BREAKING DOWN THE REMAINING WALLS:
Prospects for EU-NATO co-operation Alister Miskimmon, Royal Holloway, University of London

by Norway and Denmark to construct strategic narratives for their domestic audiences

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At NATO’s Lisbon summit in November 2010, the topic of partnership took centre stage in the alliance’s efforts to recast its strategic concept for the coming years (NATO, 2010). Of central importance to NATO’s partnership are European Union-NATO relations, defined more by frustration in recent years, than success. Relations between the EU and NATO have been a constant topic of discussion since the end of the Cold War. Questions relating to the future viability of NATO with the demise of the Soviet Union were further complicated by the gradual emergence of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy after 1993. In an address to the summit, the President of the European Union Council, Hermann van Rompuy, concluded his speech to the summit with the following words:

The ability of our two organisations to shape our future security environment would be enormous if they worked together…It is time to break down the remaining walls between them (Van Rompuy, 2010).

Frustrations have been evident within NATO and the EU concerning the two organisation’s apparent difficulties to forge closer ties (de Hoop Scheffer, 2007). These frustrations have often taken the form of NATO criticisms of the EU’s sporadic development as a security and defence actor since the 1990s. Such criticisms stress the EU’s failure to have taken threats and new realities of international affairs seriously, which has contributed to an ever-growing gap in capabilities between European allies and the United States of America. Under such circumstances the alliance risks becoming a redundant institution which would signal the end of the USA’s interest in Europe and in maintaining a transatlantic community (Walt, 2010). Others predict that Europe without the American pacifying influence will once again descend into the kinds of nationalism-driven power struggles which had defined previous centuries (Kupchan, 2010). This is further exacerbated by the EU’s lack of global ambition, which will ensure that is remains a peripheral player on the big issues in the world (Toje, 2010). Attempts to build security and defence capabilities in

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1 This paper is based on ideas presented at the 46th Annual Security Conference of the Norwegian Atlantic Committee, 8th February 2011.
the EU since the end of the Cold War have at best been viewed with ambivalence by successive US administrations, fearing that too many false dawns in European defence co-operation leaves them understandably cautious. Such criticisms have been driven by issues of burden-sharing in the alliance, which have in turn been exacerbated by falling defence budgets in Europe and continued inefficiencies in the organisation of armed forces in Europe (IISS, 2008). This apparently bleak picture often sets the tone of discussions between both organisations, which are the key institutional actors in Europe, leading to concerns over the viability of co-operation between the EU and NATO in the long term.

NATO’s criticism of the EU’s performance raises many valid points. Yet, NATO has also gone through a period of substantial transformation, which had it not taken place, might have resulted in the end of the alliance in the years following the end of the Cold War (Coker, 2004). Theorists suggest that alliances do not, and should not, outlive the reasons for their original formation (Walt, 2009 and 2010). Alliances which have outlived their usefulness constrain states and mediate against finding new solutions to new challenges as they emerge (Mearsheimer, 1990). Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has continually sought to justify its continued existence and pushed back criticisms that it had become anachronistic for post-Cold War security challenges. Ironically, it has perhaps been during its period of most profound disintegrative stress during the crisis over Iraq, that NATO has since emerged with a clearer sense of purpose.

On a more positive note, both organisations share similar memberships – 21 countries are members of both the EU and NATO, suggesting that there is a solid basis of commonality between both partners. Much of the literature on NATO during the decade after the end of Cold War focused on the continued importance of ideational linkages between European and North American members of NATO as a central explanation for the alliance’s continued existence. Mary Hampton (1998/99) stressed the importance of ‘positive identity’ in the process of smoothing the transition from Cold War to the post-Cold War world. Others, drawing on Karl Deutsch’s concept of a security community – a group of states that rules out the use of force to settle disputes – sought to explain NATO’s continued relevance as
a venue to resolve problems within an institutional setting (for example, Williams and Neumann, 2000). As Robert Cooper states, ‘NATO and the European Union have...played an important role in reinforcing and sustaining the basic fact that Western European countries no longer want to fight each other’ (Cooper, 2004: 33).

