

The Unipolar Moment and ESDP, 11/04, Barry R. Posen<sup>1</sup>

**The Puzzle**

Since 1999 the European Union has slowly and deliberately proceeded to develop a capability to act militarily. This is a puzzle. The European Union is a young political organization, having assumed its combined economic, social, and political form only in 1992. The principal purpose of the EEC, its previous incarnation, was the improvement of economic prosperity in Europe. A second purpose, often submerged, was to reduce the risk of war among European states by organizing a high, and hopefully unbreakable, economic interdependence among them, especially in the heavy industries that contributed to military power in the last century. Most states in the European Union have unmartial publics—the use of force is distasteful to most citizens. Only Britain and France can be said to retain an historical identity as warfare states.

The collapse of the Soviet Union left Europeans facing no existential threat. And just in case, Europeans hung onto the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which helped to retain a U.S. continental commitment. Many feared that the Alliance would quickly disappear without an imminent threat, but reasons were found to keep it together, and to adapt its nature to new problems. The U.S. was still present enough to provide enormous insurance.

The European Union has improved its ability to act autonomously in security matters since 1999. A civilian figure in charge of coordinating EU foreign policy now

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<sup>1</sup> This essay draws from my “ESDP and the Structure of World Power,” *The International Spectator*, (Vol. XXXIX, No. 1/2004), pp. 5-17.

exists in the person of Javier Solana. That role is destined to be strengthened if the European constitution now under consideration is adopted by its members. Mr. Solana has, for the first time, coaxed the member states of the European Union into publishing a security strategy document. Political and military organizations have been created both to organize and to manage EU military operations. The EU has undertaken several small missions, in Africa and in the Balkans, and will soon take over peace keeping in Bosnia Herzegovina. Finally, at the national level, defense procurement programs have been launched to overcome key lacunae that have in the past limited Europe's ability to act militarily. The bitter intra-European squabbles associated with the Iraq war of 2003 have not prevented further progress.

So why did the European Union decide to get into the security business? This article will offer one explanation—the very great power of the United States, and all its implications for transatlantic relations and for global politics. This is a structural realist explanation. I do not argue that the EU is balancing against a perceived existential threat from the U.S.; instead I argue that the EU is preparing itself to manage autonomously security problems on Europe's periphery. The EU is balancing vs U.S. power, regardless of the relatively low European perception of an actual direct threat emanating from the U.S..

### **The Theoretical Value of the Case**

Post Cold War Europe offers an excellent laboratory to test the predictions of structural realist theory. The pure theory, summarized below, abstracts from international politics everything but two causal forces—the condition of anarchy, and the distribution of power. It then makes predictions about how the actions of states are influenced by

these causal forces. This theory is difficult to test because, among other reasons, so many things do matter to the course of international politics—ideology, form of government, geographical position, national history, and military technology. Post Cold War Europe, and the concentration of power in the U.S., allow us to hold constant some important complicating factors, but to measure the impact of one important variable that assumes a very strong value. The internal nature of the Europeans and Americans can be held constant—the states are all liberal democracies with market economies. These factors also make for a somewhat counter-intuitive case for structural realism, because they assume extremely positive values in terms of liberal theories that broadly should predict little or no competitive security behavior between Europe and the U.S. Two other variables, geography, and military technology assume extreme values that, in terms of one new realist theory, “offense-defense theory,” also predict very little competitive behavior. Contrasting these factors with the great concentration of power in the U.S., which structural realism predicts ought to produce at least some competitive behavior, allows us to focus somewhat on the independent effects of the power variable.

The U.S. and the member states of the EU are all liberal, capitalist democracies. Liberal theories of international relations ought to be favored in predicting the relations among these states. Democratic peace theory only claims to predict “peace”—but it should also predict patterns of relatively uncompetitive behavior in the security realm. High political participation and a free press mean that those citizens likely to be affected by conflict or war get a say in the matter. The notion of a harmony of interests is central to liberal democratic notions of International politics. Statesmen and citizens should believe that there is almost always a “deal” that can avoid conflict. Most European states

are now partners with the U.S. in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, now depicted by some theorists as more than a mere power alliance, but an institution. This institution would be expected to impart a set of relatively benign expectations about the future security seeking behavior of the members. Shared democracy and liberal ideology should limit some typical sources of threat perception, allowing us to focus on the purely structural aspects of the case, without the pollution of an ideological edifice of malign intent. And membership in a liberal security institution should reduce uncertainty about the future. The case is thus a “hard test” for structural realism.

Two variables of great recent interest to some realists also assume values in this case that lend themselves to a test of the influence of power concentration alone. Those interested in offense-defense theory would have to acknowledge that the security relationship between the U.S. and EU is “defense dominant.” Two member states of the European Union are nuclear powers, as is the U.S.—if the U.S. and the EU were to spend a day pretending to be enemies, their strategists would quickly have to confront the fact of mutual nuclear deterrence, though the Europeans would probably want to strengthen their forces. And, if nuclear weapons were taken out of the equation, the two parties would still need to confront what John Mearsheimer likes to call “the stopping power of water.” Even if the nation states of North America and Europe still had large conscript armies, they would have a hard time getting at each other.

In sum, the case provided an excellent laboratory to see if a relatively pure form of structural realism tells us much of anything about relations among nation states. All the parties are liberal democracies, they are (nearly) all members of the North Atlantic

Treaty Organization, they have little reason to fear existential threats from the other in any case—as nuclear deterrence prevails and a large moat separates them.

### **Policy Implications: The Enduring Strategic Relevance of Europe**

The security aspirations of the EU are of more than academic interest, they have practical policy implication. Because a large gap exists between the aggregate military capability of the EU and that of the U.S. it is tempting to be dismissive of the EU's efforts. But outside the U.S., the member states of the EU today are among the world's most capable military powers. Together they spend 40% of what the U.S. spends. Static measures long used by NATO to assess military output suggest that the four largest members of the EU generate about a third as much ground, air, and naval capability as the U.S., and about one ninth the air lift.<sup>2</sup>

Annually, the EU (calculated prior to the recent enlargement) allocates about a third as much money (roughly twenty billion dollars,) as the U.S. does to procurement of modern equipment, much of which they design and produce themselves. It is often said that much of this money is spent inefficiently, because it is divided among so many states, and must support so much administrative overhead as well as many redundant capabilities. But most of the spending (75%) is concentrated in four countries, and nearly half (45%) is concentrated in two. Inefficiencies there are, but due to the concentration of spending in these four countries, they are probably not a result of too much overhead. Britain and France, Europe's two principal powers spend a little less than half of all the defense money's in the EU These are nuclear powers. They are the

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<sup>2</sup> Calculated from information in Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Report on Allied Contributions to the Common Defense*, U.S. Dept. of Defense, 2002.

only states in the world aside from the U.S. with any global power projection capability, and this capability can be expected to grow.

The states of the EU have roughly the same number of men and women under arms, and their personnel are well educated and easily trained. The major militaries either are now, or are in the process of becoming, entirely professional, including Britain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain. Germany's conscript army is slowly transforming itself into a hybridized form, conscript in name but with combat forces manned almost entirely by a large professional cadre.

The U.S. still relies on bases in Europe for power projection. Much of the NATO and national infrastructure built to defend against a Soviet attack remains in place. Though scarce U.S. ground forces are virtually leaving Europe because they are desperately needed elsewhere, U.S. air and naval forces remain. Airfields in Europe extend the range and increase the flexibility of U.S. strategic airlift assets. European ports continue to provide support for U.S. naval operations in the Mediterranean. Though the U.S. could do without this infrastructure and still project power into the Middle East and Persian Gulf, this would prove very much more expensive and complex than it is at present.

These facts have several implications. The first is that the European States are good allies for the U.S. to have. They have a lot of capability. Second, they suggest that the Europeans could probably "go it alone" under a wide variety of circumstances, if they had to do so. The essential material base is there today though important enablers will not be in place for about a decade. The administrative base is gradually being put into place. That said, Europe probably cannot and will not any time soon, become a

formidable adversary of the U.S. But with this military base, a combined GDP equal to that of the U.S., and a population half again as large---under improbable circumstances the EU could prove a challenge. More plausibly, Europe will within a decade be reasonably well prepared to “go it alone.” This will have important implications for transatlantic relations, as allies that are prepared to look after themselves, and know it, will prove even less docile than they have already proven. U.S. strategists and citizens should thus follow carefully the EU’s efforts to get into the defence and security business. The Europeans are useful to the U.S., but if present trends continue, they will have the wherewithal to decamp, and they could even conceivably cause some mischief.

