

## COMPLEMENTARITY

## NATO and the EU

## Stop the Minuet; it's Time to Tango!

By Leo Michel, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University in Washington

*Iraq and Afghanistan bring grim reminders of the complexities and dangers of crisis management operations. So positive news from Europe, where NATO and the EU are choreographing their next steps in Bosnia, is welcome.*

Hold the champagne. Nearly two years after these proud actors formally proclaimed a "strategic partnership," the dance between them too often resembles an elegant but rigid minuet. This looks more and more absurd. Of 25 EU members, 19 are in NATO and four are in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP). Each has a single army, air force, navy and defense budget to meet NATO, EU, and national commitments. There is no margin for wasteful duplication, and divergent operational doctrines and practices would increase the inherent risks of military operations. In short, the NATO-EU couple needs to practice a more flexible, embracing tango.

### Bosnia: A Critical Test

Consider their upcoming Bosnian performance. At last June's Istanbul summit, NATO decided to terminate at year's end its successful 9-year old Stabilization Force (SFOR) mission and welcomed the EU's willingness to deploy a new military mission, now named ALTHEA. ALTHEA will operate under a new UN Security Council resolution. Its commanders will get their political and strategic guidance from the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC), just as SFOR takes direc-

tion from NATO's North Atlantic Council (NAC).

ALTHEA's 7,000 troops will match the current SFOR size. Its first Force Commander will be UK Major General Leakey, and some European soldiers simply will switch from NATO to EU insignia. As SFOR has completed the 1995 Dayton Accord's key military tasks, e.g., separating the warring parties and destroying their heavy armaments, ALTHEA will be oriented more toward civil-military functions and low-profile patrols, and work closely with the 500 trainers and monitors of the existing EU Police Mission. The EU's "holistic" approach to improving law and order, governance and socio-economic conditions hopefully will allow it eventually to

NATO and EU planning and decision-making processes are far from interoperable

reduce ALTHEA's military component and facilitate Bosnia's progress toward EU membership.

NATO will remain engaged with Bosnia.

Under the March 2003 "Berlin Plus" arrangements, NATO's Deputy Supreme Allied Commander for Europe (DSACEUR), British General Sir John Reith, will become ALTHEA's Operation Commander. NATO support to ALTHEA might include a strategic reserve outside Bosnia. A NATO headquarters in Sarajevo will: help Bosnia reform its defense structures and prepare for PFP membership; handle certain operational tasks involving counter-terrorism and detention of persons indicted for war crimes; and facilitate intelligence sharing with the EU. Bosnia will likely host NATO-PFP training exercises.

There is precedent for such cooperation. In March 2003, NATO ended its peacekeeping duties in Macedonia. The EU follow-on mission, CONCOR-

DIA, which ended last December, was a trial run for Berlin Plus. CONCORDIA's small size (around 400 personnel) and relatively benign environment helped the experiment succeed. It is proving more difficult, however, to finalize the complex details for a smooth transition from SFOR to ALTHEA.

One reason is that NATO and EU planning and decision-making processes are far from interoperable. Before Istanbul, some European officials complained sotto voce that the EU civilian machinery was resistant to working with NATO. Others faulted certain EU governments for their zealous - some said "theological" - defense of EU "autonomy." And some Europeans pointed fingers at NATO. Most agree that such irritations have faded in recent months, but they have not disappeared entirely, as the transition deadline nears. Fortunately, EU liaison cells are now in place at SHAPE (NATO's strategic nerve center for planning and operations), NATO's Joint Force Command in Naples, and SFOR headquarters.

A second reason: the EU faces greater challenges with ALTHEA than its leaders anticipated in 2002, when they first offered the idea. In 2002, EU planners counted on access, via Berlin Plus, to special U.S. capabilities (e.g., intelligence and communications)

The EU faces greater challenges with ALTHEA in Bosnia than its leaders anticipated

used by SFOR. With such capabilities now in high demand for Iraq and Afghanistan, a greater burden will fall on the EU to fend for itself. Moreover, since 2002, many

European countries have committed large portions of their limited deployable forces elsewhere - e.g., Afghanistan, Iraq, and Cote d'Ivoire. Kosovo remains volatile, so the 17,500 NATO-PFP troops (mainly European) there will not soon be reduced. Thus, the task of sustaining



*Closely linked: French soldier in camouflage, NRF Demonstration in Doganbey, Turkey, November 2003. (NATO Photo)*

a capable, 7000-strong ALTHEA looms larger than before.

