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EU-NATO Relations: Top-down strategic paralysis, bottom-up cooperation

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Introduction

The European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) have been engaged in an intricate minuet for many years, almost since inception. This chapter will make the argument that both organizations have struggled to cope with the results of strategic paralysis in their mutual relations. The chapter does not argue that 'strategy', as such, is irrelevant. There are formal strategic documents that outline the aims and objectives of both the EU and NATO but the very nature of their differing historical legacies and overlapping but sometimes competing crisis management roles means that finding consensus often leads to broad statements of intent rather than a coherent plan of action aimed at a specific goal. In both cases, for reasons that will be developed below, the reasons for the broad nature of the strategies can be traced to ambivalence within the organizations about their parameters and the degree of desirable overlap or separation.

The chapter will consider the evolving nature of EU-NATO relations since the end of the cold war as a way of understanding why the barriers between the two organizations at the strategic level have been particularly difficult to overcome. In so far as there is emerging strategic clarity it can be found in the Union's ability to adopt a comprehensive approach to security while the Alliance has always had a more explicit defensive mandate. Both organizations have, however, significant strategic overlap when it comes to NATO's role in crisis management, conflict prevention and peacekeeping – all of which have also been developed in the context of the Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) since 1998 (Howorth 2014). Conversely, the EU has adopted a mutual defence clause which, on paper, appears to take the EU towards the traditionally defence-oriented role of NATO. As will be argued below, the lack of respective strategic specificity is what has allowed the two organizations to co-exist not as a matter of happenchance but as the result of the assessments and fealties of the members themselves.

The impediments that have constrained the development of strategy in both cases are due to a combination of exogenous and endogenous factors. These are assessed in more detail below. The core argument is that there is unlikely to be much strategic

development as the result of endogenous factors as long as the Cyprus-Turkey dispute continues to dominate progress in relations between the EU and NATO. But, it is argued that this is in some ways a welcome distraction since it hides other reservations about the strategic compatibility of the two bodies and their only partially overlapping membership – the differences in membership being in many ways more significant than the similarities.

The chapter is divided into an analysis of the period from the end of the cold war until 2004 which has been broadly characterised as top-down in the strategic sense. The picture since 2004 is one that saw the replacement of grand strategic declarations and designs by a far quieter and pragmatic form of bottom-up cooperation.

EU-NATO Relations post 1989: A Difficult Start

Relations between the EU and NATO have gone through a number of stages commencing with NATO as *primus inter pares* during the Cold War years (for a fuller account see Duke and Haar, 2015). The European Community, as it was at the time, had little security role to speak of (Nuttall, 1992) and therefore the period until the end of the Cold War can, for the sake of brevity, be thought of as one of ‘structured separation’ (Koops, 2010: 48).

The end of the Cold War required both bodies to radically rethink their security roles. NATO faced an obvious need to reframe strategically since its prime military opponent and principal *raison d’être* had all but vanished. The traditional emphasis on self-defence (Article 5) was replaced by a gradual move towards more general crisis management tasks (Article 4) and a growing interest in human security (Reichard, 2006). The EU, which emerged with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, initially remained largely insulated from the immediate questions of defence and security, in part because of the presence of the Western European Union (WEU) who carried the main responsibility for the defence implications of the EU’s activities. In practice, ‘defence’ meant a range of peace-keeping and building tasks, often named the Petersberg Tasks after the hotel where they were signed just outside Bonn (Duke 2000).

