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# European Union and NATO

Partnership, Competition or Rivalry?

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## 1. NATO and the EU: a 'clarified, though still undefined' relationship

Transatlantic relations certainly encompass more than just the relationship between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) and there is every indication that the North Atlantic Alliance has become far too narrow to still represent the defining transatlantic framework.<sup>1</sup> However, there are good reasons for arguing that the relationship between the two most important organizations of the political West is central to any analysis, for without meaning to overvalue the role of institutions: the institutional mechanisms and substance of arrangements between NATO and the EU are among the most decisive factors determining how relations between Europe and the United States will evolve in the future.<sup>2</sup> The two organizations established a network of co-operation in the past years, including arrangements for regular consultations at different levels. Since 2001, NATO-EU consultations involve joint meetings at the level of foreign ministers twice a year, between the North Atlantic Council and the Political and Security Committee at least three times a year and between both Military Committees biannually. Furthermore, the EU and NATO Ambassadors meet every four to six weeks and a broad range of formal and informal contacts exists between the EU Secretary General / High Representative and NATO

Secretary General. In March 2003 permanent arrangements came into effect which enable the EU to draw on NATO assets and capabilities and in May 2003 a "NATO-EU Capability Group" was established. That is, at first sight the relationship between both organizations seems close, clarified, and unproblematic.

Yet, according to German commentators, Washington suspects the EU of attempting to become an independent actor in security policy under French and German leadership. Conversely, the US is supposed to reshape NATO into an instrument by which it can keep the EU's military ambitions under control. Since both views might be true in principle, "nerves are frayed" (Winter 2003). Consequently, it has been argued that for open conflict to break out between NATO and the EU or the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), respectively, nothing else but an appropriate trigger would be missing (Wernicke 2003). The perceptions of the involved parties, however, turn out to be different – at least officially. Thus, the North Atlantic Council's final communiqués routinely stress the common strategic interests between NATO and the EU (see exemplary: NATO 2003) and likewise a declaration of the European Council states unmistakably: "The transatlantic relationship is irreplaceable. The EU remains fully committed to a constructive, balanced and forward-looking partnership with our transatlantic partners" (European Council 2003). Nevertheless, even high-level officials criticize the current

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state of affairs between NATO and the EU. In this sense, the NATO Secretary General expressed “deep concern” regarding the evolution of formal relations between both organizations (quoted in FAZ, 3 February 2006: 2) and complained about still “too many” people “who misunderstand NATO and the EU as rival organizations and display a protectionism in some sort of zero-sum thinking to safeguard ESDP” (De Hoop Scheffer 2005). Likewise, the German Military Representative to NATO and the EU lamented: “We are far away from having finished solutions for the final design of a strategic partnership between NATO and the EU, though this has been repeatedly asserted in summit declarations” (Olshausen 2005: 25).

Which position reflects reality most accurately? Do the partners of both sides of the Atlantic try to limit the damage by playing down any conflict between both organizations although they increasingly pursue divergent policies? Is a disagreement just being brought on by commentators and political actors which does not actually exist in political practice? In sum, there are convincing reasons for an analytical examination of the relationship between both organizations. To begin with, this article explores the changes within the transatlantic security structure resulting from a growing Europeanisation of security policy (section 2), next outlines the evolution of relations between NATO and the EU (section 3), and finally debates possible scenarios and

consequences for a renewed NATO-EU relationship (section 4).

## **2. A transatlantic controversy: the Europeanisation of security policy**

Transatlantic relations are in a phase of fundamental reorientation. In essence, the end of the Cold War profoundly changed the central parameters of the relationship between Europe and the US – a challenge which came to full effect some fifteen years later.

Transatlantic relations are far more complex than just being characterized by security policy issues and also cover cultural, political, and economic aspects. Furthermore, they are distinguished by the fact that each of the two is the most important partner for the other. It is also true that, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, actors on both sides of the Atlantic are brought closer together by their interests, culture, and economies as well as advances in communication and transportation technology, but at the same time the potential for causes of friction and with it the possibility of conflict increases. For despite of a close co-operation and joint institutional arrangements, Europe – so far as one might talk already about it as a single actor – and the US frequently develop divergent ideas concerning important questions in international politics. As the former Deputy Secretary of State serving during the Clinton Administrations second term put it: the US does not want to see an ESDP “that comes into being first *within* NATO but then grows *out of*

NATO and finally grows away from NATO”, as this would inevitably lead to rivalry between both organizations (Talbot 1999).<sup>3</sup>

## 2.1. The reorientation of transatlantic relations

Already in summer 2002, US political scientist Robert Kagan exposed the underlying roots of this debate in a much-noticed essay, which has been published as a book in an expanded version, by arguing that it is about time to stop deluding oneself to the illusion that “Europeans” and “Americans” would share a common world view or even live in the same world. Although the differences over the Iraq War should not be regarded as a transatlantic dispute since Europe did not present itself as a coherent actor opposing the US – rather this issue generated rifts within Europe itself – Kagan argues more broadly that “[o]n the all important question of power – the efficacy of power, the morality of power, the desirability of power – American and European perspectives are diverging. Europe is turning away from power, [...] it is moving beyond power into a self-contained world of laws and rules and transnational negotiation and cooperation. It is entering a post-historical paradise of peace and relative prosperity, the realization of Immanuel Kant’s “perpetual peace”. Meanwhile, the United States remains mired in history, exercising power in an anarchic Hobbesian world where international laws and rules are unreliable,

and where true security and the defense and promotion of a liberal order still depend on the possession and use of military might” (Kagan 2003: 1). Furthermore, US-European differences over strategies could particularly be explained by their different capacities for power projection. Kagan concludes that “Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus”.

