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# Implementing the European Security and Defense Policy: A Practical Vision for Europe

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*This bulletin is adapted from a speech given by General Klaus Naumann earlier this year at a joint Atlantic Council/National Defense University conference titled “Implementing the ESDP: The Transatlantic Dimension.”*

*General Naumann argues that while the goals agreed to at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 will strengthen both the EU and NATO, these goals will not be realized without a vision that focuses on the development of specific capabilities. Simply pooling European countries’ current capabilities will not address the major gaps that have left European forces unable to act alone. Putting forth what he calls the “Force Planning Triad”, General Naumann suggests detailed steps, including the development of technologically advanced command and control structures, intelligence capabilities and the support infrastructure necessary to field a credible expeditionary force that will allow the EU to achieve a foreign and security policy that strengthens Europe and the Alliance.*

Based on the evolution seen in Europe from the Maastricht summit of 1991 to the Helsinki summit of 1999, it seems the European Union is about to add to its integrated policies on economic, financial, and other issues a new, this time intergovernmental, dimension which will enable the EU over time to act in the field of foreign and security policy in a more coordinated way than today.

I assume that the overall objective of this policy will be to create a Europe “whole and free,” and to achieve security and external stability for Europe by conflict prevention – through a strategy which intends to keep risks at a distance from Europe. I further assume that this Europe will consist of the EU members, plus the countries which are nominated as candidates at this time, and also Norway and Iceland, should they one day wish to be members. This leaves two questions open for the moment: First, what will happen to the states which emerged or will emerge from the former Yugoslavia and, second, will there be a chance for Ukraine to join the Union in the long term? I will not attempt to answer these questions here.

Such a Europe is a global power in its economic dimension. As such, it can no longer afford to think regionally in this realm; and hence the question remains whether it can afford to think regionally in foreign and security policy. There is no need for an answer at this point since the Petersberg Declaration<sup>1</sup> fortunately avoids addressing the issue of geographical constraints. There are no geographical limitations as far as Petersberg missions are concerned.

Nation states will retain their identities in this enlarged EU, but the roles and responsibilities of the nation state are likely to change. We will probably see ever-closer economic and financial cooperation and industrial mergers taking place in a globally connected world, which may reduce the influence of national governments and parliaments. We might eventually see a growing transfer of national responsibilities in the field of foreign and security policy to international organizations such as NATO and the EU. This will one day pose the question whether the EU will be able to continue with the present dichotomy of pursuing integrationist approaches in economics and intergovernmental approaches in foreign and security policy.

One day, and I suspect rather sooner than later, we might see a common EU foreign and security policy, since transnational risks will require transnational answers – but there is no need to argue over that now. There is, however, a clear necessity to avoid one illusion: to believe that the EU should follow the model of the Euro and create European Armed Forces at this point, which will then lead automatically to a Common Foreign and Security Policy. Leaving aside that Helsinki clearly ruled out a European Army, it is also fair to say that such an approach would really put the cart before the horse. Moreover, nations at this time are not willing to transfer sovereignty to such a degree. This does not contradict working on the long term vision, since it is the vision which eventually promotes change, but it would be wrong to strive for solutions which are simply not feasible at this point.

On one issue, however, no one should leave any doubt: *the defense of Europe as such is and will remain the sole responsibility of NATO*. Had this been stressed unambiguously and had the expression ESDP avoided mentioning defense, some of the transatlantic war of words over this issue might have been avoided. I am saying this because Europe continues to need the U.S. commitment to Europe. In particular, Europe needs the U.S. commitment to ensure cooperation with an unstable and increasingly unpredictable Russia. Nobody can foretell the future of that great country but there can be no doubt that we will have to cooperate with Russia as we seek security with her and not against her.

On the other hand no one should have any doubt that the United States does need Europe as well to avoid overstretched commitments and to protect its vital sea lanes of communication (SLOCs). What we Europeans have to take into account is that no partnership comes for free. It is always based on the realistic assumption that influence is, at the end of the day, commensurate to contributions. Hence, in a nutshell, one reason why Europe should really do more on defense is to remain the indispensable partner for the indispensable nation: the United States.

