too small to permit them the luxury of replicating the same patterns of military organisation and operation that exist in NATO. Likewise, the dependence of European military forces on US assets like airlift, secure communications, precision strike forces, theatre reconnaissance and strategic intelligence is simply too great for the EU to overcome without major budget increases. The EU will need to develop an identifiably different approach to warfare from that practised by the US.

The International Institute for Strategic Studies recently showed that defence spending in most EU countries had actually decreased in constant dollars.¹⁵ Although this analysis is perhaps unfair, given the strength of the dollar, it does drive home the point that European defence spending increases have been marginal. The modest European moves to increase defence budgets in response to the events of September 11th will do little to close the gap to the US, where spending has already increased substantially.

Given budget constraints, if the EU is serious about building a force that is capable of operating without US support, it will need to experiment with new ways of carrying out the military tasks it cannot afford to replicate. EU members may have to relinquish some national autonomy. They will certainly need to pool resources to buy the necessary equipment and systems. And they will need to integrate their forces multinationally, to a far greater degree than is already done in NATO. The EU will need to learn to prepare for military operations in different ways to NATO or the US.

The US approach to war emphasises advances in technology that reduce the risk to military personnel, and consequently the political cost to leaders of engaging in war. The technologies range from mundane innovations like night-vision goggles, to exotic developments such as miniature robotics for intelligence collection. The EU will be operating without many of these risk-reducing technologies. As a result, EU political leaders will have two options: either greater tolerance for risk when choosing to use military force in crises, or an extraordinary amount of creativity to keep risks manageable when intervening with force. In either case, the internal dynamic of autonomous EU military action will encourage the development of a unique EU approach to warfare.

Rather than worrying about the rapid changes in US forces and the shaky premise of 'assured access', the EU should welcome the opportunity to develop a different strategic perspective. This challenge presents Europe with the chance to build affordable capabilities that do not require a major increase in European defence spending. NATO is going to have to develop new ways of working in coalitions whatever happens – not due to the EU's military development but because of the changes occurring in US forces. If the EU were to emphasise constructive duplication – innovative ways to replicate by cost-effective means the high-end capabilities on which US forces depend – it would be able to deploy force in a genuinely autonomous way. It would also make the EU states more valuable allies for the US. Instead of relying on scarce US military assets, they would complement US forces, even if in some respects they might find it harder to operate together with US forces.

¹⁵ International Institute for Strategic Studies, "The Military Balance 2000-2001".

7. Constructive duplication

At the Capabilities Pledging Conference in November 2000, the EU identified a substantial catalogue of forces available to meet the Helsinki Headline Goal: nearly 100,000 troops, 400 aircraft and 100 ships.¹⁶ However, all the assets pledged already existed in the military forces of EU states and nearly all were committed to NATO or UN forces. All the shortfalls identified by the WEU audit in 1999 remain; European military commanders, moreover, are concerned about the quality and availability of some of the assets pledged.

The EU now faces the dilemma of how to set priorities for improvement. The EU states in NATO have already committed to the 1998 DCI list of force capabilities that need to be developed, and these would improve Europe's military forces. However, the capability targets that the EU has set for the fulfilment of its headline goal are not fully consistent with the priorities of the DCI. The EU must decide whether to build its own planning process around NATO plans, or create a different set of priorities, more suited to fulfilling the Headline Goal.

For the EU to simply take over NATO plans would be politically difficult. France is not part of NATO's force planning process and does not want it carried over into the EU. More importantly, the requirements of the kinds of force promised in the Headline Goal are appreciably different to those of a DCI force. For example, an EU force would not be able to wage the kind of air campaign that NATO fought in Kosovo. But if EU members agreed to a different set of spending priorities from those already committed to in NATO, it would raise concerns in non-EU states about the EU's commitment to NATO and the seriousness of the Helsinki process. NATO and the EU, it seems, are on a collision course. The conflict could be reduced, however, if both sides accepted that duplication of assets and planning will occur, and the EU focused spending on the kind of military asset it had planned to borrow from US forces.

