"But We Have To Do Something" : the drivers behind EU crisis management operations

Pohl, B.

CHAPTER IV: EUFOR ALTHEA

On 2 December 2004, the European Union launched its third and thus far largest ESDP military operation with an initial deployment of around 7000 troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia or BiH). Dubbed 'Althea' after the Greek goddess of healing, the operation was tasked by the Council of the European Union to provide deterrence and continued compliance with the Dayton Peace Agreement and 'to contribute to a safe and secure environment in BiH' (Council of the EU 2004a). Prior to the start of Althea, NATO had been responsible for implementing and guaranteeing the military part of the Dayton Accords that ended the war in Bosnia in late 1995. Yet at its Istanbul summit in June 2004 the Alliance had decided to conclude its 'Stabilization Force' (SFOR), making way for the EU force. This begs the question why the EU took on this crisis management operation, and why it did so nine years after the initial international deployment.

In examining this question, this chapter harks back to the propositions developed in chapter II. What would this entail in the case of EUFOR Althea? The first proposition suggested that ESDP operations might serve to balance US influence. This explanation is somewhat puzzling in the case of the Bosnian operation because the Union took this operation over from NATO of which the US forms part, which in turn implies that the latter had to formally agree to the change in command. One possible solution to this conundrum would be if we saw the US pushed out. European governments would thus have wanted to limit US influence through a change in the political oversight mechanism, and the latter would have conceded for reasons as yet unknown. Indications to this effect might include the initiative's provenance from particularly US-critical EU governments (e.g. France), EU insistence on maximising the operation's autonomy from NATO, *ex post* contentment over having balanced successfully, and US resistance to being pushed out. By contrast, was the operation's idea to have originated in US-friendly EU governments, have been welcomed by the US, and been used as a means of strengthening the transatlantic relationship, we would conclude that the 'balancing' proposition was misleading.

The second proposition hypothesized that ESDP operations primarily served to promote collectively held values. To accept this explanation, we would expect to find the EU primarily concerned about how best to help Bosnia entrench a liberal peace. Indications to that effect may include that deliberations about the operation were focused on how best to achieve the latter objective, that justifications for (national) policy positions on the operation were framed with a view to achieving that objective, and that there was cooperation with the US on account of similar values that both sides sought to promote. In contradistinction, an emphasis on narrow self-

interests would lead us to reason that the EU's normative role conception cannot explain its behaviour regarding Bosnia.

The third proposition had suggested that ESDP operations had been driven by governments' desire to promote European integration. This could explain why the operation was transferred from one Western multilateral organization to the next, and why Western governments, in their professed quest for stability in Bosnia, opted to switch to a seemingly weaker guarantor of that stability. Accordingly, we would expect to find indications of a conscious choice for the European against competing and equally suited institutional frameworks, justifications emphasizing the major step that the EU (rather than Bosnia) would be taking by adopting this operation, and an emphasis on exploiting the visibility that this operation afforded the EU. In contrast, was the choice for the EU to have resulted from considerations external to the EU, or were EU governments reluctant to involve the EU and raise its profile, we would conclude that the motive of European integration was not a major driver behind Althea.

Finally, the fourth proposition conjectured that ESDP operations primarily served to help governments demonstrate their capacity of influencing international events in line with domestic expectations. We would consequently expect to find indications that governments tailored their positions according to what they considered domestically beneficial, that justifications related primarily to domestic expectations, that the latter overlapped at least partly, and that intergovernmental conflicts regarding Althea were primarily the consequence of diverging societal expectations. This last proposition would be less convincing, however, if the considerations regarding Althea had primarily focused on international objectives, or if governments had even taken on domestic political risks for the sake of international objectives.

A. BACKGROUND

Bosnia had been one of the six republics that made up the former Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. The beginnings of the process of Yugoslavia's disintegration can be traced back to political developments during the Cold War when ethnic nationalism became a rallying point of opposition to one-party rule in the country, which was increasingly seized by the political nomenclature as the legitimacy and clout of communist ideology collapsed during the late 1980s (cf. Cousens and Cater 2001: 17-18; Malcolm 1996: 202-212). With revolutionary change sweeping through Central and Eastern Europe, Yugoslav politicians, and Serbian communist leader Slobodan Milošević in particular, sought to change Yugoslavia's constitutional order

in favour of ethnic nationalist agendas (cf. Silber and Little 1995: 29-48; Malcolm 1996: 202-212).

On 25 June 1991, the Yugoslav republics of Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence. Whereas the former was able to quickly end violent clashes with the Yugoslav's People's Army, Croatia became the site of a longer conflict that came to resemble full-scale war from August 1991 until a UN-mediated ceasefire in January 1992. The independence of those two republics left Bosnia in a heavily Serb-dominated rump-Yugoslavia. After a referendum on 1 March 1992 that produced an overwhelming majority for Bosnian independence but was largely boycotted by ethnic Serbs, Bosnia thus also declared its independence (cf. Malcolm 1996: 231). Minor skirmishes between (para-)militaries claiming to defend Bosnia's three large ethnic communities – Bosniak, Serb and Croat – and assaults on the civilian population erupted into large-scale fighting and 'ethnic cleansing' just when the European Community recognized BiH as an independent state on 6 April 1992 (cf. Cousens and Cater 2001: 21; Berdal 2004: 453).

With a cost of more than 100.000 lives according to conservative estimates (cf. Tabeau and Bijak 2005), the war that engulfed Bosnia until October 1995 marked the nadir of Yugoslavia's violent breakup. Neither the Serbian side – aided by the Yugoslav army – nor the coalition of Bosniaks and Croats (whose respective forces intermittently also fought among each other) were able to achieve decisive military victory. The international community proved unable for a long time to prod the parties towards a diplomatic solution. The European Community, after a precocious declaration in the early days of the dissolution of Yugoslavia that 'the hour of Europe' had come, failed to get a grip on the crisis (cf. Duke 2000: 213; 221-223). The United Nations equally could not solve the conflict either diplomatically or through various attempts at coercion, including an arms embargo, a mandate for a no fly zone to be enforced by NATO, the setting up of an *ad hoc* war tribunal, and its peace-keeping operation UNPROFOR. The latter, lightly armed and mandated, figured the two foremost military powers of the EU, the UK and France, as the most significant troop contributors. UNPROFOR was however repeatedly humiliated by warring militia, culminating in its paralysis vis-à-vis the genocide accompanying the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995 (cf. ICJ 2007: 20; Berdal 2004: 454-456; Gow 1997: 156-183).

In the end, it was the involvement of the US and its apparent willingness to use greater force after summer 1995 that ended the war in Bosnia (cf. Economides and Taylor 2007: 101; Gow 1997: 276-278; Duke 2000: 219; Daalder 2000). NATO's air strikes in combination with successful local ground offensives brought about a decisive change in relative power on the ground (Berdal 2004: 461; Malcolm 1996: 266-267; Cousens and Cater 2001: 26). A general cease-fire in BiH on 5 October

1995 was followed by negotiations for a comprehensive peace agreement in Dayton, Ohio, with the place bearing witness to the US' key role in the process. Similarly, the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR), which was responsible for implementing the military aspects of the Dayton Accords and which one year later would be re-baptized into Stabilization Force (SFOR), was US-led.

The Dayton Peace Agreement provided for extensive powers for the international community in Bosnia. Its eleven annexes parcelled out, among a range of international institutions, the core of what government is about – including, but not limited to political decision-making, internal and external security, and economic regulation (cf. GFA 1995). While military aspects were assigned to NATO, the UN became responsible for re-building the police with the International Policing Task Force (IPTF), and a High Representative was designated to monitor and ensure the implementation of the civilian side of the Dayton Accords. The High Representative, answerable to a newly created 'Peace Implementation Council' (PIC) comprising 55 states and international organizations, saw his influence rise over the first years to the point where he became the embodiment of supreme power in Bosnia. With the help of the so-called 'Bonn powers', he became able to impose and invalidate legislation as well as to appoint and dismiss any Bosnian official (cf. van Willigen 2009: 90-121; Knaus and Martin 2003; Chandler 2000: 65).

The international administration that was to oversee the implementation of the Dayton Accords in Bosnia has proven a mixed blessing. In part this was because '[t]he Dayton agreement reflected the interest of the US administration in bringing the fighting to a halt, rather than the readiness of the three warring parties to settle their political differences' (Burg and Shoup 1999: 318). International efforts to build a sustainable state have therefore been only partially successful: while the requisite institutions were established, they came to be only superficially embedded in Bosnian society (cf. van Willigen 2009). This lack of sustainability can partly be attributed to the fact that there has been little incentive for Bosnian politicians to compromise or take any painful decisions because the international community has proven willing to act as a decision-maker of last resort via its High Representative. As a consequence, Bosnia to this date is 'addicted to' and dependent on international decision-making (cf. Prelec 2009).

BOSNIA'S IMPACT ON EUROPEAN SECURITY POLICY

While the peace-building effort in Bosnia has essentially been a project of 'the West' at large, it has time and again been hampered by differences of opinion on and between the two Atlantic shores. At the start of the conflict, the US administration of George H.B. Bush, worried about the upcoming 1992 elections, 'was content to accept the strangely possessive argument of EEC leaders who had claimed from the

start of the Yugoslav war that this was "a European problem"' (Malcolm 1996: 240). The subsequent Clinton administration for a long time dithered on its Bosnia policy, torn between the moral impetus and domestic pressure to 'do something' and weariness of becoming involved militarily (cf. Daalder 2000; Berdal 2004: 456-7; Gow 1997: 322; Duke 2000: 209-10). Combined with the 'tougher' approach the US publicly advocated at times, i.e. a lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia as well as NATO air strikes against Serbian positions, this led to resentment on the part of European powers, in particular the UK and France, who feared for their soldiers on the ground becoming the object of Serbian reprisals (cf. Berdal 2004: 456; Stromvik 2005: 172-173). Yet whereas the transatlantic was the deepest of all the rifts dividing the West, European capitals among themselves also frequently did not agree on the appropriate policy (cf. Berdal 2004: 454; Malcolm 1996: 249; Gow 1997: 166-174; 182; Cooper 2004: 123).

