After precisely half a century of structured separation and complex coexistence, the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) announced in their December 2002 Declaration on European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) the establishment of a strategic and mutually reinforcing partnership in crisis management. Barely three months after, the conclusion of the so-called Berlin Plus agreement consolidated this partnership even further by providing for the European Union’s access to NATO’s military assets and planning capabilities. It was on the basis of this arrangement that the European Union was able to launch its first ever military mission, Concordia, in Macedonia in March 2003. This did not only take one of the closest and most densely negotiated interorganizational relationships to the practical realm, but also signalled a military revolution in the European Union’s evolution as an international actor.

It is therefore unsurprising that the European Union’s European Security Strategy (ESS) also refers to NATO’s importance in its outline of ‘an international order based on effective multilateralism’ (Council 2003: 9). In view of reinforcing the European Union’s ‘progress towards a coherent foreign policy and effective crisis management’, the ESS stresses that ‘the EU-NATO permanent arrangements, in particular Berlin Plus, enhance the operational capability of the EU and provide the framework for the strategic partnership between the two organizations in crisis management. This reflects our common determination to tackle the challenges of the new century’ (ibid.: 11–12).

In this light, the EU–NATO relationship indeed provides an important and rather intriguing empirical case study for assessing the European Union’s practice of its interorganizational foreign policy concept of effective multilateralism in the realm of military crisis management. In this chapter, we shall thus analyse the evolution, implementation and function of the European Union’s cooperation with NATO and assess the impact both organizations have had on each other within and as a result of their relationship. This should provide us with a useful basis for evaluating one interorganizational aspect of the European Union’s approach to its strategy of effective multilateralism in the field.

The chapter, in line with the general analytical approach of this volume, is structured as follows. In the first section, we provide an outline of the three main phases in the evolution of the EU–NATO relationship and highlight key developments
and turning points therein. Next, we analyse the main internal and external factors of change behind this evolution and assess their relative importance. In the final section, we provide an overall evaluation of the EU–NATO relationship in the wider context of the European Union’s strategy of effective multilateralism. By applying our previous findings to a comparative analysis of the European Union’s and NATO’s impact on each other’s policies, developments and institutional designs, we seek to assess what the empirical example of the EU–NATO nexus can indeed tell us about the European Union’s actual implementation and pursuit of its foreign policy concept of effective multilateralism in practice. We conclude by arguing that the European Union’s relationship with NATO is less characterized by the interorganizational altruism often associated with the European Union’s ‘foreign policy philosophy’ (Barroso 2004) of effective multilateralism. Instead, the European Union seems to have developed a distinctly instrumental approach to its cooperation schemes with NATO.

By progressively applying its experiences and lessons learned with NATO to the launch and conduct of more and more autonomous missions, the European Union seems to be intent on strengthening and advancing its own profile as a visible international actor in the realm of crisis management. Instead of an effective multilateralism in the field, therefore, we seem to be rather witnessing the emergence of an EU-led ‘shrewd interorganizationalism’ in the making.

The evolution of the ‘EU–NATO relationship’: From structured separation to ambiguous interaction

In this section, we provide a brief overview and analysis of the main developments and key changes in the evolution of the EU–NATO relationship, including the shifting balance of power between both organizations. We identify three major phases in the emergence of EU–NATO relations.

The first phase, roughly covering the first post-Cold War decade, highlights the European Union’s and NATO’s search for adapted roles and a new interorganizational equilibrium in response to the new demands and opportunities of the fundamentally altered international environment. Whilst NATO succeeded in establishing its primacy as an effective military actor during this period in the Balkans, the European Union’s increasing ambitions in the security and defence field – most forcibly foreshadowed by the Franco-British St Malo declaration in 1998 – reinforced the pressing question of what kind of new post–Cold War balance and bargain should be struck between the two rapidly evolving organizations.

The second phase, ranging from the establishment of the ESDP in 1999, via initial contacts between EU and NATO officials, to the final ‘Berlin Plus’ agreement in March 2003, comprises the actual onset and formalization of a direct EU–NATO relationship at the political and operational level.

The third and indeed current stage in the evolution of EU–NATO relations is as much defined by increasing interactions as by deliberately ambiguous relations between both organizations. Despite the European Union’s operational dependence on NATO for the European Union’s first ever military mission, Concordia,
from March to December 2003 in Macedonia and the indispensable need for cooperating with NATO in the context of the more ambitious mission Althea in Bosnia since December 2004, the European Union has nonetheless been keen to stress its political and operational autonomy by conducting independent military missions without recourse to NATO’s capabilities and assets. As we shall argue below, a key underlying feature of this period is thus the slow but clear shift in the overall power balance between both organizations: away from NATO and decidedly towards a more assertive European Union. Questions surrounding the implications of this power shift for the functions, practice and meaning of ‘EU–NATO effective multilateralism’ will be central to the article’s remaining analysis.


The lifting of the Iron Curtain in 1989 not only removed the geopolitical separation between Western and Eastern Europe, but also blurred the clear organizational division of labour, roles and functions that have characterized the distinct relations between NATO and the European Community throughout the Cold War. Whilst NATO, with the dissolution of the ‘Soviet enemy’ in 1991, was forced to rethink its raison d’être and to justify its continued existence, the negotiations on the transformation of the European Community into the European Union 1991 were also accompanied by some new-found ambitions in the security policy realm (Deighton 2002: 724). The creation of the European Union’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) signalled the first tentative indications of the European Union’s readiness to venture into what had hitherto been NATO’s exclusive domain. Indeed, sensing a new activism, reorientation, overlap of ambitions and the general search for a new post–Cold War balance amongst the major European and international organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Council of Europe or the UN, NATO–Secretary General Manfred Wörner already called in 1991 for a cooperative scheme of ‘interlocking institutions’ (Biermann 2008: 152).

Ironically, however their inadequate responses to the exogenous shock and challenge of the Balkan Wars from 1991 to 1995 served to reinforce NATO’s and US primacy. The Dayton Peace agreement of 1995 not only underlined that solely a US-led NATO was capable of an intervention decisive enough to bring the warring parties to the negotiation table, but also woefully exposed the European Union’s marginal role and its ‘capability-expectation gap’ in the wider security realm (Hill 1993). The Balkan experience, initial American reluctance to get involved in an essentially European conflict it had little strategic interest in and Europe’s eventual and woeful dependence on US military power reinforced the sense of urgency amongst European leaders for the need of developing their own European military capacities.

A key bone of contention for the relationship between the European Union and NATO has been in which precise organizational context Europe’s new-found militarization project should take place. Whilst US administrations have welcomed and constantly called for European moves towards greater ‘burden
sharing’, they also remained adamant that these initiatives should not be undertaken outside the NATO framework (Varwick 2008: 120). In this vein, the Clinton administration supported the idea of a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) within NATO, which had already been hinted at in NATO’s Strategic Concept of November 1991. In the wake of the Europeans’ efforts to reactivate the dormant Western European Union (WEU), a compromise and new, albeit temporary, institutional post–Cold War balance was struck at NATO’s ministerial meeting in Berlin in June 1996. The WEU, as the European Union’s extended defence arm, was offered access to NATO’s military assets and planning capabilities for the launch of missions ‘where NATO as a whole is not engaged’. Thus, conditional on US approval in the North Atlantic Council, NATO’s highest political decision-making body, the European Union could, via the WEU, draw on combat forces that were ‘separable, but not separate’ from NATO. This ‘Berlin agreement’ thereby reinforced NATO’s political pre-eminence, whilst enhancing the European Union’s military capabilities and operational options, indirectly, through the WEU.

However, barely two years after, this compromise seemed to be already overtaken by events, in the form of the Franco-British declaration at St Malo in December 1998 (UK FCO 1998). Signifying a historical shift in the British position, Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac agreed on the need for the European Union’s direct development of autonomous military capacities (Howorth 2007). This declaration – which, rather tellingly, the Americans had not been previously consulted on – did not only herald the onset of the European Union’s more assertive ESDP, but also raised the issue of the balance and relations between the European Union and NATO afresh, and indeed, more acutely than ever before.


