



ESDP: an overview

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a. The basis for ESDP: responsibility and autonomy

During the Cold War, the very mention of 'European defence' gave rise to apprehension, regrets or hopes. Given the threat from the East, Europe's security remained a NATO monopoly, although that did not prevent differences of view between the two sides of the Atlantic, nor specific instances of intra-European cooperation. While the Western European Union certainly constituted a European forum for discussing security questions, its military significance and political role were marginal. In a context that was both unexpected – the threat from the East had disappeared – and familiar – NATO was still in charge of European defence – discussion of European security was still characterised by historically based divergences between the major members of the Union, while at the same time the first moves towards a single currency were being made. This ambivalence was seen during the Maastricht summit. On the one hand, countries, such as the United Kingdom, who were in favour of the Alliance's primacy, while acknowledging the need for greater coordination of foreign policy, were opposed to any transfer of competence in security matters to the Union. On the other hand, France, reasserting its desire to strengthen its relationship with Germany, had suggested raising its military collaboration with its eastern neighbour to a European level. The Maastricht summit saw the birth of the second pillar, the Common Foreign and Security Policy, including, after bitter negotiation, the perspective that this common policy 'might in time lead to a common defence.'

But the real world did not wait. The Balkan wars, first in Bosnia, then in Kosovo, seriously put into question the weak equilibrium of European security. Faced with the return of barbarity to the European continent, the failure of the Europeans to end the conflict dealt a serious blow to the very essence of the European project, which is based on democratic values that were flouted on its doorstep. As the European partners had failed to produce a common strategy, the former Yugoslavia should have been seen as a sufficiently serious democratic and moral issue for them to set aside individual national interests, their respective inhibitions and institutional shortcomings. The humanitarian management of the conflict was the only common denominator among Europeans, but in that respect, too, Bosnia was a painful learning

experience. The gap between UN logic and security imperatives on the ground, which was reflected in the limitations on UN troops' mandates, was to have dramatic consequences. That ambivalence led to the tragedy of Srebrenica, for which a collective sense of responsibility still hangs over Europe. The first imperative for any European defence undertaking is to avoid such a massacre happening again in Europe.

The changes in the European security landscape had dramatic consequences for the European Union. Since peacekeeping operations abroad rarely involve crucial security interests, European security, which was a matter of necessity during the Cold War, has now become a matter of voluntary national choice. This renewed importance of national sovereignty marked the limits of the institutional changes ratified at Maastricht. At the same time, no individual member state could hope to deal with this type of conflict alone: it called for a collective response. Efforts, therefore, had to be directed at cooperation on foreign policy while taking into account national prerogatives.

Another lesson concerned the effective use of force. Here, several shortages were critical: the inadequacy of defence institutions founded on a territorial defence, the lack of professional armed forces, the absence of a common strategic culture and organisations able to anticipate events and, above all, the inability to project significant forces abroad. All these indispensable elements were missing. Europe was not ready to respond to the post-Cold War world - a more violent world than anticipated - with adequate defence budgets. Moreover, the division of labour for the military intervention, whereby European ground forces bore more risk than US aircraft operating at safe altitudes, was unfavourable to the Europeans. This imbalance of risk and strategic divergence suggested a reform of the Atlantic Alliance that took into account this European specificity. But the technology deficit calls also for a renewed effort in European capabilities. To be effective, diplomacy must be coordinated among the main European partners and be based on a credible ability to use force.

The crisis in Kosovo provided striking confirmation of European weaknesses. Without entering into its details, the conflict clearly demonstrated that without making an effort to improve its military capabilities, Europe's influence and responsibility would continue to be limited. But influencing America's war strategy was all the more important since Europeans had rightly realised that the subsequent reconstruction and peacekeeping would fall to them in the first instance. The crisis also confirmed both the relevance but also the singular nature of the transatlantic relationship. An effort to improve Europe's military capabilities had become essential if the strategic decoupling of a Europe, lagging behind technologically, was to be avoided; yet, doing so would raise fears of the political decoupling of a more autonomous Europe. From an American point of view, the conflict raised concerns about a 'war by committee' - a term indicating excessive restrictions on American room for manoeuvre, while, in fact, procedures were entirely in line with the fundamentals of the Atlantic organisation. More deeply, and even before 11 September, the new Bush administration had concluded that Europe was of lesser strategic importance, heralding more selective and restrictive external actions by the United States, which would now be decided on the obvious, but reassuring, assumption of American hegemony and focused on the main strategic balances in the world. This partial reading of the conflict, and the explicit exclusion of any future NATO operation like that in Kosovo, influenced Washington's views on ESDP. After Kosovo, US misgivings over European integration became more pronounced.