In the same sense, Thomas Risse regards the debate about the Iraq War as obscuring a threefold controversy about “constitutive principles and values of the Western security community” (Risse 2003: 114ff). This conflict over world order within the West has three components: firstly, it is about the relevance of multilateral institutions and arrangements under international law; secondly, it concerns the question of the relative importance of democracy and human rights and how to promote and implement them; and thirdly, it is about how to manage the new types of security challenges, that is to say, what role should be assigned to the use of force.

These differences are reflected in the relevant strategic documents of both the EU and US. While the March 2006 US National Security Strategy (National Security Strategy 2006) and the December 2003 European Security Strategy (European Security Strategy 2003)<sup>4</sup>, which still remains operative, display a high degree of consensus regarding fundamental policy objectives, values, and threat perceptions, they also account for substantial differences concerning security policy priorities

and the means to implement them. This becomes further apparent when looking at the US's and EU's military planning assumptions. While the US aims to be in a position to dominate each kind of conflict with superior military force, the EU is content with military missions along the lines of the so-called Petersberg tasks.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, both established different financial priorities - or adopted different policies resulting from this distinct prioritization, respectively - and opted for alternative means to further their strategic objectives. The US spends about \$463 billion annually (!) for defence, whereas all of the EU's member states spend some \$186 billion.<sup>6</sup>

Such findings, even if in an oversimplified and sharpened form as in Kagan's illustration, could not have been without effect on EU-NATO relations. To the extent that the debate set out above reflects the underlying dynamics of current transatlantic differences, it is also of central importance for the future evolution of transatlantic relations. This is the case as disagreements go beyond present-day issues and also concern fundamental structural questions concerning European and international politics:

- Does the United States continue to exercise hegemonic leadership / regional leadership in Europe and what will the future distribution of power look like in security policy?
- How much autonomy can and should Europe afford in security policy?
- Are NATO and the EU actually designed in a complementary way or do they increasingly evolve into rivals, potentially leading to confrontation one day?

## **2.2. The EU on its way to a common security policy?**

If ESDP had not displayed such a dynamic evolution, it would not have been necessary to worry about the relations between NATO and the EU as they would be far more simple. However, to begin with, the question needs to be addressed whether the EU could already be regarded as a single actor in security policy.

From the outset, European integration within the framework of the European Community (EC), the Western European Union (WEU), and today's European Union served to create a security community with a dual purpose: to provide both "security of each other" by economic and political integration and "security with each other" against external threats by co-operation in foreign, security, and defence policy issues (Varwick 1998). While initial efforts were based on the idea that the 1954 defeated European Defence Community (EDC) would serve as a starting point for a common defence policy from which a common security policy would emerge, finally leading to a political union including a common

foreign policy, a quite different logic prevailed in the course of the European integration process. For decades, security and defence policy was primarily placed within NATO, whereas the WEU was a highly limited organization in the Alliance's shadow, rather providing an additional insurance in case of NATO's loss of significance. Whilst the member states of the European Community sought to encourage a co-ordination in foreign policy issues within the framework of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) – though as a non-binding commitment in the first instance – during the 1970s, it took the Single European Act (SEA) and the reactivation of the WEU in the 1980s to put security and military topics back on the agenda of Western European states. However, it needed a profound shift in the constellation of world politics at the beginning of the 1990s to cause the EU to establish a European Security and Defence Policy by the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) and its accompanying establishment of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the WEU Petersberg Declaration (1992), the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) and the conclusions of the European Council in Cologne (1999) and Helsinki (1999). Finally, with the December 2000 Nice decisions the EU understands itself now as a security community with a common (though not single!) foreign, security, and defence policy.

In fact, with such a high degree of economic, political, and military integration within the EU the problem of “security

of each other” could be regarded as solved. Today, it seems unthinkable that one of the EU's member states could once again pose a military threat to the others – although one should never rule out the possibility of political regressions entirely. That is, war as an instrument of politics has become *de jure* and *de facto* inconceivable within the EU. However, apart from these “old” considerations, “new” thoughts emerged. In view of the level of integration achieved so far, it is not a question of *whether* the EU defines itself as a potent international actor, but rather *how* it defines such a role for itself. In principle, the EU and its member states acknowledged that they need to surmount the growing discrepancy between its significant role as an international actor in economic, trade, financial, and development policy and its comparatively minor role in security policy in order to be in a position to effectively perform the full spectrum of tasks ranging from conflict prevention to crisis management in the future.

In the light of these findings – which became further apparent under the impression of Europe's incapacity to act militarily during the Kosovo Conflict – far reaching initiatives were launched, stimulating further progress in the conceptual realm in the last decade which would have been unthinkable a few years ago. Since the end of 1998, the EU member states have intensified their efforts towards integration in security and defence policy. Thereby, the major turning point was the reversal of the UK's position on the question of an

autonomous European defence capability.

This sudden turn resulted in an initiative to strengthen European security efforts at the Anglo-French Saint Malo Summit in December 1998. Eventually, at the June 1999 meeting in Cologne, the European Council launched ESDP as an integral part of the Maastricht Treaty's CFSP. In the "Declaration on strengthening the common European policy on security and defence" EU member states declared their determination that the EU should play "its full role" on the international stage. Furthermore, the EU should be given the necessary means and capabilities to meet the requirements of ESDP. That is, to perform the Petersberg tasks as contained in the Amsterdam Treaty, the EU should have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, as well as the means and readiness to decide to use them in order to respond to international crises. To this end, the member states committed themselves to develop more effective military capabilities and to strengthen the industrial and technological defence base as well as to harmonize military requirements and the planning and procurement of arms.