Both organisations share a common space in Europe. They have worked side by side during the Cold War and have been central to efforts to establish stability in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The EU has also developed from being an institution largely devoid of substantive discussion on security and defence policy in the Cold War, to an organisation that now deploys troops and capabilities across the globe. Whilst the speed of the EU’s emergence as a security and defence actor might not be fast enough for some (Kagan, 2003), it is nonetheless notable that the EU has made significant strides forward in this area, in a relatively short period of time. The major challenge is this: how to balance forging stronger cooperation between allies in NATO whilst at the same time developing EU capabilities and allowing for the development of the EU as an international actor. Evidence suggests, however, that members of both organisations pursue often contradictory policies in both organisations as a means to maintain power and hierarchy within Europe, leading to continued sub-optimal outcomes (Simón Navarro, 2010).

The lack of territorial threat to Europe has made the role of NATO less essential. Added to this, there is a greater diversity of institutions providing security in Europe. Despite this, the EU and NATO must be considered indispensable partners, despite the stumbling blocks that continue to litter the path to closer cooperation. Overcoming these stumbling blocks will involve a process of careful choreography between the EU, USA and NATO. As this paper will outline, there exist substantial points of commonality between both organisations on the challenges their members face. Differences emerge on how to tackle security challenges and who should take the lead in addressing these challenges. The EU’s role in the world as a foreign policy actor has led some commentators to predict the EU’s rise to prominence in the 21st century (Leonard, 2005; Reid, 2004). Whilst there have been some bumps in the road in the EU’s journey toward becoming more influential and visible, Europe’s economic strength and growing
responsibilities will ensure that the EU will need to address its weaknesses in foreign and security policy. The challenge of new world order with the rise of competing voices to the USA and EU will also mean that the EU will need to be more assertive (Cooper, 2004; Zakaria, 2009). The USA’s gaze has moved away from Europe to Asia. Answering the question of what NATO’s role should be in the new world order is a major bone of contention and a driving force behind the process of writing the new strategic concept in 2010.

The EU and NATO are subject to considerable differentiation in the capabilities of its members (Noetzel and Schreer, 2009). For Noetzel and Schreer a multi-tiered NATO – as with the EU – risks creating disintegrative effects with multiple centres of power and more overt hierarchies. A lead group within the EU especially is perhaps unavoidable. Talk of a security and defence directoire within the EU built around the UK and France with a potential role for Germany has been evident since the 1990s. So too within NATO - this is not a new phenomenon. The difference between the Cold War and post-Cold War era is, however, that the range of areas where limited resources should be directed has become much more diverse. The art of multilateralism in Europe in future years will continue to be how to cope with diversity of capabilities, whilst working to establish more commonality of strategic culture and defence policy among Europeans and North Americans.

This paper outlines the range of issues impacting EU-NATO relations. Discussions on relations between both organisations have a number of recurring themes. As with many international issues, the EU-NATO conundrum demonstrates aspects of history repeating itself. Focus on making EU-NATO relations function more effectively ignores the underlying issues relating to different security and defence policies and interests of EU and NATO member-states. Even if the EU and NATO are able to forge closer relations, any quantitative improvement in defence provision will not be the result of bureaucratic tinkering. Rather, national decision-makers will need to take political decisions on the future of defence in the alliance and the EU, which will shape defence policy for years to come. Where, how and when to intervene in crisis management are important questions which often divide NATO and EU members, which will inevitably continue and have to be addressed even if NATO and the EU can come to a more co-ordinated relationship.
Historical background to the issue

With any examination of the EU-NATO conundrum it is striking to see the degree of continuity in the debates taking place. As Stanley Hoffmann argued, NATO-EU debates are often, ‘new variations on old themes’ (Hoffmann, 1979). Fundamentally a number of themes have remained consistent throughout recent decades: first, the degree of influence that European and North American members should have in NATO policy-making; second, Washington’s frustrations with what they consider to be a general under-investment in defence by the majority of European NATO members; third, debate over the nature of USA influence in Europe; and, fourth, debates over what the scope and nature of the EU’s foreign and security policy should be. These four issues remain present with us to this day.