Bosnia should be a "win-win" situation, demonstrating that NATO and the EU can cooperate in pragmatic and complementary ways to reach their common goals. But Balkan dances are not simple or risk-free affairs...

### Strategic Trends

At the strategic level, one detects more convergent views on security threats to the Euro-Atlantic community. The EU's Security Strategy (ESS) of December 2003 listed five key threats: terrorism; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; regional conflict; state failure; and organized crime. Except for crime, NATO pronouncements - e.g., its April 1999 Strategic Concept and more recent declarations - list essentially

**France wants to be linked closely to the U.S.-led "transformation" process**

the same threats. The ESS emphasizes non-military tools to prevent and diffuse crises but hardly strikes a pacifist stance. To be fair, NATO pronouncements recognize that states must use all their tools, not just the military, to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century threats.

The ESS sheds little light on the EU's *military* strategy. Still, the EU seems to be making a mid-course correction that could enhance its partnership with NATO.

The "Headline Goal" centerpiece of European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) is clearly evolving. At the 1999 Helsinki Summit, EU leaders agreed to develop, by 2003, the ability to deploy up to 50,000-60,000 military personnel within 60

days and sustain them for at least one year. Such a force was to have the capability to perform the "Petersberg tasks", ranging from humanitarian and rescue operations to peacekeeping and separating warring parties.

The "Helsinki Headline Goal" was declared operational in early 2003. Indeed, EU members pledged impressive numbers of troops, combat planes and ships. Still, key capabilities required to deploy, engage, and sustain those forces in any demanding scenario - e.g., strategic lift, aerial

**In principle, EU battle groups would complement, not rival, NATO's more capable NRF**

refueling, precision guided munitions, advanced communications - remain seriously deficient. No wonder, therefore, that UK Defense Minister G. Hoon, whose government plays a pivotal role in ESDP, has insisted repeatedly since August 2003 that "(i)t is highly unlikely that the UK

would be engaged in large-scale combat operations without the U.S., a judgment born of past experience, shared interest and our assessment of strategic trends." Other leading European defense officials privately echo such sentiments.

## French Twists

Meanwhile, France—ESDP's strongest proponent and ardent defender of EU "autonomy" (often irritating EU partners as much as Washington)—seems to be correcting its aim. Its experience in Bunia (Democratic Republic of Congo) might help to explain why.

In May 2003, when UN peacekeepers were unable to cope with violent ethnic militias wreaking atrocities against civilians in the Bunia region, Secretary General Annan sought French help to stabilize the situation pending deployment of a restructured UN force. The appeal reached senior French officials who were worried about ESDP, given the bitter EU rifts over Iraq and the April 2003 proposal (by France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg) to create a EU operational planning capability that appeared to duplicate SHAPE functions. Those officials reportedly saw Bunia as an opportunity to reinvigorate ESDP by demonstrating the EU's ability to launch an "autonomous mission," i.e., without recourse to NATO.

The EU readily accepted France's idea of mounting an operation in Bunia. Knowledgeable European officials say there was little, if any, discussion in EU councils on whether to consult with NATO, as France made clear its aversion to doing so and its willingness, if necessary, to lead an operation outside the EU.

(Of note, French military officials reportedly informally asked U.S. officers if U.S. transports would be available to airlift European troops to Bunia. The U.S. side advised that such requests appropriately should come under Berlin Plus. The French soon dropped the matter and opted to lease Ukrainian transports. The incident reinforced perceptions in

Washington and elsewhere that Paris was determined, for political reasons, to conduct an autonomous EU mission.)

Launched in early June, the EU operation, ARTEMIS, successfully tamped down the violence and protected the civilian population in Bunia until a new UN force arrived the following September.

