

# Beyond the EU/NATO dichotomy: the beginnings of a European strategic culture

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## Introduction

The European Union and its member states have moved with almost breathtaking rapidity towards the creation of a European Security and Defence Policy. That is not to say that progress has been without the occasional hiccup, especially when the ‘constructive ambiguity’<sup>1</sup> over the purpose, scope and long-term implications of the policy has been stretched by domestic concerns within some member states almost to breaking point. The rather less constructive and more uncertain ambiguity of successive US administrations and the reluctance, for a variety of reasons, of other NATO non-EU states to envisage any easy access by the EU to NATO assets have helped to fuel a sense of dispute and contention. Meanwhile, of course, bureaucratic structures have been put in place and promises have been made about force commitments. Whether these constitute a ‘revolution in the EU and in military affairs’ is a moot point;<sup>2</sup> old habits in foreign and security policy die hard. But important changes are clearly afoot. What we seek to explore in this article is whether there has been, through and beyond the Security and Defence Policy initiative itself, a move within the EU to accept that the Union has—or is developing—something like a ‘strategic culture’, defined as the institutional confidence and processes to manage and deploy military force as part of the accepted range of legitimate and effective policy instruments, together with general recognition of the EU’s legitimacy as an international actor with military capabilities (albeit limited). If it is to be anything more than hyperbole or unfulfilled commitments, the ‘revolution’ in matters of European security must begin with such an underlying culture. Without it, any political aspirations can only appear disconnected and either empty or superfluous. And the acquisition of serious capabilities becomes even more unlikely.

<sup>1</sup> F. Heisbourg, ‘Europe’s strategic ambitions: the limits of ambiguity’, *Survival* 42: 2, summer 2000.

<sup>2</sup> N. Gnesetto, *Newsletter* (Paris: WEU Institute for Security Studies, July 2000). See also A. Deighton, ‘The military security pool: towards a new security regime for Europe?’, *The International Spectator* 35: 4, October–December 2000; G. Andréani, C. Bertram and C. Grant, *Europe’s military revolution* (London: Centre for European Reform, 2001).

There is no convincing reason to reject the idea of an EU strategic culture, however limited the result might be in scope and capability. There are, in any case, signs that a strategic culture is already developing through a socialization process considerably accelerated by the institutional arrangements put in place in the EU since the decisions of the Helsinki European Council in December 1999. Furthermore, there are areas of political–military activity, such as policing actions of various types on the external borders of the EU, and the limited application of military force in the context of post–conflict reconstruction, peace–building and development aid, where perhaps a unique, ‘gendarmierie’–style EU strategic culture has been germinating.

### **Progress report**

For many participants and spectators, years of inconclusive argument and false starts ended when European security finally crossed the line into a more coherent, mature and purposive debate in 1998–9. The EU’s inability to tackle the build–up of the crisis in Kosovo and the ambivalence and delays in US policy were vital factors in creating a foreign policy demand for some new initiative. Others have tackled the wider background to the Anglo–French Declaration at St Malo of December 1998, including more domestic concerns.<sup>3</sup> But what the British Prime Minister and French President agreed was that there was a need to make a ‘reality’ of the Amsterdam treaty (which had not yet entered into force) through the ‘full and rapid implementation of the provisions on CFSP’. What they envisaged was the ‘progressive framing of a common defence policy’, with the EU developing a ‘capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces’. If other leaders were taken somewhat by surprise (though the idea was ‘trailed’ earlier in the informal European summit at Pörtschach), it was the EU’s experience in Kosovo that finally disposed the Fifteen to move the debate radically forward. Whatever the arguments surrounding the decision to use force in Kosovo, and its consequences, what mattered for both analysts of European security capabilities and institutions, and for European leaders was the widespread sense of disappointment, frustration and even failure over the scale of the effort mounted by European forces compared to that of the United States. Not only did the US fly 60 per cent of all sorties and 80 per cent of strike sorties, they also provided crucial intelligence, communications and logistical capabilities. Once again, as earlier in the 1990s, Europeans appeared weak and incapable when responding to a security challenge in their own ‘backyard’—the Balkans. By December 1999 in Helsinki, with the Kosovo experience clearly in mind, EU leaders reached an unprecedented level of agreement on the appearance, management and tasks of a European military structure. They agreed a ‘headline goal’, together with a set

<sup>3</sup> J. Howorth, ‘Britain, France and the European Defence Initiative’, *Survival* 42: 2, 2000; A. Shearer, ‘Britain, France and the St Malo Declaration: tactical rapprochement or strategic entente?’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 13: 2, 2000.

of 'capability goals', whereby the EU would, by 2003, develop the capacity to coordinate and deploy a force of 60,000 troops, at 60 days notice to move and be sustainable for up to one year. The force would be capable of carrying out a range of tasks from non-combat peacekeeping, to humanitarian and rescue missions, to combat-capable crisis-management operations or peacemaking/peace-enforcing; the so-called 'Petersberg tasks' which had recently been incorporated into the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty on European Union (Article 17).