Many of the reasons behind the emergence of tensions between these two organisations rest with their different origins – NATO was specifically developed as a Cold War security and defence institution, whilst the European integration process, although beginning as an economic group, developed into a multi-faceted economic and political organisation (Howorth, 2009). During the Cold War the European

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen listening to the EEAS High Representative baroness Ashton.
Community did not develop a security and defence policy after the failure of the European Defence Community (EDC) to be ratified in France in the early 1950s. After the EDC’s failure, NATO became the central forum for discussions on security and defence, a position which was reinforced by the existential threat of the Soviet Union and Western Europe’s reliance on the USA’s security umbrella. The European Community developed European Political Co-operation (EPC) in the 1970s as a means to increase its foreign policy footprint without relegating the role of NATO as the central arena for transatlantic discussions. EPC was a vehicle for the EC to develop a European voice in international affairs but remained largely ad hoc and was not formalised until discussions leading to the Treaty on European Union (TEU), signed in Maastricht in 1992.

There are numerous examples of tensions within NATO during the Cold War. Since the founding of the Atlantic alliance there have been marked differences in capabilities and defence policies. Ownership of nuclear weapons distinguished some members from others and, as the ‘dual track decision’ of the late 1970s and early 1980s demonstrated, the deployment of nuclear weapons became an issue of concern and tension. The USA’s commitment to the defence of Europe, whilst strategically important, often resulted in frustration at a perceived over-reliance on American forces. As Hedley Bull vociferously states,

…it is demeaning that the rich and prosperous democracies of Western Europe in the 1980s (admittedly, to different degrees in different cases) should fail to provide the resources for their own security and prefer to live as parasites on a transatlantic protector increasingly restless in this role (Bull, 1983: 887).

This sense that Europeans could do more in the provision of their defences has endured to this day. Now that defence is less tied to the territory of Europe, U.S. frustrations at the inability of many European states to project force across the globe is viewed as being a new manifestation of ‘free-riding’ on American security guarantees. Whilst the USA did carry the lion’s share of defence responsibilities in Europe during the Cold War, the concomitant political influence
which the U.S. enjoyed as a result of this policy was central to its Cold War foreign policy.

The end of the Cold War removed the existential threat to Western Europe posed by the Soviet Union. For many Europeans, the apparent peace dividend of the end of the Cold War would allow for a political emancipation from the USA and a chance to unify the continent under the banner of the European integration process. Building EU security and defence capabilities was an important pillar of working towards political union in Europe. Initial attempts to develop European capabilities after the end of the Cold War in the form of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy were met with American concerns (Deighton, 1997). In remarks to the NATO summit in Rome President Bush made clear his concerns about a potential parting of ways in NATO, stating ‘If, my friends, your ultimate aim is to provide independently for your own defence, the time to tell us is today’ (cited in Brandon, 1992: 7). Despite American concerns, NATO agreed to work towards the strengthening of the European contribution at the Rome summit in November 1991. The Rome declaration stated:

The development of a European security identity and defence role, reflected in the further strengthening of the European pillar within the Alliance, will reinforce the integrity and effectiveness of the Atlantic Alliance. The enhancement of the role and responsibility of the European members is an important basis for the transformation of the Alliance. These two positive processes are mutually reinforcing (NATO, 1991).

Ensuring EU and NATO developments were mutually reinforcing has been a difficult objective to achieve. Although initially modest, the CFSP did outline a commitment to building a common European defence in the future. More relevant to the initial development of CFSP, once the TEU came into force in 1993, was the preparation to equip the EU to take greater responsibility for stability in Europe. The break-up of Yugoslavia was a chastening experience for both institutions (Ginsberg, 2001). The tragedy of events in the Balkans highlighted the scale of the challenges facing post Cold War Europe and Europeans’ continued reliance on NATO and the USA, during the embryonic phase of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy.
The impact of the Kosovo conflict and the 1998 British-French St Malo declaration established a dynamic for developing EU security and defence capabilities and promised to be a watershed moment for NATO and the EU. The USA’s leadership in Operation Allied Force (OAF) had afforded Washington a political influence which created tensions among European allies and generated a momentum to develop the autonomous EU capabilities alluded to in the St Malo declaration.