Whilst the St Malo declaration signified the beginning of the European Union’s development of autonomous military capacities, the decision reached at the EU Council Summits at Cologne in June 1999 to transfer the majority of the WEU’s structures and tasks to the European Union, implied the end of the EU–WEU–NATO triangle and marked, by default, the commencement of a direct EU–NATO relationship. The central question at this stage was how exactly this new EU–NATO relationship should be organized, formalized and internally balanced.

Madeleine Albright’s famed ‘three Ds’ conditions revealed the Clinton administration’s suspicions about ESDP as an institutional rival that was potentially capable of undermining NATO. Thus, in her article she demanded that the development of ESDP should neither lead to the decoupling of North American and European security, nor to the duplication of NATO assets, nor to the discrimination against non-EU NATO members (Albright 1998). Arguably, the very fact that the US administration felt to have a right and duty to attach conditions to the European Union’s unfolding military project is telling evidence of the perceived EU–NATO hierarchy and assumed transatlantic power balances at this critical juncture.
NATO’s reaction to ESDP was more ambiguous. At its 50th anniversary summit in Washington in April 1999, it welcomed the European Union’s initiative with some reservations. Whilst the Summit Communiqué stressed that the European Union’s ESDP should develop only in close coordination with NATO, based on the WEU–NATO agreements reached at Berlin in 1996, NATO’s new Strategic Concept – adopted on the same day as the final communiqué – still referred to the ESDI within NATO instead of acknowledging the realities of an autonomous ESDP outside of NATO (Yost 2007:75).

However, spurred by a repeated demonstration of the military inadequateness of the European troops participating in the US-led NATO air-strikes in Kosovo from March to June 1999, EU governments stepped up the deepening of the ESDP’s institutional and operational structures. Whilst the first Helsinki Headline Goal, agreed upon at the December EU Council summit, called for the creation of a European Rapid Reaction Force of up to 60,000 troops to be deployed within 60 days and to be sustained for at least one year – incidentally, the same number of troops required by NATO’s Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia in 1995 – the Treaty of Nice formalized the creation of the Political Security Committee (PSC), European Union Military Committee (EUMC) and European Union Military Staff (EUMS). These developments signified indeed a military revolution in the European Union’s evolution as an international actor and spelled the end of the European Union’s long-established self-image as a purely ‘civilian power’ (Gnesotto 2004).

For EU–NATO relations, this shift meant a further EU move into NATO’s operational domain. Yet, despite ESDP’s institutional advances, by 2002, the European Union still lacked the operational capabilities for conducting its own crisis management mission. As long as the build-up of the European Union’s own capacities was still incomplete, functional cooperation with NATO – and the European Union’s use of NATO assets in particular – was still essential. Despite earlier reservations, particularly by the French, about the detrimental effect, a formally institutionalized EU–NATO relationship – including the danger of an over-reliance on NATO replication – could have on the independent development of ESDP, the formalization process of EU–NATO relations gained a clear momentum by the summer 2000 (Reichard 2006:124–125). Parallel to the increasing number of informal meetings between key individuals of both organizations since 1997 and between the European Union’s interim PSC and NATO’s North Atlantic Council (NAC) at ambassadorial level since autumn 2000, negotiations on permanent and formalized cooperation arrangements between the European Union and NATO lasted from 1999 to 2003. After having overcome several obstacles and objections, particularly from non-EU NATO members, most notably Turkey, a political and diplomatic break-through in the evolution of EU–NATO relations was achieved at the EU Council summit in Copenhagen in December 2002. After half a century of structured separation between both organizations, the ‘EU–NATO Declaration on ESDP’ announced the establishment of an effective ‘strategic partnership’ (NATO 2002) in the field of crisis management. This ‘mutually reinforcing’ EU–NATO ‘relationship’ was to be founded on the principles of
‘effective mutual consultation, dialogue, cooperation and transparency’ as well as on ‘equality and due regard for the decision-making autonomy and interests of the EU and NATO’ (ibid.). Thus, whilst the declaration stressed that the ‘European Union and NATO were organizations of a different nature’, it nevertheless called for overall close cooperation and coordination ‘with a spirit of openness’ between the European Union and NATO ‘in order to provide one of the indispensable foundations for a stable Euro-Atlantic security environment’ (ibid.).

Three months after this declaration, the practical details of this arrangement were eventually concluded on 17 March 2003 in the form of over a dozen classified agreements and under the overall label of ‘Berlin Plus’ – indicating its more technical nature as well as its actual proximity to the WEU–NATO Berlin Accords of 1996. Indeed, despite the December 2002 declaration’s promisingly ambitious tone and wider political scope, in practice, the Berlin Plus arrangements turned out to be a highly technical and rather limited mechanism on the secure exchange of information and, above all, for EU access to NATO’s military assets and planning capabilities in the case of an EU-led crisis management mission. As pointed out by a NATO official, ‘Berlin Plus itself is a technical manual, not a political tool’ (cited in Crisis Group 2005: 29). Hence, for those who expected a comprehensive ‘grand bargain’ on a more precisely defined EU–NATO role in collaboratively shaping the post–Cold War security environment as well as on the persistent transatlantic question of burden sharing, divisions of labour and EU autonomy, Berlin Plus represented a comprehensive disappointment (for a more in-depth critique, see Cornish 2006: 12) As soon as Berlin Plus was formally concluded, there was a tacit understanding that these questions and the precise nature and operability of the EU–NATO relationship had to be decided on an ad hoc, bottom-up basis in the field.

Increasing interactions, ambiguous relations: The question of EU autonomy revisited

Two weeks after the formal conclusion of the EU–NATO Berlin Plus agreement, the European Union’s operation Concordia in Macedonia not only represented the European Union’s first ever military mission, but also marked the first instance of actually putting Berlin Plus into practice in the field. The aim of this rather modest mission, which lasted from March to December 2003 and involved 357 troops, was to continue the stabilization efforts of the preceding NATO mission Operation Allied Harmony in Macedonia. In line with the EU–NATO procedures, the EU relied on NATO’s operational headquarters in Mons, Belgium, and ‘borrowed’ NATO’s Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR) as Concordia’s Operational Commander. The Force Commander on the ground was a French EU general. The mission was regarded as a success for both the European Union’s military debut and, more importantly, for the actual implementation of ‘Berlin Plus’. Thus, Concordia not only signalled the advancement of the EU–NATO relationship into the practical realm, but also served as an important preparation for the second, more ambitious and more complex military
operation under the EU–NATO Berlin Plus mechanisms: the European Union’s mission EUFOR Althea in Bosnia. Launched in December 2004 in direct succession to NATO’s Stabilization Force, this remains the European Union’s largest and longest military operation to date. Bearing in mind the European Union’s ineptitude and disastrous handling of the Bosnian war during the 1990s, the cooperation with NATO, and indeed NATO’s continued presence in Sarajevo was vital (Grevi et al. 2005: 7). Following the Berlin Plus procedures, the European Union has once again relied for its Operation Commander on NATO’s D-SACEUR, whilst providing its own force commander. The European Union’s Political and Security Committee exercises the overall strategic direction of the mission and the EU Military Committee monitors its implementation.\(^3\) NATO’s D-SACEUR mainly reports to the European Union’s Military Committees. Indeed, overall, Concordia and Althea have demonstrated a successful and promising implementation of the Berlin Plus arrangements in the field (Kupferschmidt 2006). Furthermore, as a result of both Berlin Plus military missions, a dense network of frequent and effective interactions between European Union and NATO military staffs and strategic planners has been progressively forged. This has contributed to stronger bonds and mutual organization understandings between the European Union and NATO in the realm of crisis management (Interview with NATO official, Crisis Management Unit, November 2007).