Europe and transatlantic relations have thus been profoundly marked by the conflicts in the Balkans. The contrast between American power and Europe's inability to resolve conflicts led to a collective realisation of the need to rectify the imbalance between the reality of Europe as an economic power and its potential as a political power. That was precisely the basis of the Saint-Malo agreement between France and the United Kingdom.

b. From St-Malo to Copenhagen: the rising power of ESDP

The Balkan tragedy affected all European countries, especially France and the United Kingdom. For the French, the effective use of force, which was formerly based on the concept of deterrence, i.e. the absence of actual conflict, meant a more pragmatic approach vis-à-vis NATO cooperation and multinational cooperation in order to be effective. Close cooperation on the ground in Bosnia between British and French troops had cultivated a de facto solidarity between the military personnel and hierarchies. All of this had in 1995 led to a noticeable rapprochement between France and the Alliance. On the basis of the July 1998 *Strategic Defence Review*, and noting the level of European participation in Bosnia, the British Government was dismayed by the Europeans' operational powerlessness despite a European GDP that was greater than that of the United States. It concluded, even before the dramatic illustration provided by Kosovo, that if this imbalance continued, it would imperil the very foundation of the Atlantic partnership. It was a matter of laying down a more balanced and, therefore, healthier basis for the relationship. The way to save the Alliance was via Europe. In the eyes of the British, European defence had now acquired real added value. The language used at the St-Malo summit – referring to a 'capacity for autonomous action' – represents a compromise between these two developments: the St-Malo declaration should be read as a turning point in London's approach to Europe as much as a French concession to Atlantic legitimacy. For one, Europe was becoming a way to exert influence, and, for the other, the Alliance was the designated framework of European autonomy. Between the means and the end, between the autonomy asserted and the assured conformity with the Atlantic Alliance, between British short-term pragmatism and French ambitions for a powerful Europe in the long term, ESDP found a fragile but real area of *entente*. The core of the compromise lay in the effort made to improve the Europeans' military capabilities and their intention to take on Petersberg missions. The Kosovo conflict opened the way to a rapid Europeanisation of the St-Malo agreement. The German presidency worked on transforming this bilateral initiative into a European reality and changing the European defence *identity* into a European security and defence *policy*. At the June 1999 European Council in Cologne, member states stated their determination 'that the European Union shall play its full role on the international stage. To that end, we intend to give the European Union the necessary means and capabilities to assume its responsibilities regarding a common European policy on security and defence . . . the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises without prejudice to actions by NATO.' To achieve that, several specific institutional changes were made:

- the nomination of Javier Solana to the post of High Representative for CFSP, which had been agreed in principle at the June 1997 European Council in Amsterdam. The High Representative is also Secretary-General of the European Council.
- the creation of a Political and Security Committee (PSC, more often referred to by the French abbreviation COPS), consisting of ambassadors of each member state meeting twice a week in Brussels. Dealing with all aspects of the CFSP and ESDP, its function is to manage developing crises, organise evaluation and planning and give political advice to the European Council. In the event of a deployment of military forces from the Union, it assumes political control of the day-to-day direction of military operations.
- the creation of a European Military Committee, officially made up of chiefs of defence staff of member countries but in practice attended by their military delegates. It is responsible for giving advice and recommendations to the COPS and the European Council, and issuing military directives to the European Military Staff (see below). Its chairman, at present General Gustav Hägglund, attends sessions of the Council when decisions are to be taken by it having defence implications. The European Military Committee is the Union's most senior military body and a forum for consultation and cooperation between member states.
- the creation of a European Military Staff providing expertise for the CESDP, in particular in the conduct of any Union military crisis management operation. Directed by General Rainer Schuwirth, it is responsible for early warning, evaluating situations and strategic planning for Petersberg missions, including the earmarking of national and international European forces. It constitutes a source of technical expertise for the Union on all aspects of security and defence and acts as an interface between political and military authorities within the Union. It gives military support to the European Military Committee during the strategic planning phase of crisis management situations, for the complete range of Petersberg missions, and develops working methods and operational concepts based on or compatible with those of NATO.
- the holding of regular sessions of the General Affairs Council, with the participation of defence ministers.
- the inclusion of WEU functions necessary for the European Union concerning Petersberg missions. That integration, referred to since the Amsterdam European Council, signifies the accomplishment of the WEU's mission but does not signify the end of the WEU as such.