### **Structural Realism and Unipolarity-Tenets of Realism**

In its modern guise, “structural realism” is an analytic not a prescriptive theory. It tells us a little bit about how international politics, especially great power politics, works. Structural realism depicts the world as an anarchy—a domain without a sovereign. In that domain, states must look to themselves to survive. Because no sovereign can prevent states from doing what they are able in international politics, war is possible. The key to survival in war is military power—generated either internally or through alliances, and usually both. States care very much about their relative power position because power is the key to survival. It is also the key to influence in the system. It enable defense and offense, deterrence and coercion. States therefore try to grow their power when they believe they can do so without too much risk. They try especially hard to preserve the power that they have. Because war is a competition, power is relative. One’s power

position can deteriorate due to another power's domestic or foreign success. When another power increases its capacities through either internal or external efforts, others have incentives to look to their own position. Structural realism does not predict that all powers will behave this way all the time. But those who do will likely survive, and those who do not will likely suffer.<sup>3</sup>

States that get the message may choose from an array of possible strategies—all of them problematical. States of the first rank are generally expected to balance against the greatest powers, figuring that failure to look to their own capacities will invite future predation.<sup>4</sup> They will build up their capabilities and form balancing alliances if they can, which is usually the case. Sometimes, however, great powers may choose to buckpass—i.e. to look to their own national capacities to the extent that they can—but hope, bet, or scheme to get other great powers to shoulder the majority of the risks and costs of containing the greatest power.<sup>5</sup> If one state expands its power, others may try to bandwagon with it—in the hopes of getting a good deal. Realists on the whole expect small, weak states to bandwagon because they have little choice.<sup>6</sup> Some second rank, but still consequential, powers may also bandwagon with the greatest states in a gamble to

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<sup>3</sup> On realism see Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading, MA.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 102-128; John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001) pp. 29-54.

<sup>4</sup> This is Kenneth Waltz's central prediction. Speaking of the anarchical condition of international politics he observes, "A self-help system is one in which those who do not help themselves, or who do so less effectively than others, will fail to prosper, will lay themselves open to dangers, will suffer. Fear of such unwanted consequences stimulates state to behave in ways that tend toward the creation of balances of power." Waltz, *Theory*, p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> On buckpassing, see Mearsheimer, pp. 157-162.

<sup>6</sup> For a review of the literature on bandwagoning, and skepticism about whether even weak states do it unless they absolutely have no other alternatives see, Eric J. Labs, "Do Weak States Bandwagon," *Security Studies*, Vol. 1, NO. 3 (Spring 1992), pp. 383-416.

improve their own positions.<sup>7</sup> On the whole, realist theorists and their critics continue to debate which of these strategies is more common, and which nations prefer which strategies. All the behaviors are observed—but unless we are to attribute the ultimate failure of all aspiring hegemons on the Eurasian landmass in modern times to chance or the intervention of Providence, we must conclude that balancing ultimately happens, Balancing is invariably accomplished mainly by my small coalitions of the most capable powers, and it is backed with enough force to bring down or exhaust the expansionists.

#### **The distribution of capabilities-**

Because structural realists believe that power is the key means for states in international politics, they view the distribution of capabilities in the system as an important causal variable. Historically, two patterns have existed—multipolarity and bipolarity. Multipolarity, a system of three or more great powers, has been the most common pattern. Multipolarity is viewed as quite war prone because of its complexity. States cannot be too sure who among them is the greatest danger. They are sorely tempted to buckpass to each other if they think they can get away with it. This may produce windows of opportunity for expansionists, allowing them to defeat at least some of their opponents piecemeal. The relative power of opposing coalitions depends greatly on decisions taken by the members. These are difficult to assess in advance and can change quickly. Under-reaction and miscalculation are the diseases of multipolarity.

Bipolarity characterized the Cold War. Realists view it as the more stable of the two patterns of power distribution. When only two great states face each other everything is clear. Each knows that the other is the key security problem. They watch

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<sup>7</sup> Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security*, Vol. 19, NO. 1 (Summer 1994), pp. 72-107.

each other carefully. Their attention is focused. Most of the important power assets are contained within each of the superpowers. Calculation of relative capabilities is easy. International moves to improve capabilities will usually be countered because they are hard to miss. Tension and overreaction are probably the principal problems of bipolarity. Our understanding of bipolarity is obviously complicated by the presumed stabilizing effect of secure second strike nuclear capabilities on the competition.

Realists are now forced to consider the implications of another distribution of power—"unipolarity" as it has been dubbed. The U.S. today is far and away the greatest power in the world. This goes well beyond military superiority, where the U.S. advantage in inputs and outputs is clear.<sup>8</sup> U.S. overall economic and technological capability exceeds that of almost any other dyad of existing consequential nation states—Russia, China, Japan, Germany, France, UK, Italy.<sup>9</sup> Though China is growing fast, one careful analysis argues convincingly that U.S. material superiority is likely to persist for many years. It is difficult to find a plausible three-state balancing coalition that could presently equal much less exceed U.S. capabilities, and this is probably the best indicator that "unipolarity" is an appropriate description of the system. Alliances of three or more near equals are likely to prove difficult to manage, especially if, as is the case, they are widely separated on the surface of the globe.

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<sup>8</sup> On the military aspects of U.S. superiority see Barry R. Posen, "Command of the Commons, The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Summer 2003), pp. 5-46.

<sup>9</sup> On the power position of the United States, see William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security*, vol. 24, No. 1 (Summer 1999), pp. 5-41. To equal U.S. GDP in 1997 one would have to add the GDP's of the next three economic powers, p. 12. Between 1995-1997, the U.S. spent more on all types of research and development than Britain, Japan, France, and Germany combined, p. 19.

### **Predictions of the theory for unipolarity**

How might unipolarity work?<sup>10</sup> First the greatest power can be expected to exploit its opportunity to organize international politics to best suit its interests. In particular, one predicts that the U.S. will try to consolidate and indeed improve its unusual relative power advantage. U.S. power creates its own foreign policy energy. Second, the U.S. will not see itself as particularly constrained by the risks that another great power or even a coalition of great powers might directly oppose any particular action that it chooses. There isn't another equivalent great power to do so, and it would take an unusually large and cohesive coalition of the other consequential powers to make much trouble for the U.S. Third, the U.S. can be expected to behave in ways that seem capricious to its allies and friends. It will take up issues abroad with little thought to the views of its allies because their capabilities will not seem critical to U.S. success. Moreover, they essentially have no place else to go; there is no great power out there to exploit their unhappiness, or U.S. absence.

### **How does structure influence behavior?**

The distribution of power does not influence behavior because its shape and implications are fully understood by statesmen. It influences behavior because power concentrations and the permissive condition of anarchy produces constraints, temptations, and incentives. These regularly shape the decisions of statesmen and the behavior of states. "Shape" does not mean "determine." The theory leaves considerable scope for freedom of action by states and statesmen. Unipolarity and its implications ought not to be expected to be fully understood the day after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Rather

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<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Waltz does not expect it to work well or to last long. See Kenneth N. Waltz, "Evaluating Theories," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, NO. 4 (December 1997), pp. 913-917. "In light of structural theory, unipolarity appears as the least stable of international configurations."

we should expect that the distribution of power will slowly produce the behavior patterns and problems outlined above as statesmen explore the geo-political terrain of the post Cold War world.

### **How will the other consequential powers behave?**

Will consequential powers bandwagon, balance, or buckpass? This is the key question of Transatlantic relations. Given U.S. power, we should expect small states to bandwagon—they should hug the U.S. closely, lend it what support they can, and avoid antagonizing it. The larger states face a more interesting choice.

Four western European states have histories as major power actors, and possess significant capability relative to most other international actors even though each is individually much weaker than the U.S.. Because of the coexistence in Europe of NATO and the EU, these actors can choose from an existing bandwagon option, and from an existing balancing option, though from an institutional point of view, the bandwagoning option enjoys an advantage. The case thus offers a good opportunity to explore the choice of whether to balance or to bandwagon, and to explore how bandwagoning is done by consequential states, if we observe that behavior. Neither choice is easy or self evident for the four principal European powers. None of them are very large states that structural realist theory would expect to balance, nor are they really small states, that the theory would expect to bandwagon. Bandwagoning may seem reasonable to some of them simply because balancing is so difficult. Yet, these states are not so lacking in capability that they must fatalistically entrust their fates to the whims of the U.S.

Bandwagoning is uncomfortable. Though the U.S. may be a benign hegemon today in the eyes of some, there is no reason to assume that this will always be so.<sup>11</sup> Some U.S. current initiatives may rankle; efforts by the U.S. to improve its power position necessarily erode the power position, or limit the power aspirations, of others. States must be mindful of the possibility that the U.S. could prove an enemy in some distant future. No state that can avoid it will wish to leave itself vulnerable to such a reversal.

