

**Soft Power in Hard Times: An American Perspective  
of ESDP after a Decade**

**By**

**David Armitage<sup>1</sup>**  
**Office of Analysis for Europe**  
**US Department of State**  
[armitagedt@state.gov](mailto:armitagedt@state.gov)

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in this paper are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect those of the US Department of State or US Government.

## **Introduction**

Since the early 1990s, NATO members have debated the form and nature of post-Cold War security, in particular the change from territorial defense to crisis management, and the role of the US in Europe. One aspect of that debate has been the development of what has become known as the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). First announced in December 1998 at St. Malo, France, and later formally agreed by the EU at the June 1999 European Council Summit in Cologne, Germany, ESDP reveals and exacerbates tensions within the Atlantic Alliance. ESDP also has the potential to strengthen the transatlantic partnership, but such an outcome is not guaranteed. In many ways the debate has pitted American desires for Europeans to share more of the defense burden without having to give up the US leadership role and European desires for greater defense autonomy without having to devote more resources to military capabilities.

The paper will examine how the development of ESDP over the past ten years has influenced transatlantic security relations. The paper will be divided into three parts. First, the paper will review the initial US position on ESDP and its evolution over the past decade. Second, it will assess the impact of EU operations on US-EU relations and the EU-NATO institutional dynamic. Finally, it will highlight three factors that will be crucial in influencing the US view toward ESDP in the years to come.

## **Born in the Balkans...**

The US position towards ESDP generally remains ambivalent and dependent on the perceived effectiveness of Europeans to improve their military capabilities.

Nevertheless, American rhetoric might be broken out into three broad phases: 1) St. Malo (1998-2002); 2) Iraq (2003-2004); and 3) post-Iraq (2005-present).

One could argue that the conceptual forebears of ESDP can be traced back to the failed European Defense Community (EDC) effort in the 1950s, but in practical terms the roots of ESDP arose in the late 1990s from European frustration in the Balkans. Whereas EDC centered on assuaging French fears of a resurgent Germany and fulfilling American military goals (as well as US domestic concerns over getting “bogged down” in Europe), ESDP focused on assuaging American fears of a competitor to NATO and fulfilling European defense goals (as well as advancing internal EU institutional development).

Although NATO had intervened in Bosnia and established a Stabilization Force (SFOR) in 1996, ethnic tensions in Kosovo renewed calls for European action to solve the latest Balkan crisis. The UK held the EU presidency in the first half of 1998. The deteriorating situation in Kosovo and American unwillingness to act led British Prime Minister Tony Blair to shift course. Blair’s policy reversal in December 1998 at St. Malo reflected the convergence of two factors: 1) Blair needed to prove his EU credentials, but since the UK had opted out of the euro, he needed an alternative means to demonstrate British leadership in the EU; and 2) the widening military capabilities gap between the US and its NATO Allies could only be narrowed if the Europeans strengthened their own military capacities.<sup>2</sup>

The shift in British policy became evident by the December 1998 Saint-Malo declaration. In it, the UK and France announced their intention to cooperate more closely in defense. Specifically, British Prime Minister Blair and French President Chirac agreed

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<sup>2</sup> David T. Armitage, Jr., *A Comparative Analysis of US Policy Toward European Defense Autonomy: Enduring Dilemmas in Transatlantic Relations* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 114-116.

to develop an “autonomous military capability” within the EU, thus starting a new European defense project.<sup>3</sup>

The Saint-Malo declaration injected life into the European security debate and opened the door again to American reservations. It occurred as the situation in Kosovo worsened, four months before NATO’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and just one month before the introduction of the euro, the single European currency.

According to one Pentagon official, Washington felt “betrayed” by the British for having “broken” the 1994-1998 promise regarding Berlin Plus. This same official noted that there was no advanced warning by the British, and that the surprise reflected not only the substance of the Saint Malo proposal but also the process of notification.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly thereafter, the American reaction was one of skepticism and concern over this latest European defense initiative.<sup>5</sup> In particular, US government officials wanted to ensure that the European proposal would not undermine or weaken NATO. Secretary of State Madeline Albright warned the Europeans with her famous three “Ds”: no decoupling, no duplication, and no discrimination.<sup>6</sup>