From a military perspective, most duplication of US and NATO assets would be constructive. The assets of greatest interest to the EU are also in short supply in US forces. Furthermore, the high tempo of operations in the past ten years is wearing out some sorts of equipment at a much faster pace than expected – the US had not foreseen routine use in long-term engagements in northern Iraq and the Balkans. This accelerated pace of use for US forces requires the faster replacement of equipment and creates more concern about their use in marginal operations.

If the EU wants to avoid unnecessary duplication, improve its capacity to act autonomously and engender support in the US, it needs to choose areas of duplication that would reduce the burden on over-extended US assets. In particular, it should focus on 'strategic lift' (transport), intelligence, reconnaissance, strike capabilities, mid-air refuelling and, finally, research, development and procurement:

- **Strategic lift**

The key constraint on the ability of Europeans to deploy force is their inability to shift troops by air, sea, rail and road. EU states already have procurement plans to improve the airlift capability of their forces. The UK has bought 25 C-130J transport aircraft and leased four C-17s from the US; Italy has bought 20 C-130Js and is also buying 12 C-27J tactical transport aircraft; and Spain is buying 9 C-295 light transport aircraft. Eight European states have plans to buy 196 of the new Airbus A400M strategic lift aircraft, to be available by 2007. Although these purchases mark a substantial improvement, they will not make the EU autonomous, even at the relatively modest level of the Helsinki Headline Goal force. Further purchases will be

¹⁶ Assembly of the WEU, "Implementation of the Nice Summit Declarations in the Operational Area of the European Security and Defence Policy," Document A/1734, Appendix 1, 2000.

necessary to meet Helsinki requirements, and the US would not object to such spending – it would relieve the US of responsibilities that could slow down its ability to deploy force.

While airlift is generally the best way to move forces quickly, and EU states deserve praise for focusing on the high end of the spectrum, other less expensive alternatives also deserve consideration. Buying or leasing existing airlift from Russia or Ukraine could provide a cheaper means of quickly acquiring the necessary lift, although availability and safety might be counterbalancing concerns.¹⁷ Another cheap and speedy fix would be to create a civilian reserve air fleet programme (CRAF), allowing EU governments to requisition civilian aircraft, ships, trains and lorries in crises at previously agreed rates. European CRAF arrangements exist for wartime, but there is no equivalent for crisis-management missions. This method of improving lift would require governments to negotiate with civilian suppliers and ensure the availability of trained reservists to man the equipment.

The Dutch and the Germans have embarked on a creative funding scheme, in which the Dutch invest in improving the German airlift fleet, in return for the right to use the fleet for Dutch operations. This important effort is the first attempt to use national spending to create a common pool of EU assets, and has considerable merit as a model for more effective European defence spending.¹⁸ But the Dutch-German approach has potential drawbacks. By combining cross-funding (paying for another state to own an aeroplane) and pooling of assets (building multinational units out of nationally owned aircraft), it raises the potential drawbacks of access and buck-passing.

On access, countries would need a high degree of confidence that they had guaranteed usage, even when the country holding the common asset was not contributing forces to the mission concerned. The level of confidence is far higher among Europeans than across the Atlantic. First, there would be fewer concerns about the assets being engaged in other areas of the world or committed to higher-priority potential conflicts. And secondly, disagreements over the use of force are likely to be less trenchant among the 15 EU states than between NATO and the EU as a whole. Consequently, it is less likely that one member state would deny access to another.

The second potential problem with the Dutch-German model is buck-passing – states commit too little money because they are not themselves responsible for producing the necessary aircraft, ships, trains and lorries. As a result, the EU may end up lacking the necessary assets. NATO members routinely fail to spend all they have promised, and while the EU may prove better at enforcing commitments, that is certainly not a given.

Several EU states have looked at ways of improving European lift. Germany and France have proposed the creation of a joint air transport command, while France and the Netherlands have mooted an EU maritime lift force and co-ordination cell (with a substantial commitment of 70 ships). These are useful initiatives, but in order to provide the best cross-pollination, the EU should consider creating an overall EU transport command, as suggested by General Klaus Naumann, the former chairman of NATO's military committee.¹⁹ An EU command would give the Helsinki process a concrete and visible result: aircraft, ships, trains and lorry transports flying the EU flag and committed in the first instance to EU operations. The model might be an EU transport equivalent of NATO's AWACs: a standing command structure, multinational personnel and a jointly owned fleet of equipment. As long as these EU resources were also available to NATO, neither the US nor other states should have any reason to block an EU transport command.

