

# 10 ESDP Operations and NATO

## Co-operation, Rivalry or Muddling-through?

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### **Introduction**

The Balkans were the first region where operational co-operation between the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was translated into practice, first with operation Concordia in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and subsequently with operation Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Co-operation in this framework is also one of the main success stories to date in the co-operation between the two organizations and one of the areas where such co-operation continues to develop and progress. It is therefore worth examining it in detail both for its achievements and for its future prospects. My goal in the present text is therefore to provide an overview of how the co-operation between NATO and the EU in the operational field started, how it was subsequently enshrined in the so-called Berlin Plus arrangements, how it was put into practice and, finally, what could be learnt from this experience and how it could be further developed.

### **In the beginning: NATO-WEU co-operation**

Co-operation between NATO and European defence institutions actually predates the ESDP and was originally developed in the framework of the Western European Union (WEU). It was in fact in June 1992, at the foreign ministerial meeting in Oslo that NATO ministers stated their 'support for the objective of developing the WEU as the defence component of the EU and as a means of strengthening the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance' (NAC, 1992). This declaration was followed by increased co-operation and consultation between the two organizations. This led to the decision, at the NATO Brussels summit in January 1994, to 'make collective assets of the Alliance available, on the basis of consultations in the North Atlantic Council, for WEU operations undertaken by the European Allies in pursuit of their Common Foreign and Security Policy'. Allies further declared their support for 'separable but not separate capabilities which could respond to European requirements and contribute to Alliance security' (NAC/NACC,

1994). This was translated in operational terms through the idea of creating Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) to facilitate the dual use of NATO forces and command elements for NATO- and WEU-led operations. The process was completed at the Berlin NATO foreign ministerial meeting in June 1996 which confirmed the conclusion of work on the CJTF concept and reaffirmed the use of separable but not separate military capabilities in WEU-led operations (NAC, 1996). It is important to underline that the developing crisis in the Balkans played no small role in leading to these developments. In fact, they made evident to the Europeans that there might be crises in their backyard where the USA might not wish to be involved while at the same time NATO was the most convenient and accessible structure for European countries for the conduct of multilateral operations. This last point was proven, in particular, by a somewhat renewed enthusiasm of France toward the military structure of the Alliance, as made clear by its December 1995 decision to participate fully in NATO's Military Committee which it had abandoned in 1966 (Gnesotto, 1997; Grant, 1997). At the same time, and largely for the same reasons, the USA also welcomed the development of a European military capability, provided that this supported the transatlantic strategic goals rather than ran counter to them.

Undoubtedly, this initial co-operation between the two institutions was also made easier by their parallel institutional configuration. They both have a collective defence clause in their founding acts, and they both sought to diversify their activities in the post-Cold War era, looking into the possibility of including peace support and crisis management operations in their repertoire. Finally, and this is of particular relevance in light of what we will see looking at the EU, all fully-fledged WEU members were also NATO members, which made communication and the exchange of information relatively easy. The NATO-WEU co-operation had only one limited test on the ground – the joint naval operation Sharp Guard in 1993 to enforce the United Nations (UN) arms embargo against the former Yugoslavia, – but it led to a number of seminal decisions which retain their validity in the NATO-EU context. At a political level, NATO-WEU co-operation led to the emergence of a 'European Security and Defence Identity', which defined the specific position and role of the European allies within the alliance. At an operational level, a number of planning measures were examined and approved to make the provision of NATO assets to the WEU possible. Mostly, these measures remain in force in the NATO-EU framework.

### **The birth of the ESDP and the Berlin Plus arrangements**

At the end of the 1990s, the decision by the EU to establish its own security and defence policy and abandon the so-called 'WEU approach', which considered the WEU as the natural framework for establishing European military capabilities, unavoidably led NATO to review the terms and prospects

of its co-operation with European institutions in defence matters. NATO was actually quite rapid in acknowledging the changes brought about by the St Malo declaration. At the Washington summit in May 1999, the allies outlined the main tenets of what would become the Berlin Plus arrangements – the ‘plus’ signifies the fact that the NATO-EU arrangements were seen as an evolution of the 1996 Berlin decision concerning NATO and the WEU. However, the speed with which NATO recognized the need for arrangements for military co-operation with the Union was not matched by the speed with which such arrangements were devised and put into place. Three factors mostly contributed to the lengthy negotiation process. First, some allies were concerned that the development of EU defence capabilities might negatively influence Europe’s commitment and contribution to NATO. This concern was most eloquently outlined by the then US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in an article published in the *Financial Times* where she outlined the ‘Three Ds’ (or better, ‘the three don’ts’) policy: no decoupling (of NATO from the EU), no duplication (of military/defence efforts) and no discrimination (of non-EU members of NATO) (Albright, 1998). Second, there was the stumbling block of Cyprus’s accession to the EU which, in light of the unsolved issues concerning the status of the island, led to a tangle of legal, political and strategic problems, especially for the relations between the two NATO allies Greece and Turkey. Third, some European nations, such as France, worried that Berlin Plus might result in a *droit de regard* of NATO over EU operations or, more generally, in an excessive limitation of the EU’s autonomy to act.

