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Kennedy's 'Two Pillars' Revisited: Does the ESDP Make the EU and the USA Equal Partners in NATO?*

JORIS LARIK**

Abstract. This essay takes President John F. Kennedy's visionary 'Declaration of Interdependence' of 1962, in which he called for a concrete transatlantic partnership on equal footing as the benchmark to assess today's relationship between the USA and the European Union in defence matters. The central question is: can the European Union with its emerging security and defence policy be seen as one of the two supporting pillars of NATO next to the USA? To this end, the general security strategies, the institutional frameworks and capabilities, as well as the defence industries of both sides are compared. The result is that, although the strategies and initiatives taken by the EU point towards a more equitable partnership, the current state of capabilities and defence industries make it impossible to conclude that NATO rests on two equal pillars. Nevertheless, in view of the history of European integration and in anticipation of the fresh impetus to be given by the Obama administration, the author closes by suggesting a less static image of the transatlantic partnership, namely that of an ever-changing, yet ever-closer partnership.

I Introduction: The Declaration of Interdependence: A Visionary Statement

On the 4 July 1962, President John F. Kennedy gave an address at the Independence Hall in Philadelphia, which would enter into history as the 'Declaration of Interdependence'.¹ An important part of this speech was

* The present article is an adapted and updated version of the winning contribution of the NATO Manfred Wörner Essay Award Competition 2007–2008 (original title: 'Whatever happened to Kennedy's "two pillars"? A Reappraisal of the Transatlantic Security Partnership in the Light of the Emerging European Security and Defence Policy'). For further information see <www.nato.int/acad/fellow/mw00e.htm>.

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¹ J.F. Kennedy, 'Address at Independence Hall', Philadelphia, 4 July 1962, <www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/003POF03IndependenceHall07041962.htm>.

devoted to the president's 'visionary'² approach to the further development of the USA's relationship with Europe. Kennedy was very favourable towards the project of European integration, which according to him the USA should regard 'with hope and admiration' and not consider 'as a rival but as a partner'.³ He added that even though '[b]uilding the transatlantic partnership now will not be easily or cheaply finished', the USA was 'prepared to discuss with a united Europe the ways and means of forming a concrete Atlantic partnership, a mutually beneficial partnership between the new union now emerging in Europe and the old American Union'.⁴ Furthermore, and very importantly, this partnership ought to be 'on a basis of full equality'.⁵

This was due to the realization that even the USA, in spite of its superpower status, could not 'establish justice throughout the world' while acting alone, nor guarantee its 'domestic tranquility, or provide for its common defense'.⁶ Therefore, this new 'Atlantic partnership . . . would not look inward only, preoccupied with its own welfare and advancement . . . It would serve as a nucleus for the eventual union of all free men – those who are now free and those who are vowing that some day they will be free'.⁷

Although Kennedy mentioned a whole range of policy areas in which both sides of the Atlantic should cooperate, including development aid, trade and monetary issues, this paper will focus on what Kennedy called 'the common defense', the embodiment of which has been the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for no fewer than six decades since its foundation in 1949. This is the field where calls for a more equitable and balanced transatlantic partnership have been most strongly reiterated ever since. Yet, this is also the area where such a balance seems to be most difficult to achieve, both in the past and today.

For the purpose of this paper, the current state of the transatlantic partnership in defence matters will be reappraised, taking President Kennedy's design as the benchmark. Therefore, it will be broken down into two core characteristics: partnership and equality. The former means that the two sides have a common set of goals and interests and recognize the need to collaborate in order to fulfil and protect these. The latter is a more specific quality of this relation, namely that both sides have the same weight in deciding which direction the joint enterprise should take and that they share the same burden. This was captured

² As it has rightly been called by M. Schaefer; 'NATO and ESDP: Shaping the European Pillar of a Transformed Alliance', speech at the German Foreign Federal Office, Berlin, 15 March 2004, <www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Infoservice/Presse/Rede/Archiv/2004/040315-NATOAndESDP.html>.

³ Kennedy, note 1 above.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

in the image of the Alliance resting on ‘two pillars’, i.e. North America and Europe, and at the core of these, the USA and what is now the European Union. This image, although attributed to Kennedy, was not mentioned in the speech but has subsequently become a symbol for what he meant by ‘full equality’.⁸

To this end, the existence of these two characteristics will be analysed on three levels following a top-down approach. The first will be the general security policies of the USA and the EU as represented by their respective strategy papers. The second level will deal with their respective capabilities needed to live up to what is envisaged in their strategies. The third level finally will assess their respective defence industries in order to determine their ability to actually procure such capabilities, before drawing a conclusion with regard to the USA–EU relationship within NATO.

