



Wilfried
Martens Centre
for European Studies

Strategic Autonomy

Why It's Not About Europe Going it Alone

Jolyon Howorth





Wilfried
Martens Centre
for European Studies

Strategic Autonomy

Why It's Not About Europe Going It Alone

Jolyon Howorth



Credits

Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies
Rue du Commerce 20
Brussels, BE - 1000

The Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies is the political foundation and think tank of the European People's Party (EPP), dedicated to the promotion of Christian Democrat, conservative and like-minded political values.

For more information please visit:
www.martenscentre.eu

External editing: Communicative English bvba
Layout: RARO S.L.
Typesetting: Victoria Agency
Printed in Belgium by Drukkerij Jo Vandenbulcke

This publication has received funding from the European Parliament.

© 2019 Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies

The European Parliament and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies assume no responsibility for facts or opinions expressed in this publication or their subsequent use. Sole responsibility lies with the author of this publication.

Table of Contents

About the Martens Centre	04
About the author	06
Executive summary	08
Introduction: autonomy – what’s in a word?	10
Autonomy to date: a story of failed ambition	14
The challenge of strategic autonomy	18
Rejection of strategic autonomy	18
The case for strategic autonomy	22
The way forward	30
Policy recommendations	36
Conclusion	40
Bibliography	42
Keywords	Strategic autonomy – Global Strategy – Grand strategy – CSDP – NATO – Defence

About the Martens Centre



The Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, established in 2007, is the political foundation and think tank of the European People's Party (EPP). The Martens Centre embodies a pan-European mindset, promoting Christian Democrat, conservative and like-minded political values. It serves as a framework for national political foundations linked to member parties of the EPP. It currently has 31 member foundations and two permanent guest foundations in 25 EU and non-EU countries. The Martens Centre takes part in the preparation of EPP programmes and policy documents. It organises seminars and training on EU policies and on the process of European integration.

The Martens Centre also contributes to formulating EU and national public policies. It produces research studies and books, policy briefs and the twice-yearly *European View* journal. Its research activities are divided into six clusters: party structures and EU institutions, economic and social policies, EU foreign policy, environment and energy, values and religion, and new societal challenges. Through its papers, conferences, authors' dinners and website, the Martens Centre offers a platform for discussion among experts, politicians, policymakers and the European public.

About the author



Jolyon Howorth is Visiting Professor of Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and the Jean Monnet Professor ad personam and Professor Emeritus of European Politics at the University of Bath. He has published extensively in the field of European security and defence policy, and transatlantic relations. This includes the following books: *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union* (2007, 2014); *Defending Europe: The EU, NATO and the Quest for European Autonomy* (2003); and *European Integration and Defence: The Ultimate Challenge?* (2000).

Executive summary



The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy was launched in 1998 as a quest for 'autonomy'. The EU sought the capacity to stabilise its volatile neighbourhood without undue reliance on the US. Almost two decades of efforts have failed to deliver on that objective. But as EU leaders, post-Brexit, re-launch the Common Security and Defence Policy, as the 2016 *European Global Strategy* rediscovers the virtues of 'strategic autonomy', and as the world juggles with a US president who appears to question the very bases of the Atlantic Alliance, it is time to radically re-think the relations between the EU and NATO. This paper argues that, in the longer term, it is through strengthening the EU–NATO relationship, rather than by focusing on defence initiatives undertaken by the Union alone, that EU strategic autonomy will become possible. This will, at the same time, consolidate rather than weaken the transatlantic bond.

The concept of 'strategic autonomy' has raised serious concerns on both sides of the Atlantic. Many see the EU's ambition of defence autonomy as a challenge to the US and as undermining NATO. That need not—and must not—be the case. Therefore, the EU must rapidly make clear precisely what it understands by the notion of 'strategic autonomy'. This should be presented both to European and to American audiences as a long-awaited move towards European *non-dependence* on US resources. This was the original intention behind NATO. It was also integral to President Kennedy's vision of the twin transatlantic pillars of *interdependence*. Strengthening European capacity must be seen and understood as strengthening the Alliance. This process must be conducted in close cooperation with the US—in such a way that the final outcome (European *non-dependence*) will be an objective actively sought by both partners.

Such an approach would involve a progressive rebalancing of leadership and responsibility within NATO. US leaders and opinion-shapers have long argued that the EU must take up greater responsibility for its own regional stability. Recently, European leaders have embraced that same objective. Europe can best assume such responsibilities and leadership from within—rather than in contradistinction to—NATO. This would free up US military resources for deployment to other strategic crisis areas of significance to Washington. In the short to medium term, greater European operational capacity can be assisted with US enablers. But the long-term ambition should be to empower Europeans. This would not involve a rupture in the Alliance, a divorce or a decoupling. On the contrary, it would entail the engineering of a more balanced, healthy and geographically rational deployment of NATO resources.

**Introduction:
autonomy –
what's in
a word?**



The use of the concept ‘strategic autonomy’ (SA) in the context of the EU’s pursuit of a common security and defence policy has generated controversy in both the EU and the US. The concept of European autonomy was first used by the EU in the declaration that capped the December 1998 Franco-British summit in Saint-Malo, France.¹ Almost 20 years later, SA was the key concept in the EU’s *Global Strategy* paper of June 2016, even though there was no attempt to offer a definition.² Since the publication of that paper, analysts have interpreted its implications and consequences in a bewildering variety of ways, generating considerable confusion about the EU’s intentions and/or capabilities. There are many—often conflicting or even incompatible—views as to what the concept means and how it might be realised. The aim of this paper is to probe that confusion and to propose a formula for achieving SA, a formula that promotes the interests both of the US and of the EU.

There are three distinct dimensions to SA: the political (strategy), the operational (capabilities) and the industrial (equipment) dimensions.³ All three are crucial, and any viable SA must eventually combine them. Part of the confusion about SA derives from the different emphases placed on these different elements at different moments by different actors. After Saint-Malo, controversy arose essentially around the *operational* dimension of autonomy. What type of crisis-management missions was the EU capable of undertaking without major US assistance? More recently, and particularly following the launch of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO; see below), US objections to SA have focused on the *industrial* dimension. American officials have expressed concern about the potential exclusion of US companies from future EU defence equipment funding.⁴ This is a perennially sensitive issue which involves, on the part of the US, at best disingenuousness and at worst hypocrisy.⁵ The operational dimension of SA has

¹ The declaration stated that ‘the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them and a readiness to do so’. It gave rise to instant controversy and push-back, especially in the US. See J. Howorth, *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 111–12.

² EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe – A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy* (June 2016).

³ F. Arteaga, ‘Strategic Autonomy and European Defence’, Elcano Royal Institute, ARI 102/2017 (12 December 2017); R. Kempin and B. Kunz, *France, Germany and the Quest for European Strategic Autonomy: Franco-German Defence Cooperation in a New Era*, IFRI and SWP (December 2017); F. Mauro, *Autonomie Stratégique : le nouveau Graal de la défense européenne*, GRIP Report 2018/1 (2018).

⁴ S. Erlanger, ‘U.S. Revives Concerns About European Defense Plans, Rattling NATO Allies’, *The New York Times*, 18 February 2018; A. Mehta, ‘US Warns Against “Protectionism” with New EU Defense Agreement’, *Defense News*, 14 February 2018.

⁵ B. Tigner, ‘Deconstructing PESCO: Washington’s Apparent, Actual and Misplaced Fears about European Defense Plans’, *Atlantic Council*, 26 February 2018.



also been emphasised in a paper arguing that the EU needs to aim for self-reliance in four main areas of security: domestic security; crisis response in the neighbourhood; ‘connectivity’ with the world in space, airspace and cyberspace, and on the high seas; and eventually territorial defence.⁶

Some analysts argue that discussions over the political/strategic dimension of SA should be avoided as being either premature or divisive—or both. They hold that the focus should be placed (once again) on the operational/capabilities dimension.⁷ Step-by-step, piecemeal progress, it is argued, is a more fruitful course than the elaboration of grand strategic objectives. This paper argues, on the contrary, that without agreement on the long-term political and strategic *finalité* of SA, there is little point in focusing on the nuts and bolts—even if it might take many contentious and stormy discussions to reach such an agreement. Grand strategy has been defined as ‘the calculated relationship between means and large ends’.⁸ In this equation, the ‘large ends’ are primary. To quote Seneca: ‘There is no favourable wind for the sailor who does not know where he is headed.’

In tackling the political/strategic dimension of SA, semantics are important. Some of the negative reaction in the US has been to the word ‘autonomy’ itself, especially when coupled with ‘strategic’. It has been suggested that a preferable concept for the EU might be ‘strategic responsibility’.⁹ At the 2019 Munich Security Conference, Federica Mogherini, sensitive to US objections to the concept of SA, coined the expression ‘cooperative autonomy’. In so doing, she indicated that while the EU is seeking autonomy, it also stresses cooperation, not only with the US and NATO, but also with the UN and other partners.¹⁰ Indeed, in the EU’s *Global Strategy* document, while the term ‘autonomy’ appears no fewer than eight times, it is occasionally relativised by referring to ‘*an appropriate level of ambition and strategic autonomy*’.¹¹ Experts have tiptoed delicately around the issue of relativity, the study cited above distinguishing between ‘strengthening autonomy’, a ‘significant degree of autonomy’ and ‘full strategic autonomy’.¹² It has been

⁶ S. Biscop, *Fighting For Europe: European Strategic Autonomy and the Use of Force*, Egmont Paper no. 103 (Brussels, January 2019).

