

British 155mm howitzer on Glamoc range in Bosnia.



Fleet Combat Camera Atlantic (Richard Roeser)

European Security and Defense Identity:

Berlin, St. Malo, and Beyond

By ALEXANDER R. VERSHBOW

The issue of the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) is not new. Long before the recent meeting between the British and French heads of state at St. Malo, Europeans considered strengthening the European pillar of the Alliance, and encouraged a security role for the European Union (EU) and its eventual friendly takeover of the Western European Union (WEU). The result is a new proposal for a new time, based on the accords reached in the last five years—especially breakthroughs made at the 1996 North Atlantic Council ministerial meeting held in Berlin.

Europeans must improve their capabilities for force projection and sustainability if ESDI is to be more than a slogan, and they have taken up this challenge. In the past, European discussions of ESDI have dealt almost entirely with institutional arrangements. These are important—and one should not diminish either the significance of ESDI for European construction or the deepening of EU integration. But any discussion of ESDI that is not based on real capabilities and commitments will be just a paper drill. These points were central to the summons issued by Prime Minister Blair for a renewed European dialogue on ESDI and for an emphasis on capabilities that must be applauded.

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The French role in such events is a very positive development. In time, increased efforts to coordinate improvements in capabilities—if indeed this is a result of St. Malo—can lead to greater interoperability between France and other allies. Greater French involvement with NATO military structures—particularly if Paris decides to participate fully—will strengthen ESDI within NATO, given the formidable capabilities that France brings to the table.

The overall direction in the wake of the St. Malo meeting is positive, and we look forward to a continuing exchange on ESDI. As Secretary of State Albright has observed, the United States welcomes a more capable European partner with modern, flexible military forces that can put out fires in Europe's back yard and work with the

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Alliance to defend common interests. A stronger ESDI will depend not only on strengthening decisionmaking structures and collective political will, but also on tangible improvements in European military capabilities which promote ESDI.

At the same time, the framework of transatlantic cooperation as well as the Berlin decisions of 1996 are important and positive developments that must be taken into account as ESDI evolves. Improved military capabilities will shore up the foundation of the ESDI structure, but we also need to preserve the transatlantic roof for ESDI established at Berlin.

Questions and Pitfalls

In the United States, both Congress and the public are looking for a more equitable sharing of responsibilities within the Alliance. A robust ESDI that preserves the transatlantic dimension of the Atlantic Alliance will make both Europe and NATO stronger, and that is essential to sustaining American support. However, problems may arise as Europe reflects on the advance of ESDI.

First, a high priority must be placed on finalizing the remaining work from Berlin to build ESDI within NATO. We should not lose sight of this important work, which holds real promise. We are close to the finish line, but time is getting short, and we must press on and finish the job by the Washington Summit. There will be room to take the process further after Washington, once the framework is set. More dual-hatting at different levels of the planning and command structure will enable WEU or EU to prepare for and conduct Petersburg missions without the need to create duplicate structures—which would be both costly and politically divisive.

Second, the United States—like the United Kingdom—is open-minded about institutional arrangements Europeans may want to make for a future security and defense identity. Because of support for a strong ESDI and the fruitful relationship between NATO and WEU, there is interest in the institutional side of ESDI should a defense dimension be injected into the European Union. A chief concern is that in exploring ways to transpose the NATO-WEU relationship into a possible NATO-EU framework, we ensure that the new relationship embodies and preserves the principles which were so carefully crafted in Berlin.

One particularly important point contained in the Berlin communique was the principle that we will act together—under the auspices of NATO—whenever possible. This was the best way to ensure solidarity and effectiveness. Whether or not the United States participates, decisions on the NATO, WEU, or EU leadership of operations will be common. There must be unity of purpose even when some allies opt out of a specific operation.

This is not a question of sequencing in the literal sense: consultations will occur in many forums and formats as a crisis unfolds. The key is to have a thorough transatlantic discussion before making a final decision on which



Turkish commandos during Dynamic Mix '98.

U.S. Marine Corps (Michael A. Lujan)

nation is best placed to take the lead if military action is necessary. This is important because security deliberations differ from economic and foreign policy. Apart from the smallest of operations, there is always the risk that a situation may escalate, even to the level of Article 5, and additional NATO (namely, U.S.) military support may be required. Thus consulting fully through NATO makes operational sense and is vital to maintaining solidarity, which is the hallmark of the Alliance. This is what Secretary Albright means by “no decoupling.”

Moreover, the principle of “separable but not separate forces” must be observed rather than duplicating our existing capabilities and structures. With flat or declining defense budgets the trend across most of Europe, redundant structures would be particularly unwise. We also must take into account the differing membership status of countries so as to avoid discrimination and creating new dividing lines. Inclusiveness must be the general rule. A European operation will have the greatest chance of success if it has political and practical support from non-EU allies—not least Turkey.