Yet doubts remain as to whether the Helsinki goals will be fully realized by 2003. While EU leaders may be relatively clear that they wished to avoid another Kosovo-type crisis in the future, the Petersberg tasks are a broad and ambiguous commitment. If the French have consistently referred to 'Defence Europe', others have tended to talk more quietly about crisis management and peacekeeping, the lower end of the Petersberg tasks. Even so, as Heisbourg and others have pointed out, humanitarian intervention can come at quite a considerable cost if it were to follow the model of Operation Provide Comfort in 1991, or operations in East Timor in 1998.<sup>4</sup> There were, therefore, fairly profound questions relating to the scope of action of the Helsinki force across the spectrum of Petersberg tasks and its geographical area of concern—how far beyond the territory of EU member states should operations be envisaged? Beyond these were a number of questions that tended to attract media attention: how 'autonomous' was the force to be? What was the relationship with NATO? Should the EU operate in the military field, even establish a European Army? How and when would governments decide to use the EU rather than NATO? Would NATO be given the right of first refusal? Rather more damning, if pragmatic, given the EU's past record on CFSP actions, could the EU be the appropriate lead vehicle? And, finally, how was the initiative to be financed? National defence budgets continued to be cut, and there was no support for the idea that the Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP) should be centrally funded; no one was seriously contemplating that it should be paid from the EU's budget, given the involvement of the European Commission and the European Parliament in budgetary procedures.

Much of the debate, stimulated at irregular intervals by vague thinking, loose talk and poor reportage, seemed to be in danger of focusing only on pro-Atlanticist versus pro-Europeanist rhetoric. That debate is important, though not in the artificial zero-sum sense so often portrayed in the more Eurosceptic national press in the UK and elsewhere. It is important in so far as the interaction between the EU and NATO remains critical, and because the debate has the ability to distract leaders and complicate policy actions.

Pivotal to some of the more difficult EU-NATO negotiations since Helsinki, as well as more generally in the post-Cold War evolution of European security, was the North Atlantic Council ministerial meeting in June 1996 in Berlin. This saw acceptance of the idea of establishing a European Security and

<sup>4</sup> Heisbourg, 'Europe's strategic ambitions', p. 7.

Defence Identity (ESDI)—as it was then termed—within NATO, and approval of an overall political–military framework for what were known as Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF).<sup>5</sup> The CJTF concept, launched in 1993, was designed to allow for NATO–WEU cooperation for Petersberg-type tasks. After the Helsinki decision to move to an ESDP, the April 1999 Washington summit agreed on the so-called ‘Berlin-plus’ compromise. This came in four parts: ‘assured EU access to NATO planning capabilities’; ‘the presumption of availability to the EU of pre-identified NATO capabilities and common assets’; ‘identification of a range of European command options’; and ‘the further adaptation of NATO’s defence planning system to incorporate more comprehensively the availability of forces for EU-led operations’.<sup>6</sup>

The ‘Berlin plus’ agreement was not, of course, the end of the matter and, amid lingering tensions and uncertainties over the more precise modalities, the EU attempted to resolve matters at its Feira European Council meeting in June 2000. The Council welcomed the offers of troops for the Rapid Reaction Force made by Turkey, Norway, Poland and the Czech Republic. It agreed to establish ‘inclusive’ structures that allowed for routine regular dialogue which would intensify during a pre-operational phase, developing into an ad hoc committee of contributors when operations began. The Turkish government, for one, was not impressed.<sup>7</sup> However, Feira also identified four areas for developing the relationship with NATO: security issues, capability goals, the modalities for EU access to NATO assets, and the definition of permanent consultation arrangements. Any consultation and cooperation, though, according to the Fifteen, had to recognize the different nature of the EU and NATO and ‘must take place in full respect for the autonomy of EU decision-making’.<sup>8</sup> The last was a principle on which the French were particularly keen. As Hubert Vedrine, the French Foreign Minister put it after a meeting with Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State:

I think that the mutual information and consultation mechanisms are being put in place wholly satisfactorily, but the tempo has to be that of the establishment of Defence Europe. The consultations can’t take place before the mechanisms exist or have been decided on by the Fifteen.

The Fifteen are totally open to everything to do with information and consultation, but that can’t mean a country which isn’t in the European Union taking part in the Fifteen’s decision-making processes.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See P. Cornish, *Partnership in crisis: the US, Europe and the fall and rise of NATO* (London: Pinter/RIIA, 1997), ch. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Washington Summit Communiqué, NAC-S(99)64, 24 April 1999, para. 10.

<sup>7</sup> The Turkish Defence Minister was reported as saying: ‘We are a member of NATO. In NATO decisions are adopted unanimously. The sentence incorporates everything.’ Quoted by W. Park in his Memorandum to the House of Lords, House of Lords Select Committee on the European Union, 15th Report, *The Common European Policy on Security and Defence*, Evidence HL Paper 101-I, 25 July 2000, p. 125.

<sup>8</sup> Appendix 2 of the Portuguese Presidency Conclusions, European Council, Santa Maria da Feira, 19–20 June 2000.

<sup>9</sup> 2 October 2000 at a Press Conference after meeting Madeleine Albright (together with other members of the EU Troika, i.e. Javier Solana and Chris Patten). (French Embassy, *Statements SAC/00/837*.)