Given the US' pivotal role in bringing about the Dayton Accords, it also took the lead in its implementation. The US thus held key positions in Bosnia's international administration and initially contributed not only the force commander, but also the biggest national contingent of IFOR/SFOR amounting to a third of the overall force, 16.500 out of 54.000 troops (Bowman 2002: 9-10). The size of US troop commitment to implementing peace in Bosnia has been traced to two motives: the fact that all local parties demanded this participation as a result of their distrust of the ineffective and largely European peace-keepers during the UNPROFOR operation, and US perception that it needed to maintain its leadership position in NATO (Bowman 2002: 1; regarding the former, see also ICG 2004b: 6-7; Batt 2009: 3).

Yet whereas the international administration of Bosnia can be described as US-led (cf. van Willigen 2009: 60), Washington has repeatedly been ambiguous about its commitment (cf. Reichard 2006: 250-251). Thus, President Clinton initially promised his domestic audience that US participation in IFOR would last only for one year (Kim 2008: 2; Duke 2000: 220). Unease about a seemingly open-ended commitment was also strong in the US Congress, which asked the administration early on to reflect on whether some form of US withdrawal would be possible (Bowman 2003: 3-4). Finally, in 2000, future president George W. Bush ran on a platform that was suspicious of extensive US involvement in nation-building, not least with an eye on the Western Balkans (Kupferschmidt 2006: 11; ICG 2004b: 3; see also Rice 2000: 51-53). The new administration's determination to follow up on that pledge led the International Crisis Group to plead, in May 2001, for NATO and especially the US to carry on in Bosnia (ICG 2001). While the US' weight was dominant in deciding the future of Bosnia, neither policy direction nor issue salience have thus been entirely consistent (cf. Malcolm 1996: 267-271; Bancroft 2009; Kim 2006: 4; Gow 1997: 208; Burg and Shoup 1999: 317-318; Daalder 2000: 90-91). As

James Gow wrote, 'this forced an understanding [on Europeans, BP] that the US could no longer be relied on to be there – and might well not be reliable when it was' (Gow 1997: 320). As the next section sets out to analyze in greater detail, the US' will to withdraw in combination with European ambitions to prove their mettle were the main reasons for Bosnia to appear on the agenda of the newly established European Security and Defence Policy.

B. PUTTING OPERATION ALTHEA ON THE ESDP AGENDA

ESDP engagement in Bosnia came onto the EU's agenda against the backdrop of an earlier, unsatisfactory European involvement. In an attempt to compensate for these prevarications, EU governments came to invest into building a viable Bosnian state. The international community's efforts in this respect have essentially been two-pronged (cf. European Commission 2003: 11): on the one hand, internationals have attempted to 'push' state- and nation-building forward by means of the 'Bonn powers' that the High Representative has been equipped with, i.e. by imposing solutions on Bosnia. On the other hand, they have attempted to 'pull' Bosnians via conditionality, trying to leverage the perks of eventual membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions for inciting domestic reforms. For the EU, which saw its vocation mainly with the latter element of the strategy, this translated into offering Bosnia, as well as the other Western Balkans countries, the prospect of potential EU membership. First expressed at the European Council in Feira in June 2000 and substantiated at the European Council in Thessaloniki in June 2003, the process towards EU membership has been slow and unsteady, but has cleared a number of formal hurdles, with a 'Stabilization and Association Agreement' (SAA) finally signed on 16 June 2008. Yet whereas the EU's strategy puts much emphasis on the 'carrot' of future Bosnian membership, the High Representative continues to wield the 'stick' of the 'Bonn Powers'. The EU came to bolster and complement the latter with operations in the ESDP framework.

After the end of the war in Bosnia, European countries had successfully lobbied for the job of High Representative to go to a European (Daalder 2000: 157). From 2002 onward, the latter was 'double-hatted' as EU Special Representative (cf. Council of the EU 2002a). At the same time, the Council of the EU also offered to create an ESDP police mission for Bosnia in order to replace the UN-run predecessor (Council of the EU 2002b). Launched in January 2003 as the first ever ESDP operation, the 'European Union Police Mission (EUPM)' did not have an 'executive mandate' as its UN antecedent did, i.e. it did not substitute for local law enforcement. Instead, it was entrusted with the objective of establishing 'sustainable policing arrangements under BiH ownership in accordance with best European and international practice, and thereby raising current BiH police standards' (Council of the EU 2002a). This

was to be achieved by monitoring and mentoring the upper echelons of the Bosnian police. With its mandate adjusted in 2005, 2007 and 2009, EUPM is still ongoing, nowadays with a focus on the fight against organized crime and on honing the criminal justice system (Council of the EU 2005a, 2007c, 2009).

IMAGINING ALTHEA

ESDP engagement did not stop there, however. In its conclusions of the December 2002 summit, the European Council 'indicated the Union's willingness to lead a military operation in Bosnia following SFOR' (European Council 2002). It took another two years though until the EU's High Representative Javier Solana could proclaim the mission's launch on 2 December 2004. What were the reasons, and what intentions were shaping the EU's voluntarism as well as the subsequent decision-making process?

A number of analysts have asserted that the Union's motives for taking on EUFOR Althea had less to do with Bosnia than with the EU's desire to establish itself as a credible security actor (Kupferschmidt 2006: 11-12; ICG 2004b: 1; Gross 2007a: 146). The reasoning, also borne out in a number of interviews conducted for this study, was that there was an appetite within the newly established EU crisis management structures to operationalize and 'test' ESDP (Interviews with CGS and MS officials).[23] As several officials from the Secretariat themselves pointed out, there was a clear bureaucratic interest for Solana and his Council General Secretariat in such operations because they represented a visible and tangible result (Interviews). Compared to ESDP operations, they explained, other instruments of the CFSP such as common declarations and positions were cumbersome to achieve and provided little visibility for the EU while running the risk of being denigrated as only talking the talk. It should thus not come as a surprise that Solana is reported to have 'aggressively pushed' for an EU takeover of a NATO operation in Macedonia which preceded EUFOR Althea as the very first, if small, military operation to be run by the EU (Woodbridge 2002: 3; cf. Dijkstra 2011: 132).

Javier Solana was not alone however in his quest for an EU military role in the Western Balkans. Among EU governments, London and Paris have in particular been singled out as having pressed for an EU takeover from NATO in Bosnia (Franco-British summit declaration 2003; see also Bowman 2003: 1; Taylor 2006: 51; Howorth 2003: 249; Reichard 2006: 251). Interviewed officials moreover underlined that the former were 'pushing an open door' when it came to persuading

[23] CGS is shorthand for Council General Secretariat, MS for member state.

Berlin of the proposal, and that the idea of an EU takeover received widespread support among EU governments (Interviews with CGS, UK and GER officials). On their part, German officials even claimed that Berlin was in fact among the most active, because of its government's interest in focusing ESDP on its geographic neighbourhood rather than any post-colonial endeavours as well as its general enthusiasm for making the ESDP operational (Interviews). Agence France-Press thus reported that German Defence Minister Struck described the proposed takeover in Bosnia literally as a 'good test' for the EU's fledgling security arm (AFP 2002).

WASHINGTON'S AMBIVALENCE

The very concept of an EU operation in Bosnia was premised on the idea that NATO, and more specifically the US, wanted to leave Bosnia in the first place. There had certainly been indications to that effect (cf. Hill 2003; Burns 2003; Daalder 2000: 144-9). Yet when the European Council announced the EU's willingness to take over SFOR in late 2002, the reception was anything but enthusiastic. NATO was 'not amused' when it saw itself confronted with a public announcement by the European Council that was 'not fully pre-agreed' between the two institutions, as one official put it (Interview with GER official; see also Reuters 2002). Although talks between the two organizations had been ongoing since summer 2002, it had proven impossible to reach a solution agreeable to both (Interview with MS official). The fundamental sticking point was an attempt on the part of the US to relegate the ESDP to 'drying the dishes while the US runs the show', as the Financial Times quoted a senior EU diplomat (Dempsey 2004). In a document originally entitled 'delineation of tasks', the US sought to codify via NATO a general framework of cooperation between the two organizations which would have distributed responsibilities along the lines of hard power for NATO and soft power for the ESDP (Interview with MS official).

According to European officials, the principal (if publicly unspoken) motivation for the US' hesitation was its ambiguity with respect to the idea of the EU acting on its own, rather than through NATO (Interviews with FRA, GER, UK and CGS officials; cf. also Didzoleit and Koch 2003; Wernicke 2004; Giegerich et al. 2006: 393). While a long-running phenomenon, this ambiguity related to US fears that ESDP presented a French plot of organizing European resistance to US leadership in European security affairs (see e.g. Hunter 2002b: 28). As one British official put it pointedly, 'the US position was very bad at the time, and that was our fault. The UK did not properly prepare the US in 1998/99, mentally. I don't know what Blair was thinking he was doing at the time, but the Washington establishment saw ESDP as a perfidy of London. It caused deep disquiet – how could London make deals with that US-hating Chirac?' (Interview).

US ambivalence with respect to an EU takeover in Bosnia was a symptom of a more general dilemma that American administrations encountered. George Robertson – a former British defence minister and NATO Secretary-General at the time, and thus hardly one of the 'usual suspects' for latent European anti-Americanism – is reported to have referred to the American position as 'a sort of schizophrenia' which implied 'on the one hand saying, "You Europeans have got to carry more of the burden." And then, when the Europeans say, "OK, we will carry more of the burden," they say, "Well, wait a minute, are you trying to tell us to go home?"' (quoted from The Economist 1999). Thus, there has traditionally been a tension in US foreign policy between the wish to rebalance the sharing of the burden of military security in Europe and the fear that such a rebalancing might lead to lesser US influence on European security affairs (cf. Bowman 2003: 8). This ambivalence and associated fears about EU 'balancing' came to be primarily expressed through the contested nature of relations between the ESDP and NATO, the major obstacle on the road to EUFOR Althea.Negotiating 'Berlin Plus'

In order to have NATO decide to transfer the command over its SFOR operation to the European Union, the latter needed to overcome more than just US ambivalence towards a shift in emphasis from transatlantic to European responsibility for Europe's security. Partly in order to soothe US concerns about European autonomy, it was understood early on that the EU would rely on NATO command and control assets rather than plan and conduct the operation on its own (see e.g. Dempsey 2003a). As a consequence, the operation also depended on an agreement between the two organizations as to how exactly such cooperation would be designed. Negotiations on such arrangements, which came to be known under the moniker of 'Berlin Plus', had been ongoing for years (see previous chapter, first section). Yet concerned about the impending accession of Cyprus to the EU, Turkey drove a hard bargain vis-à-vis the EU concerning its rights of participation in ESDP (cf. Missiroli 2002). These demands not only raised Greek hackles, but also French objections to what was seen as interference in the EU's decision-making autonomy. Turkey on the other hand could count on US support against 'discrimination' with respect to pre-ESDP times.

