Pillar or Pole? NATO, European Security and Defense Initiatives, and the Transatlantic Relationship

The relationship between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the various incarnations of a shared European security identity has been a complex one. Since the end of the Second World War and the US’s decision to become engaged in Europe’s reconstruction, there have been consistent calls on both sides of the Atlantic for a Europe that speaks with one voice on security matters. The institutions of a European security identity, culminating most recently with the European Union’s (EU) Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), are largely modeled after NATO institutions (Reynolds, 2010). Why, then, has a constructive transatlantic defense community, that encompasses both NATO and European defense initiatives, not been realized fully?

The primary stumbling block to fuller transatlantic political cooperation, and particularly to a fully institutionalized NATO-EU security arrangement, has been discord surrounding the nature and purpose of a European security identity. While US policy makers have consistently advocated the development of a stronger European security and defense identity as a pillar of a transatlantic security community, European leaders have differed as to whether a European security identity should be developed as such a pillar, or as a pole existing to pursue uniquely European (or national) security interests. Historically, European security integration has progressed further and faster during periods when these two rival notions have been effectively reconciled. It has stalled when they have not. The St. Malo Declaration, commonly viewed as the single most important moment in the development of CDSP, is an excellent example of this trend. While specifically referencing an “autonomous” European defense capability (Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom, 1998), the “sea change” of St. Malo came
with the explicit acknowledgement that ESDP would function as a “pillar” of transatlantic security, and without prejudice to member states’ commitments to NATO.

The paper will use burden sharing as a proxy to measure common approaches and integration, the notion being that effective cooperation, either intra-European or transatlantic, will be associated with increasing equality in burden sharing. Using a purpose-built Burden Sharing Index (BSI), the paper will evaluate the extent to which burden sharing has converged among NATO allies both across the Atlantic and within Europe, using convergence as a proxy for both effective European integration and constructive NATO-Europe security engagement.

Recent events in the Middle East, and particularly in Libya, have provided yet another challenge, or ‘crisis’ for the Transatlantic security structure. Just under 20 years after Jacques Poos famously (and prematurely) declared the ‘hour of Europe’ in Yugoslavia (Riding, 1991), European actors have again attempted to take the lead in a conflict scenario. Division among the EU’s three most powerful members, with France strongly advocating military action against the Qaddafi regime but strongly resisting NATO command; the UK also advocating military action but insisting on NATO command; and Germany abstaining from the vote on UN Security Council Resolution 1973, authorizing the use of force (United Nations Security Council, 2011), has caused some to mourn the ‘death’ of any hope of a common EU defense policy (Benitez, 2011).

This discord among European allies has posed a significant challenge to NATO as well. Thus far, the challenge has been managed in an ad hoc manner, with diplomats and leaders scrambling to accommodate widely varying interests and perceptions among allies. The pillar/pole dichotomy is a useful prism through which to analyze NATO and the EU’s handling of the crisis in Libya. At present, it appears that France’s approach has been to assert a more
‘polar’ or ‘Europeanist’ vision in the crisis, while the UK has pursued a more ‘pillar’ or ‘Atlanticist’ tack. Both of these approaches are true to historical form. Germany’s approach, however, represents a departure. Until the crisis over Iraq in 2003, Germany carefully balanced its position vis-à-vis the generally Europeanist approach of France, and the generally Atlanticist requirements of the alliance with the United States. In the event of the Iraq crisis, Chancellor Schroeder aligned with France in opposition to the US-led, UK supported invasion. Germany’s position in the Libya crisis again differed, this time splitting with all of its major NATO allies in abstaining from the vote on UNSCR 1973, authorizing the use of force in Libya. This approach appears to envision an EU security identity as neither a pillar in the transatlantic security arrangement, nor a pole in a multipolar world, but as being not particularly important at all. It is doubtful that this tack will represent Germany’s long-term strategic approach, and unfolding events will clarify what that approach actually is. The wrangling and summitry of the first few days of the US-led operation over Libya shed little light on how these tensions will ultimately be resolved. An effective reconciliation of the now three rivaling approaches within Europe will be necessary for continued progress in the development of CSDP. Such reconciliation is by no means certain at this moment.

The present ‘crisis’ over Libya is not unique in the history of NATO and European security arrangements, and is in fact just the latest in a long line of challenges. It is perhaps emblematic of the gap between aspirations and capabilities that has plagued European defense initiatives since the earliest days of the alliance, when the force goals were outlined in Lisbon in 1952 and never realized. In order to develop this thesis, this paper will examine some of the pivotal moments in the history of European security and defense initiatives through the
pillar/pole prism, in light of both qualitative evidence derived from primary sources, and quantitative evidence derived from analysis of the BSI.

**Quantifying Burden Sharing: Metrics**

The paper relies on three metrics to quantify burden sharing within NATO and among European allies: Military Burden, Burden Sharing Index (BSI), and Burden Gap. The three metrics are defined as follows: First, the **Military Burden** is the most common metric used to measure military expenditures and their economic significance and impact. It is defined as the ratio of military expenditures to Gross Domestic Product. Second, the **Burden Sharing Index** (BSI) is an indicator developed specifically for this research, based on the work of political economists in the field of NATO burden sharing (Sandler & Hartley, 1999). The index is designed as a proxy for the cost/benefit ratio associated with each member’s participation in NATO. BSI is calculated by dividing the *NATO Cost Share* of each member (member military expenditures divided by total NATO military expenditures – the aggregated military expenditures of all NATO members) for each year by the *NATO Benefit Share* of each member. Benefit Share is calculated the same way as Cost Share, with benefit being a function of economic goods protected (GDP) and human lives protected (population, with urban population weighted additionally due to both its vulnerability and its economic productivity). A BSI specific to ISAF is also a component of the paper, and is further addressed in the ISAF section of the paper.

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BSI = \frac{NATO\ Cost\ Share}{NATO\ Benefit\ Share} = \\
\frac{Member\ MILEX}{Total\ NATO\ MILEX} = \\
\frac{(Member\ GDP+Member\ Population+Member\ Urban\ Population)}{(NATO\ Total)}
\]
The Burden Gap with the United States is a variant of the Military Burden, specifically using the United States as a point of reference with which to compare other NATO members and groups of members. It is simply the difference between the Military Burden of the US and the member or group of members considered. Observing change in the Burden Gap over time facilitates comparison in hypothesis testing with specific regard to transatlantic burden sharing, and the efficacy of Europe as a cost-sharing pillar of the transatlantic security community.

First Attempts: The Pleven Plan, the European Defense Community, and the Western European Union

The primary transatlantic and intra-European issue in the years immediately following the Second World War was the incorporation of West Germany into the security architecture designed to secure Europe against further war, either with itself or with the Soviet Union. The European Defense Community (EDC) and the Western European Union (WEU) were both attempts at managing these dual challenges.

