THE ROLE OF NATO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

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Introduction[1]

The 'trans-Atlantic' strategic grouping has not been a normal or important one for most of modern history. After the establishment of the USA as a break-away colony, the Atlantic was for a century and a half as often a barrier as a bridge. The creation of a trans-Atlantic alliance based on permanent defence guarantees reflected the needs of a specific, and in many ways novel, situation at the end of World War Two: the need for a credible, nuclear-backed Western bloc to deter the Soviet Union and the further expansion of Communism in Europe, and the need to rebuild and consolidate democracy and a functioning economy on the territory of Western Europe itself. NATO was important also for the latter goal: first because of its effect in blocking a nationalistic and competitive development of defence culture among its European members, and secondly because it provided a 'shield' under which West Europeans could rebuild their economy in peace, with far fewer resources diverted to defence than if they had been forced to stand alone.

Hence the famous Lord Ismay quotation (which also shows that NATO in the early days could be thought of in a very Realpolitik, not so idealistic way): NATO exists 'to keep America in, keep Russia out and keep Germany down'.

At this early stage, the Western security community would invariably have been described as Atlantic or trans-Atlantic: the concept of Euro-Atlantic defence and of a distinct European component within it took decades to get off the ground. The first impulse of West European unity after 1945 was actually to create the Europeans' own guaranteed defence community (EDC), but this collapsed and was replaced by the much weaker WEU, which effectively left all real defence work to NATO. When the European Community was created, its aims did include consolidating the peace of [Western] Europe but it did so by the indirect methods of destroying self-sufficient national war industries, diverting energies to economic and social cooperation, opening frontiers, creating new interdependent interests and so on. Hence the rather sharp functional division which arose and persisted between NATO and EU ('Mars' and 'Venus'?) for the first 30 years or so, though it is important to note that throughout this period the USA did explicitly support the EU's supranational integrative ambitions as well.

Only in the 80's did the idea of a distinct 'Euro' component in Western security re-develop, feeding simultaneously on the burden-sharing debate in NATO (the pressure for a load-bearing 'European pillar') and on the gradual entry of the EU into the security sphere with Political Cooperation, entailing i.a. support for arms control processes and the development of joint European inputs into CSCE. This is the line of development that has ended up with today's Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP), and which has brought us to the point where we can and must talk of NATO and the EU in the

same breath. The two institutions now share a significant part of the operational security spectrum between them, because they overlap in some of their competences and pretensions (ie in the spectrum of lower-intensity crisis management), but also because CESDP obliges them to have a much more direct and instrumental relationship with each other.

At this point it is worth recalling that the overall 'Atlantic system' includes other institutions developed during or around the end of the Cold War, whose functions could be defined as filling functional niches; providing a framework for relations between the Western groups and other groups and non-members; and organizing relations among smaller and more specialized, notably regional communities. These other bodies include the CSCE/OSCE, the Council of Europe, NATO's and the EU's own partnership/outreach structures developed after the cold war, and the various sub-regional groupings within and on the edge of Europe. Their existence may have been more important than is normally recognized, not just in helping to keep Europe's peace, but in diffusing the inevitable strains of the transatlantic relationship and in keeping NATO's and the EU's respective burdens at a manageable level.

The need to reassess the value, viability, and possible future of NATO's and the EU's place in this 'architecture' comes from three main forces of change active between 1989-90 and the present day:

- the end of the Cold War and bloc confrontation, the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union, the enlargement process and the change in Russia's role vis-à-vis the West and its institutions;
- the changed security environment and pattern of threats and challenges within and beyond Europe, including notably the powerful demands for conflict management capability and the growing prominence of 'new threats' (terrorism, WMD, but also crime, migration, disease, dangers to the environment etc);
- the increasingly prominent differences and divisions within what used to be the 'Western' camp, both between the US and Europe as a whole and among Europeans.

In what follows, I will go on to look in more detail at each of these three issue-clusters and try to bring out particularly their implications for the way ahead.