These three factors continue to play an important role and re-emerge, in different forms and fashions, every time NATO and the EU discuss the strategic aspects of their relationship. As a result, an agreement on NATO-EU co-operation could only be reached at the end of 2002, when the two sides issued a joint declaration on the ESDP (NATO Press Release, 2002b). At the same time, both organizations acknowledged that their co-operation in the framework of Berlin Plus would only apply ‘to those EU Member States which are also either NATO members or parties to the Partnership for Peace, and which have consequently concluded bilateral security agreements with NATO’ (European Council, 2002). This effectively meant excluding from the Berlin Plus framework both Cyprus and Malta (once they joined the EU), which do not meet the aforementioned requirement.<sup>2</sup>

The December 2002 statements paved the way for the approval, on 17 March 2003, of the Berlin Plus arrangements, which still constitute the cornerstone for co-operation in operational matters between NATO and the EU. The Berlin Plus arrangements are a set of jointly approved documents, which cover the following aspects (De Witte and Rademacher, 2005):

- A NATO-EU Security Agreement covering the exchange of classified information under reciprocal security protection rules;

- assured EU access to NATO's planning capabilities for actual use in the military planning of EU-led crisis management operations;
- presumed availability of NATO capabilities and common assets, such as communication units and headquarters for EU-led crisis management operations;
- procedures for the release, monitoring, return and recall of NATO assets and capabilities;
- terms of reference for NATO's Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR), who becomes the Operation Commander of any EU-led operation under the Berlin Plus arrangements (and who is always a European), and European command options for NATO;
- NATO-EU consultation arrangements in an EU-led crisis management operation making use of NATO assets and capabilities;
- incorporation within NATO's long-established defence planning system of the military needs and capabilities that may be required for EU-led military operations, thereby ensuring the availability of well-equipped forces trained for either NATO-led or EU-led operations.

This is not the place for a detailed analysis of Berlin Plus. But a brief discussion of one of its documents, the NATO-EU Security Agreement – the only document in the package in any case which is fully accessible to the public (Council of the EU, 2003c), – provides a good illustration of the difficulties encountered in the negotiations leading to the accord.

In the first instance, the conclusion of the NATO-EU Security Agreement required a partial convergence of the different corporate cultures of the two organizations. NATO had developed strict and detailed security regulations in the Cold War period while the EU prided itself on its openness and transparency. In this case, it was the EU which had to make greater adjustments by introducing a security architecture which was until then alien to its organizational culture and largely modelled on that of NATO. Indeed, as most NATO information is restricted, it was necessary to have some form of security arrangement in place even before the rest of Berlin Plus was approved, so that NATO planning and military documents could be made available to the EU for the development of the rest of the package. An interim security agreement was approved in summer 2000 and enforced within the EU through what a number of non-governmental organizations described as a 'coup' by EU foreign policy supremo, Javier Solana. The European Parliament even started a court case against the EU Council, which was only dropped when the EU approved a new set of security regulations in 2002. The action by the European Parliament was probably motivated, at least in parts, by the fact that the interim agreement only applied to the EU Council and the European Commission, thereby excluding the parliament and other EU bodies from access to protected information. The interim agreement was replaced by a permanent agreement signed on 14 March 2003 and included in the Berlin Plus package. Incidentally, it

too, does not empower the European Parliament to have access to restricted NATO information.