⁷ A. Billon-Galand and A. Thomson, ‘European Autonomy: Stop Talking, Start Planning’, European Leadership Network, Policy Brief (11 May 2018).

⁸ J. L. Gaddis, ‘Why Grand Strategy is Tough for Academics’, Part of a lecture at Middlebury College (16 May 2005).

⁹ N. Burns and D. Lute, *NATO at Seventy: An Alliance in Crisis*, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Report (February 2019).

¹⁰ F. Mogherini, ‘Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Munich Security Conference’, EEAS (Munich, 15 February 2019).

¹¹ EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action*, 9 (my emphasis).

¹² S. Biscop, *Fighting For Europe*.



argued that ‘autonomy’ implies ‘separation’ or ‘divorce’. Such connotations are not attested by the dictionary.¹³ Semantically, the juxtaposition of ‘strategy’ and ‘autonomy’ is entirely logical, indeed tautological. For the purposes of this paper, it is appropriate to adopt a rigorous semantic position. Autonomy, like pregnancy, is an absolute. A strategy that is not autonomous is little more than an aspiration, in this context largely conditioned by another actor. The policy challenge is not to render the two words compatible (they already are). It is to render *the status* of SA not only non-suspect and non-threatening or even non-problematic for the US but also fully compatible with American interests and strongly deserving of US support. To present such a case is the aim of this paper.¹⁴

¹³ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘autonomy’ as (1) the right or condition of self-government; (2) freedom of the will; (3) freedom from external control. These are surely values that lie at the heart of the US Declaration of Independence.

¹⁴ On a personal note, I am an Atlanticist. I believe deeply that Europe and North America share with each other more—in terms of both interests and values—than either does with any other part of the globe. Those interests and values are not identical. Europe and the US occupy different geographical spaces and emerged from very different historical circumstances. I *believe in* the Alliance and have no desire to undermine it or to damage it. My objective is to strengthen it. But I start from a belief that the transatlantic relationship has for too long been weaker than it can be (and should be)—precisely because it is unbalanced, lop-sided and therefore suboptimal. The current imbalance has been unsatisfactory to both Europeans and Americans for decades, and there is no more obvious indicator of that dissatisfaction than the eternal squabbles over burden-sharing.

**Autonomy to
date: a story of
failed ambition**



The European quest for strategic autonomy is not simply driven by Donald Trump and Europe's fears of being abandoned by the US. Rather, the quest goes back to the very foundations of the Alliance, which was initially intended precisely to generate European autonomy—in the sense that Europeans would be able to develop, on their own, a credible military capacity to contain or deter an external threat. Senator Arthur Vandenberg and Secretary of State Dean Acheson, the two main US architects of the Alliance, approached their task with three key assumptions.

The first was essentially symbolic and declaratory. They believed that after World War Two it was important for the US to give a clear signal that, in the event of a new threat to European peace, its commitment to Europe should be strongly stated before that threat developed. Acheson argued that had the US made such a commitment prior to 1914 (instead of in 1917), or prior to 1939 (instead of in 1941), neither of the two world wars would have broken out. The second assumption was very concrete: the 1949 treaty should not and would not involve the permanent stationing of US troops on European soil. During the Senate hearings on the Treaty of Washington, Acheson was asked by Senator Hickenlooper of Iowa whether Article 3 of the treaty (mutual assistance in developing capacity to resist armed attack) meant that the US was 'going to be expected to send substantial numbers of troops over there as a more or less permanent contribution'. 'The answer to that question, Senator', Acheson replied, 'is a clear and absolute "No"'.¹⁵ The defence of Europe was, in his view, to be undertaken overwhelmingly with European troops and resources. The third assumption was pragmatic: NATO would offer a breathing space allowing the Europeans gradually to create a robust and credible European armed force that would obviate the need for that permanent US deployment. To quote the outstanding scholarly authority on this issue: 'American policymakers had come to think of the US presence as a kind of crutch. It might be necessary for the time being, but eventually the Europeans needed to come together and take over primary responsibility for their own defense'.¹⁶ The form which that European force might assume was intended to be the European Defence Community, functioning as the European pillar of the Alliance.¹⁷

The supreme irony of these early discussions over alliance arrangements is that it was the Europeans who pleaded for an American umbrella—or umbilical cord—and the Americans who resisted. The joint

¹⁵ D. Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1969), 285.

¹⁶ M. Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement 1945–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 118.

¹⁷ E. Fursdon, *The European Defence Community: A History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1980).



chiefs of staff in particular were reluctant to be too tied into the European alliance and argued that *US autonomy* might be compromised by a tightly integrated alliance, even with a US general in command. The joint chiefs were successful in establishing a separate US European Command and even developed a plan for the withdrawal of US troops from Europe in the event of war—a plan to which the Europeans were not even privy.¹⁸ Most Europeans at the time were convinced that, without the US shield, there was no conceivable defence against the Soviet Union.

The various complexities of that original, finely balanced calculus are all still present in 2019. The key difference is that more Europeans today are keen to explore the prospects of autonomy, and fewer Americans than in the earlier period believe it to be a realistic or viable option.

The story of how and why the French-devised European Defence Community, after four years of gestation, was voted down in the French National Assembly is well-known.¹⁹ So is the story of how the sense of geostrategic urgency created by Soviet muscle-flexing in Eastern Europe, and especially by the Korean War, ‘put the O into NATO’.²⁰ By the early 1950s the urgent threat to ‘the West’ posed by world Communism appeared to be existential. Giving organisational backbone to the Alliance involved institutionalising a Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) who, precisely because of that urgency, had to be *an American* general. It necessitated pouring hundreds of thousands of US troops back into Europe. Germany was brought into NATO, which gradually became a permanent structure massively dominated by the US. This, it should be stressed, was the opposite of the initial intention. Recall that Eisenhower, on assuming command of NATO forces in Europe in 1951, stated, ‘If in 10 years, all American troops stationed in Europe for national defense purposes have not been returned to the United States, then this whole project will have failed’.²¹

The intervening period has witnessed the failure to deliver on the initial intentions behind the Alliance. Five years of war in the 1940s had reduced Europe to its knees, thereby generating the need for a (temporary) US backstop. Forty years of European *dependency* on that backstop produced an atrophy of strategic thinking in

¹⁸ J. English, ‘Who Could Ask for Anything More?’: North American Perspectives on NATO’s Origins’, in G. Schmidt (ed.), *A History of NATO: The First Fifty Years*, vol. 2 (London: Palgrave, 2001); Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 118–19.

¹⁹ Fursdon, *The European Defence Community*.

²⁰ S. Kashmeri, *NATO 2.0: Reboot or Delete* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2011).

²¹ E. Carroll and P. Schroeder, ‘It’s Time to Consign NATO to History and Look to the Future’, *Chicago Tribune*, 2 September 1994; Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 148.

the EU. In 1973 Henry Kissinger noted that the only country in Europe where strategic thinking existed was France—the one country to have resisted the principle of dependency on the US.²² Yet it is inaccurate to describe Europeans as ‘free-riders’—as Barack Obama did in his *Atlantic* interview²³ and as Donald Trump has repeatedly alleged. Europeans contribute considerably more to European security in all sorts of ways than does the US.²⁴ But over the decades Europeans have become so *dependent* on the US that they are incapable (at present) of assuming their own collective defence. This is as bad for the US as it is for the EU.

The EU’s current military and strategic *dependency* on the US is the starting point for virtually every analysis of the prospects of European SA. For many, in both Europe and the US, this dependency is based on military reality. The US lead is so strong that any attempt to break out of it would be fraught with great danger and should consequently be avoided at all costs. For others, dependency is a fact of life that renders extremely complex any attempt to move beyond it, even though these commentators do not rule out making the attempt. For still others, it is an obstacle to be overcome, precisely *because* it is perceived as unhealthy, unwise and unsustainable. From the latter perspective the key problem in discussing the move towards SA is the absence of clarity about the mechanics of the process. Almost all commentators, to whichever of the above three groups they belong, think of the pathway to SA in terms of the EU’s post-1999 Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). They assume that progress in the direction of SA must be made *outside of NATO* (albeit in cooperation with it) as a *separate* and *distinct* development that must be taken to its logical conclusion. Those opposed to SA are terrified of this prospect. It seems to imply that NATO will be superseded or become irrelevant. Even those in favour of SA are nervous about it. The tranquilliser for this latter group is the mantra of ‘EU–NATO cooperation’, a process that appears to render SA less fraught. Some analysts, however, are beginning to ask whether SA might not best be engineered *from inside NATO* rather than from outside it.

²² General de Gaulle always insisted on a distinction between ‘independence’ and ‘non-dependence’, the latter being the more accurate and appropriate objective.

²³ J. Goldberg, ‘The Obama Doctrine’, *The Atlantic*, April 2016.