To enhance Europe's ability to contribute and to take on a bigger share of the common burden was undoubtedly behind the EU summits of Cologne and Helsinki. The European NATO members learned during the Kosovo crisis – in a truly embarrassing way – that today's Europe is incapable of acting on its own in a conflict as limited as Kosovo. Europe could not contend with a dictator equipped with, at best, a third class armed force. The EU drew the right conclusions – and the progress achieved so far is truly remarkable – but much remains to be done to achieve even an initial ability to act.

So far none of the steps taken have done anything to close the two gaps which exist in the military forces of most, if not all, EU nations today:

The tremendous U.S. technological advantage in the area of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, satellites and reconnaissance (C4ISR). Because the United States continues to invest heavily in this area, I would measure this advantage in years.

The lack of modernization of most of the European forces. This is less a technology issue than a lack of political will to invest in defense generally.

Today the European NATO nations spend some 60 percent of what the United States spends for defense, grant themselves the luxury of having about 50 percent more personnel in their armed forces, spend only one third of what the United States invests in a well coordinated R&D program without making any attempt to coordinate their national R&D programs, and are surprised to produce not more than 10 to 15 percent of the U.S. power projection capability.

The Helsinki decisions are therefore a highly necessary, and indeed overdue, step to correct these deficiencies. But their implementation will require more than the creation of new institutions and a few more committees whose usefulness remains doubtful. The decision requires capabilities and so far little has been done to create them in time, i.e., at least some initial capabilities by 2003.

Implementing Helsinki will also require additional investment, at least initially, since the forces needed to achieve the projection capability desired do not exist to a large degree. The modernization of national contingents, and in many cases the reorganization necessary to transform them into expeditionary forces instead of home defense forces, will also require up-front investment.

This will not be possible without convincing arguments since, in all our societies, there is an urgent demand for domestic reform to prepare Europe for the benefits as well as the downsides of globalization. I do not see this as an insurmountable obstacle, but it requires politicians to share unpleasant news with their electorates, spelling out why Europe has to do more: we cannot take U.S. participation for granted in every crisis, Europe cannot remain an unbalanced power, and we need to keep crises at a distance from our territory.

Europe can no longer take it for granted that the United States will intervene again in situations like Bosnia or Kosovo. The reasons for this are manifold. First, the United States has commitments in many regions of the world, particularly in Asia, which seems to be becoming an increasingly unstable place. Americans at this time have Taiwan, Korea and the Indian-Pakistani powder keg at their fingertips, and they have to make sure that relations with China develop into a benign partnership, which is, by the way, in the interest of Europe as well. Second, they still have to carry the bulk of the burden of ensuring that the relationship with Russia develops into a stable but benign partnership. And, third, they face growing difficulties in persuading the inward-looking Congress to accept participation in military operations where no vital U.S. interests are at stake.

Europe has to overcome its present deficiency of being an unbalanced power. Europe is an economic superpower, but it still lacks the ability to speak with one voice, let alone act in areas other than the economic one. Unbalanced players are never seen as the ultimate guarantors of security and stability. Europe therefore has to continue the process, which began in Helsinki and become a player capable of acting beyond the boundaries of the EU in order to guarantee security in and for Europe.

The citizens in Europe need to understand that the EU is an island of stability surrounded by a sea of instability, with some storms moving towards the island. Although war on the territories of NATO countries appears to be rather unlikely, conflicts and crises can by no means be ruled out. They will be all the more

likely if Europe fails to exploit the unique advantage it enjoys these days: the possibility of keeping conflicts at a distance.

What are, in broad categories, the risks we will be confronted with in the years ahead?

Residual and transitional risks. The prime example for this category is the instability in Russia.

Regional instabilities such as the in the Balkans.

Risks at Europe's periphery. Religious fundamentalism, a disastrous economic situation, population growth, competition for water, terrorism and proliferation are the symptoms visible to everybody.

