

### The future of the ESDP

Umbach, Frank

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Arbeitspapier / working paper

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:

SSG Sozialwissenschaften, USB Köln

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Umbach, F. (2003). *The future of the ESDP*. (CSM Reports & Analyses, 20/03). Warschau: Center for International Relations. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-217283>

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**Reports & Analyses**

**20/03**

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***Dr. Frank Umbach***

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## **The Future of the ESDP**

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**CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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ul. Emilia Plater 25, 00-688 Warszawa  
TEL.: (22) 646 52 67, FAX: (22) 646 52 58  
[www.csm.org.pl](http://www.csm.org.pl), [info@csm.org.pl](mailto:info@csm.org.pl)

# The Future of the ESDP

**Dr. Frank Umbach**

Contribution given to the conference „New Europe, Old Europe and the New Transatlantic Agenda” held on September 6, 2003 in Warsaw. The conference was organised by the  
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
in the framework of its project:

***Poland, Germany and the Transatlantic Security Agenda***

Supported by the German Marshall Fund of the United States



The German Marshall Fund of the United States is an American institution that stimulates the exchange of ideas and promotes cooperation between the United States and Europe in the spirit of the postwar Marshall Plan

*“In NATO we don’t suffer from too much America; we suffer from not enough Europe”*

Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, April 29, 2003<sup>1</sup>

*“Mighty Europe remains a military pygmy”*

Lord George Robertson, NATO General Secretary

## **Introduction**

The Iraq crisis has not only threatened the transatlantic ties but also produced intra-European divisions which have cast doubts over the future CSFP and ESDP of the EU. France and Germany were aligned against the United States in the UN-Security Council and both temporarily blocked the provision of surveillance and missile-defence assets to Turkey. Paris even warned that it might block the accession of pro-US East European countries to the EU if they did not align their foreign and security policies closer with those of the major EU powers (such as France). When Paris and Berlin were declaring that war in Iraq should be avoided at all costs, the prime ministers of the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Hungary and Poland as well the retired Czech president Vaclav Havel declared to support the US. A week later, 10 other Central and Eastern European governments supported their positions in public — at a time, when the EU will expand from 15 to 25 members next year, growing in population by more than 20 percent. Ultimately, both sides did not fulfil their obligation to consult with their EU partners before taking up sharply opposing positions.

Thus one the main political questions today is whether the public and government splintering of Europe into pro- and anti-U.S. camps will last beyond the present Iraq-conflict and cause long-term impacts on the future transatlantic relationship. Thereby, the transatlantic relationship is threatened by unilateralists on both sides. In Europe, unilateralists calling for a CSFP and ESDP independent from the US and NATO, whereas in the U.S.-administration, hardliners and unilateralists view a geopolitically powerful EU as a threat and competitor to fundamental US national interests. Hardliners and unilateralists in Washington might indeed look to exploit the current splits by nurturing relations with EU states like Great Britain, Spain, Italy and Denmark, as well as with candidate countries such as Poland and others.

On the more positive side, in January 2003 the EU took over from the UN the international police-mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in April the *Operation Concordia* from

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted following Elaine Sciolino, New York Times, 30 April 2003 (Internet-version).

NATO in Macedonia as the first two operations in the framework of ESDP. Meanwhile, the EU has intervened in Congo by carrying out the first EU military operation ("Operation Artemis") outside the European continent. It was able to bring about a UN decision and select a lead nation (France) within a short period of time. A multinational command was in charge of strategy and action on site. The success of Artemis shows that the EU has at least a small genuine military operational capacity limited to 1,400 troops at its present disposal albeit it should not be overestimated.

Looking ahead, the treaty of Nice in 2000 finally entered into force in March 2003 with 10 countries: Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Cyprus. They are expected to become full members in 2004.

The deep intra-European split among the European countries has at least one positive notion: the enlarged EU needs to clarify for itself and as well as for the outside world what role it will and should play and what relationship it will develop with the United States, particularly in regard to NATO. Germany has to recognize by aligning and supporting French positions which are often not its original ones that it marginalizes itself within the EU because the positions of France in regard to ESDP as a counterweight to the U.S. had and will never get a majority in an expanded EU. With other words, Germany and its positions vis-à-vis the EU's CSFP and ESDP are a very critical factor for its outcome. In this light, I will analyse the present main challenges for the future ESDP.