²⁴ The EU can be credited with spending countless billions to transform and stabilise the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that have become member states. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, in pure military terms, the US only spends around \$30 billion *directly* on European security each year, whereas the European members of NATO devote around \$230 billion to the same objective. See L. Béraud-Sudreau and N. Childs, ‘The US and Its NATO Allies: Costs and Value’, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Military Balance Blog (9 July 2018). See also B. McCarthy, ‘Trump Falsely Claims NATO Countries Owe United States Money for Defense Spending’, *Politifact*, 11 July 2018.



The challenge of strategic autonomy

There is no question that achieving SA will be exceedingly challenging for the EU. Several recent substantial studies highlight the severe political obstacles facing the ambition itself.²⁵ A persistent and very widespread form of scepticism about the viability of SA focuses on the serious absence of unity within the EU over the precise meaning of the ambition and the means for delivering it.²⁶ Many on both sides of the Atlantic therefore consider that the attempt itself would be a mistake. This paper is agnostic on this point. It proceeds on a double assumption. If Europeans collectively lack confidence in their ability to achieve SA, if they are not fully committed to it, or if they interpret the task weakly or half-heartedly, then both the concept and the ambition should be abandoned as a counterproductive distraction. But if, as increasing numbers of EU leaders insist and as their main strategy document proposes, they are determined to make the attempt, then it behoves them to devise a clear political plan for progressing towards it. That is the aim of this paper.

Rejection of strategic autonomy

Let us first rehearse the arguments of those who fear or reject SA. For those that one might call ‘professional Atlanticists’,²⁷ such as certain NATO officials, there is one overriding consideration: not to weaken NATO. The Alliance’s Secretary General warned of ‘the risk of weakening the transatlantic bond, the risk of duplicating what NATO is already doing, and the risk of discriminating against non-EU

²⁵ Arteaga, ‘Strategic Autonomy and European Defence’; C. Brustlein, ‘European Strategic Autonomy: Balancing Ambition and Responsibility’, IFRI, Éditoriaux de l’Ifri (November 2018); A. M. Le Gloannec, *Continent by Default: The European Union and the Demise of Regional Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018); A. Cottey, ‘Astrategic Europe’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 57/3 (2019) (forthcoming); Mauro, *Autonomie Stratégique*.

²⁶ E. Braw, ‘Can Europe Achieve “Strategic Autonomy?”’, *Stratfor*, Worldview, 11 September 2018.

²⁷ I do not use this term pejoratively. NATO officials, especially the Secretary General, are paid to defend the interests of their organisation as they see them. There is nothing unusual or mysterious about this.



members of the NATO Alliance’.²⁸ These arguments are *exactly* the same as those that Madeleine Albright deployed in her reaction to the December 1998 Saint-Malo Declaration.²⁹ In short, there is a risk that SA will undermine NATO in a situation where, it is asserted, ‘the European Union cannot protect Europe by itself’. However, in this view, if the CSDP ‘complements’ NATO and engages in close cooperation with it, then European capacity can strengthen the Alliance—but only on condition that it remains ‘anchored within the transatlantic partnership’.³⁰ In other words, SA *per se* should be firmly *rejected* as a policy objective.

Very similar arguments were deployed in October 2017 by a number of leading German foreign-policy experts who published a manifesto entitled ‘In Spite of It All, America’.³¹ This manifesto pushed back against tendencies emerging within the German political class and intelligentsia that were shifting (largely as a reaction to Donald Trump) in the direction of ‘a strategic reorientation for Germany’, whether based on the apparent decoupling siren song of SA itself, on the promise of a Franco-German defence rapprochement or even on the emergence of German nationalism. Such revisionists were dubbed ‘Post-Atlanticists’ by the manifesto’s authors. ‘Without the United States’, the authors countered, ‘there will be no security for and in Germany for the foreseeable future. . . . It would be an error of historical proportions to play out “more Europe” against the trans-Atlantic alliance.’ Their proposal was for Germany to wait out the Trump presidency and, in the meantime, to keep as many trans-Atlantic bridges in place as possible. This manifesto was subjected to considerable cross-examination, one major analysis arguing that both the Atlanticists and the Post-Atlanticists in Germany were guilty of wishful thinking.³² For the purposes of the current paper, what is important is that the Post-Atlanticists were perceived to be framing their future options in *contradistinction* to or even *in opposition to* NATO rather than as a way of transforming NATO or strengthening it.

²⁸ J. Stoltenberg, ‘Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the opening session of the Munich Security Conference’, NATO (16 February 2018).

²⁹ Albright’s ‘3-Ds’ (don’ts) were ‘no decoupling, no duplication and no discrimination’. See M. Albright, ‘The Right Balance Will Secure NATO’s Future’, *Financial Times*, 9 December 1998.

³⁰ Burns and Lute, *NATO at Seventy*; Stoltenberg, ‘Remarks by NATO Secretary General’.

³¹ D. Berger et al., ‘In Spite of It All, America: A Trans-Atlantic Manifesto in Times of Donald Trump – A German Perspective’, *The New York Times*, 11 October 2018.

³² H. Kundnani, ‘The Necessity and Impossibility of “Strategic Autonomy”’, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Transatlantic Take (January 2018); H. Kundnani and J. Puglierin, ‘Atlanticist and “Post-Atlanticist” Wishful-Thinking’, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Policy Essay (3 January 2018).



Another constituency that roundly rejects any thought of SA is the group of Central and Eastern European states that formerly belonged either to the Soviet bloc (Poland and Czechia) or to the USSR itself (the Baltic states). These countries, which lobbied energetically in the 1990s to join NATO—and heaved a historic sigh of relief when they were finally accepted in 1999 and 2004—are currently beset with two major concerns. The first is the solidity of the US commitment, especially under Donald Trump, to NATO’s Article 5 collective defence guarantee. Although every Trumpian assault on that commitment³³ is followed by reassuring words from others,³⁴ the cloud of uncertainty hanging over these states remains dark and threatening. In these circumstances all talk of SA from within the EU is considered to be irresponsible: it ‘scares the hell out of us’.³⁵ During a public meeting in Brussels that debated the principle of SA, a prominent Czech official—former foreign minister, defence minister and ambassador to the US, Alexandr Vondra—was as merciless in his scorn for the EU’s capacity to ever get close to SA as he was fulsome in his praise for the US as the only conceivable form of protection for the EU into the very distant future.³⁶ Although no politician should ever say ‘never’, in this context ‘the very distant future’ clearly means ‘never’.

This view is widely shared in the US. An extreme expression of it is National Security Advisor John Bolton’s derision of the CSDP as a paper tiger, and his insistence that if Europeans ever ‘got to the point of achieving something concrete, that would be a dagger pointed at the heart of NATO’.³⁷ What is striking about all these arguments is that they replicate in every detail the criticisms that were levelled against the CSDP when it was first formulated at the beginning of the century.³⁸ This wholesale rejection of SA is driven by the underlying assumption that the *rise of the EU* must inevitably involve the *demise of NATO*—a zero-sum relationship. However, it is not impossible to construct a positive-sum approach to SA.

³³ J. E. Barnes and H. Cooper, ‘Trump Discussed Pulling US from NATO, Aides Say amid New Concerns over Russia’, *The New York Times*, 14 January 2019; E. King, ‘Trump: Defending NATO Ally Montenegro Could Mean “World War III”’, *Politico*, 18 July 2018.

³⁴ M. Gallagher and C. Dueck, ‘The Conservative Case for NATO’, *The National Review*, 31 January 2019; U. Von der Leyen, ‘The World Still Needs NATO’, *New York Times*, 18 January 2019.

³⁵ *The Economist*, ‘The Baltics Fear European “Strategic Autonomy”’, 4 October 2018.

³⁶ Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, ‘European Defence Union: Time to Aim High?’, *YouTube*, 21 May 2018.

³⁷ J. Hayward, ‘John Bolton: European Union Military Would Be “Dagger Pointed at the Heart of NATO”’, *Breitbart.com*, 23 November 2016.

³⁸ Howorth, *Security and Defence Policy*, 109–43.



The case for strategic autonomy



There is a growing body of opinion on both sides of the Atlantic, some but not all of it fuelled by Donald Trump's bull-in-a-china-shop approach both to NATO and to the EU itself, that argues in favour of moving towards some form of SA. This begins at the highest level with statements from a growing number of EU leaders who suggest that Europe can no longer rely on the US for its defence and must take its fate into its own hands. There is increasing talk of 'European sovereignty'. Most argue that this must imply a 'European army'.³⁹ For the most part, such stirrings among the EU's leaders exist largely at the level of discourse. Their authors, for the most part, have made no attempt to set out what they might mean by their remarks.