It was precisely when the negotiations about the relationship between NATO and the EU were reaching a decisive point that the European Council indicated the EU's wish to step into NATO's shoes in Bosnia. The basics of this accord, i.e. that not all EU member states would automatically be able to participate in 'Berlin Plus' operations, had already been agreed (Interview with MS official). The 'Declaration of the Council meeting in Copenhagen on 12 December 2002' thus noted laconically that '[a]s things stand at present, the "Berlin Plus" arrangements and the implementation thereof will apply only to those EU member States which are also either NATO members or parties to the "Partnership for Peace", and which have consequently

concluded bilateral security arrangements with NATO' (European Council 2002: 13). The underlying 'reason' is that Turkish representatives refuse to sit at a table where a badge announces the presence of Cyprus so as not to indirectly confer upon the latter any semblance of recognition – unless and until the conflict in Cyprus is solved to Turkish satisfaction (for a nice example of the attendant agony, see Gros-Verheyde 2011a).

Because 'Berlin Plus' was thus preconditioned, it was 'imperative' that it would be finalized before the impending accession of the 10 new member states in May 2004 which included Cyprus and Malta (Interview with CGS official). Neither state had a partner- or membership agreement with NATO – and, in the case of Cyprus, did not stand a chance of getting one due to an expected Turkish veto in NATO (cf. Dempsey 2005). Since Cyprus and Malta could not be expected to explicitly agree to excluding themselves from certain instances of EU decision-making, 'Berlin Plus' needed to be finalized before those two countries had a vote.

The very day before the summit that announced the EU's intention to take over the operation in Bosnia, EU discussions on this issue were taking place in Copenhagen while NATO's North Atlantic Council negotiated in Brussels. Yet whereas a compromise was reached in both *fora*, leading to an 'EU – NATO declaration on ESDP' on 16 December 2002, the texts that the two respective bodies internally agreed on were not identical (Interviews with CGS and MS officials; cf. NATO-EU 2002). In an effort to increase its leverage regarding Cyprus, the Turkish government insisted that the North Atlantic Council add the words 'and strategic cooperation' when it adopted the 'agreement on military cooperation' between the two organizations (Interview with MS official). The EU however, at Greece's urging, did not follow suit. This led, and continues to lead to insistence on differing interpretations of what 'Berlin Plus' pertains to (Interview with CGS official; see e.g. Reichard 2006: 91). Under pressure from Cyprus, Greece and France in particular, the EU has argued ever since that the Berlin Plus consultation framework only apply to questions that are directly related to the EU's use of NATO assets, e.g. operations conducted through NATO's headquarters. At Turkey's urging, NATO has on the other hand insisted that basically any question of political import falls under the category of 'strategic cooperation'. As a consequence, meetings between the EU and NATO have become close to meaningless since the only agenda item which both sides agree falls under Berlin Plus is operation Althea.

Whereas the Turkish-Cypriot conflict has over time come to constitute a sheer insurmountable obstacle in its own right, it initially also represented a convenient smokescreen for the US and France (and their respective associates) to attempt to promote their particular visions of the European security architecture. This struggle was intensified by the transatlantic tensions associated with the impending invasion

of Iraq. In view of this unpropitious timing, it is perhaps unsurprising that the European Council's bid regarding SFOR was initially greeted by loud silence on the part of NATO (cf. Kim 2006: 2). Yet transatlantic cooperation on ESDP did not generally come to a halt over Iraq. Negotiations on how to implement 'Berlin Plus' instead advanced apace. This was due to the fact that progress on implementing 'Berlin Plus' was of particular concern to those interested in 'binding' the new European Security and Defence Policy to NATO, namely the 'Atlanticist' EU member states.[24] Whereas France, in the context of the difficult inter-organizational issues, suggested an alternative *ad hoc* solution for taking over the aptly named operation 'Allied Harmony' in Macedonia, the UK and Germany in particular insisted that the mechanism be properly executed (cf. Howorth 2007: 232; Dempsey 2002). The Berlin Plus implementation agreements were thus formally signed on March 17, 2003, i.e. days before the invasion of Iraq. Less than two weeks later, that framework was tested for the first time when operation 'Concordia' – as 'Allied Harmony' came to be re-baptized under the EU flag – was ushered in (Council of the EU 2003).

FURTHER OBSTACLES: THE 'CHOCOLATE SUMMIT' AND OPERATION ARTEMIS

The relatively quick resolution of all outstanding issues with respect to operation 'Concordia' shows that it was seen as a welcome 'test case' by all sides – despite its concurrency with the divisive US intervention in Iraq (cf. Dempsey 2003b). With respect to the much larger operation in Bosnia, however, the US made it known at the June 2003 biannual meeting of NATO's foreign ministers that it saw an EU takeover as 'premature' (AFP 2003; see also Robertson et al. 2003). In their testimony to the US Senate, administration officials justified this assessment with the EU's unwillingness deploy a sufficiently large force and NATO's particular aptitude in apprehending war criminals and countering terrorism (Senate Hearing 2003: 16-17). Moreover, there was considerable scepticism in the US as to whether the EU was actually militarily ready and operationally capable to take on this task, and to what extent such a handover would 'risk' the prior US investment (cf. Kupferschmidt 2006: 11; ICG 2004b: 2-3; Kim 2006: 4; Senate Hearing 2003: 28-31; 34-36). Indeed, the US commander of SFOR used precisely this reasoning when he told Reuters that 'I think the end-game is to leave this place so that the investment that we've made to this point is not going to be a wasted investment' (Dunham 2003). Given the EU's well-known eagerness to 'buy out' the US investment, this was hardly an obliging comment. Most interviewed European officials, in any case, were convinced that

[24] For a more general discussion of the Atlanticist-Europeanist cleavage, see (Stahl et al. 2004; Major 2009: 57; Howorth 2000).

behind all these caveats lurked Washington's fear that ESDP might become some sort of competitor (Interviews with UK, FRA, GER and CGS officials).

US fears of a hidden French agenda of weakening NATO via ESDP were fuelled when four EU member states – France, Germany, Belgium and Luxemburg – met at the highest level in the Brussels suburb of Tervuren on 29 April 2003 to launch efforts for reinforced and more autonomous European defence cooperation. Ridiculed as the 'Chocolate summit', this proposal not only met with fierce replies from the US and UK as well as other governments who felt this initiative was deeply divisive for both NATO and the EU, it also soured relations between the two organizations to 'rock-bottom' in the words of one official (Interview with CGS official; see also Keohane 2009: 130; Evans-Pritchard and Helms 2003).

Washington was jolted into new suspicions when the EU conducted its first 'autonomous' military operation in the summer of 2003, temporarily reinforcing the UN peacekeeping mission MONUC in Eastern DRC. What piqued US officials about 'Operation Artemis' was not only its French origin combined with the subtle message that the EU could intervene without NATO support, but also the paucity of consultation with NATO despite the two organizations' commitment to consult in the framework of Berlin Plus (cf. Giegerich et al. 2006: 9-10; Didzoleit and Koch 2003; Keohane 2009: 130). One analyst reported that 'European officials say there was little, if any, discussion in EU councils on whether to consult with NATO, as France made clear its aversion to doing so' and went on to point out that 'French military officials reportedly informally asked U.S. officers if U.S. transports would be available to airlift European troops to Bunia. The U.S. side advised that such requests appropriately should come under Berlin Plus. The French soon dropped the matter and opted to lease Ukrainian transports' (Michel 2004: 90).

In hindsight, several officials argued that France had been 'desperate' to prove that the EU could conduct such autonomous operations and hinted that the run-up to operation Artemis violated the spirit if not the letter of Berlin Plus insofar as transparency vis-à-vis the US and NATO was very limited (Interviews with CGS, GER and UK officials). One Council official reasoned that France had always been afraid that if the US knew too much, it might somehow prevent operation Artemis, so France acted in a secretive way, leading to negative US reactions that confirmed French fears (Interview with CGS official). French and U.S. mistrust of the other side's motives thus proved self-fulfilling. Mutual suspicions threatened to feed into a vicious circle of attempts to contain policy initiatives emanating from Washington and Paris respectively. In the course of 2003, this repeatedly came to resemble the zero-sum games that Western powers like to consider a thing of the past when it comes to their mutual relations in security policy. The relationship simultaneously

continued to be constructive in other areas though, notably concerning the operation in Macedonia.

With respect to the takeover of SFOR in Bosnia, the bad blood surrounding operation Artemis (not to speak of Iraq) meant that only in autumn 2003 were there the first careful signs that this transfer was coming back on the agenda (cf. Hill 2003; Burns 2003). The December 2003 NATO ministerial meeting concluded that '[o]ver the coming months, Allies will assess options for the future size and structure of SFOR, to include possible termination of SFOR by the end of 2004, transition possibly to a new EU mission within the framework of the Berlin+ arrangements and to a new NATO HQ Sarajevo' (NATO 2003). While the wording is tentative even by diplomatic standards, it contained the defining features of the deal that would eventually be finalized one year later: an EU military operation replacing SFOR under the Berlin Plus framework, i.e. using NATO assets, but complemented by an additional new NATO Headquarters in Bosnia.

C. PREPARING EUFOR ALTHEA

The subsequent year during which the transition from NATO to EU responsibility was planned and prepared saw the continuation of transatlantic tensions by more bureaucratic means. Although Berlin Plus had been created to specifically safeguard a close transatlantic link, Washington had come to see that framework as insufficient for guaranteeing SFOR's succession. It was hence decided that, while the EU would take over the deterrence function of SFOR, NATO would also remain in the Bosnian theatre with a small Headquarters presence (cf. NATO 2004a). Next to NATO's residual military presence, the US also decided to keep a small bilateral US presence whose tasks again overlapped with NATO's responsibilities (cf. NATO 2004b). This incidentally pleased Bosnians who were reassured that the US would continue to co-guarantee stability. However, most observers presumed that the US stayed because some parts of the administration did not like the feeling of being pushed out (Interviews with MS officials; see also Moore 2004; Wernicke 2004; Kupferschmidt 2006: 16). At the same time, a much reduced NATO presence was considered more palatable to US public opinion as it allowed for a US leadership role in NATO without committing significant assets. As several officials underlined, a continued NATO operation with only a small US contribution would have undermined the US claim to leadership in NATO on which its continued investment into the alliance depended domestically (Interviews with CGS and MS officials).

