

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY
NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

**EUROPEAN SECURITY DEFENSE POLICY –
WHY THE U.S. NEEDS TO SUPPORT**

A PAPER SUBMITTED TO
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In December 1999, the leaders of the 15-nation European Union (EU) endorsed a plan to develop an independent military force within three years. This plan is part of a bid by Europe's most stable and affluent democracies to assume a greater role in security responsibilities on the continent. Referred to initially as the European Security Defense Initiative (ESDI), this plan, now called the European Security Defense Policy (ESDP), includes an initiative to build a European crisis-response force of up to 60,000 troops by no later than 2003. Initially, this program was hailed as a long-overdue program for the more affluent and stable European nations to assume more responsibility for their own security. However, this initiative is now a more controversial proposition than it seemed when first proposed. Some U.S. and other NATO leaders have voiced concerns that this initiative could erode the U.S.'s guaranteed presence and leadership on the European continent leading to potential instability in Europe. This paper will argue, that for both political and military reasons, the European Security Defense Policy should be fully embraced by the U.S. and the U.S. should continue to support the "separable but not separate" European defense entity remaining under the NATO umbrella.¹ Given the changing character of conflict on the European continent, this initiative will help ensure continued U.S. involvement in Europe stability, continue the viability of NATO in a changing security environment, and begin to develop a European defense capability needed for the changing environment in Europe.

The discussion of a European common security and defense policy is not new. Nor are the issues raised in the United States about such an initiative and the implications for the "Atlantic Alliance" and US interests in and beyond Europe. In fact, these issues were center stage during the 1948 Brussels Pact that established the Western European Union (WEU), the

¹ William Drozdiak, "U.S. Tepid on European Defense Plan," The Washington Post, December 1999, p. 1.

Washington Treaty that led to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the French attempt to stall German Rearmament with the proposal of the European Defense Community (EDC) in 1950. The German entry into NATO in 1955 and entry in the Western alliance gave a renewed start to the idea of Europe as a united community. The Rome Treaties in June 1957 that started the European Economic Community (EEC) which ultimately led to the European Union (EU) are historical examples that the goal of a common foreign and defense/security policy in Europe is not new.² These efforts to develop a common defense policy have taken many forms over the years but have ultimately led to very little capability other than structures, organizations, and forums to discuss European security issues. The political resolve and consensus among European allies in the past resulted in little progress. Given the history of what Europeans say and then Europe's failures to follow through, it is tempting for the U.S. to dismiss ESDP altogether or provide, at best, lukewarm support. This U.S. skepticism is justified. However, the prospects of ESDP seem more serious today as Europeans feel passionate about a common European defense policy with ties to the EU. With this renewed interests, the prospect of it succeeding in a substantive way is better than any in the past. ESDP may succeed over the next decade given the changing political, social and economic context in Europe and provide significant improvements given the changing roles and missions of NATO as we start the new millennium.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the political, social, and economic context in Europe has changed dramatically. NATO, the centerpiece of post world war American foreign policy and defense, ensured the security of Western Europe for over 50 years. Now with peace

² Simon Serfaty, "European Common Foreign, Security, and Defense Policies: Implications for the United States and the Atlantic Alliance," testimony as Director of the European Program for Strategic and International Studies to the House Committee on International Relations, November 10, 1999, p. 1-2.

maintained in Western Europe, the loss of the enemy with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and continued and dramatic economic bonds in Europe through the EU, NATO has taken a series of initiatives to adapt to the new security environment. Force structure, strategic concepts, missions, and alliance institutions have or are changing. Force structures are less than one-third their size during the Cold War. NATO's new strategic concept emphasizes crisis management and peace operations. The alliance is partnering with the former Warsaw Pact states and three of its former enemies are now members of NATO. NATO has essentially evolved from a "collective defense" arrangement into a "collective security" arrangement.³ NATO's new military strategy de-emphasizes forward defense and calls for NATO to play a more political role in European affairs. NATO's new strategic concept is to serve as the one of most indispensable foundations for stable security environment in Europe. Secondly, NATO continues as the forum for the Trans-Atlantic security issues, continue to deter and defend against any threat of an aggressor against a NATO member state, and finally continue to preserve the strategic balance in Europe. With this strategic concept, NATO's restated mission changed significantly. The mission expanded to be concerned with security issues on the continent as a whole and the threats to security broadened to functional terms that address territorial disputes, ethnic rivalries, and political and economic problems throughout Europe.⁴ Given these strategic changes, NATO must continue to operate in an environment of continual change and must adapt its organization and security concepts to enhance peace and security in Europe. Above all, the alliance must continue to serve as the foundation of the collective security of its members while committed to a