Still, even ARTEMIS' Operation Commander has been careful not to overplay its significance. "Would the real political unanimity expressed during ARTEMIS have been the same,"

French General Neveux wrote in May 2004, "if the risks had been greater, the stakes more sensitive, the contributions more numerous, and the engagement on the ground more important?"

These are hard questions for French officials who bridle at suggestions that ARTEMIS was essentially a French operation wrapped in a EU flag, even as EU data confirms France provided 1651 of the total EU force of 2020 personnel, plus 134 of 180 persons in headquarters staffs in Paris and Entebbe, ARTEMIS' logistical hub. France's closest EU military partners, the UK and Germany, provided 120 and 7 personnel, respectively. Another detail: of some 1200 soldiers in Bunia (and at greatest risk), around 1100 were French and 74 were elite Swedish forces. And according to French Defense Ministry data, the 90-day operation cost France some 40 million Euros, i.e., slightly less than the cost of its military participation in Afghanistan for the entire year.

Thus, as French military circles grumble about "overstretched" forces and the Defense Ministry evaluates its recent fight to protect its 2005 budget from the Finance Ministry's axe, French officials might well be asking *discretement* how many future "Bunias" they can afford...

Cheerleading for ESDP aside, France wants better ties to NATO. Long a major troop and headquarters contributor to the Balkan and

Afghan operations—since Istanbul, France has taken important command responsibilities in KFOR and ISAF (Afghanistan) - France also ranks among top providers to the new NATO Response Force (NRF). The General Staff and Defense Ministry maneuvered earlier this year to gain approval in Paris and Brussels to place a general officer, beginning June 2004, in each of NATO's two restructured Strategic Commands. More than one hundred other French officers and NCOs will serve inside the Commands' integrated staffs. Despite political tiffs with Washington, France especially wants to be linked closely to the U.S.-led "transformation" process. As Defense Ministry official M. Perrin de Brichambaut helpfully stated last April: "European defense must not present itself as a rival to NATO. It cannot adopt a posture of opposition or contribute to weakening Euro-U.S. relations."

## Next Steps

The Helsinki Headline Goal's lackluster results and evolving French thinking seem to have altered the EU's military ambitions. In May 2004, EU defense ministers approved "Headline Goal 2010", extending the timelines for EU project groups to deliver new capabilities in areas such as strategic mobility and communications and emphasizing the need for rapid decision-making and deployment. Instead of reaffirming the Helsinki targets, the 2010 goal features a UK-French-German initiative to develop, by 2007, up to ten rapidly deployable "battle groups" of around 1500 personnel to conduct relatively short (30 days) UN-mandated operations. In principle, EU battle groups would complement, not rival, NATO's more capable NRF. ARTEMIS might well be the paradigm for Headline Goal 2010, just as Bosnia and Kosovo inspired its predecessor. (Besides, it is hard to identify EU members beyond France and the UK that seem prepared to *lead* operations involving significant combat risk.)

How then could NATO and the EU work better together?

A better approach would be to arrange for timely "informal" NATO-EU consultations when a crisis builds

There should be a healthy dose of transparency between the new EU Defence Agency and NATO



## Skip the Theological Debates.

Some experts suggest striking a "new transatlantic deal," capped in (yet) another joint NATO-EU strategy document aimed at reconciling views on contentious issues, e.g., the UN's role regarding the use of military force. But is such an exercise necessary? NATO's daunting agenda includes: stabilizing Afghanistan and the Balkans; helping to train Iraqi security forces; completing the NRF; and rejuvenating PFP and relations with Russia and Ukraine. As the ink is barely dry on the ESS, should not the EU apply itself to pressing challenges - e.g., in the Balkans, Caucasus, or Sudan - rather than fine-tune its rhetoric? Do we need more theoretical debates about who should do what for Euro-Atlantic security?

NATO and the EU will remain profoundly different in terms of structure, scope, and procedures

That said, enhancements to NATO-EU consultative practices should be considered. These might include asking NATO and EU staffs to prepare joint working papers for the now routine NAC-PSC meetings, which should focus on a single agenda item vice broad *tours d'horizon*. Hopefully, increased staff contacts through the EU liaison cell at SHAPE and NATO liaison arrangements with the EU Military Staff will continually improve their vital working relationships.