¹⁷ Stephan de Spigliere and Dmitri Danilov, "From Decoupling to Recoupling", Chaillot Paper 31, WEU Institute for Security Studies, 1998.

¹⁸ Keynote Address by Dutch Defence Minister de Grave to the Defence Planning Symposium, Oberammergau, January 15th, 2001.

¹⁹ Klaus Naumann, "Europe's Military Ambitions," *CER Bulletin*, June/July 2000.

• Strategic intelligence collection and assessment

Whether strategic intelligence collection is a genuine EU requirement is questionable. Satellites are not optimal for the kind of crisis-management operations outlined in the Petersberg tasks. The Petersberg tasks, set by the WEU summit in June 1992, define three main tasks for a European force: humanitarian and rescue efforts, peacekeeping, and the deployment of combat troops for enforcement purposes. Europeans are divided on whether an autonomous EU force needs independent satellite intelligence. While many members regard government-owned reconnaissance satellites as a low priority in EU defence spending, France considers them critical. It has legitimate concerns about US intelligence sharing and the availability of commercial data in crises.

In principle, the US can have no objection to the EU acquiring strategic intelligence assets. The dominance of the US in intelligence issues is neither conducive to co-operative policies, nor beneficial to the US or Europe. Better intelligence would allow Washington's NATO allies to replicate and validate the factual basis of US assessments. Disagreements over interpretation would certainly occur; they are common within and among US intelligence agencies. But, overall, better European intelligence is likely to produce more transatlantic agreement, if only because the act of collecting and assessing intelligence would encourage European governments to think rather more about long term foreign policy issues than some of them do at present.

A more important priority than collection of intelligence, however, would be to improve intelligence sharing and assessment capabilities. The critical shortfall for Europe is not lack of information – the US relies on intelligence provided by European allies in many parts of the world. The EU's problem is that since most states do not share their intelligence, they cannot arrive at a common assessment. The EU's Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit has some modest multilateral assessment capability, but most European intelligence remains jealously guarded in national channels.²⁰ The varying histories and commercial interests of the EU states give them different competitive advantages; these could be profitably combined without sacrificing vital national interests.

The US will, however, be wary of intelligence-sharing across the Atlantic until the EU establishes standards for security that bring its governments, and its institutions, up to the level at which allies can be confident about sharing intelligence. The war on terrorism will exacerbate US fears. Catching terrorists requires tactical surprise, which places a premium on secrecy. The US will not allow the kind of difficulties it experienced in Kosovo – on one occasion there were allegations that a French officer passed tactical intelligence to suspected Serb war criminals – to endanger the success of operations against the likes of Osama bin Laden and his associates. The need for secrecy and surprise will starkly restrict the sharing of intelligence, even with America's closest allies.

Those countries with privileged access to US intelligence, like Britain, will be loathe to encourage more intra-European sharing if it risked access to US intelligence. Consequently, better EU intelligence capabilities depend crucially on raising the standard of information security in all EU states to the level of those countries with privileged access, and making the US comfortable that the highest common denominator is reliably met.²¹

Intelligence hardware is high-tech and glamorous, but is ultimately less important than the ability of trained analysts to interpret intelligently what they are seeing. The US experience on September 11th, as on many other occasions, has been that intelligence failures are usually a product of insufficient analysis, not inadequate information. The training of analysts would

²⁰ Alessandro Politi, "Towards a European Intelligence Policy", Chaillot Paper 34, WEU Institute for Security Studies, December 1998.

²¹ See Charles Grant, "Intimate Relations: Can Britain Play a Leading Role in European Defence, and keep its special links to US intelligence?", CER, April 2000.

improve Europe's intelligence capability faster, and less expensively, than investment in new equipment.

The EU's existing Situation Centre, which is linked to both the EU Military Staff and the Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit, in the bureaucracy which reports to Javier Solana, the High Representative for EU foreign and security policy, is insufficient. It does not receive enough intelligence from EU states, it is not large enough to provide analysis on demand, and its staff lack the links into national intelligence staff that would allow them to share ideas and receive feedback. The EU should consider creating a new and larger specialist unit, under the control of Solana, with responsibility for collating and analysing information from national intelligence channels. Alternatively, the Situation Centre could focus merely on gathering national assessments, and determining which most closely approximate to its own judgement, rather than developing its own assessments. Either of these approaches would boost the EU's intelligence capabilities more rapidly than an attempt to build European collection capabilities.