A number of strategic documents, not to mention acronyms, followed in the mid 1990s, with the primary purpose of defining distinct roles rather than establishing any common strategic ground. For instance, the New Transatlantic Agenda (December 1995) insisted

that NATO remains 'the centrepiece of transatlantic security, providing the indispensable link between North America and Europe' (Duke, 2000: 187). One year before, the NATO Council of January 1994, had recognised the need to reinforce the European pillar of the Alliance. The essential elements of the security aspects of the Agenda were distilled into the European Security and Defence Initiative (ESDI). Although ESDI was never particularly well enunciated, either strategically or politically, it has two essential features that were to frame mutual strategic relations between the two organizations (Rees, 2011). First, ESDI acknowledged a 'European security and defence role' but in the context of a 'European pillar within the Alliance' (see Duke, 2000: 189-194). And, in a phrase that was to be repeated on numerous occasions by the North Atlantic Council, NATO was to remain the 'essential forum' for consultation among allies – most of whom were also EU members. A second theme that emerged from the above-mentioned Council's January 1994 meeting was the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept which provided 'separable but not separate military capabilities' that could be employed either by NATO or, at that time, the WEU (Duke, 2000: 190-191).

As instability worsened in the Western Balkans during the course of the 1990s it became apparent that the EU would have to think more seriously about security (Smith, 2012; Laursen, 2014). This led to the December 1998 St Malo declaration between the French President Chirac and the British Prime Minister Blair which advocated the need for 'the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to military crises' (Joint Declaration, 1998). This key strategic document casts the entire relationship with NATO into a highly ambiguous light, especially the formulation that the EU would take decisions and approve military action 'where the Alliance as a whole is not engaged'. This implied, at least from some Atlanticist perspectives, that NATO had an effective right of first refusal. To the Europeanists, it implied no such thing since the emphasis was upon autonomy. The document, at that time, reflected the historical differences between France and the United Kingdom over the respective roles of the two organizations.

The St Malo declaration also represented the beginning of the end for the WEU and faced the EU and NATO with two contrasting and somewhat paradoxical strategic challenges. It meant in the first place that, *ipso facto*, the EU was now responsible for the defence-related aspects of its activities. NATO's members, on the other hand, found themselves

facing no obvious territorial threat with the result that the strategic debate in the Atlantic Alliance was about reorienting itself away from defence towards crisis management. Both organizations, for different historical reasons, found themselves moving towards the centre ground of crisis management – circumstances that, superficially, might have given rise to expectations of strategic alignment (Howorth and Keeler, 2003).

Within this changing context, informal talks between the EU and NATO commenced in 1999 with the objective of reaching cooperation arrangements between the two organizations. That same year the EU and NATO established formal institutional relations and talks on what became the Berlin Plus agreements (Reichard 2006). This led to an exchange of letters between the EU High Representative and NATO's Secretary-General in January 2001 defining the modalities of consultation between the two organizations and the signature of a joint declaration on ESDP on 16 December 2002 (EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP, 2002). The document welcomed the 'strategic partnership' in crisis management, agreed upon a number of shared principles and agreed to develop their relations in a spirit of openness, including the fullest possible involvement of non-EU NATO Members of NATO within the CSDP and, on NATO's side, assured access to NATO's planning capabilities. The text, however, is generally silent about what the common strategic objectives or priorities are.

The Joint Declaration was followed a few months later, on 17 March 2003, by the signature of a joint 'Framework for Permanent Relations and Berlin Plus' by the Secretary-General of the Council of the EU/High Representative and NATO's Secretary General (Council of the European Union, 2003). At the institutional level mutual crisis consultation measures at both the political as well as military level were established. In the absence of a NATO equivalent of the Foreign Affairs Council, the interaction at foreign minister level remained however limited. The last such meeting goes back to December 2003. There are, however, informal exchange at various 'Transatlantic events' held biannually in New York or European capitals (see European Parliament, 2012). Other fora, such as the annual Munich Security Conference may also provide other venues for informal exchange.

The cluster of agreements, a series of summits, declarations and agreements were supposed to provide the tapestry for the EU-NATO strategic relationship (Howorth, 2014). In spite of the superficial trappings of a strategic relationship, closer inspection

reveals a relationship that was often competitive and not particularly strategic. The 2003 Comprehensive agreement and Berlin plus, which were supposed to represent the jewel in the crown of strategic cooperation, became more of a straitjacket rather than the basis for future strategic growth. In practical terms this means that much of the official dialogue revolves around the EU's Operation Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina which is carried out with recourse to NATO assets and capabilities under 'Berlin Plus' arrangements.

