

## NATO-EU Cooperation in the Atlantic Alliance's Future Strategic Concept (ARI)

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**Theme:** NATO and EU cooperation on security and defence is one of the fundamental issues to be reviewed in the development process of the Atlantic Alliance's new Strategic Concept, envisaged for 2010.

**Summary:** NATO-EU relations are one of the essential issues under debate in the review process undertaken by NATO member states for the Atlantic Alliance's Strategic Concept. Military cooperation between the two sides of the Atlantic has become increasingly more difficult with the EU's development of independent criteria and capacities in security and defence. Thus far, the attempts to adapt NATO to the new reality have not been as successful as anticipated, and the transatlantic relationship has suffered the effects of disagreements and obstacles to cooperation.

This ARI, drafted within the framework of the Elcano Royal Institute Working Group for the Review of the Atlantic Alliance's Strategic Concept, aims to analyse the trajectory of NATO-EU relations in the area of security and defence, where the Berlin Plus Agreement marked an important milestone. Similarly, we analyse the current difficulties that hinder the improvement of cooperation between the two organisations. Finally, we offer several proposals for a more constructive cooperation that serve to feed today's debates on the development of the Alliance's new Strategic Concept.

**Analysis:** In keeping with the decision of the Heads of State and Government last April at the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit, NATO is currently working on the draft of a new Strategic Concept. In a seemingly complex process, the Alliance will need to reform the current Concept, which has been in force since 1999 and therefore existed before the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US and the start of military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The significance of this review exercise resides in the importance of the document in question. Indeed, the Alliance's Strategic Concept is the expression of the spirit of the body's security and defence policy, its operative concepts, its force structure and its guidelines for common security and collective defence.

Many are the issues to be addressed by the new Strategic Concept in order to endow the Atlantic organisation with the necessary transforming impetus to avert its gradual decline in the international arena. Among other matters, it will need to review its relations with Russia, the future of current partnerships and associations, as well as its possible expansion. Yet above all, it must resolve on the manner in which it wishes to define its relations with the EU and evaluate the future of the transatlantic bond. This is the unchanging foundation of the Atlantic Alliance, as it brings the interests of the US together with those of its European partners –interests represented by the traditional values of

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democracy and freedom that are upheld by the nations on both sides of the Atlantic that form part of the Washington Treaty–.

The importance of transatlantic relations was endorsed in the Declaration on Alliance Security that was approved by the Heads of State and Government at the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit of 2009. This concise declaration, which is highly political given its content and very different from the official communiqués that we are accustomed to seeing from the Alliance, reminds us that NATO continues to be the essential transatlantic forum for security-related consultation among the member states. Similarly, NATO acknowledges the importance of a stronger and more capable European defence and welcomes the EU's efforts to consolidate its capacities and its potential to confront common challenges for security. The Heads of State and Government asserted their determination to make the NATO-EU relationship a true strategic association, stating that the efforts of the two organisations must reinforce and complement each other. Thus, NATO-EU relations are one of the crucial building blocks, if not the fundamental component, to be considered for the revision of the current Strategic Concept of the Atlantic Alliance.

US relations with some of the most important European allies were damaged by the US invasion of Iraq, which naturally affected both the internal cohesion of NATO and the organisation's relations with the EU. Nevertheless, given the international political state of affairs today, with a new US President in the White House who is very popular in Europe and with the recent reincorporation of France into NATO's integrated military command structure, now seems to be the right time to redefine NATO-EU relations. In this context, bringing together the interests of both shores of the Atlantic may be imperative for the future of the Alliance. At present, 21 of the EU's nations are full members of the Atlantic Alliance, and the rest, with the sole exception of Cyprus, take part in the Atlantic organisation's different forms of partnership. For this reason, the organisations and the member states must strengthen the association that unites them, to avoid unnecessary overlaps and instead to generate synergies of action.

