

**The new transatlantic agenda:
the EU-US relationship**

In search of the essence of the new type of relationship between the United States and the European Union, three questions should be addressed:

- What has recently happened, and why, in relations between the big global power and the European Union that they are now at the centre of the discussion on perspectives of the European security system and, in addition, are the main issue of the future of the Atlantic Alliance? This question implies the other one:
- Who are the actors of the new transatlantic landscape, or whether the United States faces one or 15 partners on the other side of the table, considering that the West European states intend to retain, today and in the future, their individual national security and defence policies within the ESDP? It is then in this context that we can ask the third question:
- What are the prospects of the EU-US relationship?

This relationship will largely determine the new role for NATO in Europe. One thing is unquestionable: in the entire history of the European efforts to integrate security and defence policies, the last two years have brought about a new quality with the adoption of the St. Malo Declaration of December 1998. Various elements have contributed to that: the collapse of the bipolar system; the lack of clear, “classic” external threats; the new status of the USA in NATO, Europe and in the world; and, lastly, the crisis situations on the periphery of South Europe, particularly in the Balkans.

NATO, the USA and the European allies

In this context, the question must be asked whether before July 1990 the North Atlantic alliance could have decided on and carried out a military intervention outside the territory of its member states, as it did in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. The answer is evident: it did not take and could not have taken such a decision during the cold war. At that time, the basis for

global and European security was the bipolar system. The Kosovo intervention demonstrated that NATO is capable of acting. However, it also showed: (a) that there is a clear disproportion between the burdens borne by the United States and its European allies with respect to financial resources, technological input and military commitments; (b) that the role of the USA in Europe's defence and security was once again a live issue; and (c) that following the campaign in Kosovo there is a need to redefine the alliance's mandate and establish whether in the light of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty it is still a collective self-defence alliance or a Euro-Atlantic collective security system *in statu nascendi*. It is an important background against which a debate is going on about the ESDI within NATO and about the ESDP within the EU. Analysing the official declarations, one might conclude that things continue undisturbed: NATO accepts the ESDI; its multinational command structure does, in fact, work; the 19 member nations maintain cohesion and political unity within the alliance framework; and the new technologies, such as precision-guided munitions, unmanned aerial vehicles and cargo transport, have proved to be valuable investments.

However, the experience gained in Kosovo has led many politicians to be critical of the practical operation of the alliance. At the February 2000 Munich Conference on Security Policy, US Defense Secretary William Cohen told his European allies: "We simply cannot continue with a posture in which one member of NATO conducts virtually two thirds of all air support sorties and half of all air combat missions; in which only a handful of countries have precision munitions that can operate in all kinds of weather; and in which some pilots had to communicate over open frequencies in a hostile environment".¹ The USA's public criticism was wide-ranging. Fewer than half of the countries which had agreed to do so had contributed fully to logistical support; fewer than half of the countries asked to contribute to an advanced intelligence network had provided their full share; fewer than half of the countries asked had provided deployable command-and-control modules; the European provision of air-to-air refuelling was poor; and among the European allies assigned to work on a

¹ 36th Munich Conference on Security Policy: Remarks as prepared by Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen on *European Security and Defense Identity*, 5 February 2000, URL
<<http://www.defenselink.mil:80/speeches/2000/s20000205-secdef2.html>>.

deployable headquarters that can withstand biological and chemical weapon attacks only one will meet the goal in 2000. In this context Cohen referred to the view expressed succinctly by the German Minister of Defence, Rudolf Scharping: “The problem in NATO is not too much America, but too little Europe”.² Indeed, relations between Europe and the United States are the main issue.

The decisions adopted by the NAC at its April 1999 meeting in Washington determined NATO’s strategy for action in this regard.

Partnership of Europe and the USA

Much misunderstanding stems from the simple fact that European-US relations are and will be asymmetrical. The United States is a global power with a foreign and security policy determined by the president. The European Union is not and will not be in the foreseeable future a single state—it will be a community of states with differing priorities. Thus, so long as a genuine common foreign policy will be lacking, there will be no common security and defence policy. Therefore, Europe and the United States are incompatible in these respects.