³ Robert Hunter, "Maximizing NATO: A Relevant Alliance Knows How to Reach," Foreign Affairs, vol. 78, no.3 (May/June 1999), p. 190-191.

⁴ "NATO Alliance Strategic Concept," NATO meeting in Washington D.C, April 24, 1999.

balanced and dynamic partnership. This commitment to a balanced and dynamic partnership emphasizes the importance of adapting and fostering the development of ESDP.

The discussion of ESDP has once again renewed the debate of “burdensharing” – the sharing of defense responsibilities and capabilities across the Atlantic. As Cold War ended, the U.S. particularly the Congress argued for the Europeans to take on more responsibility for European security and not to rely on the U.S. for crises that seemed on the surface European only. This issue continued to boil as the Bosnia conflict grew in the early 1990s. On the European side, the growth of support for a common security entity developed for a different reason. The idea of the ESDP grew as part of the Western European Union (WEU)⁵ to help the EU with its common foreign security policy. This concept was to strengthen support for a common defense and provide insurance against America, one day, electing not to help support a security threat in Europe. To further add to the importance of ESDP, the gap between the European military capability and the U.S. continues to grow. The gap comes in many forms from the technological gap as demonstrated in the Kosovo Air Campaign, the declining European defense budgets compared to the U.S., and the lack of focused and corporative defense initiatives among Europe major countries. Finally, the lack of ability for Europeans to contribute peacekeeping forces at previously agreed upon levels in Kosovo and Bosnia serves as further examples to the growing gap between the Europeans and the U.S.⁶

The ESDP initiative, largely led by France with its desire to lead Europe in military affairs, took a remarkable change when in 1996 the allies, with British support, agreed that this capability should be created within NATO. The idea was to create a military capability that

⁵ The Western European Union was established by the 1948 Brussels Treaty and called for collective security and defense of nations involved in economic, social, and cultural matters. The WEU allows only European matters and

avoided duplication of NATO assets and was “separable but not separate.” NATO would remain the primary defense alliance and the Europeans would ask America first whether it wished to participate in case of a crisis. In December 1998, the allies agreed that NATO would conduct joint planning with the WEU and the deputy supreme allied commander would serve as the commander of a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF).⁷ The CJTF concept is designed to be a flexible command, which can be detached from NATO main forces for use either by NATO, or by the WEU for European-only missions. Current plans call for the establishment of one mobile command and control headquarters, together with a planning capability. This HQ would be able to call on NATO forces for any given mission. These forces would be detached from NATO main forces and put under the command of the CJTF HQ. NATO military assets are still required, including U.S. transportation and satellite-based communication/intelligence assets. In December 1999, senior defense officials of France, Germany, Britain and other members of the EU agreed to develop the capability by 2003 to field a crisis-response force of up to 60,000 troops and 300 to 500 aircraft for up to a year. This force could serve as peacekeepers under European control and could be sent within 60 days to a crisis situation in Europe’s periphery – a Bosnia or Kosovo type crisis.⁸ This force and the details are still in flux as the Europeans continue to work through the major issues involving force structure, capabilities, country contributions, equipping, along with the name change that occurred this spring from EDSI to ESDP. Additionally, the December 1999 proposal discussed the creation of a European political and security committee of senior officials in Brussels and a committee of senior defense chiefs

is directly linked to security policy of the EU. Summarized from “Eurojargon,” National Affairs Training Center, U.S. State Department, May 1998.