## Build Cooperation, not Suspicion, on Operations.

CONCORDIA, ARTEMIS, and ALTHEA offer different models of NATO-EU cooperation in the field. The ARTEMIS episode, were it to become the norm, would be the most problematic for NATO-EU relations, as it seemed to sidestep the Berlin Plus understanding that the two would "intensify consultations" in a crisis.

EU statements assert that NATO was regularly "informed" of EU intentions in Bunia. NATO officials counter that "informing" them *after the fact* does not equal "consultations." (Europeans have been known to make the same complaint about the U.S. - with some justification.) While some EU officials argue that the EU Treaty (TEU) mandates that consultations with other organizations must

be based on a "common position," the point remains: it will not help to build NATO's confidence in the EU if the latter makes decisions whether to conduct an autonomous operation before it opens a dialogue with NATO.

A better approach, consistent with the TEU and Berlin Plus, would be to arrange for timely "informal" NATO-EU consultations when a crisis builds. Such consultations would include the NAC and PSC national representatives, plus the senior civilian leaders (e.g., NATO Secretary General and EU High Representative) and military leaders (e.g., DSACEUR and the respective Chairmen of the NATO and EU Military Committees) of the two organizations. They would discuss preliminary assessments of: the potential pros and cons of military or civil-military options for the crisis at hand; the capabilities that might be required and available; and whether an eventual crisis response operation might be more effectively handled under (1) NATO auspices; or (2) an EU operation with NATO support (via Berlin Plus); or (3) as an autonomous EU operation.

This would *not* be a joint decision-making meeting, but would allow all parties to reach better-informed national positions and, eventually, NATO and EU decisions. The principle of autonomous decision-making by each organization would be respected.

## Get Serious on Capabilities.

This is a critical area where the minuet-like relationship has been most unhelpful. Berlin Plus transformed an *ad hoc* NATO-EU working group on capabilities to a formal Capabilities Group. While NATO and the EU agreed that their respective capabilities planning processes should be "mutually reinforcing," they have yet to agree on some basic tools, such as a common questionnaire laying out each nation's existing and planned military capabilities available for relevant NATO or EU missions. The Capabilities Group itself reportedly has become a sterile forum where senior officials from capitals exchange scripted statements. If

uncorrected, this situation risks producing contradictory NATO and EU guidance to national defense planners. It will impede needed efforts by both to encourage more cooperative programs and asset pooling.

The Capabilities Group should hold more focused and frequent meetings between *Brussels-based* NATO and EU officials and national representatives. The Group also should provide specific recommendations to both organizations, not restrict itself to informational ("talk shop") exchanges. Similarly, there should be, at a minimum, a healthy dose of transparency between the new EU Defence Agency and NATO, whose experience in defense industrial cooperation could be helpful. Finally, in his Berlin Plus role as a "strategic coordinator" between NATO and the EU, DSACEUR would be well positioned to work with both to ensure mutually reinforcing certification and training standards and to minimize any risk of European forces being committed, during the same period, to the NRF and EU battle groups.

## Shall We Dance?

Despite shared democratic values and security interests, NATO and the EU will remain profoundly different in terms of structure, scope, and procedures. The EU, unlike NATO, aspires to "political union." And while memberships largely overlap, the preponderant U.S. role in NATO and absence from EU councils greatly affects how those organizations decide and execute policies. Hence, some awkward moments between them are inevitable.

Still, most Europeans and Americans want continued U.S. engagement with, not estrangement from, the Old Continent. The trick will be to maximize NATO-EU political and military interoperability - and minimize missteps. Every one of their members has a vital stake in the success of this partnership. For in Bosnia and, in time, elsewhere, if one partner slips, the other surely risks stumbling, too. ■

*INSS is the "think tank" component of the National Defense University in Washington. These are the author's views and do not necessarily represent the official policy of the Department of Defense or any other U.S. Government agency.*