As for concrete developments, many analysts have focused on PESCO as the one major 'breakthrough' that looks promising.⁴⁰ PESCO was first proposed in the 2008 Lisbon Treaty but only given substance in 2017. However, the prospect of achieving autonomy through PESCO already seems highly problematic. Participants in PESCO were intended to be *restricted* to those 'whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another, with a view to the most demanding missions'.⁴¹ For almost a decade after the Lisbon Treaty was ratified, there was an intense debate about inclusion and exclusion. The more member states that were included, it was argued, the less effective this instrument would actually be.⁴² France, concerned primarily with deployability and military effectiveness, was strongly in favour of selectivity. Ever keen to promote European unity and integration and ever nervous about French leadership, Germany argued in favour of inclusivity.⁴³ In the event, when PESCO was officially launched in December 2017, it included 25 member states (the only states to self-exclude being Denmark, Malta and the UK). When the initial list of 17 projects was announced on 6 March 2018, it was clear that the whole process was being diluted.⁴⁴ In an acerbic comment on PESCO, the former CEO of the European Defence Agency cited a Chinese proverb: 'Big noise on stairs; nobody coming down.'⁴⁵ To date, the jury remains out as to the added strategic value of PESCO.

³⁹ F. Mauro, and O. Jehin, 'L'Armée Européenne en Débat', GRIP (Brussels, 2019).

⁴⁰ F. Mauro, *La Coopération Structurée Permanente : Perspectives nationales et état d'avancement*, European Parliament (2017); S. Biscop, 'European Defence: Give PESCO a Chance', *Survival* 60/3 (2018).

⁴¹ Art. 42(6), Treaty on European Union.

⁴² S. Biscop, 'Permanent Structured Cooperation and the Future of the ESDP: Transformation and Integration', *European Foreign Affairs Review* 13/4 (2008).

⁴³ C. Major and C. Mölling, 'PESCO: The German Perspective', ARES #36 (February 2019).

⁴⁴ Biscop, 'European Defence: Give PESCO a Chance'.

⁴⁵ N. Whitney, 'EU Defence Efforts Miss the Open-Goal Again', *ECFR*, 15 November 2017.



In addition to PESCO, there are three other European defence initiatives, two of which are subsumed within NATO. Germany's Framework Nation Concept has created a grouping, under German leadership, of 17 states from Central, Eastern and Northern Europe to focus on building up a significant military force to deter Russia.⁴⁶ It is explicitly geared to territorial defence and involves both procurement and deployment projects. The UK initiative, the Joint Expeditionary Force, embraces the Scandinavian countries and the Baltics.⁴⁷ It is less institutionally structured than the Framework Nation Concept, with no legally binding commitments. It is intended primarily to demonstrate that nations in the northern region take Russian mischief seriously and that the UK can be a European leader. Neither of these initiatives can claim to act as the driver of SA. Nor is either considered likely to play this role.

President Macron's proposal for a European Intervention Initiative (EI2)⁴⁸ has begun to acquire some substance.⁴⁹ This initiative, which exists outside both an EU and a NATO framework, is designed explicitly to lead to European SA. Macron foresees, by 2020, 'a common intervention force, a common defence budget and a common doctrine for action', as well as a European Intelligence Academy. France has been highly selective in choosing its partners. Only 10 countries are included: Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK. Unlike the German and the British initiatives, this embryonic force faces both east and south (the '360 approach'). Rather than a collective thrust, Paris envisages multiple bilateralisms, all under direct French command. This has been interpreted as a French counter to the German Framework Nation Concept and a sign that Paris has grown weary of in-fighting over the direction of PESCO. It is not clear how Macron's initiative relates to NATO. One sceptical analyst sees it as fundamentally undermining the Alliance.⁵⁰

However, for the most part, and for the moment, all these initiatives are little more than tentative manifestations of Europe's growing sense that it needs to do more for its own security and defence. The many

⁴⁶ R. Allers, 'The Framework Nation: Can Germany Lead on Security?', *International Affairs* 92/5 (September 2016); C. Major and C. Mölling, 'The Framework Nations Concept: Germany's Contribution to a Capable European Defence', SWP Comments 52 (December 2014).

⁴⁷ H. L. Saxi, 'British and German Initiatives for Defence Cooperation: The Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nations Concept', *Defence Studies* 17/2 (5 April 2017).

⁴⁸ E. Macron, 'Initiative pour l'Europe – Discours d'Emmanuel Macron pour une Europe souveraine, unie, démocratique' (26 September 2017).

⁴⁹ A. Billon-Galand and M. Quencez, 'European Intervention Initiative: The Big Easy', *Berlin Policy Journal*, Bullets and Bytes, 15 October 2018; P. Taylor, 'Emmanuel Macron's Coalition of the Willing', *Politico*, 2 May 2018; C. Major and C. Mölling, 'Why Joining France's European Intervention Initiative is the Right Choice for Germany', *Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations*, 15 June 2018.

⁵⁰ J. Dempsey, 'Macron's Call for European Boots', *Carnegie Europe*, Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe, 13 November 2018.



supporters or advocates of SA can be broken down into various groups. One can begin by making a distinction between American and European supporters.

US proponents themselves occupy two main positions: Euro-friendly policy advocates and academic realists. Some of the former are primarily outraged by Donald Trump's behaviour. They cheerlead a hypothetical European empowerment as a logical response to Trump's apparent attempts to undermine both NATO and the EU, and as the most constructive way of keeping alive both some form of Western resistance to Russian encroachments in Eastern Europe⁵¹ and the underpinnings of Atlanticism. Others have long been advocates of a European defence capacity⁵² and now see the EU's resistance to Trump as the best way of securing the Atlanticist fort while awaiting the president's departure from the White House. Kupchan offers Europeans solid advice on how to firm up their move towards autonomy.⁵³ Others focus their arguments on the need for the US to support, rather than to resist, the EU's quest for autonomy.⁵⁴

The second group consists of American academics from the structural realist camp. These scholars have long advocated European SA. Their main argument falls within the framework of the 'grand strategic debate' in the US. Participants in this debate fall into two main camps: the 'liberal hegemonists' or 'deep engagers', on the one hand, and the 'restrainers' or 'offshore balancers', on the other. The former believe that the US can continue indefinitely to act—financially, militarily and morally—as the global hegemon, promoting and buttressing the liberal international order around the world. For these theorists,⁵⁵ European 'free-riders' pose no problem since, in their view, the EU will not prove capable of developing a serious military capacity and the costs to the US of the NATO alliance are easily outweighed by the benefits of US influence over European politics and economics. The latter group⁵⁶ believes that it is neither financially nor

⁵¹ A. Applebaum, 'Europe Needs to Start Planning for a Future with No US', *Washington Post*, 12 July 2018.

⁵² C. Kupchan, 'In Defence of European Defence: An American Perspective', *Survival* 42/2, 2000.

⁵³ C. Kupchan, 'The West Will Have to Go It Alone, Without the United States', *Foreign Policy*, 13 June 2018.

⁵⁴ B. Haddad and A. Polyakova, 'Is Going It Alone the Best Way Forward for Europe? Why Strategic Autonomy Should Be the Continent's Goal', *Foreign Affairs*, 17 October 2018; R. Rizzo, 'The United States Should Rally Behind European Strategic Autonomy', European Leadership Network, Commentary (29 October 2018).

⁵⁵ S. Brooks and W. Wohlforth, *America Abroad: Why the Sole Superpower Should Not Pull Back from the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); G. J. Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁵⁶ J. Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); B. R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); S. Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of US Primacy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 16 October 2018).



militarily in US interests to try to police the globe, that a policy of restraint is imperative. It holds, further, that American military forces should be pulled back from their forward positions to the US mainland and a select few strategic bases, so as to adopt an ‘offshore balancing’ posture allowing them to be rapidly deployed in a crisis affecting vital US national interests—and *those interests only*. In this perception, US allies in both Europe and Asia should take over primary responsibility for their own regional security. These views are also expressed by the classical realist conservative Andrew Bacevich.⁵⁷

Expressions of support for European SA from within the *European* policy and academic community come from a vast array of perspectives and agendas. Some, like their US counterparts, frame the issue overwhelmingly in terms of a necessary EU response to Donald Trump.⁵⁸ Others stress the absolute need for the EU to move cautiously, step by concrete step, towards *operational* autonomy over a lengthy time frame (by 2049). At the same time, the EU should remain wedded to NATO structures and objectives, and eschew any overt *political* attempt to pursue independence from the US, lest this hasten the day of American disengagement.⁵⁹ One French analyst insists, on the contrary, that the fundamental challenge for the Europeans is to take *ownership* of their security preferences and that this can *only* be achieved outside the NATO framework.⁶⁰ One key European analyst places considerable trust in PESCO to help deliver the rudiments of European SA.⁶¹ One study, echoing pleas from inside the US, stresses the vital need for Washington to *listen* to the European debate, to *understand* that there is no desire across Europe either to break with the US or to engineer any form of decoupling, and to give encouraging signals of *support* for the project. This, it is argued, would facilitate engagement with the project on the part of sceptical EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe.⁶² However, the authors recognise that the intra-European confusion over the three dimensions of SA (political, operational and industrial) has made it difficult for Americans to follow the ‘debate’. They also flag the absolute necessity, as a starting point for any serious move towards SA, of *Franco-German alignment* on defence essentials.

⁵⁷ A. J. Bacevich, ‘Ending Endless War: A Pragmatic Military Strategy’, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2016.

⁵⁸ E. Lucas, ‘Europe Must Plan for Defence Without NATO’, *The Times* (London), 13 July 2018.