⁶ William Drozdiak, “U.S. Tepid on European Defense Plan.”

⁷ Robert E. Hunter, “Maximizing NATO: A Relevant Alliance Knows How to Reach,” p. 202.

⁸ Craig R. Whitney, “Europe Says Its Strike Force Won’t Impair Role of NATO,” The New York Times, December 2, 1999.

from the participating countries to advise, continuing a tendency of the “European solution” to create structure over capabilities.⁹ The plan is still in the concept phase as both senior political and military leaders of the major European nations continue down the development path. With the political environment uncertain, it will be difficult to execute without great political leadership and focus on the part of European leaders along with consistent U.S. support.

The current U.S. position on ESDP can be summed up by what the U.S. State Department calls the “three D’s”. The European defense initiative should not “decouple” the U.S. from Europe, it should not “duplicate” NATO structures and capabilities, and it must not “discriminate” against NATO members that do not belong to the EU.¹⁰ ESDP and its capability must remain under NATO umbrella. From the U.S. perspective, NATO is the most important alliance that exists and should be the basis for all security issues and decisions in Europe. Duplication of effort in structure or capability is wasteful with the current and future environment of shrinking European defense budgets. The idea of military capabilities “separable but not separate” from NATO alliance makes fiscal sense. The U.S. insisted and received the European agreement to “ask America first” as to whether it wishes to be involved in a security crisis. The U.S. also insisted on NATO conducting planning jointly with the EU and the development of ESDI. Finally, the U.S. position is somewhat vague on the primary tasks for this force as it develops. Currently, the initial force appears to be working toward a peacekeeping capability and this seems to be the direction of the European effort.

The U.S. support of ESDP is critical for its success and can make great improvements in the overall health of the Atlantic alliance. Currently, ESDP has the political backing of the most

⁹ William S. Cohen, “European Security and Defense Identity, remarks by the Secretary of Defense at the Hotel Bayerischer Hof, Munich, Germany, Saturday, February 5, 2000.

important European leaders and the U.S. must capitalize on this renewed effort of the Europeans. Any U.S. response that the Europeans would see as lukewarm could hamper the process. As Javier Solana, the EU commissioner in charge of common foreign and security policy stated just recently:

We seem to be damned if we do and damned if we don't by our American friends, so this time we have decided to bear the criticism for going ahead. I've been working on initiatives to build European unity for many years now, and I've never seen so much will and determination as over the defense project.¹¹

From a political perspective, ESDP needs to be seen in the U.S., and particularly the Congress, as the Europeans' effort to assume a greater degree of common defense in Europe. The criticism of adequate burdensharing in Congress has been a continuing theme from the early 1990s if not during the later parts of the Cold War. Regional conflicts over ethnic or religious differences like Bosnia and Kosovo will continue to be the most likely crisis Europe will face in the future. This type of conflict usually results in the requirement of peacekeepers to head off a conflict or forces on the ground for an extended period once the conflict has been resolved. ESDP can provide a forum, initially in a symbolic way and a substantive way in the future, to achieve development of European defense capabilities to address this type of conflict. The current plans to field a peacekeeping force of 60,000 can go along way to relieving the burden on U.S. forces currently entrenched in Bosnia and Kosovo.

From a military perspective, the U.S. needs to continue to develop and strengthen its coalitions. In both Joint Vision 2010 and the draft of Joint Vision 2020, the Chairman calls for coalitions with our allies that effectively integrate them. JV 2010 requires routine, integrated,

¹⁰ Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, "European Security Defense Identity," text from Speech given January 28, 1998 at the Institute for Security Studies, Paris.

