The European Union has embarked on the process of developing what Javier Solana, the EU’s High Representative, has described as ‘a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention’. In view of the priority given to the ‘war on terror’ by the United States, it might have been expected that 9/11 would galvanize an EU strategic capability—or, conversely, that the sometimes bitterly contested divisions over the invasion of Iraq would have destroyed the whole project. Neither happened. EU member states, both old and new, have been slowly establishing the will and the capacity to make the EU’s security and defence policy credible and useful.

With so many strategic developments within and around the EU—apart from enlargement and the consequent efforts at institutional and constitutional reform, there have been 9/11 itself, the invasions of Afghanistan as well as Iraq, the widespread acknowledgement of the risk of further terrorist attacks, especially after the Madrid bombings of March 2004, and the proliferation of materials and technologies associated with weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—it is not surprising that a veritable cottage industry has arisen on the possible development of an effective and relatively coherent European security policy and strategic culture. For its many critics, the very venture remains misguided and fraught with problems. For some, the EU’s strategic project is at least implicitly (and sometimes only too explicitly) a challenge to the United States and to a system that has successfully secured Europe’s defence through NATO. Others argue that the project lacks operational credibility and is therefore dangerous to both global and European stability and security. And there is a concern that the project will push Europe away from the moral high

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ground established by a reliance on civilian rather than military power: the civilian power approach that has distinguished the EU from NATO and the US is, arguably, endangered as access to military force makes Europe more a normal than a normative power. Other critics have been alarmed at the prospect of a growing securitization of EU policies, particularly since 9/11, and fear that the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and the strategic project could adversely affect both domestic and external relations, including development assistance. Also striking, however, is the pragmatism that has characterized the development of the ESDP since St Malo in 1998. After the deep divisions over Iraq, the ESDP project has been revived, most significantly in the form of the EU’s Security Strategy, published in December 2003.

Our aim here is to re-examine the EU’s character and potential as a strategic actor, setting that analysis in the context of the strategic culture debate. Our definition of strategic culture as the political and institutional confidence and processes to manage and deploy military force, coupled with external recognition of the EU as a legitimate actor in the military sphere, lends itself to a reappraisal around four core questions. First, military capabilities: we argued in 2001 that establishing a European strategic culture was vital in order to rationalize the acquisition of capabilities necessary for the range of humanitarian and peacekeeping tasks envisaged. Equally, without military capabilities, all talk of a strategic culture would ring hollow. How much closer has the EU come to acquiring those essential capabilities? Second, while the EU has established some reputation for and some credibility in ad hoc action, to what extent and in what quarters have these limited military/policing experiences engendered a sense of reliability and legitimacy for autonomous EU action? Third, given that, so far, operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Balkans have depended on an integrated civil–military effort, do the policy-making processes of the EU now ensure the appropriate level and depth of civil–military integration? Finally, given that EU operations have been limited in time and scope, and that much of the EU’s work in the Balkans has depended upon cooperation with NATO, what can be said of the evolving relationship between the EU and NATO?

Capabilities

In Helsinki in December 1999 the European Council took the decision to improve the EU’s crisis management capabilities by setting what became known as the ‘Helsinki headline goal’: an army corps of 50,000–60,000 troops, available at 60 days’ notice, and sustainable in theatre for up to one year. The hope was that by December 2003 the EU would be able to manage simultaneously one ‘heavy’ mission, such as the separation of belligerent forces, and one

‘light’ mission, such as a humanitarian or non-combatant evacuation operation. Initially, the project appeared to achieve good results: the November 2000 Capabilities Commitment Conference brought promises amounting to 100,000 troops, 400 aircraft and 100 ships. Yet by mid-2001 a more cautious and realistic assessment of the Helsinki timetable was being made, with Javier Solana admitting that the EU still lacked ‘certain important strategic and tactical capabilities essential to undertake the most demanding missions in the time-frame foreseen at the Helsinki Council’.6

Ironically, the EU’s otherwise full and urgent response to 9/11 revealed how little had been achieved in nearly two years of the Helsinki process, and how little was available to the EU in terms of crisis management and security capability. The extraordinary European Council meeting of 21 September 2001 produced an action plan which concentrated on important but largely non-military issues such as definitions of terrorism, a common EU arrest warrant, aid to Afghanistan, and agreement on mutual legal assistance with the United States.7 But in terms of deployable, operational capability, the EU had little to offer. It had become uncomfortably apparent before 9/11, and not just to Javier Solana, that the Helsinki timetable was simply too demanding. The EU’s new Military Staff (EUMS) had constructed a ‘headline catalogue’, listing the capabilities required, in 144 areas, to achieve the 1999 Helsinki goal. The list was daunting, including airlift and sealift, air-to-air refuelling, communications and intelligence, and many other capabilities. By one estimate, these acquisitions would have required additional defence expenditure within the EU of US$25 billion over 10–15 years.8 Yet even after 9/11 there were few signs that European governments were willing to increase defence budgets by such a large margin.9 Known budgetary realities took precedence over the unknown implications of 9/11. On 12 October 2001, EU defence ministers acknowledged in masterly understatement that it was unlikely that the initial Helsinki goal could be reached by December 2001, and preferred to speak of the EU’s military ambitions being achieved ‘progressively’.10

Nevertheless, the Helsinki process moved forward doggedly. At the Capabilities Improvement Conference (CIC) held on 19 November 2001, defence ministers insisted that by 2003 the EU should be able to manage the full range of military tasks, from humanitarian missions to the use of combat forces in crisis management operations—though they also identified 42 capability