• Theatre reconnaissance

There can be no doubt that better reconnaissance of the region in which EU forces operate is essential for improving its capacity for crisis management. Both the former and current chairmen of the NATO Military Committee have highlighted theatre reconnaissance as a critical shortfall in European forces during the Kosovo campaign.²²

The US conducted over 90 per cent of advanced intelligence and reconnaissance missions during the Kosovo campaign. Given the other demands on US intelligence capabilities, the EU would be wise to reduce this dependence, focusing its spending on tactical assets, like unmanned aerial vehicles and Airborne Early Warning and Command (AWACs) aircraft. EU countries could save money by pooling the cost of developing and buying these systems, and then run them as EU squadrons, just as NATO has its AWACs aircraft. Provided that these EU units were also available to NATO, they should pose no political problem.

• Strike forces

If the EU wants to improve the political visibility of its contributions to NATO, and the power to 'shock and awe' potential adversaries independently of NATO, it needs to build a precision strike force that can attack from beyond the battlefield. This would be a welcome duplication, given Europe's heavy reliance on US assets in Kosovo. Building a strike force will require upgrading both the platform for operations – predominantly fighter aircraft – and the precision munitions they use. Some improvements are already planned: France is buying 61 Rafale fighters that will enter into service in 2005; the UK, Germany, Italy and Spain are buying 620 Eurofighters; while Belgium, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands are upgrading their F-16 fighters to provide an all-weather operating capability. With respect to precision weapons, France, the UK, Italy and Greece are purchasing the Storm Shadow air-launched cruise missile; Germany has a similar programme under development but has not yet targeted funds.²³

The potential impact of these improvements would be maximised if Europe pooled them into an EU strike force. The Benelux Deployable Air Task Force might provide a good model for pooling forces, especially among countries with smaller military organisations. This Task Force combines fighter aircraft from three countries that train together and can be deployed as a single squadron. EU states with similar aircraft and munitions, that are used to training together, could create multinational fighter squadrons for strike missions. This kind of multinational integration comes at a price, in terms of national sovereignty and military efficiency. The advan-

²² See Admiral Venturoni, NATO press conference, June 30th 1999, and General Naumann, NATO press conference, May 4th 1999.

²³ See Robert Grant, "The RMA – Europe Can Keep In Step", Occasional Paper 15, WEU Institute for Security Studies, June 2000.

tages are substantial: a better sharing of the defence burden among EU states, and the opening up of a meaningful role for the smaller European countries on the leading edge of combat.

An EU strike force would need to set training standards, develop operational plans and conduct exercises to ensure its readiness for combat. Although that would, to some extent, duplicate the defence planning process in NATO, the problem should be manageable. The current level of inter-operability among NATO countries cannot be maintained, given the pace of change in US forces. Indeed, other NATO states are already complaining that US forces do not comply with NATO standards: in order to go on meeting NATO standards, the US would have to reduce the sophistication of its operations.

For the longer term, General Naumann's idea of a force of unmanned aerial vehicles with supersonic cruise missiles has considerable merit.²⁴ This option would reduce concerns about national sovereignty, since unmanned vehicles are a strictly mechanical weapon that could easily be reshuffled into different formations. Whether manned or unmanned, either approach would enable Europe to be at the forefront of a high-intensity combat mission, ensuring its involvement in the early stages of operations.

• Air-to-air refuelling

Another area for duplication that would garner US support is in-flight refuelling of transport, reconnaissance and fighter aircraft. In Kosovo, the most critical constraint on operations was the limited number of KC-130 refuelling aircraft. Denmark and the Netherlands are pioneering the development of compatible systems in Europe through a bilateral agreement for Dutch tankers to refuel Danish F-16s. An EU refuelling unit could be planned, organised, trained and commanded multinationally, as a separate force under EU auspices. That would give the EU a visible presence in operations and an essential niche that could be the basis for mission specialisation within NATO or in non-NATO international coalitions.