The EDC, as proposed by the Pleven Plan (named for France’s Defense Minister René Pleven, the architect of the plan) was the first attempt at a concerted Europe-wide security and defense approach in the years that followed the end of the Second World War. It was preceded by the Brussels Pact, which allied Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, primarily against the perceived threat of German aggression (Joffe, 1984), with no specific mention of the Soviet Union at all (Archives nationales du Luxembourg, 1948). The Pleven Plan, on the other hand, represented the first attempt at securing the rest of Europe (and primarily France) against Germany by incorporating Germany into a broader European security architecture, designed to secure Western Europe from Soviet aggression. The French desire, some claimed, was a “West German army … strong enough to impress the Soviets and weak enough not to threaten Luxembourg” (Joffe, 1984).
The Pleven Plan for the EDC was fairly ambitious, in that it involved the creation of a pan-European defense force, under which each military would be under the command of its national command authority, except for Germany’s, which would be under EDC command (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 1954). It was proposed by French Prime Minister René Pleven in response to the US proposal to rearm Germany. The intention of the EDC was to create such a force as an alternative to the proposed accession of West Germany into NATO. The EDC was to include the original Treaty of Brussels signatories plus Italy and West Germany (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 1954). The treaty instituting it was signed (Mémorial du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 1954), but the EDC itself never went into effect because the treaty was not ratified by the French Assemblée Nationale (Communauté européenne de défense: Suite de la discussion du projet de loi, 1954 (30.08)).

The failure of the EDC is an example of an excessively ambitious project for European security, not necessarily out of a desire to assert a European pole, but out of a desire to conduct, in particular, French foreign policy by means of the construction of a European security entity. The EDC was also developed with the specific purpose of developing an independent “European” solution to a problem for which the United States had proposed the solution of incorporating a rearmed Germany into NATO. Importantly, France, West Germany, and the other European countries each perceived the plan very differently.

The EDC began and ended in France. Jean Monnet, one of the most important drivers of the development of what would become the European Union, in a letter to the Pleven, outlined the EDC. Monnet saw the development of a fully integrated military as the only way to incorporate a peaceful Germany into a European political and defense identity. The seeds of the EDC’s demise were present at the idea’s creation. Although Monnet certainly tended to take a “pillar”
approach to the development of a common European political identity, he shared common French concerns about an overbearing United States: that France would become “just a second-rate partner” in a transatlantic alliance that would ultimately drag France into unwanted war (Monnet, 1950).

While the architect of the EDC saw it as a potential counterweight to excessive US influence on French foreign policy, others saw it as an American plan to force France against its will into an alliance that did not serve its interests. From popular (see cartoon below) to elite opinion, the notion of the EDC as an American invention was widely held. The US did, in fact, exert pressure on the Europeans to develop the EDC. This pressure resulted from the American understanding that a European agreement to put together an effort at a combined defense against the Soviet Union. In spite of early reluctance, France had signed on to this understanding, and the US expected its European allies to make good on their agreement (Sloan, 2011).

At the same time, there were strong, seemingly “Atlanticist” arguments in France opposed to signing on to the EDC. A French Foreign Ministry white paper concluded that, primarily for
reasons of national sovereignty, that the intra-governmental Atlantic alliance was more suitable to France’s foreign policy requirements than was the supranational EDC (Foreign Ministry of France, 1953). Eventually an improbable parliamentary “coalition” of sorts, made up of Communists, Socialists, and Gaullists coalesced to reject the EDC in the French National Assembly in August of 1954 (Journal officiel de la République française, 1954). Dirk Stiiker, in his memoirs, accurately observed that “in the field of defense nationalistic passions would result in bringing together a strange combination of Gaullists, Communists, neutralists, anti-Germans, anti-Europeans and all-out supporters of an Atlantic policy, which would in the end prove decisively hostile (Stiiker, p. 305).”

While the Communists and Socialists, staunchly opposed to German rearmament, played an important role in the death of the EDC through its rejection in the National Assembly, the most powerful voice opposing it was that of Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle’s opposition was of a different nature, and the ideas underlying it would continue to have an impact on transatlantic relations for years to come. De Gaulle critiqued the treaty insofar as it represented a subordination of French strategy to US interests, without a concomitant guarantee of France’s security (de Gaulle, Discours et messages. Book II: Dans l'attente (1946-1958), 1970, pp. 564-575). De Gaulle also argued that the treaty would limit France’s sovereignty and would undermine the importance of “l’Union Français,” France’s equivalent of the British Commonwealth (de Gaulle, Discours et messages. Book II: Dans l'attente (1946-1958), 1970).

At the same time, de Gaulle conceptualized, in a 1954 letter to General Béthouart, an important French approach to European political cooperation whose influence continues today (Védrine, 2009): the notion of a “Europe of Nations” (de Gaulle, Lettres, notes et carnets (juin 1951-mai 1958), 1985, p. 188). This Gaullist notion, which is shared by actors across France’s political
spectrum, has interesting implications for the pole/pillar dichotomy: both the European Union and the CSDP are seen in almost transactional terms; as necessary bargains that limit France’s sovereignty, but that act as force multipliers for France’s political power. In this sense, France’s “Europeanist” approach to transatlantic security issues can be seen also as a “polar” approach to global security.

But other actors saw the EDC very differently. Small countries, such as Luxembourg and the Netherlands, held similar concerns to those that they tend to hold today. First, they feared that the machinations of the larger countries would not result in a satisfactory capacity for self defense; in other words that the European powers’ capabilities did not match their rhetoric and strategy (see Opland cartoon below).

Some officials were concerned that the supranational nature of the EDC - while not objectionable in and of itself - meant that it would either be dominated by the larger powers, or doomed to fail (Stiiker, p. 304). A secret report by the Luxembourgeois diplomat Albert Wehrer
revealed concerns both on the part of the smaller countries, and on the part of Jean Monnet himself, that were primarily focused on intra-European rivalry (Wehrer, 1950).

The German position was complex. One argument was that rearmament would make reunification impossible, and that this was all for the best from the American, and particularly the French perspectives. At the same time, there was an explicit recognition of the metaphorical relationship between Germany and Korea, at least in the minds of some important actors (Daniel, 1953). From the perspective of Germany’s leadership, it was paramount to participate in the developing global and transatlantic security system, without stoking fears of revanchism or ambition (Brentano, pp. 69-86).

Alcide de Gasperi, Italy’s Prime Minister, viewed the EDC more clearly as a pillar of a transatlantic security arrangement than anyone else on continental Europe. Perhaps this was due to the anti-Communist bent of de Gasperi’s Christian Democrat (DC) party, which had recently roundly defeated its communist rivals. His assessment that “When this Army, thus organised and directed, has been incorporated into N.A.T.O., in accordance with the decision reached by the Rome Conference, we shall have united all our defensive forces, at the same time creating within Europe the nucleus of a federation which will be the surest guarantee of our democratic solidarity (De Gasperi, 1951).”

The United Kingdom, not an actual participant in EDC, also explicitly perceived the EDC as essentially the European pillar of NATO (Chamber of Commons, 1954). Prime Minister Anthony Eden was among the first to respond to the failure of the EDC, proposing a way forward that included incorporating Germany into NATO with the same safeguards outlined by the Pleven Plan, and building on the Brussels Pact to develop what would ultimately become the Western European Union (WEU), yet another attempt at the creation of a European pillar in the
transatlantic security community (Eden, p. 152), and an attempt to ease French concerns about German rearmament. Eden, however, was alarmed at John Foster Dulles’s explanation that the failure of the EDC would be taken hard in the US, and that it would likely result in pressure to reduce aid to Europe (Eden, p. 153).