The tendency to emphasize the autonomous nature of decision-making was sometimes wilfully stretched to suggest autonomy of defence, sometimes even independence. Tension preceded the Nice European Council of December 2000 when *The Times* reported that President Chirac had declared the European initiative 'independent' of NATO. Following a heated reaction in London, a French damage-limitation exercise only added fuel to the fire when it announced that 'European defence cannot be subordinated to NATO'.<sup>10</sup>

While diplomatic calm was restored among EU leaders at Nice—at least on issues relating to defence—the modalities and the very purpose of the 'partnership' between NATO and the EU remained exploratory. At less rarefied heights, NATO officials and representatives appeared determined to present a constructive interpretation of events and discussions, choosing to see the Nice summit as a 'useful starting point on how the EU and the alliance would work together'.<sup>11</sup> For some of these representatives, this was not particularly difficult. Most of the NATO/EU member states double-hatted many of the military and other officials engaged in the cooperation talks. France, perhaps inevitably, was the exception. Apart from creating some arcane diplomatic tensions over seating, such double-hatting makes a basic point: eleven EU member states are also members of the Atlantic Alliance. Policy coordination at national levels may not always work well, but it would be more than a simple issue of inefficiency if there were not coordination at some level between foreign ministries, defence ministries and the offices of heads of government. Institutional rivalry, perhaps jealousies, may continue to exist, both at national or EU–NATO levels, but a degree of rationality in terms of information-exchange has to be assumed. What has also helped to overcome any such rivalries was the fact that the former Secretary General of NATO, Javier Solana, had moved over to become both the EU's High Representative and Secretary General of the Council, and Secretary General of the WEU, and was intimately involved in the discussions. As the *European Voice* reported: Solana 'has acted as an invaluable bridgehead between the two organisations, allaying NATO's concerns about the EU's new role and ensuring that the Union will have enough military expertise to prevent its first operation ending in disaster'.<sup>12</sup> It has helped too that Lord Robertson, Solana's successor at NATO, had been British Defence Minister as well as being on the more pro-European end of the spectrum within the Labour Party.<sup>13</sup>

But while the problems of information exchange may well have been exaggerated, at least for those who are EU *and* NATO members with few

<sup>10</sup> 'French trigger NATO furor', *The Times*, 8 December 2000. The French Embassy statements, on the other hand, report that what the President had actually said in the press conference was that 'Defence Europe must, of course, be coordinated with the Alliance, but it must, as regards its development and implementation, be independent of SHAPE, coordinated but independent' (French Embassy, *Statements SAC/00/933*).

<sup>11</sup> NAC Final Communiqué (M-NAC-2(2000)124), 15 December 2000; 'So that's all agreed, then', *The Economist*, 16 December 2000; 'Turkey: not yet slotted in', *The Economist*, 23 December 2000.

<sup>12</sup> *European Voice*, 5 October 2000.

<sup>13</sup> With the two men providing an invaluable informal link through weekly breakfasts, *European Voice*, 27 April 2000.

problems experienced by non-NATO EU member states, there are still the uncertainties for the non-EU European members of NATO and for the United States and Canada. For the non-EU European members of NATO who are in the process of negotiating EU accession with a target date of 2004–6, it may appear as a somewhat temporary problem. However, it becomes highly complicated by the vagaries of the EU negotiation process and by the aspiration of most central and east European countries to become NATO members as well. Turkey, too, has remained determined that its unique position as a NATO member and a candidate not yet able to open negotiations with the EU on membership, should be recognized. But the position of the United States is key, both because of its intrinsic importance and because of its potential impact on opinion within member states.

If there was still a sense of muddling through in Europe, there remained uncertainty in Washington. The outgoing Clinton administration had spent much of the year arguing against the notorious ‘three Ds’—*decoupling* Europe from the US, *discrimination* against NATO allies which are not EU members, and *duplication* of efforts and capabilities.<sup>14</sup> In March 2000, Clinton himself had addressed the NATO–EU relationship, calling for NATO to be guaranteed the ‘right of first refusal’ when missions were being considered.<sup>15</sup> But by the autumn, Washington seemed unclear as to the nature of the European effort and whether it would be beneficial to NATO. During a speech to NATO defence ministers in October 2000, US Secretary of Defense William Cohen declared that the US agreed with the initiative ‘not grudgingly, not with resignation, but with wholehearted conviction’, and even acknowledged it as ‘a natural, even inevitable part of the process of European integration’.<sup>16</sup> Two months later, Cohen took a far more cautious line, insisting that the European initiative would have to complement and be of benefit to NATO, which would otherwise ‘become a relic’.<sup>17</sup> It was this equivocation which had led George Robertson to suggest earlier in the year that the US suffered ‘from a sort of schizophrenia’ where European defence was concerned.<sup>18</sup> That seemed to continue as the new Bush administration began to settle into Washington from late January; it was plain that a transatlantic consensus had not yet been achieved. In the early months of the new year, the Bush administration’s view of the ESDP ranged from support through uncertainty and indifference, to outright hostility.<sup>19</sup> Support, perhaps unsurprisingly, tended to follow visits by various,

<sup>14</sup> See F. Heisbourg, ‘European defence takes a leap forward’, *NATO Review* 48, spring/summer 2000.

<sup>15</sup> William Drozdiak, ‘US tepid on European defense plan’, *Washington Post Foreign Service* (washingtonpost.com), 7 March 2000.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Tory tirade falls flat as US backs European force’, *The Times*, 11 October 2000.

<sup>17</sup> ‘The Nice ambush’ (leader), *The Times*, 7 December 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Drozdiak, ‘US tepid on European defense plan’.