• EU research, development and procurement

European R&D funding is insufficient for existing needs and is unlikely to increase substantially in the foreseeable future. One way of addressing the problem would be to secure national commitments in the EU for an agreed percentage of GDP to be spent on defence, and for R&D funds to be specially fenced within defence budgets.²⁵ That approach would take up the kind of quantitative criteria and careful scrutiny that fostered discipline for Europe's monetary union. But it is not clear that national governments are willing to be held to account for those kinds of targets in the area of defence, or that Europeans are willing to 'spend for Europe', given that they have not wanted to increase defence spending to meet NATO goals. The same idea has guided NATO defence planning for decades, but with little effect, for NATO has not found a way of holding governments accountable for failing to meet targets. The EU will need to convince governments to develop a stronger system in order to bring about progress.

EU governments need to think more about collective research, development and procurement. While R&D tends to be treated separately from procurement, the EU governments should think about combining the three processes together. Potential improvements in weaponry could be evaluated in tandem with the restructuring of forces. One feasible solution would be to create an EU body under High Representative Solana to pool some of the national contributions to research, development and procurement. Members would certainly want to retain some of their funds for national programmes, but an EU body collecting the contributions of member states could have five great benefits. It would:

- take advantage of potential economies of scale;

²⁴ Klaus Naumann, "Europe's military ambitions", *CER Bulletin*, June/July 2000.

²⁵ See François Heisbourg, "The EU needs defence convergence criteria", *CER Bulletin*, June/July 1999 and Charles Grant, "European Defence Post-Kosovo", *CER*, June 1999.

- help reduce the detrimental duplication of effort that exists in member states' budgets;
- work with the EU Military Committee to establish common priorities for equipment purchases that would advance the Helsinki Headline Goal and future objectives;
- establish the basis for an EU-wide defence market; and
- help to build a common strategic and operational vision of the future of EU forces.

Despite the exemption of defence industries from the competence of the EU under Article 296 of the EU Treaties, a high-level co-ordinating body could build on the existing agency for managing joint weapons programmes, the Organisation for Joint Armaments Co-operation (OCCAR). The original participants in OCCAR – Britain, France, Germany and Italy – account for 80 per cent of EU spending on research, development and procurement. Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands are in the process of joining, and Sweden is considering doing so – which would bring most of the EU's defence industry within the ambit of OCCAR.

A genuine transatlantic defence market would be preferable, but the political and economic impediments to transatlantic co-operation are prohibitive. Both European governments and the US want the employment and technological benefits of domestic defence industries, and none of them wants to depend solely on foreign suppliers for critical war materials. However, consolidation among European industries could create some competition for America's defence industrial behemoths, thereby alleviating Pentagon concerns about monopoly suppliers in the US market.

An EU research, development and procurement agency would duplicate the work currently undertaken by the Conference of National Armaments Directors, which tries to push governments to choose the systems that best serve NATO's military needs. That would be no bad thing. NATO armaments directors have failed for the past ten years to agree on whether to buy a US ground surveillance system, identified by NATO military commanders as the top priority need, or to wait for a European system to be developed. If the EU could bring greater political impetus to decision-making and thus break the gridlock in NATO committees, this would be an area of NATO planning where the risks of competition between NATO and the EU are worth taking.

8. Does the EU need its own planning capability?

The duplication of expensive logistical and war-fighting assets is unlikely to raise objections in the US or NATO – the benefits to all concerned are obvious. The difficulties will start when EU initiatives duplicate NATO's planning role.

Sceptics on both sides of the Atlantic question why the EU cannot manage its military operations through NATO, with or without US participation. Employing the NATO machinery to organise, plan and conduct military operations has three enormous advantages. First, it ensures constructive US involvement. Whether or not US forces are involved, a NATO operation would commit the US to a common approach. That would avoid the kind of divisiveness that occurred during the Bosnian war, when US advocacy of a 'lift and strike' strategy made life difficult for European states that had forces committed in UNPROFOR. If Europeans were to work through NATO, the US would have a vested interest in the success of its operations.