The US disappointment was strong. Support for the EDC had been unwavering, particularly from Dwight Eisenhower (Office of the Secretary of State, 1951). Eisenhower’s powerful advocacy of the development of a European security identity was crucial to ensuring the congressional support that Eden and Dulles feared losing after the failure of the Pleven Plan (Eisenhower, 1951). The US was so committed to the creation of the EDC – one observer referred to it as an “11th Commandment” (Silvercruys, 1998) – that no provisions were made for the eventuality of its failure. Eisenhower felt as though the French, in particular, had bused the EDC as a device to blackmail the US over support in Indochina (Ambrose, p. 357). After Eisenhower articulated the strategy of Massive Retaliation, French support for EDC eroded for strategic reasons – Massive Retaliation put all of Europe under a US nuclear umbrella, whether or not an EDC existed. US disappointment was abject, but Dulles and Eisenhower accepted the Eden plan for moving forward (Eden, p. 153). One important result of this program was the creation of the WEU on the basis of the Brussels Pact. Although widely viewed as ineffectual, the WEU would, at a minimum, provide a skeletal framework on which European conceptions of sovereignty pooling in the realm of security and defense could evolve over the next five decades, before the WEU’s final cessation of activities in 2011.

The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the precursor of the European Community (EC) and then the European Union (EU) whose proposition also predated the Pleven Plan, responded institutionally to the failure of the EDC by focusing on Europe’s economic
integration (ECSC, 1955). The idea of Europe had survived, but a common European security and defense policy was dead for the time being. The Pleven Plan, a French conception of Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, and René Pleven, died as a result of French domestic politics. Among the US, the UK and the smaller countries of Europe, there was consensus to create the EDC as a pillar of transatlantic security. Germany simply sought to take a step in normalizing its relationship with its neighbors and the world. But French popular and elite opinion was divided. Some supported the EDC for the same reasons most other actors did. Others supported it as a vehicle through which France could remain a pole globally. Still others opposed it because it would weaken France’s position as a pole within Europe. Ultimately, it was this inability to reconcile the pole/pillar argument among European states, but particularly within France, that led to the demise of the Pleven Plan and the EDC.

In the realm of burden sharing, the BSI moved in line with what might be expected, though only very subtly. In the earliest years of NATO, the US share of the transatlantic defense burden went up dramatically. But as the EDC initiative developed through 1952 and 1953, European states began to bear a slightly larger share of the burden. After the defeat of the EDC in 1954, the US BSI resumed its upward trajectory, and most European allies’ indexes (with the exception of the UK) resumed a downward trajectory (see graphic 1 below). This effect was not dramatic, but was certainly present. So Europe’s collective inability to resolve the pole/pillar argument with the Pleven Plan coincided, at a minimum, with the US bearing an increased portion of the burden of transatlantic defense.
From the Fouchet Plans to France’s withdrawal from Integrated Military Command

When Charles de Gaulle took on the 18th presidency of France (and the first of the Fifth Republic), NATO reform was one of the first items on his agenda. As early as 1958, de Gaulle communicated to Eisenhower his agenda for reforming NATO (de Gaulle, Lettres, notes et carnets (juin 1958-décembre 1960), 1985, pp. 82-84). De Gaulle had two points in mind: first, in a foreshadowing of NATO’s “out of area” debates in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, he wanted NATO to take into account the “globalization” of security issues. For him, Africa and the Middle East were of paramount importance. Second, de Gaulle sought recognition for his “Europe of Nations” vision within NATO. Immediately upon taking office, de Gaulle reasserted national control over France’s Navy, explicitly mentioning that this was for the purpose of acting “far away;” in other words, to secure France’s overseas possessions and interests (de Gaulle, Discours et messages. Tome III: Avec le renouveau (1958-1962), pp. 247-250). In short, de Gaulle arrived in office with a clear vision of France as a world power, and saw NATO and any 1All graphics based on author’s calculations. Data Sources: Correlates of War National Military Capabilities Dataset; “Statistics on World Population, GDP and Per Capita GDP, 1-2008 AD,” Angus Maddison;“The Military Balance,” IISS
European security architecture through that prism. It was during this period that the notion of Europe as a “third force,” first mooted by Ernest Bevin in 1948, became a major factor in transatlantic relations. This notion, of course, closely aligns to visions of Europe as a global pole, distinct from the US and the Soviet Union. De Gaulle specifically and publically referenced concerns about American hegemony in his capacity as President as early as 1960 (de Gaulle, Discours et messages. Tome III: Avec le renouveau (1958-1962), 1970, pp. 247-250), and the theme became a dominant one by 1962 (de Gaulle, Discours et messages. Tome III: Avec le renouveau (1958-1962), pp. 402-409).

After recognizing that his vision for NATO had been rejected by the British and Americans, de Gaulle began efforts to create a much more politically unified Europe. Given de Gaulle’s views on a Europe of Nations, this can be interpreted as a reaction to a perceived lack of attention to his concerns about US hegemony within the alliance. The Fouchet plans, introduced in two iterations, amounted to a (Gaullist) French vision of a European union: an economic, political and defense community based on the autonomy of each member state. The second Fouchet plan made no mention of NATO (Commission Fouchet, 1962). The Fouchet plans were roundly rejected by France’s European partners, for three main reasons: uncertainty regarding the role of the United Kingdom, discord regarding a European defense system separate from NATO, and the intergovernmental nature of the institutions, which was discordant with the developing supranational component of existing EC institutions (Europa).

Christian Fouchet himself (at the time French ambassador to Denmark) focused on the intergovernmental aspect of the Fouchet plans as the deciding factor, lambasting the Dutch and Belgians as “bleating,” and “utopian” advocates of a “stateless, technocratic and irresponsible Europe” for their rejection of the plans (Fouchet, 1972). French diplomats in the concerned
countries perceived a more nuanced situation, noting both concerns about excluding the United Kingdom and the Gaullist intergovernmental nature of a Fouchet-inspired European political architecture (Crouy-Chanel, 1998).

What appears certain, though, is that discord over whether Europe should play the role of a global pole (de Gaulle, Discours et messages. Tome III: Avec le renouveau (1958-1962), 1970, pp. 402-409), or that of a pillar of transatlantic security was operative in the rejection of the Fouchet plans and the resulting period of limited progress on European political and security integration. De Gaulle’s vision of Europe as a political actor differed profoundly from that of his European partners, and as a result the Fouchet plans did not come to fruition, this time rejected by the other five members of the EC. While little was made on the French side of the second of the three reasons for rejecting the Fouchet plans listed above, France’s partners made the centrality of this component quite clear (Spaak, pp. 185-186). France’s efforts to build Europe into a pole outside of the structures of NATO were roundly rejected by France’s European partners. Once again, disagreement over the nature and objectives of a European security identity, tied to the pole/pillar dichotomy, had stifled attempts at further integration.

