

EU's Mission in Macedonia¹ – milestone for EU's ESDP or proof of EU's dependence on its transatlantic partners?

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On the 1st of April 2003, the EU began its first military mission in Macedonia. Co-named *Concordia*, this mission took over from NATO to ensure continued stability in the small former Yugoslav Republic. Politically, this mission is extremely important, coming at a time when the EU's newborn and fragile CFSP has been "left in tatters by deep divisions over Iraq".¹

This mission is aimed to symbolize EU's military capacities, acting as a cornerstone in the development of ESDP. However, it also shows how limited these capabilities are and how dependent they become, when such a small mission (250 men) was only possible after an EU-NATO agreement on the EU's use of NATO's assets. From this assumption, one can assume that this mission also shows how important the EU-NATO cooperation, and therefore the transatlantic link remain for the European Union.

In order to prove these assumptions, I will now analyse the EU/NATO agreement on the use of NATO's assets and its consequences on the take-over of the NATO Allied Harmony mission in Macedonia, analysing the constraints created by both EU and NATO countries, and therefore showing how the EU is dependent on NATO to act, and how the gap between the countries that don't belong to both organizations brings huge difficulties to EU's actions in this field. I will also try to understand if this dependency is to be kept, or otherwise, if the EU's developments towards independence in this field can damage the EU/NATO cooperation, therefore the transatlantic relationship.

1 – A difficult EU/NATO agreement – The “mirage” of Macedonia mission

I have memories of the EU wanting to take over command of Task Force Fox in Macedonia and there has not been much talk of this recently, and I think that we, all of us in this room, know why that is – there is a Turkish/Greek difference of opinion on NATO/EU co-operation and I would like to know whether both of you expect this to be resolved at or by the Copenhagen Summit, and if not, what is going to happen to EU's plans?"²

The future of the ESDP is finally taking shape with EU's first military operations in the Balkans - The undertaking of the NATO's mission in FYROM/Macedonia.

This important development in the EU's security and defence capabilities was made possible by an agreement between EU and NATO on the EU access to military equipment and support services. But the path to this achievement was not an easy one.

The above quote from EU's High Representative, Javier Solana gives us the overall picture of the EU's constraints to start and take-over military missions (the so-called Petersberg tasks) in the Balkans and assuming its security role in the International Arena. Indeed, without the green light from the NATO countries, EU cannot take-over a military mission, because its ability to act in the defence and security field is dependent on the use of assets that the EU itself does not possess – the assets provided by NATO.

¹ In "EU takes over in Macedonia", EU Observer, 31.03.2003.

² SOLANA Javier, "What can we contribute to a revitalised transatlantic security partnership", Prague 2002, challenge and change for NATO.

In December 2002, before the Prague Summit, the negotiations between the EU and NATO were still blocked by Turkey, with no end to the deadlock in sight. Turkey insisted on a decision-making role in all EU military operations, whereas the EU said it was out of the question because NATO member Turkey does not belong to the EU. These reservations were going on for two years, and had to deal with both Turkey and Greece seeking assurances that any EU peacekeeping force would use NATO assets to meddle in the eastern Mediterranean, in particular in the divided island of Cyprus.

NATO and the EU had already agreed the Berlin and Berlin Plus agreements, which allow the EU to have 'assured' and 'presumed' access to NATO capabilities, but Turkey's block enabled the previous agreements to take place.

Finally on the 16th of December 2002, after the NATO Summit of Prague, (where an agreement hadn't been reached yet) this deadlock was finally overcome. EU and NATO formally sealed this cooperation pact, after Turkey overcame its objections. This development was possible after the EU, once more promised a date for the launching of EU membership talks for this country. And although Turkey failed to secure a firm date it finally redrew its objections.

2 – Deepening transatlantic security through EU/NATO cooperation and the difficulties of the transatlantic relationship.

This episode of a non-EU country, Turkey, having the control to the allowance of the use of NATO assets by the European Union in the peacekeeping of Macedonia shows the need for greater transparency and links between EU and NATO. NATO states that do not belong to the EU have expressed concerns of being sidelined in the event that a military action is taken under ESDP in the prospect of a military autonomous European Union.

This was referred to, by several authors as a problem of "discrimination", one of Madeleine Albright's 3D's, that were US's concerns on the development of ESDP. Indeed, this issue can affect EU-NATO transparency. And although the other two D's (Duplication and decoupling have already been solved, this one still brings concerns to the overall EU/NATO relationship.

The problem is, indeed the discrimination of a NATO member that doesn't belong to the EU. And here we can better understand Turkey's concerns over the use by the EU of NATO's assets, which are Turkey's assets too, when Turkey itself cannot be part of the mission.

And because of this lack of transparency, there is a danger of the two organizations having a slow and inefficient response to a crisis because they are discussing and having disputes over jurisdiction, while the same crisis gets out of control.

Macedonia mission was supposed to be the first step to an autonomous EU operation. But Turkey's veto seems to have proven the opposite – that this capacity is not an autonomous one and that indeed, EU-NATO joint actions end-up being slow and less effective than a singular NATO action. And finally, the take-over of the mission by the EU had to be postponed twice until finally an agreement was reached in December 2002.