Even powers that do not fear U.S. capabilities may fear the U.S. autonomy that such capabilities allow.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. may, for its own reasons, go absent from a region—even Europe. During its absence, those who have grown dependent upon it for security in the past could suddenly find themselves with regional problems that the U.S. finds uninteresting.

Finally, some U.S. initiatives may simply create a more dangerous world in the eyes of other states. A state as powerful as the U.S. exerts a strong influence on the substance of international politics.

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<sup>11</sup> Waltz, "Evaluating," p. 915. "Unlikely though it is, a dominant power may behave with moderation, restraint, and forbearance. Even if it does, however, weaker states will worry about its future behavior." The reasoning is captured perfectly by Robert Cottrell, writing for *The Economist*, after the Kosovo war. "The strategic argument says, in essence: 'You never know.'" America is a foreign country and a long way away (although Britons are often blind to the first of those points.) However sound transatlantic relations may be at any given time, a prudent Europe cannot pursue a long-term policy of dependence on America, because Europe cannot possibly have any guarantees about the future direction of American policy. Hostility is highly unlikely. Indifference or incomprehension are perfectly possible. So if Europe can provide for its own security, it should do so. And if America approves, so much the better."

<sup>12</sup> "The powerful state will at times act in ways that appear arbitrary and high handed to others, who will smart under the unfair treatment they believe they are receiving." Waltz, "Evaluating," p. 916.

### **Predictions**

Consequential states will at minimum act to buffer themselves against the caprices of the U.S.<sup>13</sup> They will generally try to carve out an ability to act autonomously should the hegemon prove unwilling to provide local services, or should the hegemon's global strategy prove highly inimical to the interests of its allies.<sup>14</sup>

Second, given the unipolar distribution of power some consequential states should bandwagon. But those states will do everything they can to influence and constrain the behavior of the giant ally. The generation of an ability to act autonomously in the security sphere provides two kinds of bargaining leverage. First, it creates a tacit and credible threat to exit the relationship. Second, it simultaneously makes these states more attractive allies because of their enhanced capacity.

Third, some consequential states will prefer pure balancing strategies, regardless of cost.

### **Expected Observations**

These general theoretical predictions generate more specific substantive predictions for this case, predictions about which nation states should prove the critical actors in ESDP, the occasions and rationales for key ESDP developments, and the nature of these developments. Briefly, the EU's consequential powers, especially Britain and France, but also Germany and to some extent Italy should be at the heart of these developments. They are. Events that demonstrate the risks of security dependence on the U.S. should be the major proximate events stimulating ESDP developments. The Balkan

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<sup>13</sup> They will, in Albert Hirschman's terms, try to maintain a plausible "exit" option.

<sup>14</sup> Such ability would permit a divorce at a later date. In extremis, autonomous capabilities could support a strategy of buckpassing-- waiting for another truly great power to emerge and bell the U.S. cat, or ultimately a policy of directly balancing the power of the U.S.

wars were such events and their lessons were closely tied to ESDP. The need for some autonomous capability to provide some insurance against U.S. caprice should be articulated in those terms. It was and is. And the capabilities being sought should do more than merely deliver presents to the U.S.—i.e. they should provide the hope of some degree of genuine strategic autonomy. They do.<sup>15</sup> A fourth prediction is that the unipolar hegemon should object to these processes since they could reduce its overall power advantage. Who better to code the behavior of the EU than the state most obsessed with power relations?

### **The leading states: France, Britain, and Germany**

Structural realism predicts that the most consequential states will be the ones most concerned with managing relations with the superpower, because they are the only ones who have the capability to do so.

France has had the longest standing interest in an independent European defense capacity. Jacques Chirac asserts that it is a multipolar world and French diplomats are quick to echo this point.<sup>16</sup> This is more an expression of intent than of fact, but it suggests the French are strongly interested in building up Europe's power position. When

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<sup>15</sup> The use of the term “predict” is somewhat artificial. ESDP happened before I decided to apply structural realism to understand it. I find in it a “natural experiment” for the theory and thus adopt the language of theory testing and prediction.

<sup>16</sup> “In every meeting with our European partners I observe a new state of mind, summarized in one wish: that Europe may be able to enlarge its voice in the administration of world affairs and above all in our continent's affairs. That it may assume its responsibilities, that it may act in favor of a balanced, multipolar, and law-respecting world.” Jacques Chirac, “A Responsible Europe in a Renewed Atlantic Alliance,” Speech to the Assembly of Atlantic Societies, October 19, 1999, Strasbourg France, [www.dgap.org/english/tip/tip2/chirac191099\\_p.html](http://www.dgap.org/english/tip/tip2/chirac191099_p.html); See also Chris Marsden, “Europe moves towards independent military role,” *World Socialist Web Site*, June 5, 1999, quoting Jacques Chirac to the effect that ESDP would make “an essential contribution to a multi-polar world to which France is profoundly attached.” [www.wswg.org/articles/1999/jun1999/eur-j05\\_prn.shtml](http://www.wswg.org/articles/1999/jun1999/eur-j05_prn.shtml) [find original later.]

queried about French interests, non-French European officials and academics are quick to intimate that France has grand ambitions. Some assert that the French simply want to drive NATO out of Europe. The British have long feared this. In the negotiations on the Maastricht treaty, which created the European Union, and which ultimately resulted in a decision to make the semi-moribund WEU, the agent of the EU's military ambitions, Britain already feared that the French wanted the "WEU one day to replace NATO" and that concern limited the ultimate scope of the WEU's role.<sup>17</sup>

Other observers suggest a more plausible and subtle French strategy, consistent with the public statements of French leaders that Europe will only get a voice in world affairs if it can stand on its own militarily. French planners know that Europeans cannot pursue a more autonomous policy, which France favors, if Europe cannot take care of itself. In the words of the French Minister of Defense, Madame Michele Alliot-Marie, "Europe has no foreign policy weight without the corresponding military potential."<sup>18</sup> A practical defense organization and enhanced capabilities are thus necessary, though these need not supplant NATO to produce influence. It is easy to forget that in the mid-1990's France tried to improve its ties with NATO, and indeed was willing to re-enter the military command structure of the alliance (which it had exited in 1966) in exchange for the appointment of a European (preferably a Frenchman) to a key operational command. Ironically, the words of a former British official, Sir Rodric Braithwaite, capture French reasoning perfectly: "A junior partner who is taken for granted is a junior partner with no

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<sup>17</sup> "Seven Steps to Maastricht," *The Economist*, November 9, 1991, pp. 47-48.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Romain Leick, "French Defence Minister Interviewed on Iraq, EU Defence Union," *Der Spiegel*, December 2, 2002, BBC Monitoring International Reports.

influence. In dealing with the Americans we need to follow the basic principle of negotiation: you must always make it clear that you will, if necessary, walk away from the table.”<sup>19</sup>

British policy, since 1999, has been a not so subtle alteration between bandwagoning with the U.S., and balancing U.S. power. If France is driven more by a desire for a greater say in how the world is run, Britain is driven more by fear that failure to support the U.S. will further reduce Europe’s already slim influence on its policies. If the French fear U.S. recklessness, the British fear abandonment, and Prime Minister Tony Blair has offered the clearest articulation of this concern, noting in a seminal speech in 1999 that U.S. involvement in global security issues “...is something we have no right to take for granted and must match with our own efforts. That is the basis for the recent initiative I took with President Chirac of France to improve Europe’s own defence capabilities.”<sup>20</sup> Yet, British support for ESDP was central to the original launch of ESDP and that support remains important, perhaps even essential, for future progress. The British attitude toward ESDP is thus complex.

Britain and France, each for their own reasons, were looking for arguments that would produce more serious attention to defense issues in Europe than emerged in the

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<sup>19</sup> Sir Rodric Braithwaite, “End of the Affair,” *Prospect*, May 2003, [www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/ARticleView.asp?P\\_Article=11914](http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/ARticleView.asp?P_Article=11914).