De Gaulle’s vision of Europe (and of France in particular) as a global power persisted after the failure of the Fouchet plans, culminating in France’s withdrawal from NATO’s unified command structure in 1966. In a press conference on 21 February of that year, de Gaulle announced his reasons for withdrawing from NATO’s unified command structure. The conditions under which the Treaty of Washington was signed, he declared, had changed. First, Western Europe was no longer under as significant a threat from the Soviet Union as it was in 1949. Second, the development of a Soviet nuclear capacity had rendered the US more vulnerable to Soviet attack, and thus less likely to assure the defense of Western Europe in the
event of armed conflict. Third, de Gaulle contended that, just as the risk of a world war erupting in Europe had diminished, the risk of such a war erupting due to US adventures elsewhere in the world had increased. France, contended de Gaulle, was prepared to assume global responsibilities on its own, in its own interests, based on its own nuclear capacity (de Gaulle, Discours et messages, pp. 17-19). Weeks after de Gaulle’s announcement, he sent a formal letter to US President Lyndon B. Johnson requesting the departure of US forces from French territory (de Gaulle, Letter from President de Gaulle to President Johnson (7th March 1966)). It was a clear effort to assert France’s international prestige as a global actor, fully capable of self-defense, without the politically expensive protection of the US and NATO.

Reactions in Europe were quite negative. Germany’s Foreign Minister made it clear that Germany did not perceive the evolution in the threat environment in the same way as de Gaulle, and that Germany’s commitment to the alliance would not be affected (Schröder, 1967). The other WEU members expressed collective concern at the operational effects of the unilateral withdrawal, as well as its unpleasant political and strategic implications, and formal regret at France’s decision (Sandys, 1966). The harshest criticism came perhaps from René Pleven of EDC fame himself: “Unfortunately, once again I see what it has undone, what it has destroyed, but I fail to see what is being done instead (Pleven, 1967).”

The US response was equally displeased. The official US government response to de Gaulle’s message took clear umbrage with the precipitous nature of the French decision, particularly the 1 April, 1967 date for the completion of the withdrawal of US forces from French territory (US Department of State, 1995). While de Gaulle’s outlook on NATO had been clear for many years, rendering the decision itself not terribly surprising to the US administration, its timing and abrupt nature did take nearly all organs of the US government
aback. US Ambassador to France Charles Bohlen attributed the decision almost exclusively to the person of Charles de Gaulle (Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 1966). The US congress, traditionally less sanguine about US support for European capacity building and political integration, reacted true to form. US policy professionals and France experts, themselves quite unhappy about France’s decision, were in the awkward position of explaining de Gaulle’s decision to a frustrated House Foreign Affairs Committee (Subcommittee on Europe of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 1966).

What is striking about burden sharing in the years surrounding the development and defeat of the Fouchet plans, followed by France’s unilateral withdrawal from NATO’s unified command structure, is the relative non-impact of these significant political machinations on European defense spending (see graphic 2 below). European military burden and BSI remained relatively constant throughout the period surrounding the development of the Fouchet plans, and dropped fairly precipitously following France’s withdrawal. This can perhaps be explained among non-French European members by a general sense of exasperation at another failed attempt at sovereignty pooling, followed by a unilateral action by one member that impacted the rest of NATO and Europe. But it is somewhat puzzling that France’s military burden and BSI would move essentially in tune with the rest of Europe’s during this period. Even after having asserted its autonomy in the realm of defense in 1966, France’s BSI and military burden dropped steeply through the rest of the 1960s, with military burden falling to a full percentage point below France’s average for the period considered by 1970.
The trends in military spending during this politically eventful period serve to highlight the gap between capabilities and aspirations that has plagued European efforts at a common security identity, and suggest that this gap is exacerbated when there is discord among European allies about the nature and purpose of such an identity. The pole/pillar dichotomy was particularly strong during this period, and it appears that the capabilities/aspirations gap and the decline in actual capabilities are positively correlated to such intra-European discord.

**From Flexible Response to the Hague Platform**

The period stretching roughly from the late 1960s until the early 1980s was one of consolidation both within Europe and in NATO. The period was characterized by détente between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, a difficult period economically and strategically for the United States, and consolidation of the gains of the trente glorieuses for the European members of NATO. The fundamental aspect of the strategic landscape of this period was NATO’s doctrine of Flexible Response, which called on NATO members to maintain conventional and nuclear forces sufficient to be able to control the ladder of escalation in response to a Soviet attack, and terminate hostilities on terms favorable to the allies (Sloan, p. 57). In differing with the Massive Retaliation approach, which relied on the threat of unconstrained nuclear response to
an act of Soviet aggression to compensate for NATO’s relative conventional weakness, Flexible Response would theoretically encourage the European component of the alliance to bear a greater share of the burden.

Flexible Response was in some senses a careful reaction to the French withdrawal from NATO’s unified command structure. As a doctrine, it helped NATO to maintain cohesion in the face of this challenge, and to “multilateralize détente (Wenger, 2004).” The Harmel Report on the Future Tasks of the Alliance set the tone for this period, opening the door for détente as a NATO policy, and clarifying NATO’s political role in consolidating and protecting democracy (North Atlantic Council, 1967). The report’s lasting legacy was to articulate two purposes for NATO: to prepare for and deter conflict, and to engage with the Warsaw Pact in order to bring peace to Europe.

As Flexible Response was articulated and the perception of détente became more broadly shared among both the NATO allies and the Warsaw Pact states, increased convergence among European allies and across the Atlantic in military burden sharing could be expected. From the introduction of Flexible Response and the articulation of what would become known as the Harmel Doctrine until 1981, this was precisely the case (see graphic 3 below), although the drawdown in Southeast Asia over the course of the late 1960s and early 1970s impacted the US
side of transatlantic defense expenditures significantly.

In 1983, the Reagan administration in the US introduced the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which aimed to provide a national missile defense for the United States. This doctrine upset the notion of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), which had helped stabilize the US/USSR relationship during the period of détente and Flexible Response. SDI reopened - at least theoretically - the door to massive retaliation on the part of the United States, or even nuclear first use. In so doing, the initiative turned back the clock, in a sense, to the pre-Flexible Response era: since massive retaliation was theoretically back on the table, security provided by US defense capabilities was now less excludable vis-à-vis the US’s European allies than it had been since 1967. This reversal, at a minimum, coincided with a rapid decrease in the military burden of the European allies from 1981 until the late 1980s (see graphic 4 above).

In 1987, the foreign and defense ministers of the member states of the WEU broke important ground in terms of European attempts at security integration when they introduced the Hague Platform on European Security Interests. In the Hague Platform, the member states made at least two very significant affirmations: first, that a defense and security element was essential to the future of Europe’s construction. Second, that such an element would be consistent with
the member states’ obligations to NATO. The platform went as far as to specifically refer to the WEU and its newly declared security interests as a “European pillar of the Alliance” (WEU, 2002). The platform was received with some skepticism within Europe, particularly with regard to its aspirational, rather than concrete, nature (Gazzo, 1987). Nor did the fiscal components of such a platform go unnoticed (Lefèvre, 1987).