⁵⁹ Billon-Galand and Thomson, ‘European Autonomy’; A. Thomson, ‘Security Autonomy for Europe?’, European Leadership Network, Commentary (7 April 2017).

⁶⁰ P. Zajac, ‘If America Wants Strong European Allies, Let Them Find Their Own Way’, *War on the Rocks*, 19 December 2017.

⁶¹ Biscop, ‘European Defence: Give PESCO a Chance’; Biscop, ‘Letting Europe Go Its Own Way’.

⁶² R. Kempin and B. Kunz, ‘Washington Should Help Europe Achieve “Strategic Autonomy”, Not Fight It’, *War on the Rocks*, 12 April 2018.



Several in-depth studies of SA consider the Franco-German relationship to be crucial. To date, the only EU member state to have generated a serious analysis of SA is France.⁶³ The ambition to develop SA is missing from the 2016 German White Paper. Analysts have taken this omission to reflect an underlying discomfort with the concept itself both within the German political class and among the public.⁶⁴ But particularly in the context of Brexit, no progress towards SA is even imaginable without close Franco-German convergence. This convergence must take place in three key areas.⁶⁵ Macron speaks constantly of what he calls 'European sovereignty'. For such an ambition to take shape, there would have to be massive convergence at the level of strategic culture between the German penchant for military restraint, which is still the default preference for a large majority of Germans, and the French culture of interventionism. At the level of institutional and juridical processes, there would also have to be very clear agreement about which agency would be empowered to operationalise any military engagement and how that agency could command Europe-wide legitimacy. Finally, at the level of capacity and equipment, there would have to be convergence between a French military industrial culture that gives a huge role to the state and Germany's preference for a competitive private sector. These types of convergence are not impossible, and in recent years there has been discernible movement towards common ground, particularly on Germany's part.⁶⁶ Who could have imagined 10 years ago that there would be a thousand German troops in Mali today?

One in-depth study has attempted to flesh out the challenges to be overcome in a hypothetical Franco-German convergence.⁶⁷ Starting from the 13 July 2017 Franco-German cooperation agenda launched by the Franco-German Defence and Security Council,⁶⁸ Kempin and Kunz examine the prospects for complementarity between the two countries in the three dimensions of autonomy: the political, operational and industrial. This paper will concentrate on the political dimension.

Kempin and Kunz call for a permanent strategic dialogue between Berlin and Paris, leading to a Franco-

⁶³ Ministère des Armées, *Livre Blanc: Défense et Sécurité Nationale 2013* (Paris: Documentation Française, 2013); Ministère des Armées, *Revue Stratégique de Défense et de Sécurité Nationale* (Paris: Documentation Française, 2017).

⁶⁴ U. E. Franke, 'Germany's Defence Policy: Still Living in Dreamland', European Council on Foreign Relations, Note from Berlin (22 September 2018).

⁶⁵ D. Puhl, 'Strategic Autonomy for Europe: Can Berlin and Paris Agree?', Federal Academy for Security Policy, Security Policy Working Paper 8/2018 (2018).

⁶⁶ Z. Laidi, 'Europe Is Starting to Turn French', *Financial Times*, 26 February 2019.

⁶⁷ Kempin and Kunz, *France, Germany and the Quest for European Strategic Autonomy*.

⁶⁸ Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung (BPA), 'Gemeinsame Erklärung zum Deutsch-Französischen Ministerrat' (13 July 2017).



German White Paper on security and defence. The goal would be to develop shared ambition and to come to an agreement on the meaning of political autonomy. This could be engineered via the Franco-German Defence and Security Council, which should have the task, the authors suggest, of finally implementing the recommendations of the 1963 Elysée Treaty.⁶⁹ Indeed, on 22 January 2019, France and Germany concluded the Treaty of Aachen/Aix la Chapelle,⁷⁰ which includes a mutual defence clause that can be interpreted as more robust than either NATO's Article 5 or the Lisbon Treaty's Article 42(7).⁷¹ Notwithstanding this development, Kempin and Kunz clearly recognise that France and Germany currently have strikingly different approaches to all these issues, even to the point of using different words for national approaches to strategy: French documents refer to *doctrine*, whereas German documents prefer the word *Auffassungen*, meaning simply 'views' or 'perceptions'. Any progress in Franco-German strategic discussions, however, will probably depend upon the recognition that neither country is going to adopt or embrace the strategic culture of the other. Congruity or 'sameness' is never going to happen. The key is to aim for cooperation and compatibility.

⁶⁹ The treaty called for regular consultations between France and West Germany on all important questions concerning defence. President De Gaulle intended it to be a means of distancing Germany from the US. However, when it was ratified by the Bundestag, it was given a preamble demanding tight cooperation with the US via NATO. This effectively stripped the treaty of its European potential.

⁷⁰ France Diplomatie, *Traité de Coopération franco-allemand d'Aix la Chapelle* (2019).

⁷¹ E. Perot, 'The Aachen Mutual Defence Clause: A Closer Look at the Franco-German Treaty', Egmont Security Policy Brief 105 (February 2019).



The way forward



What is striking in all of these analyses of the possibility of SA is that they all avoid addressing head-on what the present author considers to be the key challenge: the optimum definitive relationship between the EU and NATO. The majority of the literature on SA suggests, either implicitly or explicitly, that autonomy must be sought *via the CSDP outside of and in contradistinction to NATO* (albeit in cooperation with the Alliance). This is the process that many authors ask the US to encourage. Similarly, the massive literature on EU–NATO cooperation tends to eschew the issue of how such cooperation might facilitate the EU’s move towards SA.⁷² The nub of my argument is that the two processes should be seen as symbiotic. A deep change of mindset is required on both sides of the Atlantic. It is only *through and via NATO*, rather than *outside or alongside it*, that the EU can move towards SA. This approach, which the author has suggested for a number of years, is quite marginal in the abundant literature on SA. Hubert Védrine hinted at it in his 2012 report on France’s reintegration of the NATO integrated command.⁷³ In that report he coined the phrase the ‘Europeanization of NATO’. One prominent European expert on NATO has speculated on the prospects for a ‘Europeanized NATO’ as an accidental consequence of Trump’s assault on the international order.⁷⁴ The head of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtiges Politik (German Council on Foreign Relations) has called for Europeans to play an increasingly prominent role *inside* NATO.⁷⁵ The notion of European leadership within the Alliance is implicit in Barack Obama’s concept of US ‘leadership from behind’.⁷⁶ Steven Metz posited a version of the same idea when he suggested that NATO should

consider an arrangement in which the United States is the ‘supporting’ rather than the ‘supported’ nation, with the position of Supreme Allied Commander finally shifting to a European general. America could be Europe’s backstop rather than its primary defender. Might Americans even ultimately consider a NATO in which the United States is formally affiliated but not a full member?⁷⁷

⁷² J. S. Smith and C. Gebhard, ‘EU–NATO Relations: Running on the Fumes of Informed Deconfliction’, *European Security* 26/3 (2017).

⁷³ H. Védrine, ‘Report for the President of the French Republic on the Consequences of France’s Return to NATO’s Integrated Military Command, on the Future of Transatlantic Relations, and the Outlook for the Europe of Defence’, Permanent Representation of France to NATO (14 November 2012).

⁷⁴ S. Rynning, ‘A Europeanized NATO? The Alliance Contemplates the Trump Era and Beyond’, *War on the Rocks*, 25 September 2018.

⁷⁵ D. Schwarzer, ‘Les Européens doivent peser davantage à l’intérieur de l’OTAN’, *Le Monde*, 17 February 2019.

⁷⁶ R. Lizza, ‘Leading from Behind’, *The New Yorker*, 2 May 2011.

⁷⁷ S. Metz, ‘It’s Time to Re-Imagine the NATO Alliance’, *World Politics Review*, 27 July 2018.



This proposal comes close to the position adopted by growing numbers of US structural realists. And it is not far removed from the stance adopted, for different reasons, by both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the 2016 presidential campaign. Trump and Sanders are currently the front-runners in the 2020 US presidential campaign.⁷⁸

The *Europeanisation of NATO* model is predicated on a number of important assumptions. The first is that SA must mean that, as was intended at the birth of the Alliance, the EU will eventually become capable of providing for its own collective defence. Any other interpretation of SA does not amount to autonomy but perpetuates dependency. This does not imply separation from the US, a rupture of the Atlantic Alliance, decoupling or divorce. The enduring partnership between the two sides of the Atlantic would undoubtedly *reinforce* the EU's collective defence capacity, but the capacity itself (political, industrial and operational) must nevertheless be autonomous. The received wisdom is that it would take many years, even decades, for the EU to acquire such a capacity. Some argue that it would also encourage the Americans to disengage or even return to isolationism. This is why many commentators conclude either that Europe will never achieve SA or that it should not make the effort. Obstacles on the route to SA, the sceptical narrative suggests, will derive from one or more of several factors: divisions within the EU, US unwillingness to abandon leadership, the EU's continuing inability to generate adequate capacity or the emergence of a new existential threat.