With the Nice Treaty coming into force in February 2003, the EU also has an institutional structure in place to further implement ESDP. Apart from the Political and Security Committee (PSC), which serves as a preparatory body for the Council's meetings on CFSP / ESDP issues, these are, inter alia: the

European Union Military Committee (EUMC), providing for military recommendations to the PSC, and the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) for the planning of military operations and exercises. Even though these political and military structures are in no way comparable with the long-established NATO structures: by now it is also taken for granted within the EU that military expertise is included in the decision-making process. Those having fond memories of the EC / EU meticulously taking care not to debate military aspects of security policy in the 1990s are able to realize the profound changes that have taken place since then.<sup>7</sup>

### **2.3. The question of the EU's military capabilities**

Additionally, the EU set itself wide ranging objectives concerning military and civilian capabilities. At the European Council meeting in Helsinki in December 1999, EU member states elaborated this intention in more detail by defining a military capability target to be met by 2003. These decisions have been supplemented at the summits in Feira (June 2000) and Göteborg (June 2001) - and more precisely in 2004 - by a catalogue of measures in the non-military realm of crisis management, especially in the four priority areas police, rule of law, civil administration, and civil protection. While the 1999 established Headline Goal (provision of a European Rapid Reaction Force of up to 60,000 troops to be de-



ployed within 60 days and to be sustained for at least one year) has been achieved in quantitative terms in 2003, existing qualitative shortfalls required the definition of a new “European Headline Goal”. Thereby, the military capacity for action shall be enhanced by means of an action plan to be implemented by 2010. Furthermore, new instruments such as role specialization and pooling of resources shall be adopted. It is true that wide ranging proposals like the much debated creation of a European army continue to be unacceptable to a majority of the EU member states. But the creation of the European Defence Agency (EDA) aims to improve the European defence technological and industrial base and to harmonize national procurement programs. Moreover, in 2004 the EU started the built up of up to 13 EU Battlegroups, consisting of 1,500 troops each, as a specific form of rapid reaction in sophisticated military operations. However, the record so far remains modest. As can be seen from the recent “Capability Improvement Chart”, which is submitted to the Council every six months, the situation did not improve in most of the defined capability areas between 2002 and 2005 (European Council 2005).

Besides, it remains an open question what kind of military operations the European Rapid Reaction Force actually shall conduct. The already mentioned Petersberg Declaration from June 1992 provides some initial clues. The then WEU member states agreed to make available military units from

the whole spectrum of their conventional armed forces. Notably, three types of military tasks are mentioned: humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks, and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking. These so-called Petersberg tasks have been incorporated into the Amsterdam Treaty and are expanded in the (failed) Constitution Treaty to include disarmament, military advice, conflict prevention, and post-conflict stabilization (Art I-41.1, II-309.1). Further clues are provided by the EU’s first security strategy which has been adopted by the European Council on 12 December 2003 under the title “A Secure Europe in a Better World” (European Security Strategy 2003). This strategy describes for the first time the EU’s view of the predominant security threats in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and presents possible responses to them. It identifies international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, the instability of states and state failure, and organized crime as the five main threats to European security and reveals basic principles and approaches for measures to cope with them. Thereby, it defines three strategic goals for the EU: addressing the threats, building security in the EU’s neighbourhood, and an international order based on effective multilateralism. The strategy advocates a European Union that is more active, coherent and capable in its foreign policy actions and furthermore, it promotes the strengthening of international institu-

tions and international law. In addition to that, it emphasizes the EU's whole set of instruments for prevention, whereby the use of military force as a last resort to prevent conflict and to manage crises is not ruled out (Sinjen / Varwick 2005: 104-110).

The November 2004 decision to set up Battlegroups must be viewed in this context. From 2007 onwards, the EU Battlegroups shall be deployable within the period of five to ten days and be sustainable for an initial period of 30 days (up to 120 with rotation). The "Declaration on European Military Capabilities" further states that the Battlegroups should usually be employed on the basis of a UN mandate and should create, inter alia, favourable security conditions for major UN peace-keeping operations. Nevertheless, concrete "combat scenarios" are not mentioned. A quite different approach has been outlined in a proposal of the EU Institute for Security Studies for a "European Defence Paper" (EU Institute for Security Studies 2004: 67-98). This study examines the conditions, means, and possibilities for implementing the provisions of the European security strategy. Although the paper has been commissioned by the EU's heads of state and government, it was not presented as some sort of "White Paper" due to some member state's concerns. The paper's main argument is that the established objectives of the European security strategy will not be met by existing military capabilities. Five conceivable strategic scenarios are pre-

sented for possible crisis response operations over a 10-20 year timeframe:

- Firstly, large-scale peace support operations modelled on the IFOR / SFOR operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina or KFOR in Kosovo. Thereby, it is assumed that the EU would be able to deploy some 30,000 troops, 40 combat aircraft, 6 surface combatant warships plus some maritime patrol aircraft within 30 days for a period of three years and in a distance of up to 2,000 km from Brussels.
- Secondly, high-intensity humanitarian interventions modelled on Rwanda (1993) and East Timor (1999). For these kind of operations, the EU could make a contribution of up to 10,000 troops, 105 aircraft, including supporting aircraft, 10 surface combatant warships, 4 amphibious transport and support ships, and 10 maritime patrol aircraft which could be deployed within 15 days for a period of one year (with troop rotation taking place after six months) and in a distance of 5,000 km from Brussels (with the nearest available seaport in 300 km from the theatre of operations).
- Thirdly, regional warfare in the defence of strategic European interests, like the interruption of oil supplies or massive increases in their costs or the disruption of flows in goods and

transport services. In those kind of operations the EU could deploy an expeditionary force, composed of 10 brigades with 60,000 troops, 360 combat aircraft, 2 maritime task forces, 4 aircraft carriers, 16 amphibious ships, 12 submarines, 40 surface combatant warships, 8 supporting ships, and 20 maritime patrol aircraft.