7 The Conclusions and Plan of Action of the Extraordinary European Council Meeting on 21 September 2001 declared: ‘It is by developing the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and by making the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) operational at the earliest opportunity that the Union will be most effective. The fight against the scourge of terrorism will be all the more effective if it is based on an in-depth political dialogue with those countries and regions of the world in which terrorism comes into being.’ See http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/140.en.pdf, last accessed 8 June 2005.
10 ‘EU rapid reaction force “will not be ready this year”’, Independent, 13 Oct. 2001.
shortfalls, some 24 of which were ‘significant’. The CIC also launched a new initiative—the European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP)—to ‘rectify the remaining deficiencies’ in the headline goal process. Rather than produce another ambitious and overwhelming list of capability deficiencies, ECAP called on governments to identify, voluntarily and ‘bottom-up’, those projects (national and multinational) which could enhance European military capability and which had a reasonable prospect of being delivered. Between March 2002 and March 2003 some 19 ECAP development panels drew up reports indicating both qualitative and quantitative solutions to the shortfalls identified.

The final ECAP reports contributed to several further initiatives, the first of which was the capability development mechanism (CDM), introduced under the Italian presidency in December 2003. The CDM is designed to encourage progress towards the Helsinki goals, with reviews and initiatives under successive European Council presidencies. The May 2004 Single Progress Report, for example, noted that while ECAP had addressed some capability shortfalls, no more than ‘marginal progress’ had been made. The second report, in November 2004, found that, of the 64 capabilities listed in the 2002 Capabilities Improvement Chart, the shortfall in member states’ contributions was shown as ‘solved’ in no more than seven cases; some improvement was noted in another four, while the remainder had stayed ‘approximately the same’. These shortfalls prompted new ideas. Yet another capabilities plan—known as Headline Goal 2010—was agreed at the June 2004 European Council, with member states committing themselves ‘to be able by 2010 to respond with rapid and decisive action applying a fully coherent approach to the whole spectrum of crisis management options covered by the Treaty on the European Union’. The new plan involved a mix of old and new objectives such as a civil–military cell within EUMS, EU strategic lift coordination, and the development of criteria with which to assess national forces declared to the new Headline Goal.

Late 2003 also saw the ‘battlegroups’ initiative, aimed at making European troops more deployable: small, self-contained force packages of around 1,500 troops would be available within 15 days to respond to a crisis, usually in support of the United Nations, and sustainable for about 30 days. At their meeting in April 2004, European defence ministers planned to have nine such battlegroups

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available for deployment by 2007. From 2005 to 2007, at least one ‘coherent battlegroup package’ would be able to undertake an operational deployment. The full operating capability, due in 2007, would enable two concurrent, single-battlegroup, rapid response operations, launched ‘nearly simultaneously’. The timetable seemed achievable, particularly when, at the November 2004 Capabilities Commitments Conference, EU defence ministers made commitments sufficient for 13 battlegroups. Although the battlegroups initiative was not intended to replace the full, 60,000-troop Helsinki goal, the range of tasks and responsibilities soon being considered for the battlegroups suggests that EU defence ministers were keen to make as much as possible of the new scheme, perhaps compensating for the faltering progress in the larger Helsinki project.17

Another, rather weightier initiative was the European Defence Agency (EDA), established by Council Joint Action on 12 July 2004. Support for such an initiative had been clear at the Thessaloniki European Council in June 2003, with calls for an ‘intergovernmental agency’ to assist in the development of defence capabilities for crisis management operations and strengthen the European defence industrial base.18 Although acting as a coordinating body for existing multilateral institutions and projects, such as the Eurofighter ‘Typhoon’,19 the EDA would be more than just another armaments acquisition or cross-border project management body. As both ‘catalyst’ and ‘conscience’, the EDA would provide an element of ‘top-down’ guidance to the ECAP project groups and would encourage member states to make meaningful commitments to the Headline Goal 2010.20 The new EDA was duly instructed to work with governments to review the 15 ECAP project groups agreed in May 2003, and make appropriate use of the CDM.21

As far as the civilian aspects of the ESDP capabilities project are concerned, the goals were always more modest and have provoked rather less political and public interest. The Feira European Council in June 2000 identified four areas of civilian capability requiring attention: police; judiciary; civilian administration; and civil protection.22 The November 2001 Police Capabilities Commitment Conference saw agreement to provide by 2003 up to 5,000 police officers for crisis prevention and crisis management operations, of whom up to 1,400 could be deployed in 30 days. This new European Security and Intelligence Force (ESIF) could be called upon to conduct ‘preventive and repressive’ actions in support of peacekeeping missions around the world. The ESIF would be the political responsibility of the Political and Security Committee (PSC), and

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19 D. Keohane, Europe’s new defence agency, policy brief (London: Centre for European Reform, 28 June 2004).
21 For background see http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/050208_EDA_update2.pdf. A chief executive, Nick Witney, was appointed in July 2004.
22 Feira Presidency Conclusions, appendix 3 to annex I.
under the operational control of the High Representative.\textsuperscript{23} Having made these commitments, albeit for a deadline in 2003, the Council judged in December 2001 that enough had been done and, rather oddly, that ‘the targets set at Feira have therefore been met’.\textsuperscript{24}

Other, more practical initiatives were launched in late 2004, including a new European Gendarmerie Force (EGF), formed by France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.\textsuperscript{25} More significant was the November 2004 Civilian Capabilities Commitment Conference, the outcome of which—a civilian headline goal with a target date of 2008—was approved at the December 2004 European Council. Various monitoring and support missions were envisaged, covering a range of security sector governance issues, for which the EU’s civilian capabilities would be available within 30 days of the decision to deploy. As with the military Headline Goal 2010, the civilian Headline Goal 2008 sets a number of clear targets, such as identifying key planning assumptions and illustrative scenarios by April 2005; creating a Capabilities Requirement List by July 2005; assessing national contributions to the list and identifying shortfalls by end 2005; and ensuring a civilian headline goal follow-up process.