<sup>19</sup> For example, ‘Euro army threat to Nato, says Kissinger’, *Daily Telegraph*, 26 January 2001; ‘Powell backs plans for EU defence force’, *Guardian*, 7 February 2001; ‘US move gives boost to plans for rapid reaction force’, *Financial Times*, 7 February 2001; ‘Blair wants to forge “special” bond with Bush’, *Independent on Sunday*, 18 February 2001; ‘US launches attack on Euro army’, *Sunday Telegraph*, 18 March 2001; ‘Doubts on both sides of the Atlantic’, *The Economist*, 31 March 2001.

anxious European leaders, including Tony Blair and Gerhardt Schröder during February 2001.<sup>20</sup>

But the ambiguities and uncertainties have inevitably had knock-on effects in Europe, distracting leaders, and creating inter- and intrastate tensions so that the political commitment of Europe's leaders has sometimes seemed to be on the point of wavering. It had after all seemed like a political revolution that 'all countries of the Union—whether "large" or "small", from north or south, NATO members or not...having an interventionist tradition or not—now subscribe to the political and operational aims set out at Cologne and Helsinki'.<sup>21</sup> Maintaining that 'revolution' in the face of scepticism and hostility was never going to be easy. The 'Capabilities Commitment Conference', for example, took place on 20 November 2000 in Brussels. EU governments made offers amounting to 100,000 troops, 400 aircraft and 100 ships. This notional pool of manpower and equipment suggested that the 'headline goal' could indeed be achieved on time. It was noted, however, that the force would need to be improved before 'the most demanding Petersberg tasks are to be fully satisfied', that certain operational capabilities (such as medical and other combat services) were still lacking, and that crucial strategic capabilities needed improvement, including strategic air and sea transport, command and control systems and particularly strategic intelligence, where 'serious efforts' would be needed. This would not, the conference declaration went on reassuringly, lead to any 'unnecessary duplication' (of functions and assets already provided by NATO). The NATO/EU Working Group on Capabilities would ensure that the organizations would develop their capabilities in a coherent and complementary fashion, and reiterated that the initiative did not 'involve the establishment of a European army'.<sup>22</sup> Equally important, as George Robertson noted with approval (and a measure of optimism) in early December 2000, 'the trend toward lower defence budgets, evident for most of the nineties, has been reversed'.<sup>23</sup>

Political rhetoric and re-packaging armed forces are important, but probably do not constitute a revolution. There are other developments more significant for the nascent ESDP and the development of a strategic culture. First there is the determination to underpin political commitment by an institutionalization of the military options within the CFSP–ESDP. Second, there is the development of external responsibilities in terms of conflict prevention and management that has been quietly proceeding within the EU. If the first development smacks of a neo-functionalism, the second, more pragmatically,

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, the joint statement by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair, 23 February 2001 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/02/text/20010226>).

<sup>21</sup> Gnesetto, *Newsletter*.

<sup>22</sup> 'EU military capabilities commitment declaration' (<http://ue.eu.int/pesc/en/CCC.htm>), 20 November 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Secretary General's Opening Statement, NAC Defence Ministers, 5 December 2000 ([www.nato.int/docu/speech/2000/s001205a.htm](http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2000/s001205a.htm)). See also 'Europe's defence and the US', *Financial Times*, 28 December 2000.



indicates how the military option is becoming a part of the EU's range of policy instruments. It suggests that 'Civilian Power' Europe has already begun to evolve a strategic culture.

### Institutions and socialization

Having agreed at the Cologne European Council in June 1999 to absorb the WEU by the end of 2000,<sup>24</sup> the EU also agreed at Helsinki to establish a number of committees and staff organizations (military and civil) in Brussels to provide the necessary infrastructure for the ESDP. At ambassadorial level, the Political Committee responsible for the CFSP was to become the Political and Security Committee (PSC), with competence in all aspects of the EU's foreign, security and defence policies. An EUMC Military Committee (EUMC), made up of the military representatives of the national Chiefs of Defence, would provide advice to the PSC and direction to the European Union Military Staff (EUMS). The EUMS would carry out 'early warning, situation assessment and strategic planning for Petersberg tasks including identification of European national and multinational forces'.<sup>25</sup> Importantly, these new arrangements would be voluntary for EU members and would be very firmly within the orbit of the European Council. The British, among others, were adamant that while the European Commission could be associated with EU action, neither the Commission nor the other EC institutions were to be involved in military operations. The UK's Political Director declared:

The British Government is not embarking on this particular initiative to bring common foreign and security policy, still less anything pertaining to defence implications, under the control or purview of either the Commission or the European Parliament. What is more, I do not believe that the other member states want that either. There is at the margin a limited role for both institutions in terms of the powers they currently enjoy and in terms of where the interface is between humanitarian intervention, developing aid, and so on and what might be done in a security dimension. That is it. We are not going to cross that threshold, it is very much one of our red lines.<sup>26</sup>

It would seem that at least the participation of the Commission—'at the margin'—in EU–NATO meetings has become normal and, given its responsibilities in conflict prevention, humanitarian assistance and peace consolidation, a necessary occurrence.

<sup>24</sup> A number of options were considered, such as placing WEU in a newly created Fourth Pillar, or placing WEU under the aegis of the EU Council, coordinated with CFSP. The outcome was the decision to *insert* WEU into EU (not *integrate*) by joining it with CFSP. Hence Javier Solana's appointments: High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy; Secretary General of the EU Council; and Secretary General of the WEU (in its last hours). See L. M. de Puig, *The myth of Europa: a paradigm for European defence* (Paris: WEU Assembly, 2000), pp. 17–18.

<sup>25</sup> European Military Staff Organization (<http://ue.eu.int/pesc/military/en/EUMS.htm>).

<sup>26</sup> Emyr Jones Parry to the House of Lords Select Committee op. cit. p. 3.