INTERORGANIZATIONAL RIVALRY

The compromise solution of an EU operation with a parallel NATO operation 'which has the principal task of providing advice on defence reform, [and] will also undertake certain operational supporting tasks, such as counter-terrorism whilst ensuring force protection; supporting the ICTY, within means and capabilities, with regard to the detention of persons indicted for war crimes; and intelligence sharing with the EU' opened up new questions (NATO 2004a). Since there were now two operations with partially overlapping mandates on the ground, there was a need to divide tasks and responsibilities among both, if only to avoid a potential 'blue on blue' encounter between the EU and NATO. The surrounding tug of war for political control over the EU operation poisoned the inter-institutional (and transatlantic) atmosphere once again (Interview with MS official; see also Kupferschmidt 2006: 8-9). In the end, the delineation of tasks proved so controversial that the political bodies in Brussels simply could not find a solution but passed the buck to the military commanders in theatre (cf. Kupferschmidt 2006: 16). In Solomonic wisdom the latter proposed conjoint decision-making in areas of overlapping responsibility, a compromise that was subsequently endorsed without much discussion (nor official knowledge of the precise technical arrangements) by both organizations in Brussels (cf. Kupferschmidt 2006: 16). Although this arrangement proved workable in the case of operation Althea, the torturous process and the uneasy solution which could easily be imagined to unravel in an operation of higher intensity and greater stakes cast considerable doubt over the feasibility of potential future 'Berlin Plus' operations.

Next to the question of dividing tasks between the EU and NATO, a second 'technical' but politicized issue to hamper negotiations between the two organizations was the question of the chain of command (cf. Kupferschmidt 2006: 19-20; Dempsey 2003a). According to the Berlin Plus framework, NATO would make its DSACEUR[25] – who by tradition comes from an EU country – available as the operation commander for ESDP operations. Yet whereas under EU crisis management procedures the force commander in theatre would be directly answerable to the operation commander, NATO procedures provide for a middle tier consisting of regional commands with Naples the command responsible for the Balkans. What made this discrepancy a problem for a number of EU members was the fear that an additional NATO layer of command might undercut the EU's autonomy (Interview with MS official; cf. Kupferschmidt 2006: 19; Gourlay 2004: 5). Originally, the liaison officer in Naples would moreover not have been an EU citizen (Interview with MS official). Last but

[25] Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe

not least, the 'obvious' solution of parallel command and reporting lines from SHAPE[26] to both Naples and Bosnia and back did not comply with the military maxim of a 'single chain of command' that France in particular insisted on (Kupferschmidt 2006: 19). Although Paris' position reflected political preferences more than military needs, the earlier, disconcerting experience in Bosnia with parallel chains of command during the times of UNPROFOR lent some credibility to this concern.

There were good reasons for integrating the regional NATO command in Naples into the EU chain of command, though. Since the EU-led operation in Bosnia and the NATO-led operation in Kosovo provided tactical reserves for each other and shared their over-the-horizon operational reserves and air support, some coordination below the strategic level in SHAPE seemed appropriate (cf. Kupferschmidt 2006: 19; NATO 2004b). Eventually, the solution consisted in putting a NATO officer from an EU country in charge of the liaison function and 'double-hatting' him for both EU and NATO functions while keeping the command and reporting lines compatible with both EU theory and NATO practice (Interview with MS official). This implied that, in theory, DSACEUR would directly lead the operation and simply keep Naples updated, while in practice Naples would consider itself part of the chain of command (cf. Kupferschmidt 2006: 19). The fact that this liaison officer could only be appointed more than 3 months after the relevant Joint Action had been adopted, and that French officials continued to malign this arrangement attests however to the politically contested nature of this 'technical' issue (PSC 2004a; Gourlay 2004: 5; Kupferschmidt 2006: 19). Interviewed officials reasoned that France and Greece were not as such opposing 'Berlin Plus', 'but interested in demonstrating autonomy from NATO' and that 'France in particular wanted to show autonomy by having a separate headquarters to fly the EU flag' (Interviews with CGS and MS officials).[27]

The discussions around the delineation of tasks and the precise chain of command demonstrate the high sensitivities and competing agendas for ESDP operations between member states with Atlanticist or Europeanist leanings (cf. Monaco 2003: 2). The tedious process left many officials wondering whether using the Berlin Plus arrangements was feasible for anything but handovers from NATO (where time

[26] Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, NATO's operational headquarters and seat of (D)SACEUR

[27] France originally insisted that the new EU operation should have its own headquarters in order to fly the EU flag. However, Althea was eventually co-located with the remaining NATO operation, triggering acrimonious fights as to who would get to occupy the top floor...

pressure is much more manageable because there is by default a force present in theatre). One interviewee pointed out that this was just an example of bureaucracy at its most typical – the more time you gave a big organization for a task, the more time it would consume (Interview with CGS official). Others cited the fact that the decision-making on petty details was such a torturous process as evidence that some autonomy-minded member states may have tried to 'prove' that Berlin Plus was 'too difficult to be worth it' (Interview with CGS official). Yet such reasoning may also have informed Atlanticist obstinacy. Since NATO assets are deemed vital for truly challenging EU operations, making them available only after a tedious process (which governments can only afford in the aftermath of a NATO operation) might help to entrench a certain *de facto* division of labour between the two organizations. Whether the 'conspiracy theorists' were right has however become unlikely to be ever discerned as the EU membership of Cyprus has depressed the chances of any 'fresh' Berlin Plus operation, to the disappointment not just of London, but also of Berlin (Interview with GER and UK officials).

TURNING A PAGE IN BOSNIA?

Much of 2004 thus passed with difficult negotiations over the precise terms of reference for operation Althea, but on 2 December the transfer of authority finally took place. While the EU at that point was eager to demonstrate continuity and carry over NATO's credibility, it also wanted to prove its value added. Thus, the operation's first force commander reminisced how Javier Solana, in instructing him, insisted that Althea be 'new and distinct' and 'make a difference' (Leakey 2006: 59). That difference was to shift the emphasis from military to civilian means and to show, in the words of the High Representative in Bosnia, Lord Ashdown, that Bosnia was changing tracks as it left the 'road from Dayton' to turn onto the 'road to Brussels' (Leakey 2006: 60; cf. Dijkstra 2011: 148-54). As much as this seemed consequential nine years after NATO troops entered the country to implement the Dayton agreement, some observers judged it to be self-serving, with the EU tailoring the operation's orientation and mandate to the means it had available and the message it wanted to convey, but without paying too much heed to Bosnian needs (e.g. ICG 2004b: 4).

When operation Althea took off in December 2004, it thus encapsulated compromises between Western European capitals on a range of issues: the degree of autonomy the operation would enjoy from NATO and thus the US, the kind of international actorness the EU would aspire to, the institutional setting that would satisfy member states' sensitivities with respect to the preceding two issues, and the kind of tools regarded as necessary for fostering stability in Bosnia. Whereas France and Sweden in particular would have favoured a more autonomous operation, most

EU member states preferred the reassurance and the political signal that NATO involvement gave. The fact that the Berlin Plus arrangements were complemented (if not supervised) by a continued NATO presence in Bosnia was considered by some as the price to pay for Washington's approval (cf. Wernicke 2004). It is at the same time somewhat ironic that NATO, with its presence in Bosnia geared primarily to supporting security sector reform, secured a 'soft power' role for itself next to the EU's 'hard power' role of providing deterrence.

D. IMPLEMENTING ALTHEA

When the international stabilization operation swapped NATO's for the EU's flag, this initially amounted to little more than changing badges (cf. The Economist 2005). The operation's structure, force orientation, and even force composition remained largely the same as before (cf. Kupferschmidt 2006: 20). The only significant contributor that left the operation was the US, but in 2004 it 'merely' supplied about 15% of the force, as opposed to the 30% which it had originally accounted for (Kim 2006: 2). The other non-EU NATO members, Canada, Turkey, Norway, Romania and Bulgaria, stayed on with Althea, and so did six other 'third states' as non-EU contributors are referred to.[28] At the same time, several of the EU's non-NATO member states substantially re-engaged in Bosnia on the occasion of the transfer to Althea, with Finland, Sweden and Austria collectively committing almost 10% in 2005 after they had been largely absent from SFOR for some years (cf. IISS 2008c: 157, 160, 168).

CROSS-NATIONAL PARTICIPATION

Althea initially comprised approximately 7000 soldiers, just as SFOR before its replacement in late 2004. 80% of the former were directly taken over from the preceding NATO operation so as to highlight the continuity between the two forces and thereby underscore Althea's credibility (cf. Kupferschmidt 2006: 20; The Economist 2005). Continuity was further emphasized by the fact that almost all NATO members continued to contribute to Althea. Apart from the US, whose wish to withdraw from SFOR was instrumental in starting Althea, the only NATO members

[28] Albania, Argentina, Chile, Morocco, New Zealand, and Switzerland were also accepted as contributors by the EU (PSC 2004b). Whereas the EU stresses that ESDP is an 'open project', i.e. that it generally welcomes contributions from third states, the exceptional range of 'third countries' in operation Althea is mainly a legacy of SFOR which at one point involved an even more significant and diverse range of contributors (see e.g. Bowman 2003: 8-10).

not participating were Denmark and Iceland: the former has formally excluded itself by 'opting out' of any military undertakings in the EU framework and the latter does not have any armed forces. Similarly, merely three EU member states did not participate in Althea: apart from Denmark, only Cyprus and Malta remained absent – but they were in fact prohibited from contributing by the conditions attached to Berlin Plus (cf. European Council 2002: 13). This near-universal participation, rare for ESDP operations, gives an indication of how widespread support for Althea was across EU capitals.