But the actual impact on the economic component of burden sharing seems to have been of some consequence. From 1987 to 1991 there was significant convergence in burden sharing across the Atlantic and, although less so, within Europe. For only the second time in NATO’s history, transatlantic burden sharing was at near parity in 1991. Though criticized and often dismissed, the Hague Platform was a significant rhetorical and psychological step for European security integration. Tellingly, its enunciation is at a minimum temporally correlated with the outset of a period of relatively equal transatlantic burden sharing. At least some of this equality can be attributed to progress on the European side of the Atlantic in terms of a shared vision of the nature and purpose of a European security identity; the Hague Platform articulates this consensus around Europe as a pillar of transatlantic security.

In the years that followed, visions of Europe as a security actor suffered some severe blows. But those blows would serve as catalysts for further European security integration in the late 1990s, for which the “European Security Interests” articulated at The Hague admirably served as a “Platform.”

*From Maastricht to Amsterdam*

By 1991, some Europeans were quite confident in Europe’s capacity to operate as an actor in the realm of regional, if not global, security. This confidence was famously embodied in
Jacques Poos’s 1991 assertion, regarding the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, that “this is the hour of Europe…not the hour of the Americans. (Riding, 1991).”

Most of the progress in European security “actorhood” during this period was administrative and legal – the EU’s engagement in the former Yugoslavia was widely viewed as disappointing at best. At the same time, this disappointment provided the impetus that led to later progress in the development of an EU security identity, and future progress would certainly not have been possible without the institutional developments of the early 1990s. The Balkan wars of the 1990s also provided test beds for NATO interoperability, and gave a “new” task to the transatlantic pact in the post-Cold War era: ensuring peace and stability in Europe, beyond the borders of the member states.

Institutionally, the early 1990s were a period of significant progress. Signed on 7 February, 1992 the Maastricht Treaty, which created the EU, was the crowning achievement of the second Delors Commission. The existence of the EU was certainly a necessary, if not sufficient condition to create what would become the CSDP. Article 228a of the Maastricht Treaty explicitly articulated a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) for Europe (European Commission, 1992).

A mere four months after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the Petersberg Declaration outlined priority tasks to be accomplished within the framework of the newly created European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) component the CFSP. The ESDP was to focus on the execution of humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks, and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacekeeping (Western European Union Council of Ministers, 1992). The Petersberg Declaration also explicitly addressed the WEU’s relationship with NATO, hewing to the “pillar” line, without, this time, specifically using the word. The
implementation of the Petersberg Declaration involved continual dialogue between NATO and the WEU (NATO, 2001).

NATO’s Brussels Declaration of 11 January 1994 launched the concept of a European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI), within the framework of NATO. The declaration identified ESDI as the first step in creating what would eventually become the CSDP, under the CFSP clause of the Maastricht Treaty. The Brussels Declaration unequivocally outlines the ESDI as a pillar of the Atlantic Alliance, specifically using the word pillar 5 times. During meetings in Berlin and Brussels in June of 1996, NATO Foreign and Defense Ministers decided to construct ESDI within NATO, as “an essential part of the internal adaptation of the alliance,” essentially, a European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance, to “enable all European Allies to make a more coherent and effective contribution to the missions and activities of the Alliance. It would allow them to act themselves as required and would simultaneously reinforce the transatlantic partnership (NATO, 2002).” It was this aspect of the development of ESDI that led to the notion of ESDI as “separable but not separate” (Schmidt, 2000).

The apparent effects of this shared vision of the ESDI representing a pillar of the transatlantic security arrangement are quite striking. Europe’s collective recognition of its inability to act collectively and effectively in the Balkan wars of the early and mid-1990s led to many of the institutional developments of this period. There was a clear trend toward increased equality of transatlantic burden sharing during this period, with France in the lead among the Europeans (see graphic 5 below). The burden gap during this period was also significantly lower than in past periods (see chart 1 below).

This increased equality can partially be attributed to reduced US defense expenditures on weapons following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, combined with steadier European
expenditures due to high labor costs. But some of the increase in equality must be attributed to a combination of 1) European desires to improve security capacity as a result of the shortcomings highlighted by Europe’s experience with the former Yugoslavia, and 2) institutional progress in the form of the ESDP and the ESDI. At the same time, it is not at all clear that there was any improvement in European defense capabilities, which would be tested and found lacking in the years to come. A significant portion of European defense spending could be attributed to large (often still conscripted) standing armies on the European side of the equation, and increasing personnel costs (Sloan, 2011).

The progress referred to here was partially enabled by the clear consensus that NATO’s European members came to during the 1990s regarding the nature and purpose of Europe’s security identity. The early 1990s were a period of enormous institutional progress beyond the realm of defense, which cannot be ignored in this analysis. The high level of activity that the Delors Commission became known for resulted, most importantly, in the institutional birth of the European Union. The Maastricht Treaty’s provision for a CFSP led directly to the foundation of the ESDP, the first successful implementation of a European security institution beyond the WEU. The ESDI integrated a European security capability into a transatlantic security
framework, specifically identifying it as a pillar in that framework. The consensus that European political elites were able to come to about the intergovernmental nature and transatlantic purpose of ESDP was instrumental in the significant institutional progress of this period.

From St. Malo to Helsinki via Kosovo: the implementation of ESDP

One of the most significant outcomes of the practical failures and institutional progress of the 1990s was the St. Malo declaration, which - more than any other development - paved the way for an autonomous European defense capability. By calling for the establishment of a European crisis management capability independent of NATO for the first time, “the St. Malo Declaration turned the history of European integration on its head (Reynolds, 2010).” St. Malo is often referred to as a British “U-turn (Rutten, 2001)” that reconciled the Atlanticist policy tradition of the British with the Europeanist policy tradition of the French. But was this reconciliation tantamount to an adjustment to member states’ understandings of the nature and purpose of the ESDP? Or was it merely the starting point for another round of negotiations?

Acknowledgement that the gains of St. Malo are mostly in the field of “policy commitments and policy guidelines” notwithstanding, there is some degree of consensus on the European side of the Atlantic that St. Malo represented something almost “revolutionary” compared to the hapless attempts at European security integration highlighted above (Reynolds, 2010), (Rutten, 2001). While the procedural and institutional developments expressed at St. Malo are indeed significant, it is worth considering that the declaration was perhaps more an encapsulation of a series of incremental developments that preceded it than a groundbreaking endeavor. Particularly in the realm of budgetary and operational burden sharing, St. Malo was less a watershed development than might be imagined.
The importance of St. Malo in terms of institutional development, however, should not be underestimated. Even the “sea change” of St. Malo came with the explicit acknowledgement that ESDP would function as a “pillar” of transatlantic security, and without prejudice to member states’ commitments to NATO. So, while St. Malo purportedly resolved historic Franco-British tensions regarding the Atlanticist or Europeanist nature of what had become the ESDP in favor of an autonomous, Europeanist vision, in identifying ESDP as a “pillar” of transatlantic security, it also somewhat stoked concerns regarding the development of a European “pole,” by specifically referencing an “autonomous” European defense capability (Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom, 1998).