Even for NATO, however, the agreement constituted a sea change in its culture. The only security agreement with an organization rather than a state, and one which was used as an initial springboard for the NATO-EU agreement, was that with the WEU which was, at any rate, a purely inter-governmental institution like NATO. The idea of having to deal with an institutional framework as complex as that of the EU was something that gave shivers to more than one NATO official. Additionally, because of the openness so much vaunted by the EU, most NATO security officials perceived it as a 'colander' and were concerned that signing the agreement would limit the willingness of non-EU allies to provide sensitive information to NATO. At the same time, the agreement became, unusually so for what should be mostly a technical document, highly charged politically, as it included an express reference to the exclusion from access to NATO classified information of those nations which are neither members nor part of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. This reinforced, from a legal perspective, the political exclusion of Cyprus and Malta from Berlin Plus. Finally, and as already noted, the agreement identified the EU Council as NATO's main counterpart for the exchange of classified information. This was for reasons that had to do as much with the primacy claimed by the Council in representing the Union in foreign policy as with the fact that, due to its intergovernmental nature, the Council was seen as more 'similar' by the NATO side (Reichard, 2004).

The Berlin Plus arrangements were put into practice for the first time in Macedonia immediately after their approval. The handover to the EU of NATO operation Amber Fox had already been discussed for a while between the two organizations but could not take place because of the lack of a framework for the co-operation between them. Therefore, it was only on 31 March 2003 that operation Concordia, the first-ever military ESDP crisis management mission, took over the responsibilities of Amber Fox (Council of the EU, 2003a). The European force provided security backup for international monitors from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the EU.

In accordance with the Berlin Plus arrangements, NATO's DSACEUR was appointed as the Operation Commander of Concordia; he was assisted by an EU director of operations. NATO mainly supported the EU with strategic, operational and tactical planning. An EU operation headquarters was set up at NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium, to assist the Operation Commander. In addition, an EU Command Element (EUCE) was established at Allied Forces South Europe (AFSOUTH) in Naples, Italy. The chief of staff of AFSOUTH also became chief of staff of the EU Command Element. These dual NATO-EU posts guaranteed the linkage between the EU and NATO at all levels of the chain of command during the operation.

At the time of its launch, the operational usefulness of Concordia was put in doubt by some analysts who highlighted what looked like a quite stable situation in Macedonia. Concordia proved however a successful and useful test for NATO-EU co-operation, leading to the deployment of some 400 military personnel from 13 EU Member States and 14 non-EU countries. The operation, which was concluded on 15 December 2003 and succeeded by the EU police mission Proxima (Council of the EU, 2003f; 2004e), showed the determination of both organizations to work together and encouraged them to develop a 'concerted approach on security and stability in the Western Balkans' (NATO Press Release, 2003a). An assessment of this document is not easy and cannot be definitive. On the one hand, it was the first and so far only attempt to outline a common strategy of the two organizations for a specific geographic area. Some significant results have been achieved, such as the participation of both organizations in the Ohrid regional border management process. On the other hand, the practical impact of this document has generally been limited and the approach of the EU and NATO to the Western Balkans is still largely independent, although moving along similar lines, such as the commitment to the progressive integration of the countries in the region into both organizations.

The co-ordination of the work of the two institutions in the Western Balkans occurs mostly at the level of practical co-operation on the ground, where there is a clear need for a common position of the international community. It is facilitated by the more general efforts of some nations to push for similar, coherent policies in both institutions. Again, however, the main issue is political, not technical or legal. If the two organizations were to agree on common work in the Western Balkans, the concerted approach would provide the basis to do so, but this document cannot by itself achieve what remains essentially in the hands of the EU member states and their NATO counterparts.

### **Stormy weather ahead**

The approval of the Berlin Plus arrangements took place against the backdrop of growing transatlantic tensions over the intervention in Iraq. While these tensions did not directly affect the transition from Amber Fox to Concordia or other types of operational planning, they clearly had an impact on some developments which followed the conclusion of the Berlin Plus arrangements, most notably the decision in April 2003 by four NATO and EU allies – Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg – to establish a planning headquarters capability for ESDP missions. In itself, this is clearly one of the options for ESDP missions, the other two being the 'lead nation' framework or the use of NATO assets at SHAPE. However, in the tense context of the discussions related to Iraq, this decision appeared as an attempt to divorce ESDP operations from the need to rely on NATO capabilities and assets; this was clearly the interpretation of most American observers,

some of whom disparagingly dubbed the meeting in the Belgian locality of Tervuren the ‘Praline Summit’. This criticism, and concerns over the risk of an even wider transatlantic rift, led to a review of this decision later in 2003, resulting in the establishment of a more limited civil-military planning cell within the EU Military Staff.