Nonetheless, the new structures are very clearly within the Council framework. By 1 March 2000 the EU had established various 'interim' political and military bodies to serve until the PSC, EUMC and EUMS were fully established within the EU's Council of Ministers. By October 2000, some 80 uniformed staff were estimated to be regularly wandering the Council building. The aim, agreed at Nice, is to have a military staff of about 140 with its own headquarters on Avenue de Cortenbergh, established as part of the Council Secretariat attached to the office of the High Representative. The primary functions of the EUMS as laid out in the Nice Presidency Conclusions are 'to perform early warning, situation assessment and strategic planning for Petersberg tasks including identification of European national and multinational forces'.<sup>27</sup> This places the High Representative in a particularly influential position, in so far as he also has the Policy Unit of seconded national officials which was established under the Amsterdam Treaty and which provides a similar service in general foreign policy terms. The opportunities for a more integrated foreign and security policy have become significantly enhanced.

Providing the opportunity to create a more integrated consideration of policy options does not by itself create more coherent and consistent policy outputs. It is difficult to ascertain precisely the political effect of all this activity, all these new posts and committees. But it would be safe to expect at least *some* effect on the institutions and culture of the EU, and on external perceptions of the EU. In the Monnet vein, Andréani has suggested that institutions have always been at the core of the European project: 'the process of European integration is a joint exercise in norm-setting and institution-building. Institutions are supposed to provide for fairness and predictability, and inspire EU countries with a sense of purpose and belonging'. By this view, the new crop of defence institutions will 'inevitably' have just such an effect, 'all the more so because the EU is currently devoid of any defence culture: only in a specialised institutional setting will such a culture hopefully be imported into it, and solidify'.<sup>28</sup> Viewed from the outside, the EU's gradual accumulation of confidence and expertise in a new and largely unfamiliar area of policy will steadily enhance its credibility as a potential military actor. Formal and informal relationships are embedded between the various EU bodies and national governments, including with Washington, with NATO's European headquarters at Mons, and with NATO itself.

Institutionalization matters in that, *inter alia*, it establishes strong socializing pressures on the part of those participating, both within the formal structures and within the more informal processes and procedures that surround them. Such pressures can, of course, be resisted. Yet even from the unscientific sample of those interviewed for this article there seem to be indications of a decidedly positive approach among the military, as well as others, to the inclusion of the 'military dimension' within the EU. They may not (yet) have acquired the

<sup>27</sup> As quoted in Council Decision, 22 January 2001 (2001/80/CFSP) OJ L27/7.

<sup>28</sup> G. Andréani, 'Why institutions matter', *Survival* 42: 2, summer 2000, p. 83.

'habit' of seeking agreement that has often characterized much of the EU's work<sup>29</sup> but there is at least a 'can try' approach if not a 'can do' one. This is not without importance in so far as many of the military personnel come from a NATO background. Much in the past has been made of NATO efficiency—often to point up the inefficiencies of the EC/EU. Whether or not that was justified is another matter—attempting to reach unanimity within NATO can be as protracted and difficult as reaching it within the EU. But NATO's 'defence culture' has been strong. The EU now has to inspire a shift towards a different culture, not one based on defence because that remains the fundamental rationale of NATO, but on a strategic ability to make a difference in crises and conflicts. The problems of assessing such a shift are legion, not least that the ultimate test is the first serious crisis. Nonetheless, there are developments that suggest that such a shift is already under way.

Institutionalization in so far as it adds to capabilities, also matters because it raises expectations. Hill is right to have pointed out that the EU's subsequent failure—whether in the Balkans or elsewhere—creates disappointment and disillusionment, which can then reduce expectations (both within and without the Union) that anything could be achieved.<sup>30</sup> But just as one can point to perennial failures on the part of the EU, so one has to recognize that disillusionment has led to a determination to reform. Such reforms may be incremental and not in themselves likely to have put the EU in a position to have succeeded rather than failed (common strategies under Amsterdam may be an advance on joint actions, just as joint actions under Maastricht were an advance on the mere declaratory politics of the Single European Act, and yet they offer opportunities rather than commitment), but they indicate a consensus to adapt.

To what then is the EU adapting? In broad-brush terms, it is adapting to a new security agenda in Europe. That agenda has become more diverse since the end of the Cold War, with the elements of the agenda overlapping considerably. The military perspective no longer offers a sufficient or exclusive understanding of European security; environmental, economic and human security must all now be taken into account. It follows that any attempt to compartmentalize the security agenda and to allocate certain tasks to certain organizations must be questionable. As Deighton observes of the EU breaking away from its 'civilian culture': 'in the context of the post-Cold War world, a blend of economic, political and military instruments is surely indispensable for an effective security policy'.<sup>31</sup> Equally, the claim that strategic culture is a prerogative of military alliances looks to be less of a general argument than a mere description of NATO's role under the peculiar conditions which obtained in Western Europe

<sup>29</sup> H. Wallace, 'Making multilateral negotiations work', in W. Wallace, ed., *The dynamics of European integration* (London: RIIA/Pinter 1991).