Whereas almost all capitals expressed commitment by participating, it is insightful to take a look at the size of their individual troop contributions so as to gauge the relative enthusiasm with which they did so. Such a comparison necessitates a few preliminary words of caution though because such figures might represent poor proxies of a state's commitment to an operation for a number of reasons. First, an operation is planned with a view to military needs – and the means to fulfil those needs are not always distributed equally across member states. 'Military needs' also figure in another way. As several interviewees hinted, since modern Western militaries partly rely on peace support operations to justify defence expenditure, some armies (or sub-units thereof) might be actively interested in 'doing something' (Interviews with MS officials; cf. also Mérand 2006: 138). Western armies also frequently have targets in terms of overseas deployment, i.e. to have 10% of personnel active in peace support operations. The vagaries of whether and when commitments to other international operations change or end, rather than the merits of a particular new mission might therefore impact on the decision on which scale a country will participate in such an operation.

A second reason for being careful before equating troop contributions with a country's enthusiasm for a mission is that key positions in the operation's military hierarchy are usually offset by the requirement to contribute a larger number of troops. A lower figure might thus reflect a nation's (temporary) inability to secure important positions in the operation's hierarchy. Thirdly, to see which operations a country supports relatively strongly, national commitments would also have to be compared to national capabilities more generally. Fourthly, the operation itself is not the only possible benchmark against which contributions can be compared. It is also plausible to compare overall contributions to crisis management which, depending on strategic assessment and/or domestic preferences regarding means of peace support, might be skewed towards non-military contributions. Fifth, it also makes sense to compare troop contributions across crises. As British officials stressed, the UK's extraordinary commitment to the rather uncomfortable operation in Afghanistan means it has fewer troops to spare for less risky crises such as Bosnia where other countries willing to take on the task could be found more easily (Interviews with CGS and UK officials).

The five issues discussed above illustrate that the scale of national participation does not necessarily correlate closely with the political importance a country attaches to a certain operation. That analytical problem is further compounded by the lack of good and reliable data on troop contributions. What is publicly available are usually only synopses that are difficult to compare because they may alternately refer to the total turnover of national troops in a given region, or their average or maximum number, or their number on any day picked by chance – often not even specifying which measure is being used. While the present study has attempted to cross-check and complete numbers wherever possible, interview information on such figures is usually insufficiently specific to be used for more than approximate verification. Thus, all numbers and the conclusions drawn from them must be taken with a considerable pinch of salt.

TABLE 6. NATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO ALTHEA[29]

	2004	*April 2005*	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*	*March 2009*	*Sept. 2009*
Germany	1.000	1.227	900	235	138	122	132
UK	1.100	669	590	21	12	10	10
France	1.500	381	450	73	101	96	3
Austria	2	265	287	178	103	118	90
Belgium	4	48	51	-	-	-	-
Bulgaria	36	192	134	115	116	118	120
Czech Rep.	7	61	65	5	-	-	-
Denmark	4	-	3	-	-	-	-
Estonia	1	2	33	3	2	2	2
Finland	0	158	177	64	53	45	4
Greece	250	182	155	45	45	44	44
Hungary	150	119	118	158	158	158	166
Ireland	50	45	57	25	43	40	43
Italy	979	1.032	882	363	248	283	297
Latvia	1	3	2	1	2	2	-

[29] The numbers in columns 2 and 4 – 6 are taken from an annual publication of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) labelled 'The Military Balance'. Unfortunately, this publication does not provide the exact dates at which contributions were assessed, nor is it fully consistent: Column 2 stems primarily from a 2008 longitudinal overview on European contributions, with non-European contributions added on the basis of the 2005 'Military Balance' and refers to the period before NATO's last drawdown to some 7.000 soldiers, so the shift from column 2 to 3 captures more than just the transition (IISS 2008c: 157-170; 2005: 114). Moreover, columns 4 and 5 seem to include not just Althea, but also the (significantly smaller) NATO operation as well, hence the contribution of the US and Denmark (IISS 2007: 160-1; 2008b: 160). By contrast, column 6 explicitly refers to Althea only (IISS 2009: 170-1). Numbers in column 3, which have been included because they capture the initial force distribution after the transition, stem from another secondary source, whereas the last two columns were retrieved the operation's website where they are unfortunately not accessible anymore (Lindstrom 2005: 95; Althea 2009b, 2009a).

Lithuania	97	1	1	1	1	1	1
Luxembourg	23	1	1	1	1	1	1
Netherlands	1.000	447	261	67	75	73	75
Poland	287	206	236	203	204	205	189
Portugal	330	167	193	14	51	55	51
Romania	106	110	85	49	58	57	55
Slovakia	29	4	42	42	40	72	32
Slovenia	158	165	84	58	34	29	26
Spain	935	538	495	284	376	307	316
Sweden	7	81	67	24	-	-	-
Albania	70	70	70	70	13	13	13
Argentina	-	1	2	-	-	-	-
Canada	800	112	11	8	8	-	-
Chile	-	24	15	21	21	32	32
Macedonia	-	-	-	-	12	12	12
Morocco	800	133	135	-	-	-	-
New Zealand	12	-	11	3	-	-	-
Norway	125	3	22	2	-	-	-
Switzerland	0	9	26	26	25	25	25
Turkey	1.200	229	368	253	242	232	273
U.S.A.	839	-	256	207	-	-	-
Sum Contributions	11.902	6.688	6.285	2.619	2.182	2.153	2.012

The preceding caveats notwithstanding individual countries' participation shed some light on the preference intensity of member states for operation Althea. Germany and Italy provided the biggest individual contributions, with the UK, Austria, Finland, Spain and the Netherlands investing relatively heavily as well (cf. Kupferschmidt 2006: 19; IISS 2008c: 157-170). Germany's and Italy's enthusiasm can be explained by geographic proximity and their history as primary target

countries of war-induced refugees which created relatively strong domestic interest in the events in the Balkans, from public opinion to Home affairs ministries. At the same time, however, Althea – as the most important incarnation of 'Berlin Plus' – mirrored their preferences with respect to the shape of transatlantic security cooperation, namely the potential to cooperate in a European framework, but nested, where convenient, in a transatlantic setting that provided both expertise and credibility at lower costs (Interviews with GER officials).

For the UK, the latter was also attractive, but the Balkans was becoming relatively less of a priority as the country increasingly engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan (Interviews with UK and GER officials). France for its part remained less than happy with Berlin Plus as British and German officials at the receiving end of French complaints confirmed in interviews (Interviews with CGS, FRA, GER and UK officials). France remained engaged, however, as its government knew that the Balkans was important not only in its own right, but also as the place where ESDP must not fail for it to retain any credibility (Interview with CGS and MS officials; cf. The Economist 2005). The substantial reengagement of the traditionally neutral European countries – Ireland, Sweden, Finland, and Austria – can equally be related to their preference for a European framework. Whereas Ireland's contributions remained constant with both the NATO and the EU operation, the other three countries increased their participation considerably after the takeover. Sweden's engagement remained limited as did its enthusiasm for Berlin Plus, but Austria and Finland started to make important contributions again. An EU operation was apparently domestically more palatable than a NATO mission (Interview with CGS official).

EU-NATO RELATIONS REVISITED

The near universality of participation at the induction of operation Althea attests to the breadth of support for this mission across EU capitals whereas the distribution of troop contributions indicates, albeit imperfectly, whose preferences were particularly well mirrored by the specific institutional setup. Yet although Berlin Plus proved workable for Althea, relations between the EU and NATO could hardly be described as the 'strategic partnership' that both organizations and most member states – principally those with two club cards – professed to strive for. Repeated attempts at improving these relations, notably from the British and German side, failed to overcome inter-organizational competition and the underlying problem of the Turkish-Greek-Cypriot triangle, which both the US and France used to support their vision of the ideal relationship between the EU and NATO (Interviews with MS and CGS officials).

A speech that NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer gave at an ESDP conference in January 2007 may serve as an illustration. Starting out by emphasizing the importance of EU-NATO relations, he went on to ask: 'How do NATO-EU relations stand? Let me answer that by means of a little anecdote. A few weeks ago, one of my staff told me he had been invited to a conference on "frozen conflicts". And then he added with a smile: "Of course it's about the Caucasus, not about NATO-EU relations!"'. De Hoop Scheffer went on to identify the main culprits for this situation, arguing that '[s]ome deliberately want to keep NATO and the EU at a distance from one another. For this school of thought, a closer relationship between NATO and the EU means excessive influence for the USA' (de Hoop Scheffer 2007; see also The Economist 2007). To complete the picture, suffice it to say that conference participants related not just Solana's increasingly foul mood, but also how the French ambassador to Germany had already left the room by that point – to protest the fact that a NATO Secretary-General would be invited in the first place to give a speech at an ESDP conference.

Yet whereas the wider relationship between NATO and the EU was thus bedevilled, Althea actually helped to keep it alive to some extent because it gave the two organizations a setting in which they had to meet regularly to exchange information on the operation (Interview with GER official). It thereby created a space for regular get-togethers which the backers of Berlin Plus attempted to widen by trying to complement those meetings with 'informal meetings', 'coffee', or even 'informal informals' (their informal nature allowing for guests, and for table badges to disappear).[30] On the ground, by contrast, the most contentious issues were not necessarily between EUFOR and its co-located NATO HQ, but rather among different EU actors. The fact that many of EUFOR's tasks were essentially non-military in nature and related in particular to fighting organized crime brought it in a difficult relationship with the EU Police Mission tasked to do just that – but without an executive mandate (cf. Michel 2006: 4; Leakey 2006: 65; Gross 2007a: 142; Juncos 2006). EU internecine turf battles – fuelled by national caveats as to what national contingents were allowed to do – were however largely settled within the first year of EUFOR's operation (cf. Leakey 2006: 63; Michel 2006: 4; Dijkstra 2011: 153-4).

[30] Such arrangements could of course easily be torpedoed should either Turkey (and the US) or Greece (and France) so wish, e.g. by posing preconditions for attending the coffee or by insisting that a given topic was so important that it needed to be formally discussed. As interviewees pointed out, attempts to this end have meanwhile largely collapsed as Turkey's reservations against such meetings have only hardened (Interviews with CGS and MS officials).

THE THREAT OF ALTHEA'S DISSOLUTION

Whereas there had originally been broad agreement across the EU on the need for a credibly-sized operation, European militaries increasingly came to view Bosnia's travails as an essentially non-military task (Interviews with CGS and MS officials). With the security situation judged as stable and safe, medium-term plans were being drawn up for downsizing the force (Interviews with MS officials). There was however a feeling that the EU needed to tread carefully, in particular with a view to the upcoming Kosovo status negotiations, which it was feared might fan secessionist pressures in Bosnia (Interview with MS official). Yet in 2006 the UK announced, in different bilateral settings, its prospective near-withdrawal over the following months (Interview with CGS and MS officials).