Yet, beyond these two carefully controlled missions, the EU–NATO relationship as a whole remains more ambiguous, mostly due to two major reasons. First, on the wider political level, interorganizational cooperation and formal exchanges between the European Union and NATO have become rather limited. This is mostly due to the blocking manoeuvres by France and, since the European Union’s 2004 enlargement, increasingly by Turkey. Whilst France has persistently viewed closer EU–NATO relations as a constant limitation on the European Union’s autonomy, Turkey’s refusal of any official EU–NATO exchanges in the presence of the non-NATO EU member Cyprus has been explained by Turkey’s frustrations over the unsettled Cyprus conflict, over its stalling EU accession process and over its lack of decision-making influence in ESDP (Hofmann and Reynolds 2007: 2–4). As a result, the political EU–NATO dialogue has almost come to a halt in recent years. Second, the European Union’s continued eagerness to demonstrate its military autonomy from NATO has not only reinforced the underlying tendencies of interorganizational rivalry, but has also in several instances directly undermined the spirit of the Berlin Plus arrangement itself. This was most acutely highlighted by the lack of agreement between the European Union and NATO on who should respond to the African Union’s request for a strategic airlift for its military mission in Sudan in 2005. Whilst the United Kingdom, Italy and The Netherlands preferred a NATO mission, France, Germany and Greece supported the idea of an EU mission (Touzkovskaiap 2006: 252). In the end, after severe interorganizational procrastination that did as much damage to the credibility of each organization’s rapid reaction mechanism as to the relevance of Berlin Plus itself, both organizations launched separate missions.
In addition to this head-on collision, further instances of the underlying process of the European Union’s *autonomization* in the field of crisis management – that is, the build-up and promotion of ESDP capacities and activities independent and distinct from NATO and outside the Berlin Plus framework – have heightened the tensions within the EU–NATO relationship. They ranged from the fractious proposal for an autonomous EU operational planning cell made by France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg at their Tervuren Summit in April 2003 and the launch of three autonomous military crisis management missions in support of the United Nations (*Artemis* and *EUFOR RD Congo* in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003 and 2006, respectively, as well as the currently planned *EUFOR Chad/RCA* in Eastern Chad and North Eastern Central African Republic) to the creation of so-called EU Battlegroups. The Tervuren proposal provoked fierce reactions from the United States, which perceived it as a direct threat to NATO and as a further hostile act from ‘old Europe’ in the wake of the transatlantic controversies over the invasion of Iraq. In the end, a compromise was reached by the establishment of an EU cell within NATO’s Supreme Headquarters Allied Command for the operational planning of Berlin Plus missions and a small civil–military cell (Civ-Mil cell) at the EUMS for the planning of EU autonomous, but primarily small-scale civilian–military crisis management missions (Howorth 2007: 111–112). It was thus specifically designed to avoid rivalry with NATO in the realm of ‘pure’ military missions. However, in December 2004, the Civ-Mil cell was tasked to set up an EU ‘Operations Centre’, which had been fully activated in June 2007 and is now also envisaged to be used for autonomous ‘predominantly military operations’ (European Council Secretariat 2007a: 2). Thus, the previous compromise’s limitation on civilian–military operations has been quietly dropped and reveals the strong *autonomization* tendencies of the ESDP. These have been reinforced by the European Union’s autonomous military missions. In the case of *Artemis*, the lack of prior consultation with NATO or the United States in the run-up to the operation raised some diplomatic eyebrows and hedged further mistrust (Kupferschmidt 2006: 26). *EUFOR RD Congo* provides another illuminating case. Whilst an initially reluctant Germany was persuaded both by French policy-makers, and in particular by the EU High Representative Solana, to take on the overall command of the mission (Interview with German EU Council Secretariat Official, Brussels, 6 July 2007), Germany at first suggested a mission under the ‘Berlin Plus’ arrangement in cooperation with NATO. In the end, the French insistence on an independent EU mission run from the German Operation Headquarters in Potsdam prevailed (Shimkus 2007: para. 24), highlighting the urge for EU autonomy. Finally, the practical experiences drawn from the ESDP’s first autonomous military mission *Artemis* had a direct ‘spill over’ effect on the emergence of the British–French–German initiative for the so-called EU Battlegroups. Operational since January 2007, the 1,500 troop strong rapid reaction forces are either formed by a single nation or composed multinational of up to four member states, and are specifically but not exclusively designed for UN support missions on the African continent (European Council Secretariat 2007b). Concerns have been voiced over the potential rivalry between the Battlegroups and NATO’s
Response Force (NRF), which essentially draw on the same national sets of resources (Lindstrom 2007: 48–49). However, with NATO’s announcement in September 2007 that national contributions to the NRF were severely falling short, the European Union’s Battlegroup concept seemed to have become the member states’ preferred option (Dempsey 2007). The Battlegroups not only seem to function as a ‘catalyst’ for the European Union’s promotion of multinational interoperability and military transformations, but also for further advances in the progressive integration and Europeanization of national defence policies within the context of the European Union’s ESDP (Shimkus 2007: para. 11; Boyer and Quille 2007). Taken together, these developments not only highlight the European Union’s increasing strife for UN-centred, NATO-independent missions, but also show that the European Union’s move towards autonomization is deeply embedded in an underlying process of Europeanization. This does not only mean that national military policies and cultures are increasingly influenced by the ESDP-level or by the preferences of other member states, but also that, in the context of the EU–NATO relationship, such a process is intimately related to a ‘de-NATOization’ of national policies: the partial shift of national preferences from NATO to the European Union’s ESDP. Thus, parallel to the European Union’s successful interaction with NATO in the context of their two Berlin Plus missions in the Balkans, the European Union’s instances of choosing autonomy over EU–NATO cooperation, or at least consultation, render the EU–NATO relationship as a whole and as acutely ambiguous. Indeed, in combination with the current shortfalls of EU–NATO consultation mechanism at the political level, these tendencies have led some commentators to speculate whether Althea has indeed been the last operation under Berlin Plus (Yost 2007: 89).

In the short and medium term, however, this seems unlikely. Despite the cumbersome and technical nature of Berlin Plus, the European Union is still not in a position to run a long-term and complex military mission, such as Althea, on its own without recourse to NATO’s capabilities. A common feature of the European Union’s three autonomous missions in Congo and Chad is that they remain rather faint in terms of military impact and strong in terms of Europeanized symbolism. Ironically, at the current stage of EU–NATO relations, the European Union seems to apply the lessons learned from its cooperation with NATO – such as the design of the ESDP’s military institutions or the operational procedures in the field – to missions that aid and contribute to the European Union’s proliferation and visibility as an international actor in the realm of military crisis management on the one hand, and the European Union’s slow but increasing ‘emancipation’ from NATO on the other. This autonomy reflex at the interorganizational and increasingly Europeanized national level raises some doubts about the European Union’s long-term interest in the EU–NATO collaboration system, at least at the political level. At the operational level in the field, however, cooperation and coordination attempts remain strong and effective. This will have to be kept in mind when assessing the EU–NATO nexus within the wider context of the European Union’s pursuit of its foreign policy strategy of Effective Multilateralism in the final section. At first, however, we shall take a
closer look at the external and internal factors and causes of the major changes identified in this section.

Potential explanations and drivers of change: External and internal factors

In this section, we summarize and analyse the key factors and processes driving the changes in the EU–NATO relationship. In line with the analytical approach of this volume, we distinguish between external and internal factors of change and assess their relative importance. By external factors, we refer to major structural changes, power shifts, and exogenous shocks in the international system. Furthermore, the external factor of ‘other organizations and governments’ – predominantly, the United Nations and the United States – will be looked at. Internal factors, on the other hand, include the impact of shifts at the national, organizational, interorganizational and individual level. These range from policies pursued by key member states, direct interorganizational interaction and the role of individuals in executive positions either at the organizational or national level. The influence of political and military cultures will also be touched upon in this category. Finally, we will be looking at the underlying process of Europeanization as an important internal, but also increasingly externalized, underlying process of change.

The end of the Cold War: The underlying structural factor

The end of the Cold War represents in many ways the crucially permissible ‘master variable’ and was a decisive, structural factor of change in the early stages of the evolving EU–NATO relationship. It was the end of the East–West conflict that both permitted and forced a re-evaluation of the European Union’s and NATO’s roles in the newly uncertain, fundamentally re-forming international system. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the Euro-Atlantic Security architecture that had persisted – French ambitions notwithstanding – without any major challenges throughout the Cold War, lost its key disciplining threat, and in the case of NATO, its actual raison d’être overnight. Whilst NATO was forced to fundamentally adapt and transform in order to justify its post-Soviet existence, the European Union faced, for the first time in the history of the integration project, an external environment which gave it the legitimacy to create a Common Foreign and Security Policy. This was a major development that had been unattainable throughout the Cold War, when Western European leaders had little incentive to organize their own defence within a separate organizational set-up, beyond – let alone outside – the US security guarantee embodied by NATO. This, however, changed dramatically in the post–Cold War context, where European leaders could no longer count on, or were no longer content with, a dominant US military engagement in Europe. The creation of a European Security Defence Policy in the context of the European Union – and thus the subsequent need for some sort of EU–NATO arrangement – was facilitated by a combination of further external factors intimately connected to the
main underlying structural change of the international system: exogenous shocks as well as the external role of the United States and United Nations.