<sup>30</sup> C. Hill, 'The capability-expectations gap, or conceptualizing Europe's international role', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 31: 3, 1993; and 'Closing the capabilities-expectations gap?', in J. Peterson and Helene Sjursen, *A common foreign policy for Europe?* (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> Deighton, 'The military security pool', p. 25.

during the Cold War. As far as the EU is concerned, since its absorption of the WEU the EU now contains within its walls a robust collective defence commitment, albeit one which does not concern all EU members.<sup>32</sup> It follows from this that the EU can no longer be considered *stricto sensu* a civil power. Equally, the fact that EU operations will be voluntary—‘coalitions of the willing’—makes clear that whatever is developing within the EU cannot be *stricto sensu* a military alliance in the NATO mould of commitment to collective action in a common defence. The efforts of the countries of central and eastern Europe to join both the EU and NATO illustrate this particularly clearly. Interestingly, the EU may well be developing into a hybrid version of a Deutschian security community.<sup>33</sup> But more important here is to ask whether an inward-looking security *community* (whether pluralistic, amalgamated or hybrid) could or should also assume some of the qualities of an externally-focused security *alliance*, in the absence of an unambiguous, common external military threat. In other words, as the members of the community move from their founding commitment not to consider or prepare for military activity against each other, to preparing for precisely such activity, albeit at less than full-scale and with third parties in mind, does this necessarily ‘mark the end of the chapter of the EU as a “Civilian Power”’,<sup>34</sup> or does that idea have sufficient elasticity to develop the strategic culture necessary to bring forth the Helsinki commitments?

The EU’s institutional and bureaucratic structure is adapting; the point is coming closer at which it could be said that the EU knows how to manage limited armed force and has the organizational capacity to do so. Here we see the beginnings of a ‘strategic momentum’ towards EU credibility in the military sphere. But ‘how’ to manage armed force can only be the first step. What is also required is a clear sense of when and why force would be used—something analogous to the politico-military strategic concept that lies at the heart of national defence planning and NATO. At present, the EU’s best effort in this regard would be a compilation drawn from several treaty and documentary sources, centred on the 1992 Petersberg tasks.<sup>35</sup> Yet the difficulty with centring anything on the Petersberg tasks is that they are very broad in scope. Much of the discussion of the ESDP has revolved around the question of whether it would be prudent for the EU to focus on the low end of the Petersberg scale (rescue missions and peacekeeping), leaving the high end (peace enforcing) to

<sup>32</sup> Andréani et al., p. 50.

<sup>33</sup> Karl Deutsch distinguished between a ‘pluralistic security community’, where the governments and societies of two or more states discount the possibility of mutual warfare, and each ceases to make financial and military preparations for aggression or defence in respect of the others but their institutions and authority are not integrated, or an ‘amalgamated security community’ where a merger of some sort takes place. K. Deutsch et al., *Political community and the North Atlantic area* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 6. The EU increasingly offers elements of both.

<sup>34</sup> G. Edwards, ‘Europe’s security and defence policy and enlargement: the ghost at the feast?’, *EUI working papers* (Florence: RSC no. 2000/69, December 2000), p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> See M. Ortega, *Military intervention and the European Union* (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, Chaillot Paper no. 45, March 2001), ch. 6.

NATO for the time being (or for ever). In the US and at NATO there remains concern that a botched high-end Petersberg operation—with the EU having over-reached itself—could result in NATO being drawn precipitously into a conflict, although this seems to imply a lack of consultation and cooperation in the early stages of a conflict, more analogous to past ‘island’ mentalities than to present realities. For much of the 1990s there was concern in NATO—and some national capitals—that by adopting the Petersberg tasks, the WEU/EU had assumed ownership over the whole range of military operations likely to concern Western allies for the foreseeable future. Scale is of course important, as is the constant threat that a modest, exclusively EU entry into a crisis may escalate into something very much more serious that rapidly requires NATO support. But it remains necessary to avoid falling into what can become a wholly artificial zero-sum dispute between Atlanticism and Europeanism. The EU’s efforts are bound to be limited in scope, whatever the aspirations of some in Europe, even if only because of the constant pressures on defence budgets. There may have been some halt in their decline in part because of the demands of the ESDP; it is unlikely that they will be radically increased. While autonomy of decision-making and some duplication of command and control structures may mean a degree of separateness, they do not in themselves mean the end of cooperation. For their different reasons, all parties to the European defence and security debate agree that the EU should acquire some military capability. Few if any of them have sought to define ‘military capability’ solely or mainly in terms of the high end of the Petersberg range. A constructive approach, which recognizes military realities but avoids confrontation with fundamental perceptions, would be to find areas of EU activity where the possible or actual deployment of limited military forces could extend and complement EU policies and practices. These deployments will undoubtedly be at the low end of the Petersberg scale, with the possibility of the EU augmenting its existing functions with a low-level military dimension where appropriate. Since, and in spite of the misleading wording of the Petersberg tasks, all military forces are by definition ‘combat capable’ (or should be), the EU will have begun to acquire a strategic culture at a viable level and in a convincing way.

One of many complications is the EU’s enlargement both to central and eastern Europe and to the Mediterranean. This is less because it creates a number of possible flashpoints within the enlarging Union than because, as the EU enlarges, it will increasingly make contact with ‘zones of intractable conflict’, defined as ‘underdeveloped, historically violent, and filled with seemingly insurmountable religious and identity conflict’.<sup>36</sup> In places such as parts of former Yugoslavia, North Africa and the Middle East, the gulf between the EU’s expectations and *modus operandi* on one hand, and the Hobbesian realities of life on the other, could become uncomfortably apparent, and the

<sup>36</sup> O. P. Richmond, ‘Emerging concepts of security in the European order: implications for “zones of conflict” at the fringes of the EU’, *European Security* 19: 1, spring 2000, p. 42.

claim that the EU security community is a paradigm of stability-making rather than an introspective club for comfortably well-off developed countries could appear a little tenuous.