The US Administration expressed these concerns and sought more assurances. Secretary of State Madeline Albright applauded Europe’s progress in terms of laying the institutional groundwork to develop capabilities that would be of use to the alliance in the 21st century. At the same time, she set out, immediately following the St. Malo Declaration, the famous “3 Ds”: no Decoupling (of European decision-making from broader alliance decision-making), no Duplication (of resources for planning and operational management), and no Discrimination (against NATO members who are not members of the EU) (Albright, 1998). In so doing, Albright essentially reminded Europe not to lose sight of the pillar/pole debate, and made clear on which side of that debate the US Administration was.

As all of this was occurring, an important security issue was developing once again in the Balkans. The Yugoslav National Army (JNA) had been engaging in a harsh crackdown against the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), an insurgent group seeking autonomy for the Kosovo region of Serbia. Pressure was mounting on the West to take action. A series of escalating measures were taken to attempt to convince Serbian Premier Slobodan Milosevic to cease
offensive action in Kosovo, to withdraw JNA troops, and to curtail Serbian militias. Throughout
the winter of 1998-1999, the KLA and the Serbian government had been in talks at Chateau
Rambouillet, outside of Paris. The talks broke down on 15 March 1999, and by 24 March, after
the failure to pass a UN Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force, NATO
launched an air operation designed to eject the JNA from Kosovo. The mission was eventually
accomplished, but many cautioned against NATO’s replicating such an operation. Nonetheless,
it could be considered NATO’s first non-Article V operation, and the deployment of ground
forces in support of KFOR was a major development for the Alliance. While the EU proved a
more effective and cohesive set of institutions during the Kosovo crisis than it had during the
Balkan wars of the early 1990s, US firepower and negotiating clout still proved decisive in
NATO’s “win” in this European conflict (Daalder, 2000).

While the allied military operation in Kosovo clearly showed the extent to which the EU
political voice and capabilities to back up policy with action envisaged at St. Malo were still
lacking, it also gave a greater sense of urgency to implement the declaration (Rutten, 2001).
Additionally, the Kosovo operations would serve as a precursor of future NATO operations in
Afghanistan and Libya. There were more immediate effects as well. Based on the lessons
learned after one month of Alliance operations over Yugoslavia, the final communiqué of the
Washington, DC North Atlantic Council summit exhibited a much greater interest in and
approval of the ESDP (North Atlantic Council, 2001) than had the previously prepared Strategic
Concept (North Atlantic Council, 2001). EU leadership touted these gains at the Franco-German
Defense and Security Council the following month in Toulouse (Foreign Ministries of France
and Germany, 2001). At Cologne, in June, the European Council elected to subsume the WEU
into the EU, which would result in the WEU’s eventual disappearance. Additionally, the
Cologne Council appointed Javier Solana as the High Representative, in accordance with the declaration of the Vienna Council (European Council of Cologne, 2001).

It appeared that not just a European, but a transatlantic consensus around a powerful, autonomous, European pillar of transatlantic security was building. Following the Cologne Council, French President Jacques Chirac and US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott each seemed to affirm the centrality of the ESDP as an essential pillar of NATO, with the French action plan for the implementation of ESDP explicitly referring to it as such (Chirac, 2001). In an explicit acknowledgement of Secretary Albright’s articulation of US concerns about ESDP with the three (negative) Ds, NATO secretary Lord Robertson offered three (positive) Is: Indivisibility (of the security of Europe and North America), Inclusiveness (of all nations of the Euro-Atlantic area), and Improvement (of NATO member’s capabilities) (Robertson, 2001).

The EU at last appeared ready to begin the concrete implementation of ESDP. The Helsinki Headline Goal, echoing the Lisbon agreements of 1952, was a target set for EU military capabilities to be achieved by 2003. The goal was the outcome of the December 1999 Helsinki European Council. The Helsinki Council pledged the EU to develop the capability to rapidly deploy and sustain a corps level force into the field of operations to execute the full range of Petersberg tasks, anywhere where European interests are affected (European Council Presidency, 2001).

In this era of high hopes for the ESDP, one might expect to see some increase in the share of the collective defense burden borne by European states. In fact, the opposite was true. From 1998 to 2001, the proportion of the burden of collective defense decreased in every European state and grouping of European states analyzed (see graphic 6 below). If anything, the uniformity of the decreases could be seen as an indicator of cohesion among European allies.
around the idea of reducing investment geared to increasing capacity of member state military forces. But, given the rhetoric of the documents and declarations surrounding the implementation of the ESDP, this seems unlikely. Importantly, Europeans were spending most of their available resources at this time on developing monetary union. Constrained defense spending could be associated with the fiscal constraints imposed by monetary union (Sloan, 2011).

Perhaps, then, the pooling of sovereignty implicit in the St. Malo Declaration engendered a sort of collective action problem, whereby once EU member states felt assured that henceforth the EU would pursue defense and security affairs collectively, there was less need to invest individually. This scenario also seems unlikely given the intense attention given to capacity building. It was also precisely the opposite of the sense of collective responsibility that Blair was aiming for at St. Malo (Sloan, 2011). It appears, then, that there were unseen cracks in the apparent consensus reflected in St. Malo, Helsinki, and elsewhere. While the EU had improved its capacity to operate as a political and security actor in the period between the Balkan wars of the early 1990s and the Kosovo conflict, the latter demonstrated that glaring weaknesses remained in terms of capacity and cohesion. As discord, particularly over US policy choices, in the next decade would demonstrate, there was disagreement over the nature and purpose of
ESDP lurking just beneath the surface: the old pillar/pole debate, seemingly put to rest, was still alive and well.
From Nice to Benghazi

The first 11 years of the 21st century have been eventful for NATO and CSDP. 2001 saw the signature of the Treaty of Nice, the first ever invocation of Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty after the September 11th attacks in the United States, and NATO’s participation in ISAF in Afghanistan (Sperling & Webber, 2009). From 2002 on, as the alliance was divided over US policy toward Iraq, ISAF continued to grow in importance, until by 2007 ISAF’s five Regional Commands, or RCs, were in command of the entirety of Afghanistan, from an Alliance perspective (International Security Assistance Force). Meanwhile, the EU took major institutional steps with the 2007 Treaty of Lisbon (Official Journal of the European Union, 2007) conducted 8 military operations under the auspices of ESDP (which became CSDP after the 2009 Lisbon Treaty), and at least 17 civilian missions during the first decade of the 21st century, often complementing NATO military operations, notably in the Balkans (Consilium, 2011). By April of 2011, NATO had articulated a new Strategic Concept (North Atlantic Treaty Organization Heads of State and Government, 2010), and was involved in an air war over Libya. The Alliance’s evolving posture toward Libya in the spring of 2011 demonstrated that the pole/pillar conversation remained unresolved.