<sup>20</sup> Prime Minister Tony Blair, “Doctrine of the International Community” April 22, 1999, a speech to the Economic Club of Chicago, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/globaliz/politics/blair.htm>. (also at Foreign and Commonwealth Office Website, somewhere.) The whole paragraph deserves quotation in full. “At the end of this century the U.S. has emerged as by far the strongest state. It has no dreams of world conquest and is not seeking colonies. If anything Americans are too ready to see no need to get involved in affairs of the rest of the world. America's allies are always both relieved and gratified by its continuing readiness to shoulder burdens and responsibilities that come with its sole superpower status. We understand that this is something that we have no right to take for granted, and must match with our own efforts. That is the basis for the recent initiative I took with President Chirac of France to improve Europe's own defence capabilities.”

early 1990's. They were and are the two big defense spenders in Europe (together they provide roughly 45% of the defense spending of the "Fifteen"); they are the most serious about having genuinely use-able capabilities, including capabilities with some strategic reach. Neither state, however, is politically able to spend much more on defence than it does currently. For the others, NATO's pleas lacked the political "sizzle" to elicit serious defense reform efforts from most European states. Indeed, NATO could not prevent, slow, or stabilize the significant reductions in defense spending that occurred during the 1990's, and which continue in some key countries, especially Germany. The EU, however much it is derided by European publics, has more appeal. Polls suggest that Europeans are somewhat more willing to spend more money on defense for EU related projects than for NATO related projects. The fact that the EU's own force goals are so similar to those of NATO, in spite of the clear differences in their chosen missions, supports this point.

Britain was interested in more European military capability to improve British influence in Europe and in the U.S.<sup>21</sup> For Britain ESDP was and is in part a sales tool for NATO's force goals. It is commonly argued that Prime Minister Blair, as well as many in the senior reaches of the British security establishment believe that as Britain was the most capable military power in Europe in the late 1990's, it could play a major role in any EU security and defence project, which would not only increase British influence in the EU, it would also help persuade Euro-skeptic Britains that the EU was a good thing

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<sup>21</sup> Oliver Thraenert, a German foreign policy expert, suggests a "three-fold motive." Blair wanted the UK to have greater weight in Europe and could not at that time play in the creation of the Euro; it wished to ensure against any possible French effort to organize an EU security policy that could harm NATO, and he believed that a more active security role in the EU would increase British influence in Washington. See Oliver Thraenert, "German commentator Views EU-NATO relations," *Frankfurter Rundschau* (web site,) July 24, 2000, (BBC Monitoring Europe-Political, BBC Worldwide Monitoring.)

for the UK.<sup>22</sup> British leaders believe that the U.S. will take Europeans more seriously if they deliver some useable capabilities to NATO.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, if Britain is seen as the agent of these improvements, its standing with the U.S. would rise.<sup>24</sup> Finally, British planners discovered during their first major post-Cold War defense review that they simply could not afford all the capabilities that they wanted Britain to have—for its own strategic reasons. Britain’s European allies looked like a possible source for some of these capabilities. It is therefore perhaps not a great surprise that Geoffrey Hoon, the British defense minister, interpreted the EU’s “Petersberg Tasks,” to include operations similar to the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan in 2001, “Enduring Freedom.”<sup>25</sup> Only by setting demanding tasks for the EU military effort could imposing new capabilities be justified, capabilities that would be useful to NATO as well as the EU.<sup>26</sup>

Germany originally was highly ambivalent about EU defense and security efforts. Though Germany’s still has Europe’s largest economy, its diplomacy is constrained by its

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<sup>22</sup> See for example, Richard Norton-Taylor, “On the defensive,” *Guardian*, November 3, 1999, p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> Prime Minister Blair is said to have hoped that “Europeans would do more under an EU label for the ultimate benefit of NATO.” See “Special Report: A moment of truth-The future of NATO,” *The Economist*, May 4, 2002, p. 26.

<sup>24</sup> “For Britain, the biggest decision we face in the next couple of decades is our relationship with Europe. For far too long British ambivalence to Europe has made us irrelevant in Europe, and consequently of less importance to the United States. We have finally done away with the false proposition that we must choose between two diverging paths - the Transatlantic relationship or Europe. For the first time in the last three decades we have a government that is both pro-Europe and pro-American. I firmly believe that it is in Britain's interest, but it is also in the interests of the U.S. and of Europe.” Prime Minister Tony Blair, “Doctrine of the International Community” April 22, 1999, a speech to the Economic Club of Chicago, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/globaliz/politics/blair.htm>. (also at Foreign and Commonwealth Office Website, somewhere.)

<sup>25</sup> “Europe: If only words were guns; European defence,” *The Economist*, November 24, 2001, p. 43.

<sup>26</sup> For similar argumentation see Peter Hain, UK Minister for Europe, “The Case for a European Security and Defence Policy,” Speech to the Royal United Services Institute, November 28, 2001. <http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029391647&a=KArticle&aid=1013618415201>. “NATO remains at the centre of this capabilities improvement movement. Better EU forces will make a real contribution. The Headline Goal is the nuclear of a movement to spend better and modernize forces...Our drive to improve European Capabilities as part of the Helsinki Headline Goal process, has always been designed to work in concert with NATO’s Defence Capabilities Initiative. This remains the case...”

historical past, and its military power is constrained by treaty. NATO was “mother’s milk” for post-war Germany, and Germans did not want to do anything to weaken it, and certainly did not wish to be at odds with Washington.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, Germany held the rotating Presidency of the EU for the 1999 Cologne summit, and did much of the preparatory work for the key decisions of that meeting which launched ESDP.<sup>28</sup> A senior German Foreign Office official speaking to a domestic audience in 2001, after reviewing the need for stability and predictability in German foreign policy asserted that European policy was “the top priority in our foreign policy.”<sup>29</sup> The social democratic government of Germany drifted further from NATO during the run up to the Iraq war, following rather than leading German public opinion. German behavior has started to look a bit more like that of a normal great power. Germany is now an even stronger supporter of ESDP.<sup>30</sup> According to the French defence minister, Germany’s discontent with U.S. Iraq

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<sup>27</sup> For the once seemingly eternal strength of Germany’s traditional commitment to NATO above all else see, “The Helmut-and-Jacques show,” *The Economist*, April 6, 1996, p. 49. Karl Lamers, a Christian Democratic foreign-policy maker, averred “NATO is Heimat. Germany grew up feeling it in the bones.” (heimat=home) The article suggests that Germany and France, though cooperating well on many EU matters were still at odds over defense, with the Germans suspecting the French of still wanting defence independence.

<sup>28</sup> The German government drew up the initial “blueprint” for strengthening the EU’s “ability to launch independent military actions.” Shada Islam, “Kosovo war Speeds up work on European defence,” *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, May 29, 1999. For the actual “blueprint, see “Presidency report on the strengthening of the common European policy on security and defence” in “European Council Declaration on Strengthening the Common European Policy on Security and Defence,” Presidency Conclusions, Cologne European Council, June 3-4, 1999, Annex III, [http://europa.eu.int/council/off/conclu/june99/annexe\\_en.htm#a3](http://europa.eu.int/council/off/conclu/june99/annexe_en.htm#a3).

<sup>29</sup> Dr. Ludger Volmer, Minister of State, Federal Foreign Office, “The fundamental principles of the new German foreign policy,” speech to the Ruhr Political Forum, November 12, 2001, [http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/en/archiv\\_print?archiv\\_id=2333](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/en/archiv_print?archiv_id=2333). “Let me begin with European policy, the top priority in our foreign policy. At the start of the legislative period, our Government was immediately confronted with a twofold European challenge: the German EU Presidency in the first half of 1999 and, at the same time, the Kosovo crisis. In both cases we had to break new ground in European policy.”

<sup>30</sup> I infer this from a number of interviews. The inference is supported by both anecdotes and public opinion polling. For example, an unnamed German editor reports that his editorials arguing that the EU should not be built against the Americans produced a torrent of e-mails to the contrary. See William Pfaff, “U.S. Message: Who Needs Allies?” *The Boston Globe*, April 27, 2003, p. E11. A recent poll reports that “Germany, the long-time American ally, now expresses an unambiguous preference for Europe over the United States.” In 2002, 55% of Germans polled said that the EU was more important than the U.S. to Germany’s vital interests. By 2003, 81% of Germans

policy "...in fact led to closer ties between Germany and France. And this rapprochement in turn heightens the awareness of how important a strong European pillar in Western security and defence policy is."<sup>31</sup> Germany cannot entirely replace the UK as an ESDP leader, but its growing support for the project is another factor that points to continued ESDP dynamism. The combination of German and French commitment to ESDP seems to make it difficult for the British to play the kind of obstructionist role they formerly played when the French led an effort to make the Western European Union a vehicle for more autonomous European security and defence capacities, even if the British wanted to return to that course.

### **Precipitating Events: The Balkan Wars**

ESDP aims to give Europe the capability to deal with the Petersberg Tasks, i.e. tasks of crisis management, peacekeeping, and peace making. These were the tasks that the U.S. did not want NATO to take up at the outset of the Balkan wars, and which Europe could not then address. The EC did try to influence the unfolding Balkan crisis, but disagreement among the principal European states, especially France and Germany prevented any consistent line, which in turn watered down the EC's diplomatic efforts.<sup>32</sup> Europe did muster the will for a WEU naval operation, "Sharp Fence," to police the arms embargo on the Balkans, but that was all. NATO began its own naval patrol operation shortly thereafter, and the two efforts were for all intents and purposes, fused.