- Fourthly, the prevention of an attack with weapons of mass destruction by the allocation of 1,500 special operations forces for clandestine and covert actions, plus a brigade of four battalions of special forces, supported by 60 combat aircraft, 40 support aircrafts and combat helicopters, one aircraft carrier, 10 surface combatant ships, 3 submarines, and 2 support ships within 15 days and in a distance of up to 5,000 km from Brussels.
- Fifthly, homeland defence, though this is only marginally discussed in this paper. However, it refers to aspects of civil protection for the limitation of damage.

From the Institute's point of view these five scenarios reveal the discrepancy between the defined threat perceptions, types of missions and tasks on the one hand and the available military capabilities of the EU member states on the other hand. Therefore, the paper pays great attention to the devel-

opment of EU-specific military capabilities as well as a capacity for autonomous political-military action.<sup>8</sup> Though the EU's first military operations might be less visionary, they are politically motivated and practicable for the time being (see section 3.3.).

#### 2.4. Interim conclusions

Fifty years after the failure of the EDC and six years after launching ESDP at the Cologne summit, the EU developed into a security policy actor of a new type. With a wide range of political, military and civilian options for action at its disposal, the EU could potentially exert enormous influence in international politics. However, despite of all achievements so far, the ambivalent nature of CFSP / ESDP between integration on the one hand and the preservation of national sovereignty on the other hand, still remains. In that sense, the EU member states could neither agree on qualified majority voting in the CFSP / ESDP nor on a common "leit-motif" for these policy areas. Moreover, the (provisional) failure of the EU Constitution Treaty – triggered by the referenda in France and the Netherlands in spring 2005 – revealed that it is not the time of great visions in European politics at the moment. Yet, the fact that with the solidarity clause (as included in the Constitution Treaty) and the establishment of the Defence Agency as well as the Battlegroups, three essential component parts were addressed before the Constitution Treaty coming into force, is evidence

for the further pragmatic development of ESDP independent of far-reaching initiatives and plans.

### **3. On the way to a sustainable relationship: milestones and explanation attempts**

In view of the firm establishment of ESDP the question of the relations of Europeans to NATO and more fundamentally the question of the role the US plays in Europe has become even more important. One of the obstacles confronting transatlantic relations concerns the membership incongruity between NATO and the EU. However, with NATO's enlargement to 26 members in April 2004 and the EU's enlargement to 25 members in May 2004 a broad congruence of membership in both organizations has been achieved, which will further increase with the accession of the NATO members Rumania and Bulgaria to the European Union in 2007. That is, only six countries (Finland, Ireland, Malta, Austria, Sweden, and Cyprus) are EU but not NATO members. Conversely, five states (Iceland, Norway, Canada, the United States, and Turkey) are NATO though not EU members. Consequently, a peculiar situation arises for co-operation between both organizations. For "on the one hand EU member states – insofar as they are also members of the North Atlantic Alliance – quasi co-operate with themselves in joint NATO-EU working groups. On the other hand – arranged by the institutions of NATO and the EU

– they face each other as separate actors" (Heise / Schmidt 2005: 66). This does not imply, however, that any decisions are taken at joint meetings; on the contrary "both organizations are careful to keep their decision autonomy" (De Witte / Rademacher 2005: 275). While NATO and the EU are different organizations, each with its own origins, functions, and political culture, they are connected with each other by a largely overlapping membership - overall 19 states are members in both organizations, by partly overlapping functions and by roughly the same military forces (as a result of a "single set of forces").

In allusion to the principle of a "single set of forces" it has been argued that "a further 'set of structures and institutions' has been established which ties up scarce resources. Some processes have become more complex and where redundancies arise, their added value needs being tested over and over again" (Olshausen 2005: 25).

#### **3.1. The evolution of the NATO-EU relationship**

How a systematic and precise division of labour between NATO and the EU could look like remains a much debated and still unsolved question. It was former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright who articulated what would become known as the "three D's" for US approval of an autonomous European security policy: with the development of ESDP there should be firstly, no *decoupling* of

North American and European security; secondly, no *duplication* of NATO structures and assets; and thirdly, no *discrimination* against non-EU members of NATO (Albright 1998). Former NATO Secretary General George Robertson countered these rather advising standards for judgment with his concept of the “three I’s” which should serve as basic criteria for a successful co-operation between both organizations: the *indivisibility* of the transatlantic security relationship, the *inclusiveness* of all NATO members in EU military operations, and the *improvement* of European defence capabilities. If these were taken into account, NATO “would have no reason to be afraid of ESDP. Rather there would be every reason to support it” (Robertson 2002:189).<sup>9</sup>

After a long period of uncertainties, characterized by US ambivalence about how to cope with European ambitions in the sphere of security policy, a procedure has been invented in 2002 to form the basis for practical work between the two organizations (see Dembinski 2005: 72-78; and De Wille / Rademacher 2005: 272-282). It builds on the so-called “Berlin-Plus” arrangements which have been reaffirmed in the “NATO-EU Declaration on ESDP”<sup>10</sup>, as agreed on 16 December 2002. The underlying idea of the “Berlin-Plus” agreement in 1996 was the creation of European military structures according to the “separable but not separate” principle. Therefore, an autonomous and permanent EU military structure was not planned origi-

nally. In detail, this compromise provided for:

- NATO’s identification of military capabilities, assets, as well as headquarters which could be made available to the WEU, subject to decision by the North Atlantic Council. Thereby, NATO secured itself the right to monitor the use of these assets and to keep their use under constant review.
  - the elaboration of command structures within NATO to prepare, command and conduct WEU-led operations. For that purpose, appropriate NATO personnel are assigned to a second WEU-function.
- In this context the so-called “Deputy Proposal” – the proposition that the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR), traditionally a British or German general, would be dual-hatted to be also the operation commander of WEU-led operations – became of special importance.
- the participation of all European NATO members in WEU-led operations.