Another issue of possible dissension was the decision by the EU to launch operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of Congo in June 2003. Although limited in time (it lasted only three months), location (it was limited to the town of Bunia) and numbers (it had around 2,000 personnel), this French-led mission took place without any previous consultation with NATO or exchange of information. This infringed on what some allies, notably the USA, had advocated up to that moment, i.e. the so-called ‘right of first refusal’ for NATO (Larrabee, 2004). According to this, never formally defined, right, NATO should have been given the privilege to choose whether to get involved in the crisis management operation. Of course, those EU members such as France that feared from the beginning the risk of a confinement of the EU by NATO, or its subordination to it, were eager to establish that such a right simply did not exist. As in the case of the Tervuren meeting, the effect was more that of rubbing salt into existing wounds rather than of breaking dramatic new ground, as it remained clear that, for long-term and sustained operations, the EU still lacked those assets – strategic airlift, communications, and so forth – that NATO could provide through Berlin Plus.

### **Operation Althea: framework and results**

The idea of a NATO-EU transition in the international military presence in Bosnia was initially raised at the European Council in Copenhagen in December 2002 (European Council, 2002). Actual work on such a proposal could, however, only begin after the approval of the Berlin Plus arrangements and after the Amber Fox-Concordia transition had proven, on a smaller scale, that these arrangements could actually work. The project therefore took off only at the end of 2003, when NATO foreign ministers announced the alliance’s intentions to

assess options for the future size and structure of SFOR [Stabilisation Force], to include possible termination of SFOR by the end of 2004, transition possibly to a new EU mission within the framework of the Berlin+ arrangements and to a new NATO Headquarters Sarajevo.

(NATO Press Release, 2003b)

This statement was matched by the readiness expressed one week later by the European Council to launch a military ESDP mission in Bosnia that would draw on the Berlin Plus arrangements. The EU summit also welcomed NATO’s readiness to start consultations with the Union.

The transition from a NATO-led force to an EU-led force presented challenges that were not only technical but, again, political. The NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) and later SFOR had clearly been a success story, securing the peace and other objectives of the Dayton peace accord. For this reason, SFOR, and thus NATO, had acquired an indisputable credit among large sectors of the Bosnian population and their withdrawal was viewed with concern by these sectors (for details, see Chapter 12). In particular, there was widespread concern that a European force would be a 'new UNPROFOR'; the label refers to the unsuccessful United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operation, which was deployed in the country from 1992–95. Some openly argued that, in order to keep the peace, it was necessary to keep the USA in Bosnia, as it was the only country that had the 'teeth' to face renewed hostilities. Keeping the USA clearly meant keeping NATO. Hence, the EU and NATO devised a framework which foresaw the transition to an EU force which would inherit most of SFOR's tasks, while some functions – assistance to defence reform, counterterrorism and the temporary detention of indicted war criminals – would be taken up by a 'legacy' NATO Headquarters Sarajevo that would remain on the ground after SFOR's withdrawal.

For these reasons, as well as for the greater size of the operation, the replacement of SFOR by Althea – the codename for the EU troops – proved a much bigger task than the Amber Fox-Concordia precedent. Work proceeded along two tracks. The DSACEUR elaborated the content of Althea's operations plan (OPLAN), while at the political level, NATO's North Atlantic Council and the EU Political and Security Committee started consultations to review preparations for the handover. These meetings helped the EU to present its views on co-operation with NATO and its own actions in Bosnia, including the role of the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the EU police mission EUPM and the Stabilisation and Association Process. NATO, for its part, briefed the EU on its plans for the final year of life of SFOR, and, in particular, the decision to transform SFOR into a deterrence force made up of around 7,000 troops by mid-2004.

This work also helped to further refine NATO's structures and procedures for Berlin Plus missions. As mentioned earlier, the key military officer for the Berlin Plus framework is the DSACEUR. He is a senior officer, normally a four-star general, from an EU member state – currently Great Britain – who serves as the deputy NATO supreme military commander. Under Berlin Plus, the DSACEUR is the EU Operation Commander. This means not only a second title but also, more importantly, a second staff and a new political supervisory body. As EU Operation Commander, the DSACEUR is responsible to the EU and reports regularly to the EU Military Committee (EUMC) and EU Military Staff (EUMS). The former provides military advice to the Political and Security Committee while the latter, working under the direction of the EUMC, carries out early warning,

situation assessment and strategic planning for the military ESDP. The DSACEUR is assisted by an EU director of operations and the EU Staff Group, which is made up of officers from EU member states, with the exception of the two countries excluded from Berlin Plus. The function of the EU Staff Group is to provide a link between the DSACEUR and the EU Military Staff for the Berlin Plus duties. The EU Staff Group also supports the DSACEUR by ensuring that NATO's SHAPE staff provides the necessary help for the planning and conduct of operations. This apparently complex arrangement works in practice quite smoothly and, as it has been said, was fully utilized in the preparation for the Althea handover.