The latent disagreements about the nature and purpose of ESDP came to the fore in the public discourse surrounding the signature of the Treaty of Nice. First, issues of nationalism and intergovernmentalism, standard fare in EU discussions, were a source of some discord (Riccardi, 2000). More importantly, disagreements along the pole/pillar cleavage entered into the debate, in the traditional form of British Atlanticism and French Europeanism: the plan, complained Iain Duncan Smith, Britain’s shadow defense secretary, could not be reconciled with Prime Minister
Blair’s assurance to US president George Bush that “European defense would not undermine NATO,” due to the French insistence that the EU will have its own “autonomous planning system.” Smith, not wholly unreasonably, perceived such an autonomous system as a violation of the second of Secretary Albright’s 3 injunctions: duplication. As quickly as it had been “resolved,” the pole/pillar debate reappeared. In reality, the issues had never really been resolved, but had merely been papered over more effectively then they had been in the age of the EDC or the Fouchet plans.

Operationally, NATO was ready to welcome a new, stronger European pillar, based on the letter of the Nice Treaty, as outlined in Article One of substantive amendments (Official Journal of the European Communities, 2001). The “Berlin Plus Agreement,” shorthand for a package of seven agreements between NATO and the EU arrived at during the Washington Summit, was intended, from the NATO perspective, to address the issue of cooperation and the risk of competition between NATO and the ESDP (Cornish, 2006).

The Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF)/Deployed Joint Task Force (DJTF) concept was designed to help NATO cope institutionally with the evolutions outlined above. The intent of the CJTF concept was to replace NATO’s “rigid OPLANs” with more generic, flexible Contingency Plans, and to enable the integration of non member state contributions into Alliance operations. The purpose of these changes was to broaden NATO’s perspective into a global one, and to enable NATO to better marshal international political support outside of the Alliance (NATO Defense College, 2006). The CJTF concept made allowances for a European “pillar” within NATO, but was ambiguous about how to incorporate such a pillar, as NATO planners perceived some uncertainties about what it would look like (NATO Defense College, 2006).
Operationally, the first decade of the 21st century saw two sometimes conflicting trends. For the first time, the EU was able to put forces in the field under its own auspices. The EU adopted two iterations of a Europe-level “security strategy,” one in 2003 (Solana, 2003), and another in 2010, which, in draft form, focused primarily on internal security (Council of the European Union, 2010). Under the broad strategic framework laid out in 2003 (and before that at The Hague and St. Malo), the EU conducted 7 military operations (Council of the European Union, 2011).

On the other hand, Europe remained divided on some key issues, notably the US-led operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. While NATO, as an alliance and as an institution, continues to play a key role in Afghanistan, European members are divided when it comes to actual participation. National caveats, as well as member states entering and exiting ISAF according to domestic political changes, have created tension within NATO over ISAF. The sources of these sorts of tensions are difficult to objectively define and arbitrate. In order to evaluate NATO member burden sharing within ISAF more objectively, an ISAF-specific Burden Sharing Index (BSI)\(^2\) was developed for this paper, using the spatial statistics features of ArcGIS to develop a “Protection Ratio” (PR), which measured the extent to which NATO members participating in ISAF complied with the ISAF commander’s first directive: “to secure and serve the population (Petraeus, 2010).”\(^3\) Identical to the broader NATO BSI, an ISAF BSI of 1 or above suggests a greater focus in the measured member state on NATO priorities than on national or regional

\(^2\) PR = \(\frac{\text{ISAF Activity Targeting Insurgency}}{\text{Insurgent Activity Targeting Civilian Populace}} \div \frac{\text{Population}}{\text{km}^2}\)

\(^3\) ISAF BSI = \(\frac{\text{ISAF PR Share of Member}}{\text{NATO Benefit Share of Member}}\) = \(\frac{(\text{Member Troops} \times \text{Member PR})}{(\text{Member GDP} + \text{Member Population} + \text{Member Urban Population} + \text{NATO Total} + \text{NATO Total})} + \frac{(\text{Total NATO Troops} \times \text{NATO PR})}{\text{NATO Total}}\)
ones, and a ratio of 1 or less suggests the opposite. The variation of ISAF BSI among European NATO members is striking. Denmark and the UK, generally regarded as strongly “Atlanticist” alliance members, demonstrate extremely high ISAF BSI to overall BSI ratios (see chart 2 below). France and Italy have extremely low ISAF BSI to overall BSI ratios; Germany and the US have ratios of slightly less than 1. These ratios suggest that countries like Denmark and the UK devote a relatively large proportion of their military expenditures to NATO-focused tasks (in this case ISAF operations), while France and Italy, and to a lesser extent the US and Germany, may be focused on other priorities.

In addition to suggesting that the US pursues national security interests beyond the scope of NATO (not a surprising finding), this data indicates that there is severe division among European allies as to the nature and purpose of both NATO and an EU security identity. The implication of the data displayed above is that NATO members such as the UK and Denmark likely perceive CSDP as a pillar of NATO, as evidenced by their high ISAF BSI to overall BSI ratios. Extremely low ISAF BSI to overall BSI ratios displayed by members such as France and Italy suggests that these countries likely either see CSDP (or themselves) as a pole, with interests deeply diverging from NATO’s, or are interested in free-riding in a more traditional sense. This intra-European divergence was on display during 2002-2003, as the US made an unsuccessful
case for the invasion of Iraq at the UN. France and Germany’s strong opposition to the US case suggest that those two countries might see Europe as a rising pole. Italy’s and some smaller EU members’ short-lived support for the invasion suggests that they might be examples of the second possibility: security free-riders.

In spite of these important divisions, Europe’s leadership has collectively exerted a massive effort to develop the EU into a 21st century security actor. The European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003 was the greatest leap forward in terms of a common European security strategy since The Hague Platform. Though not explicitly stating so, it outlined an autonomous European strategy that identified a broader set of risks and threats than did NATO’s 2001 strategic vision (Solana, 2003). This European strategy suggested a European approach that shared a similar approach to the US on “hard” security issues such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and failed states, but that defined security less narrowly than did the US (Sloan, 2011). Some began even to discuss a “European Way of War (Everts, Freedman, Grant, Heisbourg, Keohane, & O'Hanlon, 2004).” The authors of a Centre for European Reform document contend that despite continuing and profound differences among EU members as to “whether the point is for the EU to become a more effective partner for the US, helping it to sort out global problems, or rather to promote a multipolar world that would serve to constrain US power,” they have always managed to move European defense forward, including the management of ESDP/NATO interaction. They draw a parallel between the ESDP and the EU in general: “the fact that the member-states have never agreed on what the EU is for has not prevented them from building the world’s most successful and effective multilateral organization (Everts, Freedman, Grant, Heisbourg, Keohane, & O'Hanlon, 2004).” The challenge that the
NATO/EU relationship faces an analogous one: moving a relationship forward in spite of disagreement on a fundamental issue, while continuing to move toward reconciling that issue.

On the broader burden sharing front, two evolutions are of particular note. First, while the burden gap has grown significantly, BSI has remained fairly steady across NATO members since 1998 (see graphics 7 and 8 below). Perhaps most importantly, though, European members’ military expenditures have begun to move in a more strongly correlated fashion (see graphics 7-9 below), with a two-tiered EU emerging in terms of security: a Franco-British leadership that is investing relatively significantly in defense and security expenditures, and the rest of Europe that is (fairly uniformly) investing less heavily.