The Washington Declaration, signed by the heads of state and government participating in the meeting of the NAC to mark the 50th anniversary of NATO and to set forth a vision of an alliance for the 21st century, stated: “NATO embodies the vital partnership between Europe and North America. We welcome the further impetus that has been given to the strengthening of European defence capabilities to enable the European Allies to act more effectively together, thus reinforcing the transatlantic partnership”.³ Defining the approach to security in the 21st century, the NATO Strategic Concept adopted at Washington recognized the security of Europe and that of North America as “indivisible” and their commitment to “the indispensable transatlantic link and

² See note 1; and Rede des Bundesministers der Verteidigung, Rudolf Scharping, anlässlich der 36 Internationalen Konferenz für Sicherheitspolitik am 5 Feb. 2000 in München [Speech of Federal Defence Minister Rudolf Scharping at the 36th International Conference on Security Policy, Munich, 5 February 2000], URL <<http://www.bundesregierung.de/05/0513/19/fischer.html>>.

³ “The Washington Declaration”, Press Release NAC-S(99)63, 23 April 1999, *NATO Review*, summer 1999, Documentation, p. D1.

the collective defence of its members fundamental to its credibility and to the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area".⁴

What does this mean in practice? There was no doubt until the end of 1998 that the concept of the ESDI was the concept of a European pillar of NATO and that it could be developed only within the alliance framework.⁵ This meant that the USA's approval was needed. For many years the United States strongly endorsed the "ESDI within the alliance" position. US officials began to demonstrate a more cautious approach after the Franco-British St Malo Declaration of 4 December 1998: at the NAC meeting on 8 December 1998 US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright warned the European allies against de-linking the ESDI from NATO, against duplicating existing efforts and against discriminating against non-EU members.⁶ US fears mounted after the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty in May 1999 and the launching by the EU of the work of giving the CFSP an operational dimension. EU policy did not, however, envisage responsibility for a defence policy. Nor has the "ESDI within NATO" concept ever been intended to create a separate European defence capability.

NATO, the WEU and the European Union

The Western European Union (WEU) was considered a *sui generis* bridge between NATO and the EU states. The NAC meeting in Berlin in June 1996 proposed the use of "separable but not separate" military assets in WEU-led operations.⁷ The Washing-

⁴ "The Alliance's Strategic Concept approved by the Heads of States and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington, DC, 23–24 Apr. 1999", Press Release NAC-S(99)65, 24 April 1999. *NATO Review*, summer 1999, Documentation, p. D9.

⁵ Bailes, A. J. K., "NATO's European pillar: the European Security and Defence Identity", *Defence Analysis*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1999), pp. 305–22. See also Mathiopoulos, M. and Gyarmati, I., "Saint Malo and beyond: toward European defense", *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 4 (autumn 1999), p. 66.

⁶ For more detail, see Rotfeld, A. D., "Europe: the institutionalized security process", *SIPRI Yearbook 1999: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1999), pp. 240–41. The text of the declaration is reproduced in *SIPRI Yearbook 1999*, p. 265.

⁷ For more detail, see Rotfeld, A. D., "Europe: in search of cooperative security" *SIPRI Yearbook 1997: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1997), pp. 130–32.

ton NAC meeting reaffirmed the three fundamental objectives as defined at Berlin.⁸ The ESDI will: (a) enable all the European allies to make a more coherent and effective contribution to the missions and activities of the alliance as “an expression of their shared responsibilities”; (b) reinforce the transatlantic partnership; and (c) help the European allies to act by themselves through the readiness of NATO, on a case-by-case basis and by consensus, to make its assets and capabilities available for operations in which it is not engaged militarily. These military actions may be conducted under the political control and strategic direction either of the WEU or as otherwise agreed, “taking into account the full participation of all European Allies if they were so to choose”.⁹ In fact, the signatories of the 1999 NATO Strategic Concept wished both to secure the existing central role of NATO in the Euro-Atlantic security structure and to acknowledge the developments and changes that have taken place in the security sphere since the 1991 Strategic Concept.¹⁰

The crucial point is that the Berlin decisions of 1996 addressed to the WEU referred to missions and roles for the WEU as defined by the 1992 Petersberg tasks—conflict prevention, crisis management, peacekeeping, and humanitarian and rescue work. The military role NATO envisaged for the WEU was limited to humanitarian assistance in peacetime and did not include a defence and security role as such.