However, the “Framework Document on the Release, Monitoring, and Return or Recall of Assets and Capabilities”, signed in 1999, remained rather vague concerning the central issues of release, return, and control of NATO assets. While France insisted on *guaranteed access*, NATO was only pre-

pared to offer *assured access*. In fact, the December 2002 “Berlin-Plus” arrangements comprise the following assurances for EU-led crisis management operations:

- assured EU access to NATO's planning capabilities;
- presumed availability of NATO capabilities and common assets, such as communication units and headquarters;
- procedures for release, monitoring, return, and recall of NATO assets and capabilities;
- NATO-EU consultation arrangements in the context of EU-led operations making use of NATO assets and capabilities;
- establishment of a “NATO-EU Capability Group”.

However, there seem to be different interpretations about the actual content of these arrangements on both sides of the Atlantic. Especially France called into question whether recourse to NATO assets and capabilities would really be guaranteed. Additionally, it was feared that a claim to codecision on European operations would hide behind the demand for more transparency. Furthermore, Paris referred to practical and conceptual problems which would be raised by the demand for a right of first refusal for NATO, i.e. NATO to have first refusal on the launching of an operation before an autonomous operation could be conducted by the EU. To give in to this desire would mean to make the EU's ca-

capacity for action dependent on the North Atlantic Council, and therefore the United States (see also Meiers 2005). Already at the summit in Helsinki in December 1999, the EU declared its intention to enable the EU to take autonomous decisions in those cases, where NATO as a whole is not engaged. That is, it is indisputable that the EU will take action only when NATO as a whole is not engaged. However, it is disputable whether the EU must ask NATO for permission when launching an EU operation and whether NATO (i.e. the US) has some sort of veto power. Consequently, it remains an open question under what circumstances such a situation is given and who will be the one deciding about it.

Finally, after Turkish reservations were dispelled and following the conclusion of a security agreement between NATO and the EU, “Berlin-Plus” came into force in March 2003. In any case, recourse to these arrangements presupposes the approval of the North Atlantic Council, in which each state has a veto of course. Furthermore, access to NATO planning capabilities is only assured on condition that NATO does not need DSACEUR and its planning capabilities for its own military operations. The recourse to prior identified NATO assets and capabilities would be released on a case-by-case basis anyway. Moreover, NATO reserved the right to recall these assets and capabilities in an ongoing EU-led operation if aiming to carry out a military operation itself (see also section 4).

### 3.2. Tervuren as a symbol of an unsolved dispute

Against this background, especially France tried and still tries to achieve the set-up of autonomous planning capabilities for the EU. Thereby, the joint declaration of France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg on ESDP in Tervuren at the end of April 2003 was of particular importance as it expressed the intention of the four states to create European structures for joint operational planning. In addition, the final communiqué proposes, among other things, the concept of a European Security and Defence Union (ESDU), whereby those states should be brought together that are ready to go faster and further in strengthening their defence co-operation. In total, seven initiatives are announced that shall be open to all interested EU member states. Apart from the development of a European rapid reaction capability, the creation of a European command for strategic air transport, the development of a joint European NBC protection unit, the creation of a European system for emergency humanitarian aid and of European training centres, it is also announced to establish a European operational planning cell that shall be installed in the Brussels suburb of Tervuren by summer 2004 (Joint Declaration 2003, part 6 and 7). In fact, this would firstly amount to the creation of an "EU General Staff" that would be independent of NATO facilities, secondly to the du-

plication of NATO capabilities, and finally it would undermine the declaration between NATO and the EU, as agreed under great political efforts in December 2002.<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, Tervuren not only threatened to cause a transatlantic split<sup>12</sup>, but - due to the lack of consent to such an initiative among the EU member states themselves - also within Europe itself. In August 2003 the United Kingdom launched a distinct initiative proposing the establishment of a permanent EU cell within NATO's Allied Command Operations (ACO, formerly SHAPE), thus avoiding any separate and rival structures to NATO. Therefore, provisional result of this dispute is that the UK accepted the necessity of an autonomous EU operational planning capability. That is, the EU shall have the capacity to conduct military operations without recourse to NATO assets and capabilities. In the end, the compromise, as agreed with the US, amounts to the solution that military missions across the spectrum of the Petersberg tasks (humanitarian aid, peace-keeping, and tasks of combat forces) will be conducted with recourse to EU planning capabilities, while major and more sophisticated military operations will rest on NATO structures and assets (European Council 2003: 23).<sup>13</sup> In those cases in which the EU is having recourse to NATO assets and capabilities, the "Berlin-Plus" agreement remains valid. Additionally, while co-operation between NATO and the EU shall be enhanced by the establishment of a small

EU cell at NATO's ACO, a further newly established "civilian / military cell" comprising some 30 officers within EUMS shall be activated in those cases in which the EU decides to conduct an autonomous operation. Indeed, the latter is subject to very restrictive conditions, for the primary option remains the recourse to national headquarters. This means that the "civilian / military cell" within EUMS will only be activated upon the advice of the EU Military Committee, if a civilian / military operation is planned and where no national headquarter is available (Dembinski 2005: 72-78).