Bosnia produced a huge rift in the transatlantic alliance by 1995. The Americans accused the Europeans of indecision and letting the wrong side win. The Europeans

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polled said the EU was more important. See The German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Transatlantic Trends 2003, Key Findings*, pp. 3,9. .

<sup>31</sup> "French Defence Minister Interviewed on Iraq, EU Defence Union," *Der Spiegel*, December 2, 2002,

<sup>32</sup> Simon Nuttall, *European Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 216, 220.

accused the Americans of grandiose talk about air strikes and lifting the arms embargo that would in their view have exposed their peace keeping troops on the ground to vastly greater risks.<sup>33</sup> Europeans believed that U.S. discussions of these gambits also emboldened the Bosniaks and made them less amenable to possible compromise solutions. Indeed, France, as well as other European states, suspected that the U.S. was already running guns to the Bosniaks, in violation of the UN arms embargo.<sup>34</sup> In November 1994 the U.S. Congress forced President Clinton to “announce that American warships in the Adriatic would no longer help to stop arms getting through to ex Yugoslavia...Never before had a NATO member declared it would cease to carry out an agreed NATO policy.”<sup>35</sup>

Fear of a complete breakdown in transatlantic relations, and fear of further deterioration in Bosnia, helped bring the allies, the U.S., and Russia together in the Contact Group to try to bring an end to the Bosnia conflict.<sup>36</sup> Though the formation of the Contact Group proved the beginning of a successful effort to end the war, cooperation was not smooth. Richard Holbrooke, the key U.S. trouble shooter on Bosnia resolved to restrict the flow of information to his European partners, though he knew it annoyed them.<sup>37</sup> Once NATO launched its coercive air strikes on the Bosnian Serbs, the U.S. saw

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<sup>33</sup> Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, The War in Bosnia Herzegovina, Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), p. 253.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 308.

<sup>35</sup> “It can’t be done alone,” *The Economist*, Feb. 25, 1995, p. 19. See also “Defence policy: Wooing the WEU,” *The Economist*, March 4, 1995, pp. 56-57. “America’s abandonment of the NATO naval blockade of the former Yugoslavia has led British policy-makers to question its commitment to the alliance.”

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 285-286, 299-300.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Holbrooke, To End A War, (New York: Modern Library, Random House, 1999) pp. 84-85, 117; European suspicion of the U.S. remained high during the contact group negotiations. P. 201.

fit to strike targets in Western Bosnia that NATO had not yet authorized, producing further European disquiet.<sup>38</sup>

Given the frictions that emerged between the U.S. and Europe over Bosnia-Herzegovina, one would have expected a stronger European reaction. Yet, the Europeans were still prone to rely on NATO. The main adaptation was the proposal of the Combined Joint Task Force Concept, which would allow for the use of some NATO assets by coalitions of the willing formed from within the Alliance.<sup>39</sup> At the same time however, some European officials resolved never to cooperate with the U.S. again in ways that did not produce equally shared risks—if Europe would have troops on the ground so must the U.S. France and Britain may also have been pulled somewhat closer together by the Bosnia experience as the only two European powers with the capability and will to commit significant military force to the UN peacekeeping operation. The French perceived that the experience of U.S. inattention had already convinced Britain that Europe needed a capability to act on its own if necessary, and British resistance to a European “defence identity” is said to have weakened slightly thereafter.<sup>40</sup> A year later the *Economist* observed that “the new impetus for strengthening the WEU comes partly from America’s belief that Europe ought to shoulder more of the common defence

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>39</sup> Dana H. Allin, NATO’S Balkan Interventions, Adelphi Paper 347, (Oxford: Osford U. Press for International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2002), p. 39.

<sup>40</sup> Daniel Franklin, “The shame of it,” *The Economist*, July 3, 1993, pp. 16-17. This drift in European elite opinion began much earlier. An editorial reflecting political developments in the U.S., and the U.S. –Soviet agreement to eliminate medium range nuclear forces in Europe, suggested that European conservatives who had been willing to “cheap ride” on the U.S. for security saw “evidence that the Americans were washing their hands of Europe.” “For safety’s sake, Europe must therefore get ready to do more to defend itself.” “Europe’s braver colours,” *The Economist*, July 11, 1987, pp. 11-12.

burden, but more from a recent growth of doubt in Europe about the durability of America's military commitment to Europe."<sup>41</sup>

The Kosovo Crisis, following so hard on the Bosnia experience, provided the primary impetus to action. It is striking that no significant progress on European capacities was made until the British and French agreed at St. Malo in 1998 that such capabilities were essential, which suggests that Bosnia alone was not embarrassing enough. Many suggest that Prime Minister Blair in particular was deeply frustrated by the fact that Europe was still dependent on NATO and the U.S. to do anything militarily about the emerging Kosovo crisis in 1998. Reporting the first steps of Prime Minister Tony Blair's 1998 European defense initiative, the *Economist* observed-

"Mr. Blair is conscious that in defence matters, Britain, France, and Germany may have little choice but to work together more closely, given America's recent reluctance to commit any more ground troops to Europe's potential war zones. The three European powers face the task of cobbling together an intervention force in Macedonia, ready to rescue, if necessary, the unarmed mission which is supposed to be verifying a ceasefire in neighbouring Kosovo. The force will come under NATO's aegis, but be French-dominated and lead-another welcome sign, from Britain's point of view, that France has resumed its rapprochement with the military wing of the alliance. Britain and France, so often at odds over the theology of defence, are now at one in their keenness to hammer out a common European positions ahead of NATO's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary summit in Washington in April next year."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> "Playing at Euro-soldiers," *The Economist*, Nov. 26, 1994, p. 56.

<sup>42</sup> "Blair's defence offensive," *The Economist*, November 14, 1998, (Vol. 349, Iss. 8094) pp. 61-62. During this time, for unexplained reasons, the EU neutrals—Ireland, Austria, Finland, and Sweden were evolving away from their previous opposition to the EU taking on a defense-role. The position of the neutrals had given the UK diplomatic cover for its long standing opposition to an EU defence role, and its strong preference for the preservation of NATO as the sole European defense organization.

At their December 1998 summit at St. Malo, Britain joined with France to propose that the EU organize a rapid reaction force of its own, in part to ensure against future Bosnia's.<sup>43</sup> During the Kosovo War the following spring, Blair learned first hand of the limitations of European military power.<sup>44</sup>

The conduct of the Kosovo War also helped spur the EU's efforts. Though NATO's first war is publicly lauded as a great success, there were significant problems. NATO's command structure did not really run the war; the U.S. is said to have relied much more on the EUCOM command structure.<sup>45</sup> European officers were excluded from tactical planning that involved stealth aircraft. U.S. military commanders complained of micro-management of air attack planning by the civilians of the North Atlantic Council—a charge that most European officials hotly deny. Philip Stephens reports that this did not matter in any case, as the U.S. was hitting targets that had not even been discussed by the Alliance, which British officials discovered by accident.<sup>46</sup> Europeans complain that the U.S. did not generously share important intelligence information with them. Finally, General Wesley Clark came close to producing a diplomatic disaster when he proposed to race the Russians to the Pristina airport—a project rejected by the British commander on the ground. Substantively, European soldiers and statesmen learned first hand of the

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<sup>43</sup> Philip Stephens, *Tony Blair, The Making of a World Leader*, (London: Viking Penguin, 2004), p. 115.

<sup>44</sup> Philip Stephens, *Tony Blair, The Making of a World Leader*, (London: Viking Penguin, 2004), p. 168.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Cottrell, "The ageing alliance," *The Economist*, October 23, 1999, p. S6 (??56?), "Once begun, this became an American war run from the White House and the Pentagon over which the Europeans had little political influence."

<sup>46</sup> Philip Stephens, *Tony Blair, The Making of a World Leader*, (London: Viking Penguin, 2004), p 161. To avoid embarrassment, British officials decided to pretend that they had been informed by the U.S. A BBC documentary screened on August 20, 1999 reports that Germany and Greece did not approve the final set of targets bombed in the Kosovo War, which included power stations, but that they were simply ignored. See "NATO faced deep splits over Kosovo conflict," *Agence France Presse*, August 20, 1999.

developing technological gap between their forces and those of the U.S., which they candidly concede.<sup>47</sup> The U.S. has never let them forget it, and this gap has been a staple of European and U.S. defence planning discussions and commentary in national, EU, and NATO contexts ever since.