### **Present Challenges of the ESDP**

*"Too easily, Europe's hard security responsibilities have been evaded in the name of peace and soft power. Too often, economic priorities have not been fully grasped in the interest of systemic stability due to inward-looking absorption with budget deficits and protectionist expectations. A convincing political language is needed to free Europe of shallow populism, insistence on corporatist harmony and 'protest' foreign policy."*<sup>2</sup>

It is fair to remark that Europe's absence from the debate on Iraq for many years and its inadequate defence spending as well as the lack of a real *Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)* and common *European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)* have strengthened US unilateralism in the last years. 12 years after the *Maastricht Treaty* of 1991 which declared the initiation of the CFSP, and four years after the *Helsinki Declaration* of the EU in 1999, calling for a ESDP and the strengthening of the European pillar of NATO, both policies are still incoherent and considerably underfunded at a time when NATO's and the

EU's extension to the east is already underway and when both organizations are being preoccupied with those extension policies and its related problems. As a result, under the roof of NATO as a multilateral security and defence organization, a European and transatlantic re-bilateralisation of foreign, security and defence policies is underway due to US unilateral tendencies and the European lack as well as unwillingness to implement a real *CFSP* and *ESDP* and to recognize global security responsibilities.

Basically, the EU and the ESDP are facing four major challenges in the next years:

- 1) *Residual French resistance to integration structures that Paris is unable to control sufficiently:* Paris seems still to believe that the French-German axis of the 1990s is the real and only motor for EU integration which it effectively controls. But objectively this is no longer the case, particularly not in the context of the enlargement processes. Symptomatically for the French ESDP dilemmas, France cooperated with Britain much better than with Germany on ESDP and concrete defence cooperation projects during the last two years because it became increasingly disappointed about Germany's ESDP commitments. Germany on its side has strengthened its bilateral defence cooperation with Britain despite the fundamental disagreements in regard to the US military intervention in Iraq because Berlin needs London's support for NATO to play a greater role in Afghanistan, where Berlin co-leads the *ISAF* peacekeeping operation.
- 2) *Establishing an independent European military headquarter and command structures outside NATO:* The EU defence initiative of France, Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium on April 29 this year to set up an independent military headquarter is in many ways typical for the European political symbolism rather than substance (having more significant military capabilities). Moreover, the proposal came to the wrong time because Berlin and others were in the process of repairing their relationship with Washington. When the allies agreed to the creation of a ESDP at a North Atlantic council meeting in Berlin in June, 1996, they tied the ESDP into NATO by strengthening the European pillar within NATO. The new organization was defined as "*separable but not separate*" and would not only take action when NATO at large decided that it did not intend to do so as a whole. Although later in 1999 (see *Table 1* of the "*Helsinki Headline Goals*") a European military committee and staff were established, their duties are restricted to give mainly technical advice to the European Council and to liaise with any operational activity (see *Table 2*). Realistically speaking, for the time being, no significant European military operation can take place without prior NATO agreement to use the alliance's assets such as command,

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<sup>2</sup> IISS (Ed.), 'Strategic Survey 2002/3. An Evaluation and Forecast of World Affairs' (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), here p. 115.

control, communication, computer and intelligence systems (C<sup>4</sup>I) and logistical capabilities. However, it is this restriction why the four European member states have taken action to establish a separate command chain on April 29 that would no longer be under NATO's ultimate control.

**Table 1: Helsinki Headline Goals 1999**

1. By the year 2003, co-operating voluntarily, EU Member States will be able to deploy rapidly and then sustain forces, capable of the full range of the Petersberg tasks as set out in the Amsterdam Treaty, including the most demanding, in operations up to Corps level (up to 15 brigades or 50,000/60,000 persons).
2. Member States should be able to deploy in full at this level within 60 days, and within this to provide smaller rapid response elements available and deployable at very high readiness. They must be able to sustain such deployment for at least one year.
3. These forces should be militarily self-sustaining with the necessary command, control and intelligence capabilities, logistics other combat support services and additionally, as appropriate, air and naval elements.
4. Such EU-led Crisis Management Operations are envisaged with or without recourse to NATO assets and capabilities and with eventual contributions from other countries. Collective defence remains a matter for NATO.