In essence, some kind of division of labour between NATO and the EU appears in outlines: The Alliance would be responsible for the conduct of more robust combat missions where US participation is necessary, while the EU would mainly undertake peace-keeping operations.<sup>14</sup> Yet, a division of labour based on the idea of the US being responsible for initiating regime changes through military interventions and the subsequent promotion of democracy on the one hand, and the Europeans criticizing this US policy initially, but finally taking part in stabilization operations in the framework of NATO or the EU on the other hand, cannot represent a model that is conducive to the definition of a joint transatlantic strategy. On the contrary, what is required is a precise co-ordination of NATO's and the EU's activities in each phase of a military operation.

### 3.3. EU Operations

In March 2003, the permanent arrangements between NATO and the EU were put into first practice in Operation Concordia, the European Union's military deployment to take over the NATO Operation Allied Harmony in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Thereby, in Skopje, the European Force Commander was co-located with the NATO Senior Military Representative, who had been further deployed in Macedonia to assist in the country's preparations for a possible accession to NATO, and NATO's Deputy SACEUR served as Operation Commander. Likewise, the EU's Operation Althea, replacing NATO's SFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2004, was carried out using NATO assets and capabilities under the "Berlin-Plus" arrangements. By now (spring 2006), ESDP completed all in all four operations (Concordia, Artemis, Proxima, Eujust Themis), while ten operations (inter alia, Althea, EUPM, EUPOL Kinshasa, Eujust Lex, EUSEC DR Congo and AMIS II Darfur) are still ongoing. In doing so, operations covered the spectrum of small-scale missions in support of the rule of law as in Georgia (Eujust Themis) and medium-scale operations like the taking over of the main peace-stabilization role previously undertaken by NATO's SFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Althea). Overall, EU operations are not only remarkable for their geographical range (e.g. Macedonia, DR Congo, Georgia, Bosnia,



and Herzegovina), but also for the fact that all of them have to be regarded as successful.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, however, it also needs to be noted that the “Berlin-Plus” arrangements have been ignored in a number of cases. In December 2002, for example, the EU announced its intention to take over the SFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina without consulting NATO and also the EU’s operation in Congo in June 2003 - as well as in spring 2006 - has not been accompanied by prior consultations with NATO. Notably, an open – even if comparatively harmless – conflict came about for the first time in summer 2005 with regard to the operation in Darfur. While the US pressed for conducting the military operation under the auspices of NATO, especially France and Germany insisted on an EU mission in the Darfur region of Sudan. In the end, both organizations took action with US transportation units assigned to NATO and French and German troops assigned to the EU (NATO’s operation “Assistance to the African Union of Darfur” and the EU’s operation “AMIS II Supporting Action”). Certainly, such a “beauty contest” (Wanninger 2005)<sup>16</sup> between NATO and the EU is less useful and a bad outlook for interinstitutional co-operation.

#### **4. Prospects for NATO-EU relations: scenarios and consequences**

Obviously, several ideas exist among the major actors in transatlantic relations concerning the future direction of

the relationship between NATO and the EU. While the United Kingdom – for which NATO appears to be the only acceptable pillar in a two-pillar alliance – traditionally prefers a close alignment with the US and tries to exert influence by pursuing a bandwagoning strategy, traditional French policy aims to create an equipoise to US power in accordance with a balancing approach. Thereof, Poland tends unequivocally and unmistakably to the British position. Finally, the German preference traditionally was to adopt the role of a mediator between the extreme positions of France and the UK.

#### **4.1. Scenarios about the future of transatlantic security relations**

In view of the tension between the formation and further development of ESDP on the one hand and the continuing existence of NATO on the other hand, two scenarios about the future evolution of transatlantic security relations are principally conceivable: firstly, a two-pillar alliance of equal partners, and secondly a rivalry between the EU and the US, leading to NATO’s dissolution rather sooner than later.

According to the first scenario, a two-pillar alliance – as already thought of in the 1960s and since then repeatedly demanded in numerous documents and strategy papers by the way – with the US and Europe as asymmetric (because of the different power capabilities), but still equal partners will arise in the future. The European pillar would be responsible to solve prob-

lems in its own regional security environment; yet, US forces would be available to support Europe if necessary. That is, by arrangement between the two transatlantic partners, peace-keeping missions like the ones in Kosovo or in Bosnia and Herzegovina could be undertaken by the European pillar without US participation. In the event of global security problems, decisions would be made as the cases arise, based on the existence or non-existence of a consensus about a joint action.<sup>17</sup> The question of which of the two organizations – NATO or the EU – assumes primacy would not be decided in principle, but rather pragmatically in the spirit of partnership and solidarity. Nevertheless, a range of points of conflict would also remain in this scenario: How should the Alliance's military structure be designed; what degree of military co-operation should exist; how should the division of labour between NATO and the EU precisely look like; how to guarantee interoperability; how to preserve cohesion within the Alliance; and is a UN mandate required for joint action (as already provided for in the North Atlantic Treaty of April 1949)?

