

**THE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE
ON ESDI/ESDP
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INTRODUCTION

The final months of 2000 will be a critical time in Brussels. From now until the end of the year, we will be working to validate the proposition that, working together, NATO and the European Union can enhance European security and, at the same time, strengthen the transatlantic link. This is the premise on which the United States' support for the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) has long been founded. It was the basis for Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott's unequivocal statement at the North Atlantic Council last December:

"There should be no confusion about America's position on the need for a stronger Europe. We are not against it; we are not ambivalent; we are not anxious; we are for it. We want to see a Europe that can act effectively through the Alliance or, if NATO is not engaged, on its own. Period. End of debate."

Talbott's statement was a reiteration of the US position, going back to the beginning of the Clinton Administration in 1993, in favour of a stronger European pillar within NATO - with the European Allies taking greater responsibility for managing security problems in their own backyard. The Administration position reflected broad sentiment within the US Congress and American public opinion that, fifty years after the end of World War II, it was high time for the Europeans to shoulder a greater share of the burden. At the same time, President Clinton was convinced that maintaining domestic support for US engagement in Europe after the end of the Cold War would be easier if there were a more equitable sharing of responsibility within the Alliance.

There has been much progress over the past five years in creating the conditions in which NATO could support operations under the aegis of the Western European Union (WEU). With the signing of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, the EU decided that it would adopt many of the security functions of the WEU and build a common European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) within the EU. ESDP and ESDI are not quite the same thing - ESDP encompasses non-military as well as military forms of crisis management. But the challenge from the NATO perspective is the same: how to build the same kind of mechanisms for supporting EU-led operations as we have done for the WEU while preserving and strengthening the transatlantic link.

Four ad hoc working groups between NATO and the EU have now been established to tackle the practical issues of co-operation between the two organisations. The American objective in these groups will be to ensure that the relationship that results truly enhances Europe's defence capabilities and improves the balance and burden-sharing between the US and its European allies. The objective of ESDI must be to improve the collective capacity of Europe and North America to deal with the crises and other security challenges of the twenty-first

century while increasing the range of options available to all our nations for solving European security problems. If these twin goals are met, the EU's decision to play a larger role in European defence will be a 'win-win' proposition for its members and for the Allies. The benefits for all Europeans and for all Allies should include: more capabilities for NATO operations, a more effective EU ability to manage crises where NATO is not engaged, and a more balanced partnership between North America and Europe, inside and outside of NATO.

NATO's Secretary-General Lord Robertson, regularly cites his three priorities for European security as "Capabilities, Capabilities, Capabilities." The United States agrees with that list. But we also agree with our Turkish colleagues who stress "Participation, Participation, Participation." The development of an effective European Security and Defence Identity is only possible if European military capabilities are enhanced; and NATO support for the EU will only be meaningful if the six non-EU European NATO Allies (Turkey, Norway, Iceland, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic) are comfortable with their role in shaping EU decisions on crisis management and participating in EU-led operations. As we proceed with plans to increase NATO-EU co-operation, both priorities will be central to the American approach.

THE WASHINGTON NATO SUMMIT

It is worth reviewing the record of the last eighteen months to recall how much progress we have already made in broadening NATO-EU co-operation and laying the basis for the future. NATO Allies agreed at the Washington Summit last April that, given the Amsterdam Treaty's decision to move crisis management out of the Western European Union and into the European Union, NATO and the EU could no longer afford to remain artificially aloof from one another. 'Real life' experience in the Balkans and elsewhere demonstrated that these two powerful institutions needed to consult, work together and solve problems using their respective strengths to the best advantage. At the Washington Summit, there was a very clear statement that the Allies would try to act through NATO "wherever possible." This reflected the fact that, in addressing crisis management or peace enforcement challenges, it is always better to bring together the broadest possible coalition with the strongest possible military capability to back up the agreed political strategy.