Again, the US responded with suspicion and scepticism to moves by the EU to develop a security and defence policy of its own – most famously coined by Madeline Albright’s Three Ds of discrimination, decoupling and duplication3, driven in the main by the experience of OAF and informed by recent context of insubstantial moves by the EU to develop the CFSP (Shake et al, 1999). Europeans have often found it difficult to balance keeping the USA interested in Europe as its main partner – whilst establishing a more prominent role in foreign affairs both for the EU and within NATO. The decision taken at the Cologne European Council in June 1999 to work towards the establishment of a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) was the beginning of a process to develop the security and defence policy which defines the EU today. Operational since 2003 the ESDP is a portfolio of civilian and military capabilities capable of conducting operations ranging from humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking (the so-called Petersberg tasks). EU-NATO co-operation has been a key component of enabling the emergence of ESDP – now the Common Security and Defence Policy since the 2009 EU Lisbon Treaty - through the so-called Berlin Plus agreement of 2003. The Berlin Plus agreement is the arrangement between the EU and NATO for EU access to NATO capabilities. The majority of CSDP missions have not been Berlin Plus missions, but one can expect, as the EU’s confidence in crisis management grows, that the EU and NATO will need to work more closely together, particularly for missions at the higher end of the Petersberg Tasks spectrum.

CSDP is, however, not all about defence. Civilian capabilities have been central to the CSDP’s development (see Chivvis, 2010). At the time of writing, 17 of the 24 CSDP missions to date have been
primarily civilian or partly civilian in make-up (Council of Ministers, 2011). It is the EU’s civilian capabilities that give the EU a comparative advantage over NATO in tackling many international problems. The range of threats facing both organizations outlined in their strategic texts such as the 2003 European Security Strategy or NATO’s 2010 Strategic Concept illustrate that the security threats of today are not going to be addressed solely by military means. National defence white papers such as Germany’s Defence White Paper 2006, France’s Livre Blanc 2008 and the UK’s Strategic Defence and Security Review 2010 all view defence as a wide spectrum of operations, involving a range of capabilities and agencies. These national conceptions are central to the formation of policy in the EU and NATO. Attempts to differentiate policy too much between both organisations underplay the centrality of nation-states and substantial shared membership of the EU and NATO. France’s policy towards the EU and NATO in recent years is illustrative of this. As Mérand states,

**Before Sarkozy came to office, both London and Paris had come to accept that there is no existential contradiction between NATO and the EU, that the people in the two organizations in fact need each other. In hindsight, several decades of socialization in EU diplomacy and NATO cooperation were unlikely to generate a security architecture that would sideline one or the other. No matter how the world had changed from a geopolitical point of view, policy makers were not going to destroy their social lives. (Mérand, 2009: 374)**

The interconnected social lives and experiences of participants in European defence is such that despite institutional bureaucratic differences, many issues are viewed in similar ways, making any attempt to reinforce a sense of competing institutions a self-defeating objective.
Institutional differences

Institutional differences between the EU and NATO are an important aspect in explaining why both organisations find it difficult to co-operate. These differences do not focus solely on Brussels, but rather trickle down to national contexts where years of experience of NATO-centred activity in defence ministries can complicate attempts to Europeanise security and defence policy within the EU (Gross, 2009; Miskimmon, 2007; de Vasconcelos, 2010) As a means to address the problems of co-ordinating 27 different foreign policies, CSDP remains largely an intergovernmental area of policy making in the EU, with member-states playing the central role. The EU’s neutral states and Denmark’s objections to CSDP mean that the member-states
represent a varied set of policies and strategic cultures. Nevertheless, European Union security and defence policy is to some extent integrative, involving both intergovernmental and supranational actors – the Commission has a prominent role in External Relations and the European Parliament’s (EP) role in CFSP has grown in recent years, primarily due to the EP’s ability to win influence through exercising its influence over the EU budget. The EU’s 2009 Lisbon Treaty’s tidying up exercise of institutional arrangements and the emergence of the External Action Service under the direction of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy – Baroness Catherine Ashton - are designed to create greater coherence and visibility of EU diplomacy. The EU is also a very prominent international aid donor and an important trade power. The EU is, therefore, a multifaceted foreign policy actor. NATO, despite recent developments to expand the range of tasks the alliance engages in, remains a niche organisation focused on defence.