Strobe Talbott observed afterwards that if Milosevic had not chosen to make a deal when he did so, “there would have been increasing difficulty within the alliance in preserving solidarity and the resolve of the alliance.”<sup>48</sup> It is worth noting, however, that Europeans claim credit for the negotiations that ended the Kosovo War.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, some European diplomats believe that U.S. diplomacy, particularly its pre-war support for the Kosovo Liberation Army, and its support for a referendum on Kosovo’s future,

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<sup>47</sup> European fighter aircraft flew only a small per centage of the bombing sorties in the Kosovo War, due mainly to their then very limited ability to employ precision guided munitions, which were preferred in order to minimize aircraft losses as well as collateral damage. European arsenals were still full of Cold War “dumb ammunition,” and the Europeans had plenty of fighter bombers that could have delivered them. The war also demonstrated European weakness in command and control, intelligence gathering, airlift, and the ability to suppress enemy air defenses. Most of these weaknesses reflected resource allocation decisions that had been sensible during the heyday of NATO in the Cold War, but which Europeans had only slowly begun to remedy in the 1990’s. Programs are now underway to remedy many of these deficiencies. See fn \_\_\_\_.

<sup>48</sup> “NATO faced deep splits over Kosovo conflict,” *Agence France Presse*, August 20, 1999. See the original source, BBC News, Online Network, “NATO’s Inner Kosovo Conflict,” August 20, 1999, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/europe/newsid\\_425000/425468.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_425000/425468.stm), reporting on a BBC Two “Newsnight” documentary developed by Mark Urban. The principal findings of the report are that Germany, Italy, Greece, and perhaps even France resisted the escalation of the bombing, in particular the escalation to various communications and power supply targets as well as other targets in central Belgrade. General Wesley Clark, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, seems to have frequently ignored their concerns. It notes that Germany and Italy tried to propose bombing pauses in support of diplomacy, but that these suggestions were rejected by the United States and Britain. Although squeamish about bombing, some of the Europeans were even more resistant to a ground war. Simultaneously, out and out NATO failure over Kosovo was viewed by all as too damaging to the alliance to even contemplate. The report concludes that had the war continued, NATO would have had an extremely difficult time deciding to mount a ground offensive, which was widely opposed in Europe. “The decision to go on bombing was the only thing the Allies could agree because hawks and doves cancelled on another out.”

<sup>49</sup> Peter Norman, “EU heartened by Ahtissari’s success: Sidelined in bosnia, Europe has learnt from its mistakes and one of its own leaders brought back the good news.” *Financial Times*, June 7, 1999, p. 3. Reporting from Brussels, Norman put a distinctly EU gloss on the diplomacy that produced the settlement. The facts of the case, however, support this. See, Barry R. Posen, “The War for Kosovo: Serbia’s Political-Military Strategy,” *International Security*, vol.24, No. 4, (Spring 2000), pp. 66-72.

reduced the chances for a settlement without war.<sup>50</sup> Partly to expiate their thin contribution to the bombing campaign, but also to provide the necessary resources to police the Kosovo cease-fire agreement, European forces took on the bulk of the peace keeping task that followed the successful air war, and did so with the understanding that this task would be a lengthy one. Overall, both the military and diplomatic problems of the war provided an impetus to the Europeans to improve their own capacities.<sup>51</sup>

Most observers of transatlantic relations observed that European public attitudes toward the U.S. deteriorated after the Kosovo War. The precise reasons for this public resentment have not been explained, so far as I know, but the fact of the antipathy is well understood. It manifested itself directly in the strange episode of a health panic over the relatively small number of depleted uranium aircraft cannon shells fired into Kosovo, and the never very well founded but widespread suspicion that these shells had caused health problems for European troops. The controversy was so intense that the U.S. State department was moved to survey newspaper commentary on the matter in 54 sources from 22 countries, noting in its summary that “the press in major and minor NATO capitals also did not spare the superpower, complaining loudly that America must stop its ‘somewhat cavalier treatment of its European Allies’ and devote itself to an ‘exercise in transparency.’”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Peter Norman, “EU heartened by Ahtissari’s success: Sidelined in bosnia, Europe has learnt from its mistakes and one of its own leaders brought back the good news.” *Financial Times*, June 7, 1999, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> Roger Cohen, “Crisis in the Balkans: The Continent; Europe’s Aim: Arms Parity,” *New York Times*, June 15, 1999, p. A1. Karl Kaiser, a longtime German foreign policy experts observed, “Kosovo has been a watershed in so many ways. For Germany, it has represented a coming of age. For Europe, it has brought a crushing realization of the asymmetry of power between it and the United States, and the need to do something about that.” See also Shada Islam, “Kosovo war Speeds up work on European defence,” *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, May 29, 1999.

<sup>52</sup> U.S. Department of State, International Information Programs, Office of Research, “Balkan Syndrome Causes Anti-U.S. Wave,” *Issue Focus, Foreign Media Reaction*, <http://usinfo.state.gov/admin/005/www/1j09.html>.

### **The What of ESDP?**

Though the EU has been interested in Foreign and Security Policy since its inception, most substantive progress has happened since late 1998. It is widely acknowledged that it was the accord achieved by Britain and France at their St. Malo Defense Ministers meetings in 1998 that launched ESDP. This led quickly to the establishment of the necessary administrative capabilities: the Political and Security committee, a council of senior European diplomats stationed in Brussels meets regularly to discuss security issues that might be of concern to Europe; the Military Committee is a council of European Chiefs of Defense Staff, with a chairman chosen from among them who resides in Brussels; the Military Staff is a small group of officers drawn from across Europe who permanently support the Military Committee.<sup>53</sup> Against the predictions of many observers, progress continued after the Iraq War. The European Union Military Staff was strengthened, after an acrimonious transatlantic debate. An EU armaments directorate has just been set up with the purpose of coordinating the defense spending of the member states.

The EU's military effort is centered on the "Petersberg Tasks," "humanitarian and rescue tasks, peace-keeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making" as strategic objectives. These had first been incorporated into the Amsterdam Treaty of European Union in 1997, a principal purpose of which had been

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<sup>53</sup> The creation of these three institutions was recommended at the June 1999 European Council meeting in Cologne. "Presidency report on the strengthening of the common European policy on security and defence" in "European Council Declaration on Strengthening the Common European Policy on Security and Defence," Presidency Conclusions, Cologne European Council, June 3-4, 1999, Annex III, [http://europa.eu.int/council/off/conclu/june99/annexe\\_en.htm#a3](http://europa.eu.int/council/off/conclu/june99/annexe_en.htm#a3). The three organizations were officially set up at the Nice European Council Meeting in December 2000.

to “equip the Union better for its role in international politics.”<sup>54</sup> St. Malo and what came after arose from frustration that the Amsterdam Treaty had not fully succeeded. The first detailed capability objective, the Helsinki Force Goal which called for the EU to have the ability to deploy a force of 60,000 for a range of peacekeeping and peacemaking tasks within six months of a decision to do so, and to sustain the mission for a year, was adopted in December of 1999, at the European Council Meeting in Helsinki.<sup>55</sup> Most of the appropriate forces have since been identified. Qualitative lacunae have also been identified and some steps have been taken to rectify them though all objectives have not been met.<sup>56</sup> Within roughly ten years, I estimate, the EU will collectively possess many if not all of the assets that were missing in the 1990s.<sup>57</sup> Ambitious goals for quantity

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<sup>54</sup> The disintegration of Yugoslavia was a precipitating event. The original Treaty of European Union agreed in Maastricht in 1992 called for a “Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP),” but provided no effective mechanisms to achieve it. The Amsterdam treaty among other things created the Office of the High Representative for CFSP, the post now held by Javier Solana. It also point to “the progressive framing of a common defence policy.” Nevertheless, the Amsterdam Treaty counted on the Western European Union to be the institutional vehicle for European security policy. See “The Amsterdam Treaty: a Comprehensive Guide, An effective and coherent external policy,” <http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/a19000.htm>. The Treaty of Nice, 2000, more or less abandoned reliance on the WEU, and took the security project into the EU

<sup>55</sup> “To develop European capabilities, Member States have set themselves the headline goal: by the year 2003, cooperating together voluntarily, they will be able to deploy rapidly and then sustain forces capable of the full range of Petersberg tasks as set out in the Amsterdam Treaty, including the most demanding, in operations up to corps level (up to 15 brigades or 50,000-60,000 persons). These forces should be militarily self-sustaining with the necessary command, control and intelligence capabilities, logistics, other combat support services and additionally, as appropriate, air and naval elements. Member States should be able to deploy in full at this level within 60 days, and within this to provide smaller rapid response elements available and deployable at very high readiness. They must be able to sustain such a deployment for at least one year. This will require an additional pool of deployable units (and supporting elements) at lower readiness to provide replacements for the initial forces. See “EU Military Structures, Annex IV of the Presidency Conclusions, Helsinki European Council, 10 and 11 December 1999,” especially Annex 1 to Annex IV, “Presidency Progress Report to the Helsinki European Council On Strengthening the Common European Policy on Security and Defence,” [http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/ACFA4C.htm](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/ACFA4C.htm).