¹¹ William Drozdiak, "U.S. Tepid on European Defense Plan."

full spectrum multinational planning and training, proactive coalition building, international involvement in concept development and integration. As an end-state, JV 2010 envisions integrated alliance capabilities that leverage the strengths of each partner, enhanced lethal and non-lethal capability in offense and defense operations, and similar coalition doctrine, training, and education.¹² ESDP provides the forum to develop and refine these capabilities and potentially address the “gap” that currently exists and threatens our ability to move as JV 2010 points. Furthermore, ESDP can serve as the renewed forum for coalition-shared development of capabilities. ESDP can be used to leverage the defense budgets of all alliance countries that continue to fall. Currently the European members of NATO spend about 60 percent of the amount the U.S. spends in its military budgets. But because of duplication, the Europeans come nowhere close to duplicating the 60 percent capability the U.S. is able to produce. Furthermore, the U.S. spends annually about \$35 billion on defense R&D while the rest of NATO countries spend only \$9 billion.¹³ The Kosovo war revealed embarrassing military weaknesses among European nations, particularly in the areas of precision strike, mobility, command and control, and communications capabilities. These shortfalls impeded the conduct of the air campaign and will continue to do so in the future. Left to go it alone, the Europeans have little chance of correcting separately because most allied governments are reluctant to spend more money on defense in an era of tight budgets, high unemployment and no visible military threats. ESDP can serve as the forum to foster this coalition effort to address these shortfalls. In fact, the merging of ESDP with the NATO initiative called the Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) can provide synergistic benefits. The DCI initiative, sponsored under the NATO umbrella, seeks to enhance allied military capabilities in six areas: deployment and mobility, sustainment, effective

¹² Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Vision 2010, 1996.

engagement, survivability of forces and infrastructure, command and control, and information systems.¹⁴ The U.S. must continue to exert its leadership in the development of ESDP. Progress continues to be made on the links between the EU and NATO and the need for a security agreement is required. The U.S. must continue to push for substantive capabilities and just not more structure of bureaucracy. Finally, the focus on capabilities must also include links with NATO allies that are not members of the EU – Norway and Turkey being to key non-EU members. ESDP can leverage the political will it currently has to enhance the alliance and serve as the focus for real defense capability improvements.

No discussion of ESDP is complete without highlighting the dangers and pitfalls to seeing this initiative providing some real defense capability improvement. First and foremost, the lack of political willingness over the long term on the part of European political leadership is real and has plagued most real change in the past. The U.S. must recognize this and continue to foster the development. Secondly, ESDP can lead to a 2-tiered alliance – one where Europeans only focused on the low-intensity spectrum of conflict such as peacekeeping while leaving the high intensity fight to a U.S. primarily led effort – an unhealthy balance that exists today and potentially threatens the alliance in the future. The realities of defense budgets have a play in this project and are a source of considerable concern. For example, Germany plans to reduce its defense budget by \$10 billion over the next four years, a figure that is of great concern with only 1.4 percent of its gross national product going to defense. This figure is low and represents the realities of European defense budgets as they move to develop a more relevant capability. Finally, there is the challenge of isolationist movements in Congress along with NATO skeptics

¹³ William Drozdiak, "Cohen Criticizes German Arms Cuts, The Washington Post, December 2, 1999, P. A29.

¹⁴ Department of Defense, Report to Congress: Kosovo/Operation allied Force After-Action Report, 31 January, 2000, p. 24-26.

who will capitalize on this effort to renewed the battle to drawdown our 100,000 U.S. troops in Europe. These pitfalls aside, the ESDP will only succeed with U.S. leadership compelling our European allies to continue to support such initiatives.

In summary, the ESDP, while a concept only, has the potential to provide an improved political and military ability for the Europeans to address the future security challenges of the European continent. However, the U.S. must take a leadership role to support and guide this initiative to ensure a continued viable NATO with strong European partners. ESDP is to provide the litmus test of the political resolve of Europe to develop more compatible defense programs. This improved and compatible defense program will provide a greater responsibility to enhance peace and security, strengthen the alliance by moving toward a more coherent and effective contribution to the missions and new actives of the alliance, reinforce the transatlantic partnership, and provide the opportunity for our European allies to act alone in the future. The prospects for ESDP seem more serious today, and they may even succeed over the next decade. On the whole, these efforts deserve encouragement. Notwithstanding the adjustments that might be imposed on the exercise of US leadership, a more united and stronger Europe within a more coherent and powerful Atlantic Alliance will serve US interests well, and certainly much better than any plausible alternative.

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