The debate initiated by the St Malo Declaration centres around the new role which can and should be played by the European Union in matters of security and defence. This is not a new idea. The Brussels Treaty of March 1948 and the WEU, cre-

⁸ The 1999 Strategic Concept affirms: “On the basis of decisions taken by the Alliance, in Berlin in 1996 and subsequently, the European Security and Defence Identity will continue to be developed within NATO. This process will require close cooperation between NATO, the WEU and, if and when appropriate, the European Union”. “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept” (note 4), p. D9.

⁹ “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept” (note 4), para. 30. The WEU and NATO organized a crisis management exercise involving joint staff work as an expression of the development of the ESDI, CMX/CRISEX2000, 17–23 Feb. 2000.

¹⁰ The Strategic Concept of 1991, agreed by the heads of state and government in the meeting of the NAC in Rome on 7–8 Nov. 1991, is published in *The Transformation of An Alliance: The Decisions of NATO’s Heads of State and Government* (NATO Secretariat: Rome, 1991), pp. 29–54.

ated in 1954, included a plan for common defence.¹¹ It was assumed that the WEU and NATO would be connected, but the parties to the Brussels Treaty would not in practice build up any military cooperation separate from or competing with NATO.¹² In practice the WEU's activities were of a marginal character, less military than involving customs assistance (Sanctions Assistance Missions during the Bosnian crisis), police training, advice and advisory missions (the Multinational Advisory Police Element for Albania, MAPE, launched in May 1997).

The Washington Communiqué reflected to some degree the new situation signalled by the St Malo Declaration.¹³ In practice it meant NATO acceptance that the EU can have the capacity for autonomous action, take decisions and approve military action where the alliance as a whole is not engaged, and that cooperation between NATO and the EU will be based on the mechanisms that exist between NATO and the WEU. NATO's support for an autonomous EU force and military capability is qualified. It is not support for an independent European defence but for the European allies taking steps to strengthen their defence capabilities, to be addressed to new missions and avoiding unnecessary duplication with NATO.¹⁴

In response to fears of possible discrimination against the states that are not EU members, the EU committed itself at Cologne to ensure the fullest possible involvement of non-EU NATO

¹¹ The signatories of the Brussels Treaty were Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the UK. The WEU was created by the protocols to the Brussels Treaty signed in Paris in Oct. 1954. A treaty to create the European Defence Community was signed in 1952, but never entered into force because the French National Assembly failed to ratify it, and the WEU was set up following the failure of the idea. For further detail, see Deighton, A. (ed.) *Western European Union 1954-1997: Defence, Security, Integration* (St Anthony's College: Oxford, 1997); and Deighton, A. and Remade, E. (eds), "The Western European Union, 1948-1998: from the Brussels Treaty to the Treaty of Amsterdam", *Studia Diplomatica* (Brussels), nos. 1-2 (1998).

¹² Bailes (note 5), p. 306.

¹³ The Washington Summit Communiqué, para. 9, declared: "We welcome the new impetus given to the strengthening of a common European policy in security and defence by the Amsterdam Treaty and the reflections launched since then in the WEU and—following the St. Malo Declaration—in the EU, including the Vienna European Council Conclusions". Washington Summit □ Communiqué, "An alliance for the 21st century", Press Release NAC-S(99)64, 24 Apr. 1999.

