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CSDP: A Balancing Strategy against the United States?

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Abstract

In the aftermath of the Second World War, European integration progressed rapidly. Despite economic performance, the European community is far from playing a major role in security and defense. The catalyst for a European defense policy is the war in Yugoslavia, which shows that Europeans are dependent on Americans. Thus, the EU has the CSDP and has conducted many military and civilian operations. Yet a new wave of academic studies, launched by proponents of American neorealism, argues that the EU is engaged in an attempt to "balance" the US by exploiting the CSDP. By studying European history in terms of security, we find that the balancing theory can not be justified.

Keywords

European Union, NATO, CSDP, balancing

1. Introduction

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the European countries gradually integrate and acquire step by step capacities for action in the economic and commercial fields. Despite economic performance, the European community is far from playing a major role in security and defense. It was not until 1992 that CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy) was created with the Maastricht Treaty. In fact, throughout the Cold War, European defense merges with transatlantic defense, no European country can, nor wants to consider its defense without the Americans. NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) provides exclusive EU territorial defense. On the other hand, it is not easy to have a common security policy, or even a defense policy, which represents an extremely sensitive aspect of the national policies of states.

The catalyst for a European defense policy is the war in Yugoslavia. The war in Kosovo is indicative of the shortcomings of Europeans: of the 30,000 military sorties carried out in Kosovo, 29,000 were carried out by Americans, bombings and reconnaissance were carried out almost 100% by the Americans. This explains why the EU has decided to adopt the ESDP (European Security and Defense Policy), an operational part of the CFSP, renamed the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) with the Lisbon Treaty. The EU has conducted many military and civilian operations under the CSDP.

Yet, on the side of the United States, a new wave of university studies, launched by the proponents of American neorealism, such as Stephen Walt, Robert Art, Barry Posen, is quick to argue that the EU is committed to an attempt to "balance" American power by instrumentalizing the CSDP.

Is the EU, as American theorists of international relations say, developing a balancing strategy against the United States? Can the EU be independent of NATO in security and defense in the foreseeable future? These are the questions we will try to answer. The present article is divided into two parts. The first part questions the creation of the CSDP and its limits. Despite the remarkable development, PSDC is not designed to act against the United States. Nor is it in a position to do so, since CSDP operations are more of a civilian nature. The second part focuses on the major role of NATO in Europe, to see if the EU is able to oppose the Atlantic Alliance, an institution within of which Europeans and Americans act together and operate unanimously.

2. CSDP: An Operational Part of the CFSP

The fact that CSDP is considered an important ambition is easy to understand. Its development, since the summit of Saint-Malo in December 1998, is remarkable. The Franco-British declaration of Saint-Malo between French President Jacques Chirac and British Prime Minister Tony Blair contributed to the launch of the CSDP. At the Helsinki Council (1999), the Heads of State of the EU and Government set the Helsinki global goal, which states that by 2003 Member States will be in a position to deploy 60 days and support for at least a year military forces of up to 50 000 to 60 000 people capable of carrying out all Petersberg missions. The Nice European Council (2000) completed the first phase of this work by deciding in particular to create the permanent structures, political and military, necessary for the management of crises by the European Union: the Political and Security Committee (PSC), the EU Military Committee (EUMC), the European Military Staff (EUMS). The Laeken European Council, in December 2001, concluded with a declaration of operationality, which confirmed the state of play of the CSDP. The overall objective set at the Helsinki European Council was achieved in 2003 as planned.

The CSDP allows the European Union to carry out military or civilian crisis management operations around the world since 2003. The military ambitions of the European Union are in support of crisis management operations—the Petersberg missions, which in the early 1990s transformed the defense

apparatus inherited from the Cold War into military forces with a broad spectrum of intervention. These missions, which correspond to the founding values of the European Union, were incorporated into the Treaty on European Union (Article 17 of Title V) with the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) and thus constituted the first area of action of the CSDP. They reflect the Union's ambition to assert itself as a real actor on the international scene, by conducting operations aimed at promoting peace, security and human rights.

One of the specificities of the crisis management of the European Union is to combine the civil and military dimensions to better adapt the responses to each crisis situation. The EU decided at the Santa Maria da Feira European Council in June 2000 to establish four priority areas of civil action under the CSDP: the police, the strengthening of the rule of law, the strengthening of civilian administrations and civil protection.

The Nordic countries require that civilian crisis management be developed in parallel with military capability. The Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden and Finland, played a major role in the concept and instruments of civilian crisis management. Subsequently, the development of the CSDP turns to these non-military priorities. The concept of civilian crisis management even appeared in a Helsinki Council text in December 1999. During the following presidencies, the European Council focused on the four non-military CSDP instruments: the police, the justice, civil administration and civil protection. In June 2002, the Council launched the Committee on Civil Aspects of Crisis Management, which reports to the largest CSDP committee, the Political and Security Committee (PSC). The Danish Presidency declared five months later that the specific objectives of civilian crisis management had been achieved. A few weeks later, in January 2003, the EU began its first civilian mission: the police operation in Bosnia. The military and non-military instruments of the CSDP have been developed in tandem, which has not been envisaged at the summit of Saint-Malo.