Before starting this exercise, however, it should be pointed out that there are opinions of and approaches to the transatlantic relationship that differ from Kennedy’s vision to varying degrees, ranging from favouring a more unequal relationship and a division of labour,⁹ or on the contrary an adversarial counterbalancing by Europe vis-à-vis the USA,¹⁰ to even evoking the inevitable drifting apart of Europe and the USA due to irreconcilable perceptions of the world.¹¹ Also, it must be stressed that not all EU Member States are members of NATO and that the two-pillars image tends to eclipse other important NATO members such as Canada, Norway or Turkey and their contributions to the Alliance. Nevertheless, for reasons of being concise and in order to properly appreciate the appeal that Kennedy’s vision still has in today’s literature and

⁸ See e.g. the French ambassador to the US in 1996: ‘You certainly remember that President Kennedy, back in the early 60s, spoke about the need to have NATO rest on two pillars: one American pillar, one European pillar. This is very much this old Kennedy vision that we are trying to reactivate’; F. Bujon de l’Estang, ‘Interview with CNN’, 28 October 1996, <www.ambafrance-us.org/news/statmnts/1996/amb2810.asp>. Two other examples of this retrospective attribution of the ‘two pillars’ image include: F. Heisbourg – ‘Debate: Is the Fundamental Nature of the Transatlantic Security Relationship Changing?’ (2001) 49/1 NATO Rev., <www.nato.int/docu/review/2001/0101-04.htm> – who also speaks of ‘President John F. Kennedy’s vision of a two-pillar NATO formulated in 1962’; Schaefer, note 2 above, who talks of ‘President John F. Kennedy . . . – again demonstrating great far-sightedness – created the vision of an Atlantic Community resting on two pillars’. This image was actually devised by George Kennan during the negotiations on the Washington Treaty (1948–49) in his capacity as chief policy planner at the US State Department. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. van Staden (Leiden University) for this clarification.

⁹ e.g. A. Moravcsik, ‘Striking a New Transatlantic Bargain’ (2003) 82/2 *Foreign Affairs*, pp. 74–89.

¹⁰ e.g. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (Norton, New York, 2001).

¹¹ e.g. R. Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (Knopf, New York, 2003); also F. Fukuyama, ‘Does “the West” still exist’ in T. Lindberg (ed.), *Beyond Paradise and Power: Europe, America and the Future of the Troubled Partnership* (Routledge, New York/London, 2005), pp. 137–161.

political discourse, this paper will limit itself to assessing what has become of this vision and not embark on discussing these related issues.

II Partnership and Equality in the Transatlantic Relationship Today

At first glance, it is stunning that an approach so enthusiastically heralded in public has had hardly any practical impact for decades. However, a look at the strategic situation during most of this time gives several 'quite understandable reasons'.¹² This can best be explained by the strategic situation during the cold war, where there was no 'choice but to share the same strategic goal and methods, in the face of a single and existential threat'.¹³ However, both sides of the Atlantic were exposed to it to very different degrees. Whereas the Western Europeans were concerned with the 'immediate regional threat'¹⁴ of being overrun in a 'massive attack'¹⁵ by the Soviets and their allies, the USA was concerned with a global attempt to contain communism and maintain overall nuclear deterrence.¹⁶

Through calls for reinforced burden-sharing, the USA rather intended to be offset and thus to be given more leeway and resources in other parts of the world, than to develop a more equitable partnership.¹⁷ This was also reflected in their respective capabilities, as for 'most Western European countries, this required the development of heavy armies built around armour, artillery and short-range air superiority fighters . . . For the USA, by contrast, preparing for a major battle in Europe required precisely the capacities most of its European Allies did not need: mobility, sustainability, the capacity to project and sustain forces over distance and time.'¹⁸ Although it would be an exaggeration to say that this strategic situation degraded the Europeans to 'footsloggers',¹⁹ furnishing 'the bulk of conventional power',²⁰ the very image of this sword–

¹² F. De Rose, 'NATO at Fifty: A European Pillar in the Alliance?', The Eisenhower Institute, 1999, <www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/globalpartnerships/securityandterrorism/coalition/usandnato/NATOatFiftyBook/deRose.htm>.

¹³ J. Appathurai, 'Closing the Capabilities Gap' (2002) 47/3 NATO Rev., <www.nato.int/docu/review/2002/issue3/english/art1.html>.

¹⁴ P. Williams, 'The United State's Commitment to Western Europe: Strategic Ambiguity and Political Disintegration?' (1983) 59/2 Int'l Affairs (RIIA), pp. 195–209 at p. 203.