*The Road Thus Far: From the European Identity of Security and Defence to the Berlin Plus Agreements*

Following the end of the Cold War, the EU was lacking a strategic dimension and military capacities that were on par with its economic and political potential. This situation became evident during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, where the EU fruitlessly attempted to use its diplomatic instruments to provide a political solution to the Yugoslav crises and where Europe was unable to undertake any military action whatsoever without the US, given its limited military capacities. Thus, the EU member states could only intervene as a part of NATO forces. Following this experience and the lessons learned from the armed conflicts in Africa in the 1990s, the EU reactivated its European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) within the general framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The ESDP envisaged the development of a strictly European security and defence body that was independent of NATO and that would enable Europe to take action in the sphere of international relations and security in scenarios that required such action for the preservation of its interests.

The development process for a European defence capability independent of NATO spurred disquiet in the US and among non-EU Atlantic partners, particularly Turkey. Until then, the Alliance had chosen to admit the development of EU military capabilities through the construction of a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) within the Atlantic organisation, to facilitate a more coherent and effective European contribution to NATO

missions. Nevertheless, the ESDI, which lacked a specific political and legal definition, should not be identified with European security, nor did it coincide precisely with NATO's European pillar. The ESDI cited the Western European Union (WEU) rather than the EU as the European organisation of reference for cooperation in the area of defence. The relations between the WEU and NATO were consolidated as mutually complementary through the North Atlantic Council Declaration. Signed in Berlin on 3 June 1996, this document established a set of measures for the implementation of WEU-controlled military operations that did not involve the military intervention of the Alliance.

All of these elements were officially set forth in the Alliance's Strategic Concept of 1999, which is currently in force. Nevertheless, the ESDI was outdated almost from day one, due to the birth of the ESDP, also in 1999, which transferred the duties of the WEU to the EU. The NATO-EU Declaration on the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which was agreed on 16 December 2002, entailed the Alliance's explicit support for the ESDP and implied a joint declaration on the new strategic association. To effectively carry out the aforementioned cooperation, the two organisations signed the Berlin Plus Agreements, an extensive package of commitments that establishes a strategic association between NATO and the EU. This coalition is coordinated through the 'Framework Agreement', which essentially consists of an exchange of letters between the High Representative of the EU and the Secretary General of NATO, dated 17 March 2003. Since that day, Berlin Plus has served as the underlying basis for NATO-EU relations and particularly as a set of guidelines for the EU's use of NATO planning resources or certain capacities for military crisis management operations in scenarios that do not directly involve the Alliance. These agreements are built around four basic components: (1) the EU's access to the Allied planning systems; (2) the European 'Command Options' within the Alliance (the role and responsibility of the Deputy Supreme Allied Command Europe, DSACEUR, as the European commander of an EU operation); (3) the EU's use of Allied resources and capabilities; and (4) the development of military capabilities, specifically relating to the way in which the EU and NATO and its member states are to mutually and coherently reinforce each other, when both have the same needs.

The implications of the Berlin Plus Agreements are significant, as both NATO and the EU can benefit from them. The most obvious –and at the same time the most important of these benefits– is the EU's ability to undertake actions making use of NATO planning, command and control capabilities, which would at least theoretically prevent Europe from developing these capabilities independently. At the time, this capacity for intervention, anywhere in the world that the EU may deem necessary, was a big step forward for Europe, both politically and strategically. We must point out that to date the EU has only made use of the capabilities and resources set forth in Berlin Plus on two occasions: the CONCORDIA operations (Macedonia), which is now over, and ALTHEA (BiH), which is still underway. The fact that the EU is currently carrying out most of its crisis management operations independently of NATO would demonstrate that despite the good intentions of Berlin Plus, the results have only been moderate.