Beyond Berlin Plus

The immediate aftermath of the Berlin Plus agreements were marked with some optimism, but this soon crumbled in the face of competing strategic interests of the different actors involved and, in particular, the enlargement of the EU in 2004 with Cyprus. The latter marked the beginning of the 'participation problem' with Turkish opposition to the participation of Cyprus in formal EU-NATO meetings.

The note of optimism was due not only to the Berlin Plus agreements, but also due to the entry in force of the Nice treaty (February 2003), which provided the EU with permanent political and military crisis management bodies. The same year saw the adoption of a European Security Strategy and the EU launched its first ESDP mission in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The mission, named *Concordia*, was a follow-on to a NATO mission and, as such, relied on NATO's operational headquarters and the commander was NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR) who is, by tradition, European. Operation *Concordia* was soon followed by a second operation, *Althea*, in Bosnia-Herzegovina at the end of 2004. This was an altogether more ambitious mission and, like *Concordia*, it was a Berlin Plus mission following on from a previous NATO mission (Dijkstra 2013).

However, the momentum for EU-NATO cooperation created by Berlin Plus did not last for long. Very soon, ESDP started to gather pace with the launch of several new autonomous missions and the emergence of new crisis management structures within the EU like the 'Civ-Mil' cell. France, in particular, was concerned about the evident EU dependence on NATO and this was one of the reasons why Paris backed a 'Europe only' military operation in the Bunia province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2003 following a UN invitation (see Duke, 2009). A further cause of strain were the

bitter disputes within the EU and between the Union and NATO over the advocacy for an EU military headquarters at Tervuren, just outside Brussels. The plan, first launched in April 2003, was backed by Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg and was thus derisively dubbed the 'chocolate summit' by the United States. Coming scarcely a month after the formal adoption of the Berlin-Plus agreement, it caused considerable consternation within NATO (Black, 2003).

The 'chocolate summit' also paved the way for later projects such as the European Defence Agency (EDA), the EU Battlegroups, the EU Operations Centre and the European Security and Defence College, within the EU. The emergence of the EU Battlegroups in 2007, consisting of 1,500 strong rapid reaction forces, was a smaller and more modest version of the NATO Response Force which was created in 2003. As with previous developments, perceptions were varied and ambiguous, ranging from a strengthening of NATO's European pillar to a clear sign that the EU continued to develop in an autonomous fashion.

Notwithstanding the rhetoric, the Berlin Plus agreements did not lead to a new phase in EU-NATO relations. In spite of the increasing institutional contacts and the cooperation in the framework of operations *Concordia* and *Althea*, both players have to a large extent operated next to and even in competition with each other. The hailing of the joint EU-NATO declaration on ESDP (December 2002) as the beginning of a strategic partnership in crisis management was clearly premature. Not only have we not seen much of a partnership, there was remarkably little joint thinking about a common sense of strategic direction or purpose.

Strategic autonomy or overlap?

As the two main European security bodies in Europe, both the EU and NATO have adopted their own security strategies. NATO, as mentioned above, adopted a Strategic Concept in 1999 and this was updated in 2010 (Strategic Concept, 2010). The EU, as already noted, adopted a European Security Strategy (ESS) in light of the divisions of the military intervention in Iraq (2003). As the new European Security Strategy is not expected to be adopted before mid 2016, the extant strategy will be referred to as per 2003 and its update five years later (European Council, 2008).