<sup>56</sup> Julian Lindley-French and Franco Algeri, “A European Defence Strategy, The Vision Document of the Venusberg Group,” Bertelsmann Foundation, May 2004.

<sup>57</sup> This estimate is based on the planned acquisition pace of key enabling military assets. Significant deliveries of the A400 airlift aircraft are planned for 2009-12; see S. Coniglio, “A400M, An-70, C-130J, C-17: How Do They Stand?” *Military Technology*, vol. XXVII, no 7, 2003, p. 58. Skynet 5, a sophisticated European military satellite communications system that will mainly serve the UK is expected to be fully operational by 2008; see C. Hoyle, “UK Concludes Skynet 5 deal”, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, vol. 40, no. 17, 2003, p. 3. The first test models of the Galileo navigation satellite will be in orbit by early 2006; see D. A. Divis, “Military

and quality of deployable forces have been set, and member states are working, with varying degrees of energy and enthusiasm to meet these goals.

Out of deference to NATO, the EU denied itself the ability to command this force independently, and agreed to depend mainly on NATO-SHAPE for the necessary resources to both plan and command any serious stabilization operation.<sup>58</sup> NATO was unable to work out suitable methods for cooperation until political issues associated with Turkey and Greece were ameliorated. Since early 2003 the EU and NATO have made considerable progress in developing the modalities of EU-NATO cooperation. Nevertheless, France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg remained dissatisfied with this dependence and set out to find a second way to run an EU operation. After much controversy, a decision was made both to formalize and strengthen an EU military planning cell at NATO, and to augment the EU military staff, rather than to set up a new EU command organization as these four states had originally suggested.<sup>59</sup> Presumably the augmented EU military staff would coordinate the delegation of operational authority for EU missions to the national operational headquarters that have been developed in Britain, France, Germany, and Italy since the mid- 1990's, headquarters that have been pledged to the EU in the event of a collective decision to launch a peace enforcement

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role for Galileo emerges", GPS World, vol. 13, no. 5, 2002, p. 10. < [www.globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org)>. Several European satellite reconnaissance programs should yield usable assets over the next few years; see "The New Challenges Facing European Intelligence – reply to the annual report of the Council", Document A/1775, Assembly of the WEU, 4 June 2002, paragraphs 81-4, 104.

<sup>58</sup> Senator William Roth sponsored a resolution in the U.S. Senate on November 9, 1999 reminding Europeans that NATO should remain the primary institution for European security, and that it should have the right of first refusal for all military tasks in Europe. It passed unanimously. See "Europe: The EU turns its attention from ploughshares to swords," *The Economist*, November 20, 1999, p. 51.

<sup>59</sup> John Chalmers, "UK clinches EU defence deal," *Reuters*, December 11, 2003, [www.reuters.co.uk](http://www.reuters.co.uk); and "EU agrees to create military planning cell next year," *AFP*, December 12, 2003 <http://uk.news.yahoo.com/031212/323/egx37.html>.

operation.<sup>60</sup> The option to use these headquarters to plan and command an EU-led stabilization operation, without access to NATO-SHAPE assets, was prefigured in the British-French St. Malo communiqué in December 1998.

### **The hegemon's coding**

The emergence of the European Union Security and Defense Policy suggests that however comfortable bandwagoning with the U.S. has been for most European States, they also want other options. Realist theory would predict that a hegemon will be jealous of its power—and will be particularly attuned to developments that might provide options for others.<sup>61</sup> Who better to code European behavior than the U.S.? It is no surprise that U.S. officials from both the Clinton and Bush administrations have viewed ESDP with suspicion.<sup>62</sup> The U.S. has opposed EU steps toward true military autonomy.<sup>63</sup> In his very

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<sup>60</sup> Stephen Castle, “Italy Brokers Deal to End EU Defence Rift,” *The Independent*, October 3, 2003, (Financial Times Information, Global News Wire-Europe Intelligence Wire, 2003), reports an Italian proposal for a rotating team of EU planners to be associated with the existing national operational headquarters in the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Greece.

<sup>61</sup> Norton-Taylor, “On the defensive,” November 3, 1999, observes that then deputy secretary of state Strobe Talbott “wanted to have his cake and eat it.” Talbott favored “...a strong, integrated, self-confident and militarily capable Europe” but did not “want to see a European security and defence identity that comes into being first within NATO but then grows out of NATO and finally grows away from NATO.”

<sup>62</sup> During the Clinton Administration, then U.S. Ambassador to NATO Alexander Vershbow, developed the ability to support and critique ESDP in the same speech to a high art. Translated into plain English his message was simple. So long as ESDP produced real capabilities identified by NATO, coordinated closely with NATO as an institution, and consulted closely with non-EU European NATO member states, it would be a great thing for NATO, and the U.S. would support it. If the EU focused on capacities for autonomous action, then ESDP would be a bad and divisive thing. “—If ESDP is mostly about European construction, then it will focus more on institution-building than on building new capabilities, and there will be a tendency to oppose the ‘interference’ of NATO and to minimize the participation of non-EU Allies. The danger here is that, if autonomy becomes an end in itself, ESDP will be an ineffective tool for managing crises and transatlantic tensions will increase.” See his speech to the Transatlantic Forum in Paris, “European Defense: European and American Perceptions,” May, 18, 2000, [www.usembassy.it/file2000\\_05/alia.a0051907.htm](http://www.usembassy.it/file2000_05/alia.a0051907.htm).

<sup>63</sup> Efforts by France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg starting in the Spring of 2003 to set up what seems to be a small nucleus of a standing operational headquarters that might plan and run EU military operations, were met with total opposition by the U.S. U.S. Ambassador Nick Burns called it the “most serious threat to the future of NATO.” A special NATO meeting was called to ease the concerns of the U.S., but it apparently failed to accomplish much. See Stephen Castle, “NATO calms U.S. fears of European defence HQ,” *The Independent*, October 21, 2003, <http://news.independent.co.uk>

first meeting with Vice President Richard Cheney, Blair was questioned on the initiative he had launched at St. Malo. Cheney accused Britain of weakening NATO.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the Pentagon states explicitly that the purpose of NATO cooperation with the EU, through a set of procedures known as “Berlin Plus,” is “to prevent the creation of an EU counterpart to Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and a separate ‘EU’ army...”<sup>65</sup> One would expect nothing less from a unipolar hegemon.<sup>66</sup>

### **Alternative Explanations**

Two alternative explanations are commonly offered for the emergence of ESDP. These are not usually offered in theoretical terms, but rather are offered empirically by close observers of the EU, or European national or EU civil servants.

Some argue that ESDP is simply a logical extension of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, which itself arose merely from a recognition that an economic bloc and loose political entity the size of the European Union would inevitably be a global political player. Thus it would need a foreign policy, and a foreign policy is nothing without some kind of military capability. This view is most often heard in EU official circles, and also among small state members. While this view is widely held, if it were the driving force, it ought to have predicted more progress earlier. The aspiration for the EU to have some

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<sup>64</sup> Stephens, *Tony Blair*, p. 190. Blair then, for all intents and purposes, sought and secured President Bush’s approval of the ESDP project, which he “tentatively” provided. P. 193.

<sup>65</sup> U.S. Dept. of Defense, *Responsibility Sharing Report*, June 2002, Chapter II, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> See also “NATO acquires a European identity,” *The Economist*, June 8, 1996, p. 51, discussing the Berlin meetings that gave rise to “Berlin+” in relation to WEU missions. This article was quite optimistic about the prospects. “Now each has managed to reassure the other. The French have acknowledged that Europe has neither the money nor the political will to create a serious defence body outside NATO, which means that the European identity has to be within it. And, worried by the possibility of America’s disengagement from Europe, they want a stronger NATO to hold it in. For their part, the Americans have warmed to the WEU: they see that it is likely to become a subsidiary of the alliance rather than a rival to it, and so are happy for it to do some real jobs.” By June 21, 1997 the rapprochement, which some had hoped would bring full or nearly full French reentry into NATO’s military command, foundered on the question of a European commanded NATO HQ for the Mediterranean. See “Riling NATO,” *The Economist*, June 21, 1997, p. 53.

kind of a Foreign Policy was present in the original Maastricht treaty of 1992, but little effort was made until six years later to add any military teeth to this aspiration. Most ESDP progress came after 1998—i.e. well after the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties. Nevertheless, the fact that these aspirations were written into the original treaty, and have been strengthened in the Amsterdam and Nice emendations of the Treaty, demonstrates that there has been at least a weak consensus in the EU that it must have a Foreign and Security Policy. The ambition is to some extent now locked in to the EU project, which makes it a bit sticky—progress may slow, but outright retreat seems unlikely.