¹⁴ Washington Summit Communiqué (note 13), para. 9(c), p. D4.

members in EU-led crisis-response operations.¹⁵ Eight NATO states belong to this category—Canada, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, Poland, Turkey and the United States. In this context, further development was also recommended of the concept elaborated at the 1996 Berlin NAC meeting of WEU-led operations. NATO also declared its readiness “to define and adopt the necessary arrangements for ready access by the European Union to the collective assets and capabilities of the Alliance, for operations in which the Alliance as a whole is not engaged militarily as an Alliance”.¹⁶ To put it simply, the alliance recommended that the EU should tackle the problems which NATO does not wish to or cannot handle. The EU’s role in defence matters or broader military issues is seen by NATO as marginal.

The European Union: a common security and defence policy

The essence of the process initiated by the 1998 St Malo Declaration was to seek a new role for Europe in its alliance relations with the United States. The objective was set out in the 1991 Treaty on European Union (the Maastricht Treaty), which provided for the CFSP to be established. According to Article J.4, the CFSP “shall include all questions related to the security of the Union, including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence”.¹⁷ A later stage in developing the CFSP was the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, which entered into force in May 1999 after being ratified by all 15 members.¹⁸

¹⁵ Cologne European Council, Presidency Conclusions, Annexe III, “Presidency report on strengthening of the common European policy on security and defence”, para. 5. URL http://europa.eu.int/council/off/conclu/june99/annexe_en.htm#3.

¹⁶ Washington Summit Communiqué (note 13), para. 10, p. D4.

¹⁷ Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty), Dec. 1991, *SIPRI Yearbook 1994* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1994), p. 253. At the NATO summit meeting in Brussels on 10–11 Jan. 1994 and the Ministerial Meeting of the NAC in Istanbul on 9 June 1994 the alliance confirmed its commitment “to a strong transatlantic partnership between North America and Europe developing a Common Foreign and Security Policy and taking on greater responsibility on defence matters”. NATO, Press Communiqué M-NAC-1(94)46, 9 June 1994.

¹⁸ Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty on European Union, 2 Oct. 1997. For excerpts, see *SIPRI Yearbook 1998*, pp. 177–81. See also analysis in Rot-

Since then a number of decisions have been made which have borne witness to the EU's ambitions rather than giving those ambitions more practical substance. Experts and security analysts¹⁹ and EU officials²⁰ have been critical of this. The decisions taken at the meetings of the European Council, the highest body of the EU, in Cologne and Helsinki in 1999 were the first real attempt to hammer general declarations into an operational act.

This was made possible by the profound change that has taken place in the premises of European states' security. First, none of the EU member states is any longer in a zone of immediate threat. During the cold war transatlantic relations were dominated by the overriding priority for collective defence. This warranted not only the involvement but also the dominant role of the United States in European security.²¹ Second, the policies of the EU members have changed. The British Government of Prime Minister Tony Blair is much more pro-European than previous governments; France has become less anti-US; unified Germany under the Social Democratic-Green coalition led by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer is demonstrating commitment to NATO and the ability to take independent decisions; and the non-aligned members—Austria, Finland, Ireland and Sweden—are less oriented to their tradi-

feld. A., "Europe: the transition to inclusive security", *SIPRI Yearbook 1998: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998), pp. 154–60.

¹⁹ Herolf, G., "The security and defence policy of the EU—the Intergovernmental Conference and beyond", Conference Papers no. 21 (Swedish Institute of International Affairs: Stockholm, 1997); and Zielonka, J., *Explaining Euro-Paralysis. Why Europe is Unable to Act in International Politics* (St Anthony's College, Oxford and MacMillan: London, 1998), pp. 2–8.

²⁰ European Commission, "Report on the operation of the Treaty on European Union", SEC(95), Brussels, 10 May 1995, p. 5; and van den Broek, H., "The view of the European Commission" and Loriga, J. D., "CFSP: the view of the Council of the European Union" both eds S. A. Pappas and S. Vonhoonacker, *The European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy. The Challenges for the Future* (European Institute of Public Administration: Maastricht, 1996), pp. 25–31.