The British notice that the UK would henceforth participate at much reduced levels – the IISS records a shift from 590 troops in 2006 to 21 in 2007 (IISS 2008c: 170) – changed the dynamics of the planning process. Described by German and French diplomats as 'rather brutal' and 'un-British in style', it reflected the UK's serious overstretch and the pressure that the Ministry of Defence felt, in terms of resources as well as politically from the House of Commons (Interviews with MS officials; cf. Self 2010: 180-6). While a renewed outbreak of military hostilities in Bosnia seemed less and less likely, both France and Germany were reluctant at the time to accelerate the drawdown since they considered the situation in Bosnia and the region (i.e., Kosovo) as politically still too fragile (Interviews with MS officials). Unable to convince the UK to change its decision, they nonetheless insisted on characterizing Althea's 'reconfiguration' in the respective Council conclusions as 'progressive' and 'reversible' (Interview with MS official; Council of the EU 2007d).

While both Paris and Berlin were less than happy with London forcing their hand when they would rather have preferred to wait and see, officials considered the decision to reduce Althea's strength justifiable (Interviews). Moreover, the German military was also becoming increasingly unhappy about its non-military tasks in Bosnia, and in late October the German defence minister publicly raised the idea of a German withdrawal (Interview with GER official; Dempsey 2006a). This likely happened in response to domestic concerns for 'overstretch' given Germany's substantial contributions to operations in DRC and Lebanon in summer 2006 while facing Anglo-Saxon criticism over too limited engagement in Afghanistan prior to the biennial NATO summit in November that year. Yet it also shows that a drawdown in Bosnia was not unequivocally opposed when it came to Berlin. The Council thus decided to downsize Althea from 6500 to around 2500 troops, with Italy, Poland, Spain and Turkey taking on a relatively bigger part of the burden (all of whom still saw their contributions fall in absolute terms, see IISS 2008c: 157-170). Although the security situation in Bosnia subsequently remained stable despite a worsening

political deadlock, this process produced an awkward precedent for future decision-making on Althea.

WHITHER ALTHEA?

After the decision to reconfigure Althea in early 2007, the operation continued for another two years without much debate or political progress in Bosnia. Discussion about the mission picked up again in late 2008, however, when France, unable to achieve EU consensus on closing the operation, decided to follow the British example and unilaterally withdraw most of its contribution (Interviews with CGS and MS officials). French officials insisted that this decision was based on the fact that the military tasks in Bosnia were simply finished, yet privately they also pointed out that 'the MoD was very much in favour of pulling out' (Interviews). Others also emphasized that France, as previously the UK, needed troops elsewhere, and one explained that the underlying motive was that French defence minister Morin 'needed to prove to parliament that he was closing down something' and that he took the decision 'for domestic consumption' (Interviews with CGS and GER officials).

With Finland also announcing withdrawal, there rose the spectre of Althea ending by 'development' rather than deliberate collective decision. Such a development would likely have undermined the EU's credibility not just in Bosnia, but also beyond. The downward spiral could be stopped in spring 2009, but the process highlighted the pressure the EU found itself under to close down an operation that most European militaries considered superfluous. As one official put it in May 2009, 'in recent discussions we have established that we should not be withdrawing unilaterally anymore […] Our future pullouts, they need to be collective decisions because everybody is quite worried, in terms of an ESDP or the EU's credibility, that Althea will just slowly die, without a proper decision to draw down. You don't want to die until you get down to option 3 because that would just look incredibly bad, so people are more focused now on the need to stay, together' (Interview with MS official). In view of the precedent that London set earlier, it is ironic that the official just quoted was British.

The majority of EU member states, especially the UK and the Netherlands, reacted anxiously to the Franco-Finnish retreat (Interviews with CGS and MS officials). On the one hand, they understood the pressure most Western European armies felt under – indeed, as British officials admitted, their own unilateral decision to draw down in BiH came back to haunt London as it found itself between a rock and a hard place trying to argue why other militaries needed to stay when the UK had decided its troops were not needed anymore (Interviews with UK and CGS officials). Moreover, with Bosnia set to be elected to the UN Security Council in 2010, a foreign

military presence seemed anachronistic, and the lure of declaring the operation a success and closing it down perfectly understandable. Last but not least, many European militaries felt that, as a German officer put it, there were 'no more brownie points to be won with the US' for staying in Bosnia, and that now only Afghanistan counted – a message that the UK had previously amplified (Interviews with MS and CGS officials).

Yet many EU capitals – especially the ones in the region, but also London and Berlin – continued to perceive risks for the political transition in Bosnia towards Euro-Atlantic integration (Interviews with CGS, GER and UK officials). In this context, Bosnia experts still opined that EUFOR's presence was helpful in that a Western general in a black limousine signalled to local politicians that they could not get away with just anything (Interview with MS official; cf. Dijkstra 2011: 136). Due to these regional threat perceptions, Greece and Turkey were among those most strongly in favour of continuing the operation, stressing that regional stability in the Balkans was more important than deploying to Afghanistan (Interview with CGS official). This coalition is of course somewhat ironic given that Althea is currently the only incarnation of 'Berlin Plus', a favourite bone of contention between the two countries. Yet while Althea was in fact never needed in the sense that Bosnian security services have so far always been able to handle any security challenges, there is a residual risk given what is perceived as irresponsible behaviour on the part of Bosnian politicians (Interview with CGS official). The counter-argument, that these politicians might behave irresponsibly precisely because a safety net in the shape of Althea exists, can however also not be easily dismissed.

At the same time that many European capitals were thus having a 'big rethink' on Bosnia, the advent of a new US administration with many 'old Bosnia hands' in positions of responsibility has further complicated discussions (Interviews with CGS and MS officials; cf. Sebastian 2009: 3-4). Many Clintonites involved in US Bosnia policy in the 1990s, from Joe Biden and Hillary Clinton to Richard Holbrooke, James Jones and Ivo Daalder, returned into the Obama administration with their opinions on the conflict still partly shaped by their experience of 15 years earlier (Interview with CGS official). US discontent with the EU's progress in BiH and Washington's resulting desire to once again take centre stage has led to EU protests that eventually dissuaded the Obama administration from nominating a special envoy for Bosnia (cf. Romac 2009; Bancroft 2009). The US apparently turned to indirect pressure on the UK instead (Interviews with CGS and MS officials). Thus, the UK's Shadow Foreign Secretary attacked the EU's intention to withdraw, putting domestic pressure on the incumbent government to defend an almost untenable position at the European level – namely to keep others from following its example (cf. Morris 2009). This in turn has not pleased either Javier Solana's Council Secretariat nor a number of more

'autonomy-minded' member states including the Swedish EU presidency at the time (cf. Sebastian 2009: 2-3).

What made the debate about the future of Althea particularly difficult was that it became intricately linked to the wider question of the future of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) in BiH. Whereas the EU has taken responsibility for the OHR's ultimate stick, Althea, the High Representative himself is answerable to the 'Peace Implementation Council' (PIC), comprising among others the US and Russia, as well as to the EU with his 'second hat' as EU Special Representative (EUSR). It would thus be preferable to close down Althea together with the OHR, but the EU cannot decide the latter whereas simply closing down its own operation would open it to the charge of behaving irresponsibly. The solution has been to shift Althea's emphasis towards non-executive tasks, but this only side-steps the question of whether the operation is truly prepared to deter potential spoilers.

The evolution of Althea to a non-executive operation also brought up old debates about 'Berlin Plus'. That framework was evidently not drawn up for non-executive training missions, and the proposed use thereof for such purposes raised eyebrows in those member states concerned about EU autonomy (Interviews with UK and GER officials). Why would NATO have to have a say in an EU mission where neither its assets nor its credibility were seemingly needed? Predictably, there was pressure in particular from Greece and Cyprus to change the new mission's format, and with good arguments: closing down Althea would not only allow the EU to book it as a success, but also signal that BiH was advancing and that a new chapter of cooperation had been opened (Interviews with FRA and UK officials).

Those advocating a continuation of Althea under 'Berlin Plus' however also brought important arguments to bear. Why should the EU have to change its Operational Headquarters and re-start with changes in procedures (opening up predictably intractable problems such as how to exchange information with NATO), financing and logistics (Interview with UK official)? Moreover, it seemed sensible to stay close to NATO in case a possible if unlikely extraction operation was to become necessary. Yet perhaps most important was the reasoning shared by London and Berlin: that Althea was helpful in keeping EU-NATO relations afloat because it mandated continued if hardly meaningful meetings (Interview with GER official). Ironically, whereas 'Berlin Plus' had originally been considered necessary to underpin operation Althea, that relationship was thus over time reversed to the extent that a few years later Althea was considered useful for underpinning 'Berlin Plus'. By way of compromise, the EU eventually decided that Althea would continue under Berlin Plus, but that this did not set a general precedent. When the ESDP formally became the CSDP in late 2009, Althea was thus still ongoing and still guaranteeing Bosnia's

constitution against potential violent challenges, despite its constantly diminishing size.

E. PROXIMATE DRIVERS BEHIND ALTHEA

Taking a bird's eye view of the operation's history, what were the drivers behind Althea? Although this case study analyzed in detail the tensions between various capitals, the first point to notice is the degree of consensus regarding the operation. Throughout its existence, most EU capitals proved supportive. At least in hindsight, British, French and German officials all claimed that their governments had been enthusiastic about this operation. They moreover acknowledged that their EU counterparts backed the operation too, including the principle of implementing it via the ESDP framework. Finally, the breadth of troop contributions also indicates widespread support. Although the reasons for this enthusiasm varied in part, they converged in the shared incentive to demonstrate that EU governments were able and willing to take responsibility in international crisis management. To understand why, we need to look back at what Bosnia had meant for their foreign policies.