Another view attributes most of the post-1998 progress to Britain's change of policy. This is essentially accurate; it is improbable that much would have happened without the Franco-British agreement at St. Malo in 1998. Britain had formerly opposed any EU defence effort that might undercut the cohesion of NATO and the continental role of the U.S.. This was, and remains, a particularly strong view of Britain's Conservative party. Thus Britain's change of policy is attributed to the change of government, and to the particular views of Prime Minister Tony Blair, a supposed EU supporter. But advocates of this explanation offer a non-security reason for Blair's decision to support an EU defense effort. Blair wanted to move Britain closer to the core of the organization, and bring Britain into the Euro, and British public opinion needed to be prepared by showing that Britain could be a leader. To accomplish this, Britain needed to start with an EU role that played to its strengths. Military capability is a British specialty. As one of the two biggest defense spenders in the Union, and acknowledged even by the French as its most accomplished military power, ESDP provided an issue where Britain could lead—pursuing both prestige and power in the EU, and perhaps setting the stage

for a change in British public attitudes toward the organization. It is difficult to find evidence that would undercut or confirm this tactical explanation of ESDP's origins. The tactic does not seem to have moved British public opinion as yet, but despite the bad intra-European blood of the Iraq war, Britain continues to be a positive participant in ESDP. Some British officials seem to believe that they no longer have the option to sit out the project.<sup>67</sup> In conversation they volunteer the observation that once the EU launches a project, that project will proceed. If they try to sit out an EU project, this will simply guarantee that Britain will have to come in later anyway, and in a disadvantageous position. Blair may or may not have launched ESDP for complex political reasons, but the British seem to understand that they cannot now easily reverse the project, even if they wanted to do so. What is less clear at this point is what British preferences regarding ESDP truly are.

### **Summary**

A review of the timing and the reasons for this development suggests that they can largely be traced back to the emergence of Unipolarity. France does provide a permanent pressure for a more autonomous Europe—i.e. promotes pure balancing behavior, though this antedates the end of the Cold War. For others, the strategic rationale centers on the creation of options. The UK joined this effort out of dissatisfaction with dependency on the U.S., the implications of which were manifest in the Balkan Wars. Other European states joined largely for the same reason, though institutional loyalty to the EU also provided a motive. Had Britain not joined with France

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<sup>67</sup> David Clark, then the shadow labor defence secretary noted regarding the possibility of joining the Eurocorps, "The lesson of EU history is that you should be there when the architecture is being designed." See "Defence policy: Wooing the WEU," *The Economist*, March 4, 1995, pp. 56-57.

to take a leadership role, most agree that little would have been accomplished. Britain joined for other reasons as well. British defense planners could not afford all the capabilities that they wanted in order to maintain their own decision-making and military operational autonomy. Europe was a plausible place to develop these capabilities. NATO would have been the preferred organization for Britain, but it had lost its sizzle with publics and parliaments. Tony Blair also wished to preserve and expand Britain's role in Europe. After September 11, 2001, Blair seems to have lost interest in ESDP. This is where the institutional momentum of the EU plays a role. The EU is unlikely to walk back a project of this magnitude and visibility, especially one that enjoys so much public support.

U.S. policy on Iraq, another manifestation of the Unipolar moment, has succeeded in weakening Germany's once nearly instinctive allegiance to NATO, and produced a much stronger inclination toward an EU security project.<sup>68</sup> Germany cannot entirely replace the UK as an ESDP leader, but its growing support for the project is another factor making it difficult for the EU to reverse course on defense. Due to the U.S. power

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<sup>68</sup> I infer this from a number of interviews. The inference is supported by both anecdotes and public opinion polling. For example, an unnamed German editor reports that his editorials arguing that the EU should not be built against the Americans produced a torrent of e-mails to the contrary. See William Pfaff, "U.S. Message: Who Needs Allies?" *The Boston Globe*, April 27, 2003, p. E11. A recent poll reports that "Germany, the long-time American ally, now expresses an unambiguous preference for Europe over the United States." In 2002, 55% of Germans polled said that the EU was more important than the U.S. to Germany's vital interests. By 2003, 81% of Germans polled said the EU was more important. See The German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Transatlantic Trends 2003, Key Findings*, pp. 3,9. For the once seemingly eternal strength of Germany's traditional commitment to NATO above all else see, "The Helmut-and-Jacques show," *The Economist*, April 6, 1996, p. 49. Karl Lamers, a Christian Democratic foreign-policy maker, averred "NATO is Heimat. Germany grew up feeling it in the bones." (heimat=home) The article suggests that Germany and France, though cooperating well on many EU matters were still at odds over defense, with the Germans suspecting the French of still wanting defence independenc.

position alone, it is likely that similar U.S. policy initiatives will occur in the future, with similar results.<sup>69</sup>

### **The Consequences of ESDP for Transatlantic Relations**

ESDP has provided Europe with a limited capability. Some Europeans want to use it. Insofar as the U.S. is busy, it seems likely that the EU will soon take responsibility for securing the peace in Bosnia, and shortly thereafter, take responsibility for Kosovo. If ESDP missions are successful, the project may attract more public and elite support. If so, the resources devoted to Europe's security project may also increase and Europe's autonomous military capabilities will grow.

If this comes to pass, ESDP is likely to complicate U.S.-EU relations in three ways.

First, because of its peculiar relations with NATO, ESDP gives Europeans a way to encourage the U.S. to be more interested in Europe's special security concerns than would otherwise be the case. Europeans have strong interests in peace and order on Europe's periphery, including the suppression of civil conflict. NATO has taken on these missions, but it has also taken on missions farther afield, in order to satisfy the U.S. It is clear that the U.S. has a strong interest in preserving NATO's primacy on the continent. If Europeans were to propose to NATO a mission that they thought was important, but that the U.S. thought unimportant in its own terms, the U.S. now has a second reason to

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<sup>69</sup> Those who attribute the U.S. led invasion of Iraq and overthrow of the Baath regime solely to the Bush Administration's peculiar approach to the War on Terror ignore the depth and breadth of suspicion of and hostility to the Iraqi Baath regime in the U.S. since the first Gulf War. During the 2000 campaign, Vice-President and Democratic Party Presidential candidate Al Gore alluded to the need for a stronger policy to overthrow Saddam Hussein than that pursued by his then boss, President Bill Clinton. "It is our policy to see Saddam Hussein gone," he averred in a public speech. See John Lancaster, "In Saddam's Future, A Harder U.S. Line," *The Washington Post*, June 3, 2000.

approve the mission—to keep it out of the EU’s hands, and to avoid the prestige loss associated with a success. The EU will have a certain agenda setting power in NATO. The U.S. is not going to like this.

Second, the maturation of the ESDP will produce Europeans who are increasingly convinced that if they had to do so, they could provide for their own security. This is not a prediction of an EU ready to compete with the U.S.. It is a prediction of an EU ready to look after itself. This will not happen soon, but given the planned pace of European capabilities improvements, a more militarily autonomous Europe will appear viable in a bit less than a decade. As consciousness of this fact grows, Europeans can be expected to speak to the U.S. inside and outside of NATO with greater expectation that their views will be taken seriously. The U.S. will have decisions to make about how it wants to conduct its foreign policy and in particular about how much it cares about Western Europe relative to its other international projects.

Third, insofar as U.S. officials already recognize that ESDP is and will be a complicating factor for them, they have decisions to make about the U.S. attitude toward the project. On the whole, U.S. officials have supported the project—but only with the understanding that it will provide Europe with no truly autonomous capabilities. When it appears otherwise, they oppose, sometimes artfully and sometimes clumsily. The more the U.S. opposes the project, the more suspicious many Europeans become about the ultimate rewards of bandwagoning with the U.S. in the context of NATO. U.S. overt opposition may produce the very capacities that the U.S. opposes. Given U.S. power, and consciousness of its power, it is not obvious that the U.S. will find a subtle way to deal

with the EU's defense efforts. This will add more friction to the transatlantic relationship.

The European defence project was not pursued with much vigour until after the end of the Cold War. Most progress is comparatively recent. Though many factors have contributed to this recent progress, specific problems posed by the hegemonic position of the U.S. appear particularly important. Viewed in this light, ESDP is a form of balancing behavior, albeit a weak form. Should ESDP progress, as it well might given the causes at work, and should the EU progress on other fronts, it seems likely that Europe will prove a less docile ally of the U.S. in a decade or two.