This author sees these as rationales for lack of ambition rather than as serious road-blocks. Europe is as wealthy as the US. It has a much bigger population. It boasts technological, scientific, industrial and creative capacity as great as that of the US. It is (unlike the US) situated in a geographical area that is vulnerable to numerous serious threats. What reason could there possibly be for the EU to elect to remain in perpetuity in a state of security dependency on the US? Why would the acquisition of serious military and defensive capacity by the EU be seen as undermining rather than strengthening the Alliance? How can one square the constant drumbeat from the US urging the Europeans to up their game with an apparent reluctance to allow them to go beyond a certain point with this?

The second major assumption behind the notion of the Europeanisation of NATO is that, on its own, the CSDP will prove inadequate for the purposes of EU SA. From the outset, the CSDP has been framed

⁷⁸ E. I. Dove, 'Bernie Sanders Is the Democratic Front-Runner', *The Atlantic*, 19 February 2019.



as a series of EU instruments allowing the Union to conduct missions that the US and/or NATO see no reason or need to be involved in. This has resulted in a constant downgrading of CSDP ambition. In consequence, whenever a genuine crisis has arisen on the EU's periphery (the Balkan wars, Libya or Ukraine/Crimea), the Union has had to resort to NATO. The post-2016 new dynamism behind the CSDP is unlikely to make much difference to that lack of capacity. The full implementation of the entire raft of new initiatives could produce a more effective CSDP, capable of making some difference, particularly in the southern neighbourhood. This would not amount to SA in that it would still leave the EU existentially dependent on NATO and the US for protection against a serious Russian threat.⁷⁹ It would not allow the EU alone to develop a containment and deterrence posture against Russia, or indeed against an eventual threat of a ballistic-missile-launched nuclear attack by Iran (or any other state in the Middle East). This scenario would represent a serious step beyond the status quo but would still leave the EU subordinate to NATO, while at the same time requiring the expenditure of a great deal of money to duplicate capabilities largely provided to NATO by the US. As one who has studied the CSDP intensely since its very inception, the author sees in the current cheerleading around what he has called 'CSDP-Redux' many echoes of long-forgotten arguments—that led nowhere.

The third major assumption, therefore, is that it is as much in the interests of the US as it is in those of the EU for the latter to acquire genuine collective defence capacity—that is, SA. Again, this was the original purpose of NATO. The key to the future is *US empowerment of the EU via NATO* and a combined, consensual rebalancing of the Atlantic Alliance. European SA should be a *joint venture* between the US and the EU. The two partners should agree a plan to lead the EU towards SA.

If Europeans and Americans truly believe that, despite their differences, they share overall values and are closer to one another than either is to any other global actor, then they will rise above short-term problems of adaptation. If Europeans fear abandonment because of a clash of transatlantic values and/or interests, then to accept a state of permanent dependency makes no sense. If Americans believe that Europeans should indefinitely defer to the US for their security, then they should cease cajoling the latter to do more for themselves.

It was right and proper that the EU should have experimented with what the CSDP implies for au-

⁷⁹ T. Valasek, 'Cajoling Europe into Cooperating on Defence', *Carnegie Europe*, 7 June 2017.



tonomy. It is to be hoped that the experience gained over the past 20 years has been fully absorbed both in Brussels and in European national capitals. The objective of SA is appropriate, and the EU should interpret this as demanding the highest possible level of ambition. It is time to take EU–NATO cooperation to a new and different level. It means, in effect, *a European return to NATO*. But this time, unlike in the mid-1990s, the EU would be working through NATO for the right reasons: to gain the experience necessary to transcend the limitations of the CSDP and to create a genuine two-pillar alliance.

The EU should take up the challenge from the US and progressively assume leadership in meeting its own regional challenges, both in the south and in the east. Currently, there is an implicit if not explicit division of labour under which NATO handles the eastern challenge and the EU deals with the south. This arrangement must be transcended. If the EU is to achieve SA, it must take ultimate responsibility for both neighbourhoods. This must be done in a manner that is fully transparent to its American partners. Both sides should embrace the overall game plan. The US, via NATO, can continue to backstop EU security initiatives with critical enablers such as intelligence, logistics, heavy lift, and command and control—but only as a temporary measure while Europe acquires the experience, the capacity and the confidence needed to meet future challenges on its own. Again, that was the original purpose of NATO. The best way of reaching that stage is gradually to merge the CSDP into NATO, for Europeans to progressively take over command of the major agencies in NATO and to allow the US to focus on the areas of the world that are of the most strategic importance to Washington.

At that point, the EU, featuring a Europeanised NATO, might sign a bilateral, co-equal and different type of alliance with the US. This would deliver on John F. Kennedy's 1962 proposal for a *Declaration of Interdependence* between the two sides. Any other course of action would amount to the same 'muddling through' that we have witnessed since the end of the Cold War. There are many problems with this plan. It depends on the EU transcending its three current crises of sovereignty (money, borders and defence). It assumes the EU will not only continue in business but also rise to the challenge of engineering central political authority. The plan would have to be sold successfully in Washington and London, and above all in Warsaw, Prague and Vilnius. It would also have to be made acceptable to the EU's remaining non-NATO member states. Once the *political and strategic* principles were agreed at both the European and transatlantic levels, the serious quest for *industrial* and *operational* autonomy could begin. It would require highly creative thinking about two unavoidable issues: nuclear weapons and political



leadership. It would take time, a lot of time. The hundredth anniversary of the Treaty of Washington is in 2049. This seems like a reasonable anniversary occasion by which to achieve European SA (a mere 90 years late by Eisenhower's metric). This is the only serious route to SA. If it should be judged by the EU member states to be unrealistic, unattainable or undesirable, then the project for SA should be dropped and another—less challenging—ambition adopted.

Policy recommendations



Based on the blueprint set forth above, a number of key recommendations can be given. The aim of these recommendations is to set up an intergovernmental European Security Council (ESC) that would facilitate quicker and more decisive EU action, and help the Union approach international affairs in a more strategic manner.⁸⁰

1. The European Council should hold an extraordinary session to agree on a precise definition of 'strategic autonomy'. A robust interpretation of the concept must involve the EU ultimately assuming primary responsibility for its own collective defence. If no agreement can be reached on such a meaningful definition, then the concept should be replaced with one that is less ambitious, and which explicitly accepts indefinite EU dependency on the US for its collective defence. The rationale behind that status should be clearly explained to the people of both the US and the EU.
2. This process should be conducted by both NATO and US officials in total transparency in order to provide the necessary assurances that SA is in the best interests of both sides of the Atlantic. The deadline of 2049—NATO's one hundredth anniversary—should be established as the date for meaningful EU SA.
3. The objective should be a progressive rebalancing of capacity, responsibility and leadership within the Alliance. Immediate political, institutional and resource modifications should be made by both parties with a view to rationalising military planning and political decision-making procedures in Brussels.
4. NATO and the CSDP are already working on 74 cooperation programmes. These activities should be *merged* into permanent *joint* EU–NATO working groups.
5. The EU and NATO military committees already comprise (with the exception of the neutral countries and Denmark) precisely the same representatives, double-hatted. These committees should be merged and special arrangements made for the neutrals.
6. The North Atlantic Council and the Political and Security Committee should progressively coordinate

⁸⁰ N. Novaky, *EU It Yourself: A Blueprint for a European Security Council*, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, Research Paper, March 2019.



their agendas and merge their representatives (again, with special arrangements for the neutrals).

7. A time frame should be agreed for SACEUR to become a European officer. Appropriate EU–NATO command chain arrangements would have to be agreed.
8. Over a 10-year period, staff at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe should be rebalanced to reflect the growing EU assumption of responsibility and leadership.
9. NATO and the EU should start formal discussions on which intelligence assets can—and which cannot—be shared.
10. The EU and the US should enter into discussions aimed at a phased reduction of US strategic enablers and their replacement by EU assets. The time frame for this might be 20 years.
11. US troops currently deployed in Europe should be progressively repatriated over a 25-year period.
12. A special EU–US agency should be established to discuss nuclear planning. This would be co-chaired by US, UK and French personnel.



Conclusion



The conundrum of Europe's responsibility for the stabilisation and defence of its own neighbourhood has existed from the very foundation of the Alliance in the 1940s. It was originally intended that the US would provide a temporary backstop to enable European military capacity to recover from World War Two and provide a shield against external threats. European incapacity and the onset of the Cold War, with its existential threat to the entire West, ensured that this objective was abandoned. During the Cold War, European dependence on the US became structural—and largely unquestioned.

Since the end of the Cold War, pressure has mounted both within Europe and from the US for Europeans to take greater responsibility for their own security affairs. The debate on burden-sharing has expressed this pressure. The EU aspired to autonomy in the December 1998 Saint-Malo declaration—which gave rise to the CSDP. Initial US concerns about the autonomous ambitions of the CSDP rapidly gave rise to the opposite concern: that European military capacity would once again be found wanting. Whenever serious challenges arose on Europe's periphery, the EU set aside the CSDP and fell back on NATO/the US. This exacerbated US frustration with the EU and intensified the burden-sharing debate.