American officials worried that the EU effort, which was formalized in June 1999, would distract from NATO defense transformation efforts.<sup>7</sup> Arguments against pursuing an autonomous EU defense capability included: there would be competition for scarce financial resources; it could lead to a potential mismatch in doctrine, standards, and requirements, which would make interoperability (a perennial NATO problem) even harder to achieve; applying a decision-making system designed for the Common Agricultural Policy to military and crisis situations was dangerous; and erecting new institutional structures would confuse and complicate procedures and policies that already existed within NATO. The argument also was made that because so many European states belonged to both the EU and NATO, any European defense policy had to be

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<sup>3</sup> See *Text of a Joint Statement by the British and French Governments*, Franco-British Summit, Saint Malo, 4 December 1998. The declaration also can be found in Maartje Rutten (ed.), *From St. Malo to Nice, European Defense: Core Documents*, Chaillot Paper No. 47 (Paris: WEU-ISS, 2001), 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> Armitage, *Enduring Dilemmas*, 118.

<sup>5</sup> For example, see Craig Whitney, “Americans Alarmed over European Union’s Defense Plan,” *New Times* (October 11, 1999); and William Drozdiak, “US Tepid on European Defense Plan,” *Washington Post* (March 7, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Madeline Albright, “The Right Balance Will Secure NATO’s Future,” *Financial Times* (December 7, 1998): 12.

<sup>7</sup> For example, NATO’s Defense Capabilities Initiative, or DCI.

closely linked with the Alliance.<sup>8</sup> Other Americans feared that ESDP would somehow derail Senate ratification of NATO membership for the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, at the December 1999 European Council Summit in Helsinki, EU leaders announced their Headline Goal: by 2003, the EU would be able to field a European Rapid Reaction Force of 60,000 troops within 60 days and sustain it for up to a year. The scope of deployment was 4,000 km. The EU also established bureaucratic and institutional structures, not only to support Javier Solana in his newly created post of High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), but also to develop European military capacities. These included: the Political-Security Committee (PSC), EU Military Committee (EUMC), EU Military Staff (EUMS), and to fold other offshoots from the Western European Union days, such as a satellite center and the Paris-based Institute for Security Studies.

### **Impact of 9/11 on ESDP**

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks initially reduced the transatlantic tension over ESDP. Suddenly, ESDP appeared a trivial dispute compared with the more significant threat posed by al-Qaeda. The Bush Administration—which did not consider the EU a serious security actor—and the Pentagon—which was not thrilled with NATO as a war-fighting institution—viewed the new “war on terror” to be Washington’s main focus. The swift success in late 2001 of overthrowing the Taliban in Afghanistan reinforced perceptions underway since Kosovo: that is, the US military could operate with minimal assistance, and American defense planners did not want a “war-by-committee” mission controlled at NATO. Moreover, the defense plans for fighting in Afghanistan originated from CENTCOM, which was not as familiar as EUCOM was in dealing with NATO. Also, the Europeans discovered that, despite all the rhetoric and new committees and institutions, European military capacity continued to lag far behind that of the Americans. If Europeans wanted to play in their own backyard (i.e., the Balkans) or in sub-Saharan Africa, Washington did not seem to mind.

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<sup>8</sup> Kristin Archick and Paul Gallis, “NATO and the European Union” (Congressional Research Service Report RL32342, January 4, 2005), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Armitage, *Enduring Dilemmas*, 119-120.

The 1999 NATO Strategic Concept noted the danger from terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the 9/11 attacks reinforced the sense of urgency to transform the Alliance's ability to conduct expeditionary operations.<sup>10</sup> The Alliance agreed to consider a broad approach to security including crisis management and crisis prevention, in accordance with Article 4 of the Washington Treaty. However, after the September 11 attacks and the invocation of Article 5, attention shifted to how best to adapt to the new security environment.

It appeared that NATO and ESDP efforts were converging. At the May 2002 NATO Ministerial in Reykjavik, Allies agreed on the need to "be able to field forces that can move quickly to wherever they are needed, sustain operations over distance and time, and achieve their objectives."<sup>11</sup> This seemed very much in line with the European Rapid Reaction Force concept, with a similar geographic scope beyond the European continent.