Progress made in planning during the first half of 2004 allowed NATO heads of state and government to announce, at their Istanbul Summit from 28–29 June 2004, the decision to conclude the alliance's successful SFOR operation by the end of 2004 and to welcome the launch of the follow-on EU operation.

Further details were worked out in the first half of July 2004, with an NATO-EU exchange of letters, in which the DSACEUR's role as Operation Commander was confirmed; a UN Security Council Resolution (2004a), which welcomed the EU's intention to launch an EU mission in Bosnia; and the adoption by the EU Council on 12 July 2004 of the Joint Action on the EU military operation (Council of the EU, 2004c). With this, all of the building blocks were in place for the SFOR-EUFOR transition. On 15 July, NATO's Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer and the EU High Representative Solana visited Bosnia to show the unity of purpose between the two organizations and inform the local authorities in detail of the timing and modalities of the transition.

Two more key decisions intervened in the course of the fall of 2004. First, in October the EU foreign ministers adopted the OPLAN and the rules of engagement for Althea. Second, the UN Security Council passed a resolution which declares that both EUFOR and NATO Headquarters Sarajevo inherit the powers that were enjoyed by SFOR under the Dayton Agreement (UN Security Council, 2004b), for example, the power to dismiss obstructive officers or to limit the movement and training of local military units. With the finishing legal touches in place, de Hoop Scheffer and Solana attended the ceremony in Sarajevo on 2 December which officially launched Althea and terminated SFOR.

Such a lengthy and meticulous decision-making process may sound excruciating, but it actually proved useful. As two organizations with different membership and corporate identities were involved, every move on one side had to be exactly mirrored by a move on the other, so that there would be as little ambiguity as possible as to the content of the decisions. Also, somewhat paradoxically, the case of Althea suggests that working out the operational framework, which is the one which decides the success or failure of a mission, may actually be less difficult than steering through the

intricacies of the political process involved in a Berlin Plus operation. This was certainly the case in Bosnia, where Althea did not have to be set up from scratch, but followed on the heels of a NATO operation with extensive powers and linked inextricably to the provisions of an international treaty, namely the Dayton Agreement.

The positive side of the story is that most sources, at least on the NATO side, confirm that the amount of detail put into setting up the operation helped greatly to avoid misunderstandings and overlap at the practical level and was instrumental in ensuring that the operation has been a success so far. There were undoubtedly some issues that required greater care or more intensive effort than others, for example, ensuring a reciprocally satisfactory exchange of information, but no major complaint is heard when speaking to the 'voices from the ground'. This applies not only to the degree of support provided by NATO to EUFOR, but also to the relationship on the ground between EUFOR and NATO Headquarters Sarajevo. The co-existence of two headquarters on the ground could have created the potential for rivalry and misunderstandings, which analysts often associate with the NATO-EU relationship. However, in fact it proved a quite successful model of co-operation. A number of factors can explain this result. First, the long and detailed planning work to set up the Berlin Plus framework led to a detailed and exhaustive delineation of tasks between the two headquarters. It was clear from the beginning that NATO Headquarters Sarajevo would move into the footsteps of SFOR in its last year and focus principally on advising Bosnia on defence reform, which was a key requirement for making the country eligible to join NATO's PfP programme. Hence, most of the operational work was left in the hands of EUFOR, which had significantly more operational forces on the ground than the residual NATO presence. Second, successful liaison relations were immediately established on the ground between EUFOR and NATO Headquarters Sarajevo, starting from the two commanders and reaching down to the different staff divisions. This helped minimize misunderstandings and resolve disagreements at the lowest possible level, before they could escalate into controversies between the two organizations. Third, at headquarters level, a regular exchange of information was organized between NATO and the EU to notify each other of developments on the ground. In particular, the close interaction and co-operation established between the DSACEUR's EU staff and the NATO/SHAPE staff reduced to a minimum the chance of disagreement and misunderstanding. Once Althea was up and running, the different badges worn by staff of the respective organizations had a rather limited significance.

Berlin Plus, then, has successfully passed two tests so far. But in the longer-term, operational co-operation can only work if it is supported, as foreseen in Berlin Plus itself, by other elements, such as the development of common or at least interoperable capabilities. It is to this issue that the chapter turns next.