**Table 2: European Council in Nice December 2000 - New Structures**

Establishment of new *permanent* political and military bodies within the European Council:

- *Standing Political and Security Committee* (PSC): linchpin of the European security and defence policy (ESDP) and of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP). The PSC has a central role to play in the definition of and follow-up to the EU response to a crisis.
- *European Union Military Committee* (EUMC): composed of the Chiefs of Defence (CHODs) represented by their military representatives (MILREPs). The EUMC meets at the level of CHODs as necessary. This committee gives military advice and makes recommendations to the PSC, as well as providing military direction to the European Union Military Staff.
- *European Union Military Staff* (EUMS): the source of EU military expertise. It assures the link between the EUMC and the military resources available to the EU and provides military expertise to EU bodies as directed by the EUMC. It performs "early warning, situation assessment, and strategic planning for the Petersburg tasks including identification of European national and multinational forces" and implementation of policies and decisions as directed by the EUMC. The EUMS also contributes to the process of elaboration, assessment, and review of the capability goals; and it monitors, assesses, and makes recommendations regarding the forces and capabilities made available to the EU by the member states on training, exercises, and interoperability.

Source: Kori N. Schake, "Do European Union Defense Initiatives Threaten NATO?", in: Strategic Forum (INSS/NDU), No. 184, August 2001, p.3.

But characteristically of the past ESDP initiatives and the ever growing gap between official declarations and the implementation programmes, all four EU countries made no initiative for offering the necessary resources for combat, support and logistical personnel and equipment which will come at much greater costs. Hence the argument of the proponents that it would strengthen the European pillar of NATO lacks any credibility (except on paper).

**Table 3: Seven-Point Implementation Plan of the Mini Defence Summit (Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg) on April 29, 2003:**

- Formation of an embryonic joint rapid reaction force built around the existing Franco-German *EuroCorps*, Belgian commandos and Luxembourg recce units;
- Formation of a joint planning and operations centre intended to support missions in conjunction with or independent of NATO. This unit would be operational by next year;
- Formation of a general staff to conduct joint operations in theatre;
- Creation of a European strategic air command, to be operational by June 2004;
- Creation of a joint NBC defence capability;
- Creation of joint training centres and harmonization of training methods;
- Formation of an emergency humanitarian aid system (EU-FAST) capable of deployment on 24 hours' notice.

**Table 4: EU Forces Pledges of November 2000**

At the November 2000 EU *Capabilities Commitment Conference*, member states committed to 100,000 troops, 400 aircraft, and 100 ships, including the following numbers of ground forces:

Germany	13.500	Austria	2.000
United Kingdom	12.500	Finland	2.000
France	12.000	Sweden	1.500
Italy	6.000	Belgium	1.000
Spain	6.000	Ireland	1.000
Netherlands	5.000	Portugal	1.000
Greece	3.500	Luxembourg	100

Source: Assembly of WEU, "Implementation of the Nice Summit Decisions in the Operational Area of the European Security and Defense Policy", Document A/1734, Appendix I, available on: [www.assemblee-ueo.org/en/documents](http://www.assemblee-ueo.org/en/documents) – here following: Kori N. Schake: Do European Union Defense Initiatives Threaten NATO?, in: Strategic Forum (INSS/NDU), No. 184, August 2001, S.4.

Even initiatives to improve efficiency in the mid- and long-term perspective by pooling capabilities, rationalizing force structures and combining national headquarters will be insufficient to reach the declared goals by the four EU countries. In this light, the German foreign and defence ministries have internally warned the Chancellor's office to support those proposals of France, Belgium and Luxemburg. They have also tried to persuade the chancellor to limit the powers of the planned *Tervuren* military headquarter just to planning – but not leading – future EU crisis management operations.<sup>3</sup> Symptomatically for the lack of crucial capabilities, the EU had to sign last March a landmark political agreement with NATO to share classified information and to give the EU access to the alliance's logistical and planning capacities.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 5:** *Proposals for the Final Draft of the EU-Constitution at the EU-Summit in Thessalonika (Greece) on June 19-20, 2003:*

- Guarantees of mutual defence and assistance.
- Expansion of the so-called Petersberg tasks to permit the EU to commit military and civil resources for more extensive peacekeeping and crisis management missions.
- Creation of a joint defence procurement agency (already included in a draft released by the convention last week).
- Creation of a defence and security college.