The generalities of the 2003 ESS and the 2010 New Strategic Concept (NSC), on the EU and NATO sides respectively, provide ample room for overlap since both are expansive in nature and scope. Unsurprisingly, both overlap in normative terms, referring to common challenges emanating from the security environment (albeit seven years apart), similar threats (the proliferation of nuclear weapons and terrorism feature prominently in both and others, like cyber security were added in the 2008 revisions to the ESS), both emphasize the importance of conflict prevention, both refer to the conditional enlargement of their organizations to like-minded states, both mention each other (In NATO's case, the EU is a 'unique and essential partner') and it is recognized that they share a majority of members but also 'share common values' (NSC, 2010: Para. 32). The similarities go beyond this. Neither are really strategies but statements of the challenges facing the respective organizations, with little sense of priorities, how specific targets or challenges will be addressed or any benchmarks against which to gauge success. Both are also marked by being consensual documents, thus reflecting the inevitable compromises necessary to garner agreement among the respective and largely overlapping memberships.

The strategies also differ in some ways. For obvious reasons the EU is ambivalent on the whole question of nuclear weapons, whereas the NSC bluntly states that 'as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance' and that nuclear weapons represent a 'supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies' (NSC, 2010: Para. 17). With this in mind, far more emphasis is put on the role of deterrence as a 'core element' of NATO's overall strategy than in the ESS. Defence is also better defined, especially with reference to Article 5 of NATO's founding treaty, than is the case for the EU where the 'D' in CSDP remains largely undefined.

The ESS plays to its strengths with a far greater emphasis on the development related aspects, while noting that, 'Security is a precondition of development' (ESS, 2003: 2). Typically, the EU also puts a strong emphasis on the importance of the use of a mixture of instruments when addressing security challenges. These include both political, diplomatic, military, civilian, trade and development means. The ESS also emphasizes the need to link the different instruments and make sure that they are all used in a coherent way and in support of a common purpose.

Another typical characteristic of the EES is the strong emphasis on effective multilateralism with close cooperation with the UN and other international

organisations (Biscop, 2005). This is mentioned in the NSC, but not with the same frequency or political weight. The prominence of multilateralism is in line with the EU's 'normative power' discourse according to which it likes to present itself as a novel kind of power, which strives to promote international rather than Westphalian norms and values (Manners 2002).

In terms of geographical scope the ESS is obviously intended to be global in purview, while the NSC refers to the Euro-Atlantic area as well as to Afghanistan and the Western Balkans. At this juncture, in the lead up to the revised NATO NSC, a number of prominent American thinkers, such as Ivo Daalder (who later became U.S. Ambassador to NATO) and James Goldgeier (2006), advocated amending Article 10 of NATO's founding treaty to expand membership beyond European countries with a commitment to shared values. Given the EU's global ambitions but limited capacity for military intervention beyond Europe, 'global NATO' was seen by many Europeans as a tool for ensuring support for American foreign policy at a time when the transatlantic and intra-European wounds inflicted by the differences over Iraq were still relatively fresh (Rees, 2011).

So far the strategic declaratory overview presents a complex picture. The earlier documents, adopted from 1999-2002, shaped mutual relations but also exposed political dividing lines. It was also noted that NATO envisaged its primarily interlocutor as the WEU for much of this period (Cornish, 1996). The NSC and the ESS tried to provide a strategic or doctrinal basis for NATO-EU relations where the latter represented a far broader and more complex counterpart than the WEU. The strategies illustrated similarities as well as significant differences. The NSC was adopted perhaps more self-consciously as a strategy, while the ESS represented a more conspicuous attempt to mend damaged intra-European and transatlantic relations that had been torn asunder by military intervention in Iraq in 2003. Although the ESS was reviewed and updated in 2008, strategic relations between the two organizations were continued to be shaped by the repercussions of the enlargement of the EU.

The question of whether strategic blocks could be overcome was one that lay primarily with the Member States who were firmly entrenched in their respective positions, notwithstanding the presence of strategies that in many ways were compatible. The following section makes it apparent that the strategic level became increasingly irrelevant as a driver of relations between the EU and NATO.

Formal non-cooperation and strategic paralysis?