Enlargement

To underline the importance of the planned expansion of NATO and the EU to around 25 members each in 2004, it is useful to recall that after the fall of the Berlin Wall no-one would have dreamed of such a scenario being fulfilled in just 14 years. Theories then were either more idealistic—the belief that a 'single European house' would replace partial and selfish organizations with 'comprehensive security'; or pessimistic— fear that the West and a revived Russian Empire would end up fighting over a chaotic Central Europe, and that even the West might be 'renationalized'. The outbreak of the Balkan wars in early 1990's encouraged the pessimists, but in the event:

- Inter-ethnic/'failed state' conflicts took place only in former Yugoslavia, and in parts of the former USSR;

- NATO proved itself necessary to deal with the Former Yugoslavia crisis, survived the severe pressures the crisis involved and drew from it productive lessons for modernization and burden-sharing with other institutions;
- The EU reacted against its initial divisions: large nations came back together in the 'Contact Group'; institutional 'deepening' continued through Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice, and the final phase of Economic and Monetary Union was successfully launched on schedule;
- All Central European States rejected nationalist, regionalist and Russian-led alternatives to bid for full membership in both NATO and EU, and accepted and even anticipated the «peace-enforcing» effects of these institutions by democratizing their internal defence arrangements, ending disputes with neighbours and building «pre-integrative» local cooperation schemes;
- Russia failed even to re-build the USSR or keep peace on its own territory, let alone re-capture any satellites to the West: after initial frictions it acted side by side with the West in Balkan crises; and it swallowed the first NATO enlargement.

Now we are witnessing a fresh surge forward in NATO and EU membership, both including the Baltic States i.e. going right up to the borders of Russia and (in NATO's case) the shores of the Black Sea. In addition:

- the Balkans are clearly on the way to a longer-term 'integrated' solution and to becoming a truly European responsibility;
- Turkey has been making real progress towards EU entry (which would have enormous implications not least on the strategic front, giving the EU common frontiers with Iraq and Iran);
- Russia has not only acquiesced in the latest 'big-bang' enlargement, but has demanded a closer, more integrated relationship with NATO and EU for itself: hence the new NATO/Russia Council 'at 20', the discussion of an EU-Russia 'economic space', and so forth.

To sum up, we could say that Europe (if not the world) is becoming 'uni-polar', the scene of a single political, economic, social and security model for more than 400 million people. NATO in particular has not collapsed for lack of a «threat», but rather eaten up those who used to threaten it! But a whole new set of questions are bred by success itself:

- The impact of expansion on the enlarged institutions themselves: questions over their future coherence and efficiency in decision-making, the possibility of new internal divisions and power structures, and well-founded doubts over the degree of real popular understanding and support (in both 'new' and 'old' member countries).
- Are the Balkan conflicts really 'solved', are these countries and communities ready to behave well with purely European incentives and can Europe keep them in line without US back-up?
- Other new EU/NATO borders: how far does the zone of 'convertibility' to the 'European way' actually go (note the different challenges of Turkey, Ukraine etc.), how can the next stage of (much slower) conversion be handled, how should the West organize its relations with those 'new neighbours' who can't be converted in the foreseeable future?
- How 'Europeanized' is Russia really at this point in history, and how far can it be 'integrated' in the longer term? Will it accept the gradual extension of the European model to the former Soviet territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States as

well, or will it continue dreaming of a counter-bloc (an issue which could be brought to a head by new conflicts in the CIS and/or the possibility of European intervention)? What are the respective roles of NATO and the EU in guiding Russia away from the wrong and towards the right paths during this phase?

- What will be the impact of enlargement on West Europe's still 'semi-integrated' states (the Nordics, Ireland, Austria, Switzerland)?
- What role is left for the Council of Europe, OSCE, and sub-regional organizations?

Adaptation

Even without enlargement, Western institutions would be facing the need for change and adaptation today, in view of successive and cumulative shifts in security agendas. By simplifying somewhat, we may distinguish three 'waves' of challenge which have had different effects on the institutions and on their mutual relations.

A. The surge in demand for [Western-led] conflict management in Balkans and around the world, from the early 1990's to the end of 20th century. The consequences included the following:

- NATO was very much in demand for 'hard' and heavy' interventions (thanks not least to its ability to draw upon US assets): it had the decisive role in ending the original FRY conflict and the Kosovo crisis;
- in the process it learned useful lessons about the need for change in military organization, speeding up decision-taking, and learning to work with Russia and other non-member contributors;
- trial-and-error progress was made in burden-sharing among/collaboration with other institutions, notably during the phases of conflict resolution and peace building: this increased understanding of NATO's complementarity with the EU but also the OSCE and UN;
- after Kosovo, the EU also felt the need to have its own military option, and launched a CESDP devoted to crisis management (only), including the more targeted development of EU non-military (notably police) intervention capabilities. As with WEU earlier, the new EU policy was still based on 'dual-use' sharing of the same European military resources with NATO (though the detailed implementation of these 'Berlin-plus' arrangements became held up by Turkey/Greece problems).