In fact, two requirements would need to be met to implement this scenario. On the one hand, it is a prerequisite that the EU is successful with its project on ESDP and undertakes more efforts on its own (also in financial respects) to guarantee its own security. Thereby, a duplication of military capabilities and decision-making structures is unavoidable, but would take place in

consultation with the US. However, the question remains open whether Washington would have a codecision power. Or, to put it differently: Will there be situations in which NATO does not want to act and nonetheless the EU acts against the will of the US? On the other hand, a further prerequisite is that the US maintains the ability and willingness to establish and maintain partnerships, and furthermore acknowledges that it needs allies to confront today's security challenges.

While the latest US strategic documents like the March 2006 National Security Strategy and the February 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report emphasize the importance of international partnerships<sup>18</sup>, such a background condition cannot be taken for granted, though. Therefore, it seems reasonable to agree to a recent study on the new strategic direction of US defence policy. Therein, it is argued that although the US will not turn away from NATO entirely, at least in future combat missions, however, it will likely make "a demonstrated political willingness and demonstrable existing military capabilities a condition for its willingness to co-operate. As it does not expect both of them from all of its European allies, future transatlantic co-operation will continue to be limited to coalitions of the willing and capable, instead of being characterized by NATO" (Aßman 2006).

The second scenario foresees a rupture in transatlantic relations in the medium and long term and NATO gradually eroding or even critically col-

lapsing. That is, in the medium term, the basic security assumptions and threat perceptions would further diverge and in the long term the EU and the US would become strategic rivals. Accordingly, the relative stability of a world order under the auspices of American dominance would be replaced by a conflicting competition for supremacy between the world poles. It is true that Europe is not in the position to perform such a role as a political rival for the moment, but assuming that the EU will be able to translate its economic weight into political and military power some day, this scenario could become reality sooner than it is feared by transatlantic Europeans (or European transatlanticists, respectively) or hoped by European autonomists.

#### **4.2. Consequences for NATO-EU relations**

What follows from this analysis? The degree of European autonomy within NATO or of Europeans on the whole, respectively, is one of the most difficult structural questions of security and alliance policy. In essence, it is about to what extent the EU is able and willing to take over tasks and functions so far being performed by NATO. Thereby, the central question is whether the EU will become a “branch office” of NATO for particular tasks or whether the bulk of those security policy tasks which lie ahead of an EU enriched by ESDP can still be performed much better, much faster and more effectively by NATO. However, as matters stand today, this

question must be regarded as unanswerable, for on the one hand, today, it is more uncertain than ever whether the EU can manage to become a single political actor and on the other hand, at present, it remains unsettled whether the US wants to remain a “European power” and whether it is still interested in formal alliances with its European partners.

Overall, three essential consequences for transatlantic security relations arise from this analysis of the complex relations between NATO and the EU:

- *Firstly*, EU-Europe will be more responsible for its own security than ever before and therefore, European policy must enhance the EU’s capacity to effectively perform this role. However, in all probability, the EU’s ability to shape its political evolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will turn out very modest under given conditions of European policy. For neither the possibility of a creeping erosion of the EU can be ruled out entirely, nor the evolution of a completely new form of integration beyond existing treaties (see on this: Varwick 2002). Although the sphere of foreign and security policy almost suggests itself for seeking common solutions like hardly any other policy field, it should not be expected that with 25 or even 30 member states that could be accomplished, what could not be achieved with just 15 mem-

bers: that is, to develop and raise a common European voice in international affairs. Thereby, the Europeans – who are, by the way, much more perceived and requested as a common actor from the outside world than this is discernible inside the EU itself – are no more allowed to confine themselves to internal self-reflection and quarrelling for quite some time now. The difficult debates about the future of integration as well as about European foreign and security policy still lie ahead of the EU.

- If this analysis is true, then the EU and its member states will *secondly* be well advised to working to the best of its ability to ensure that the US remains a “European power” and in developing a security policy role to behave in such a manner which does not further disassociate the US from Europe.<sup>19</sup> Apart from numerous other questions, this will be one of the central challenges facing alliance policy in the future. As NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer put it in fine terms: “Now I am the first to grant that NATO-EU relations could be better than they are at present. But what is not yet can surely come about. [...] Today nobody can dispute the need for the EU to have a security-political role. An effective EU must be considered a normal part of the

transatlantic relationship, and not a disruptive factor. And even if the rhetoric of the EU sometimes seems a bit too robust, NATO can take this in its stride. For NATO remains unique – it alone has the United States on board. And there can't be a stable world order without the USA” (De Hoop Scheffer 2004).

- *Thirdly*, despite of all already existing statements and formal arrangements, a debate about a transatlantic division of labour is imperative. For sensible reasons, the EU should strengthen its focal point in those areas where priority is given to an approach that goes beyond sheer military capabilities. That does not mean to say, however, that the military dimension at EU level should be abandoned. Yet, for the foreseeable future, the EU will be, at best, a “civilian power with teeth” (Schmalz 2005, 57-59) and should leave those military operations to NATO in which escalation dominance and high intensity capabilities are required. It should be self-evident that European capabilities (or more specifically: contributions of single European states) will have to be placed at the disposal of the Alliance for this purpose.

In essence, also in the future, the relations between NATO and the EU will not be easy and neither will they be

conflict-free. However, in view of the broad congruence of membership in both organizations and the fact of a “single set of forces” as well as the demanding international security policy agenda, it would be absolutely inadequate, if both were busy with themselves in some kind of beauty contest instead of giving effective impetus to the stabilization of the international system and actively contributing to the solution of current and future security policy problems.