The year 2004 marked the ‘big bang’ expansion of the EU by ten members, which included Cyprus. It was the beginning of the ‘participation problem’ with Turkey a candidate for EU membership, but locked in endless negotiations and wavering support in both Turkey and the EU members, while Cyprus’ non-membership of NATO and the Partnership for Peace (PfP) effectively scuppered most workable relations (notably the Berlin Plus arrangements) between the two organizations (Duke 2008).

The emphasis given to the Cyprus ‘participation problem’ should not distract attention from another historic ‘participation problem’. France left the Integrated Military Command of NATO in 1966 under General de Gaulle and it was not until 2009, under Nicolas Sarkozy (2007-12), that France eventually returned to the Military Committee. This was done, however, in the context of a changed strategic landscape, the expanding role of ESDP and the need to get ‘rid of the flaccid atlanticism that so often prevails in NATO circles’ (d’Aboville, 2008). Much as France’s return to the fold was welcomed, it did little to change the fundamental strategic orientations of either the EU or NATO. While it opened up the way for more pragmatic engagement with NATO, over Libya for example (2011), it was not so much a case of Atlanticising French defence policy, or unionizing it for that matter, but one of Europeanizing it under whichever vehicle best suits national policy priorities.

Even if the French rapprochement with NATO can be portrayed as broadly positive, the Cyprus problem continued to impose considerable obstacles at the formal levels between the two organizations. This gives rise to one of the peculiarities of EU-NATO relations whereby, in counter-distinction to many of the other contributions to this book, much of the cooperation between the organizations is *not* driven by the strategic level but by *ad hoc* cooperation and informal procedures that may, in time, result in strategic advancement.

The informal cooperation between both organisations is well illustrated by Simon Smith’s (2014) extensive study of EU-NATO interaction in common operational areas such as in the Gulf of Aden, Afghanistan and Kosovo. Off the coast of Somalia, the EU’s Operation *Atalanta* and NATO’s *Ocean Shield* share the same mission (anti-piracy), operate in the same location and even have the same command location (Northwood, England), but with separate command structures operating side by side (European

Parliament, 2011). In Afghanistan the EU and NATO also operate in parallel and the Union's civilian police training mission has to rely upon NATO for protection, which necessitated 14 separate agreements between the two organizations as well as with individual Member States in order to ensure the protection and transport of personnel (European Parliament: 2011). In the case of Kosovo the number of technical agreements was reduced to a commendable four. This has led Carmen Gebhard and Simon Smith (2015) to suggest that the two institutions are characterized by 'formal non-cooperation' and that the relationship is kept afloat by various forms of informal and pragmatic cooperation in the field. As a consequence they argue that there are two-faces of EU-NATO cooperation: 'the political level is dominated by permanent deadlock, while on the ground and at sea staff have developed a *modus operandi* that allows them to deliver fairly successfully in complementing yet detached operations' (Gebhard and Smith, 2015: 107).

The presence of *ad hoc* workarounds to the high-level political impasse between the EU and NATO enables coordination, but with varying degrees of efficiency (Græger and Haugevik, 2011). Overall, there is little real possibility of a strategic breakthrough, either on Cyprus or on the emergence of a truly compelling strategic vision that will appeal to EU and NATO members alike. Having said that, there is ongoing blurring of the lines between NATO and the EU when it comes to arrangements on the ground. For instance, all of the non-EU NATO members have contributed as third parties to CSDP missions, with Canada, Norway and Turkey standing out. Norway, Ukraine and Turkey have also contributed to various EU Battlegroups. It is possible that the prevailing pragmatism between the organizations will lead to more 'quasi' operations, such as that in Libya in 2011, which are neither truly NATO nor EU missions but in which both have compelling interests. Circumstances like these, often complemented by the frequent American preference for coalitions of the willing, has often encouraged *à la carte* solutions with the consequence that short-term strategic alignment is far more important than any shared longer-term vision which, for the time being, is blocked.