B. From 2001 onwards, the 'asymmetrical' 'transnational' threats of terrorism and WMD proliferation went to the top of the agenda. They rapidly became linked with a focus on 'failed States' (Afghanistan) and 'rogue States' (Iraq) against which the US saw a need for military intervention to stop or preempt their cooperation with terrorists and/or the development of WMD. One effect of this was to maintain and even strengthen the emphasis on military deployment capability, but with these new twists: (i) the West might be starting military crises, not intervening in those started by others; and (ii) the US was now placing the emphasis on operational 'coalitions of the willing' rather than on an institutional approach (both for practical reasons and because it saw itself acting ultimately in self-defence). The consequences:

- NATO in mid-2002 accepted the possible need for operations world-wide, notably against terrorist targets. At the Prague Summit at end-2002 it took a new big step forward in military adaptation: the new Response Force, a new capabilities

commitment focussing on deployable forces, and the start of a drastic command structure reform. By end-2002 a role –subsequently expanded – had also been identified for NATO in support of an international peace-keeping force (ISAF) in Afghanistan;.

- NATO started handing over at least some of its military responsibilities in the Balkans to the EU: the Macedonian preventive operation, and possibly SFOR next (while the EU also set up a police operation under its own initiative in Bosnia-Hercegovina);.
- The EU in early 2002 took major steps in internal security («justice and home affairs») cooperation against terrorist activities, allowing an increasingly effective US/Brussels dialogue to develop on these subjects;
- But many significant aspects of West-West (and global) cooperation against these 'new threats' were played out in contexts quite <u>outside</u> both NATO and EU: eg the UN (with its new Counter-Terrorism Committee) arms control fora and agencies, and export control groupings; while some significant new initiatives (eg on ship searches) were also taken by new ad hoc groups.

C. The growing awareness since the turn of the 20th-21st century of threats to common security in <u>other dimensions not open to military remedies</u>: symbolized and highlighted by the SARS outbreak in early 2003, but including other human and animal diseases, environmental and climate change problems, refugeeism and uncontrolled migration, drugs trade and international crime. In the present context, the points to note are that:

- NATO has virtually no role in these fields (apart from expertise in civil defence, and a limited scientific programme);
- such common policies as do exist in Europe have been created by the EU, which has competence in all the relevant fields;
- US/European dialogue is carried out through still other, primarily global institutions.

Taking the impact of these three sets of challenges together (and leaving aside for the moment all extra complications due to US/Europe disagreements), we can note some <u>major outstanding issues</u> for NATO and EU in this field:

(a) Has the need for <u>collective territorial defence</u> through NATO been overtaken by the shift in threat pattern and change of Russia's role? Have NATO's practical adaptations (especially at Prague) shifted the focus from it irrevocably, at least at the material and operational level? If so,

(b) Is it actually safe to do this so soon? What is protecting the wider Europe's territory—nuclear deterrence? Is that still credible with fewer US forces in Europe, and with the new types of potential enemy we face?

(c) What will take the place of the 'collective defence experience' in restraining nationalism and creating solidarity, especially among new NATO/EU members? Do the EU's own internal security policies (and role in coping with non-military threats) inherit this function? What will happen to democratic discipline and the impetus for security sector reform within the enlarged NATO?

(d) Will NATO's more focussed, global-capable intervention capabilities actually be used and under what circumstances? Will not the US prefer unilateral action or coalitions for 'real' crises, and would all Allies be able to agree anyway on starting an anti-terrorist action under a NATO flag? If not, does the Alliance risk being reduced to a 'tool-box' for follow-on actions and/or in response to outside political

requests? Has NATO lost for good its role as a forum to <u>discuss</u> imminent and emerging threats?

(e) Could US/Europe combined deployments in NATO also be undermined by the widening gap in defence resources, technology and tactical doctrines?

(f) Can Europe provide the resources (and/or improve its defence resource use) to make CESDP operations credible and sustainable, with or without the loan of US assets? How much further can the Europeans get without a serious attempt at role specialization?

(g) Can the EU improve its capability to coordinate multi-functional interventions (military/police, civilian/military etc)? Should complex multi-institutional interventions be reduced to fewer institutions, or coordination be improved?