**The capabilities issue: a stumbling block?**

As outlined previously, a key component of Berlin Plus is the 'incorporation within NATO's long-established defence planning system of the military needs and capabilities that may be required for EU-led military operations, thereby ensuring the availability of well-equipped forces trained for either NATO-led or EU-led operations'. As a result, both NATO and the EU agreed, within the Berlin Plus package, a document called 'EU and NATO: Coherent and Mutually Reinforcing Capability Requirements', which focuses on the issue of capabilities development. This document is fully in line with the policy of the 'three-Ds' and, in particular, non-duplication. It establishes the NATO-EU Capability Group, which has a broad mandate to delimit areas for NATO-EU capability co-operation. Under the aegis of the group, a number of NATO-EU meetings on capabilities issues such as the meetings of the PCC/ECAP groups were held; the PCC, which stands for Prague Capabilities Commitment, is the NATO framework for capability development and ECAP, which stands for European Capability Action Plan, is the EU counterpart. Inter-institutional co-operation, however, has become more difficult with the establishment, in 2005, of the European Defence Agency, which is progressively absorbing the competencies of the ECAP groups. As those groups were the ones expressly mentioned in the Berlin Plus package, their disappearance has been considered by some on the EU side as reason to suggest a review of the current arrangements.

Also, after the big bang EU enlargement in 2004, and its more limited follow up in January 2007, capability development in the Union relies on the input of all 27 countries, which is difficult enough even without the additional constraints imposed by Berlin Plus. The upshot of these complications is that the ambitious, joint EU-NATO target of building up 'coherent and mutually reinforcing' capabilities appears to give way to the mere 'exchange of information on the capability development process' (Permanent Representation of France to the EU, 2005). This makes the important issue of non-duplication more dependent on the goodwill of the member states of the two organizations than on any coherent and co-ordinated process between NATO and the EU. Quite clearly, there are high stakes in an area which involves national sovereignty and industrial issues, but in light of the shrinking defence budgets of most states, in particular in Europe, the current set-up clearly does not ensure the best use of available funds. In addition, a lack of mutually reinforcing capabilities could create problems for future Berlin Plus operations if EU and NATO assets, for example in the field of communications, are not interoperable. If nothing else, then the expenses involved in developing two different sets of equipment, one for EU, the other for NATO purposes, should induce states to find pragmatic ways to co-operate.

### **Recent developments**

The main institutional development after the launch of operation Althea has been the establishment, in September 2005, of the EU Cell at SHAPE and of the NATO Permanent Liaison Team in the EU Military Staff. These two structures allow SHAPE and the EU Military Staff to maintain daily military-to-military contacts and to take care of the planning aspects of Berlin Plus missions. These structures could also become very helpful if the DSACEUR were to obtain officially a role which so far has not been formally acknowledged, namely that of strategic co-ordinator for NATO-EU military-to-military relations. In other words, while the DSACEUR as Operation Commander is entrusted with running Berlin Plus operations, nothing is said of who should be in charge of conducting the strategic planning for future operations or review the relevant policies and procedures as doctrines evolve. The DSACEUR would be ideally suited to deal with these duties and responsibilities. Indeed, *de facto*, the DSACEUR is acting as strategic co-ordinator, but as long as this role is not institutionalized, it remains open to challenges.

### **NATO and the EU in the Western Balkans and beyond: what other forms of co-operation?**

Operations in the Berlin Plus framework are not the only area in which NATO and the EU have co-operated so far in the Western Balkans. Another such area is that of security sector reform. The most interesting experience in this respect is the previously mentioned Ohrid Border Process, launched in 2003, where the EU, the OSCE, NATO and the Stability Pact agreed a common platform for border security and management in the region. The Ohrid Border Process has achieved a number of significant results, most notably the demilitarization of the borders in the region.<sup>3</sup> Yet it also has a broader political significance. Through the Ohrid process, the four lead organizations established not only a series of goals and principles, but also a division of labour for their work. This model could be applied on a broader scale, as both NATO and the EU and, to a lesser degree, the OSCE are in different ways engaged in the process of security sector reform in the Western Balkans. For NATO, this mostly means involvement in defence reform processes. Defence reform is one of the key aspects of the work of the alliance in the framework of the PfP; it constitutes a central requirement for countries aspiring to NATO membership. In the case of Bosnia and Serbia, NATO established defence reform benchmarks when they applied to join the PfP, and it co-operates with national authorities in defence reform commissions or groups designed to ensure that the benchmarks are met. In addition, NATO is involved in setting up Trust Funds under willing lead nations to help manage the consequences of downsizing military forces by providing alternative livelihoods for redundant personnel.