At the November 2002 NATO Summit in Prague, leaders agreed to establish a NATO Response Force (NRF). The NRF would consist of 20,000 highly trained combat forces that could be deployed across the globe to fight terrorism. The goal would be for the NRF to have initial operational capability in October 2004 and full operational capability by October 2006. According to the NATO statement:

Recalling the tragic events of 11 September 2001 and our subsequent decision to invoke Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, we have approved a comprehensive package of measures, based on NATO's Strategic Concept, to strengthen our ability to meet the challenges to the security of our forces, populations and territory, from wherever they may come. Today's decisions will provide for balanced and effective capabilities within the Alliance so that NATO can better carry out the full range of its missions and respond collectively to those challenges, including the threat posed by terrorism and by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> North Atlantic Council, "The Alliance's Strategic Concept," (Brussels, NAC-S (99) 65, April 24, 1999). <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm> [Accessed April 18, 2009].

<sup>11</sup> North Atlantic Council, "Final Communiqué: Ministerial Meeting in Reykjavik," (Brussels, M-NAC-1(02)59, May 14, 2002). <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-059e.htm> [Accessed April 18, 2009].

<sup>12</sup> North Atlantic Council, "Prague Summit Declaration," (Brussels, NATO Press Release 127, November 21, 2002). <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-127e.htm> [Accessed April 18, 2009].

The Allies also agreed on the Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC), which, like the EU Headline Goal and later on the EU Capability Development Mechanism, was designed to align European military capabilities with constrained defense budgets.<sup>13</sup> In addition, it was a tacit admission that the 1999 Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) had not worked.

### **Impact of Iraq**

Despite the seeming convergence on what needed to be done, political and strategic differences emerged between the US and Europe regarding the appropriate means for responding to the new threats. These differences included: the role of multilateral institutions such as the UN and NATO; the utility of military force against non-state actors; legal issues connected with the fight against terrorism; and the appropriate mix of political, diplomatic, and military instruments to confront authoritarian regimes, especially Iraq's Saddam Hussein. Even before the September 11 attacks, many Europeans worried that the new American administration had taken a strong unilateralist turn.<sup>14</sup> These fears were confirmed over Iraq.

ESDP-NATO tensions, particularly at the working level, did not disappear, and in some respects worsened, especially in the run-up to Iraq in late 2002 and early 2003. American officials working at NATO feared that ESDP might rip the Alliance apart. France and Germany had used NATO structures in February 2003 to block NATO from providing Turkey with military assistance in case of an attack by Iraq.<sup>15</sup> After Belgium, France, Germany, and Luxembourg held the so-called "Chocolate Summit" in April 2003, the situation was such that US Ambassador to NATO Nicholas Burns claimed that EU defense aspirations represented "one of the greatest dangers to the transatlantic relationship."<sup>16</sup> The matter was not helped by Turkish resistance within NATO to allow

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<sup>13</sup> See Carl Ek, "NATO's Prague Capabilities Commitment," (Congressional Research Service Report RS21659, November 7, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> For example, see Judy Dempsey and Richard Wolffe, "Differences of Style," *Financial Times* (July 27, 2001); Jim Hoagland, "The Danger of Bush's Unilateralism," *Washington Post* (July 29, 2001); and Pascal Boniface, "The Specter of Unilateralism," *The Washington Quarterly* 24 (Summer 2001): 155-162.

<sup>15</sup> Archick and Gallis, "NATO and the European Union," 4.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Judy Dempsey, "US to Confront Brussels Over Defense Policy," *Financial Times* (October 17, 2003).

the EU access to NATO assets based on Berlin Plus principles.<sup>17</sup> It was not until December 2002 that a framework agreement was reached on the consultation mechanisms and conditions for implementing Berlin Plus. In March 2003, the two organizations issued a formal declaration that allowed the EU to conduct its first military mission, Operation Concordia, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, employing Berlin Plus mechanisms. It was a symbolic watershed for the EU, and ironic, since it also coincided with the US-led invasion of Iraq.<sup>18</sup>

The US-led invasion of Iraq damaged transatlantic security relations, but it also revealed major splits among EU member states and the limits of consensus. Javier Solana could do little but plod along in studied silence.<sup>19</sup>

### **Post-Iraq Phase**

The current phase in the evolution of US views towards ESDP began in early 2005. At the start of President Bush's second term, the Administration became much more pragmatic and made a concerted effort to reach out to the EU. Such outreach included visits to both the European Commission and Council buildings, a first for a US president. American officials also found ways to assist European security and defense efforts, and the EU permitted the US greater access to ESDP planning and preparations. For example, the US and other non-EU Allies regularly are briefed after EU meetings in Brussels.<sup>20</sup> Such increased interaction helped to relieve some of the American concern regarding ESDP's direction.