(h) What respective chances do NATO and the EU have of adapting themselves further to meet the latest emerging set of challenges (B and C above) so as to maintain their relevance and vitality? If the odds are on the EU doing better (in some aspects of the asymmetric, and all the non-military fields), is a new strategic US/Europe link needed to discuss and to coordinate on these challenges?

<u>Iraq and Euro-Atlantic splits</u>

What has already been said should make clear that, even if the US and European countries hadn't quarrelled over anything specific in 2001-3, the changing security environment would already have <u>altered</u> the nature of the post-WW2 Euro-Atlantic security contract, <u>weakened</u> the strategic basis for and the daily experience of collective territorial defence as the hard core of NATO, relatively <u>enhanced</u> the EU's importance both as a provider of security and a dialogue partner of the US, increased the Western community's <u>diversity</u> through enlargement and the new role of Russia, and relativised the security role both of NATO and the EU because of the greater number of challenges now needing <u>global</u> treatment. The US/European and European/European quarrels of 2001-2003 cannot be blamed for these underlying changes and challenges: what they have done is to highlight and expose them, and to provide a focus for much of the worry and uncertainty that Western thinkers and citizens should already have been feeling at such a time. I believe it is too soon to say that they have <u>aggravated</u> the problems in a concrete and lasting sense, because getting a challenge out into the open is sometimes an important step towards dealing with it: but more on that in my final set of questions.

The events in question are well known, so I will list rather the set of <u>issues</u> which have caused division (in approximate time sequence):

- the new sense of urgency about, and diagnosis of, terrorism and WMD threats (the US tendency to generalize the threat versus the European emphasis on the particular causes; different views of priorities and remedies, etc.)
- the US theory of preemptive strike
- the general issue of respect for existing treaties and institutions, and the (national and international) rule of law
- the US belief that the fall of Saddam Hussein could start a democratic 'domino effect' in the region, even without progress on Israel/Palestine (and different views between the US and Europe on the nature/function of other regional states)
- the US decision to invade Iraq in the middle of UN-mandated inspections and without a UN mandate.

It is important to note that it was <u>this last point (only)</u> which split the Europeans, leading to the 'letters of the 8 and 10', 'old' versus 'new' Europeans, and perhaps ultimately the France/Germany/Belgium/Luxembourg 'mini-Summit' on ESDP. On all the other issues the Europeans were more or less united throughout against the US (and remain so). Moreover, it is worth remembering that there were no major splits at any time over the concurrent handling of Afghanistan, and that there was <u>not</u> a US/European argument over whether to use NATO (or the EU) to lead either the Afghanistan or the Iraq operation—both sides assumed these would be (at least initially) classic 'coalition' actions. Significantly, thus, the Euro-Atlantic institutions were neither the <u>medium</u> nor the <u>subject</u> of the key US-European conflict: rather they were the <u>victims</u> of its effects.

At any rate, the serious <u>impact</u> of the Iraq-related splits cannot be doubted:

- damage to and temporary paralysis of the UN
- unseemly competitive lobbying of third countries
- a nasty crisis in NATO (in February 2003 over protection to Turkey)
- a crisis of confidence in EU, claims that 'CFSP had become a bad joke' etc
- major anti-US demonstrations throughout Europe, pressures for polarization in the attitudes of political leaders and in government policies
- as increasing intellectual consensus (on both sides) that for whatever reasons – historical, strategic, governance-related, cultural – the US and Europe have moved apart in their security <u>visions</u> and <u>values</u> as well as their near-term <u>preferences</u> and <u>potentials</u>.

In turning to the <u>ultimate effects</u> of the crisis, it is interesting to relate it to the trends already discussed above and to note that:

- it has not stopped enlargement;
- it has not altered (or caused a new view of) Russia's orientation: Russia essentially acted during 2002-3 <u>within the spectrum</u> of 'wider West' behaviour;
- it has not stopped, but has probably promoted, the adaptation of the EU and NATO to new tasks.