NATO remains highly specialised in security and defence. The EU and NATO are very different institutions. Besides the obvious absence of the USA, Canada, Norway and others from the EU, path-dependent institutional developments in both organisations have had consequences. For some time the EU was expected to follow a NATO model to develop its Common Security and Defence Policy which ran into problems. Allowing complementary developments in each organisation may be the best way forward, rather than forcing adaptation. Both organisations have clear strengths, which both should seek to develop. Much of the literature, however, focuses on how to better organise both institutions to work more closely together, viewing EU-NATO relations as a functional puzzle to be solved, rather than an insurmountable problem. Poor European defence capabilities present a significant hurdle to interoperability in NATO. With the financial downturn hopes of increased European defence spending is a non-starter. Yet, pressure on national defence budgets has led to calls for greater commitments by EU member-states in defence spending. The creation of the European Defence Agency and recent proposals from Germany and Sweden to improve how scarce defence resources are used within the EU are evidence of EU member-states acknowledging the importance of maintaining effective capabilities. The British-French agreement of November 2010 signalled that the EU’s two most capable military powers recognise the
importance of co-operation in delivering capabilities in a time of falling spending. This close co-operation has been reinforced with the shared decision to enforce the no-fly zone in Libya in 2011.

Institutional differences and functional shortcomings need not be set in stone. The British-French agreement of 2010, which has the potential to improve European capabilities within NATO, suggests that the barriers to closer co-operation are not insurmountable. As Howorth (2009) argues, primarily it is politics which prevents movement in multilateral co-operation in European defence; therefore, this is a political problem – not a functional one. When a sensible functional option emerges and politics are resolved things happen. The British-French St Malo agreement in 1998 is another example of political will over-riding previously held beliefs in the pursuit of responding to challenges. France’s view of NATO has altered due to President Sarkozy’s policy of closer integration in NATO which if maintained, has the potential to facilitate the development of closer ties between the two organisations.

**Getting to grips with the evolving security concept**

Relations between the EU and NATO during the Cold War were, as outlined above, much more straightforward. NATO’s primacy was unquestioned. A major factor in NATO’s difficulty in redefining itself after the Cold War has been that security is now understood in a much more diverse way, rather than the orthodox view of defence. Discussions at the annual Munich Security Conference indicate how wide and varied discussions on security now are. David Cameron’s speech on the dangers of multiculturalism would surely not have been expected in Munich a decade ago (Cameron, 2011). There has been a collective transformation of security and defence policy in the EU and NATO in a time of change and uncertainty within the international system. Successive post-Cold War defence white papers in Europe have pointed to the passing of territorial threats and the increasing diversity of challenges to Europe’s security in the 21st century. The transition in thinking from nuclear deterrence and massive conventional build-up to the broadening of the security concept has presented many challenges. Primarily differences in threat perception have become more pronounced which has resulted in a cacophony of different views on what the EU and NATO should be doing in a post-Cold War world.
Lack of uniformity in identifying how to tackle the principle threats to the transatlantic area has divided opinion over what the principle focus of the EU and NATO should be in security and defence policy. Within the EU the diversity of threat perception has had the affect that member-states often differ on the scope and range of capabilities – both civilian and military – which the EU should invest in and develop. There has been some improvement in the process of identifying threats, such as in the production of the European Security Strategy, but differences remain on how to address them (Kirchner and Sperling, 2010; Meyer, 2006). NATO is no different, with noticeable variations in opinion concerning the focus on territorial defence or expeditionary crisis management forces. Both organisations have sought in their own ways to agree on a set of threats and challenges which members can agree on, most notably in the European Security Strategy 2003 and in NATO’s Strategic Concept 2010. The writing of both strategic documents required much debate within the two institutions concerning the aims and interests of their members for the coming years. Within Europe it is noticeable that among the EU’s defence policy big three (France, the United Kingdom and to a lesser extent Germany) there is an emerging sense in their national security strategies of a common view on the challenges they face, if divergence still exists concerning how these challenges should be met.