Furthermore, by duplicating NATO assets without giving substance by any additional financial commitments, NATO's integrated military command structure — on which the ability to fight in close multinational coalitions — might be damaged. This integrated military command structure of NATO guarantees five important functions:

- long-term planning to give visibility into defence spending, procurement, and force structuring plans;
- operational planning to piece together national forces into coalitions for specific contingencies;
- advising political leaders about using force;
- training to agreed standards to ensure reliable knowledge on the availability and performance of forces
- building common understanding about using force and a degree of comfort in each others' judgments through routine interaction among militaries.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See FAZ-Sonntagszeitung, 31.8.2003, S. 4.

<sup>4</sup> See IHT, 15-16 March 2003, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> See Kori N. Schake, "Do European Union Defense Initiatives Threaten NATO?", in: Strategic Forum (INSS/NDU), No. 184, August 2001, p.3.

3) Insufficient preparedness of European publics for active global foreign and security policies that the EU need to play in its own strategic interests, and with the US and its unilateral tendencies: These insufficiencies have been highlighted before and during the US military intervention in Iraq when European government policies were often different from the public opinion. However, Germany is nowadays willing to send troops abroad to participate "*in military operations in defence of freedom and human rights*". German troops had been deployed in Kosovo, with air forces participating at the first combat mission of the German armed forces after World War II in 1999. More recently, it has sent the first combat deployment of ground troops to Afghanistan where Special Forces of the German Bundeswehr ("Kommando Spezialkräfte/KSK") were and are involved in *Operation Enduring* and others. It plays a lead role in *ISAF* in Kabul and assumed naval command of a task force operating off the Horn of Africa in May 2002 and has provided medical teams, logistical support, and five transport aircraft for the EU military mission in Congo. These are important steps forward in the right direction not just for Germany but for the EU as a whole. However, there is not really a public debate in Germany and most other EU members about the military instrument in the framework of CSFP and the directions of CSFP/ESDP in general themselves and in regard to global security challenges and commitments in particular.

Nonetheless, in its first-ever global "*security strategy*", presented by *Javier Solana*, High Representative for the EU's *Common Foreign and Security Policy* (CSFP), and meanwhile confirmed by the heads of state and government of the EU at the *European Council* in *Thessaloniki* on June 19-20, 2003, the EU has now recognized and confirmed new *global* security threats (i.e. international terrorism and proliferation of mass destruction weapons). It brings the EU's security concerns broadly in line with that of the United States. This highly important document is serving as the basis for a officially declared *European Security Strategy* to be adopted by the *European Council* in December 2003. The new strategy is explicitly calling for extending the zone of security around Europe and to develop *strategic partnerships* not just with the United States, Canada and Japan, but also with China and India due to their important security role "*in their respective regions and beyond*". In another new key document, the *Declaration of Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, the EU has outlined its key policy objective of the *Common Foreign and Security Policy* (CSFP) as well as its *European Security and Defense Policy* (ESDP), "*to deter, halt and, where possible, reverse proliferation programs of concern worldwide*." For the very first time, it does no longer exclude the use of force as a last resort and the most extreme coercive measure if political and diplomatic measures have failed. In this

regard, the EU is developing and implementing an *EU Action Plan* as a matter of priority. Furthermore, in another declaration concerning the ambivalent nature of Iran's civilian nuclear program, it is not only warning Teheran to develop and acquire nuclear weapons, for the very first time, the EU is even threatening Iran to suspend its economic trade and cooperation programmes. Although I see these documents as very important and positive guidelines for the future CSFP/ESDP, the EU needs to debate openly those foreign, security and defence policies in public in order to bolster its legitimacy and understanding.