On this basis, we might draw even quite a reassuring picture of the crisis's 'educational' effects, building especially on what has been happening since June 2003 in a period of apparent re-bound, reaction and second thoughts:

- the US has been experiencing the limits of its troops' competence, and of the use of military power as such, in trying to control and reconstruct Iraq
- hence the signs of new readiness and even keenness on Washington's part to seek others' help, including the Europeans and to a growing extent the UN
- a sincere, if hitherto unsuccessful US drive for progress between Israel and the Palestinians
- the US clearly does not want to use military methods against Iran or North Korea
- there are signs of convergence in US and European (and regional powers') attitudes and efforts towards these specific WMD challenges
- the EU has adopted a new WMD strategy paper and approved Solana's paper on general security strategy, both of which texts recognise the possible need for the use of force in the toughest cases

- at the European Convention in 2002-3, the Europeans were eventually united on measures to strengthen the EU's external voice and decision-making, and to extend the range and depth of CESDP
- the EU has shown resolve to tackle out-of-area problems independently when necessary, by sending a military peacekeeping force to the Congo
- the biggest yet efforts for defence reform and general economic structural reform have been undertaken in Germany.

What this shows, however, strictly speaking is that both the US and Europe are capable of learning lessons when failures hit them in the face (unfortunately, not before!), and that the Euro-Atlantic relationship <u>overall</u> still has an elastic quality which will bring both sides back to try to meet with each other after being stretched too far apart. It does not necessarily mean that the two sides have truly overcome, still less forgotten, their differences. European behaviour in particular might be explained by prudence and caution—not unlike that shown by Russia and China—towards a country whose military might has been so recently and dramatically displayed. Decision-making in Washington is affected by the specific circumstances of a looming election and a concurrent delicate economic and financial situation. At the same time, the credibility of politicians on both sides is being shaken by revelations and debates over the possibly faulty information with which their gravest decisions were motivated or, at least, explained. The general climate of opinion remains one of uncertainty, mutual distrust and disillusionment on a scale rather different from (e.g.) the post-Kosovo phase: as if the <u>structural</u> shifts and changes in the Atlantic system which have been gathering ever since 1989 have finally (belatedly?) found their <u>conscious</u>, <u>psychological</u> reflection.

The final set of questions to ask about where we go from here in trans-Atlantic relations are in a way rather simple, but also very open because what we are talking about is a <u>political</u> relationship characterized both by free will and subjectivity:

(i) Has the US in any sense 'learned a lesson' from the aftermath of Iraq? How do the neo-cons interpret the story, how much influence do they and will they have? Does the present more cautious approach reflect untypical, temporary circumstances and/or the lack of any other immediate targets as 'easy' as Iraq? In sum, what security policy will the <u>next</u> President (Bush or other) declare at the start of his Presidency? What will he have to say about the next steps in development of US national force planning and the way ahead on Homeland Security?

(ii) Internationally, will the US maintain an 'instrumental' approach to the UN and NATO—i.e. using them only when convenient and when the results are guaranteed to be in line with US national interest—or begin again to recognize a more general value in them as a framework for 'managing' and 'leading' the group of the world's largest powers and the group of Atlantic Allies respectively? Could the US support/initiate any new moves to add to and reinvigorate these bodies' agenda?

(iii) Can we expect continuity or change in the present US hostility to Treaty-based and international-law based restraints, and if the former, what outer limits does this set to trans-Atlantic reconciliation?

(iv) What would be the impact of any new major terrorist outrages directed against the US, Europe, NATO and the EU?

(v) In the longer term, what will be the impact on the US's policy of its growing economic/trade/financial interdependence with other developed powers including Europe, and of an increasingly shared vulnerability to non-military threats? Could a time come when an 'economic cement' or 'social cement' based on recognition of

shared interests in these fields, and expressed through a US/EU link, takes the place that NATO had in the second half of the last century as strategic cement for the wider West—and makes it easier inter alia to live with recurring disagreements on the traditional security front?

(vi) Will the EU succeed in its present attempts to restore unity, increase its external effectiveness, and develop instruments of power (including military options) for the wider world? Will the 'solidarity' principle on non-military threats (proposed at the European Convention and embodied in the draft EU Constitution) become an important and concrete feature of its internal culture? If so, will this demand changes in its governance and/or its ideals? Could its attitude become more 'US-like' as it becomes more used to the power game? If not, will a weaker and more split Europe be helpful or damaging on balance for US policy?

(vii) What kind of relationship would a stronger EU seek with the US—close alignment, complementarity, competition or a balance of all these? What will be the emerging areas of closest EU/US cooperation and what will be the sharpest remaining disagreements? Which institutional channel(s) will be most important for shaping and controlling this relationship?

(viii) Where and how will Russia come into the picture?

(ix) Whose example will the rest of the world try to follow?