²¹ van Eekelen, W., "Report for NATO Parliamentary Assembly on EU, WEU and NATO: Towards a European security and defence identity", doc. DSC/DC(99)7 in "Amsterdam reports adopted in 1999", 45th Annual Session (Amsterdam: Nov. 1999), p. AS257.

tional interpretation of neutrality.²² Third, the process towards a European identity in matters of security and defence was accelerated by the experience of allied decision making during NATO's intervention in Kosovo. For all the US official representatives' repeated calls on the European allies to take on a share of the military burden that is commensurate with the USA's, the United States was not eager to translate the transatlantic partnership into sharing its leadership with Europe. The US message to the European allies is rather that they should "halt the reduction of resources dedicated to defense—the so-called peace dividend—and face up to the reality that in this still dangerous world security never comes cheap".²³

The entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty re-emphasized the need to move from words to deeds in the realm of a common European security and defence policy. There are two questions here: what is needed? and can it be done?

On the first, should the EU create an autonomous armed force and what kind of mission such a force could carry out? Political and military ambitions cannot be defined in an abstract way but should respond to concrete needs. "New common objectives" have now been defined in the Cologne and Helsinki documents. They concern not the defence of the territories of the European states—after the end of the cold war and for the foreseeable future threat to territory no longer looms—but the Petersberg tasks.

On the second, there is a fairly common view that the USA's European allies are not capable of carrying out operations independently. Here two aspects are relevant—their military capabilities and their political will.

There were widespread critical comments in the USA to the effect that its European allies, with over 2 million persons under arms, had difficulty in fielding 40 000 soldiers for peacekeeping duty in the Balkans. Since the mandate of the force to be set up is defined in the Petersberg tasks, the operations for which it would be used—peace support operations—are certainly not beyond the European allies' capabilities. New burdens will therefore

²² Dörfer, I., "Ett europeiskt försvar?" [A European defence?], *Svenska Dagbladet*, 24 and 25 Feb. 2000.

²³ Clark, W. K., "The United States and NATO: the way ahead", *Parameters* (US Army College Quarterly), vol. 29, no. 4 (winter 1999/2000), p. 5.

not be imposed on the European states, increasing their military expenditure; rather a restructuring of their expenditures is needed—"funds will have to be transferred from one area to another".²⁴ European capabilities measured by troop numbers are in fact much larger than those of the USA.²⁵ These forces, however, belong to the individual EU member states, not to the EU itself.

The greatest difficulty in overcoming traditional thinking does not stem, as often presented, from military considerations, but is political.²⁶ The failure hitherto to create a European armed force either within the WEU or within the EU cannot be blamed on NATO or the United States. It happened because there was no political will on the part of Europe. The decisions adopted in 1999 are the first step towards a major change in this regard. In the new European security environment, the European states deem it desirable, possible and realistic to take the initiative and play in the future on the European continent a role commensurate with that played in the past by the United States. EU political integration has reached a level that enables it to develop a collective European capability for crisis management operations. Multinational planning and harmonization of military requirements and procurement will furthermore increasingly encourage thinking in broader common European terms instead of narrow, national security interests.

The question now arises whether a European security and defence policy as decided at Cologne and Helsinki will strengthen or weaken the EU–NATO relationship and in a broader sense the transatlantic relationship. Four practical steps necessary to implement the new transatlantic agenda have been suggested: the WEU should be abolished and its functions divided between the EU and NATO; the European militaries must enhance their capability for projecting and sustaining power; NATO's military struc-

²⁴ van Eekelen rightly wrote: "For all members of the Alliance, priority should be given to changing allocations in defence budgets to make their forces more relevant to their new missions". van Eekelen (note 21), p. AS257. On the increases in procurement spending among NATO member countries.

²⁵ Depending on what is included, the number of permanent personnel under arms is c. 2 million in Europe and 1.4 million in the USA. van Eekelen (note 21), p. AS257.