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- <sup>1</sup> This argument was also brought forward by the former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder at the Munich Conference on Security Policy in spring 2005, available at: [www.nato.int/germany/reden/2005/s050212a.html](http://www.nato.int/germany/reden/2005/s050212a.html), accessed on 15 August 2005.
- <sup>2</sup> The relationship between both organizations increasingly receives scientific attention. For recent examples of detailed studies see: Varwick (2005); and Burwell (2006).
- <sup>3</sup> Emphasis in original. Apart from that, Joseph Nye rightly points out that particularly France would be afraid of a German hegemony following a US retreat from Europe (Nye 2002: 32).
- <sup>4</sup> For further details see section 2.3. of this article.
- <sup>5</sup> These include: humanitarian tasks, peace-keeping tasks, and tasks of combat forces. This theme is further elaborated in section 2.3. of this article. For details on the argument above, see: Heise/Schmidt 2005.
- <sup>6</sup> Based on 2004 figures in Lindstrom 2005:89.
- <sup>7</sup> For central documents on ESDP and its relationship to NATO, see: EU Institute for Security Studies 2001, 2003 and 2005.
- <sup>8</sup> A lengthy chapter of this “White Paper” (EU Institute for Security Studies 2004) deals with the necessary requirements for autonomous military actions by the EU and offers numerous suggestions. However, these cannot be discussed here in great detail.
- <sup>9</sup> This view was also brought forward by Ronald Asmus (2005) who argued that the US would rather need a functioning European Union than an effective NATO. The reason for this was, that a strategic partnership between a functioning EU and the US would be able to shape the global agenda, while each partner would not be in the position to do so individually.
- <sup>10</sup> The Declaration is classified and only the broad principles are published, see:

[http://www.nato.int/shape/news/2003/shape\\_eu/se030822a.htm](http://www.nato.int/shape/news/2003/shape_eu/se030822a.htm); and for the EU's view, see: [ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/03-11-11%20Berlin%20Plus%20press%20note%20BL.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/03-11-11%20Berlin%20Plus%20press%20note%20BL.pdf). From an international law point of view the declaration "is nothing but a non-binding agreement", according to Reinhard (2004).

<sup>11</sup> Yet, the former President of the EU Commission, Romano Prodi, indicated his sympathy for the foray of the four European states. As he put it: "NATO was a giant, surrounded by many dwarfs. Now we are in need of two giants, the European and the American, who co-operate with each other" (Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung 2003).

<sup>12</sup> For example, the US NATO Ambassador called for a NATO special session when the UK temporarily signalled its readiness to agree to the German-French-Belgian-Luxembourgian proposal of establishing an embryonic European planning capability. According to Nicholas Burns, Tervuren represented the most serious threat to the future of NATO (Burns, cited in Sueddeutsche Zeitung, 30 May 2003, p. 11).

<sup>13</sup> The British-French-German document with the title "European Defence: NATO/EU Consultation, Planning and Operations" is reprinted in: Missiroli 2003.

<sup>14</sup> See also section 4 of this article. In the same sense the French Defence Minister, who argued at the Munich Conference on Security Policy in February 2006: "The key word is complementarity in our actions. In terms of defense, we must make the specificities of NATO operations and EU operations clearer. Today, NATO is better equipped to handle heavy and long-lasting operations, when the United States are involved. ESPD is better adapted to 'lightning' operations and civil-military actions. One should not think in terms of competition between organizations; one should rather provide the necessary flexibility in the procedures in order to allow the optimal use of capabilities in all circumstances", available at: [http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?menu\\_2006=&menu\\_konferenzen=&sprache=de&id=167&](http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?menu_2006=&menu_konferenzen=&sprache=de&id=167&), accessed on 15 February 2006.

<sup>15</sup> However, this is not to say that there have not been any problems. Additionally, the character of these operations was comparatively unproblematic, i.e. a genuine acid test has not yet come. A list of current and past EU operations is available at: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3\\_fo/showPage.asp?lang=en&id=268&mode=g&name=](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?lang=en&id=268&mode=g&name=), accessed on 1 March 2006.

<sup>16</sup> See also the critical assessment of the rivalry between the two institutionalized Mediter-

anean Dialogues of NATO and the EU (Singen/Varwick 2005).

<sup>17</sup> In this sense, even the former German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, left no doubt about the value of the transatlantic alliance. He pointed out that today's Europe would be based on the US decision in principle to remain politically and militarily engaged in Europe after 1945. Even today, Europe and the US would still depend on each other. Fischer continues: "NATO is the key institution of the transatlantic alliance. No one wants to call into question its fundamental importance as the guarantor of our security. Rather, an ESDP capable of taking effective action will bring to life the concept of the "European pillar of NATO" – a concept, by the way, developed by the US. To achieve this, the EU must also improve its planning and command capabilities. What we want is for ESDP to complement NATO, not to compete with it" (Fischer 2003).

<sup>18</sup> More precisely, the 2006 National Security Strategy states in part VII C4: "NATO must deepen working relationships between and across institutions, as it is doing with the EU, and as it also could do with new institutions. Such relationships offer opportunities for enhancing the distinctive strengths and missions of each organization" and the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report describes NATO as the "cornerstone of transatlantic security" (p. 87). Additionally, the QDR calls for the establishment of a European "constabulary force" (i.e. police forces trained in military skills). The fact that the US itself does not have constabulary forces and that it demands such forces from Europe and finally that it recognizes that these forces are a vital element in stabilization operations indicates that the US rather assumes a minor, or at least different role for itself in stabilization missions.

<sup>19</sup> Hans-Peter Schwarz rightly recalls some of Konrad Adenauer's remarks on the transatlantic relationship: The one who wants to take out insurance, needs to pay a premium, and the one who believes Europe is insured with the US free of premium, is wrong (Schwarz 2003).