Two such projects exist, one in Serbia and another in Bosnia. They are implemented by the International Organization for Migration.

NATO's focus on defence reform is complemented by the EU, which is heavily involved in providing support in other areas of security sector reform in the region, for example, through its ESDP police missions. Greater synergy between these efforts could be created by elaborating a coordinated security sector reform concept. Such a move would also help address those situations, not uncommon in the region, in which forces that are considered part of the police still have inventories which belong more to a military force than to a law enforcement agency. In such instances, NATO could help these forces to review and assess their equipment requirements, while the EU could focus on their professional competencies and training. The organizational and structural aspects could be addressed jointly. What is in fact important to note is that NATO's expertise in defence reform processes is not only, or even primarily, an expertise in weapons systems and equipment, but a methodological expertise. NATO's reforms centre on encouraging a rationalization and reorganization of the military based on a thorough threat analysis, an assessment of the available resources (financial, human etc.) and the cost-effective use of resources to counter the identified threats.

This apparently straightforward process is in practice made very complex by the fact that the composition of the armed forces has at least as much to do with 'spurious' reasons such as prestige, tradition, political pressure and industrial interests as it has to do with the external security needs of a country and its defence. Clearly, the applicability of this methodology – threat analysis, resource assessment and the definition of an optimal mix of instruments under given circumstances – is not limited to military forces. It can be used for other security sector agencies, e.g., police forces, border security agencies and intelligence services. NATO could therefore bring a methodological expertise to areas in which the EU could contribute its technical and professional expertise. Such a synergy would be beneficial both for the countries in the region and for the credibility of the efforts of the international community.

New forms of NATO-EU co-operation may also emerge from developments in Kosovo. While at the time of writing, the negotiations, led by UN envoy Ahtisaari, on Kosovo's final status are not yet concluded, it is assumed by all observers that NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) will continue to ensure the main international security presence, while the EU will play the lead role in civilian peacebuilding. This division of labour constitutes an ideal springboard for renewed and enhanced co-operation between the two organizations. NATO and the EU will need to work closely together in Kosovo but, as this is not going to be a Berlin Plus operation, there is no ready-made institutional framework for orchestrating their interaction. While some insiders argue that this co-ordination challenge can be addressed on the ground, this view ignores that, in view of the likelihood of strong

challenges (local and regional) to any internationally devised settlement, the international community will need to work in unison at political level.

'Operators' on the ground will simply not be in a position to forge a united political front and to determine policy themselves. The solution might be what has been called a 'Berlin Plus Plus' scenario. It envisages that the institutional structure agreed by the Berlin Plus accord such as the periodic meetings between NATO's North Atlantic Council and the EU Political and Security Committee are used for the purpose of political partnership between NATO and the EU in the absence of an ESDP military operation drawing on NATO assets. Some might be tempted to maintain that co-operation between NATO and the EU in such cases would have to include all EU member states, including Cyprus and Malta. This argument suggests that to become reality a Berlin Plus Plus arrangement will have to overcome some major political hurdles.

Finally, an interesting idea to advance EU-NATO co-operation has been floated in academic circles: 'Berlin Plus in reverse', i.e., the use of ESDP assets for NATO operations (Flournoy and Smith, 2005). While the notion seems for the moment far fetched when it comes to military capabilities, as NATO's inventory is still more complete than that of the EU, it may be worth considering allowing NATO to avail itself of ESDP civilian capabilities. It is indisputable that military thinking, especially in light of recent operations, is more and more evolving toward co-operation with civilian organizations in the planning and execution phase of a military operation to help in particular in stabilization and reconstruction tasks. In the USA, this has been discussed for some time under the label of an effects-based approach to operations. This thinking appears to be making inroads into the alliance's doctrine. Its notion of 'comprehensive planning and action' means that future planning will have to take fully into account the interaction with non-military actors and other international organizations (Scheffer, 2006). This could be the gateway to Berlin Plus in reverse, according to which the EU could, for example, 'lend' NATO its civilian police capabilities. While this looks like a promising option, any concrete development will have to clear a number of political hurdles. At the same time, it can be argued that an embryonic form of Berlin Plus in reverse is contained in the EU decision, adopted by the General Affairs and External Relations Council in January 2006, to provide funding for the civilian activities of NATO's Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan. What is currently only a commitment to provide funding could, under different circumstances, become a commitment to provide EU personnel and assets.