Exogenous shocks: the Balkans, ‘9/11’, Iraq and Sudan

Exogenous shocks, such as the Bosnian War from 1991 to 1995, the Kosovo War in 1999, the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in 2001 as well as the Iraq War of 2003 were important factors with differing consequences for the EU, NATO and their common relationship. As we have seen, the Europeans and European Union’s own inability to intervene militarily in the Bosnian and Kosovo conflicts, coupled with a US reluctance to get involved in this essentially European affair, served as an important impetus for the European Union’s subsequent militarization. For NATO, both conflicts presented external opportunities for re-establishing its post–Cold War relevance in the field of crisis management. Furthermore, the emergence of NATO’s consolidated role and military primacy in the context of the Bosnian conflict and the formative and positive experience gained by European armed forces participating in NATO’s IFOR convinced European leaders in the mid 1990s to pursue an ESDI within NATO (Wallace 2005: 439; Medcalf 2006: 84). Kosovo, however, represented both the zenith and key turning point for NATO’s primacy as a crisis manager. Although externally perceived, despite numerous complications, as another demonstration of NATO’s military effectiveness, the mission itself was hampered by intra-Alliance disputes on the selection of targets, the use of ground forces and the avoidance of civilian casualties, which particularly in US circles led to severe frustrations over the multilateral drawbacks of such a ‘war by committee’ (Clark 2002). Once again, the fact that the United States had to provide the vast majority of air strikes, due to a lack of European resources, but was still restrained in its decision-making autonomy meant that Kosovo marked the beginning of the end of NATO’s usefulness in the eyes of US military strategists. As a Pentagon official vividly explained, ‘if anyone thinks that the US is ever going to use the North Atlantic Council to run another military campaign, they must be smoking pot’ (cited in Biscop 2006: 8). At the same time, the Kosovo episode convinced in particular French leaders to press ahead with an autonomization of ESDP outside NATO and safely beyond US dominance (Howorth 2007: 157).

For NATO, the consequences of Kosovo were the beginning of waning support from both the Europeans and the United States, which brought the organization under fierce existentialist pressures once more. The US post-9/11 refusal to use NATO for the initial phase of the campaign in Afghanistan, despite the symbolic gesture of NATO’s first ever evocation of its collective defence Article 5, and the US ‘coalition-of-the-willing’ style operation in Iraq 2003 further reinforced the impression that the United States was indeed itself ‘decoupling’ from NATO. Combined with the tensions within the Alliance in the run-up to the Iraq War and the rise of the European Union’s military dimension, NATO has come under increasing existentialist stress, which also partly explains its interest in a potentially face-saving, closer EU–NATO relationship in crisis management. NATO’s post-9/11
role in the international efforts against terrorism and its current engagement in Afghanistan provide both external opportunities for a strengthening of NATO’s role transformation and prestige, but also – in the case of failure – a potential death-trap (Goldirova 2008). For the European Union, the Iraq War – despite the internal rift it created temporarily between those governments who opposed an US-led invasion of Iraq without a UN Security Council Mandate and those who supported it – nevertheless had a unifying long-term effect as it provided the external impetus for the European Union’s ESS and the concept of effective multilateralism in the first place. Thus, these exogenous shocks affected the European Union and NATO almost in opposite ways: whilst the European Union’s failure in the Balkans accelerated the strengthening of its military capacities, NATO’s most important support-base slowly but surely decoupled from NATO since, and as a result of, its campaign in Kosovo. Whilst the Iraq War tarnished NATO’s coherence and the ‘war on terror’ and NATO’s first out-of-area mission in Afghanistan provide something of an existentialist test case for NATO, the European Union capitalized on the galvanizing shock of the Iraq War by making an important step towards the formulation of a putative common strategic identity that also links the European Union’s activities in crisis management to the United Nations (see below). Overall, therefore, these external crises curiously facilitated the rise of the European Union’s ESDP on the one hand, whilst contributing to the weakening of NATO on the other. For the evolution of the EU–NATO relationship, this has been an important external factor for the shift in the relative power distribution between both organizations, where NATO seems to be increasingly on the back foot. Finally, the conflict in Sudan and the subsequent request to both the European Union and NATO for the support of the African Union’s mission has been an important external trigger for a rather explicit episode of interorganizational competition. Although NATO and EU military officials have lessened the impact of this rift by cooperating closely on the ground, the Sudan case will remain a key reminder of the competition inherent in the EU–NATO relationship and of the fact that ‘mutual reinforcement’ is a demanding goal, not an automatic given in EU–NATO relations.

‘Significant Others’: The role of the United States, United Nations and African Union

The influence of the United States has been as much a key external factor for the formation of the Cold War Euro-Atlantic Security structure as it has been for the post–Cold War evolution of the EU–NATO relationship. As we have seen, shifting US post–Cold War strategic interests away from Europe and towards Asia and the Middle East convinced Europeans, particularly the British, to build up their own defence capacities. Throughout the 1990s, the United States positions on a more autonomous European role in defence ranged from outright opposition to conditional support. Once the EU Council Summits of Cologne and Helsinki affirmed in 1999 the development of the ESDP, it was above all US external pressure that pushed for a formalization of EU–NATO relations, thus representing a
key external factor for the dense institutionalization of the EU–NATO relationship (Reichard 2006: 152; Howorth 2007: 163). In a more indirect way, the increasingly unilateralist and assertive foreign policy of the Bush administration since 9/11, particularly its ambivalence towards the United Nations in the context of the Iraq War and of the wider strategic interests in the ‘war on terror’, may have been an important factor in provoking a distinct EU strategic response with a conscious emphasis on multilateralism and the UN (Jørgensen 2006: 205). In the field of crisis management, the UN has become an important external focal-organization for the European Union’s autonomous military crisis management activities, as exemplified by the European Union’s missions Artemis, EUFOR RD Congo and EUFOR Chad, which were launched with the explicit goal of supporting the UN peace-keeping activities. Similarly, the EU Battlegroups were created with the express aim of supporting the UN, particularly on the African continent (Lindstrom 2007: 11; Koops 2007: 4). Thus, both the UN and the African Union provide an important strategic context for the European Union’s autonomous military mission. Indeed, it could be argued that these missions provide a welcome external opportunity for the European Union to demonstrate both its role as a staunch UN supporter and for differentiating and distancing itself from both the United States and NATO in the field of crisis management. The UN thereby functions as an important legitimizer and receiver of the European Union’s strive for more autonomy in the military realm and a key facilitator of the European Union’s development of a more distinct international actorness and identity. These missions, arguably, not only provide the European Union with more visibility, but also with more independence vis-à-vis NATO. Thus, both the UN and the African Union, in effect, have been important external factors for the European Union’s autonomization. 4

Internal factors of change

Whilst external factors were at work for setting the overall structural preconditions that made an emerging EU–NATO relationship possible in the first place, and while exogenous shocks and the role of the United States and UN go a long way in explaining the changing EU–NATO power balance and the external context for a more UN-centred international identity, only internal factors can mainly explain the dynamics EU–NATO interorganizationalism and the tendencies and dynamics of the European Union’s Europeanized militarization.