New risks typical of postmodern societies may produce non-state actors using military means.

What do these factors mean for European security? There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that Europe continues to need NATO to cope with all issues concerning the defense of Europe. If this is made unambiguously clear to our American allies, most of their concerns about Europe and the United States drifting apart could be put to rest. Where cooperation with Russia is desirable, in a Western-led effort, NATO will remain the primary choice for the time being. Operations which could entail the risk of escalation and require American participation should be left to NATO.

Consequently, the "autonomous" decision mentioned in the Helsinki document would have to deal with contingencies smaller in scale than those covered by these three points. We should underline what European leaders have said again and again: Helsinki aims at strengthening European capabilities in a way which will reduce the dependency on American involvement in smaller contingencies, thus reducing the burden for the Americans and simultaneously enhancing their strategic flexibility. Consequently, the European Headline Goal decided upon at Helsinki will strengthen NATO. But it means as well that Europe will need a European Expeditionary Force. Such a capability, however, does not exist in Europe and no force generation process or donors conference could create it since the forces needed to establish such a force do not exist in Europe today.

It is realism and pragmatism which govern this approach – pragmatism which is based on a sober recognition of where Europe stands today and what Europe can realistically achieve within the next decade or so. To underpin this sobering statement, it might be helpful to translate into categories of military planning what the Helsinki Headline Goal really meant if its objective was to create a European Expeditionary Force that is more than symbolic.

The Helsinki decision to be able to deploy and sustain for at least one year 50,000 to 60,000 soldiers means that one must plan for a maximum of a 12 to 15 brigade force if the size is meant to stand for combat elements. To sustain such a force for a year – and that is not much – requires some 45 brigade equivalents, plus combat support, plus the elements necessary to support them under austere conditions, plus a naval and air component depending on the situation and the mission.

Additionally, there is a need for a minimum of two headquarters and the C4 which comes with them: one more or less static to command the forces from a location not too far away from Brussels, and one deployed force headquarters. Finally, Helsinki means that the EU should be capable of transporting the forces into the deployment area, rotating them and bringing them back.

Do the EU member states possess these capabilities? I have serious doubts, particularly regarding C4ISR, deployability and combat support. Most of what would be needed in the field of C4ISR and combat support does not exist in the European inventory and probably will not exist in 2003.

So, my first and perhaps sobering conclusion is that a force generation process (like the planned capabilities commitment conference) will by no means suffice to implement Helsinki. Europe has to begin a force planning exercise now in order to create at least some initial capabilities by the beginning of 2003; capabilities which one can see, i.e., not merely institutions and declarations of intent. This force planning process should concentrate on three areas: first, C4ISR; second, combat and service support, which includes the Achilles heel of all expeditionary forces, the enabling forces; and third, modernization and standardization of the intervention force.

What does the EU need in these areas to be capable of actions envisaged at Helsinki? First and foremost, the EU will need modern and mobile broadband C4 which can be used everywhere. In my view, it would be desirable, and indeed necessary, to arrange for C4 solutions which are identical to those of NATO. This would guarantee interoperability. Whether it still makes sense to look for dedicated military C4 is an open question, since we will need broadband rather than today's services and the cost of launching and operating these systems would be considerable. Modern broadband systems such as ICO, and Teledesic and Skybridge in the future, will be able to offer gateways for military use and provide global services of high quality, permanent availability at any place, mobile or static and with low latency, which is important for videoconferencing and telemedicine, to mention but two examples. It goes without saying that the headquarters using such C4 could be provided by NATO to avoid duplication.

The EU will also need independent ISR, but should strive for capabilities which are complementary to, and interoperable with, NATO assets. Does this make European reconnaissance satellites mandatory? Again, I have doubts. The mission spectrum for the Petersberg missions does not really require satellite imagery of military quality. Most, if not all, demands could be met in other ways: either by commercial satellites which are presently at one meter resolution capability and incredibly cheap; or, alternatively, the United States could be asked to provide the imagery under the terms of NATO/WEU arrangements.