While talk about an ESDP operation in Bosnia started only in 2002, the drivers behind Althea reach back to the 1990s. The war in Bosnia topped the list of post-cold war foreign policy disasters for most if not all EU governments. The unfortunate slogan of the 'hour of Europe' came to encapsulate the huge gap between what Europeans expected from themselves and what they could deliver (cf. Hill 1993). This letdown applied not just to the European Community collectively, but also to European states individually; the leading military powers in Western Europe proved unable to effectively address the conflict in Bosnia. This did considerable damage to Europeans' self-image as pursuers of an 'ethical' or even just an effective foreign policy. Europe's public stood aghast at the all too apparent failure of their governments to act decisively in defending the values that – especially after the revolution of 1989 – were supposed to form the basis of all European societies, if not a new world order (cf. Gow 1997: 298-299; Silber and Little 1995: 329; Duke 2000: 213; 223; Sabrow 2009). As the Economist's 'Charlemagne' once put it with respect to the EU's CFSP, 'the memory that really haunts the EU is its ignominious failure to deal with the Balkan wars in the 1990s' (The Economist 2005).

In essence, EU governments showed themselves to their electorates – as well as to the US and the 'international community' at large – as helpless and incompetent to address a morally outraging crisis at Europe's doorstep. Their subsequent efforts to redeem themselves in the region thus served not only to (re-)gain some foreign policy credibility, but might also be considered an expression of bad conscience of the way European governments had mishandled the original Yugoslav crisis in the

'old' framework of European cooperation (cf. Duke 2000: 221-223; Bretherton and Vogler 2006: 196; Juncos 2006). The American desire to pull out thus offered Europeans a 'second chance' in Bosnia (Wernicke 2004; The Economist 2005).

The fact that Bosnia came onto the ESDP agenda reflected more than a desire to make up for the failures of the 1990s though. It was also embedded in a conscious attempt to make ESDP work as a tool for European governments to influence their environment. A British Foreign Secretary recently underlined Bosnia's crucial role in this respect when he traced the St-Malo Declaration of 1998 and subsequent EU crisis management operations back to the war in Bosnia (Miliband 2009). The shared experience of this debacle united rather than divided European governments and enabled them – in spite of their differences in strategic outlook – to agree on the desirability of the ESDP instrument in general and a significant number of operations in particular, foremost among them operation Althea.

HELPING WASHINGTON

It was the confluence of the European wish to take responsibility in the framework of ESDP with Washington's wish to withdraw that enabled the EU to become NATO's successor in Bosnia. This consensus notwithstanding, there clearly was some residual American ambiguity towards the idea of ESDP that limited enthusiasm for the takeover in Washington, a hesitation amplified by the concomitance with the transatlantic fall-out over Iraq. Yet both German and British officials stressed that what their respective governments considered particularly attractive about the operation was the ability to actually help the US – and no one suggested that there was any intent of pushing the US out (Interviews). In fact, as one interviewee pointedly put it, had the US really opposed ESDP or the takeover of the operation in Bosnia, it would simply not have happened (Interview with CGS official).

Washington's ambiguity was mirrored in the mixed motives to be found within the European Union. Although an EU military operation in Bosnia enjoyed widespread support, London, Paris and Berlin each supported it for somewhat different reasons. As a number of officials from the Council Secretariat as well as all three capitals pointed out, France was above all interested in making ESDP operational, in proving that the EU was able and willing to act autonomously in the domain of international security (Interviews). As one of them argued, the deal in St.-Malo had been that France agreed to the first idea of 'Berlin Plus' in exchange for getting the ESDP 'toolbox' for the EU, a compact spelt out in paragraph 9 of the 1999 Washington Summit Communiqué (NATO 1999). In order for that toolbox to become operational reality in Bosnia, France was willing to re-new this deal even though its political preference lay with an autonomous operation (Interviews with CGS and MS officials).

For the British government, priorities were different if not inverse. Taking over SFOR implied lending a hand to the US in view of Washington's professed wish to disengage from Bosnia at the same time as it offered an opportunity to tie the fledgling ESDP to NATO, thereby making sure any 'duplication' was avoided (Interviews with UK officials). As one interviewed British official reminisced, 'we had no problem with ESDP, but we did not want it to damage NATO, and we wanted to keep NATO as the first choice for crisis management' (Interview). A Council official recapped that 'France wanted the operation to get started and found it easier to disperse doubts about its intentions because Berlin Plus made it more acceptable; for the UK, it was the other way around – help the US, but that was easier and more acceptable in the EU context' (Interview).

London had reasons beyond strengthening transatlantic ties for pushing for operation Althea. It felt that this operation was a way of promoting EU enlargement, a traditional British foreign policy objective, and of showing that the UK as one of the two founding member states of ESDP was still committed to that policy (Interviews with UK officials). One British official thus argued that 'London pushed very hard for a transfer of SFOR to the EU, because it felt that was something that the EU could do, that was politically attractive for the EU because of the latter's engagement on the civilian side, and because of the Thessaloniki commitment to the eventual integration of the Western Balkans. So all the planets were aligned, but the deal was that it would be carried out under Berlin Plus' (Interview). Another concurred, underlining that 'the UK pushed for this operation. There is a widespread perception, fuelled mostly by Paris, that London is holding ESDP back, but the UK supported it. There was a lot of tension between Paris and London on ESDP in the beginning that is sometimes referred to as constructive although it is rather destructive, but the UK was perfectly enthusiastic about the operation – the terrain was not too challenging, but showed Europeans that they needed to develop their capabilities, so it was very much in the UK's interest' (Interview). In short, as one close observer noted at the time, 'Britain staunchly supported the EU plan for Bosnia, believing it would be an incentive for the Europeans to improve military capabilities, take on more of the burden-sharing in the Balkans and allow the US to redeploy its forces elsewhere' (Dempsey 2003c).

The British view was echoed in Berlin which, apart from pointing to the US interest in leaving Bosnia, also stressed the military interest in implementing the Berlin Plus framework. German officials in both the Foreign Office and the Defence Ministry emphasized the political interest in keeping a close link to NATO (Interviews). They also stressed the financial interest in avoiding duplication, i.e. the fact that Germany already paid for NATO assets such as SHAPE and thus wanted these being put to use whenever possible – rather than paying for an extra EU set of assets with the largest contribution coming from Berlin. German officials moreover underlined that, when it

came to more 'high-end' operations involving considerable risks to troops, they preferred 'Berlin Plus' wherever that would be politically possible (Interviews). The keen interest in seeing to it that Berlin Plus would work, and that transatlantic relations thereby be strengthened, was hence an important driver behind operation Althea. In addition, and in contrast to aspirations in London and Paris, German officials also stressed their interest in showcasing that ESDP was primarily about stabilising the EU's neighbourhood, not post-colonial endeavours – a preference that a relatively big deployment in Bosnia conveniently underlined (Interviews).

In short, the most important cleavage dividing EU governments regarded the question of how 'autonomously' the operation should be run. Interestingly, this tension continued to surface even after the operation had been agreed upon. It came to be reflected in petty bureaucratic struggles during the operation's preparation and proved to be still virulent by the time that the question of its succession arose. Moreover, capitals' preferences in this respect were reflected in the size of their contributions. Yet the role of Washington was not the only issue to divide EU governments; they also displayed some variation with respect to the second major driver, their shared desire to make ESDP operational.

OPERATIONALIZING ESDP

The EU's desire to establish itself as an actor in international security was the second important reason for Althea's inception. Not only did this motive frequently surface in interviews with officials, it also explains why political responsibility was shifted from NATO to the EU in the first place. Moreover, the need to show that the EU could do it, too, explicates why this shift was accompanied by a high degree of continuity between SFOR and Althea. Finally, it also provides an explanation for EU governments' contentment with an increasingly symbolic presence and their desire to declare success paired with apprehension that Bosnia could yet derail and thereby destroy the EU's standing. The incentives for operationalizing ESDP comprise EU governments' interests in demonstrating their ability to influence international events as well as the bureaucratic interest of the new EU structures of proving their value-added. As several interviewees pointed out, after the first years of ESDP in which thorny institutional issues had to be resolved, everyone was eager to have a 'proper operation' also in the military realm (Interviews with CGS and MS officials). That is not to imply that just any operation would have been welcome; the decision on undertaking a mission was certainly coupled with an appreciation as to the Union's capacity to handle such a task. Thus, when Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel had suggested at the December 2001 Laeken summit that the EU might take over responsibility for military security in Afghanistan, this proposal was quickly rejected (Lobjakas 2001).

Yet it is probably fair to state that, in the early days of the new century, ESDP officials went on a 'mission-shopping tour'. As there were few new operations on the horizon that appeared feasible for ESDP, they opted for 'legacy operations' (Interview with CGS official). The Balkans offered a prime opportunity in this respect – due to a relatively stable security environment, geographical proximity, extensive knowledge of and (military) experience in the region, and therefore less uncertainty with respect to potential risks. Since NATO was present in theatre, time horizons for planning could moreover be relatively generous when compared to true crisis management. Whereas Berlin Plus had originally hardly been intended for such 'legacy operations', they offered good testing grounds for a 'controlled experiment' in a region where European governments and bureaucracies had a lot of expertise and influence. Reportedly, 'an ideal test run' for ESDP is also how Althea's first force commander, General Leakey, described the operation at its outset (cf. Wernicke 2004).

Bosnia's instrumentality in establishing the EU's credibility as a security actor was repeatedly criticized in the run-up to operation Althea (cf. Kupferschmidt 2006: 11; ICG 2004b: 4; Senate Hearing 2003: 16; 28-31; 34-36; The Economist 2005). The International Crisis Group (ICG), for example, judged by mid-2004 that 'Brussels seemed not so much to be engaging in the empire-building of which it is sometimes accused as aiming for a mission which was doomed to success by its own lack of ambition' (ICG 2004b: 4). The allegation was that the EU wanted to carry out this operation primarily as a means to test and promote ESDP on relatively safe territory, rather than because it believed it had the right strategy and instruments for Bosnia's travails. Yet one motive obviously does not exclude the other, and the interviews conducted for this study suggest that their relative importance diverged between the different capitals. Whereas France and the EU Council Secretariat were particularly eager to promote or, in the words of a British official, 'glorify' ESDP, the UK seemed more interested in the policy's potential for bringing Bosnia closer to the EU orbit and tying ESDP to NATO (Interviews with CGS, UK and FRA officials). German officials on the other hand stressed the perfect compatibility of all those objectives (Interviews).