Having said this, both the EU and NATO are embarking upon revision processes for their respective security strategies based upon a number of internal considerations, most notably the economic imperatives arising from economic austerity that are increasingly turning minds towards pooling, sharing and specialization, as well as the rapidly evolving external environment. With this in mind, the last sections consider the possible

endogenous and exogenous drivers that might offer a way out of Gebhard and Smith's 'formal non-cooperation'.

Endogenous factors for change

It is well known that strategic thinking is not one of the EU's strengths. Against a background of different national capabilities, geographical interests and historical experiences, the development of European foreign policy cooperation has always been reactive rather than being guided by a long term vision aimed at clearly defined goals. The rapidly changing international context and increased instability in the EU's neighbourhood have however pushed the demand for an updated strategic approach to the fore. The European Council of December 2013, dedicated to European defence and priority actions for stronger cooperation, gave Ashton's successor the task 'to assess the impact of changes in the global environment, and to report to the Council in the course of 2015 on the challenges and opportunities arising for the Union, following consultations with the Member States' (European Council 2013). In that light the High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP), Federica Mogherini, has embarked upon a process of strategic reflection in mid-2015, with the intention of updating the ESS based on a global overview exercise to be conducted over the course of a year.

Although the discussions are only starting, it is to be expected that the EU will stick to giving priority to its neighbourhood (Mogherini, 2015) and its predilection for a comprehensive approach characterized by the combined use of foreign policy instruments reinforcing each other. Still, the different national responses to the crisis in Ukraine and to Russia make it all too clear that it will not be easy to reach agreement on a common sense of direction. The fact that the United Kingdom is absorbed by internal debates about a possible Brexit and that Germany remains very reticent to assume responsibilities in foreign and security policy (Bulmer and Paterson 2013) only complicate matters further (for more details on the divergent strategic visions of the UK, Germany and France, see chapter by Whitman, Mawdsley Chappell in this volume).

NATO's strategic thinking has not remained immune to the rapidly changing geopolitical European environment either. While repeating their commitment to the three core tasks of collective defence, cooperative security and crisis management as defined in the Strategic Concept of 2010, the NATO Heads of State and Government meeting in Wales

(September 2014) upgraded collective defence to the status of *primus inter pares* of NATO's key roles (Major and Molling, 2015). An important instrument in the strengthening of NATO's collective defence role is the adoption of a Readiness Action Plan defining measures to respond to the security challenges along NATO's borders both in the east and the south. In that light, it was agreed to create a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) deployable within a couple of days.

When comparing the language of the earlier mentioned European Council of December 2013 and that of the NATO Wales summit of September 2014, it is clear that both players are conscious of the urgent need to adjust their strategic sense of direction and capabilities to the newly emerging geopolitical realities. Not surprisingly however, both the substance and tone of the documents differ considerably. The European Council Conclusions are more exploratory and primarily examine how the future EU can increase its effectiveness, visibility and impact. Although there are some proposals for concrete initiatives such as an EU Cyber Defence Policy Framework (2014), an EU Maritime Security Strategy (2014), and the development of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) (2020-25), it is clear that the remediation of shortfalls is a process that will take time and can only be realized in the medium- and long-term future. The NATO document on the other hand is much more hands-on and confident, making concrete proposals as to how the renewed emphasis on collective defence will be operationalized. In this sense NATO has completed a strategic tour de table as it returns to the original reason for its creation 65 years ago – collective defence.

Exogenous factors for change

Whether EU-NATO relations develop in one or the other direction may also be influenced by external developments or shocks. In that respect it is interesting to see how both players have responded to the annexation of Crimea and the subsequent war in Ukraine.