Factors at the member state level

As we have seen, the Franco-British declaration on European Defence, announced by Jacques Chirac and Tony Blair on 4 December 1998 at St Malo, marked a fundamental break-through for the European Union’s militarization, with crucial implications for the European Union’s relations to and with NATO. Indeed, the agreement that ‘in order to play its full role on the international stage […] the European Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed by credible
military forces [and] the means to decide to use them [...] where the Alliance as a whole is not engaged’ (UK FCO 1998) was only made possible by Tony Blair’s break with a 50-year old British foreign policy veto on any multinational military institutions that could potentially be autonomous from the United States or NATO. In contrast to French leaders, who have throughout the Cold War sought to build up the European Community as a counter-balance to the United States, Britain remained a staunch Atlanticist and something of a reluctant and weary European. The British concession to the French position on the issue of an EU military dimension was therefore ground breaking. The British prime minister did not, however, agree to use ESDP as a counterweight to the United States or as a tool to undermine NATO. For Blair, the prospect of assuming a leadership role in a major EU project – particularly after Britain had already been marginalized through its absence from the European Monetary Union – seems to have been part of the motivation behind the decision to give his blessing to ESDP (Deighton 2002: 725). Another reason, however, was his belief that – after the Europeans’ failure to significantly improve their capabilities within either the WEU or NATO itself – the ESDP would provide a more compelling context for Europe’s capability improvements, and would thereby, strengthen the transatlantic Alliance and reduce the negative imbalances and lack of ‘burden sharing’ within the transatlantic relationship (Howorth 2003: 246–247). This is indeed why the St Malo Declaration explicitly stressed that the European Union’s military project would be ‘contributing to the vitality of a modernized Atlantic Alliance’ (UK FCO 1998). Arguably, for the British Labour party, ESDP could be seen as the outward projection of the ‘Third Way’ to the foreign policy realm: a middle path between Atlanticism and Europeanism (Wallace and Oliver 2005: 162). St Malo did not mean, however, that the French and British positions did fully converge. Britain maintained its Atlanticist reflex, acting on many occasions as NATO’s advocate, whilst France continues to interpret ESDP as a tool for a truly independent European international role. This explains the persistent French tendency to push for autonomous ESDP military missions, such as Artemis or EUFOR RD Congo, on the one hand, and, as we shall see, its veto on any initiative that could enhance NATO’s role vis-à-vis ESDP, on the other. These tensions between the British and French positions have been seamlessly imported to the level of EU–NATO relations, highlighting the importance of these internal factors at the member state level for the evolution and dynamics of the EU–NATO relationship. Between the French and British poles, Germany was expected to play the role of a strong mediator (Varwick 2006: 16). From NATO’s perspective, however, this hope has not materialized (Interview with NATO Official, Public Diplomacy Division, November 2007). Instead, Germany has increasingly participated in and adapted to the ESDP’s context and policies, epitomized by its eventual decision to take on the operational command of the European Union’s mission EUFOR RD Congo in 2006 without recourse to Berlin Plus. Particularly in response to the more assertive US unilateralism under the Bush administration and in the wake of Iraq, the German government under Gerhard Schröder began a reorientation away from NATO and decidedly towards ‘putting ESDP first’ (Bornefeld-Ettmann et al. 2007: 138–139). This tells us as much about
the shifting power balance between the European Union and NATO as it does about ESDP’s Europeanizing appeal to and impact on key member states.

By Europeanization we refer to the complex integrative process by which the foreign policy interests, identities and security cultures of member states are both projected to and influenced by the European level (see also Wong 2005: 135–139). Thus, whilst key EU member states, such as France in particular, have managed to project their preferences to the ESDP domain, other member states, such as Germany, have used the ESDP context for a fundamental reorientation of their security identities. Most recently, even staunch, traditional NATOists, such as Poland, seemed to have progressively shifted their interests from NATO to the European Union as a result of participation in ESDP procedures and missions (Blaszczyk et al. 2007: 153). One explanation could be that member states perceive a greater degree of influence and ownership in the shaping of policies and institutional transformations of ESDP compared with their impact on a, however reluctantly, US-dominated NATO. The Europeanization of member states’ foreign policies and military cultures also implies – with the exception of the ‘Third Way Atlanticism’ of Britain – that on the member state level, preferences and organizational support bases are clearly shifting from NATO to the European Union, providing an important internal factor for increasing the power asymmetry between both organizations within the EU–NATO relationship.

Interorganizational and interpersonal factors

Dynamics at the interorganizational and interpersonal level have been important factors for the early phase of EU–NATO cooperation and the move towards the formalization of their relations. The early post–Cold War overlap of interests and competences between the European Union and NATO – with both organizations concentrating on newly emerging security concepts of ‘crisis management’ – created the potential for both cooperation and mutual reinforcement on the one hand as well as for inherent competition on the other. As we have seen, after the European Union’s decision to take over the WEU’s tasks at the EU Council Summit in Cologne 1999, external pressures by the United States pushed for a clarification and formalization of the relations between the European Union’s emerging ESDP and NATO. Significantly, informal meetings already took place since 1997 between Javier Solana – NATO Secretary General at that time – the President of the EU Commission Jacques Santer and the Commissioner for Foreign Relations, Hans van den Broek (Reichard 2006: 122). This highlights that it was in fact the EU Commission, not the EU Council, which advanced EU–NATO informal exchanges in the early years. However, with the appointment of Javier Solana in October 1999 as the European Union’s first High Representative for the Common and Foreign Security Policy the formalization and clarification of EU–NATO relations gained significant momentum within the ESDP context. In particular, the effective working relationship between Solana and his successor as NATO Secretary General, George Robertson – who previously as the former British defence minister had been a key architect of the St Malo agreement – proved to be a crucial factor for the rapid
advance of EU–NATO relations. Under the Solana–Robertson leadership, a raft of EU–NATO cooperation channels was developed, such as the interim PSC–NAC meetings at ambassadorial and ministerial level. Most crucially, however, they were both instrumental for the eventual conclusion of the Berlin Plus agreement (ibid.: 123–125). This not only highlights the importance of the relationship between organizations ‘executive leaders’ (Cox 1973) – acting as ‘boundary spanners’ (Biermann 2008: 166) – for the advancement and deepening of interorganizational relations, but also underlines the significance of the so-called alumni effect: the enabling impact of a leader switching from one organization to another and thereby facilitating interorganizational understandings and cooperation between the two organizations (Jönsson 1995: 2–3; Koops 2008: 27). Similar arguments about the importance of interpersonal relations have been made with reference to the initial establishments of closer cooperation between the WEU and NATO during the early 1990s, which, as William Wallace argues, were partly due to ‘the excellent personal relations between NATO’s German Secretary-General and his Dutch counterpart at the WEU’ (Wallace 2005: 439). The actual practical application of Berlin Plus through the military missions Concordia and Althea was reportedly also facilitated by the good working relations between the military officers of both organizations in the field, particularly in the case of the NATO’s British Operation Commander John Reith and the European Union’s British Force Commander David Leakey (Hofmann and Reynolds 2007: 5). Notwithstanding the current impasses at the political PSC–NAC level, the two Berlin Plus missions have also contributed to an overall consolidation and deepening of the EU–NATO relationship at the institutional level: whilst the European Union adopted NATO’s military operational structures throughout both missions, both organizations also learned important interorganizational ‘lessons’ from their direct cooperation. As we shall discuss in more detail below, together with the European Union’s learning from NATO’s institutional design – particularly the European Union’s replication of NATO’s military committee – the interaction of both organizations in the field has led to a process of interorganizational assimilation on part of the European Union. Whilst this facilitated cooperation, it was arguably also one factor for the European Union’s increasing efforts to raise its own profile by launching its own autonomous missions and by making its NATO-dependent Althea mission more distinct from NATO’s preceding SFOR operation (Leakey 2006: 59), thereby heightening the potential for image and identity rivalries. Indeed, in this context the role of Javier Solana has been crucial. Whilst having been a key driving force for the establishment of formal EU–NATO relations from 1999 to 2003, since the inception of Concordia, CFSP’s High Representative was now increasingly pushing for the Europeanization of military activities and a more visible EU role (Barros-Garcia 2007). This, by implication, increased EU autonomy from NATO and competitive tensions between both organizations. In this context, the process of Europeanization of the European Union’s military policies has been a crucial factor behind the European Union’s moves towards greater autonomy and behind the increased potential for EU–NATO tensions as well as for the power shifts in the current phase of the EU–NATO relationship’s evolution.
Overall, whilst external factors were important for setting the overall context and providing further stimuli that made the emergence of an EU–NATO relationship possible in the first place, internal factors – particularly the role of individuals – are better suited to explain the development of the relationship since the Franco-British decision on ESDP at St Malo. Indeed, similar to Blair’s role in bringing about a fundamental shift of the British position on ESDP, analysts speculate that Nicolas Sarkozy could initiate a U-turn of the French stance towards NATO (Valasek 2007). A French rapprochement with NATO could signify a ‘St Malo in reverse’, as it were: strengthening NATO in return for further advances in ESDP. Finally, the role and influence of Javier Solana was important in promoting the formalization of Berlin Plus until 2003, followed by increased EU autonomy and visibility in the field from 2003 onwards, based on lessons learned from EU–NATO cooperation. Eventually, the internal twin processes of Europeanization and autonomization, facilitated by Solana’s Council Secretariat, the European Union’s independent military missions, and an effort to carve out a distinct identity vis-à-vis NATO and the United States, have contributed to the current interorganizational tensions and power shift within the EU–NATO nexus.

