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**NATO-EU CRISIS MANAGEMENT COOPERATION:  
LESSONS LEARNED AND PROSPECTS**

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*“[T]he scope and reach of our [EU] crisis management activities has expanded enormously. .... Let me be clear: what we are doing is not about replacing NATO. Nor is it about militarizing the Union. It is about effective crisis management. About increasing the role of the European Union as a promoter of stability and security.”<sup>1</sup>*

## I. Introduction and Overview

Without going very deeply into how we got to where we are today and how the promise of the end of the Cold War has not materialized, it is clear to all of us that we live in a difficult world that poses many challenges. The most serious of these are generally accepted to be terrorism, the potential proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and what most have come to refer to as failed or failing states. The worst combination is, of course, all three in the same package. A failed or failing state that supports terrorism while, at the same, it pursues a WMD capability that it may transfer to terrorists.

In 1989 and perhaps even as late as the early 1990's we briefly thought that we would live in a peaceful, happy world in which we could turn our attention to solving the most fundamental problems of humanity to include poverty, disease, and hunger. That “dream”, if we can call it thus, has not and will not materialize probably for quite a long time (if ever).

We live in a very difficult world in which the trans-Atlantic community has no choice but to respond to the threat of local and regional conflict, the terrorist threat, the threat inherent in the proliferation of WMD, while also coping with the problems that result from failed or failing states.

It is not for the first time, that the partners of Europe and North America have to rise to a serious challenge and, most likely, it will not be the last time, but if we do not tackle these problems together, there will be no lasting solution. On the very gloomy side, some so-called experts on both sides of the Atlantic (though for different reasons) have asserted that the time for NATO has passed. They contend that the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War have removed NATO's *raison d'être*. Others claim that more than at any time in the past 50 years, the partnership is under stress precisely at a time when it must act in unison and that urgent repairs to the Alliance are required. Many blame the U.S. involvement in Iraq since 2003 for the problems in the transatlantic relationship, but in my opinion this is a short-sighted and largely incorrect perception and glosses over the endemic problems in the Alliance that have existed since the early 1990's.

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<sup>1</sup> Javier Solana, “Europe's International Role,” a speech delivered in Bratislava on 9 November 2005, p.4.

On the other hand, there are many who remain firmly tied to the conviction that NATO is not only as necessary as it has always been, but must have an ever-more important role in confronting the security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century not only in and near Europe but in a much wider region perhaps even world-wide. I am, of course, on the side of those who contend that NATO has a critical mission that it alone can accomplish but that it must continue to transform to meet new and evolving threats. And, it must fulfill this role in full partnership with the EU and other international organizations.

## II. NATO and the EU as Twin Pillars of Security

We all know and understand that the twin pillars of NATO and the EU are really not entirely separate entities at all since there is a major overlap in membership and, most importantly, a profound commonality of interests that must transcend the problems and differences that exist as a result of the coalition action in Iraq and other strains on the transatlantic relationship. There can be no questions that, in the final analysis, the fundamental aims, objectives, and goals of both NATO and the EU are quite similar. What's really puzzling to many of us (I believe on both sides of the Atlantic) is why they cannot work together in a much more coordinated and coherent fashion.

As Dr. Patrick Hardouin, NATO's Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy said not too long ago:

“Today, no organization, neither NATO, nor the EU, nor the UN, (and you could add the OSCE to this list) is on its own able to provide for the security needs of its members *across the full security spectrum* (conflict prevention, peace enforcement and peacekeeping/peace building). But when they work together, they have greater chances to successfully tackle the challenges for the new century.