The second advantage of using NATO's planning apparatus is the ability to call on extra support if necessary. The US would not allow a NATO operation to fail and would act as a strategic reserve if the mission proved more demanding than expected. NATO's experienced planning staffs would ensure a smooth transition between operations of varying levels of intensity. Joint and combined military operations are taxing under the best of circumstances – and are most effective when a standing multinational headquarters practices regularly and thoroughly for specific missions, and forces are trained to work together.

Third, for the EU to manage operations via NATO maximises the likelihood of it being able to draw upon NATO assets. Military operations can be planned on an ad hoc basis if necessary, but doing so increases the risk of failure and casualties, and also increases the influence of the strongest contributors since little time will be available to share responsibilities. NATO headquarters are the backbone of the alliance's military effectiveness. They allow NATO states to develop an intimate understanding of each others' military forces and practices. Such routine interaction, prior to a crisis, is the most reliable way to ensure that forces can work together smoothly when pulled into a multinational coalition.

But it would be simplistic to suggest, even in the short term, that the EU can develop an autonomous force without some independent strategic planning capability. Moreover, once the EU is capable of operating autonomously, its military staffs will need to go beyond strategic planning, to more detailed force and operational planning.

The EU needs a strategic planning capability so that ministers can receive advice on questions such as, for what purposes does the EU want to use force, in which parts of the world might it wish to intervene, which non-EU states might be asked to participate in an EU mission and are the operational plans supplied to ministers good ones? In short, strategic planning should help the EU and its governments to develop a common approach to the use of force and the mechanisms for taking military decisions.

The EU has already done a substantial amount of strategic planning. It has established the post of High Representative for its Common Foreign and Security Policy, charged him with overseeing the embryonic defence policy, and given him a military staff that can prepare issues for decision. It has set up a Brussels-based committee of senior national officials, to co-ordinate

work on the CFSP, as well as an EU military committee to advise decision-makers and co-ordinate progress on defence goals. All of these people and committees are engaged in strategic planning, without causing much conflict within NATO.

Force planning and operational planning, both essential to organising and conducting military operations, cause more concern. Force planning is the long-term co-ordination of the size and capabilities of military forces. It deals with the number of troops, the kinds of units they are organised into, how they are trained and what types of weapons they have. NATO does an enormous amount of force planning to maximize the ability of its members' armed forces to work together, and to ensure that it has the capabilities it needs to carry out missions.

The EU does not yet engage in significant force planning. It is still debating whether to use NATO plans or to develop a unique system unrelated to NATO reporting requirements. And preparations for the Helsinki Headline Goal are now approaching the stage when force planning will be required; so far they have focused on drawing upon the present rather than shaping the future capabilities of forces. But if the EU intends to fight as an autonomous multinational force, it needs to train as an autonomous multinational force. That means that in the long run the EU will have to build staffs that duplicate NATO force planning: when the EU runs autonomous missions, it will sometimes need different types of forces, trained and equipped differently from NATO forces.

The EU will also need to conduct its own operational planning – that is, orchestrating the use of existing forces and weapons for specific military missions. NATO's military staffs carry out this planning for multinational operations; national military staffs then check the plans before NATO's nations commit to an operation.

The size of operations envisaged by the Petersberg tasks suggests that a regional headquarters would be the appropriate level for operational planning. To meet this need, the EU has four options:

- standing joint headquarters designated by the EU, such as the Eurocorps, the five-nation headquarters that is led by France and Germany;
- rely on national headquarters such as the British Permanent Joint Head quarters that so ably planned and executed operations in Sierra Leone in 2000;
- create ad hoc multinational headquarters;
- or revive the concept of NATO combined joint task forces (that is, a modified version of a NATO headquarters, adjusted to fit with the nationality of the countries taking part in the mission).

Defence leaders in both the US and Europe are concerned about creating EU force or operational planning staffs. They want to sustain the advantages of US involvement, such as a greater prospect of access to NATO assets, and – if an operation encountered problems – of US assistance.

In the longer term, however, the EU may have to build full planning capabilities. Once the EU is able to take independent military action, it will naturally start developing an approach to the use of force that is different from, and competes with, NATO's. For example, NATO still has to plan for collective defence and high-intensity conflict, while the EU's more limited planning scenarios focus on crisis management. If both the EU and NATO military staffs are planning to use the same forces for managing crises in different ways, political leaders will be faced with conflicting options. Even if the two staffs retain a common approach – which is unlikely – the process of presenting advice to decision-makers is likely to be confusing and delay decisions. Over time, the two staffs are very unlikely to retain a similar approach, if only because the EU military staffs will be planning without reliance on US military assets.