Although some had expressed reservations over the "structured cooperation" clauses in the EU Constitutional Treaty, the treaty's rejection in late spring 2005 by the French and Dutch public seemed to put the issue again on the backburner. Americans were focused on Iraq and Afghanistan and seemed content for the EU to pursue objectives in sub-Saharan Africa, small border missions, in the Palestinian territories, and continue to provide stability in the Balkans. The EU appeared to be experiencing its own

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<sup>17</sup> Armitage, *Enduring Dilemmas*, 124.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-126.

<sup>19</sup> For more on this, see Anand Menon, "From Crisis to Catharsis: ESDP After Iraq," *International Affairs* 80, 4 (2004): 631-648.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with USEU official, February 10, 2009.

crisis of legitimacy, especially after the Lisbon Treaty was rejected by Irish voters in 2008.

However, a continuing thorn remains the lack of progress in EU-NATO dialogue. Apart from what is considered superficial NAC-PSC meetings and larger “transatlantic gatherings,” resistance by some Allies and EU member states for deeper EU-NATO collaboration has left the situation in limbo. Some European analysts call for more strategic dialogue between the EU and US, which has developed a broad agenda over the past two decades.<sup>21</sup> Others worry that the development of such a strategic forum would come at the expense of NATO. Until such an impasse is resolved, the US position on ESDP will continue to reflect pragmatism in the knowledge that there is enough work to go around.

### **Impact of EU Operations**

It soon became evident that the bulk of ESDP operations were civilian in nature focused on police capacities, border monitoring, and strengthening rule of law. The evolution of ESDP away from a purely military focus was a two-edged sword: American officials worried that ESDP would somehow compete with NATO were relieved since it was abundantly clear that ESDP would not come close to matching US capabilities. On the other hand, if European militaries were concentrated on peacekeeping, then any situation requiring a robust military capacity or an ability to fight would be left to the Americans (and a coalition of the few).<sup>22</sup> This is what is happening in Afghanistan, with the risk that the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) will become less a NATO

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<sup>21</sup> See Jolyon Howorth, “Reply to Vlasta Parkanova, ‘In Some Ways, the European Defense Agency is Stronger than NATO,’” *Europe’s World* (Spring 2009), <http://www.europesworld.org> [Accessed April 7, 2009].

<sup>22</sup> For many in the Pentagon, the concern was not that the Europeans were too strong, but that they were too weak to make a difference. See Armitage, *Enduring Dilemmas*, 167. Also, General Joseph Ralston, “Keeping NATO’s Military Edge Intact in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” Presentation to the NATO/German Marshall Fund Brussels Conference (October 3, 2002), <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s021003d.htm> [accessed April 18, 2009].

operation and more an American one. Consequently, certain Europeans worried about a US-dominated NATO would witness a self-fulfilling prophecy. Or, worse, the US would move even further from working within NATO structures.

A comparison of current ESDP and NATO military operations shows that EU member states devote a higher resource commitment to NATO operations than they do to ESDP ones. [See Table 1]. As Table 1 shows, even non-NATO EU member states such as Austria and Sweden have more troops involved in NATO missions than they do in EU ones. Thus, it is not just a question of lack of European manpower, but the data suggest that for military experience, the place to be remains in NATO. Even on the non-military front, NATO has adapted to the point of conducting anti-piracy operations, using the NRF to help provide assistance to Pakistan after the October 2005 earthquake, engaging in an agreement with the African Union by supplying transport help, and working with UN auspices.<sup>23</sup>

The concern for the US is less that Europeans will go their own way, but that they will not go anywhere. The effort to “build up the brand” can be an impediment to greater EU-NATO institutional cooperation. For example, if one reads the EU’s anti-piracy Operation ATALANTA website, one might conclude that the EU operation was the main activity and that without it, ships would be at the complete mercy of Somali predators. What one may not learn from the website is that NATO has a similar operation (Allied Protector) and that the EU has plugged into its operational component. The EU’s

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<sup>23</sup> North Atlantic Council, “Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration,” Press Release: (2009) 044 (April 4, 2009); [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_52837.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm?mode=pressrelease) [Accessed April 9, 2009].

operational headquarters is located at Northwood, UK, also home of the NATO Allied Maritime Component Command (MCC).<sup>24</sup>

In January 2009, the US Navy established a new multinational task force (CTF-151) specifically to conduct anti-piracy operations in and around the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean, and Red Sea. Besides the US Navy, CTF-151 also includes naval forces from the UK, Denmark, Singapore, and Turkey. China, India, Malaysia, Russia, and Saudi Arabia also have ships in the area conducting counter-piracy operations.