How, then, is the EU confidently to bring its security community into close contact with zones of insecurity, while maintaining its broad approach to stability and not seeking to remodel itself as a 'peace enforcer'? The answer lies in accepting that in or near such insecure areas, certain, otherwise unremarkable EU activities attach a special category of risk—either of an armed attack by hostile parties, or of demonstrating to critics the EU's triumph of ambition over capability. In the first instance, many such risks could be met and neutralized by the ability to deploy low-level military force. Among such activities might be the following: the security of EU representatives in kidnap-prone areas; the security of EU construction projects; the transport and storage of aid supplies in areas open to predation by organized criminals; the provision of military cordons (land or sea) to assist EU sanctions and embargoes; de-mining operations and disposal of unexploded ordinance in areas where the EU is active; collection, storage and destruction of surplus small arms and light weapons where EU projects might be threatened; and, at the top of the scale, the evacuation of EU representatives in a hostile environment. These, and many other low-level scenarios, have all been considered elsewhere, in the EU, the WEU, NATO and national defence ministries. They are significant for the purposes of this argument for two reasons. First, they make it possible to narrow the potentially global coverage of the Petersberg tasks—a source of some controversy—to the borders and activities of the EU. Second, they make possible a constructive, rather than confrontational, discussion of the use of military force by the EU. Rather than search for new or adapted roles for the EU as a military organization, this approach merely asks whether the EU's existing functions and competencies might be protected or improved by the addition of limited military means.

This argument can be broadened into consideration of the EU's role in international development. The EU has decades of experience as a major international development aid donor. Disbursing some €9 billion in external aid annually<sup>37</sup>—roughly half the global total—the EU operates around the world in all developing countries.<sup>38</sup> The EU is thus beginning to embody two areas of public policy, which have long been uneasy bedfellows. For advocates of development aid, military culture, thinking and practices have all symbolized failure in the quest for lasting peace and stability. When equipment procurement budgets in developed countries dwarfed government spending on development, and when military expenditure in developing countries crowded out or diverted aid projects, the military approach was said at best to have undermined the

<sup>37</sup> P. Nielson, 'Building credibility: the role of European development policy in preventing conflicts', speech to Foreign Policy Centre, London, 8 February 2001 (<http://europa.eu.int>).

<sup>38</sup> The European Community's Development Policy—Statement by the Council and the Commission ([http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/lex/en/council20001110\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/lex/en/council20001110_en.htm)).

development ethos and at worst directly to have contributed to breakdown and conflict. The standard military security response would be that development aid idealists ought to realize that basic physical security was the precondition for (not consequence of) successful development aid, and that military perspectives on security were therefore central to any debate. Recently, a level of agreement has been reached in academic and policy circles which accepts that certain military practices and institutions (and their reform) may be essential to successful development aid, and which admits a development perspective into discussion of civil–military relations.<sup>39</sup> What has become known as ‘security sector reform’ and development aid are increasingly recognized as being complementary activities: ‘slashing the size of the army and of military expenditure will not automatically result in sustained increases in social spending unless profound administrative weaknesses within states are also addressed. Moreover, restoring security will often need more professional security forces, which may require, in some cases, that existing levels of security-sector spending are maintained or even increased’.<sup>40</sup>

Britain’s Department for International Development has usefully articulated this need for a more comprehensive approach. In a speech in March 1999, Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development, observed that:

Development organisations have in the past tended to shy away from the issue of security sector reform. However, we are much clearer now that conflict prevention and resolution are key to successful development... We are therefore entering this new area of security sector reform in order to strengthen our contribution to development... A security sector that is well tasked and managed serves the interests of all, by providing security and stability—against both external and internal security threats. And obviously security is an essential prerequisite for sustainable development and poverty reduction.<sup>41</sup>

In broad terms, the EU could be said to have anticipated the contours of this debate by a number of years, even to the extent of arguing that military considerations should enter the debate not only in the context of reforming the security sector of the aid recipient, but also with regard to the donor’s use of limited military force, when necessary, to establish or re-establish basic conditions of security and stability in areas of conflict on which development aid can then build. The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 begins with a series of provisions common to the existing Community and the new forms of EU cooperation (including the Common Foreign and Security Policy). Among these provisions can be found the insistence that the EU ‘shall in particular ensure the

<sup>39</sup> See C. Smith, ‘Security-sector reform: development breakthrough or institutional engineering?’, *Conflict, Security and Development* 1: 1, 2001.

<sup>40</sup> D. Hendrickson, ‘A review of security-sector reform’, in *The conflict, security and development group working papers* (London: Centre for Defence Studies, King’s College London, 1999, Working Paper no. 1), p. 18.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Security sector reform and the elimination of poverty’. Speech by the Rt Hon. Clare Short MP, Secretary of State for International Development, at the Centre for Defence Studies, King’s College London, Tuesday 9 March 1999 ([http://www.dfid.gov.uk/public/search/search\\_frame.html](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/public/search/search_frame.html)).

consistency of its external relations, security, economic and development policies. The Council and the Commission shall be responsible for ensuring such consistency'.<sup>42</sup>