This does not mean forgoing the option of a European Satellite System forever, but it does mean concentrating scarce resources on those areas where they are most urgently needed and obtaining U.S. consent to share technology with the European allies in the meantime. What the EU will need before and throughout a Petersberg mission is first, human intelligence, second, electronic intelligence and third, imagery which could be used for targeting. Consequently, one should enhance human intelligence and arrange for dramatically improved information sharing among allies. If this step were accompanied by some improvements in the field of electronic intelligence and by the establishment of a multinational European ground surveillance capability organized along the AWACS (airborne warning and control system) pattern, all requirements could be met. This would comprise an improved JSTARS (joint surveillance targeting acquisition radar system – now being called NATAR), an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) capability such as Global Hawk, and a helicopter-borne capability such as Horizon, all requirements could be met.

The EU will need a European sea and air transport capability which should include active array radar (AAR) assets. This could be achieved by the establishment of a European Sea and a European Air Transport Command, respectively. They could command multinational formations organized like the AWACS Component Force, or task forces formed on a case by case basis through the pooling of national assets. In any case, these commands would need modern equipment, which should preferably be standardized European-made materiel.

Europe will also need a European combat search and rescue (CSAR) component. Again, both models are conceivable, the AWACS or the pool model, but standardized equipment of European origin is a must.

Europe should consider establishing a European strike capability within a mid- to long-term timeframe. To strike targets from a distance without entering the airspace of an adversary, i.e., with unmanned vehicles, offers considerable advantages in crisis management, both for the initial phase of diplomacy backed by a threat and for the follow-on phase of diplomacy backed by force. Such a strike element cannot be established by 2003, particularly since it would be desirable to equip it with supersonic cruise missiles instead of the presently available subsonic ones. These modern missiles will not be available by 2003, but to have such a force by the end of the decade planning must begin now.

The establishment of a European information warfare unit and a ballistic missile defense capability of protecting a European expeditionary force should also be considered for the mid- to long-term. Such forces will have to be fully interoperable with similar NATO elements and they should complement NATO's capabilities.

The final step in this force planning process would be to agree to, and issue a planning guidance document for, the modernization of the national contributions all EU members must make in order to muster the 50,000 to 60,000 strong expeditionary force plus the supporting air and naval forces. Such guidance is necessary to ensure interoperability among the national contingents and to guarantee that these forces fully exploit the qualitative edge modern technology offers.

It is obviously desirable to seek interoperability of these forces with NATO. But priority should be given to European interoperability, since the Europeans will have to shoulder the bulk of the burden in all missions which may lead to long term deployments such as Bosnia or Kosovo. The list of measures behind this final step range from stand-off high-precision GPS-guided ammunition to night fighting devices for our infantrymen.

This list of steps should convince everyone that implementation of the Helsinki goal will require force planning, not just force generation, and will be impossible to accomplish by 2003. Moreover, it will require capital investment, which is not foreseen in the defense budgets of the EU members at this time, and it will demand the recruitment of first class personnel. On the other hand, some of these steps are already covered by the defense capabilities initiative (DCI) agreed to at the NATO summit in Washington.

At this point I can no longer turn a blind eye to the current financial realities and the marginal probability that defense budgets in all EU countries will see considerable and sustained growth. Leaving aside for a moment that every EU nation will have to acknowledge that any reform will require some up-front investment to save money later, or even better, to reinvest it in modernization, I do not believe that such a step alone will suffice.

Consequently, I propose a three-tier approach, which I call the Force Planning Triad. The first leg should concentrate on NATO's commonly funded budgets, notably the Security Investment Programs, which are better known as NATO Infrastructure. They should be screened and an evaluation made of the extent to which commercial systems such as the commercial broadband services I mentioned earlier could provide services required under the air command and control system (ACCS) or the NATO Satcom Programs, respectively. I am convinced that this approach could offer economies of scale, provided the military bias toward autonomy can be overcome. This fear of dependence has ruled out outsourcing and a larger degree of reliance on commercial services so far.