- 4) *Taking over hard-security responsibilities as an integral element of ESDP:* The massive gap in military capabilities between the continent and the United States is well-documented. European defence spending with 140 billion Euros is less than half of the United States. A lack of military muscle as the EU's geopolitical Achilles heel certainly limits Europe's ability to project power as part of an security concept to guarantee regional and global order. The transatlantic capability gap not only concerns the US in the framework of NATO, but also France which sees Europe as its platform for military legitimacy. Since the beginning of the 1990s in the aftermath of the second Gulf-war, a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) has taken place. It is driven particularly by the US and its particular interaction of its Pentagon planners, its military/industrial complex and high technology. With a massive investment in new, precision weaponry, supported by detection, reconnaissance and command, control, communication, computer and information systems (C<sup>4</sup>I), Washington hopes to be successful in any wars without taking heavy casualties. Meanwhile, the Pentagon's budget is equal to the combined military budgets of the next 12-15 countries – accounting for 40-45 percent of all the defence spending of the world's 189 states. The USA is currently consuming the equivalent of the UK's annual defence budget every 37 days and of France's every 25 days.<sup>6</sup> The Pentagon's research and development budget alone may be even as much as 70-80 percent of all the global defence-related R&D<sup>7</sup>, outpacing not just Germany's entire defence budget, but also the entire NATO R&D investment budget.

The war in Afghanistan and the fight against international terrorism is no longer based primarily on a process of state-controlled violence that emerged centuries ago. But hitherto, only the United Kingdom has really addressed the new security challenges by developing

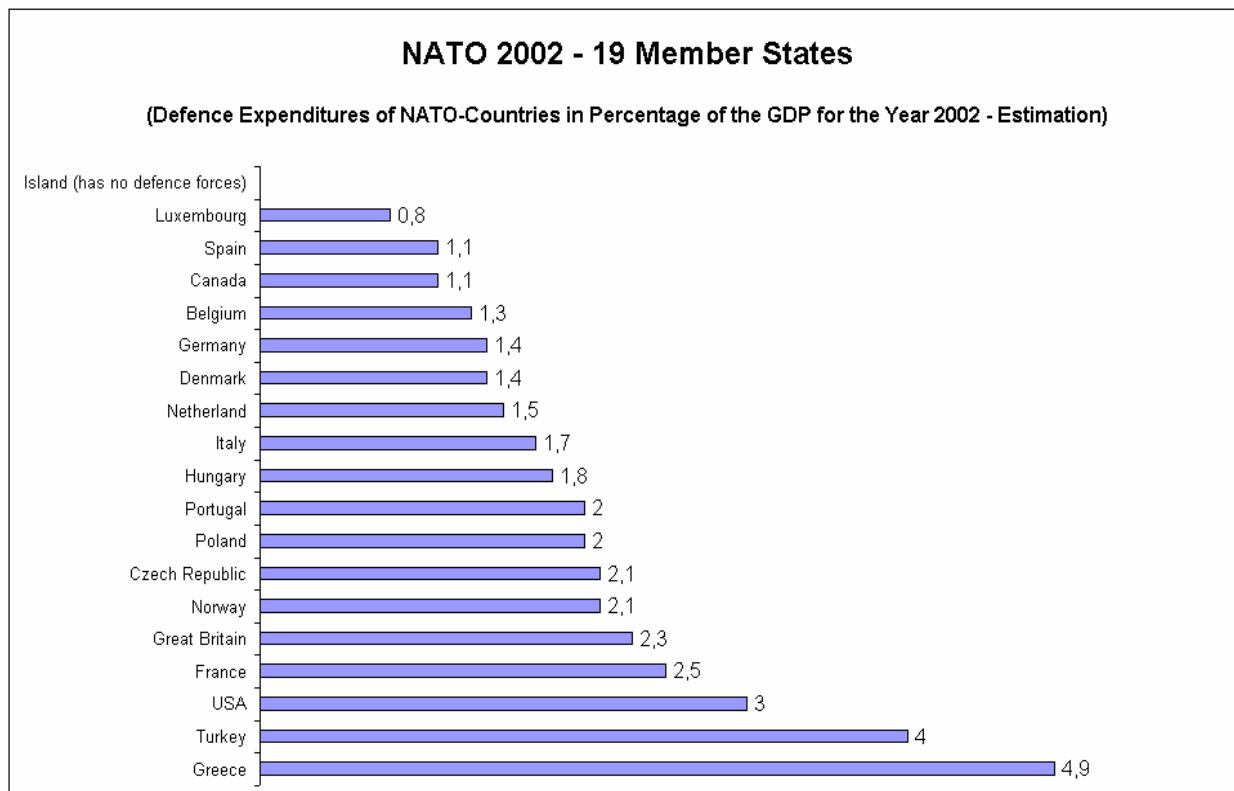
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<sup>6</sup> See Edward Foster et. al., 'How to Make Friends and Influence People', Jane's Defence Weekly (JDW), 11 September 2002, pp. 24-33 (33).