A great deal of bureaucratic skill and energy has clearly been expended on setting both military and civilian targets, monitoring progress and shortfalls, and then setting priorities for addressing those shortfalls.\textsuperscript{26} Yet for all this activity, the acquisition by the EU of deployable military and civilian capabilities for crisis management operations has been frustratingly slow. Having declared their will to act, in the European Security Strategy and elsewhere, EU governments appear so far to have been reluctant to provide themselves with all the means they themselves have argued are necessary. The pace and quality of its capability acquisition process have two main implications for the EU in its ambition to become a strategic actor. First, the transatlantic technology gap is plainly not being closed by the EU’s military capability programme. Second, another credibility gap is emerging between the EU’s strategic expectations, on the one hand, and its actual crisis management capability, on the other. Viewed from the narrow, albeit indispensable, perspective of capabilities, the EU’s pursuit of a strategic identity is comprehensible in declaratory terms, but its inadequate implementation appears to risk strategic isolation from the US as well as operational inadequacy.


\textsuperscript{25} The EGF was launched in the Netherlands in September 2004. Based in Vicenza, Italy, and available for deployment from 2005, the force will be about 3,000 strong, with a rapid reaction element of about 800–900 ready to move within 30 days.

Experience

What the EU has undertaken has been of growing significance, in that the more tasks accomplished, the greater the sense of confidence in the EU as a credible strategic actor. But it is not simply that experience has the practical consequence of engendering a ‘can do’ attitude among policy-makers; it can also either raise unrealistic expectations on the part of publics and partners or create a belief in the greater reliability of the EU among them. Expectations created by the Franco–British declaration at St Malo in 1998—which have been reflected consistently in Eurobarometer polls—now have real evidence of a capacity to act to support them. Since 2001 the EU has undertaken a variety of different missions within the framework of the ESDP, and along the way has acquired a range of experiences which even NATO cannot match. ESDP missions have included police missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (since January 2003) and in Macedonia (December 2003), a mission launched in Kinshasa (DR Congo) in December 2004 and agreement on a coordinating office for Palestinian Police Support in April 2005; military missions in Macedonia (March–December 2003), DR Congo (March–September 2003), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (agreed in July 2004); and rule-of-law missions in Georgia (agreed in July 2004) and Iraq (agreed in February 2005).

Each new mission has been seen as an opportunity to improve EU policy-making capacity, to achieve a greater consistency and coherence in integrating the EU’s different policy instruments, and to ensure a consensus among all member states. In Macedonia, for example, although the EU could arguably have acted sooner to prevent the crisis developing, the EU was able to make use of its extensive civilian instruments of policy. But the EU had agreed at the March 2002 Barcelona European Council meeting that it was ready to take over from NATO’s 700-strong ‘Task Force Fox’ in Macedonia, when that commitment concluded in October 2002, although it was acknowledged that any EU operation would need NATO agreement on sharing military and planning assets. It was not until after the Greco–Turkish spat over EU access to NATO equipment and planning procedures was resolved, in December 2002, that it could go ahead. What then became known as Operation Concordia began in March 2003 and concluded on 15 December 2003, when it was replaced by EUPOL Proxima, the EU’s fourth ESDP operation and second policing mission.

From the outset, the EU has emphasized the civilian dimension to ESDP in terms of conflict prevention and crisis management, setting its priorities as policing, rule of law, civilian administration and civil protection. The EU’s

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27 In December 2004 Eurobarometer reported that support for ESDP was higher than it had been for the last ten years, and was particularly strong in the new member states. The UK, with 27% against, was not the most reticent country: Swedes and Finns, at 39% and 36% against respectively, were even less enthusiastic.


29 The four priorities listed in the Presidency Conclusions of the Feira European Council, June 2000.
first policing mission grew out of the Seville European Council of June 2002, which agreed to deploy a 500-strong EU police mission to Bosnia from January 2003. It was perhaps ironic that after so much ambitious talk of a large and deployable military capability, the EU’s first mission would be a small policing operation. However, nearly two years later, in December 2004, the EU also took over NATO’s SFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Whereas the main task of SFOR had been the stabilization of peace, EU forces committed to Operation Althea are arguably more concerned with healing past wounds than with keeping opponents apart.\(^{30}\) But the EU runs the mission ‘in close co-ordination and co-operation’ with NATO, with access to NATO assets and planning—it is, in other words, another Berlin Plus operation. It is also the largest ESDP mission to date, involving some 7,000 forces. Together with the 500-strong European Police Mission (EUPM) based in Sarajevo, the EU thus has a physical presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina that is interpreted locally as an indication of progress towards membership of the EU. This impression, together with the EU’s Special Representative (at one and the same time the UN’s High Representative) and the stabilization and association process itself, increasingly make the EU the central external player in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The EU’s ability to operate militarily and independently of NATO—and, indeed, outside Europe—was demonstrated in Operation Artemis, a French-led stabilization mission to the DRC agreed by the European Council in June 2003. It was a limited operation in terms of both duration, in that it was concluded by September 2003, and scope, in so far as it involved fewer than 2,000 troops. Applauded by Javier Solana as a ‘tangible contribution’ to the subsequent deployment of a reinforced UN mission and more widely to the peace process in the DRC, its importance extended much wider.\(^{31}\) That extended significance lay in the fact that it was agreed and carried out at a time of deep divisions between European capitals (not least between London and Paris) over the war in Iraq, and when scepticism over the likelihood of achieving the Helsinki force goals had been growing. Artemis showed that, despite such differences, Europeans could still collaborate in the projection of armed force. It also signalled that huge forces might not always be necessary to achieve significant ends: a message that was not lost on Blair and Chirac when they referred favourably to Artemis at the launch of their battlegroups initiative in November 2003.\(^{32}\) Artemis endorsed the Framework Nation approach that had been agreed in summer 2002 to enable a prompt and efficient response to a crisis, built around one national organization and one initial plan. The relationship between the French military command and the PSC and the EU Military Committee (EUMC) committees generally worked well in Artemis, even while pointing to the need to improve the EU’s politico-military planning.