### **Assessment: sufficient but not enough**

The Berlin Plus arrangements have so far successfully passed two tests. Both NATO and the EU earned high marks. Berlin Plus thus accomplishes what it was designed for. It empowers the EU to carry out large-scale stabilization

operations. Moreover, it has more general beneficial effects. It constitutes, to date, the most successful experience in NATO-EU co-operation, demonstrating that the two organizations are reliable partners that can work together in the most sensitive field, the operational one. Also, it fosters a habit of consultation between them.

However, a number of problems have to be flagged that could undermine EU-NATO co-operation further down the road. In particular, if NATO and the EU are not able to move beyond co-operation on the military aspects of a specific operation or issue to a more rounded and comprehensive partnership, there is the risk that their evolving military capabilities, doctrines and tools increasingly diverge, making it impossible for the two institutions to work together under Berlin Plus. At the same time, all the political sensitivities and 'red lines' that were in place when Berlin Plus was launched are still present. It is therefore difficult to imagine, at least for the foreseeable future, that the arrangements may be revamped and made more flexible.

On a more general note, co-operation in operational matters is a quite limited result when compared to the different areas in which the interests and commitments of the two institutions overlap. It is also a form of co-operation which has worked effectively when the two organizations had sufficient time to work out the details of their interaction. When the urgency of the crisis called for quick action, the result has been much less impressive, as exemplified by the logistical assistance operation to the African Union in Darfur. The latter asked both NATO and the EU to support the deployment of its troops to the Darfur region of Sudan, which is ravaged by a war between government troops and rebel militias. With little time for agreeing on the modalities of the co-ordination of this operation, which is, in the words of an official of the alliance, 'a political beauty contest between NATO and the EU', the two institutions ended up establishing parallel assistance missions in June 2005. It was left to their respective staff on the ground in the headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa to find pragmatic solutions to what on the face of it looks like a duplication of efforts.<sup>4</sup>

This episode also raises some more general questions as to the commitment to, and interest in, Berlin Plus of some EU members. The only two ESDP operations so far which drew on NATO assets were operations in which the alliance was already on the ground and the issue was one of transition to an EU-led force. This is also the scenario evoked in August 2006 by president Chirac (2006), with reference to Kosovo, in his speech to the annual conference of French ambassadors; and it was again suggested by French defence minister Michèle Alliot-Marie (2006) in an op-ed for the *Wall Street Journal*. The question thus arises whether the lack so far of a genuine Berlin Plus operation, i.e., one in which the EU relies on NATO to design a troop deployment from scratch, is just a matter of chance. Or is it, to some extent at least, the result of the desire of some EU states to limit Berlin Plus only to those cases in which, due to a previous NATO presence

on the ground, it would be patently inefficient not to make use of NATO's experience and assets already on the ground. The possibility, evoked informally by EU officials in the summer of 2006, to have a Berlin Plus framework for an EU operation in Lebanon would have maybe answered these questions, provided it had materialized.

Finally, Berlin Plus has so far failed to deliver on the broader political objectives that many associate with it. Rather than constituting a springboard for greater and deeper NATO-EU co-operation, it gave rise to a self-contained field of activity, with little cascading effect onto wider transatlantic issues. This helped isolate EU-NATO co-operation in operational matters from the diplomatic fallout from the US-led invasion of Iraq but it did little to reinforce the unity of purpose of the Western allies. While initiatives such as the 'Transatlantic Dinners' of the 32 foreign ministers and staff-level working contacts are helpful, they are not a replacement for joint decision-making arrangements. Whether Berlin Plus will in the end be able to live up to these political expectations or whether new mechanisms will have to be invented remains an open question. An initial answer will possibly be provided by NATO-EU co-operation in Kosovo.

## Notes

- 1 The views expressed in this text only represent the personal position of the author. I am grateful to a number of NATO colleagues who helped me with their advice and assistance but, in particular, I would like to thank Stephan Oenning, from the political advisor's office in SHAPE, who skilfully steered me through the nuances and complexities of the practical operational arrangements.
- 2 Malta joined the PfP for a short spell in 1996 and withdrew subsequently.
- 3 It has been a limitation of these reforms that the replacement of military forces by border police structures/agencies has not always been complemented by strong efforts to upgrade the training and equipment of the new civilian police forces. This is not a minor point as the real issue is not the status of the border guards – many EU member states have militarily organized border forces – but their law enforcement training and equipment. For a discussion of these aspects, see Hills (2002, 2005).
- 4 For a more detailed analysis, see Burwell *et al.* (2006: 14).