

Summary of Discussions

SWP Working Group

"Transatlantic Military Cooperability"

2nd Colloquium, Washington DC, May 15, 2003

at the Center on Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

Although there is a long history of defense cooperation between the US and Europe, the end of the Cold War has created in some circles the perception that military cooperation is not as important as it once was. International cooperation has fallen off dramatically since the mid-70s and 80s, as demonstrated by the fact that the most significant transatlantic armaments project (apart from the relatively recent Joint Strike Fighter), MEADS, originated in the 1980s. The result is the growth of a capabilities gap between Europe and the US. Although the shortfall of European capabilities is slowly being addressed, the gap is so large (and European budgets are so small) that it is not expected to be bridged for the next 20 – 30 years. However, there is hope that this gap can be addressed in the near-term by increased European investment in interoperability with US military technology, which will directly enhance European capabilities, as opposed to an exclusive focus on closing a broad spectrum of specific European capability gaps.

The decline of military cooperation and the large capabilities gap reflect a growing strategic divide between US and Europe regarding security threat perception and the role of military power in fighting terrorism and other hard-to-define threats. These diverging views, and increased US sensitivity to its own security needs in the wake of September 11, mean that transatlantic cooperation has become even less of a priority in the US. As a result, efforts by the defense industry to loosen technology export controls—essential to transatlantic military cooperation—have not been successful. Congress has been largely unwilling to make any changes in favor of industry because of the perception that such changes would weaken control over technology that is vital to the protection of the US. The current administration's seeming acceptance of the status quo further hampers efforts to develop strong transatlantic ties on an industrial level.

Ultimately, the relationship between Europe and the US will be reassessed through the structure and operation of NATO. During the Cold War it was clear that NATO was in the national interest of all concerned. Nowadays, however, there is a growing perception that Europe is not that important to US security interests. In particular, the US questions whether the European members of NATO are prepared to support NATO military interventions outside of its traditional European sphere of operations. A successful implementation of the NATO Response Force, with a global mandate, is a key step in ensuring the continuation of strong transatlantic ties. To that end, NATO member countries must fulfill the Prague Capability Commitments.

Going forward, the political will of the leadership in Europe and the US will remain the key to maintaining strong transatlantic ties. Future cooperation will require the attitudes of the US and Europe to converge again.

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Agenda:

Session I: *Transatlantic Armaments Cooperation*

Prospects for transatlantic defense cooperation were limited before the war in Iraq and seem dimmer in the wake of the major divisions that arose between the U.S. and such key allies as France and Germany. What are the realistic prospects for transatlantic defense cooperation in the wake of the war on Iraq? What are the implications of pre-war obligations taken by Germany and its European NATO partners at the Prague summit last November? What are the German views on the future of key projects such as MEADS? Will European-oriented programs like the A-400M become the priority for German planners? What are the implications of the constraints on defense spending in Germany for arms cooperation?

Session II: *The Future of Bundeswehr Transformation*

The Center for the Study of the Bundeswehr has recently completed a four year study, "The Armed Forces: Capabilities and Technology in the 21st Century." This study looks out to the development of German armed forces to the year 2020 and proposes a revolution in force structure that will result in a transformation from a the old, heavy armored Bundeswehr to a modern intervention force (Klasse statt Masse). Are these goals attainable? What are the political and budgetary implications of such a revolution? How will it relate to the transformation occurring in U.S. forces?

Session III: *U.S. Perspective on U.S.-German Defense Relations*

What is the official U.S. view on prospects for U.S.-German defense relations following the recent visit of Defense Minister Struck with Defense Secretary Rumsfeld? How does the discussion over the reconfiguration of the U.S. base structure in Europe play into the broader cooperation agenda? How does the U.S. Defense Department view the progress made in Bundeswehr reform and the follow-on to the Prague capabilities commitment?

Session IV: *Views from Capitol Hill and Industry on Armaments Cooperation*

Defense industrial cooperation may be at a crossroads between a transatlantic and a European path. How do Capitol Hill and key industrial players view the state of play in defense industrial cooperation and the prospects for either substantial progress on transatlantic cooperation or European consolidation? Will German firms find a more hostile environment in the U.S. following the war in Iraq? Does ESDP increase the prospects for European defense industrial cooperation?

Session V: *NATO After Iraq: Where Do We Go From Here?*

NATO has, by most assessments, gone through its most serious crisis in its five decade long history. This followed the impressive show of solidarity following September 11th when the Alliance invoked Article 5 for the first time in its history. Since 9-11 there has been a great deal of talk in Washington about the mission determining the coalition and coalitions of the willing.

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Europe has been divided into "old" and "new;" where does the alliance go from here, after the war in Iraq, enlargement and a commitment to a rapid reaction force in Prague?