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\(^{30}\) H. Ojanen, ‘Operation Althea: healing, testing or testing the healing’, \textit{CFSP Forum} 3: 1, January 2005, p. 11.

\(^{31}\) J. Solana, remarks on termination of the mandate, EU press release SO168/03, 1 Sept. 2003.

structure to enable early and rapid involvement in decision-making with the framework country. Finally, Artemis illustrated the need for close civil–military coordination in the field and in Brussels, regardless of the Maastricht pillar structure.

Concerns on the part of several member states to integrate the civilian with the military elements of the ESDP were also reflected in the EU’s first rule-of-law mission, EUJUST THEMIS in Georgia, launched in July 2004 and intended to last twelve months. Following an invitation from the Georgian authorities, the mission was both a new development in the civilian aspects of ESDP, and the first ESDP involvement beyond the western Balkans and Africa. The mission’s mandate was to assist the Georgian government in developing a coordinated approach to reform within the judicial sector and, although it could only ‘scratch the surface’ of Georgia’s problems, it was nonetheless regarded as an important symbolic gesture from the EU at a delicate moment in Georgia’s reform process. Even more symbolic was the decision to establish EUJUST LEX for the purpose of training 770 senior Iraqi criminal justice officials (investigating magistrates, senior police officers and prison officials) in an integrated police, rule-of-law and civilian administration training mission. The training takes place in Europe rather than in Iraq, thereby sidestepping some of the sensibilities of those who opposed the US-led invasion of Iraq.

The post-9/11 campaign against international terrorism has also constituted a vitally important area of operations for the EU that has crossed the pillar structure. The EU has largely regarded the value of military force as limited, preferring a more integrated response that tackles the threat within the EU as much as without. Hence, initial military commitments to operations in Afghanistan were made on an individual country basis rather than through the EU—though this was a decision that sent some mixed messages. The EU’s priority has been to improve its capacity to prevent terrorist attacks in the first place, and to deal with the consequences of any that succeed. This approach was outlined in the European Council’s Declaration on Combating Terrorism of 25 March 2004, soon after the bombings in Madrid. But the Council also called for a focus upon ‘priority third countries where counter-terrorist capacity or commitment to combating terrorism needs to be enhanced’.

The declaration needs to be set against the continuous emphasis by the Council on conflict prevention and crisis management. This was clearly apparent in the December 2003 European Security Strategy, which set out a vision for the EU as a global actor, drawing on European countries’ experience of both conflict and cooperation. The document set out unequivocally the five ‘key

threats’ to Europe, including terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, state failure and consequent regional instability, and organized crime. In dealing with these ‘dynamic’ new threats, the EU’s ‘first line of defence’ would ‘often be abroad’; none of them could be met by ‘purely military means’; military action might be necessary in certain circumstances, but new tools were required, such as improved export controls, ‘political, economic and other pressures’, police intelligence, and humanitarian action and assistance to reconstruct governments, civil society and economic infrastructure. The EU was ‘particularly well-equipped to respond to such multi-faceted situations’, but an EU ‘strategic culture’ was called for that would enable the Union to meet security threats with ‘early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention’.

Though welcomed by some as a positive move, the adoption of the Security Strategy failed to silence those sceptical of the EU’s ability or disapproving of its aspiration to act.\(^{36}\) Yet in spite of these (sometimes all-too-predictable) criticisms, the EU’s strategy document does provide a much-needed conceptual framework for European security, one that is inclusive rather than exclusive. It offers each incoming Council presidency, together with the High Representative and the Commission, the opportunity to generate the political momentum to acquire the military and civil capabilities necessary for credible and successful crisis management.

**Political culture**

The Security Strategy can therefore be seen as a vital element in the deeper institutionalization of the ESDP: at once a response to the demands of the missions undertaken and a further incentive to both member governments and, especially, the High Representative. The relevant institutional structure has been formally in place since the Nice European Council of December 2000 and has been evolving ever since. The PSC, comprising the national Political Directors and a representative from the Commission, and chaired by the presidency or the High Representative, is responsible for the ‘political direction of the development of military capabilities’. It is the key Council body in a crisis, responsible under the Council for exercising ‘political control and strategic direction of crisis management operations’.\(^{37}\) It has a Politico-Military Working Party to assist in preparatory work on the ESDP, with coordination by the so-called Nicolaidis Group, a body which also has responsibility for liaising with delegations on issues of particular concern.\(^{38}\) The PSC and the

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\(^{36}\) François Heisbourg, for example, dismissed the initiative, arguing: ‘The ESS can capture at any given moment what appears to unite the EU–25 in analytical and policy terms. But the security strategy does not emanate from a fully fledged strategic actor that can wield force on its own account’ (Heisbourg, ‘The “European Security Strategy” is not a security strategy’). See also Asle Toje, ‘The 2003 European Union Security Strategy—a critical appraisal’, European Foreign Affairs Review 9: 1, 2005.