The key international elements of such an international security network are already in place: the European Union, NATO, the OSCE and the United Nations. Individually, each of these institutions reflects a distinct approach to security. Together, they offer a chance to establish a new quality of security.”<sup>2</sup>

The bases for the necessary coordination and cooperation between NATO and the EU are in place. Here I will review only a couple of brief highlights:

- On 10 December 1991, the Declaration on the Role of the Western European Union and its relations with the European Union and with the Atlantic Alliance was signed. Essentially, the signatories agreed to “develop a genuine European Security and Defence identity and a greater European responsibility on defence matters.” It was clear that this goal would be reached in phases and that the WEU “will take account of the progress and experience acquired and will extend

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<sup>2</sup> Remarks by Dr. Patrick Hardouin, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy – paper presented during a conference in Bonn, Germany.

to relations between WEU and the Atlantic Alliance.” The agreement recognized NATO “as the defence component of the European Union” and saw its own new efforts “as a means to strengthen the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance.”

- The 1999 Helsinki decision in support of its Common Foreign and Security policy established that the European Union should have an autonomous capability to take crisis response decisions where NATO is not or would not be engaged. While this decision may have caused a bit of concern in some quarters, the December 2002 NATO-EU Declaration on the European Security and Defence Policy established a basis for close cooperation in the areas of crisis management, terrorism, WMD proliferation and the development of plans to assure access to NATO’s planning capability and stressed basic principles of strategic partnership with NATO.
- Then in March 2003, there was the “Berlin Plus” agreement that today forms the basis for practical work in crisis management between the two organizations and permits the Alliance to support EU-led military operations in case the Alliance as a whole is not engaged.
- May 2003 saw the establishment of the NATO-EU Capability Group what has become a forum for planning of capabilities, development, and mutual reinforcement between NATO’s Prague Commitment and the EU’s European Capabilities Action Plan.

The question is whether or not the above measures and agreements and other declarations of common interest and objective are, in fact, the basis for the close cooperation that is required to cope with today’s challenges. Or, perhaps the better question is: If they are the basis for good cooperation and mutual understanding, are they efficiently and effectively utilized, and does the required and promised close coordination actually exist?

There has been cooperation on some major operations notably in Bosnia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia which were facilitated especially as a result of the Berlin Plus agreement. But, the major feature of these operations has been that the EU took over some of the responsibilities that NATO had handled up until the time of the take-over. There was close coordination between the EU and NATO leading up to and after the agreement on the hand-over of responsibility, a shift of some resources, and there has also been agreement that NATO would continue to provide support under Berlin Plus.

- With specific reference to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU began preparations in January 2003 to activate its first large mission “Operation Althea”, which became fully operational in December 2004.
- In the meantime, the EU also activated Operation Concordia which took over from NATO’s Operation Allied Harmony on March 31 2003. Operation Concordia was itself terminated on December 15, 2003 and replaced by Operation Proxima.

Overall, the official EU and NATO position is that all is well and that the coordination mechanisms have worked. Indeed, a review of how NATO and the EU view each other based on what is published on their respective web sites and in a whole host of official documents and pronouncements, leaves one with the general impression that relations and coordination between NATO and the EU on security related matters are quite close. But, is this really the case?

Several recent reports including one to NATO's Parliamentary Assembly note that despite the present climate of improving transatlantic relations, the NATO-EU dialogue has reached an impasse and that the agenda of joint EU-NATO meetings is limited to the implementation of the Berlin Plus agreements and largely theoretical discussion of capabilities in NATO-EU Capability Group. What appears to be lacking is a genuine effort to coordinate and cooperate in the event of a future crisis.

Moreover, and from a personal perspective, during several meetings I have recently attended it is clear that official contact between the EU and NATO staffs is highly scripted and not at all conducive to effective and smooth coordination. Apparently most, if not all joint meetings concentrate on mundane and uncomplicated issues deferring a meaningful discussion on a whole host of important issues. On the other hand, these same NATO and EU officers told me that informal discussions based on personal contacts and conducted mostly on the margins of official meetings have been quite successful in discussing problem areas and in promoting mutual understanding. If this is indeed as it appears, then NATO and the EU have much work to do in order to realize the potential of a smooth and effective working relationship. The losers are not only the citizens of the 19 nations who hold a common membership in both organizations but rather all those who may one day have to rely on the assistance of the transatlantic community in a time of desperate crisis or conflict. All in this room and far beyond know full well that effective cooperation and close coordination must be planned, practiced, trained, exercised, and nurtured. It is almost impossible to respond adequately to an emergency unless the mechanisms to do so are in place well ahead of time – their absence can and most likely will compound any disaster.

