



## What the EU and NATO Can Do For Each Other

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The biggest favour the EU and NATO can do each other is to put their respective houses in order. An organization is only as strong as the collective strength and will of its members. It is impossible to have a strong NATO -or EU- when its member states are weak or have no resolve in tackling the problems. NATO is suffering from a severe crisis of cohesion in Afghanistan, and the EU is suffering from a structural lack of military capabilities. Thus, it is imperative that their respective member states address their relative impotence. For one thing, either at NATO or through the more palatable option of the EU, Europeans must increase their defense expenditures. The World and our common security are simply too demanding for defense budgets below 2% of the GNP. At the same time, NATO should encourage the

defense money to be spent wisely, nurturing a transformation of the military establishment that in the case of Europe is always lagging well behind the Americans.

Secondly, up to now the most frequently asked question was “what assets could the EU borrow from NATO?” The Alliance is currently being stretched beyond its capabilities. Thus, I believe the question at hand should be the opposite: “what is the EU able to offer NATO in order to succeed in its missions?” NATO is a military organization; it has developed a comprehensive concept by integrating military and civilian capabilities. The real actor in the soft power domain, however, is the EU, as long as what their representatives are saying is true. Hence, in a time when everyone is arguing that there is no military solution for

Afghanistan or Iraq - to name two pressing cases- any efforts the EU could add to NATO could have a significant impact.

Finally, institutions are important but rarely the solution. The EU has developed an excellent decision making capacity for security issues in the last few years, but it still remains almost powerless in operational terms. What has been accomplished up to now in Congo or Chad is undistinguishable from French deployments. It is nice to have a Foreign Affairs minister, but there is no point in having it without agreed foreign and security policies. Kosovo has been the latest example of how divisive foreign and security policy can be for Europeans.

Again, if we want to be serious in military terms, Europe must do its home work. Alternatively, if we find complacency in being able to mount small scale peace operations in benign environments, we cannot bother those who are involved in actual combat action. It is the time to support them not to distract them with endless institutional quarrels. My advice: unless the EU seriously considers how to help NATO solve the security problems we all are facing, in a practical and reversed Berlin Plus agreement, the two organizations need to ignore each other for a while. Each one has too much to work on within their own institutions to be worrying about the other.

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