From both the American and the NATO perspective, the Washington Summit decisions on ESDI were milestones. In Berlin three years earlier, NATO had agreed to support possible operations under the authority of the WEU based on the "separable but not separate" principle. At Washington, the Allies went much further, agreeing to support operations led by the European Union where NATO was not engaged. They pledged to make NATO planning available to the EU on an assured basis. They likewise agreed to identify the full range of NATO assets and capabilities that the EU could presume would be available to support EU-led operations, while recognising that, in matters of this kind, nothing is automatic. Building on NATO's work with the WEU, the Allies have sought the closest possible relations with the EU to prevent the divergence of security interests, to minimise duplication of capabilities, and to ensure that non-EU European Allies have a meaningful decision-shaping role in EU deliberations on European security and crisis management.

At the Washington Summit, the Allies also agreed to launch the Defence Capabilities Initiative (DCI). This represents an intensive effort to modernise and enhance Alliance military capabilities for the full spectrum of missions, from peacekeeping to high-intensity conflict. DCI identified the areas where Allied capabilities - especially European capabilities -

were most deficient to include sea and air mobility, precision guided munitions and command and control. The Kosovo air campaign provided a vivid example of the dependence of the Alliance on one ally to provide the bulk of a modern air capability. Obtaining a heavy lift capability is especially important for the crisis management goals being pursued under the EU's ESDP, as is the acquisition of the logistics and other support capabilities needed to sustain forces deployed far from home for extended periods of time. As experience in the Balkans has shown, the EU nations, despite having two million men and women in uniform, have been hard-pressed to deploy less than two per cent of that number to NATO's operations in Bosnia and Kosovo (KFOR and SFOR).

EU HELSINKI SUMMIT

Since the Washington Summit, the United States has worked closely with the EU Allies to clarify the EU's intentions and ensure that ESDP evolved in a NATO-friendly way. From the Washington perspective, the Helsinki EU Summit in December 1999 was encouraging, especially on the issue of capabilities. The highlight of the Helsinki Summit was the so-called 'Headline Goal,' through which the EU nations committed themselves to create a pool of 50,000-60,000 troops capable of moving within weeks to a crisis area, and sustaining and conducting an operation for up to a year. Since one key to the success of ESDI is capability, this Headline Goal is a very important indicator of the EU's serious intent.

Also important, from the US perspective, was the recognition at Helsinki of the wisdom of implementing the Headline Goal in a way that is mutually reinforcing with the Alliance - to make use, at least in part, of NATO's defence planning process and NATO's Defence Capabilities Initiatives (DCI). Since the capabilities that the EU needs are also the capabilities that NATO needs, we can't afford to apply one set of standards and methodologies to EU forces and a different set to the Alliance as a whole. Different standards could lead to a two-tier Alliance in which EU-member Allies only focus on low-intensity situations, such as peacekeeping in the traditional sense, while leaving non-EU Allies responsible for providing capabilities at the high end of the spectrum. This would not be healthy for the transatlantic relationship. It also would not be good for the Europeans, since all crises are unpredictable and could, in the end, require more than modest capabilities.

Another important clarification at Helsinki was the EU's reiteration of the phrase from the Washington Summit Communiqué referring to the EU conducting "operations where NATO as a whole is not engaged." This re-emphasised that ESDI is part of a larger transatlantic project, the aim of which is twofold:

- o to strengthen NATO's capacity to manage crises in the future and, in particular, to provide a stronger contribution by European Allies to NATO operations,

- o and, at the same time, to give the European members of NATO the capacity to take the lead in some situations when it is judged that NATO is not needed or when the US chooses not to participate.