Against the background of their divergent histories, it will not come as a surprise that the responses of the EU and NATO have been of a rather different nature. The EU's response has been threefold: diplomatic efforts directed towards Russia and the Ukraine, especially led by Chancellor Angela Merkel and President François Hollande; the adoption of economic sanctions (along with the U.S.); and the sending of a mission

for civilian security sector reform (EUAM Ukraine, July 2014-), aimed at strengthening the rule of law. In addition, the EU has also supported economic reconstruction funds for Ukraine, but these are widely seen as too meagre in the absence of a comprehensive international reform package (Fischer, 2015). NATO, on the other hand, has primarily responded by providing military support to the allies in the regions bordering to the conflict in the (conceptual) form of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VHRJTF). More immediately, it has bolstered the defences of its Baltic members, two of whom have substantial ethnic Russian or Russophone populations. A 5,000 strong 'spearhead' force has been established and six bases in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, weighted more towards deterrence against any Russian interference (Zapfe, 2015). The western response was, on the whole, reasonably well coordinated and the responses have been complementary. The EU, through the use of sanctions, exploited its considerable economic weight as Russia's principal trade partner. NATO, and the U.S. more specifically, thought primarily along military lines and made it clear that it was ready to invoke article 5 and stand up for the defence of its members. The prospect of a NATO High Readiness Joint Task Force still need further conceptualizing and must avoid saddling 'a few with permanent responsibility' and to stress that it has to be 'a shared responsibility ... almost indefinitely' (Shea, 2015, 123).

The crisis however does not seem to have been severe enough to foster a sense of common strategic purpose. In the light of their different legacies and instruments, both partners appear to have drawn different conclusions about the need for future action. The fears of the Baltic states, especially bearing in mind their relatively short history of post-Cold War independence, are taken more seriously by NATO than by the EU – a concern bolstered by frequent air and naval incursions into NATO air and sea space by Russian military submarines, bombers and jets (the latter two often with their transponders off) (Opitz, 2015). The differences in approach are also well illustrated by the role of both partners in the Black Sea region, another part of Europe whose strategic importance has been strengthened due to the annexation of the Crimean peninsula. While NATO, amongst others, has responded with a series of naval exercises (March 2015), any sense of urgency in the EU seems to be largely lacking. A report by the Romanian Member of the European Parliament Ioan Mircea Paşcu (2015), seeking greater attention for the strategic situation of the region, has received little regard (Sadée, 2015). The key instrument for the EU in the region are the European

Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, including the association agreements with Georgia and Moldova. The Riga summit with the six Eastern Partnership states led to a reconfirmation of the importance that the Union attaches to the Eastern Partnership but was largely bereft of strategic vision when it came to relations with Russia where the tense armed stand-off in the Donbass continued to provide the backdrop to discussions (Kostanyan 2015). Nor was there much evidence of strategic vision in the form of commitment to a membership prospect for Georgia, Moldova or the Ukraine, all of whom have demanded it but seem to be sliding further away from any such prospect (Joint Declaration, 2015). The European Neighbourhood Policy will be reviewed during 2015 but little is expected since, ultimately, 'the scope and depth of cooperation are determined by the EU's and the partners' ambitions and needs as well as the pace of reforms' (Joint Declaration 2015). The results of any such strategic review will be fraught if the central issue of the EU's relations, as well as those of NATO, with Russia are not fundamentally reassessed.

In spite of the profound uncertainty surrounding events in the east Ukraine, there is the interesting potential that this crisis will provide the grounds for a strategic reassessment of the respective roles of the EU and NATO. The Alliance and more particularly Washington, where the real decisions on European security are taken (Techau, 2015), has approached the crisis primarily in terms of military security and capabilities. The EU on the other hand engages in a more structural approach whereby it uses a wide range of soft power instruments. Both approaches have their merits and in the case of the Ukraine crisis, the division of tasks has worked rather well.