The Berlin Plus Agreement should have concluded all the issues associated with the planning and implementation of EU operations and its relations with NATO. Nevertheless, given the opposition of several European nations –particularly France, Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium– to the US military intervention in Iraq, the debate was reopened, casting doubt on the viability of Berlin Plus. These countries petitioned for the establishment of an EU Headquarters in Tervuren (Belgium) that would provide the EU

with permanent planning capabilities, which politically would have undermined the importance of the role of the US in Europe and weakened the transatlantic bond. This was prevented thanks to intense diplomatic negotiations, where the UK played a key role in the dismissal of the Tervuren initiative. NATO-EU relations received fresh impetus through the Comprehensive Political Guidance of 2006, which, approved at the Riga Summit, acknowledges that, 'the European Union, which is able to mobilise a wide range of military and civilian instruments, is assuming a growing role in support of international stability'. Moreover, the Guidance states that EU participation in current operations, as well as the participation of other international governmental and non-governmental organisations, will stimulate a greater cooperation and practical coordination with NATO.

In this context, the current cooperation and coordination between NATO and the EU is embodied by several formal and informal mechanisms. First of all, the Berlin Plus Agreements gave rise to the creation of the EU-NATO Capability Group, which aims to ensure the coherence of NATO and EU capability development efforts. This Group, which does not hold periodic meetings, takes in the different capability development initiatives of both organisations. Nevertheless, there is a considerable lack of cooperation in this area, as NATO and the EU have different force planning systems and envisage different scenarios for action, with different levels of ambition. The EU-NATO Capability Group has been somewhat unsuccessful in its attempts to coordinate certain similar initiatives, such as those of the EU Battle Groups, which were developed within the EU Headline Goal 2010 and the NATO Response Force, as well as the efforts made by both organisations to improve the availability of helicopters for operations. In this aspect of capability development, to some degree, the dialogue between the European Defence Agency and NATO's Conference of National Armaments Directors has gradually mitigated the existing shortcomings, and according to the statements of the Heads of State and Government of NATO and of the EU at both the Council of Europe in December 2008 and the NATO Summit last March 2009, capacity development is a prevalent area for dialogue between the two organisations.

Moreover, the two organisations maintain different forms of institutional relations among their Foreign Affairs ministers, ambassadors and representatives. Similarly, NATO's General International Staff and the International Military Staff are in regular contact with their counterparts in the General Secretariat of the Council and the General Staff of the EU. It may be of interest to point out that in some European nations, such as Spain, the military representatives to NATO are also military representatives on the EU Military Committee, which facilitates the relations between NATO and the EU. Furthermore, the Council of Europe of December 2008, under the French Presidency, supported the creation of an EU-NATO High-Level Informal Group, designed to pragmatically improve cooperation between the two organisations. Though this initiative was supported by the European Parliament, it has not been put to practice to date. Another cooperative model is embodied by the joint crisis management exercises. The first of these exercises CMX/CME took place in November 2003 and in early 2009, it was agreed to carry out another exercise in 2010. It was also agreed at the start of 2009 to set up a permanent NATO Liaison Team on the General Staff of the EU (EUMS) and an EU Cell at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE).

#### *Difficulties and Challenges to be Overcome*

Despite the progress of the mechanisms for cooperation described above, it is clear that the strategic association between NATO and the EU is still facing serious difficulties and that there is still a great deal of room for improvement for an authentic coalition between

the two organisations. The complications hindering this association are diverse. On the one hand, the obstacles for cooperation emerge out of the difference in objectives and available resources. Although NATO has assumed a broad concept of security that goes beyond the purely military to cover other risks and threats, its underlying *raison d'être* continues to be the collective defence of the Allies. On the other hand, the EU is an enormous and complex organisation that aims to integrate the different policies of the member states and in which the ESDP, which became the CSDP when the Treaty of Lisbon came into force, is simply another available facet. At present, the primary and most visible attribute of the CSDP is its unique ability to deploy the wide spectrum of civil and military instruments necessary in operations to adequately manage crises and the ability to coordinate those instruments in accordance with the political objectives specified by the EU itself.