\(^{37}\) Nice Treaty, article 25.

\(^{38}\) Simon Duke, The Linchpin COPS: assessing the workings and institutional relations of the Political and Security Committee, European Institute of Public Administration working paper 2005/W/05, p. 22.
The strategic culture of the European Union

presidency are serviced by Directorate-General E of the Council Secretariat,\(^{39}\) with advice offered to the PSC by national chiefs of defence in the EUMC on the military side and by the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM) on the civilian side.\(^{40}\) The EUMS has also evolved to the point where it can now provide strategic planning functions as well as a joint, civil–military, 24-hour crisis centre and secure communications with national capitals.\(^{41}\)

Progress, however, has not been achieved without challenges. By late 2002, for example, deep differences over Iraq dominated transatlantic and European security debates. US–European and intra-European relations were put to the test by a Franco–German statement on European defence integration in January 2003 that called for a more vigorous pursuit of a distinctly European capability in defence and security, including a full defence union within the EU, a security guarantee (such as that which binds both NATO and WEU), more efficient EU–wide defence equipment procurement, and the possibility of ‘reinforced co-operation’ within the EU on matters of defence and security. But the Franco–German ability to provoke the UK government (as well as the United States) did not reach its peak until late April 2003, with the so-called ‘mini-summit’ on European defence organized with Belgium and Luxembourg. The so-called ‘chocolate summit’ recommended various steps to far closer military cooperation within Europe, including the creation of a European Security and Defence Union and an independent EU headquarters structure, prompting criticism that the initiative would decouple Europe from the United States.\(^{42}\)

The reaction of Britain—at least, of the British media—initially echoed that of the United States. Disagreement lingered until late in the year. By October, however, to the seeming alarm of the Bush administration, Blair appeared persuaded of the need for compromise and agreed to a small operational planning cell within the EU’s military organization, to be activated when the EU decided on a military deployment outside NATO.\(^{43}\) He also accepted the development of ‘structured cooperation’ on defence matters within the EU, whereby those states that wanted to could cooperate more closely in military matters. As ‘reinforced cooperation’, this idea had long been resisted by the UK, which had argued that NATO was the most suitable organization for military responses to armed attacks or threats against a member state.\(^{44}\) With mounting uncertainty in the United States over the EU’s defence plans, an emergency meeting was called between NATO and the EU to discuss the EU’s plans,

\(^{39}\) The Directorate–General is currently headed by Robert Cooper, a former adviser to Tony Blair. See also Antonio Missiroli, ‘ESDP—How it works’, in N. Gnesotto, ed., European Security and Defence Policy: the first five years (Paris: EU-ISS, 2005).

\(^{40}\) CIVCOM interacts with the Commission’s own Crisis Management Centre within RELEX.


which had earlier been described by the US ambassador to NATO as ‘one of the greatest dangers to the transatlantic relationship’.\(^{45}\)

The EU planning cell, announced at the EU foreign ministers’ meeting in November 2003 in Naples, was somewhat lost to the European public amid all the controversy and disagreement surrounding the draft European constitutional treaty. The Naples agreement acknowledged that four types of operation could now take place: NATO only; EU-led, using the Berlin Plus arrangement and NATO’s planning capacity; an EU operation mounted under the ‘framework nation’ concept; and a smaller-scale crisis management operation planned and run by the EU’s own military staff. When it was conceded that NATO should have a liaison presence within the EU military staff, US objections to the plan were placated.\(^{46}\)

The Naples compromise was followed by EU agreement on the European Security Strategy in December 2003. EU–US bridge-building clearly played its part, the Strategy referring approvingly to the ‘irreplaceable’ transatlantic relationship as a ‘core element’ of the international system. Solana’s document suggested that something approaching a common US–EU language of security and defence had finally been achieved; US diplomats applauded it for its contribution to a ‘new realism’ in transatlantic relations.\(^{47}\)

In providing reference points for the development of policy by succeeding European Councils, the European Security Strategy has enabled the further institutionalization of security issues within the EU. Much has been made of the need for improved coordination of information and intelligence, particularly within the Council framework, and several member governments have begun to share sensitive, even if ‘generally assessed’, intelligence within a joint Situation Centre (SITCEN).\(^{48}\) In the aftermath of 9/11, it also made sense to include counterterrorism intelligence. With justice ministers busily creating their own Counter-Terrorism Group within Pillar III, it took some time for those responsible to accept that the Union and the member states might be better off cooperating with one another rather than adhering too closely to the pillar structure. The case for coordination was given more impetus by the Madrid bombings of March 2004. As a result, links were established between the Counter-Terrorism Group and the reinforced EU Situation Centre in order that, from January 2005, the Council could be provided with strategic threat assessments based on intelligence from national services.

The European Council also appointed Gijs de Vries (a former Dutch minister) as the counterterrorist coordinator, responsible to the High Representative. His role was, in Solana’s words, to report ‘on how to make intelligence cooperation more efficient’.\(^{49}\) While efforts to encourage greater coordination among national intelligence agencies may have foundered on more ad hoc


\(^{48}\) William Shapcott, evidence to the House of Lords, 3 Nov. 2004, p. 54.

bilateral or trilateral cooperation, De Vries has continued to press member
governments to coordinate their legislation on issues such as data protection, as
well as harmonizing their constitutional positions on police–intelligence
cooperation. On the operational side, the European Council called for further
practical and operational cooperation in Europol and the Police Chiefs Task
Force, and a better exchange of information between member states and both
Europol and Eurojust.50