### **...Living in Africa**

A review of the EU's ESDP missions shows that more than half (15 of 22 operations) have been in the Balkans and sub-Saharan Africa. All three of the military missions occurred in these two regions. The Balkan missions were essentially back-fills of previous NATO operations, which made it easier for European planners to use Berlin Plus arrangements. The two autonomous operations—Operation Artemis in the DRC (2003) and EUFOR Chad (2008-09)—both were dominated by French forces, the first essentially a French operation under EU cover. In the case of EUFOR Chad, French forces comprised two-thirds of the personnel.<sup>25</sup>

As ESDP was implemented in practice, the nature of the operations shifted from its original emphasis on military and defense to softer, UN-style peacekeeping. Civilian missions make up the bulk of ESDP operations, although the explicit initial purpose was to develop and increase European *military* capabilities. After it became clear that EU

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<sup>24</sup> For more information, see <http://www.manw.nato.int/> [accessed April 18, 2009].

<sup>25</sup> See EUFOR Chad, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=1366&lang=en> [accessed February 14, 2009].

governments would not be able to meet the Helsinki Headline Goal in 2003 (or since), the EU decided to change tact.<sup>26</sup> One could argue that a 60,000-person force was no longer necessary in the current security environment. However, in Afghanistan, a country 50% larger than Iraq, the need for such a force seems axiomatic.

In 2004, the EU went to work on establishing battlegroups. While the EU declared such 1,500-person battalions operational in 2007, Brussels for some reason has decided not to deploy them, even when opportunities arguably might be appropriate.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, that did not stop Javier Solana and other EU officials from extolling their value. According to Solana, “The battlegroups concept has been validated. It is not just a concept but already a reality. And, increasingly, our battlegroups capacity is at the heart of the EU’s ability to act quickly and robustly where needed.”<sup>28</sup> A similar phenomenon occurred following the agreement to establish a European Gendarmerie Force (EGF) in fall 2004. Declared operational in summer 2006, the EGF has never deployed.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, surveys suggest that public support for ESDP is high, but some have shown that such support is shallow.<sup>30</sup> Despite what some may assert, there is no homogenous “European” public support for ESDP. In fact, because security and defense

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<sup>26</sup> In 2003, there were 1.7 million Europeans in uniform, but less than three percent could be deployed for a Kosovo-style combat mission, about the same as at the time of the 1998 St. Malo declaration. See Julian Lindley-French and Franco Algeri, *A European Defense Strategy* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Foundation, 2004), 10.

<sup>27</sup> See Anand Menon, “Empowering Paradise? The ESDP at Ten,” *International Affairs* 85,2 (2009): 227-246.

<sup>28</sup> Javier Solana, Speech delivered at the European Security and Defense Policy Conference, “From Cologne to Berlin and Beyond: Operations, Institutions, and Capabilities.” (January 29, 2007). Available at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/solana>. [Accessed March 28, 2009].

<sup>29</sup> There has been recent discussion of sending European gendarmes to Afghanistan to provide civil security. For more background on the EGF, see David T. Armitage, Jr. and Anne M. Moisan, “Constabulary Forces and Postconflict Transition: The Euro-Atlantic Dimension,” *Strategic Forum* 218 (Washington, DC: National Defense University/Institute for National Strategic Studies, November 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Klaus Brummer, “Superficial, not Substantial: The Ambiguity of Public Support for Europe’s Security and Defense Policy,” *European Security* (Vol. 16, No. 2 2007).

(in the sense of global crisis management as opposed to homeland security) rank rather low compared with other public priorities such as jobs, the economy, immigration, health care, and climate change. Finally, Europeans appear skeptical of the appropriateness of military means, which would place a major constraint on how ESDP can progress in this realm.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, scholars and officials tend to conflate the number of Europeans engaged in external military deployments as proof of the EU's collective capacity.<sup>32</sup> These descriptions tend to mislead and make it harder to assess the real value of ESDP as a framework for collective European force projection efforts.