<sup>7</sup> See also Paul Kennedy, Financial Times, 3 September 2002, p. 12.

new adequate force structures based on “network-centric” capabilities, whereas all other European NATO and EU members beginning just to analyse and develop those capabilities — not to speak about implementing them. But there is still not a real organised effort to transform the European armed forces for the new missions or to exploit the technologies that are at the heart of the RMA.

*Table 6:*



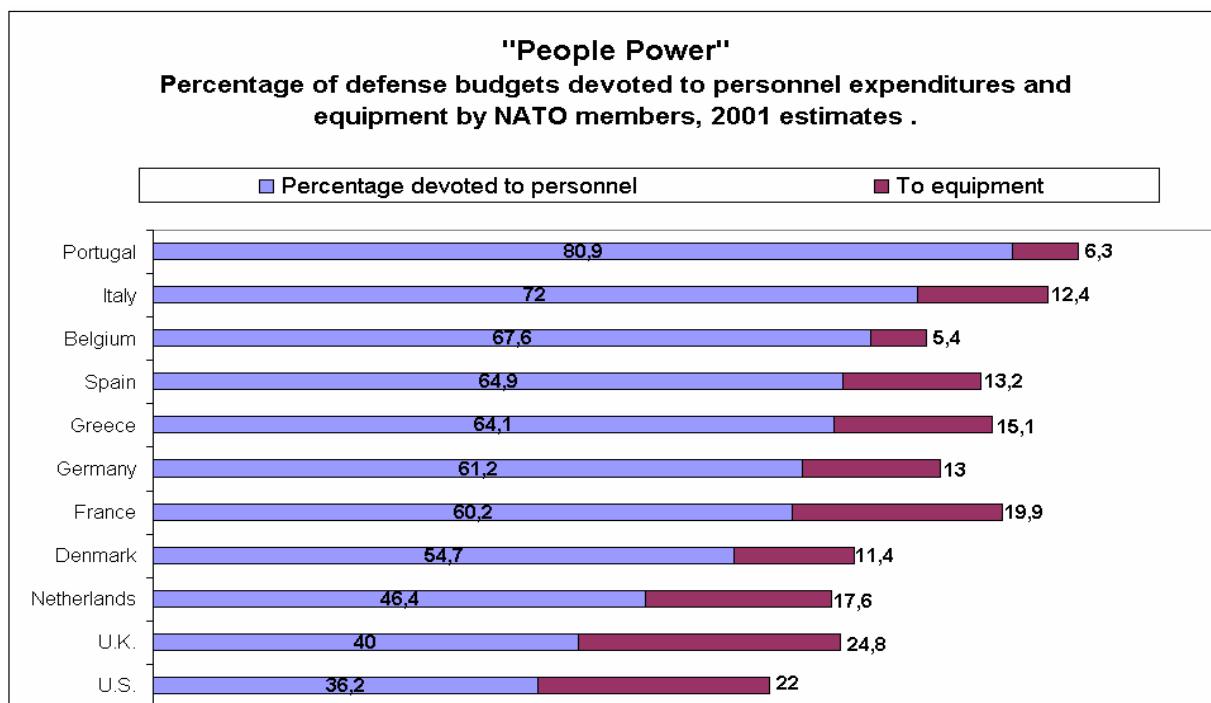
Source: Die Welt, 29 July 2002, p. 5.

This is in particular a problem for Germany (spending 1.4 on defence in percentage of its GDP compared with France of 2.5 and Great Britain of 2.3) and some other old EU member states which are accused for free riding on the common European defence and which is hardly a positive signal to poorer NATO and EU member states to live up to their multilateralist commitments (see *Table 6*). In this light, NATO and France have urged all NATO and EU members to commit to investing at least 2.0 percent of GDP on their defence budgets. But it also concerns the new NATO and members which appear to confirm NATO's worst fears: that these countries are keen to join the NATO club for historical and political reasons, but, once safely integrated in the Western alliance structures, are unwilling to pay the membership fees and to live up to their newly acquired obligations. Just the last thing NATO and EU needs is a bunch of another free riders.