The EU–NATO relationship: Effective multilateralism or ‘shrewd interorganizationalism’ in the making?

In this final section, we seek to evaluate the EU–NATO relationship in the wider context of the European Union’s interorganizational strategy of effective multilateralism. By applying our previous findings to a comparative analysis of the European Union’s and NATO’s impact on each other’s policies, developments and institutional designs, we seek to assess what the empirical example of the EU–NATO nexus can tell us about the European Union’s actual implementation and pursuit of its foreign policy concept of effective multilateralism in practice. As outlined in the ESS, effective multilateralism affirms the European Union’s goal of strengthening other major international organizations and of equipping them with the necessary tools for fulfilling their respective roles and responsibilities in the international system (ESS 2003: 9). Thus, as Fraser Cameron (2005: 3) notes, ‘if the EU wishes to promote “effective multilateralism” and ensure that conflict prevention and crisis management remain a priority, it must seek to strengthen its own role in the major international institutions as well as the institutions themselves’. Whether, how and with what impact this has been achieved through the EU–NATO relationship or to what extent it itself only reinforces an EU instrumental approach to effective multilateralism in the military realm forms the main focus of the final analysis below.

The European Union’s limited impact on NATO

Despite the dense and highly institutionalized relationship between the European Union and NATO, the European Union’s impact on NATO’s policies, transformation
or even institutional design has been rather negligible. Yet, it is important to note at the outset that unlike in other EU–IO relationships, where there is a strong EU Commission participation or high a degree of joint-voting discipline amongst EU member states (as is the case, e.g., in the EU–WTO or EU–UN General Assembly relationship, respectively), it is still inconceivable for the European Union to ‘speak with one voice’ within the Atlantic Alliance.

For one, it has been the long-standing attitude of US administrations and non-EU NATO members to vigorously oppose any idea of a unified European caucus within NATO (Biscop 2006: 9; Howorth 2003: 263). The prospect of being presented by a pre-negotiated, common EU position would not only pre-empt NATO’s function as a decision-making and discussion forum in its own right, but would also seriously weaken the influence of the five remaining non-EU members within NATO. Thus, there is a considerable level of resistance amongst NATO members against even the suggestion of a common EU bloc within NATO (Valasek 2007: 5). Compared with other EU–IO relationships, the European Union’s potential for impact may also be more limited due to the fact that the EU Commission and the EU Parliament are mostly marginalized in what is essentially an intergovernmental ESDP–NATO affair.6 This might prevent a more comprehensive and also a more multifaceted EU impact, although conversely, the absence of the usual EU inter-pillar turf wars should also be a positive, impact-enhancing factor.

More significantly, notwithstanding the Europeanization of EU member states’ foreign policy preferences with respect to the European Union, the persistent difference in the key member states’ positions on and strategies towards NATO – especially amongst the French and British governments – prevents a stable and common EU approach towards NATO at the member state level. Indeed, France’s traditional NATO aversion and its regular opposition to initiatives that could significantly enhance NATO’s role or transformation have been a reappearing trait of French foreign policy (Michel 2007; Soutou 2005). Unsurprisingly, France has also been one of the strongest opponents of an EU–NATO proposal with which the European Union could indeed have one of the most profound impacts on NATO, in the one area where the European Union has developed a distinct comparative advantage: in the realm of civilian crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction. Since the Feira EU Council summit of June 2000, the European Union has been developing effective tools for post-conflict stabilization and civil–military approaches to security governance, including capacities for police, rule of law and civil administration missions (Nowack 2006: 19). In the light of NATO’s challenges to its reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and its limited resources and complete absence of civil–military planning capabilities, the idea of a ‘Berlin Plus in Reverse’ has emerged and has found much support in US and NATO circles (Howorth 2007: 175–176; de Hoop Scheffer 2007). Such an arrangement, as the precise mirror image of the European Union’s access to NATO’s military assets under the existing ‘Berlin Plus’ agreement, would in turn allow NATO to draw on the European Union’s highly developed civil–military resources and planning expertise (Flournoy and Smith 2005: 70). Yet, alongside France, several EU member states have voiced their opposition to such an arrangement, which, it is feared,
would allow NATO to venture into civil–military affairs and could thereby rival the European Union’s distinctive approach to crisis management (Valasek 2007; Yost 2007: 89, 110–111).

In the context of effective multilateralism’s aim of strengthening other international organizations and equipping them with the necessary tools to act, the lack of support for a ‘Berlin Plus in Reverse’ surely represents as much a missed interorganizational opportunity for mutual reinforcement as it does for a material EU impact on NATO’s policies and reconfigurations. The aversions to such new schemes, however, also highlight a more general malaise of the current EU–NATO relationship: the tendency – partly due to French and Turkish pressures – not to widen interorganizational cooperation or innovation beyond a strict and narrow interpretation of the existing EU–NATO arrangements under Berlin Plus. As a result, present formal EU–NATO meetings and exchanges and discussions are mostly confined to technical discussions of the ongoing EU–NATO Althea mission in Bosnia, whilst wider and potentially fruitful initiatives, such as EU–NATO collaboration on terrorism or EU–NATO civil–military cooperation in Afghanistan, are firmly kept off the agenda (Carp 2006: 40). Hence, as David Yost (2007: 94) points out, ‘as currently interpreted, the Berlin Plus package functions to restrict cooperation, not to facilitate and promote it’. Similarly, in his much noted Berlin Speech, NATO Secretary General Japp de Hoop Scheffer might have joked about the NATO–EU relationship being a ‘frozen conflict’, but he rather accurately noted that ‘some deliberately want to keep NATO and the EU at a distance from one another’ (de Hoop Scheffer 2007: 3; see also Biermann 2008: 17). Taken together, these dynamics do not give off encouraging signals, neither about the future of an effective EU–NATO multilateralism nor about a sizable EU impact on NATO.

However, beyond the issues surrounding Berlin Plus and direct, material impacts, there are arguments to be made about a more subtle, indirect EU impact on NATO in general, ideational terms. Hanna Ojanen, for example, points out that the European Union’s own enlargement and institutional adaptation efforts contributed significantly to shaping NATO’s own identity and post–Cold War transformation attempts (Ojanen 2004: 18). In terms of military capacity innovation and design, she also suggests that it was perhaps the European Union’s decision to launch a European Rapid Reaction Force that has prompted NATO to follow suit with its own NRF (ibid.: 19). As we have seen above, similar arguments can be made about NATO’s decision to launch a Maritime Security Strategy, not dissimilar to the EU Commission’s proposal on a Maritime Directive, and, more fundamentally, to follow the European Union’s decision on Eastern Enlargement at NATO’s Brussels Summit in 1994 (Medcalf 2006: 131–132). With reference to enlargement, several commentators have also stressed, in a more explicitly constructivist fashion, the impact of the twin processes of EU and NATO enlargement towards the Central and Eastern European States on NATO’s emerging role as a normative agent for democratization, stabilization and liberal socialization (Schimmelfennig 2003; Fierke and Wiener 2005). Taking their arguments a little further, one could argue that within the framework of their parallel externalized Europeanization and Stabilization process, the European Union contributed significantly to the shaping of NATO’s emerging, highly politicized identity as a
norm exporter. Arguably, this was aided by the fact that, although both enlargement processes were not formally coordinated, NATO membership was increasingly perceived by candidate states as a first step to EU membership, and thus as part and parcel of the same Europeanization process on the way to ‘returning to Europe’. Thus, indirectly, the European Union could be seen as a co-sponsor of NATO’s politicization and role diversification. In the same identity-shaping vein, it could also be argued that the European Union itself offered an important focus point and impetus for NATO’s own identity ‘re-branding’. By associating itself and collaborating closely with the seemingly more dynamic security-newcomer European Union, it could be argued, that NATO could shed, or at least diminish, its image as a Cold War relict in the process. Conceivably, the role as an EU-mentor could, at least in the short run, have also contributed to NATO’s renewed sense of purpose. Considering the present EU–NATO problems and the lack of EU reciprocity, however, such a suggestion might seem rather cynical.