### **Willing and Unable, Able and Unwilling, Neither or Both?**

The final section looks at three factors that will influence the US view of ESDP in the coming years. The three factors are: 1) strategic vision; 2) risk aversion; 3) and capabilities.

#### ***Strategic Vision***

Europe's largest problem arguably is a lack of strategic vision, that is, a consensus among EU member states regarding ESDP's exact purpose. The EU has too many leaders and not enough leadership. Should ESDP be used for light crisis prevention in a permissive environment (à la UN)? Should it be used in a high-intensity military enforcement intervention to separate combatants even if the regime does not want such

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Also see, James Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone? The Transformation of Modern Europe* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> For example, see Bastian Giegrich and William Wallace, "Not Such a Soft Power: The External Deployment of European Forces," *Survival* (Summer 2004), 163-182; and Sven Biscop, "Able and Willing? Assessing the EU's Capacity for Military Action," *European Foreign Affairs Review* (9/2004), 509-527.

intervention? Should it be deployed for counter-insurgency? How does ESDP relate to the EU's CFSP? Does Iran, for example, consider ESDP in its EU-3 talks? What are the EU's strategic interests? The European Security Strategy (ESS) drafted in December 2003 comes nowhere near to addressing the issue.<sup>33</sup> The ESS listed the major problems, but it did not outline a plan to deal with them apart from the catchy but undefined "effective multilateralism." If "constructive ambiguity" is politically useful for masking differences among EU member states, it leads to uncertainty and a failed alignment between capability and ambition. As Schreer and Toje note, "The problem of the EU foreign policy is its idealism. The idea that Europe should be guided by altruism rather than national interest has encouraged token participation without any firm commitment to achieving objectives....As a result, the EU has been driven more by a wish to appear to be doing something rather than any genuine will to power."<sup>34</sup>

Some argue that there is an emerging consensus on the EU's strategic vision, but others are not so sure.<sup>35</sup> For example, Giegerich and Wallace write, "Not only are military missions interpreted through national lenses based on distinct foreign-policy traditions and myths, but there is a gap between the terms of discussion and the actual terms of engagement on the ground."<sup>36</sup> NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer notes that sending soldiers into harm's way remains first and foremost a national decision;

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<sup>33</sup> The revised ESS in December 2008 could be summed up by the sentence: "The world is complex, and the EU must do more and do it more effectively."

<sup>34</sup> Benjamin Schreer and Asle Toje, "If NATO Fails, So Too Does Europe on Security," *Financial Times* (March 18, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> For example, see Jolyon Howorth, Sven Biscop, and Bastian Geigrich, "The Case for an EU Grand Strategy", *Egmont Paper # 27*, (Brussels: Belgian Royal Institute for International Affairs, January 2009); Monica Gariup, *European Security Culture* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Press, 2009); Sven Biscop and Jan Joel Andersson, eds., *The EU and the European Security Strategy: Forging a Global Europe* (London, UK: Routledge Press, 2008); Geoffrey Edwards, "Is There a Security Culture in the Enlarged European Union?" *The International Spectator* (3/2006): 7-23; and Christoph Heusgen, "Is There Such a Thing as a European Strategic Culture?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 2, 1 (2005): 29-33

<sup>36</sup> Giegerich and Wallace, 172.

international and multilateral institutions can at best only facilitate such decisions.<sup>37</sup> It is hard to imagine Europeans acting differently within an EU framework.

For example, the lack of strategic vision made it harder for the EU to reach consensus on what to do in Darfur. As Schreer and Toje note, “Since 2003, the Sudanese region of Darfur has been Europe’s bad conscience.” They go on to observe why the EU intervention did not occur: “Yet the EU intervention never happened, because of opposition from the Sudanese government, insufficient military capabilities and, above all, a lack of consensus among member states about what to do.”<sup>38</sup> The implications spill over into the current debate over Afghanistan.

Both NATO and the EU consider terrorism and WMD proliferation to be the most dangerous threats, so why is there not more explicit discussion between the organizations? A 2006 conference report on the future of ESDP noted that there was little dialogue between the EU and NATO even though threat perceptions largely overlap and both rely on the same pool of forces and capabilities (all but six EU member states also belong to NATO).<sup>39</sup> Apart from discussions on the Balkans, not much has changed since.