A somewhat similar, if lower-profile, approach has been adopted on the
threat posed by the proliferation of WMD. Again, one of the essential measures
taken by Solana was the appointment in October 2003 of a Personal Represen-
tative, Annalisa Giannella (a Council Secretariat official), to take responsibility
for coordinating the EU’s activities. In this instance, too, the task has been
largely exhortatory, though with some practical coordination since it includes
drawing up six-monthly reports on WMD strategy with the Commission. In
addition, Giannella has been attempting to act along with the IAEA and other
organizations in initiatives on the physical protection of nuclear sites and other
issues. In an interview in March 2004, she pointed to a major financial problem
in getting the EU to implement fully what the Council had signed up for, but
added that she was carrying out ‘a sort of campaign’ to increase awareness of
the dangers of proliferation.51 The results, however, have been mixed, for even
if the Council working groups might include relevant clauses in any negotia-
ting mandate, these have not always been successfully negotiated with third
countries—as in the case of the five-year review of the Cotonou Agreement
with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries in February 2005.52 At the
same time, Britain, France and Germany have been undertaking their own
initiative towards Iran with equally limited success.

During the past decade, the EU’s response to regional conflict has been
patchy. As a result, since 2001 the Council has been giving increased attention
to crisis prevention, in terms of both regional conflict and failed states.
Emblematic of EU concern in particular regions has been the growing number
of EU special representatives and envoys who have been appointed. The first,
Miguel Angel Moratinos, was appointed in 1996 to maintain close contact with
the Middle East peace process. The former Spanish prime minister, Felipe
Gonzalez, was appointed as EU Special Representative to FYROM in 1998
with a mandate to try to ensure a peaceful resolution in Kosovo, one he held
jointly as special representative of the chairman of the OSCE. In a similar way,
Paddy Ashdown was already in situ as the UN’s High Representative in Bosnia
and Herzegovina when appointed the EU’s Special Representative in 2001. In
all, there are now eight representatives, in the Balkans (three), Moldova, the
African Great Lakes, the Middle East, the South Caucasus and Afghanistan.
They provide a direct link for the High Representative with local and regional

leaders as well as acting as a point of coordination for EU activities and those of the OSCE and the UN.\textsuperscript{53}

References to failed states in the EU Security Strategy document reflect growing concern over the past decade with preventive diplomacy. The new notion of ‘preventive engagement’ retains the idea of the ‘need to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention’: as the strategy document put it, ‘In failed states, military instruments may be needed to restore order, humanitarian means to tackle the immediate crisis.’ Perhaps inevitably, there has tended to be greater consensus on which states may be failing, in terms of law and order, economic management, political or social stability and so on, than agreement on what action should actually be taken urgently to prevent instability creating a threat to international order and EU interests. An essential part of preventive diplomacy must be the close interaction of member states, the Council and its machinery, and the Commission and its machinery. Coordination is critical and, even while every report refers to it, it is frequently still lacking, or is underdeveloped, or breaks down.

The integration of the military and civilian elements of any security policy has been taken furthest in the report commissioned by Solana under the title ‘A Human Security Doctrine for Europe’.\textsuperscript{54} This sought to put forward a ‘bottom-up’ approach, referring to ‘the actual security problems faced in different parts of the world, which affect the individual security of Europeans’. The document emphasized the need for dialogue and partnership with local populations in order to improve intelligence-gathering and early warning, and a more coherent, integrated and sustainable response from the EU. In many respects, it was a timely counter both to the advocates of a continued ‘civilian power Europe’ (since it sought to integrate the use of appropriate military force) and to those whose primary focus was on military capabilities. Reaction has inevitably been mixed, but the report represents yet another effort on the part of the High Representative to bring distinctiveness to the EU’s international role.

**EU–NATO relations**

The evolution of the EU as a security/strategic actor, with the capacity and confidence to use military force and non-military coercion as policy tools, can be understood fully only in the context of relations between the EU and its principal rival in the European and international security stakes—NATO. At

\textsuperscript{53} The mandate for Heikki Talvitie, a Finnish diplomat and veteran of the OSCE’s Minsk Conference on Nagorno-Karabakh 1995–6, is, for example, to ‘contribute to the implementation of the EU’s policy objectives, which include assisting the countries of the South Caucasus in carrying out political and economic reforms, preventing and assisting in the resolution of conflicts, promoting the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, engaging constructively with key national actors neighbouring the region, supporting infra-regional co-operation and ensuring co-ordination, consistency and effectiveness of the EU’s action in the South Caucasus. The EUSR will support the work of High Representative Solana in the region.’ See http://ue.eu.int/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=263&lang=en&mode=g.

one level, the EU–NATO relationship is a reflection of the broader US–European partnership. That partnership has, for decades, had a decisive influence on European thinking about security and strategy. For some, the partnership has been simply indispensable—how else, it is challenged, has Europe maintained its Kantian peace in an otherwise Hobbesian world?—and any security initiative that might challenge NATO’s supremacy and its role as the embodiment of the alliance with the US has been treated accordingly. For others, NATO is no longer the primary forum for discussing strategic issues, and the US–European partnership has become more of a problem than a solution, acting to stifle Europeans’ ambitions to become responsible for their own security and defence.

Yet the EU–NATO relationship is important for reasons of basic economics. Given the considerable overlap between the membership of the two organizations, and given that each member government has only one set of military and police forces, and only one national budget, it has proved impossible to discuss the role and prospects of either organization without considering the other. It has also been the case that several ESDP missions have followed NATO operations and have depended on NATO assistance in one way or another.