This feature shows the overall EU dependency on NATO to act in the military field, while the latter remains the main collective security organization.

Conclusion – Where do these developments lead us?

We do not have the luxury of living on separate planets. On this small planet, whose problems abound, neither the United States nor the European Union will find an alternative substantial partner which shares to such a complete degree values and interests. A little perspective and a re-commitment to some guiding principles are modest but useful starting points if the most

*successful partnership of the 20th century is to prove itself up to the challenges of the century ahead.*³

The episode of Macedonia is the exact picture of today's NATO/EU relationship. The experience of the management of the crisis in FYROM, where the common EU-NATO action played an essential role in bringing a dangerous internal conflict to an end before it developed into full-scale civil war, underscores the importance of the relationship.

The management of this conflict is the perfect example of transatlantic cooperation, where we had negotiations for the peace agreement led by NATO officials and Secretary General Lord Robertson, by EU officials, namely Javier Solana (and we need to remember that even when he doesn't want to, Solana acts in a double hat of EU's Mr. PESC and former NATO Secretary General) and also by US officials, considered to have had an important role for the good development of the negotiations.

And indeed, diplomats stress that the launch of the Macedonia force shows that the EU-US relationship is still working, despite the transatlantic strains, since Washington had to approve NATO's agreement to help the EU's "fledgling defense ambitions".⁴

The EU-NATO agreement and the following pass of the torch from NATO to EU in Macedonia, show that cooperation between Europe and US is still possible and going on in the security field, despite the differences magnified by the Iraq war and the lack of support of the EU as a whole to the US policy.

But this agreement shows also the maintenance of a European Union dependent of NATO and the transatlantic partners to act in the security field. The EU tries to develop its capabilities in this field and the question is if these developments lead to a competition of forces or to a healthy transatlantic cooperation.

In a move designed to close the so-called ambition gap between the Union's desire and ability to act on the world stage, we have two scenarios:

The first is to rely on NATO as the basis of collective defence with an important role in crisis management, and therefore developing the ESDP, maintaining this spirit of cooperation and contributing to the vitality of the transatlantic link. This first scenario has one problem – It means that EU will fear the possibility of blocked decisions because of non-EU Member States, possibility that will grow with a 26 Member states' NATO.

The second scenario is the developing of EU's independent capabilities, but this means the need for a major increase on the CFSP budget, also meaning to run the risk of damaging the transatlantic link, taking away the ability of US to have a saying on EU's security affairs.

It seems to me that the words of the EU's High representative, Javier Solana, show the present and future attitude of EU in this field, even despite the problems to overcome after the transatlantic disagreements over US policy in Iraq.

It seems to me that although important for the development of the European Security and Defence Policy, the Macedonia episode shows even better the maintenance of a strong link between the EU and its transatlantic partners in the security field. It shows even better how important this cooperation is in the future, and the importance of the EU-NATO agreements proof this dependency and need for further cooperation.

Although we have a greater variety of instruments to use in conflict prevention, we still don't have the force enough to back them efficiently alone. We cannot forget Kofi

³ SOLANA Javier, address to the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University "Mars and Venus reconciled: A new era for transatlantic relations" - April 7th 2003.

⁴ BLACK Ian, "EU poised to take over peace role in Macedonia", in *The Guardian*, March 19 2003.

Annan's words: "You can do a lot with diplomacy, but you can do a lot more with diplomacy backed up by firmness and force"⁵

The EU isn't, by any chance developing into an **independent** actor in the European and world security. It may be reinforcing its role in the security field, but only in the logic of a fairest burden sharing with its partners, namely the United States. And that seems to me, to be the best logic to a continued healthy and profitable relationship for both sides of the Atlantic.

With both EU and NATO enlargement on the horizon, the US and the EU must work together to adapt to the changing geopolitical environment, leading to the broadening of not only the issues to address, but also the scope of the relationships.

"Despite certain periods during which the US and Europe appear to be travelling down increasingly different roads, there is an underlying similarity in values and mutual respect that will provide a strong foundation for security cooperation between NATO and the ESDP".⁶

This should be the basis for EU/NATO understanding. Scholars as Robert Kagan, well known for their polemic statements have to be understood in the perspective of important contributions for the development of the EU/US/NATO relationships and not a the triggers of non-cooperation. Their contribution is important to the point that they ask for more attention to be given to the differences between the transatlantic partners, in order for this cooperation to be improved.

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⁵ Quoted in REYNOLDS Christopher, "Future tense, ESDP and the challenge for transatlantic relations". Master's thesis, College of Europe, Bruges, 2001.

⁶ DAVIS Samantha Paige, "The Long-term Outlook for NATO and ESDP: Moving toward Tighter Cooperation or the Break-up of the Western Alliance?", in LANG Peter, *Unraveling the European Security and Defence Conundrum*, Studies in Contemporary History and Security Policy, 2003.

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