It is convenient for some to try to limit NATO to only the Article 5 defense guarantee. However, NATO has always been about more than just military cooperation. As Karl Deutsch et. al. wrote more than fifty years ago, “An interest in building up the political and economic side of NATO has not been entirely lacking from the very start.”

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<sup>37</sup> Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, “Towards Fairer Burden-Sharing in NATO,” *Europe’s World* (Summer 2008) <http://www.europesworld.org> [Accessed April 7, 2009].

<sup>38</sup> Benjamin Schreer and Asle Toje, “If NATO Fails, So Too Does Europe on Security,” *Financial Times* (March 11, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> Giovanni Grevi, “Institute Report: The Future of ESDP,” (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, February 15, 2006), 7.

They go on to quote Canadian Defense Minister Lester Pearson's statement at the North Atlantic Treaty signing in 1949: "This Treaty, though born of fear and frustration, must however lead to positive, social, economic and political achievements if it is to live."<sup>40</sup> Even Lord Ismay, NATO's first Secretary General, took into account the Alliance's value outside the military sphere, particularly concerning Article 2's emphasis on stability and strengthening of free institutions: "The military effort, urgent as that is, represents one of the means, but not all, to achieve that end."<sup>41</sup>

German Chancellor Merkel at the Munich Security Conference in February 2006 favored the primary role of NATO for European defense and strategic dialogue.<sup>42</sup> In other words, NATO would come first and ESDP second for Germany. French President Sarkozy signaled the return of France to the integrated military command structure of NATO as a sign that the only way to strengthen European defense capabilities is through the Atlantic Alliance.

If NATO becomes a matter of coalitions, how does that affect ESDP? Within NATO, the capability gap between the US and the other Europeans has grown over the past decade, but there continues to be wide variation among European militaries as well. In many respects, ESDP had become a coalition of the willing, with one or two European nations taking the lead, supported by a mix of contributions from other EU (and non-EU) states. This may work in terms of a particular operation, but it has an offsetting impact on the development of a European strategic culture.

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<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Karl Deutsch et. al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 192.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Angela Merkel, Speech at the Munich Security Conference (February 2006), [http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/2006/merkel.php?menu\\_2006=&menu\\_konferenzen=&sprache=en&](http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/2006/merkel.php?menu_2006=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=en&) [Accessed April 18, 2009].

As Lord Robertson wrote recently in the *Financial Times*:

I hope Mr. Obama will also tell us what is staring us in the face—that a European Security and Defense Policy is good for the US as well as Europe but that it must not be about glitzy headquarters and flags on posts, but about a real ability to act in a crisis. That depends on tackling issues, such as why the European Rapid Reaction Force still only exists on paper, and why 10 years on only a fraction of the headline goals on capabilities have been achieved...Spending scarce taxpayers' money on heavy metal armies, undeployable troops or the wrong helicopters is a potentially blood-boiling scandal. NATO...is an alliance of European states as well as North American and European nations.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Risk Aversion***

European soldiers are not afraid of taking risks. There is plenty of evidence of their courage and bravery under fire and in difficult circumstances. What has become evident over the past ten years, however, is the continued reluctance of European publics to accept casualties in exchange for meeting certain geopolitical and strategic objectives.<sup>44</sup> As Giegerich and Wallace write, “European governments have preferred to respond to changing security threats and American demands through quietly increased deployments, without heightened public debate or major public commitments.”<sup>45</sup> Until European policymakers have a more explicit discussion with their publics, such reluctance probably will continue.

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<sup>43</sup> George Robertson, “Obama’s Message on Security Should Be Candid,” *Financial Times* (April 3, 2009), 9.

<sup>44</sup> See John Glenn and Oliver Mains, “Engaging Europe on Afghanistan,” *GMF Policy Brief* (German Marshall Fund, January 27, 2009). Also, see Stephen Sestanovich, “Ask Not What Europe Can Do For You,” *Foreign Policy Online* (March 2009).

<sup>45</sup> Geigrich and Wallace, 178.