Despite this, there has been a tendency, especially at the rhetorical margins, for the institutional responsibility for European security and defence to be regarded in zero-sum terms: the EC/EU could only make progress and establish itself in these policy areas at the expense of NATO, and vice versa. And, for as long as it proved difficult for the EU to generate strategic culture and credibility, so there remained little incentive to look beyond the zero sum to a climate of positive compromise between the institutions, out of which the EU project could develop. Each stage of the ESDP’s development seemingly required a ritual, though for some still vital, reference to the need for good relations between the two bodies. At the same time, the routine, bureaucratic relationship between the two organizations has actually improved. From mid-2000, joint NATO–EU Ad Hoc Working Groups began to discuss matters such as the procedures for exchanging classified information and intelligence; the modalities for EU access to NATO assets and capabilities; capability goals and defence planning; and more permanent consultation arrangements. These last arrangements were finally agreed in January 2001 by an exchange of letters between NATO’s Secretary General and the Swedish EU presidency. It established a programme of regular, high-level meetings between the two organizations: foreign ministers would meet twice annually, while ambassadors to NATO’s North Atlantic Council would meet their colleagues on the EU’s PSC at least three times during each presidency. Staff on the two committees also began to meet regularly from February 2001.

The events of 9/11 had both an immediate and a longer-term effect in strengthening the EU–NATO relationship. The immediate effect was to raise the issue of terrorism to the top of the security agenda for both organizations. After 12 September 2001, both EU and NATO focused upon the implications of the attacks, upon cooperative approaches to combating both terrorism and the proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) weapons, and upon exchanges of information on the protection of civilians against CBRN attack.\(^{57}\) This post-9/11 demonstration of solidarity, leading to high-level cooperation between the two organizations on aspects of counter-terrorism, was undoubtedly useful; and yet, for all that, the immediate effect of 9/11 on the EU–NATO partnership was strangely marginal; the partnership was by no means suddenly recast as an institutional joint venture against international terrorism. The longer-term influence of 9/11 was rather more significant, however, in that wide support was confirmed for the various procedures and initiatives which had been put in train before the attacks on New York and Washington and which culminated in a joint EU–NATO Declaration on ESDP, published shortly after the Copenhagen European Council in December 2002.

The joint declaration—which followed Turkey’s decision to drop its objections to an EU–NATO agreement, in spite of the EU’s refusal to agree a date on which Turkey could begin EU accession negotiations—was a trade-off, of sorts, in that the EU agreed to ensure ‘the fullest possible involvement of non-EU European members of NATO within ESDP’. The six founding principles of the EU–NATO relationship were unsurprising, albeit important, in that they included partnership (the EU and NATO being described as ‘organisations of a different nature’, albeit with crisis management activities that should nevertheless be ‘mutually reinforcing’); effective mutual consultation, dialogue, cooperation and transparency; equality and due regard for the ‘decision-making autonomy and interests’ of both EU and NATO; respect for the interests of the member states of EU and NATO; respect for principles of the Charter of the UN ‘in order to provide one of the indispensable foundations for a stable Euro-Atlantic security environment’; and ‘coherent, transparent and mutually reinforcing development of the military capability requirements common to the two organisations’.\(^{58}\)

Critical to cementing the relationship, though, was the agreement on the security of information reached a few months later. The EU presidency (assisted by Solana) and NATO had been negotiating an agreement since April 2002, but the final text emerged only in March 2003.\(^{59}\) The agreement covers access to, exchange of and release of classified information between NATO, the Council of the EU, the High Representative and the EU Commission. It proved to be the final step towards the long-awaited Berlin Plus arrangement,

\(^{57}\) ‘NATO–EU: a strategic partnership’.


\(^{59}\) A draft of the NATO–EU agreement, dated 17 Feb. 2003, can be found at http://faculty.maxwell.syr.edu/asroberts/foi/security.html.
which was announced by George Robertson, NATO Secretary General, just days later as the completion of the ‘great jigsaw’ of European defence.\textsuperscript{60} On 17 March 2003, the NAC declared that Operation Allied Harmony in Macedonia would end on 31 March, and that NATO would help the EU in taking on the commitment (as Operation Concordia), a transition that would not have been possible without the Berlin Plus scheme.\textsuperscript{61}

The first of the Berlin Plus clauses, that requiring NATO to cooperate with the EU in strategic and operational planning, proved especially significant to the developing relationship between the two organizations. From this has developed a complex system of liaison and planning consultation, one that reveals much about the EU’s approach to security and strategy (and rather more about certain governments’ approach to EU aspirations in the area of security and defence). The EU planning cell at NATO’s SHAPE headquarters, for example, was a significant concession from those EU governments which had long resisted the idea that the EU’s strategic ambitions should somehow be tied to or dependent on NATO. In return, NATO’s liaison with EUMS, including its ‘autonomous planning cell’ within EUMS, can be seen as the final outcome of the ‘chocolate summit’ that had caused such irritation in the United States. The outcome, whereby a very small EU cell of about 35 staff has been given a very specific, civil–military task and character (responsible for early warning, situation assessment, strategic contingency planning and crisis response strategic planning—politico-military, military, civilian and joint civil–military) under what some have regarded as close NATO supervision, was considered a triumph for those governments—particularly the British—which had been uneasy about the summit proposal for an alternative, full-scope European strategic and operational planning organization.\textsuperscript{62} The aim has been to create a capacity to plan and conduct operations ‘within the spectrum of tasks envisaged in the Treaty, on the scale of Operation Artemis’, becoming available from 1 January 2006 at the latest.\textsuperscript{63}

Clearly, the relationship between the EU and NATO has developed considerably in recent years, with more than a decade of negotiation (often acrimonious) finally coming to fruition. It would be unwise to attribute this new atmosphere entirely or largely to 9/11: important trends in EU–NATO cooperation were well established some time before those events, though 9/11 did add a sense of urgency to the debate, and made it more difficult to oppose the idea of close cooperation. But what is far more certain than the effect of 9/11 is that the sudden expansion of activity under ESDP (both civil and military) could not have occurred (at least not without serious mishap) without

\textsuperscript{60} Statement by the Secretary General, NATO press release 140, 13 Dec. 2002.
\textsuperscript{61} The scheme was first set out at the 1999 Washington summit. See ‘An alliance for the 21st century’, Washington summit communiqué (Brussels: NATO, 1999), para. 10.
there having been a radical improvement in EU–NATO relations. To an important extent, therefore, the EU’s venture into security and strategy has been influenced (and perhaps enabled) by the EU’s relationship with NATO.