NATO debates have often revolved around whether NATO should go global or remain primarily concerned with territorial defence of the NATO area. Pressure from the USA to deploy NATO globally in the service of the alliance’s strategic interests has also not resonated with European NATO members more concerned with territorial threats and instability on the borders of NATO’s area. The process of transformation of European armed forces from forces focused on territorial defence to globally deployable forces has not been met without opposition and reluctance. Germany’s stance is a case in point. Despite playing a central role in the development of CSDP, more challenging NATO missions – most notably in Afghanistan – have been politically very sensitive within Germany. Germany’s reluctance to participate in more offensive military missions within Afghanistan has caused tensions with alliance partners (Berenskoetter and Giegerich, 2010).
Competitive networked security governance

Former NATO Secretary-General George Robertson referred to European security as a ‘great jigsaw’ (Cornish and Edwards 2005: 817). Another consequence of the broadening of our understanding of security has been the explosion of actors involved in security policy and the emergence of different modes of co-operation. European security policy today is defined by institutional overlaps that can often frustrate. Stephanie Hofmann states that, ‘Once institutional overlap exists, multiple centres of political authority over a policy domain have been created’ (Hofmann, 2011: 105). These path dependencies have been defining of EU-NATO relations. Despite an apparent shared impetus to meet security challenges sub-optimal co-ordination exists, which has marked EU-NATO relations. Hofmann questions the underlying rationale for such inefficiencies when she asks,

One wonders why member states do not solely have the goal of peace and security in mind when conducting multilateral crisis management operations. Institutional overlap creates operational, political and institutional problems that actors do not necessarily want to alleviate but instead have an interest in creating and maintaining (Hofmann, 2011: 116).

The answer to Hofmann’s question must lie in continued different national conceptions of security and defence policy and concern by some Europeans to pursue greater political emancipation from the USA on the global stage. Defence policy is not a bureaucratic puzzle to solve. The exercise of military force has profound consequences for all sides.

The brakes on more effective EU-NATO co-operation should not be overblown, however. Art’s work on security competition illustrates that despite differences of opinion and method, the EU and NATO are not competitors in any real sense. Art defines security competition in the following terms: ‘A security competition among states commences when they come to view their security as highly competitive and divisible, not quasi-harmonious and semi-indivisible’ (Art, 1996: 6). EU and NATO members continue to view their security in indivisible terms, thus avoiding any chance that the alliance will face an acrimonious split. EU states have no interest or incentive to balance the USA (Howorth and Menon, 2009).
Continuing Problems

What then are the problems which will continue to define EU-NATO relations for the foreseeable future? Since the southern part of Cyprus became a member-state of the EU, the EU-NATO relationship remains in a deadlock. Turkey’s stance preventing Cyprus and Malta being involved in discussions with NATO is reciprocated by Cyprus and Malta’s block on Turkey’s full engagement with EU security and defence policy. Concretely, it means that:

- The EU and NATO do not have a formal dialogue (Turkey cannot accept that Cyprus is at the table)
- Formal coordinated capacity development is not possible - coordination on the ground (Kosovo, Afghanistan) must take place ad hoc and is difficult to negotiate.

Swedish Foreign Minister Karl Bildt has been a loud voice in highlighting the centrality of the Cyprus issue as a barrier for progress in European security governance (Dempsey, 2010). The impact of differentiated membership – despite 21 common members – between the two organisations remains perhaps the major reason that the EU and NATO have been unable to overcome their differences through closer co-operation. One potential avenue to overcome the impasse is to encourage NATO Secretary General Rasmussen and the EU’s High Representative Catherine Ashton to explore ways to enhance co-operation, as suggested at NATO’s Lisbon summit in November 2010 (see Ashton’s speech to the NATO summit, November 2010).

Another potential issue is NATO’s ability to serve as a central forum for transatlantic discussions, a role it played so effectively during the Cold War. EU-USA relations in terms of foreign policy are, arguably, more important for the coming decades of rapid change than defence. This is particularly relevant with the emergence of new centres of power across the globe. Biscop argues that NATO is unlikely to be the prime forum for engagement with China, India, Brasil and other leading nations (Biscop, 2011). Jolyon Howorth goes further to suggest that “…it is necessary for the two organisations to abandon attempts to define a grand strategic relationship” (Howorth, 2009: 106; see also Biscop, 2009). In the current climate the EU’s major challenge is to maintain economic cohesion, improve global competitiveness,
establish a robust Eurozone, and maintain a stable neighbourhood. Playing a prominent role in stabilising the Maghreb and Mashreq will be high on the agenda after recent events in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt.