Italian SH-3D landing troops during Dynamic Mix '98.



Fleet Combat Camera Atlantic (Steve Briggs)



German CH-53 transporting French vehicle, Joint Resolve XI.

1st Combat Camera Squadron (Lisa Zunzunykia-Carpenter)

A Capabilities Initiative

One should note that WEU has taken an admirably inclusive approach with different forms of status for non-EU allies, non-NATO EU members, and central and east European partners. The divergence in membership between NATO and the European Union will grow with the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland to the Alliance and could increase given the sluggish pace of EU enlargement.

Thus if ESDI becomes more an EU than WEU affair, it will require innovation in keeping non-EU Europeans engaged—perhaps opening the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) to non-EU countries interested in participating in operations to implement its decisions. Otherwise, the availability of NATO assets and support could be jeopardized not by an American veto, but by the resentment of allies shut out of the action. Indeed, we are already

hearing complaints that the post-St. Malo debate is taking place mainly in EU, not at NATO or even WEU.

Therefore institutional aspects need to be handled with care. But, as previously indicated, institutional questions should be secondary to the fundamental issue of capabilities. Once the ESDI foundation is bolstered by improved European allied force projection and sustainment capabilities

under a solid transatlantic roof, specific institutional arrangements will be easier to work out.

Given the importance of capability improvements, we are pleased that Germany, as WEU president, is conducting an audit of assets available for European-led operations; and we look forward to seeing the results. This effort, however, could also be carried out in the NATO framework.

The United States has proposed—and NATO has taken up—an initiative on defense capabilities that will be on the agenda at the Washington Summit. We believe the work suitably complements efforts underway after the St. Malo meeting to further develop ESDI. The NATO initiative aims at enhancing capabilities for crisis management operations beyond Alliance territory—where greater mobility, sustainability, survivability, and interoperability are essential.

Franco-British Summit: Joint Declaration on European Defense

December 4, 1998

St. Malo, France

The Heads of State and Government of France and the United Kingdom are agreed that:

1. The European Union needs to be in a position to play its full role on the international stage. This means making a reality of the Treaty of Amsterdam, which will provide the essential basis for action by the Union. It will be important to achieve full and rapid implementation of the Amsterdam provisions on CFSP. This includes the responsibility of the European Council to decide on the progressive framing of a common defence policy in the framework of CFSP. The Council must be able to take decisions on an intergovernmental basis, covering the whole range of activity set out in Title V of the Treaty of European Union.

2. To this end, the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises. In pursuing our objective, the collective defence commitments to which member states subscribe (set out in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, Article V of the Brussels Treaty) must be maintained. In strengthening the solidarity between the member states of the European Union, in order that Europe can make its voice heard in world affairs, while acting in conformity with our respective obligations in NATO, we are contributing to the vitality of a modernised Atlantic Alliance which is the foundation of the collective defence of its members. Europeans will operate within the institutional framework of the European Union (European Council, General Affairs Council and meetings of Defence Ministers). The reinforcement of European solidarity must take into account the various positions of European states. The different situations of countries in relation to NATO must be respected.

3. In order for the European Union to take decisions and approve military action where the Alliance as a whole is not engaged, the Union must be given appropriate structures and a capacity for analysis of situations, sources of intelligence and a capability for relevant strategic planning, without unnecessary duplication, taking account of the existing assets of the WEU and the evolution of its relations with the EU. In this regard, the European Union will also need to have recourse to suitable military means (European capabilities pre-designated within NATO's European pillar or national or multinational European means outside the NATO framework).

4. Europe needs strengthened armed forces that can react rapidly to the new risks, and which are supported by a strong and competitive European defence industry and technology.

5. We are determined to unite in our efforts to enable the European Union to give concrete expression to these objectives.

Our success in Bosnia has been significant in both humanitarian and geopolitical terms, but it has also revealed that refocusing the Alliance from a fixed, positional defense to a more flexible, mobile defense is incomplete—particularly when one looks at European military forces. Together with work underway in WEU, European allies should seize upon the Defense Capabilities Initiative as a tool for leveraging the force restructuring which was endorsed at the summit in St. Malo.

Drawing another lesson from Bosnia—and more recently from Kosovo—it is clear that the United States and Europe rely on each other to undertake operations where their common interests are at stake. ESDI is not simply a West-West discussion. Its development will directly affect how Americans and Europeans are able to deal with future crises in the East and on Europe's periphery.

The anniversary of NATO celebrates a truly extraordinary achievement. However we must not lose sight of our obligation to prepare to meet the challenges of the 21st century. We can best honor the past success of the Alliance by working together to create an equally ambitious, forward-looking, and more balanced transatlantic security partnership for the next fifty years. **JFQ**

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