These institutional changes decided at Cologne, elaborated at Helsinki and finalised at Santa Maria da Feira, were to be agreed at Nice in December 2000. Also decided at Nice was the creation of autonomous agencies that would incorporate within the EU the WEU structures dealing with ESDP, i.e. the Satellite Centre and the Institute for Security Studies. These two agencies were officially created by European Council Joint Actions in July 2001.

There is also a civilian part of ESDP that is peculiar to the European approach to conflict prevention and crisis management. With the experience of Bosnia, particularly the civil administration of Mostar by WEU, the Multinational Protection Force (MPF) in Albania and the Multinational Advisory Police Element (MAPE) in Operation *Alba*, the Union acquired considerable expertise in civilian crisis management. It was, therefore, logical to incorporate and develop that *acquis* in ESDP. The June 2000 Feira European Council listed the four priority areas in which the Union intended to acquire concrete capabilities: the police, strengthening the rule of law, civil administration and civil protection. Member states undertook to supply police forces for international missions. Rapid progress was made and member countries' contributions were greater than the number requested. On 18 February 2002, the Union announced that it would be ready, as from 1 January 2003, to take over from the UN's International Police Task Force (IPTF) in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This aspect of ESDP is now a reality.

In December 1999, scarcely a year after St-Malo, the Helsinki summit set out the ESDP process's Headline Goal objectives. The aim was to put at the Union's disposal forces capable of carrying out all the Petersberg missions, including the most demanding, in operations up to army corps level, i.e. 50 to 60,000 troops. Member states undertook, by 2003, to deploy forces 'militarily self-sustaining with the necessary command, control and intelligence capabilities, logistics, other combat support services and additionally, as appropriate, air and naval elements. Member States should be able to deploy in full at this level within 60 days, and within this to provide smaller rapid response elements available and deployable at very high readiness. They must be able to sustain such a deployment for at least one year.' The missions assigned to this Rapid Reaction Force are those defined at Petersberg by WEU in 1992 and repeated in Article 17.2 of the TEU, i.e. 'humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making.'

However, there were a series of successive interpretations of this legal definition. At Cologne in June 1999, the Council had stated that these tasks included 'the full range of conflict prevention and crisis management tasks.' At Helsinki, to fulfil these missions, particular attention was paid to the means necessary for effective crisis management: deployability, sustainability, interoperability, flexibility, mobility, survivability and command and control. At Laeken, where ESDP was proclaimed operational, it was emphasised that the development of means and capabilities would allow the Union 'progressively to take on more demanding operations.' Following the events of September 11, the extraordinary European Council of 21 September stated that it would fight terrorism in all its forms and that 'the fight against terrorism will, more than ever, be a priority objective of the European Union.' ESDP could not ignore this new strategic context. At the June 2002 European Council in Seville, it was decided to increase the Union's involvement in the fight against terrorism through a coordinated, interdisciplinary approach 'embracing all Union policies, including by developing the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and by making the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) operational.' It was recalled that 'the CFSP, including the ESDP, can play an important role in countering this threat to our security.' The way in which the Petersberg missions were interpreted thus evolved. From a legal point of view, they now covered nearly every hypothesis except collective self-defence, which remained a NATO prerogative. In fact, it will be

the Union's military capabilities that will determine the scope of these missions in practice.