Successive US presidents have blown hot and cold over Europe's defences. George H. W. Bush insisted that Europeans submit to US leadership. Bill Clinton gave the green light to a European capacity based on NATO. George W. Bush played divide-and-rule games with 'old' and 'new' Europeans. Barack Obama invented 'leadership from behind'. Donald Trump has called NATO obsolete. Europeans have proven to be equally schizophrenic: they wish for greater autonomy but are at the same time scared of what they wish for. It is time to move on. There is a long way to go and the road ahead will be full of snake pits. But it leads to a competent EU defence capacity, acquired through an apprenticeship in leadership and the growing assumption of responsibility *in and via NATO*—and this would be the desirable end state for both parties.

Autonomy should be framed above all as a positive—in contradistinction to its negative, *dependency*. It is neither healthy nor wise for the EU to remain in a state of permanent dependency on its ally. This, in the long term, is undesirable for both parties. It is in the vital interests of both the EU and the US to arrive at a negotiated and agreed process whereby the EU, empowered in the initial stages by the US, eventually achieves meaningful SA. If this process is conducted in the right way, it can considerably strengthen the transatlantic relationship by putting an end to decades of bickering over responsibility and burden-sharing. It should eventually lead to a new—bilateral and co-equal—treaty consolidating the ongoing partnership between the US and the EU in a complex world of power transition.

Bibliography



Acheson, D., *Present at the Creation* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1969).

Albright, M., 'The Right Balance Will Secure NATO's Future', *Financial Times*, 9 December 1998.

Allers, R., 'The Framework Nation: Can Germany Lead On Security?', *International Affairs* 92/5 (September 2016), 1167–87.

Applebaum, A., 'Europe Needs to Start Planning for a Future with No US', *The Washington Post*, 12 July 2018, accessed at https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/europe-needs-to-start-planning-for-a-future-without-the-us/2018/07/12/33a7cb7e-8601-11e8-8f6c-46cb43e3f306_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.9aca4d6748e4 on 6 March 2019.

Arteaga, F., 'Strategic Autonomy and European Defence', Elcano Royal Institute, ARI 102/2017 (12 December 2017), accessed at http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/ari102-2017-arteaga-strategic-autonomy-european-defence on 7 March 2019.

Bacevich, A. J., 'Ending Endless War: A Pragmatic Military Strategy', *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2016, accessed at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-08-03/ending-endless-war> on 7 March 2019.

Barnes, J. E. and Cooper, H., 'Trump Discussed Pulling US from NATO, Aides Say amid New Concerns over Russia', *The New York Times*, 14 January 2019, accessed at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/14/us/politics/nato-president-trump.html> on 7 March 2019.

Béraud-Sudreau, L. and Childs, N., 'The US and Its NATO Allies: Costs and Value', International Institute for Strategic Studies, Military Balance Blog (9 July 2018), accessed at <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/military-balance/2018/07/us-and-nato-allies-costs-and-value> on 7 March 2019.

Berger, D. et al., 'In Spite of It All, America: A Trans-Atlantic Manifesto in Times of Donald Trump – A German Perspective', *The New York Times*, 11 October 2018, accessed at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/11/world/europe/germany-united-states-trump-manifesto.html>.



Billon-Galand, A. and Quencez, M, 'European Intervention Initiative: The Big Easy', *Berlin Policy Journal*, Bullets and Bytes, 15 October 2018, accessed at <https://berlinpolicyjournal.com/european-intervention-initiative-the-big-easy/> on 7 March 2019.

Billon-Galand, A. and Thomson, A., 'European Autonomy: Stop Talking, Start Planning', European Leadership Network, Policy Brief (11 May 2018), accessed at <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/policy-brief/european-strategic-autonomy-stop-talking-start-planning/> on 7 March 2019.

Biscop, S., 'European Defence: Give PESCO a Chance', *Survival* 60/3 (2018), 161–80.

Biscop, S., *Fighting For Europe: European Strategic Autonomy and the Use of Force*, Egmont Paper no. 103 (Brussels, January 2019).

Biscop, S., 'Letting Europe Go Its Own Way: The Case for Strategic Autonomy', *Foreign Affairs*, Snapshot, 6 July 2018, accessed at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-07-06/letting-europe-go-its-own-way> on 7 March 2019.

Biscop, S., 'Permanent Structured Cooperation and the Future of the ESDP: Transformation and Integration', *European Foreign Affairs Review* 13/4 (2008), 431–48.

Braw, E., 'Can Europe Achieve "Strategic Autonomy?"', *Stratfor*, Worldview, 11 September 2018, accessed at <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/can-europe-achieve-strategic-autonomy> on 7 March 2019.

Brooks, S. and Wohlforth, W., *America Abroad: Why the Sole Superpower Should Not Pull Back from the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Brustlein, C., 'European Strategic Autonomy: Balancing Ambition and Responsibility', IFRI, Éditoriaux de l'Ifri (November 2018), accessed at <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/editoriaux-de-lifri/european-strategic-autonomy-balancing-ambition-and-responsibility> on 7 March 2019.

Burns, N. and Lute, D., *NATO at Seventy: An Alliance in Crisis*, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Report (February 2019), accessed at <https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/>



[files/publication/NATOatSeventy.pdf](#) on 7 March 2019.

Carroll, E. and Schroeder, P., 'It's Time to Consign NATO to History and Look to the Future', *Chicago Tribune*, 2 September 1994, accessed at <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1994-09-02-9409020263-story.html> on 7 March 2019.

Cottey, A., 'Astrategic Europe', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 57/3 (2019) (forthcoming).

Dempsey, J., 'Macron's Call for European Boots', *Carnegie Europe*, Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe, 13 November 2018, accessed at <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/77703> on 7 March 2019.

Dovere, E. I., 'Bernie Sanders Is the Democratic Front-Runner', *The Atlantic*, 19 February 2019, accessed at <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/02/bernie-sanders-democratic-frontrunner-president/583066/> on 7 March 2019.

The Economist, 'The Baltics Fear European "Strategic Autonomy"', 4 October 2018, accessed at <https://www.economist.com/europe/2018/10/04/the-baltics-fear-european-strategic-autonomy> on 7 March 2019.

EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe – A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy* (June 2016), accessed at http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf on 8 March 2019.

English, J., "'Who Could Ask for Anything More?': North American Perspectives on NATO's Origins", in G. Schmidt (ed.), *A History of NATO: The First Fifty Years*, vol. 2 (London: Palgrave, 2001).

Erlanger, S., 'U.S. Revives Concerns About European Defense Plans, Rattling NATO Allies', *The New York Times*, 18 February 2018, accessed at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/18/world/europe/nato-europe-us-.html> on 8 March 2019.

France Diplomatie, *Traité de Coopération franco-allemand d'Aix la Chapelle* (2019), accessed at https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/traite.aix-la-chapelle.22.01.2019_cle8d3c8e.pdf.



Franke, U. E., 'Germany's Defence Policy: Still Living in Dreamland', European Council on Foreign Relations, Note from Berlin (21 September 2018), accessed at https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_germanys_defence_policy_still_living_in_dreamland.

Fursdon, E., *The European Defence Community: A History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1980).

Gaddis, J. L., 'Why Grand Strategy is Tough for Academics', Part of a lecture at Middlebury College (16 May 2005), accessed at <http://faroutliers.blogspot.fr/2005/05/gaddis-on-why-grand-strategy-is-tough.html>.

Gallagher, M. and Dueck C., 'The Conservative Case for NATO', *The National Review*, 31 January 2019, accessed at <http://www.aei.org/publication/the-conservative-case-for-nato/>.

Goldberg, J., 'The Obama Doctrine', *The Atlantic*, April 2016, accessed at <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>.

Haddad, B. and Polyakova, A., 'Is Going It Alone the Best Way Forward for Europe? Why Strategic Autonomy Should Be the Continent's Goal', *Foreign Affairs*, 17 October 2018, accessed at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2018-10-17/going-it-alone-best-way-forward-europe>.

Hayward, J., 'John Bolton: European Union Military Would Be "Dagger Pointed at the Heart of NATO"', *Breitbart.com*, 23 November 2016, accessed at <https://www.breitbart.com/radio/2016/11/23/bolton-eu-military-dagger-pointed-heart-nato/>.

Howorth, J., *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Ikenberry, G. J., *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

Kashmeri, S., *NATO 2.0: Reboot or Delete* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2011).

Kempin, R. and Kunz, B., *France, Germany and the Quest for European Strategic Autonomy: Franco-German Defence Cooperation in a New Era*, IFRI and SWP (December 2017), accessed at https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ndc_141_kempin_kunz_france_germany_european_strategic_autonomy_dec_2017.pdf.

Kempin, R. and Kunz, B., 'Washington Should Help Europe Achieve "Strategic Autonomy", Not Fight It', *War on the Rocks*, 12 April 2018, accessed at <https://warontherocks.com/2018/04/washington-should-help-europe-achieve-strategic-autonomy-not-fight-it/>.

King, E., 'Trump: Defending NATO Ally Montenegro Could Mean "World War III"', *Politico*, 18 July 2018, accessed at <https://www.politico.eu/article/donad-trump-nato-montenegro-defending-could-mean-world-war-iii/>.

Kundnani, H., 'The Necessity and Impossibility of "Strategic Autonomy"', The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Transatlantic Take (January 2018), accessed at <http://www.gmfus.org/blog/2018/01/10/necessity-and-impossibility-strategic-autonomy>.