The problem of separate planning is a serious one, both politically and militarily. But it is not insurmountable. The US has military staffs independent of NATO for planning, organising, training, equipping and employing its military forces. There is no reason why the Europeans should not also create that capability within the EU. In any case they may be forced to do just that, if the EU, NATO, Turkey and Greece cannot reach a full agreement over the EU's assured access to the use of NATO planning staffs. And NATO planning staffs are already fully employed; given how different operations will be in NATO and the EU, both planning staffs will be kept busy. If the EU has a choice, however, it would be better to postpone the building of force or operational planning staffs until it has moved further down the road towards autonomous military operations.

9. The benefits of European military autonomy

Constructive duplication will not come cheaply, but adding the capabilities outlined here would not be prohibitively expensive either. ESDP advocates may well be overestimating both the willingness of Europeans to spend more ‘for Europe’ and the scale of potential savings that can be squeezed out of existing budgets. But if governments are serious about ending their dependency on the US, raising defence spending by 10 per cent per annum should be possible. That would yield an additional €16 billion per year, which would go a long way towards providing the kind of improvements suggested. If EU members were to match the next phase of the Helsinki Headline Goal planning with a commitment to contribute that extra 10 per cent to a common EU fund to finance priority improvements, the US would find it much harder to question Europe’s seriousness on defence.

The EU could also earn America’s respect by focusing on improvements at the war-fighting end of the Petersberg tasks – lift, intelligence, strike forces, air-to-air refuelling, and research, development and procurement. That would reduce US concerns that the EU is creating “the worst of all worlds...a new institution that complicates NATO’s cohesion but without providing new capabilities.”²⁶ It would make European forces more useful to the US in the wars it fights, both in Europe and beyond. That, in turn, would expand the political influence of European states in US decision-making. It would also give the EU a more strategic perspective on foreign and security problems, since it would have a fuller range of choices available in protecting and advancing its interests.

It is a major disadvantage for the EU not to have the option of conducting operations outside NATO. Without having genuinely autonomous military forces, Europe’s needs are subordinated to US priorities. The EU is left hostage to the concerns and potential veto of the US and Turkey, both of which may well evaluate their interests as opposed to an EU operation. More generally, the lack of an EU military capability forces Europe into continuing dependence on the US, which is politically unhealthy in states as powerful and independent-minded as those of the EU. Finally, as the war against terrorism is beginning to show, dependence leaves the EU few options when higher-priority demands engage the US. For example, after September 11th the US requested that European forces substitute some US roles in the Balkans to free up assets for operations in Afghanistan.

The EU was right to set itself the goal of being able to run autonomous EU military operations, and it should remain committed. Europe needs, perhaps, to be more sensitive to US concerns about EU rhetoric outstripping its capabilities. And Americans must understand that reducing Europe’s dependence doesn’t reduce its desire to work with the US. There are substantial enough challenges to US interests in the world that it needs allies out of strength, not allies out of weakness. The experience of September 11th has reinforced transatlantic political cohesion in ways that should allow for more EU activism on defence issues. And NATO will benefit from the new-found US appreciation of the value of allies and from the pride Europeans feel in having honoured the Article V pledge when America was unexpectedly in need.

An EU that is able and willing to take more responsibility for managing crises, with less reliance on the US, need not damage NATO. If the EU allocates scarce defence euro to duplicating capabilities that both enhance its autonomy and reduce the burden on heavily taxed US military assets, duplication can be constructive rather than wasteful. The practical problems of adapting NATO are manageable. For the EU to develop real competence in security and defence matters will require changes in the comfortable patterns of transatlantic relations, and these could make co-operation difficult. But the benefits of the status quo should not be overstated – it is not satisfactory to either the US or Europe. The NATO alliance is important enough on both sides

of the Atlantic to be of continuing value for the management of common security problems and coalition military operations. And it is strong enough to manage the transition from a US-dominated alliance to a collaboration among more equal partners.

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