While several arguments tend to draw a rather positive assessment of CSDP operations, these are most often of a civilian nature, the military part of the CSDP is far from being the most significant. When the EU ventures into the military, it is limited to low-intensity interventions that aim at post-conflict stabilization rather than peacemaking.

In addition, a balancing strategy on the part of European states logically implies the will to act independently of the United States, even to oppose it. However all statements on CSDP explicitly mentioned the desire to maintain and strengthen the Atlantic Alliance. The declaration of Saint-Malo states that its objective is to work for the vitality of a renewed Atlantic Alliance which is the foundation of the collective defense of its members. The EU-NATO CSDP Declaration of December 2002 clearly states that the two organizations reaffirm that the fact of reserving a greater role for Europe will contribute to the vitality of the Alliance, and adds that the management activities of the crises of the two organizations are mutually reinforcing. The European Security Strategy (ESS) goes even further by

stating that: The transatlantic relationship is irreplaceable. By acting together, the European Union and the United States can be a great force for the good of the world. Our goal should be an effective and balanced partnership with the United States. This is another reason for the EU to further strengthen its capabilities and coherence.

3. EU and NATO: The Primacy of the Atlantic Alliance

During the Cold War, European defense merges with Atlantic defense. The United States is the ultimate guarantor in the face of the Soviet threat. NATO, an organization founded on the collective defense of its members and the deterrence of the common enemy, is the cornerstone of European security. The disappearance of the Soviet threat has deprived NATO of this fundamental raison d'être, as the EU has been forced to take greater responsibility for its security in a rapidly changing world. However, even after the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO remains the indispensable framework for European security. Neither the Americans nor the majority of Europeans are ready to put an end to the transatlantic partnership.

The creation of the CSDP does not prevent the enlargement of NATO on the European continent. For most countries in Eastern Europe, NATO is more important than the EU. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary joined NATO in 1999 before joining the EU in 2003. On 29 March 2004, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia formally become members of the Atlantic Alliance. This is the fifth and widest wave of enlargement in the history of the Alliance. This fifth wave is not the last. With the accession of Montenegro in 2017, NATO has become a sort of pan-European structure of 28 European countries.

In 2001, in the aftermath of the attacks of 11 September, Europeans proclaim for the first time in NATO's history recourse to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. This represents the solidarity between member countries in case of attack of one of them. At that time, relations between the EU and NATO were difficult with the coming to power of the new American President Bush, a context in which divergences between Americans and Europeans widened due to the Kyoto Protocol. September 11 will erase these differences, *le Monde* title itself: "We are all Americans". Europeans agree to go to war against the Taliban in Afghanistan who support Al Qaeda. Yet Washington intervenes alone in Afghanistan, which has weakened NATO very strongly. It was not until the end of 2001, when the Taliban controlled only a few areas in the south-east and north-east of the country, for NATO to agree to engage in the Afghan theater with the creation and sending ISAF (International Assistance and Security Force). This force is under the command of NATO. In fact, the command turns regularly from one country to another from 2001 to 2006: the United Kingdom, Turkey (June 2002—January 2003), Germany/the Netherlands (February—August 2003), Canada, France, Turkey, Italy and again the United Kingdom. Since 2007, the command has been taken over by the United States. ISAF is

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mandated by the UN.

Euro-American relations are disrupted by the war in Iraq. In February 2003, France announced that it would oppose military intervention for lack of hard evidence against Saddam's regime. For example, Washington failed to pass a UN resolution authorizing military intervention. The French position is supported by other EU member states, such as Germany and Belgium. Americans are very angry with these countries. In January 2003, then-US Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld spoke of "Europe's Eve" to embody the EU's division in the face of the US decision to wage war in Iraq. The new Europe is dominated by the countries of central and Eastern Europe, such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania and Poland. They are the new members of NATO and seek to keep a good image in front of this superpower.

Behind this new deal in their relationship is an idea: the Americans want to make NATO a breeding ground in which they draw strength according to their needs. They therefore choose the states closest to themselves in order to have political support.

When Europe adopts the CSDP in 1999, then American Secretary of State Margaret Albright wants the Europeans to respect three conditions: the famous 3D: no decoupling, no discrimination and no duplication. The first D is essentially political: the capacity of Europeans to fulfill Petesberg's missions is limited in the military, the risk of a decoupling between Europe and Washington in the field of security is weak in reality. The second D deals with European NATO countries but not EU members. The fundamental question is whether these countries can participate in discussions and decisions in CSDP operations and, if so, under what conditions. In this respect, the June 1999 Cologne European Summit seems more reserved than the Maastricht Declaration: while affirming the possibility for the countries in question to participate fully and on an equal footing in the operations of the European Union, insists on the principle of EU decision-making autonomy. Non-discrimination is of crucial importance in the case of Turkey. With regard to non-duplication, the United States is keen to encourage the best use of European defense budgets by encouraging them to invest in the capabilities that are lacking in the Atlantic Alliance and not in ways that she is able to provide. These three conditions reveal the American weight on European security and that Europeans must check with the United States if European shares are compatible with American interests.