The EU thus came into existence with an appeal to integrate not only the relevant policy areas (security and development), but also the institutions involved (Council and Commission). The argument for greater 'coherence' between development policy and CFSP continued throughout the 1990s, and for many critics still has a long way to go.<sup>43</sup> But it is nevertheless significant that the security/development linkage has received periodic homage in EU policy statements. The December 1995 Council conclusions on preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and peacekeeping in Africa provide one example. The conclusions describe 'preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and the strengthening of international security' as 'priority aims of the CFSP', and then call for 'co-ordinating endeavours in this field with the development-aid policy of the Community and its Member States'.<sup>44</sup> In response, the European Commission called for 'a comprehensive and pro-active approach along with the guidelines and principles of the Council conclusions...The approach should be comprehensive in so far as the European Union, within its competencies, should address the entire cycle of conflict and peace'. In pursuit of what it termed 'structural stability'—'a situation involving sustainable economic development, democracy and respect for human rights, viable political structures, and healthy social and environmental conditions, with the capacity to manage change without the resort to violent conflict'—the Commission envisaged the use of armed forces in preventive deployments, preventive military intervention, peace enforcement and post-conflict activities.<sup>45</sup> At that stage in the evolution of thinking about European security institutions, the organization to have carried out the tasks foreseen by the Commission would of course have been the WEU, now absorbed into the EU. By the end of the decade, the security/development linkage had become the orthodoxy in EU policy statements. In December 1998 the Council turned its attention to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. They were described as 'a problem of great concern to the international community [that] poses a threat to peace and security and reduces the prospects of sustainable development in many regions of the world'. The Council's joint action on small arms referred to contributions that the EU could

<sup>42</sup> Treaty on European Union, Title I, Common Provisions, Article C (<http://europa.eu.int/en/record/mt/title1.html>).

<sup>43</sup> J. Pinheiro, 'Can EU development assistance contribute to peace and security?', speech to CESD/ISIS conference, Brussels, 24 September 1998 (European Commission Development website, <http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/speeches/en/980924.htm>).

<sup>44</sup> 'Preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and peacekeeping in Africa'. Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the member states on the role of development cooperation in strengthening peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution, 4 December 1995 (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/prevention/conclusions-1995.htm>).

<sup>45</sup> 'The EU and the issue of conflicts in Africa: peace-building, conflict prevention and beyond', communication from the Commission to the Council (SEC(96) 332, 6 March 1996 (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/prevention/communication-1996.htm>)).



make, including ‘weapons collection, security sector reform and reintegration programmes’ and noted that Council and Commission would both be responsible for ensuring ‘the consistency of the Union’s activities in the field of small arms, in particular with regard to its development policies’.<sup>46</sup> Most recently, while arguing for development as the most appropriate path to conflict prevention, Poul Nielson, European Commissioner for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, nevertheless accepted that ‘In some cases, military solutions may be necessary, for instance to stop the Lord’s army in Sudan or getting the peace-process in Angola on track in spite of Savimbi. Other conflicts only end when the parties are dead or dead-tired of fighting. So some conflicts cannot be expected to be halted through infusion of external resources. They cannot be stopped by fine-tuning development cooperation through marginal adjustment of this or that aid instrument.’<sup>47</sup>

## Conclusion

The Helsinki process holds out the possibility of a gradual build-up of EU competences and capabilities that extends its policy instruments to include the use of force. Although widely welcomed, there have been uncertainties and ambiguities that, even if critical to garnering support among all fifteen member states, have not yet put to rest the possibility of reverting to the cycle of conflicting declarations followed by policy paralysis which characterized the debate throughout the 1990s. If the Helsinki initiative is to be realized, a conceptual framework for European security which is relatively simple and persuasive will be needed, and which allows all competing agendas to be in play, rivalling none and foreclosing none. In a sense, what is required is a device that allows different sides in the debate willingly to suspend their disbelief as to the other’s intentions. The emphasis placed here on strategic culture is an attempt to find just such a device. This is not to present strategic culture as a new contribution to the European security debate; the concept is widely known and understood, and much of the literature on European security already refers to strategic culture, ‘defence culture’ or ‘military culture’. Nor is it supposed that this approach will answer all questions and satisfy all concerns about the ESDP. Instead, this article reflects concern that the debate may yet repeat the pattern of the 1990s, whereby a virtual debate took place between contending long-term visions which were as insubstantial as they were averse to compromise, with the result that each vision cancelled out the other and stalled practical progress. In order to avoid this trap, the concept of strategic culture should be seen not as the product or spin-off of the ESDP, but as the means to

<sup>46</sup> Joint action on the European Union’s contribution to combating the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons, adopted by council on 17 December 1998, *Official Journal of the European Communities* (1999/34/CFSP, 15 January 1999).

<sup>47</sup> P. Nielson, ‘Building credibility: the role of European development policy in preventing conflicts’, speech to Foreign Policy Centre, London, 8 February 2001 ([http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p\\_action.gettxt=gt&doc=SPEECH/01/58|0|RAPID&lg=EN](http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=SPEECH/01/58|0|RAPID&lg=EN)).

start the process that will generate the political momentum to acquire capabilities. As the EU comes into contact with 'zones of intractable conflict', and given the policy connection between development and security, an EU strategic culture will become increasingly valid. Limited military forces could reasonably be used by the EU to pursue goals which rightly fall within its scope of action and which complement other areas of Union activity. By these means, the EU will develop a unique strategic culture which begins to serve its needs and aspirations (as expressed in the Helsinki initiative) and which neither forecloses later evolution of the European capability (even, if desired and affordable, into the EU's own defence alliance), nor—importantly—rivals NATO in scope or style.