FEIRA EU SUMMIT

Despite the progress recorded at Helsinki, there was some unfinished business for the Portuguese EU Presidency during the first half of 2000. This included taking forward the Headline Goal, developing the basis for NATO-EU institutional relations and determining the

role of the six non-EU European Allies in EU political decision-shaping, military planning and actual EU-led operations. While EU leaders took some welcome steps in these areas at the June 2000 Summit in Feira, Portugal, considerable work remains. President Clinton welcomed the progress made at Feira to develop a common European Security and Defence Policy while noting the need for early implementation of the agreed steps. In the US view, Feira's key accomplishments were:

- o A proposal to NATO to establish four NATO-EU ad hoc working groups on security, Headline Goal implementation, EU access to NATO assets and capabilities, and permanent NATO-EU consultation mechanisms. These working groups will be important forums for dialogue and the exchange of ideas, culminating in the negotiation of a NATO-EU framework agreement or set of agreements defining the long-term relationship between the two organisations;

- o A commitment by the EU to hold at least two meetings with the six non-EU European Allies and one meeting at the ministerial level every six months. In addition, Feira recognised explicitly the offers of capabilities by non-EU Allies, specifically Turkey, Poland, the Czech Republic and Norway, in support of future EU-led operations;

- o Agreement to hold a Capabilities Commitment Conference in November that should serve as a catalyst for capabilities improvements by our EU Allies in line with the Headline Goal;

- o Agreement on a role for NATO defence experts in analysing requirements for the Headline Goal to help ensure the success of the November conference and the long-term fulfillment of the Headline Goal.

LINKS AND PARTICIPATION

The Feira Summit left many details to be worked out, particularly on the crucial questions of NATO-EU links and the participation of non-EU European Allies in EU decision-shaping and operations. The United States believes firmly that participation by the non-EU Allies should be seen by the EU as a benefit rather than a burden or a favour. The six non-EU European Allies deserve special status above and beyond that of the EU's nine other partners who are candidates for EU membership. Turkey and the other non-EU Allies want to contribute, they have military means to bring to the table and they have experience as Associate Members of the Western European Union. While the close consultative arrangements from the WEU will not be replicated exactly, they provide an important precedent and model for NATO-EU links. Similarly, Canada, as an Ally with a long history of contributing to peacekeeping and crisis management, deserves a special place in the EU's thinking.

NATO works by consensus and, since any significant EU operation will likely require some NATO assets, the EU should not expect to get those assets unless the non-EU Allies are comfortable with their role in shaping the policy underpinning an EU-led operation. As noted above, the provision of assets and capabilities by the Alliance to an EU-led operation in a crisis is not automatic. Therefore, it is in the EU's interest to make sure that the non-EU players are comfortable with the policy that they are being asked to support. Finally, it is essential that non-EU European Allies, such as Turkey, enjoy a special status in their security relations with the EU because of their NATO Treaty Article V commitment to the 11 EU Allies. If a crisis being handled by the EU were to escalate, that Article V commitment could come into play - a fact often forgotten by some of our EU partners.

The EU's need for NATO support - in terms of defence and force planning, as well as access to assets and capabilities - gives all Allies, including the six, some leverage in establishing the mechanisms for NATO-EU co-operation. But this leverage must be used judiciously and constructively with the goal of advancing an effective ESDI. There is an important irony here. There are some in the EU who are sceptical of the need for NATO-EU ties and NATO support for EU-led operations. Those in this camp are quite satisfied with delay and indecision at NATO, especially when they can point the finger at someone else. The United States shares the objective of effective participation by Turkey and the other non-EU Allies, but does not want to play into the hands of those who want to minimise EU reliance on NATO by blocking progress on NATO-EU links and NATO support for ESDI. Delays in decision-making at NATO or the perception that NATO support is unreliable could feed the NATO sceptics and create pressure for the EU to go it alone. This could result in the duplication of capabilities and a waste of scarce defence resources, and it could hold the potential of seeing the security interests of Europe and North America diverge.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

The current French EU Presidency will be the crucial period for completing the unfinished business from Helsinki and Feira. The key issues left to tackle are well known:

NATO-EU Relations: The US objective is to help establish a framework for NATO-EU links that ensures that ESDI will benefit European security and the transatlantic relationship in equal measure. NATO and the EU held initial meetings early this summer at the working level to exchange ideas on ongoing work and chart the course of future joint work. But this is only the first step. As two distinct and autonomous institutions, they need to develop mechanisms soon for political consultations and practical co-operation at all levels, recognising that in most future crises, both institutions will likely play a part, given the need to bring political, economic as well as military influence to bear. These mechanisms should build upon the good pattern of working links that have been forged between NATO and the WEU in recent years. NATO's partnership with the EU will require an unprecedented level of co-ordination and transparency. A strong commitment is needed from both sides to ensure the process succeeds. The aim should be to develop the structures and habits of co-operation necessary to ensure that the transatlantic community can carry out military missions more effectively, whichever organisation is in the lead.