Yet the difficulties for cooperation also stem from the differences in the participation of the member states in the two organisations, with their own interests and strategies. In this respect, we must underscore the obstacle that derives from Turkey's relations with the EU in general, and particularly with Greece and Cyprus. Turkey does not recognise the Cypriot government, and its continual refusal to open its ports and airports to Cypriot companies can even lead to a deadlock in its relations with the EU. For a long time Turkey has been petitioning for Greece and Cyprus to lift the block on its participation in EU military planning and to admit the country's possible membership in the European Defence Agency. Turkey, a key ally for the US in NATO, was an associate member of the WEU, yet it lost its preferential status when WEU missions were absorbed by the EU. NATO's new Secretary General himself, Fogh Rasmussen, has admitted that unless the Cyprus dispute is resolved, there are few possibilities for a major improvement in NATO's relations with the EU.

The difficulties for NATO-EU cooperation also arise from the different perspectives and sensitivities of other member countries that are not common to both organisations. The EU members that do not form part of NATO –such as Austria, Ireland, Finland and Sweden– publically display a different strategic culture that is more given to the usual soft power that has traditionally been a source of pride for the EU. These countries understand that in order to attain their national security, they must focus on the use of non-military resources, fundamentally economic and diplomatic means, relegating military power to a solely residual position that essentially serves to safeguard other means for international interaction. Obviously, this vision distances them from NATO's scope of operation.

Among the difficulties, we must not underestimate the distrust and reservations of the US regarding the rise and autonomy of the EU. Having partially overcome the distrust towards the ESDP in relation to the strength of the Alliance, there continue to be clear differences on each side of the Atlantic when it comes to understanding the threats and risks to security, the approach to crisis management and the use of non-military instruments. Concepts such as multilateralism and preventative action give rise to different interpretations that affect the practical cooperation between the US and some of its European allies.

In addition to the structural difficulties mentioned above, there are also other problems of an operative nature. Although Berlin Plus is a very convenient and effective agreement, it nevertheless appears to be inadequate in dealing with the existing problems in theatres of operations such as Afghanistan, where both organisations are present and where there is virtually no practical coordination between the missions undertaken by the two

organisations in the area. This situation is further aggravated by the fact that NATO cannot cooperate in the same manner with all the members of the EU, as Cyprus, for example is not a part of the Partnership for Peace, an essential condition for the exchange of classified documents and information between the Alliance and that Mediterranean country. If we add to this situation the degree of the Alliance's control over EU missions when the Berlin Plus Agreement is applied, it is easy to understand the reason why this agreement has only been used in the two operations mentioned above.

*Some Proposals for More Constructive Cooperation within NATO's New Strategic Concept*

In this context and under the premises set forth by the Strasbourg-Kehl Declaration, the draft of a new Strategic Concept for the Alliance is an opportunity to strengthen European-Atlantic relations. Thus, though not all of the proposals offered below can be incorporated into the Concept of the Alliance by virtue of their strategic nature, they might nevertheless serve as points of reference during the discussions currently underway for the draft of the new document.

Having established the importance of the transatlantic relationship for the outcome of the Alliance, it is necessary to set forth a specific clause that directly and openly spells out the essential nature of NATO-EU security and defence relations and which specifies the need to establish an authentic strategic association between the two organisations. To ensure a balance in these relations, two factors must be guaranteed: the redistribution of burdens and responsibilities, and the complementarity between NATO and the EU. The Europeans must assume greater responsibility in decision-making within the Alliance, and in this respect an important step has been taken by virtue of a French General's occupation of the Leadership of the Allied Command Transformation, a post that was occupied by a US officer until last July. Yet this increase in responsibilities must bring about a more balanced distribution of the budget-related burdens, which are fundamentally supported by the US. Secondly, the EU is making a substantial effort in the area of development and cooperation in third countries, which has given it considerable legitimacy of action, though its main weakness continues to reside in the lack of military capacity. For its part, the US has traditionally relied on its overwhelming military power to manage crises, almost completely dismissing the use of civilian instruments. To a certain degree, the 'exchange' of civilian and military resources could lead to the desired strategic balance between Europe and the US.