On that front, progress has been undoubtedly slower. The first European effort sprang from a WEU study of November 1999 on European forces available for Petersberg missions. If the numbers alone permitted a wide range of missions to be executed, several shortfalls were identified, particularly air transport, precision-guided missiles, the deployment of headquarters to relatively near theatres of operation, mobility and intelligence. This purely quantitative exercise concluded that, for an operation requiring the deployment of two divisions to a theatre of operation several thousand kilometres away, Europe had adequate ground forces but was incapable of deploying them, and that in that respect any operation of any size would have to depend on the infrastructure and forces of the Atlantic Alliance. For smaller, pre-emptive deployments nearer at hand, Europe had adequate means. This inventory, seen in the light of the precedent of Bosnia, served as the basis for the definition of the Helsinki Headline Goal. In summer 2000, experts of the Headline Goal Task Force, created at Feira, had estimated that 80,000 ground troops (3x15 brigades), 350 aircraft and three or four naval task forces would be required to meet the Helsinki objectives. In November 2000, the Capabilities Commitment Conference drew up a catalogue of forces that member countries intended to earmark to meet the overall objective. The European Military Staff concluded that, as from that date, the target number of troops had been met, but underlined the inadequacies in terms of air transport, C3I and others. The next stage was to address the shortfalls. In November 2001, the European Capability Action Plan (ECAP) was launched. The ECAP exercise, which began in February 2002, set up a series of panels headed by one or two member states responsible for coordinating work. Although this formula has the advantage of giving greater responsibility to the countries in charge, it also runs the risk that countries may take no interest in the panels in which they are not involved. The report of the ECAP was submitted in March 2003. Since then, a new Capabilities Conference was held in May 2003 in order to ask for more national commitments or launch specific programs to address current shortfalls. Progress made on capabilities and infrastructure, and an end to the stalemate on Berlin-plus, made possible the Union's decision to take over from NATO in Macedonia and declare its readiness to take over SFOR in 2004.

The operational process is, however, encountering several obstacles. The first and best known concerns military expenditure. Only a few countries have actually raised their defence budgets. Furthermore, it is a question of spending better by reducing operating costs, which in Europe represent an average of 60 per cent of defence spending, in order to leave a margin for equipment, research and development. Too often, social demands outweigh operational imperatives. The second obstacle has to do with the fact that it will take time to correct European military inadequacies. Military equipment programmes sometimes spread over several decades, and, as a result, delays are inherent in the actual exercise of correcting deficiencies. The important A400M programme – scaled down compared to the initial objectives but now finalised in budgetary terms – is symbolic of this. This means that, in the years to come, Europe will continue to depend, in part, on American assistance for operations of any size if the reduced level of risk demanded in democracies is to be respected. The third concerns the voluntary nature of national contributions. This bottom-up process seems subsidiary given national imperatives, and the lack of political involvement at the highest level among states is of concern. The fourth

handicap is more fundamental and concerns the very definition of the headline goal. Designed on the basis of the Kosovo experience, and, therefore, corresponding to a strategic imperative of the 1990s, the military tool seems at once over-ambitious if it is to be used essentially for crisis management in the Balkans, which are now generally peaceful, and inadequate in view of the strategic demands of the twenty-first century. In other words, the very moment when a real defence and security policy of the EU is taking shape, the international context has changed dramatically since September 11. More precisely, the Bush Administration's answer to this new day of infamy revealed that Europe was on the verge of becoming irrelevant to U.S. strategic imperatives. This, in turn, had crucial implications for the security of the Union.

c. ESDP after the Iraqi crisis

Without entering into the details of the Iraqi crisis, several remarks should be noted in regard to ESDP. First, even if the crisis was one of the most severe across the Atlantic and inside Europe, one element was left relatively untouched, i.e. the EU-NATO cooperation following the Berlin Plus agreement of December 2002. At the height of the crisis, when the U.N. was deeply divided and when the NATO alliance was in disarray about assistance measures for Turkey, the cooperation between the two organizations about Berlin Plus survived. This allowed for the launch of Operation Concordia in Macedonia in March 2003.