The money thus set free should be used to meet, at least partially, requirements which have been for a decade or so on the waiting list. These might include a NATO JSTARS component force, equipped with a new JSTARS, co-developed by the United States and the Europeans, or with a mix of JSTARS and Global Hawk organized in a similar way as the AWACS component force.

The second leg would concentrate on common EU procurement of enablers and force multipliers such as a modern European Transport Aircraft, AAR assets, and the establishment of multinational force multiplier elements such as additional Airborne Ground Surveillance (AGS) helicopters, the CSAR capability, strike and the Information Ops elements discussed earlier. The materiel for these forces should be procured by means of common EU funds to which all member nations contribute. These funds should be kept strictly separate from the EU budget to reflect that ESDP is an intergovernmental activity, as opposed to the supranational approach which governs all other commonly funded EU activities. The personnel to man these enabling forces should come from those EU nations willing to consider participation of these EU elements in NATO operations, but the running costs should be covered by contributions made by all EU nations.

The third leg would address the modernization of the contingents nations will provide for the 50 to 60,000 strong force plus its air and naval components. This has to remain a national responsibility and has to be financed through national budgets, which will be somewhat less burdened as a consequence of the measures taken under the second leg. Money can also be set free by reorganization and streamlining of no longer needed or oversized elements, such as the low-to-mid altitude air defense missile units, mobilizable elements and communication units which could become superfluous as soon as modern broadband services become available. Resources can be saved by the outsourcing of non-frontline activities, elimination of overlaps between the services of the national armed forces, and the consequent – in some countries long overdue – application of the revolution in business affairs to the civilian leg of the national armed forces wherever possible. These steps and others seem to offer economies of some scale, although not in the short term. In addition, all procurement and R&D programs should be screened and those for which off-the-shelf solutions or commercial solutions are available should be cancelled. If this step is accompanied by preparedness on the part of nations to terminate overlapping or duplicative programs, one could expect significant savings.

What seems to be possible if these and other steps are implemented is to modernize and reorganize the existing armed forces over the next ten years and then bring the defense budgets into the vicinity of the figures currently envisaged in many European countries for the year 2003. These forces will primarily be expeditionary forces, which need to be deployable more quickly than the 60 days after a EU decision which Helsinki envisages, and their deployment has to be sustainable for at least a year. Thus, they should be manned by regular personnel. This by no means rules out that nations that wish to retain conscription cannot work with a proper mix of regulars and conscripts, the latter being employed primarily in territorial defense of the homeland.

These measures should be underpinned by ever increasing industrial cooperation and by a coordinated transnational R&D program which EU defense ministers should urgently agree upon in order to invest more efficiently the \$10 billion the EU countries spend annually for defense R&D.

This approach could allow implementing Helsinki in a way which will produce the first results in terms of capabilities improvements by 2003. It will ensure interoperability with, and complementarity to, NATO and at the same time mark the beginning of a process which could in the very long term result in some integrated European military forces. It will not lead to a European Army, for which the political will does not exist at this time, but it will enable Europe to take more responsibility in and for Europe, and act with its NATO allies where common interests are at stake. This approach would begin to create a European Expeditionary Force by 2003.

It is a pragmatic approach, but it could achieve notable and tangible improvement. The result could be a common European Foreign and Security Policy which ties Europe inextricably to the United States, en-

abling Europe to act in solidarity with its partners where common interests are at stake, and allowing Europe to keep its own backyard and immediate periphery stable.

Such a Europe would be a global player which seeks to expand stability, and it could begin to develop bolder dreams and visions. It seems to me this is a worthy goal, which justifies making every effort and making it now.

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The author's views presented herein do not necessarily represent those of the Atlantic Council, the Institute for National Strategic Studies or the National Defense University

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<sup>1</sup> In 1992, the foreign and defense ministers of the WEU member states issued the Petersberg Declaration which set out three categories of missions appropriate for the WEU as the declared defense component of the European Union. These are: 1) humanitarian and rescue tasks; 2) peacekeeping tasks; and 3) tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making.