Participation: Reaching a satisfactory solution for the regular involvement of non-EU European Allies in EU political decision-shaping and military planning, and in actual EU-led operations will be essential to the success of ESDI and ESDP. The EU has put into place a basic mechanism for consultations with the six non-EU European Allies, but greater clarity is needed from the EU on how these arrangements will work in practice. Some issues - such as the role of the non-EU Allies in the day-to-day conduct of EU-led operations - remain vague. The EU must tackle these questions as a matter of priority. The Feira EU Summit declaration offered specific ideas for contacts with non-EU Allies but, the issue goes far deeper than the number and timing of meetings. Regular dialogue and an atmosphere of inclusion and transparency are needed to develop a decision-shaping role for non-EU Allies. Although much work remains to be done, there has been some progress on participation since Feira with the launch of initial 15-plus-6 contacts. The corollary to the participation issue is also valid: now that the EU has explicitly offered them a seat at the table, the six non-EU Allies must take their rightful place, press their interests, express their views and offer whatever contributions they can.

Capabilities: Developing ESDI/ESDP requires real capabilities for conducting crisis management operations. The Headline Goal provides ambitious yet achievable targets, but it remains to be seen whether these targets will be achieved through the commitment of the resources needed to increase the mobility and sustainability of European forces. Some EU members have begun to address the shortfalls in capabilities that were revealed most clearly in the Kosovo air campaign, and the US applauds their determination. But others continue to pare their defence budgets - despite the fact that healthy economies have helped to ease pressure on national budgets. They appear to view ESDP as a rationale for making savings on defence rather than a reason to spend more. This is not a diktat from the United States, but simply a reflection of the reality that increased capabilities require increased resources. Realignment of spending and restructuring of forces can help, but additional resources remain the bottom line requirement.

MOTIVATIONS ARE IMPORTANT

This is a formidable agenda, but solutions are possible if there is commitment and good will on both sides. While NATO can continue with its important work on ESDI, our EU Allies will need to think about the reasons why ESDP is important to them. Is ESDP primarily a political exercise, the latest stage in the process of European construction and integration or is ESDP's main goal to solve real-world security problems in Europe?

- o If ESDP is mostly about European 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 minimise 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 a source of transatlantic tension,

- o If, on the other hand, the EU's primary goal is to solve European security problems, with ESDP a means to that end, then Europe will have a new, dynamic and effective tool to deal with the changing security needs of the continent. In this case, the EU will welcome co-operation with NATO and the contributions of the non-EU Allies, and NATO will have a stronger European pillar in the process.

Of course, both these motivations are important, the key is to get the balance right. Similarly, NATO-EU relations on ESDI/ESDP should not be a zero-sum game, in which it is viewed as a concession for one organisation to sit in the same room with members of the other. The United States has a genuine interest both in the success of ESDP and in increased European responsibility within NATO. For the last half-century, NATO and the European Union have been the foundation of stability in Europe. In recent years, they have been the main engines for bringing peace, stability and prosperity to Central and Eastern Europe. Yet, NATO and the EU have had no institutional relationship, despite the fact that they are engaged in solving many of the same problems. The United States believes it is now time for these two institutions to promote together what they have sustained so well in their separate spheres. Washington's hope is that both organisations will be ready to engage directly on all fronts this fall to lay the foundation for important decisions at the Nice Summit and NATO Ministerials in December. If NATO and the EU can find practical solutions to the unfinished business at hand - capabilities, institutional links and the participation of non-EU Allies in the EU's work - then this can be the start of a healthy, twenty-first century marriage.