In the context of long-term historical trends since the founding of NATO, transatlantic burden sharing has been relatively equal in recent years (see graphic 10 below). Although burden gap has increased with an increased US military burden over the last 15 years, *the long-term trend is clearly downward*. The burden gap of all EU Members is lower than its average over the history of NATO, and was in 2009 very close to its 5 year simple moving average. Also of note, since the late 1990s, the military burden of EU member states has become increasingly aligned. Finally, French and British military burden has become virtually identical, with the
leadership duo’s average burden gaps well below both their historical averages and their 5 year simple moving averages. In short, the long-term trend is toward more equal burden sharing, both within NATO as a whole, and among the EU members of NATO.

Thus, there are reasons for both optimism and pessimism when analyzing the NATO/CSDP relationship over the last decade or so. While the US has still borne a disproportionate share of the military burden among Alliance members, this might be attributed to differences in perception regarding the global threat environment following the September 11th attacks. While European defense expenditures are largely in line with historical averages, US expenditures have been on an upward trajectory since the late 1990s. Importantly, though, the trends identified above regarding a coalescence of military burden within the EU, and a clear Franco-British leadership position in this realm, might augur well for the future effectiveness of the CDSP, and for a more equal European pillar of the transatlantic security bargain.

Conclusions: Current challenges and NATO/CSDP cooperation going forward

A number of visions for the evolving NATO/CSDP relationship have been put forward in recent years. Jolyon Howorth, echoing the analogies of other commentators to the evolution of
the EU (Everts, Freedman, Grant, Heisbourg, Keohane, & O'Hanlon, 2004), contends that the relationship ought to be allowed to evolve in an ad hoc fashion, as opposed to seeking some kind of “grand bargain” (Howorth, 2009). Zbigniew Brzezinski envisions NATO as a hub of sorts, bringing together a “web” of smaller security arrangements around the globe (Brzezinski, 2009).

In practice, cooperation (though sometimes fraught) between NATO and CSDP has been quite common, from the Balkans to Afghanistan, and now in Libya. But the cooperation is seen as largely informal and ad hoc, lacking any kind of institutional backstop (Hofmann & Reynolds, 2007). The case of ISAF, discussed in some detail above, offers mixed indicators: while NATO as an institution has been deeply involved, key NATO members who have traditionally identified with a “polar” vision of Europe have been less engaged there, relative to other commitments.

Current events in Libya are also an interesting laboratory of Alliance politics. Like most other pivotal events in NATO’s history, those surrounding NATO’s ultimate military intervention in Libya have lent themselves to conflicting interpretations. The spring of 2011 has certainly not been the CSDP’s finest hour, and CSDP has come in for criticism on both sides of the Atlantic (see “Tom” cartoon below). While France and the UK “made themselves heard,” the EU as an institution has been perceived by many as “divided and impotent (Vernet, 2011).” High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, has come in for particularly harsh criticism (Vogel, 2011). While this paper has measured investment in defense and security among NATO allies, return on such investments is of equal importance, although harder to measure. The European military capabilities on display in Libya thus far suggest that as defense investment has been lackluster, the return on that investment has been even more disappointing. But the story in Libya is not yet over.
The old pole/pillar divisions seem to have reappeared in Europe. In particular, France seems to be tempted by an old Gaullist impulse to assert itself globally, using the rest of Europe as a diplomatic force multiplier. Is the powerful “Europe of Nations” envisaged by de Gaulle in the 1960s coming into being in the skies of Libya? It seems unlikely. But elements of Gaullism seem to be present in the discourse in France surrounding Libya. French President Sarkozy pushed strongly to keep the operation to enforce UNSCR 1973 away from NATO command. Sarkozy eventually bowed to pressure from other allies, particularly the Italians and the British. This inclination was supported not only by Sarkozy’s embattled UMP-led government (Melloul, 2011), but also by important figures of the French foreign policy elite outside of government (de Villepin, 2011). The operation has been well received by the French media (Forge, 2011), French public opinion (IFOP pour Dimanche Ouest-France, 2011), and even Sarkozy’s staunchest political opponents and critics (Védrine, 2011). Although the early firepower was largely provided by the US; France, and to a lesser extent the UK, have assumed political leadership of NATO’s Libya operation. As the intervention continued and US involvement waned, the effectiveness of NATO’s bombardment began to be called into question both by Europeans (Olimpio, 2011) and by their Libyan allies (MacSwan, 2011).

Here, a somewhat tense Franco-British “condominium” of sorts was in the lead; perhaps not surprising given the convergence of French and British political positions and military
burdens discussed above. President Sarkozy and both his political allies and adversaries inside of France seemed to be reasserting the Gaullist view of Europe (and France) as a pole in a multipolar world. The UK, accompanied by much of the rest of Europe, seemed to be clinging to its notion of CSDP as a pillar of NATO. Germany at first went its own way, but at much political cost, and eventually fell into line with both the alliance and its EU partners.

The pole/pillar question seemed still to be unresolved; the EU’s members seemed still to lack a common understanding of the nature and purpose of CSDP. Yet, thus far, the operation in Libya has arguably fared better, from a NATO institutional perspective, than did its closest analogy, NATO’s 1999 air war against Yugoslavia over the Kosovo issue. NATO members quickly acted following the passage of UNSCR 1973, and, disagreements notwithstanding, control of the operation was passed from member states (US AFRICOM in the event) to NATO within 10 days of the launch of operations. European states asserted themselves politically, amid initial discord, but eventually came to a messy agreement, paralleling the suggestions made by Howorth and Everts et al with reference to the EU and NATO/CSDP cooperation. The US played a preponderant role initially, but seems to have managed to step out of the limelight, perhaps less gracefully (and less permanently) than some would have liked. Much like the Kosovo conflict following the progress represented by St. Malo, NATO (and the EU’s) operations in Libya have served to highlight the significant shortcomings of NATO/CSDP cooperation, and particularly of CSDP as an institution.

Intra-European and transatlantic disagreements over whether CSDP ought to allow Europe to represent a pole in a multipolar world, or a pillar of NATO, remain unresolved. But, compared to previous attempts at European security integration, notably the EDC and the Fouchet plans, the impact of this debate has been blunted in the case of the CSDP. Though many
shortcomings have been shown in glaring light by the Libya crisis, progress has also been highlighted. While some in France initially crowed over a powerful assertion of France’s “voice” on the international stage (Melloul, 2011), cooler heads seem eventually to have prevailed. An effective rapprochement of conflicting visions of the nature and purpose of CSDP’s relationship with NATO may be in its nascent stages. France, long the outlier in this realm, has demonstrated some important changes recently, and not just by re-entering NATO’s integrated command structure in 2009. On a more intellectual plane, an internal resolution of France’s own pole/pillar debate may pave the way for a successful resolution of that same debate on the European and transatlantic levels. An approach that Hubert Védrine refers to as “modernized gaullo-mitterandiste (Védrine, 2011)” calls for a European pole, allied with an American pole, as a second pillar of NATO. If such a formulation helps France’s political elite effectively reconcile conflicting pole/pillar approaches within France, it will augur well for the future of both CSDP and the EU as institutions, for the relationship between NATO and CSDP, and for transatlantic relations more broadly.
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