### *Capabilities*

What practical improvements have been made in European capabilities over the past ten years? Has it become easier because of ESDP for European governments to recruit and retain personnel both in the active and reserve elements? EU governments have three different fighter aircraft (Eurofighter, Gripen, Rafale) but sorely lack strategic transport. The A-400M was supposed to have entered into force in 2008, but that target has come and gone. The latest estimate is 2012, but full operational capability probably will not occur until around 2025.<sup>46</sup> The global economic downturn may make it harder for governments to allocate scarce resources to such military procurement endeavors. The EU has a surplus of 10,000 main battle tanks, but a terrible shortage of proper helicopters. An alternative view is that the economic crunch will force EU governments to pool their resources in ways that prosperous times did not permit. It remains an open question whether the “Great Recession” will lead to much needed defense rationalization or unwelcome but politically tempting defense protectionism.

### **Conclusion**

If there is a lack of strategic vision, an aversion to risk, and capabilities shortfalls, the natural response is to focus on institutional structures and revised action plans. The real concern then is that ESDP evolves in a manner forecast by then-US Ambassador to NATO Sandy Vershbow in 1999:

Is ESDP primarily a political exercise, the latest stage in the process of European construction, or is ESDP's main goal to solve real-world security problems in Europe? If ESDP is mostly about European

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<sup>46</sup> E-Publications: NATO and EU Military Capabilities. [http://www.european-defence.co.uk/defence\\_almanac](http://www.european-defence.co.uk/defence_almanac) [accessed October 27, 2008].

construction, then it will focus more on institution-building than on building new capabilities, and there will be a tendency to oppose the “interference” of NATO and to minimize the participation of non-EU Allies. The danger here is that, if autonomy becomes an end in itself, ESDP will be an ineffective tool for managing crises, and transatlantic tensions will increase.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Armitage, *Enduring Dilemmas*, 120-121.

**TABLE 1: EU and NATO Military Deployments, February 2009**

EU Member State	EU Military Missions			NATO Military Missions		
	Althea (B-H)	Chad	Total EU	KFOR	ISAF	Total NATO
<i>Austria</i>	104	157	<b>261</b>	674	1	<b>675</b>
<i>Belgium</i>	0	66	<b>66</b>	209	410	<b>619</b>
<i>Bulgaria</i>	117	2	<b>119</b>	47	510	<b>557</b>
<i>Cyprus</i>	0	2	<b>2</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>
<i>Czech Republic</i>	0	2	<b>2</b>	404	415	<b>819</b>
<i>Denmark</i>	0	0	<b>0</b>	365	700	<b>1,065</b>
<i>Estonia</i>	2	0	<b>2</b>	29	90	<b>119</b>
<i>Finland</i>	43	64	<b>107</b>	440	110	<b>550</b>
<i>France</i>	89	1,676	<b>1,765</b>	1,774	2,780	<b>4,554</b>
<i>Germany</i>	135	4	<b>139</b>	2,129	3,460	<b>5,589</b>
<i>Greece</i>	45	4	<b>49</b>	638	140	<b>778</b>
<i>Hungary</i>	162	3	<b>165</b>	461	360	<b>821</b>
<i>Ireland</i>	54	473	<b>527</b>	233	7	<b>240</b>
<i>Italy</i>	287	99	<b>386</b>	2,019	2,350	<b>4,369</b>
<i>Latvia</i>	2	0	<b>2</b>	20	160	<b>180</b>
<i>Lithuania</i>	1	2	<b>3</b>	36	200	<b>236</b>
<i>Luxembourg</i>	1	2	<b>3</b>	22	9	<b>31</b>
<i>Malta</i>	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>
<i>Netherlands</i>	72	70	<b>142</b>	8	1,770	<b>1,778</b>
<i>Poland</i>	200	392	<b>592</b>	285	1,590	<b>1,875</b>
<i>Portugal</i>	53	2	<b>55</b>	255	30	<b>285</b>
<i>Romania</i>	57	2	<b>59</b>	148	900	<b>1,048</b>
<i>Slovakia</i>	40	1	<b>41</b>	141	120	<b>261</b>
<i>Slovenia</i>	30	15	<b>45</b>	283	70	<b>353</b>
<i>Spain</i>	309	86	<b>395</b>	632	780	<b>1,412</b>
<i>Sweden</i>	0	8	<b>8</b>	240	310	<b>550</b>
<i>United Kingdom</i>	10	5	<b>15</b>	161	8,300	<b>8,461</b>
			<b>4,950</b>			<b>37,225</b>

Sources: EU and NATO

as of February 2009