Second, the capacity of the EU to bounce back from internal divisions must be underscored. Clearly, the Union has always advanced from crises to crises. But to recover so quickly is worth noting. In ESDP, in particular, the Union made at least three major breakthroughs. The first concerned a common Action Plan to fight against the proliferation of WMD. This document spells out a genuine European strategy against proliferation. Among the measures adopted in June 2003, the strengthening of the IAEA regime regarding verification, a stronger role for the UN Security Council in this matter and the creation of an observatory on WMD disarmament and non-proliferation constitute considerable progress. The Union seems ready to apply conditionality rules regarding nuclear and WMD proliferation more strictly with economic partners and, most importantly, to contemplate, if necessary, the use of force in compliance with the UN Charter.

Third, and most importantly, the Union for the first time in its history, has framed a common strategic concept. The Iraq crisis has thus produced a common awareness among Europe's leaders of the need for strategic thinking on international security issues. One of the major reasons why the EU was so divided in the case of Iraq was its lack of strategic reasoning. By contrast, a majority of member states addressed the issue through political motives, some internal, some external, which led to a merely reactive policy. There is also the general recognition that a divided Europe is powerless. At the same time, an enlarged Europe of 450 millions people cannot escape its obligations and responsibilities in the world. This was the premise of the Solana document, "A Secure Europe in a Better World," published in June for the Thessaloniki Summit. Europe's strategy is based on three pillars: 1) extending the security zone around Europe by developing the instruments for stabilisation used in the Balkans to the benefit of Eastern neighbours such as Ukraine and Moldova, but also in the Mediterranean, which involves resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; 2)

establishing effective multilateralism based on the UN, the fundamental framework of international relations, while reaffirming the need to become involved in a preventive way and act when the rules are infringed; and 3) responding to the global threats of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and organised crime by recognising that the traditional form of defence is a thing of the past since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and that the first line of defence now lies abroad. Effective multilateralism and preventive engagement are by nature elusive concepts, but several realities are recognised by the Union.

First, Europe is at peace, not at war. Next, if the European analysis of the threats of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is similar to that of Washington, the ways in which Europe addresses them are different. In its view, the fight against these threats cannot be limited to military force alone: while not excluding it, the Union intends to take a broader approach, combining the political and the economic. Regarding terrorism, any effective solution will have to be global. While the Union recognises that bad governance is a major source of instability, it advocates the extension of good governance rather than regime change. The message for Washington is, therefore, nuanced: from a similar analysis of the threats associated with terrorism stems a more diversified strategy, one that better reflects the European identity. Based on the principles of international law, this approach also implies an obligation to punish offenders. Lastly, this duty implies greater responsibility for Europe, based on more active, consistent and capable involvement. It calls for diplomatic cohesion and synergy in the field of strategic and military intelligence, and it presupposes that an effort to improve European capabilities will continue. This document could constitute the first awakening of Europe to unpleasant world realities.

In parallel to this document, the Union was involved, for the first time, outside Europe in a peacekeeping intervention in Africa. When a series of massacres in Ituri, Congo, followed the withdrawal of Ugandan troops in Spring 2003, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called for an immediate intervention. His call was answered by the European Union under the leadership of France. The military intervention of 1,800 troops, was prepared in a very short period of time, involving all the EU members in the decision-making process regarding planning and rules of engagement. Cooperation on the ground between participating nations, especially France and Sweden, was efficient. Although limited in time and scope, Artemis was a undeniable success from a military point a view. Beyond the military intervention, the EU decided for a three-pronged strategy for Ituri: first, to help disarm, demobilise and reintegrate armed groups, particularly children; second, to prepare a socio-economic rehabilitation programme to back up the interim administration, including grassroots reconciliation; and third, to give an immediate €200m aid package from its European Development Fund (EDF) in order to set up an ethnically mixed police force. Working closely with the UN, the EU has transferred the authority back to a reinforced MONUC.

The Artemis operation was the first concrete step towards implementing this new security doctrine, by taking a much longer-term view on crisis management and conflict prevention. This also the case with Macedonia where Operation Concordia will be followed by a police mission on the model of what has been achieved in Bosnia.

ESDP has changed its dimension. From a tool of crisis-management in the Balkans, it has become a necessary device to enhance Europe's role in the world.