Whilst proving to be acutely difficult to verify empirically, these speculations about the European Union’s indirect identity-shaping impacts on NATO raise crucial issues and aspects about the European Union’s wider, ideational influence and form an important reminder of the wider, ‘soft issues’ involved in evaluating interorganizational impact. Yet, they tell us little about the European Union’s more direct impact on NATO’s institutional design and strategic reforms. The truth on this matter remains that the lack of an overall more decisive EU impact on NATO’s policies, institutions or reform process lies in the fact that it was mostly the United States, as NATO’s most important internal and external factor, that almost single-handedly drove the organizations reform agenda. Indeed, with the exception of enlargement perhaps, the key changes in NATO’s evolution, such as the decisions to transform it into a global alliance or an actor in the war on terror, were driven, and ultimately decided, by the United States (Medcalf 2006: 62; Lansford 2002; Varwick 2008: 164). It is thus perhaps not too surprising that the European Union’s direct and more material impact and room for presenting reform initiatives were limited. Moreover, as we have seen above, the very fact that NATO has been a decidedly US-moulded and US-dominated organization caused EU member states to increasingly turn their attention towards the European Union in the first place, where they had hoped to increase their level of ownership and decision-making influence over European, and progressively globalizing, security policies. The European Union’s key member states have had neither the means nor, increasingly, the interest in shaping NATO according to their preferences. Instead, as we have seen throughout this article, they focussed on utilizing NATO for the build-up of the European Union’s own structures. To this end, as we shall turn to in more detail below, NATO’s impact on the European Union was crucial and far more pronounced than the European Union’s impact on NATO.

**NATO’s ‘enabling impact’ on the European Union**

NATO’s impact on the European Union’s institutional design, policies and actual experience gathering in the field of crisis management and wider security issues
has been fundamental. Although NATO’s own existence, role and function represented throughout the Cold War a de facto veto on the European Union’s development as an international actor in the military sphere, the post–Cold War period has reversed NATO’s impact: from a constraint on the European Union towards becoming the key enabler and facilitator of the European Union’s militarization. As soon as the European Union decided to develop the institutions deemed necessary for its European Defence and Security Policy in 1999, NATO officials had a decisive input in the creation of these institutions. As the vivid, albeit slightly hyperbolical, remark by a French Officer highlights, ‘it was [...] rather as though the EU, having barely laid down the foundations for its own new construction, was being overwhelmed by consultants from the shiny glass and concrete NATO structures across the road, all proffering free advice on internal partitioning, electric wiring circuits, the positioning of water-pipes and the optimum number of floors’ (cited in Howorth 2007: 165).

However, even within EU circles it was clear that the institutional design of ESDP’s key bodies would have to be modelled on NATO. Thus, the European Union’s PSC was established as the equivalent of the North Atlantic Council and the ESDP’s EUMC as well as the EUMS became a close replication of NATO’s Military Committee and International Military Staff, respectively. Furthermore, the decision to appoint the former NATO Secretary General, Javier Solana as the European Union’s first High Representative was also, as we have seen, an instrumental factor in advancing the Europeanization of ESDP and the visibility of the EU as an international actor. Beyond the institutional realm, and even before the creation of ESDP, NATO laid the fundamental groundwork of a European military culture and the norm of multinational cooperation, which in effect, provided the European Union with a vital head start for the development of its own military missions and multinational schemes. As Anthony Foster rightly notes, ‘NATO has been influential in transmitting norms of professionalism, developing a common corpus of military doctrine, promoting interoperability and [...] minimising the fear of shared multinational command structures (Foster 2006: 167).

NATO’s most profound impact on ESDP has indeed been in the field. As we have seen above, NATO’s operational support under Berlin Plus was indispensable for the European Union’s first ever military mission, **Concordia**, and the ongoing mission **Althea** in Bosnia. In both missions, the European Union replicated and applied NATO’s procedures and designs intimately (Kupferschmidt 2006; Juncos 2007). Indeed, applying the sociological concept of ‘institutional isomorphism’ to the EU–NATO relationship, Ana Juncos highlights how by extensively learning and copying from NATO, ESDP has become strikingly similar to NATO in terms of institutional design, policies and performance in the field of crisis management (Juncos 2007). Most crucially, the European Union also continued to progressively transfer its learned NATO lessons to its own, autonomous missions, thereby increasing its own, independent actorness in the security realm. Indeed, for its first autonomous military mission, **Artemis** in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which was undertaken barely three months after the launch of **Concordia**, the European Union once again copied and adhered to
NATO procedures throughout (Howorth 2005: 194). Artemis was not only a mission in support of the United Nations, thus heralding the European Union’s shift from being a NATO consumer to becoming a UN provider, but also acted as the key inspiration for the European Union’s Battlegroup Concept (Lindstrom 2007: 10). This was to further enhance its development towards an independent security actor. Thus, it has been one of the key ironies of the EU–NATO relationship that the institutional and operational ‘lessons learned’ from NATO have, ironically, aided the European Union’s ‘emancipation’ from NATO in the end.

‘Shrewd interorganizationalism’ in the making

Indeed, the European Union’s instrumentalization of NATO’s enabling impact, coupled with the European Union’s own limited impact on NATO, raises important questions about the European Union’s adherence to the principles of its strategy of effective multilateralism and about the nature and function of the EU–NATO relationship therein. The evolution of the relationship so far suggests that the European Union has gained more than it has given. Indeed, the narrow implementation of the existing Berlin Plus package, and the absence of a ‘Berlin Plus in Reverse’ arrangement through which the European Union could reciprocate the access it has gained to NATO’s assets, underlines the limited and asymmetrical impact between the European Union and NATO. More crucially, it also points to the fact that the EU–NATO relationship lacks one of the most fundamental features of multilateralism: ‘diffuse reciprocity’. First coined by Robert Keohane (1985), ‘diffuse reciprocity’ describes one of the benefits of multilateral cooperation for participating actors who learn to shape their expectations and interests towards, in Caporaso’s words, ‘benefit[ting] in the long run and over many issues, rather than every time on every issue’ (Caporaso 1992: 602). However, the narrow bandwidth and rather one-sided nature of the current EU–NATO relationship seem to still rather prevent long-term, mutual benefits.

Moreover, when it comes to a second, fundamental feature of multilateralism – cooperation based on ‘generalized principles of conduct’ (Ruggie 1993: 14) – the EU–NATO relationship does not seem to fare much better. As will be recalled, according to the EU–NATO Declaration on ESDP from December 2002, the EU–NATO relationship is founded on, inter alia, the general principles of ‘partnership’ – of ‘ensuring that the crisis management of the two organizations are mutually reinforcing’ – of ‘effective mutual consultation, dialogue, cooperation and transparency’ and of ‘coherent, transparent and mutually reinforcing development of the capability requirements common to the organizations, with a spirit of openness’ (EU–NATO 2002). The lack of EU–NATO consultation prior to the launch of Artemis, the mutually restraining squabble over the African Union support mission in Sudan, the blocked dialogue in the NATO–EU Capability Group on mutually reinforcing capability developments and the inherent tensions between the EU Battlegroup scheme and the NRFs seem to undermine these general principles of conduct. Although, as we have highlighted, cooperation and mutual reinforcement seems to take place through informal exchanges at the
actual, operational level in the field, while the overarching political, formal relationship is unmistakably defunct. Arguably, the EU–NATO relationship’s failure to meet two key requirements of multilateralism poses the question whether it actually deserves the label ‘multilateralism’, let alone ‘effective multilateralism’, at all.