### **III. Transformation and Co-operation in Stabilization and Reconstruction**

Military transformation has become the cause celebre of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In fact, for NATO transformation began after the fall of the Soviet Union but even then it was not new. NATO has never been a status quo Alliance and has been transforming since its creation. The same thing may be said for the EU which has been evolving and transforming itself since it was known as the Common Market. But, for the sake of this discussion, it is best to recognize the considerable efforts that have accelerated the transformation process especially since 9/11. To meet the threats of terrorism, WMD proliferation, and failed or failing states, NATO and the EU have no choice but to transform. More must be done with less than at any time in our modern history.

From a strictly military perspective there has been increasing recognition in European capitals that gradual reform will not meet today's security challenges. Military

formations recruited, trained, and equipped to fight a major land war in Europe have limited utility to meet today's security requirements. Light, deployable, highly mobile, multi-tasked and multi-capable forces are required. Most, if not all, have recognized the need for what I would term "whole force transformation" that includes not only the military but in a larger context, the full panoply of security capabilities.

Limited budgets necessitate difficult choices. Available resources must be expended wisely and should concentrate on the selection of appropriate capabilities that may be shared with partners. Few EU or NATO nations can field the broad spectrum of military capabilities that may be required to respond to today's contingencies. Specialization and sharing of some critical capabilities are key – and this must be a two-way street. No nation can rely totally on its own resources and an equitable relationship in the sale and acquisition of modern weapons and support systems is essential. This applies to all. Inefficiencies and unnecessary duplication will no longer be acceptable.

For the moment, I will avoid the debate of what I see as a requirement to integrate in a seamless continuum security and military forces who must respond to current threats and especially the threat of major terrorism, which is likely, and the threat of WMD use which must be considered far less likely. But I will say that we must all continue to consider and, if possible plan to activate a full response capability that is able to mitigate the effects of attacks ranging from small terrorist acts resulting in few casualties to a mass-casualty attack.

I would, however, like to address very briefly a special interest and concern. With considerable direct, on-the-ground direct experience in observing and dealing with the consequences of conflict and military intervention, I have long been aware that the aftermath of conflict has far too often been left to those who are least equipped to deal with the death and destruction modern war leaves in its wake – the civilian population. Although the international community has now come to recognize that post-conflict stabilization and recovery is essential, far too often, aid to rebuild has been slow or absent.

- Viet Nam 1968-71, Afghanistan 1978-79, the Iran-Iraq War 1980-88, India-Pakistan crisis in 1999, Tajikistan Civil War 1995-96, Bosnia and Herzegovina 1996-97, Albania, 1997, Croatia (Eastern Slavonia) 1997-98, Kosovo 1999, Iraq 2003

I was a first-hand participant and/or on scene observer in each of these conflicts or crisis situations. None benefited from an effective (or even ineffective) post-conflict or post-military involvement Stabilization and Reconstruction effort in the immediate aftermath of the crisis. Yes, international assistance would reach some after a considerable time had elapsed and after the deprivations and suffering of the population had increased and aggravated an often desperate situation but the international community absolutely must do better in the future. I will discuss this topic extemporaneously as time permits.

In closing, I am reminded of two of my favored sayings attributed to one of America's founding fathers who said:

*We must, indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately.*

and

*All mankind is divided into three classes: those that are immovable, those that are movable, and those that move.*

We, in the transatlantic community must move to make ours better more peaceful world. We have not choice but to do our best to meet today's challenges or we will suffer the consequences.