At the same time, in November 2002, at the Atlantic Alliance's Prague summit, the Americans insist on a new NATO objective: to equip NATO with a rapid reaction force of 20,000 men, which is another strength Rapid reaction set up in the same phase: the force of 60 000 men of the European Union. European soldiers would serve for both organizations as needed. This goal defined by the United States is considered a way to bypass the realization of this European army.

The United States has clearly stated that it will not allow the creation of a separate planning infrastructure within the EU. If so, the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR) would take over the operations decided by the EU, even if they did not use NATO assets. The European Council in Nice, however, made a clear distinction between autonomous operations for which a European country would provide strategic headquarters and operations using NATO assets and capabilities, which would fall under the responsibility of the DSACEUR. Washington would have preferred this distinction to be established by a NATO decision, but not a European decision, to preserve the primacy of NATO, which would delegate to the EU the operations to which the Alliance would decide not to engage. For Washington, the planning responsibilities should be a function of the nature of the operation, therefore, it was necessary to start with a joint planning phase, followed by a decision. It is up to NATO or the EU to take charge of the operation. Nevertheless from the European point of view, the distinction fell within the competence of the EU as long as it decided to act autonomously. EU autonomy can not be defined by another organization.

A balanced solution to the problem could however be found. Following intensive diplomatic efforts by Britain to reassure the United States, France, Britain and Germany found on the occasion of the meeting in Naples, held at the end of November 2003, an agreement that paved the way for a common European position. The solution rested on a political logic rather than a military one. It was agreed to give the EU staff a small planning cell. At the same time, a European Planning Unit within NATO would be established at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE).

If the creation of several institutions: the Political and Security Committee, the Military Committee, a High Representative for the CFSP, led the United States to see the CSDP as a possible rival, the Union in Helsinki reaffirmed that it was determined to ensure full consultation, cooperation and transparency between the EU and NATO. In Santa Maria de Feira, the European Council proposed to create four working groups to improve EU-NATO cooperation on security issues, notably in the following areas: exchange of information and sharing of information NATO's defense capabilities; mobility allows the EU to have access to NATO assets; the definition of permanent arrangements between the two organizations.

If some theorists prefer to emphasize the will of the Europeans to act against the United States, we try to bring these two powers together. NATO's pre-eminence over European security does not leave the EU a chance to balance the United States.

4. Conclusion

The EU has experienced a great expansion in security and defense with its CSDP, which allows it to conduct many military and civilian operations around the world. This remarkable development does not please some American neorealist theoreticians who argue that the EU is engaged in an attempt to balance the United States via the CSDP.

The purpose of the article is to refute the idea that the EU is developing a balancing strategy against the United States. In the first place, the fact that the CSDP is considered as an important ambition is easy to understand, if we look at its development from the summit in Saint-Malo. But both by its creative process and by its military capabilities, one can realize that the EU is not in a position to balance the United States. In addition, all statements by the European Union on the ESDP explicitly referred to the desire to maintain and strengthen the Atlantic Alliance. CSDP is not an ambitious, military and virtually anti-American initiative.

Second, during the Cold War, the United States is the ultimate guarantor of the Soviet threat. NATO is the cornerstone of European security. In the post-Cold War era, NATO remains the indispensable framework for European security. The American weight in Europe is not negligible, despite possible differences between the European Union and the United States. The Atlantic Alliance is the largest military organization in which the EU and the United States act together. So there is no prospect that, in the foreseeable future, the EU "will endow itself with its own security".

Currently, the EU has established itself as a political actor on the international scene. It can not be denied that it has made more progress on the political and military terrain than most international organizations. However, it is clear that the creation and development of the CSDP is not a balancing strategy against the United States, but a means of acquiring the capacity for action and increasing its influence on the international scene.

Faced with a shifting geopolitical environment and increased threats, CSDP has experienced a renewed interest in recent years, sparked by a changing political and geopolitical context in Europe. The fact that Britain is leaving the EU raises a lot of questions about its future contributions to such common defense initiatives. Even if France and the United Kingdom have reaffirmed that Brexit would not change anything to their bilateral military cooperation. After Brexit, the United Kingdom will no longer be able to exert much influence on the common foreign and security policy. The United States will have to adapt to this new reality by working more closely with its other EU allies on foreign policy issues.

France, the only major European military power after Brexit, is ideally placed to lead the strengthening of the EU's common foreign and defense policy, which means that Franco-American relations will be essential for the evolution of transatlantic security. France is well positioned to become, in the near future, the privileged European partner of the United States in terms of security and defense policy.

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