¹⁵ Appathurai, note 13 above.

¹⁶ Williams, note 14 above, p. 203.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 203–205.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 203.

¹⁹ S. Brown, 'An Alternative to the Grand Design' (1965) 17/2 *World Politics*, pp. 232–242 at p. 237.

²⁰ D. Acheson, 'The Practice of Partnership' (1963) 61/1 *Foreign Affairs*, pp. 247–260 at p. 258.

shield strategy clearly illustrates that this was not a partnership on equal footing, but a very obvious division of labour.²¹

Moreover, it could even be argued that there was no need for a more independent Europe in this respect: neither for the USA, as NATO was for them ‘the most efficient forum to exercise American leadership’,²² nor for the Europeans, since ‘the only salvation rested with NATO, the presence of American forces on the old continent, and the strategy of deterrence based on U.S. nuclear forces’.²³ Moreover, endeavours for autonomous capacities might have weakened American commitment²⁴ in Europe, the preservation of which was the prime aspiration of most European states.

This situation did not change overnight with the end of the cold war. Both NATO and the European states had to redefine their respective future security policies. In 1999, the Alliance updated its strategic concept, recognizing that ‘[t]he dangers of the Cold War have given way to more promising, but also challenging, prospects, to new opportunities and risks’²⁵ and acknowledging that a ‘new Europe of greater integration is emerging’.²⁶ Therefore, in order to address these ‘current and future security challenges’,²⁷ NATO vowed to ‘maintain collective defence and reinforce the transatlantic link and ensure a balance that allows the European Allies to assume greater responsibility’,²⁸ wording that harked back strongly to Kennedy’s speech. As far as the Europeans were concerned, drawing up a common security and defence policy of their own was a very delicate matter, with defence – touching as it does on issues of sovereignty – being a highly sensitive area. At the same time, NATO, an organization that was deprived of its original *raison d’être* and whose demise

²¹ Whereas in the sword–shield analogy the massive retaliation concept meant that European forces were to buy time for the USA to mount a nuclear counter-attack, this secondary role also holds true for the later flexible response strategy. As Williams correctly observes, the conventional forces of Western Europe would then be used as ‘insurance’ to prevent nuclear escalation and keep the conflict limited to Europe; see Williams, note 14 above, pp. 197–198.

²² De Rose, note 12 above.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ NATO, ‘The Alliance’s Strategic Concept, approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C. on 23–24 April 1999’, press release NAC-S(99)65, 24 April 1999, available at <www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm>, para. 3.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., para. 4.

²⁸ Ibid. Since the almost decade-old strategic concept, which was based on the politically unsuccessful idea of a European Security and Defence Identity through the Western European Union (WEU), has become increasingly out of date, it will not be further referred to here. Work on a new strategic concept for NATO is scheduled to commence after this year’s 60th anniversary summit; see J. de Hoop Scheffer, ‘Beyond the Bucharest Summit’, speech at the Brussels Forum, Brussels, 15 March 2008, <www.nato.int/docu/speech/2008/s080315a.html>.

was predicted by many,²⁹ embarked on transforming itself to adapt to the new situation. Nevertheless, this readjustment took over a decade and was not free from difficult external and internal crises. But eventually neither managed to break it, nor even to prevent its enlargement.³⁰

Now, in 2009, the time seems ripe for the reappraisal of Kennedy's vision, and this for several reasons: 16 years have passed since the entry into force of the Treaty of Maastricht, which established the European Union and the Common Foreign and Security Policy, nine years have passed since the European Council of Cologne launched the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), and finally NATO itself is celebrating its 60th anniversary, while Barack Obama, having emerged victorious from the presidential election with an oft-repeated promise of change, takes office in Washington D.C.

By this time, not only has the EU concretized the ESDP by virtue of its European Security Strategy,³¹ it has also fostered its implementation by setting up institutional frameworks for the improvement of its military capabilities and by underpinning these with more efficient procurement mechanisms through the European Defence Agency (EDA). Moreover, in a relatively short period of time, it has already conducted a number of missions by itself, both of a civil and military character, spanning from the Balkans to the Congo, and from the Caucasus to the Horn of Africa and even as far as Indonesia.³² The least that can be said is that this advancing European Union definitely possesses more potential than at any time in the past of becoming the second supporting pillar in the transatlantic partnership.

1. Strategy and General Policy

It is worth examining the extent to which the security strategies of the USA and the EU reflect the spirit of Kennedy's design for the Alliance, for it is a minimum requirement that the two sides recognize each other as important and equal partners on paper. For this purpose, the already mentioned European Security Strategy of 2003 and its US counterpart, the National Security Strategy of 2002 (in its updated version of 2006)³³ will be analysed.