However, the September 11 events have challenged many underlying traditional assumptions of the Pentagon's contingency planning and its related R&D investment.

Furthermore, the Iraq conflict illustrated not only the superiority of modern technology and network-centric warfare capabilities and other modern technologies but also the advantages of professional forces over conscript armies. But although the EU defence ministers declared on May 19 this year the "*operational*" capability of the EU's military apparatus across the "*full range*" of humanitarian, peacekeeping and peacemaking tasks according to the Helsinki meeting in 1999, the actual ability to deploy a 60,000-strong *Rapid Reaction Force* (RRF) remains "*limited and constrained by recognised shortfalls*" as the EU defence ministers admitted on May 19. The limitations affect deployment time and high risks "*at the upper end of the spectrum of scale and intensity, in particular when conducting concurrent operations*". In other words, the EU's RRF is unable to engage in sizable operations in terms of numbers of firepower, and cannot safely sustain more than one limited operation at a time.

*Table 7:*



Source: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, here following: *Wall Street Journal Europe*, February 13, 2003, p.10

The number of shortfalls of the *European Capability Action Plan* has reduced the major shortfalls just from 42 to 26 since 2001. Accordingly, the EU defence ministers established last May nine new project groups to reduce the gaps in (1) air-to-air refuelling; (2) combat search-and-rescue; (3) multinational headquarters; (4) nuclear, biological and

chemical defence, (5) theatre ballistic missile defence, (6) unmanned air vehicles, (7) strategic airlift; (8) space-based assets and (9) humanitarian rescue procedures.<sup>8</sup> But without raising the European defence budgets and changing the unbalance between personnel costs and material investments at the expense of modern military equipment in their defence budgets (see Table 7), it won't be likely to close most of those critical gaps in the foreseeable future.

## **Summary and Perspectives**

The recent crisis in transatlantic relations is shattering both NATO and the EU's ambitions for CSFP and ESDP as the result of U.S. unilateral tendencies combined with toothless and self-defeating tendencies for a too far-reaching European autonomy in security policies. The Iraq war exploded the myth that Europe was prepared to speak with one voice on issues touching European security. Germany and France became painfully aware of the fact that not only the East European EU candidate states are hesitating to follow their bilateral leadership in the EU's CSFP and ESDP, but also some of the older members such as Spain, Italy and Great Britain naturally. There are clear dividing lines as to how much sovereignty they are willing to yield to supranational structures of the EU in Brussels and how independent the ESDP should become from the U.S. and NATO.

Against this background, Europe and the EU are at a major crossroads in their future evolution to become a unified political and economic body, with sufficient power projection capabilities to cope with the new global security challenges and to maintain operability with the US armed forces in its own strategic interest. By expanding from 15 to 25 members, the EU might have been strengthened on paper, but not necessarily becoming more meaningful because integration is not just a technical, but also a sensitive political and psychological process. The only realistic EU security and defence identity is for political, military as well as financial reasons in the foreseeable future a ESDP within the framework of NATO. A European security and defence identity in opposition to the United States has no future and contradicts the EU's own long-term security interests in an increasing globalised world. Hence the recent British counterproposal (entitled "Food for Thought") to the idea of setting up an independent military headquarter by the "Gang for Four" (France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg) to create a European "planning cell" based in NATO's military headquarter seems much more realistic than an unnecessary duplication without real substance at this

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<sup>8</sup> See Luke Hill, 'EU Force Declared Operational but Capability Shortfalls Remain', in: JDW, 28 May 2003, p. 3.

crucial time. Even the idea of having both, a European “planning cell” within NATO as well as an independent military headquarter outside NATO is only becoming realistic when the European “planning cell” within NATO, and therewith the transatlantic alliance, will be given priority in decision-making of European security policies.

But at the same time, the Bush administration needs to recognise that a united Europe with a CSFP and ESDP that is strengthening the European pillar within NATO does not contradict US national security interests and should, therefore, not seen as a global competitor and strategic rival, but as the closest strategic ally in the future too. Against this background, both sides of the Atlantic need to change their present policies and unilateral strategies vis-à-vis the other transatlantic partner and going back to their agreement of 1996 when they tied the ESDP into NATO by strengthening the European pillar within the Western alliance.

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**Dr. Frank Umbach** is Senior Research Fellow at C/O Research Institute of the German Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin

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