With regard to the other issues involved, it would be necessary to harmonise the catalogue of NATO and EU forces to coherently develop the military capabilities of the two organisations, preventing competition for the same capabilities. It would also be advisable to reconcile both their levels of ambition and their operational concepts (such as the comprehensive approach or the rapid reaction forces, among others). To do so, it would be advisable to optimise the role played by the NATO-EU Capability Group through effective work methods, by attempting to improve the interaction and transparency between the two organisations.

Moreover, it is essential to increase and deepen strategic collaboration in crisis management, so as to ensure a practical and effective coordination in the scenarios in which both organisations intervene. It seems logical that if NATO tends to implement the comprehensive approach as the remedy or general solution in crisis management, the definition of security adopted by NATO must be in keeping with that approach. This broad concept of security will obviously imply the need to act through civilian capacities, and not

solely through military force. However, NATO must not create these types of new capabilities, which would undoubtedly lead to duplication or competition with the EU; and for crisis management operations requiring civilian capacities, NATO would have to turn to the EU. Some analysts refer to this scenario, entailing the Alliance's possible use of the civilian capabilities of the EU, as 'Berlin Plus in reverse'.

Hence, there is a broad consensus regarding the notion that Berlin Plus is no longer adequate. In addition to the extraordinary evolution of the ESDP since 2003, there are also times in which NATO and the EU operate simultaneously in the same theatre, yet in different missions. Yet Berlin Plus does not cover operational or tactical cooperation/coordination in cases of common intervention in a single zone of operations. In these theatres, there are no mechanisms, such as *ad hoc* technical agreements, to ensure the consistency of action of the two organisations. Thus, it is necessary to deepen the guidelines of the Berlin Plus Agreement to generate the necessary synergy of action. The issues relating to the above-mentioned 'Berlin Plus in reverse' form part of this argument. Even so, it is absolutely essential to find an immediate solution to the problem of Cyprus' participation in NATO's instruments of consultation.

Similarly, if in addition to the civilian crisis management resources, NATO could use other EU capabilities, such as the EU Satellite Centre, a greater cooperation through the European Defence Agency or the implementation of real joint initiatives (some have suggested a centre of intelligence), the balance in the relations between the two sides of the Atlantic would improve. Finally, as we have mentioned, it will be difficult to improve NATO-EU relations until the dispute between Turkey, Greece and Cyprus has been resolved once and for all. To resolve this situation, and although the potential membership of Turkey in the EU must be set aside in the debates on the Strategic Concept, it is necessary to increase Turkey's involvement in European issues, possibly through the European Defence Agency, as well as other instruments of consultation.

**Conclusions:** In the US National Security Strategy, NATO is defined as a basic pillar of American foreign politics, as it is a liaison with the European democracies. For their part, most of the European member states continue to view NATO as the cornerstone of bilateral relations with the US. In fact, the European Security Strategy itself asserts the irreplaceable nature of this transatlantic bond. Moreover, the Treaty of Lisbon, which has recently come into force, also confirms its importance.

For this reason, given the aspects that they share and despite the existing differences, NATO and the EU are obliged to support one another jointly in the area of security and defence. The pursuit of a synergy and mutual reinforcement is essential to the prevention of duplicity which is always unacceptable, and more so in times of crisis such as the present. This reinforcement must be consistent and transparent, while respecting the political autonomy of the respective organisations at all times.

Finally, we must point out that Spain, which will be occupying the Presidency of the EU Council at the start of 2010, can play an important role in the redefinition of transatlantic relations. The political rapprochement between the EU and the US, which is among the priorities of the rotating presidency, can foster the necessary climate of understanding to resolve the latent problems between NATO and the EU in the new Strategic Concept. On this point, we must recall that Spanish National Defence Directive 1/2008 states that, 'the Alliance continues to be the foundation of the collective defence of its members. Thus, the final objective of a European defence, developed by the European Union itself, must be

configured as a reinforcement of transatlantic relations. In this context, Spain supports a NATO with the adequate capabilities for action to effectively meet the new global challenges in the area of security and defence'. It is now time to implement this position.

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