Yet in spite of the recent consolidation of the EU–NATO relationship, the transatlantic security debate is plainly not fully resolved, and the long-term durability of the EU–NATO relationship is still an open question. NATO’s preoccupation with ‘transformation’ in recent years,\(^6^4\) and its ‘holistic’ approach to conflict and security, clearly reflects its (and especially the United States’) belief that it can remain a dynamic organization with its own agenda. The overlap of NATO and EU membership has not so far prevented rivalry or criticism; yet the institutional partnership can only continue for as long as the membership of both organizations see value in it. The most pessimistic outlook for the partnership would be one whereby the dynamic and ambitious NATO came once again to regard the EU’s strategic project as a rival. But given the EU’s efforts (however faltering) to acquire deployable military and non-military crisis management capability, and given its growing experience in a wide variety of operational environments, NATO’s rival would be not the ‘paper tiger’ of the early 1990s, but something much more substantial. If, at that point, the EU–NATO relationship came to be seen once again in zero-sum terms, it is highly unlikely that the ESDP project would be allowed to revert to a subservient, cadet relationship with NATO: a thing of ambitious but hollow rhetoric, and little more. The irony for NATO, therefore, is that a renewal of the institutional rivalry of the 1990s, and the possible breakdown of the EU–NATO partnership, might provoke even more development and consolidation of the EU’s military capability and strategic culture.

**Conclusions**

Questions remain about the near- and medium-term development of the ESDP, and more fundamentally about the prospects for the EU as a security actor with competence in crisis management and other areas, with a durable and discrete (if not unique) strategic culture. Yet in spite of this lingering uncertainty, and often scepticism, the EU’s security and defence project has clearly developed markedly since its probably over-confident beginnings in 1999. In terms of acquiring deployable capabilities for crisis management operations, in terms of gaining practical experience in planning and managing such deployments, and in terms of organizing the necessary politico-military machinery and processes, the EU has clearly earned the right to be taken seriously. But what the development of ESDP indicates is more than simply the acquisition by a ‘civilian power’ of ‘hard power’ attributes. ‘Soft power’, exercising influence through attraction as a model rather than through the use of force, does not exclude the acquisition of other forms of power and a security culture.\(^6^5\) As

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Nicolaidis has suggested, ‘Pushed to its ultimate logic, the European Union is less a model to be emulated than an experience, a laboratory where options are explored for politics beyond the state, a toolbox for non-state-based governance, a pioneer in long-term interstate community building.’ That experience is not negated by the ability to use force; nevertheless, the utmost care is required in using it.

Whether and how force is used, and what the prospects are for further development of the ESDP, will depend on the overall coherence of the EU’s strategic vision supported by its strategic culture. As the crisis over and war in Iraq clearly showed, EU member states can take very different, and occasionally bitterly contested, positions where intervention and the use of armed force are concerned. This is not to suggest that consensus can never be achieved, either generally (as in agreement on the European Security Strategy), or specifically (as in missions in both DRC and Bosnia and Herzegovina), but simply to acknowledge that suspicions do remain as to the EU’s coherence and reliability, especially in any action separate from NATO and the United States. The EU’s efforts to be seen as more dependable and effective will be reflected in the continued pursuit of practical improvements in deployable capability and the successful management of crisis management operations, and will be determined by the extent to which the EU can learn to agree expeditiously on policy appropriate to the problem at hand. But the prospects for ESDP will also be shaped by forces inconveniently beyond the control of the EU, most notably the determination of both NATO and the United States to continue to adapt to the changing circumstances of the twenty-first century. Here we come to the awkward reality that the United States—or at least some US commentators—appears unconvinced that the EU is not setting itself up as a strategic rival. Such suspicions are probably unavoidable on the part of those wedded to the grander possibilities of America’s ‘unipolar moment’.

After many years of strategic rivalry with NATO (often more perceived than real, but never entirely without substance), the EU’s security and defence project has benefited recently from an improved, more constructive relationship between these two institutions. It is difficult to see how it could be in the EU’s interest for rivalry between it and NATO (or, more generally, between Europe and the United States) to be reawakened. Indeed, it is equally difficult to see how such an outcome could be preferable from a US perspective. In seeking to avoid a return to strategic rivalry, the EU will doubtless manage its relationship with the United States and NATO carefully. But care will also be needed to ensure that the growing consensus within the EU is not undermined by internal strategic rivalry. As the EU’s strategic culture continues to evolve, the outcome is likely to be quite distinct from other models currently available. Within NATO, a complex and demanding multinational strategic culture has developed, albeit within an institution that has a relatively narrow focus and

lacks the political complexity and breadth of the EU. EU member states, on the other hand, also have well-developed, national strategic cultures in which government and armed forces are held in a close and rich relationship, but where the operational demands placed on those armed forces are likely to be limited. The challenge to the EU, as its strategic culture continues to evolve, is to find a via media which can complement, rather than rival, any lingering strategic sensitivities in both NATO and member states.