The EU demonstrates that in the absence of a collective position it becomes cumbersome and often unable to act. The latest example of this has been the issue of the no-fly zone in Libya. France and the UK’s support of United Nations Resolution 1973 alongside the USA signalled transatlantic unity on the issue. However, Germany’s decision to abstain on the resolution alongside Russia and China made a collective EU position more difficult to achieve. It also highlighted the continued divergence on military crisis management of the EU’s Big Three. In light of this, the necessity of building a defence core around the UK and France becomes unavoidable in order for the EU’s CDSP to become irrelevant (Grant, 2011). President Obama’s concern to make NATO the central institution for organising the military operation suggested that the US president is keen to engage European allies more (Gordon, 2010a and 2010b). Calls for an ‘era of engagement’ for Europe’s introverted military actors presents an uncomfortable situation in which Washington’s call for greater co-operation will be very difficult to refuse. Europeans’ ability to say no to the USA under George W. Bush, leading to a more selective US policy of multilateralism, is no longer a viable response to the Obama administration which has made a clear point of raising expectations of the contribution of European allies to crisis management. US expectations that allies need to contribute more to enforce collective decisions are therefore becoming more characteristic of EU-NATO relations (Financial Times, 23/03/2011). However, due to these high expectations, Germany’s abstention ensured that instead of EU-NATO co-operation on the issue of Libya, states fell back on tried and trusted NATO co-operation. Unrest in North Africa and the Middle East should focus the attention of EU member-states and drive a collective response to the challenges. Significant flows of displaced people from the instability in North Africa are having a noticeable effect on EU members – Italy in particular. Yet, differing views on events has ensured that Baroness Ashton has been sidelined, and national differences have defined the EU position, rather than a sustained effort to engage with the issues.
Despite NATO’s leadership in enforcing the no-fly zone in Libya, NATO’s priorities are on dealing with Afghanistan and what will happen after, in terms of the collective aims of alliance members. NATO has cast a wide net in terms of its core functions within the 2010 Strategic Concept – collective defence, crisis management and co-operative security. The commitment by NATO members to end their military deployment in Afghanistan will signal the end of NATO’s most important post-Cold War collective action. In the absence of this shared project, NATO members will need to reinforce the need for continued co-operation, or risk becoming anachronistic.

Conclusion

• The EU and NATO will sink or swim together (Valasek, 2007). Tensions between the EU and NATO are in a sense down to two major developments:
  • NATO has become less essential for Europe – there is no territorial threat to Europe.
  • The EU has grown in a relatively short period of time to be a credible foreign policy actor in its own right – despite obvious teething problems.

Yet, as NATO’s strategic concept states, ‘...the EU is a unique and essential partner’ (NATO, 2010: §32) In order for the relationship between the EU and NATO to develop two things are necessary in the immediate future:

• NATO must be clear that the EU is its partner of first choice – particularly when it comes to implementing the comprehensive approach, blending civilian and military capabilities to meet a diverse set of challenges.
• EU member-states must follow the lead set by France and the UK in November 2010 and get serious about developing real capabilities (and value for money).

A successful partnership will require continued commitment on both sides to build the relationship alongside inventive ways to overcome the impasse on formal agreements due to the Cyprus/Turkey issue. Much more unites than divides the EU and NATO. The European
Security Strategy, NATO’s strategic concept and the national security strategies of the key states demonstrate that there is a shared sense of the challenges they collectively face.