What weighs by far more heavily than the failure to adhere to scholarly definitions of multilateralism, however, is in this context the European Union’s failure to adhere to its very own defining principles of effective multilateralism itself: namely, to strengthen international organizations and to equip them with the necessary tools (ESS 2003: 9). However, instead of strengthening ‘its own role in the major international institutions as well as the institutions themselves’ (Cameron 2005: 3), the EU, at least in the case of its relations with NATO, seems to rather strengthen its own role through the partner institution. In the case of the EU–NATO nexus, this implies, as we have seen, a progressive autonomization and emancipation from NATO precisely as a result of drawing on the valuable and enabling, experiences, institutional designs, learned lessons, capabilities and assets gained through EU–NATO cooperation in the first place. Hence, the European Union’s approach to the EU–NATO relationship seems to highlight the European Union’s essentially instrumental approach to multilateralism. It therefore leads us to the conclusion that the European Union’s cooperation with NATO is less an example of altruistic ‘effective multilateralism’, than rather more an example of ‘shrewd interorganizationalism’ in the making: the European Union’s tendency to use cooperation with other organizations for the enhancement and development of its own international actoriness, capacities and strategic identity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we sought to provide an evaluation of the EU–NATO aspect of the European Union’s wider foreign policy strategy of effective multilateralism. We identified and analysed three key stages and principal changes in the post-Cold War evolution of the EU–NATO relationship. First, the beginning of a process of EU–NATO interorganizational convergence, particularly marked by the European Union’s infringement on NATO’s military domain. Second, the move towards a formalization of EU–NATO cooperation. Third, we concluded that the most recent and current phase in EU–NATO relations is characterized by the tensions between cases of effective EU–NATO cooperation in the field on the one hand, and the European Union’s strive for military autonomy on the other hand, coupled with persistent EU–NATO political dysfunctions and rivalries.

We then analysed the key external and internal factors behind these changes and developments. Whilst external factors helped to set the overall structural preconditions and context for the emergence of the EU–NATO relationship in the first place, internal factors were better suited to explain the key developments and dynamics in the EU–NATO relationship since the St Malo Declaration. We identified in particular the crucial role of executive individuals at NATO and the European Union in furthering interorganizational cooperation, both at the political
and military level. The former NATO Secretary General and current EU High Representative Javier Solana was identified as a key variable for facilitating the process of EU–NATO cooperation until at least 2004, and at the same time, for fostering a Europeanization process through his work at the Council Secretariat and thus for decisively spurring the advance of the European Union’s international actoriness profile in the military field. Indeed, we highlighted that this process of Europeanization was an important internal factor for the European Union’s autonomization by causing a slow but steady shift in the member states’ strategic cultures and organizational preferences: away from NATO as the sole military agent, towards the EU as an acceptable, and increasingly preferred, emerging alternative actor in crisis management. Overall, the analysis of the first two sections of this chapter showed that internal and external factors of change are intimately interlinked. External factors, such as the end of the Cold War or decisions by the US administrations, set the permissive parameters for subsequent developments that are mainly driven by internal processes and dynamics. Further exogenous shocks, such as external wars or international crises, might act as catalyst for hastening or re-channelling developments. But it is at the internal level where the external foundations and stimuli for change are either embraced and translated into historic advances or blocked and filibustered into lost opportunities. Again, the role of individuals and the socialization and Europeanization effects of ESDP institutions and missions were of crucial importance in the evolution of EU–NATO relations.

In the context of effective multilateralism, we sought to assess how exactly the European Union has used and translated the opportunity of the EU–NATO relationship into action. As we have seen, it has shrewdly used its interactions with NATO for its own institutional and operational advances in the military realm. Both the institutional structures, such as the PSC, EUMC and EUMS, and military procedures in the field have been replicated from NATO. Of course, this has not been done clandestinely against NATO’s will and better judgment, but rather with the support of NATO officials. Yet, the EU–NATO relationship, as it currently stands, is characterized by mostly unidirectional impact and instrumentalization, where the European Union seems to be gaining more from its use of NATO than vice versa. Thus, the relationship’s acute lack of ‘diffuse reciprocity’, which has long been agreed upon as the key feature of genuine multilateralism, leads us to question whether one could really regard the EU–NATO compact as an example of genuine ‘effective multilateralism’ between organizations. According to the ESS, effective multilateralism is pursued as a strategy to strengthen the key international organizations and the European Union’s position within them. As we have noted at the outset, the EU–NATO relationship is one of the few examples where the European Union is structurally prevented from ‘speaking with one voice’ within NATO’s North Atlantic Council. The other option, to strengthen the organization, in line with the European Union’s espousal of effective multilateralism would be by equipping NATO with the support and tools it needs to act as an effective organization. However, as we have shown, key EU member states prevent the European Union from providing NATO with access to the European Union’s civilian instruments. Instead of viewing the EU–NATO relationship as an
example of mutually reinforcing effective multilateralism, we have concluded that
it should rather be seen as an example of ‘shrewd interorganizationalism’ in the
making, where the European Union relies on NATO in order to advance its own
international actorness profile and assert its visibility and identity in the field of
crisis management. This makes the European Union less and less a sui generis
entity with a peculiarly inbuilt genetic code of altruistic foreign policy behaviour,
but rather more and more like any other ordinary, interest-maximizing power in
the international system.

However, the European Union’s autonomization ambitions notwithstanding,
for the future of transatlantic security relations, an effective cooperation system
with NATO and the US remains an indispensable imperative. Despite their differing
views on the value and relevance of multilateralism, the European Union should
continue to ensure that the United States remains a ‘European power’. For the
European Union, the strengthening of its own military capabilities will be as imperative
as the strengthening of genuine links with NATO. To this end, the recent call by
five former NATO generals for an ‘EU-NATO steering directorate at the highest
political level’ indicates the will – albeit rather at the military level than at the political
level – for revitalizing transatlantic security relations with a coordinated EU–
NATO nexus at its core (Naumann et al. 2007: 144). For the foreseeable future, as
the European Union’s autonomous missions have highlighted – the EU’s current
problems with the mission in Chad, in particular – the European Union might
arguably remain an awkward ‘civilian power with teeth’ (Schmalz 2005, 57–59).
NATO, despite facing severe existential problems of its own, might for the time being
still remain better placed for high-intensity operations. In view of the European
Union’s ambitions in the military realm, the future relations between NATO and the
European Union will, no doubt, continue to be dominated by rivalry and competition.
However, in view of the broad congruence of membership in both organizations and
the fact of a ‘single set of forces’ as well as the demanding international security pol-
icy agenda, it would be highly inefficient – politically and militarily – if both organ-
izations were busy with themselves in some kind of beauty contest instead of giving
effective impetus to the stabilization of the international system and to actively con-
tributing to the solution of current and future security policy problems.

Notes
1 The first informal contacts between both organizations since were in fact held between
Javier Solana – NATO Secretary General at that time – the President of the EU
Commission Jacques Santer and the Commissioner for Foreign Relations, Hans van den
Broek. These meetings took place at regular intervals since 1997 (Reichard 2006: 122)
and highlight that it was in fact the Commission, not the EU Council, which advanced
the EU–NATO coordination in the early years.
2 For an excellent and more detailed analysis of Berlin Plus, see Martin Reichard (2006),
especially chapters 4 and 8.
3 Similarly to the arrangements for Concordia, the very fact that NATO kept its own
small ‘back up’ presence during the European Union’s Althea missions implies a prac-
tical deviation from the operational situations originally envisaged under the Berlin Plus
agreement.
The United States’s recent decision to establish an Africa Command (Africom) represents a major shift in its strategic interest and might heighten the future competition between NATO and the European Union on the African Continent.

Arguably, the emergence of the notion of crisis management was a response to the changing nature of security. The change from the Cold War monolithic and conventional threat of inter-state war, towards a more diverse post-Cold War threat of intra-state conflicts, ethnic genocide and civil war also implied the need for different organizational responses and concepts. Whilst the concept of ‘crisis management’ was first mentioned in NATO’s Strategic Concept of 1991 as a focus for NATO’s strategic reorientation and military transformation (NATO 1991: para. 46), it was also taken up by the WEU in its Petersberg Task Declaration of 1992 (WEU 1992: Article II.4), which were subsequently taken over by the European Union and incorporated into the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997.

Despite the fact that one representative of the EU Commission has been allowed to attend NAC–PSC meetings and several Commission representatives to attend the EU–NATO Capability Groups since November 2004, the EU Commission impact remains rather negligible (see Yost 2007: 91).

Yet, it has to be noted that there have also been reservations about a Berlin Plus Reverse agreement on the side of NATO officials, too, who fear the creation of an unnecessary dependence on the European Union (Yost 2007: 89).

References
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