The question of interest to this volume is how the above largely separate discussions will impact on the strategic outlook of both organisations and overcome the existing impediments to real convergence at the strategic level. One could at least envisage three possible scenarios. Firstly, it could well be that the renewed relevance of collective territorial defence, where NATO has a clear comparative advantage, will drive both institutions further apart. The Alliance would again become the prime European security player, reactivating the old divisions between Europeanists and Atlanticists. The disagreements about future direction of the organization (and financing) of European security could trigger a competitive relationship with limited mutual interaction and diverging and even competing strategies. This scenario also holds the risk that any reemphasis on collective defence (or at least hybrid warfare) may be at the

expense of the EU's crisis management operations, thus opening up the strategic challenge of finding an acceptable balance to members who, in most but not all cases, have dual obligations to both organizations (see Rühle, 2015).

According to a second, more positive, scenario the new security situation would create opportunities for a division of tasks whereby NATO focuses primarily on the military dimension of security, while the EU further develops its crisis management role and its comprehensive approach (European Commission and HR, 2013) linking different dimensions of external action. In order to develop sustained cooperation, both players invest enhanced interaction at the political level, including the ministers of foreign affairs. In such a scenario, strategies would partly overlap but have different emphases.

A third scenario, which so far has not been given much attention, but could nevertheless be a real option, is that the U.S., which continues to be the Europe's principal security player, organizes its security relations with the European continent on a primarily bilateral basis. Washington may continue to opt for *ad hoc* coalitions of the willing rather than work through any formal alliance arrangements. The intervention in Libya in 2011 by the France, the UK and the US, followed by a later NATO mission is a good illustration of such an approach. In this event, a cohesive strategy would be absent and the predominant strategic vision would be that of the Americans. It is left to the individual allies whether or not they want to subscribe on a case-by-case basis.

Conclusion

Our analysis of EU-NATO relations post-1989 clearly shows that the legacy of the cold war whereby both organizations developed largely parallel, and occasionally overlapping tracks, is still having an impact today. The Berlin Plus system, governing the formal cooperation in the field of crisis management, has been under-used and the strategic partnership heralded in 2002 has lingered at the level of wishful thinking. With both players lacking well-articulated security strategies and in the absence of a strongly institutionalized interaction at the political level, the picture sketched in this chapter is mainly one of strategic paralysis. The informal cooperation in the Gulf of Aden, Afghanistan and Kosovo may be nice illustrations of bottom-up cooperation but are *ad hoc* in nature. Whether they will serve as a catalyst for future strategic convergence is

difficult to predict. It is also unclear whether the increasingly apparent gaps between rhetoric and resources, which afflicts both organizations due to the largely overlapping membership, can be addressed in the absence of a compelling strategic vision that appeals to and is shared by the common membership. Pragmatism and *ad hocery* are unlikely to provide a convincing rationale to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing geopolitical context. Summarizing, more than 25 years after the end of the cold war, the short-term development of a cohesive EU – NATO strategy remains highly unlikely. This is not only the result of competition between both organizations but has also to do with their internal ambivalence about their future security role in a rapidly changing European and international context.

This chapter has sketched three possible scenarios for the impact of the recent security developments on the convergence of the strategic outlook of the EU and NATO. They range from (1) competition and rivalry (2) cooperation and complementarity (3) a *modus operandi* whereby the US organizes any interaction on a bilateral and scenario-driven basis. An analysis of the respective responses to the crisis in Ukraine seems to indicate that the first scenario of strengthened competition, or the third one of interaction with the US on a bilateral basis, may be more likely than the second one. The problem with the second scenario is that the respective evaluations and interests often suggest diverging conclusions about the gravity and urgency of the situation. Even if formal non-cooperation has occasionally given way to informal cooperation, this hardly provides grounds for much optimism about the prospects for strategic alignment beyond the rhetorical level. NATO will continue to be driven by its largest member and, in some cases, this may even be in spite of the Alliance. In the case of the EU this is less likely as it is Germany, as the largest and most influential member, who has given rise to some of the deepest reservations about the Union's security role. With a weak France and a UK that it is totally absorbed by internal problems, the question of leadership in the EU is more critical than ever.

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