A final difference between EU capitals related to their attitudes in weighing the national costs of contributing troops against the collective benefits of a credible EU presence. Both the UK and France came to favour the former at the expense of the latter, for reasons that were only partly related to the situation in Bosnia. Yet whereas EU governments wrangled over the issue of burden-sharing, many officials pointed out that the most pronounced split actually ran through these very governments, pitting ministries of defence against ministries of foreign affairs (Interviews with UK, FRA and GER officials). The former tended to emphasize that the military job was done, that the security situation was and continued to be safe

and stable, and that their troops in Bosnia were basically getting depressed from only drinking coffee when they where needed elsewhere (Interviews with MS and CGS officials). By contrast, diplomats emphasized the political function of confidence-building that an ultimate military deterrent fulfilled; moreover, they wanted the 'comprehensive work of art' that the Western Balkans as a whole represented to be taken into account (Interviews with MS and CGS officials). As one official summed it up, 'the military view is that the job is done, but politically, it is different – and everyone agrees that Bosnian politics sucks' (Interview with CGS official). Once the debate over which logic ought to take precedence had been won by defence ministries in the EU's two biggest military powers, it became increasingly difficult for diplomats in the other countries to make the case for staying on. As one official argued, 'if a big state, if the French withdraw and say, not interested any more, that is a signal to the others' (Interviews with MS official). Similarly, another pointed out that 'currently, reality is catching up with the operation, and there is a moment when the begging and screaming of the neither the commander nor the Council Secretariat will do any good anymore, when the national position prevails and member states will simply withdraw' (Interview with CGS official).

In sum, the lines of conflict regarding operation Althea have remained remarkably stable. They notably included US ambivalence about EU leadership on Bosnia; the resulting transatlantic disagreements translating into intra-European tensions as to the appropriate degree of autonomy from NATO; EU governments' desire to celebrate a foreign policy success and to bring their troops home grating against concerns about the credibility of an EU military deterrent; and the inter-organizational competition with NATO, fuelled by member states' diverging preferences. Yet these conflicts also have to be contrasted with an equally stable set of agreements: the collective affirmation of the EU's responsibility for Bosnia; the considerable effort to reach compromises that translated into broad support, if to different degrees of enthusiasm; and the commitment to see the EU succeed as a regional security actor, a commitment that remained powerful enough in 2009 to contain member states' rush out of operation Althea.

F. CONCLUSION

As this chapter showed, operation Althea was driven by a mix of overlapping and diverging member state preferences. The former were due to common Balkan experiences and aspirations as well as to the importance that all EU governments attached to being perceived as conducting a legitimate and competent foreign policy; the latter to differing perceptions as to what exactly such a policy would imply. What does this entail with respect to the propositions set out in the theoretical framework?

With respect to the first proposition, Althea provides only very limited evidence of EU behaviour that could be qualified as balancing the United States. Several factors instead militate against such an interpretation. First, it was Washington's interest in having Europeans take over responsibility in Bosnia that put such an operation on the EU's agenda in the first place. Secondly, both German and British officials motivated their support with the fact that they perceived an opportunity to help (rather than balance) the US, and because it promised to tie the fledgling ESDP to NATO via a successful implementation of the Berlin Plus framework. They thus sought to strengthen ties with the US. Third, the implementation of Althea did not bear witness to either balancing intentions or any shift in the balance of power. The transition from NATO to EU command did not constrain Washington but allowed it to palm off a responsibility it had repeatedly claimed it no longer wanted. At the same time, the US remained engaged via its bilateral presence, its planners in NATO headquarters, and, most importantly, its bilateral influence on various EU governments. This influence continued to show long after SFOR had ended, such as when officials explained countries' withdrawal by the fact that Bosnia did not win them any brownie points with the Americans anymore, as well as in Washington's ability to prevent the operation's closure. After all, Althea owes its continuing existence in part to US insistence on keeping the OHR alive.

There is, however, one catch. At various points, Washington expressed ambivalence towards ESDP if not dissatisfaction with the relationship between ESDP and NATO. Even after Althea had been set up, this continued to translate into Franco-British haggling over the degree of dependence that the European framework of cooperation would have on the transatlantic one, a rivalry fuelled by inter-organizational competition between the NATO and EU bureaucracies. And whereas differences with respect to the transatlantic relationship have narrowed cross-nationally in the course of this operation, they still impact on member states' position – at least at the bureaucratic level – as the debates on the future evolution of operation Althea attest.

However, these differing preferences for the EU-NATO relationship are not as such evidence for balancing. Only one of our three capitals fought for greater EU autonomy, and Paris' reasons for doing so cannot unequivocally be traced to concerns about relative power. Apart from strategic considerations, they may just as much have reflected domestic political expediency, a question that will be further discussed in the last two chapters. Moreover, it deserves emphasis that both Washington and Paris agreed to the transition to Althea, something they are unlikely to have done had they not expected net political benefits. Although they haggled over the precise distribution of those benefits, the wish to realize them was the stronger impetus. To the extent that the US' negative reaction indicated transatlantic discord, Washington was primarily combating the shadows of its own illusions –

although Chirac's intermittent rhetoric about his objective of 'multi-polarity' admittedly helped giving such mirages some face-value credibility (cf. Howorth 2000: 48; Chirac 1999; Giegerich 2006: 116). Franco-American differences over specific institutional questions were scholastic rather than intrinsically competitive in nature – a state of affairs for which the notion of balancing simply evokes misleading associations.

Similarly, there was little evidence in the decision-making process that the EU may have been enacting its own normative role conception, as the second proposition had suggested. The pivotal internal reason for the EU to replace NATO reflected the EU's self-interest in establishing its credentials as an international security provider rather than the notion that an ESDP operation had a value-added in promoting liberal values. However, it was inscribed into a wider engagement for which remorse over Europe's earlier lack of will in Bosnia played a significant role. The West's overall intervention in Bosnia was designed to defend liberal values insofar as it aimed to suppress further human rights violations and to draw the country into the 'Atlantic' community of liberal states (cf. Daalder 2000: 165; 173-8; Duke 2000: 223; van Willigen 2009). Since the EU has participated in attempting to re-shape the country into a non-sectarian polity, it has also been accused of (and praised for) trying to impose a liberal peace (cf. Merlingen and Ostrauskaite 2005; Cooper 2004; Paris 1997). Thus, whereas the installation of operation Althea did not follow a specifically liberal impetus, it formed part of a wider effort (albeit not one restricted to the EU) which can be characterized as liberal and normatively inspired.

With respect to the third proposition, Althea provided considerable evidence that EU governments pushed for the transition from NATO to EU command in order to demonstrate the EU's ability as a military actor. Not only French and German, but also British officials attested to this motive. There was a palpable desire in the EU to show that ESDP was 'more than paperwork' and a feeling that the Western Balkans were a suitable testing ground (Interviews; cf. Andréani 2000). The added benefit of developing ESDP in the Western Balkans was that no member state had doubts about the Union's collective interest in South-Eastern Europe, and that it offered the chance for a flattering comparison in demonstrating the development the EU had undergone since it last engaged in Bosnia in the early 1990s. In view of the limited changes on the ground, it is plausible that part of the transition's objective was to provide a symbolic booster for ESDP.

There were few indications, on the other hand, that this objective of building an EU security identity was primarily a means for achieving the end of European nation-building. Although European institutions, and Javier Solana in particular, pushed for this transition in order to establish the Union's credentials in peace support operations, the crucial support that he received from member states was hardly

motivated by integrationist intents – only some German counterparts mentioned those, among more important ones. Moreover, there was no concerted effort in member states to exploit the operation's visibility for promoting the added value of European integration, and the objective of fostering an EU security identity subsided in importance over time. As the EU has grown more active in the ESDP framework, it has come to depend much less on Bosnia for the purpose of flying its flag. This change notwithstanding, there is a keen awareness that Bosnia could yet severely damage the ESDP if the EU was to show itself unable to keep a potentially unstable Bosnia under control.

Regarding the fourth proposition, there is little evidence that Althea was directly shaped by domestic expectations for foreign policy action. Yet indirectly societal pressure has arguably been influential in informing Western governments' Bosnia policy for almost two decades. As the ill-timed promise of the 'hour of Europe' shows, European politicians were already in 1991 responding to – and co-creating – expectations as to what they could achieve. James Gow summed up the motivations in Western capitals concerning their reaction to the wars in Yugoslavia by pointing out that '[t]he political worries of Western governments concerned popular opinion and the need to win votes at the next election' (Gow 1997: 306; cf. Daalder 2000: 109). While this made them reluctant to use force for fear of the risks attached to fighting a war that was not strictly necessary, the resulting lack of consequentiality also posed significant domestic political risks. In the US, Madeline Albright played a key role in convincing President Clinton to engage by stressing that 'the disaster in Bosnia was "destroying" the administration's credibility' (Daalder 2000: 93; 159).

It is plausible that similar concerns informed EU governments' decision to take action in Bosnia. The 'need to do something' arguably led European governments to engage in UNPROFOR in the first place, but failed to demonstrate decisive influence on events in Bosnia. EU governments therefore faced considerable incentives to build tools for collective crisis management and to revisit their engagement in Bosnia in order to shed the image of indecisiveness and powerlessness derived from their role in this country in the 1990s (cf. Bretherton and Vogler 2006: 196; Andréani 2000: 94-5). EU governments were thus eager to show that they were (now) able to take responsibility for security in their own 'backyard'. Many officials indicated as much when they emphasized how favourably the current situation – when Europeans could decide to act by themselves, as Europeans – compared to the crises of the 1990s (Interviews).

Whether concerns about foreign policy credibility related to governments' worries about international or domestic legitimacy can of course be debated. The same goes for the reason of the correlation between the relative size of states' contribution on the one hand, and their enthusiasm for Berlin Plus or – for the 'post-neutral'

countries – the transfer from SFOR to Althea on the other. Similarly, we may interpret the increase in self-interested attempts to 'free-ride' on the efforts of others as reflecting domestic fears of over-extension and preferences for decreasing military spending – but it may also have other reasons. Finally, the very visible differences in national positions regarding transatlantic relations is often treated as a manifestation of states' struggle for international influence, but it may instead also reflect of domestic (elite) preferences. Whereas these more generic sources of national security policy preferences will be discussed in greater detail in chapter VIII, suffice it to say at this point that the evidence regarding operation Althea all but contradicted the balancing proposition, was limited but compatible with the 'normative power Europe' and the 'domestic expectations' propositions, and provided considerable support for the assumed objective of an EU security identity – but not the suspected ulterior goal of European integration.