Kundnani, H. and Puglierin, J., 'Atlanticist and "Post-Atlanticist" Wishful-Thinking', The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Policy essay (3 January 2018), accessed at <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/atlanticist-and-post-atlanticist-wishful-thinking>.

Kupchan, C., 'In Defence of European Defence: An American Perspective', *Survival* 42/2 (2000).

Kupchan, C., 'The West Will Have to Go It Alone, Without the United States', *Foreign Policy*, 13 June 2018, accessed at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/13/the-west-will-have-to-go-it-alone-without-the-united-states-trump/>.

Laidi, Z., 'Europe Is Starting to Turn French', *Financial Times*, 26 February 2019, accessed at <https://www.ft.com/content/f3940254-3907-11e9-9988-28303f70fcff>.

Le Gloannec, A. M., *Continent by Default: The European Union and the Demise of Regional Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

Lizza, R., 'Leading from Behind', *The New Yorker*, 2 May 2011, accessed at <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/leading-from-behind>.

Lucas, E., 'Europe Must Plan for Defence Without NATO', *The Times* (London), 13 July 2018, accessed at <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/europe-must-plan-for-defence-without-nato-3697pkq0x>.



Macron, E., 'Initiative pour l'Europe – Discours d'Emmanuel Macron pour une Europe souveraine, unie, démocratique' (26 September 2017), accessed at <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2017/09/26/initiative-pour-l-europe-discours-d-emmanuel-macron-pour-une-europe-souveraine-unie-democratique>.

Major, C. and Mölling, C., 'PESCO: The German Perspective', ARES #36 (February 2019).

Major, C. and Mölling, C., 'The Framework Nations Concept: Germany's Contribution to a Capable European Defence', SWP Comments 52 (December 2014), accessed at https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2014C52_mjr_mlg.pdf.

Major, C. and Mölling, C., 'Why Joining France's European Intervention Initiative is the Right Choice for Germany', *Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations*, 15 June 2018, accessed at <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/why-joining-frances-european-intervention-initiative-is-the-right-decision-for-germany/>.

Mauro, F., *Autonomie Stratégique : le nouveau Graal de la défense européenne*, GRIP Report 2018/1 (2018), accessed at https://www.grip.org/sites/grip.org/files/RAPPORTS/2018/Rapport_2018-1.pdf.

Mauro, F., *La Coopération Structurée Permanente : Perspectives nationales et état d'avancement*, European Parliament (2017), accessed at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/603842/EXPO_STU\(2017\)603842_FR.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/603842/EXPO_STU(2017)603842_FR.pdf).

Mauro, F. and Jehin, O., 'L'Armée Européenne en Débat', GRIP (Brussels, 2019).

McCarthy, B., 'Trump Falsely Claims NATO Countries Owe United States Money for Defense Spending', *Politifact*, 11 July 2018, accessed at <https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2018/jul/11/donald-trump/trump-falsely-claims-nato-countries-owe-united-sta/>.

Mearsheimer, J., *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

Mearsheimer, J. and Walt, S., 'The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior US Grand Strategy', *Foreign Affairs*, July–August 2016, accessed at <https://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/Offshore%20Balancing.pdf>.



Mehta, A., 'US Warns Against "Protectionism" with New EU Defense Agreement', *Defense News*, 14 February 2018, accessed at <https://www.defensenews.com/smr/munich-security-forum/2018/02/14/us-warns-against-protectionism-with-new-eu-defense-agreement/>.

Metz, S., 'It's Time to Re-Imagine the NATO Alliance', *World Politics Review*, 27 July 2018, accessed at <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/25267/it-s-time-to-reimagine-the-nato-alliance>.

Ministère des Armées, *Livre Blanc: Défense et Sécurité Nationale 2013* (Paris: Documentation Française, 2013), accessed at <https://fr.calameo.com/read/000331627d6f04ea4fe0e>.

Ministère des Armées, *Revue Stratégique de Défense et de Sécurité Nationale* (Paris: Documentation Française, 2017), accessed at <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/dgris/presentation/evenements-archives/revue-strategique-de-defense-et-de-securite-nationale-2017>.

Mogherini, F., 'Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Munich Security Conference', EEAS (Munich, 15 February 2019), accessed at https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/58232/speech-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-munich-security-conference_en.

Novaky, N., *EU It Yourself: A Blueprint for a European Security Council*, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, Research Paper, March 2019, accessed at <https://www.martenscentre.eu/sites/default/files/publication-files/european-security-council-blueprint.pdf> on 22 May 2019.

Perot, E., 'The Aachen Mutual Defence Clause: A Closer Look at the Franco-German Treaty', Egmont Security Policy Brief 105 (February 2019), accessed at <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2019/02/SPB105.pdf?type=pdf>.

Posen, B. R., *Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung (BPA), 'Gemeinsame Erklärung zum Deutsch–Französischen Ministerrat' (13 July 2017), accessed at <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/gemeinsame-erklaerung-zum-deutsch-franzoesischen-ministerrat-604596>.



Puhl, D., 'Strategic Autonomy for Europe: Can Berlin and Paris Agree?', Federal Academy for Security Policy, Security Policy Working Paper 8/2018 (2018), accessed at https://www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/working_paper_2018_08.pdf.

Rizzo, R., 'The United States Should Rally Behind European Strategic Autonomy', European Leadership Network, Commentary (29 October 2018), accessed at <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/the-united-states-should-rally-behind-strategic-autonomy/>.

Rynning, S., 'A Europeanized NATO? The Alliance Contemplates the Trump Era and Beyond', *War on the Rocks*, 25 September 2018, accessed at <https://warontherocks.com/2018/09/a-europeanized-nato-the-alliance-contemplates-the-trump-era-and-beyond/>.

Saxi, H. L., 'British and German Initiatives for Defence Cooperation: The Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nations Concept', *Defence Studies* 17/2 (5 April 2017), 171–97.

Schwarzer, D., 'Les Européens doivent peser davantage à l'intérieur de l'OTAN', *Le Monde*, 17 February 2019, accessed at https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2019/02/15/daniela-schwarzer-les-europeens-doivent-peser-davantage-a-l-interieur-de-l-otan_5423944_3210.html.

Smith, J. S. and Gebhard, C., 'EU–NATO Relations: Running on the Fumes of Informed Deconfliction', *European Security* 26/3 (2017), 303–459.

Stoltenberg, J., 'Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Opening Session of the Munich Security Conference', NATO (16 February 2018), accessed at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_152209.htm.

Taylor, P., 'Emmanuel Macron's Coalition of the Willing', *Politico*, 2 May 2018, accessed at <https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macrons-eu-defense-army-coalition-of-the-willing-military-cooperation/>.

Thomson, A., 'Security Autonomy for Europe?', European Leadership Network, Commentary (7 April 2017), accessed at <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/security-autonomy-for-europe/>.



Tigner, B., 'Deconstructing PESCO: Washington's Apparent, Actual and Misplaced Fears About European Defense Plans', *Atlantic Council*, 26 February 2018, accessed at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/deconstructing-pesco-washington-s-apparent-actual-and-misplaced-fears-about-european-defense-plans>.

Trachtenberg, M., *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement 1945–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Valasek, T., 'Cajoling Europe into Cooperating on Defence', *Carnegie Europe*, 7 June 2017, accessed at <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/71196>.

Védrine, H., 'Report for the President of the French Republic on the Consequences of France's Return to NATO's Integrated Military Command, on the Future of Transatlantic Relations, and the Outlook for the Europe of Defence', Permanent Representation of France to NATO (14 November 2012), accessed at <https://otan.delegfrance.org/The-Vedrine-report>.

Von der Leyen, U., 'The World Still Needs NATO', *New York Times*, 18 January 2019, accessed at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/18/opinion/nato-european-union-america.html>.

Walt, S., *The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of US Primacy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 16 October 2018).

Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, 'European Defence Union: Time to Aim High?', *YouTube*, 21 May 2018, accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAgBTxvqXI8>.

Witney, N., 'EU Defence Efforts Miss the Open-Goal Again', *ECFR*, 15 November 2017, accessed at https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_eu_defence_efforts_miss_the_open_goal_again.

Zajac, P., 'If America Wants Strong European Allies, Let Them Find Their Own Way', *War on the Rocks*, 19 December 2017, accessed at <https://warontherocks.com/2017/12/america-wants-strong-european-allies-let-find-path/>.

The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy was launched in 1998 as a quest for 'autonomy'. The EU sought the capacity to stabilise its volatile neighbourhood without undue reliance on the US. Almost two decades of efforts have failed to deliver on that objective. But as EU leaders, post-Brexit, re-launch the Common Security and Defence Policy, as the 2016 *European Global Strategy* rediscovers the virtues of 'strategic autonomy', and as the world juggles with a US president who appears to question the very bases of the Atlantic Alliance, it is time to radically re-think the relations between the EU and NATO. This paper argues that, in the longer term, it is through strengthening the EU-NATO relationship, rather than by focusing on defence initiatives undertaken by the Union alone, that EU strategic autonomy will become possible. This will, at the same time, consolidate rather than weaken the transatlantic bond



Wilfried
Martens Centre
for European Studies