²⁶ Schake, K., Bloch-Lainé, A. and Grant, C., "Building a European defence capability", *Survival*, vol. 41, no. 1 (spring 1999), pp. 20–40.

ture should be adapted to incorporate French command within NATO- or EU-led reaction forces; and the USA and Europe must “establish better patterns for managing inevitable transatlantic disagreements over such crises as Bosnia and Iraq”.²⁷ This scheme seems to be being put into operation. In order to preserve transatlantic cooperation NATO needs a new bargain that shares more equitably the responsibilities of common interests, and is codified in reformed institutional structures.

This reasoning stems from two assumptions: first, that having greater capability will give the EU more confidence to act; and, second, that it will make Europe a more attractive partner for the USA “in areas of common interest, and a potential challenger when interests conflict”.²⁸

The Secretary General of the European Council and High Representative for the CFSP, Javier Solana, firmly believes that the ESDP will consolidate European-US relations. To support this, he has put forward several arguments: the new agenda will reassure the North American allies that Europe is doing “what they have urged us to do for decades”; there will be no duplication, since the role of NATO is collective defence and that of the EU crisis management; the Defence Capabilities Initiative adopted in Washington²⁹ and the EU’s objectives are complementary; and they have the same aims—“greater modernisation, professionalisation, strict resource priorities, closer cooperation among leading nations in each sector, interoperability, intra-European burden-sharing and perhaps some task specialisation”.³⁰

Finally, the Cologne and Helsinki decisions herald significant changes in the organization of Europe’s armed forces, moving from monolithic standing armies towards the creation of a rapid-reaction capability. This, however, is a matter for the distant fu-

²⁷ Schake *et al.* (note 26) p. 21. Kosovo is not mentioned because the article was written before the NATO intervention.

²⁸ Schake *et al.* (note 26), p. 21.

²⁹ “Defence Capabilities Initiative”, Press Release NAC-S(99)69 25 Apr. 1999.

³⁰ “Speech by Dr J. Solana, Secretary-General of the Council and High Representative for the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy”, 36th Munich Wehrkunde Conference on Security Policy, 5 Feb. 2000, URL <<http://www.bundesregierung.de/05/0513/19/solana.html>>. Solana stated at the same conference: “We no longer face the threat of massive conventional and non-conventional attack. There are new challenges. They may not threaten our existence. But they threaten our way of life, our values and interests”.

ture. The goal for the foreseeable future is not to create a European army but to improve existing national forces and multinational units and formations. At present the aim is to organize not collective defence within the EU but arrangements for a common European policy on security and defence. The new European military capability should also, and probably will, be complemented by the development of a civilian capacity. In crisis resolution the civilian component is as important as, if not more important than, military capabilities. Here the roles of the EU and the OSCE are crucial.

The Kosovo crisis brought the three main security structures—NATO, the EU and the OSCE—together. It was also a test of the effectiveness of the procedures, forms and tools in practice and of the realization of an inclusive European security architecture.³¹

Concluding remarks

The future of transatlantic relations is dependent on how the differing interests of the United States and Europe on three planes—economic, political and military—can be resolved. In essence, they are inseparable. The dilemma which the states of Europe now face can be boiled down to the question how they are to secure the United States' politico-military commitment and leading role without acquiescing in US domination of and hegemony in Europe. The US dilemma is different: it concerns how the USA can help to consolidate the European Union's independent capability to act in the field of security and defence policy without undermining NATO and its own leading role. The 1999 Washington NATO summit meeting and the Cologne and Helsinki EU summit meetings gave a new quality to the transatlantic agenda: the EU gained recognition in Washington as a partner on defence

³¹ The concept of inclusive security—proclaimed by NATO in the 1990 London Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance (5–6 July 1990) and its successive documents of 17–18 Dec. 1990, the Madrid Declaration on Euro-Atlantic Security and Cooperation of 8 July 1997—was confirmed in the 1999 Washington Summit □ Communiqué (note 13), para. 17, p. D4.

matters, although it may take a long time before the EU's politico-military dimension is complemented with a Defence Union.

For regional and global security, the renationalization of security policies and too-slow progress in shaping a common European security and defence policy are much greater threats than too-rapid change.³²

³² Nye, J.S., "The US and Europe: continental drift?", *International Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 1 (Jan. 2000), p. 58.