The EU and NATO are indispensable partners to one another. EU-NATO relations must retain an important degree of perspective of their role and aims in the world. Failure to maintain a clear sense of purpose will ensure that more focus is put on inter-institutional competition and less on maintaining collective responses to pressing international challenges. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington D.C., the historian Michael Howard called for a clear sense of purpose based on the principles of the enlightenment to guide the West’s response:

>This…should be the policy of the West: not to wage war, but to work, undeterred even by the most terrible setbacks, to maintain a necessarily imperfect peace; and to preserve a world order that has been gradually evolving since men first visualised its possibility, nearly three hundred years ago (Howard, 2002: 126)

Closer EU-NATO relations will not be a panacea for the imperfections of security and defence policy in the transatlantic area. Institutional tinkering cannot prevent bad decisions being made, or force reluctant states to participate in military crisis management. Yet, defence is a central pillar of maintaining a vibrant transatlantic community in the 21st century. Returning to Hedley Bull, a shared defence policy can also provide a cohesive quality to European integration that does not have to be at the expense of relations with Washington. Bull states,

>The objective should be a West European military alliance - an alliance within an alliance, preserving the wider structure of NATO. There might ultimately be a European alliance without Nato, just as there was in 1948 when the Atlantic Alliance had not yet been established. The idea of a Europe responsible for its own security can breathe new life into the movement for European unity. The European Community will never become a community in the true sense while it continues to steer clear of this problem. If it were to take courage and grapple with the question of
defense, which has always been much more at the heart of the issue of European unity than any matter of economic policy, it might recapture the vitality and sense of purpose which today it has so conspicuously lost (Bull, 1983: 892).

How to balance NATO co-operation, developing EU capabilities and the EU’s emergence as an international actor in its own right should be a top priority. For the Atlanticist-oriented EU states this can facilitate continued close co-operation with Washington. For the more Europeanist EU members, a more robust EU can address concerns regarding the penetration of the USA in European affairs. The EU has lost its momentum in security and defence policy. The recent development of the EU through enlargement of its membership and the protracted negotiation of a new treaty, coupled with the financial crisis, has ensured that the EU is more and more encroaching on domestic issues – rather than focusing on the foreign policy domain. Yet, individual EU states do not have the capability to be influential in international affairs for the coming century. Generating collective responses will be key. Greater ambition to influence international debates and drawing on historical ties throughout the world will also enable the EU to play a more proactive role in world affairs. Greater EU presence in international affairs should not come at the expense of NATO. As Bailes asserts,

As long as the United States and Europe need each other, guarantees matter. Absolute mutual assurance gives NATO its character as an integrated organization and makes it an effective support for democracy and wealth creation. It restrains laziness, selfishness, and nationalism. In a Europe whose peripheries are erupting with ethnic violence, this hardly seems the moment to throw away the allies’ golden handcuffs (Bailes, 1997: 20).

The last decade has seen the EU’s emergence as a crisis manager (Menon, 2009). Risk aversion is an understandable position to take as the EU grows in confidence and capabilities in foreign and security policy (Laidi, 2010). NATO’s emergence only began after the end of the Cold War, and was reinforced by over forty years of
institutionalised co-operation. American’s role in Europe is no longer to be the ‘balancer of last resort’ (Art, 1996: 36; Kupchan 2010). Europeans have learned to collectively address their problems without resorting to the use of force. America’s expectation of the Europeans is to be a partner in addressing global challenges, spreading the burden of global leadership as new states such as China rise to global prominence. Differences on tactics, if handled properly, are unlikely to diminish the shared strategic interests that are evident in the transatlantic community. (Sloan, 2003)
References


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### Endnotes

2 Initial attempts to develop European capabilities were met with American concerns: Anne Deighton states, “The famous Bartholomew telegram, sent to all EC NATO countries as the WEU meeting was taking place, laid down very clearly that the Americans were not prepared to let the Europeans make tendentious initiatives on defence issues. It set down that there should be no European caucus inside NATO, no marginalisation of non-EC members of NATO and no alternative defence organisation for the Europeans. Although considered an American over-reaction, even by the British, it nevertheless made it clear that any subsequent defence debates were going to include the US as a player if NATO’s role was challenged. This first negotiating phase was considered little more than a ‘stuttering start’, but it clearly established that the defence component of any revised treaty would meet with strong American resistance, which could be exploited by the British”. (Deighton, 1997)

3 Secretary of State Albright’s assertion was that any autonomous EU capabilities should be grounded on three principles: there should be no discrimination against non-EU NATO members; the development of EU capabilities should not mean decoupling from the Atlantic alliance; the development of EU security and defence policy should not mean a costly duplication of military capabilities.
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