²⁹ For an overview see R. Meier-Walser, 'Die Entwicklung der NATO 1990–2004' in J. Varwick (ed.), *Die Beziehungen zwischen NATO und EU. Partnerschaft, Konkurrenz, Rivalität?* (Budrich, Opladen, 2005), pp. 25–44 at pp. 25–27.

³⁰ Above all the war in the former Yugoslavia, the Kosovo crisis, the terrorist attacks of September 11, the US-led war on Iraq, as well as the Russia–Georgia war of August 2008. See also *ibid.*, at pp. 25 et seq.

³¹ European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 12 December 2003, <ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

³² For a detailed analysis of these missions see J. Howorth, *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union* (Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills & New York, 2007), pp. 207–241.

³³ The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington D.C., 16 March 2006, <www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf>.

In general, it can be observed that the fundamental goals, the assessment of threats, as well as the options envisaged to respond to these are essentially the same in both documents. In other words: 'In broad terms . . . [they] share a similar vision of a "better world"'.³⁴ The main differences exist due to the fact that the USA still sees itself as being 'at war'³⁵ with terrorism, whereas the EU tends to place this phenomenon in a wider, less martial context. The consequence of this is that the US strategy stresses the necessity of 'preemption',³⁶ i.e. military strikes before an actual attack is bound to occur. Whether this part of the strategy will be taken over by the new administration is doubtful as President Obama stressed that 'power grows through its prudent use' and that 'security emanates . . . from the tempering qualities of humility and restraint'.³⁷ Still, the fact remains that Obama continues to see his country as being 'at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred'.³⁸

The EU, for its part, wholeheartedly promotes what it calls 'preventive engagement',³⁹ i.e. a comprehensive approach aimed at solving the root problems of extremism, namely poverty and underdevelopment. All the same, the EU also puts 'terrorism' at the top of its list of key threats.⁴⁰

Turning to the perceptions of their respective partner across the Atlantic, the EU is more than clear. Firstly, it acknowledges that '[t]he United States has played a critical role in European integration and European security, in particular through NATO'.⁴¹ Later, it stresses that '[t]he transatlantic relationship is irreplaceable. Acting together, the European Union and the USA can be a formidable force for good in the world. Our aim should be an effective and balanced partnership with the USA'.⁴² Furthermore, it underlines the importance of NATO, which, in its view, is 'an important expression of

³⁴ S. Duke, 'The European Security Strategy in a Comparative Framework: Does it Make for Secure Alliances in a Better World?' (2004) 9 EFA Rev., pp. 459–481 at p. 479. Duke also refers here to NATO's 1999 strategic concept.

³⁵ National Security Strategy, note 33 above, Introductory letter of the President. See in this respect also The White House, National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, Washington D.C., September 2006, <www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/nsct2006.pdf>, which emphasizes at the start that 'America is at war with a transnational terrorist movement fuelled by a radical ideology of hatred, oppression, and murder', p. 1.

³⁶ National Security Strategy, note 33 above, p. 18.

³⁷ B.H. Obama, inaugural address, Washington D.C., 20 January 2009, <www.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/us/politics/20text-obama.html>. Note also Vice-President Biden's remarks at the Munich Security Conference: '[W]e will strive to act preventively, not preemptively to avoid wherever possible a choice of last resort between the risks of war and the dangers of inaction.' J.R. Biden, speech at the 45th Munich Security Conference, Munich, 7 February 2009, <www.securityconference.de>.

³⁸ Obama, note 37 above.

³⁹ European Security Strategy, note 31 above, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 1.

⁴² Ibid., p. 13.

this relationship'.⁴³ It also states that although the USA is today's dominant military power, 'no single country is able to tackle today's complex problems on its own'.⁴⁴ The EU has re-emphasized its stance in its Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy of December 2008.⁴⁵ In sum, the resemblance to Kennedy's 1962 vision is remarkable both in terms of partnership and equality.

The US strategy, for its part, also readily stresses that 'Europe is home to some of our oldest and closest allies' and that '[o]ur cooperative relations are built on a sure foundation of shared values and interests'.⁴⁶ Therefore, '[t]he North Atlantic Treaty Organization remains a vital pillar of U.S. foreign policy'.⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that the USA also seems to regard the EU as a unitary entity in its strategy.⁴⁸ This has, at least as a first step, been re-emphasized by President G.W. Bush's visit to the EU institutions in spring 2005, where both sides again underscored that the transatlantic partnership was 'irreplaceable and vital' and that 'a strong and united Europe will strengthen this strategic partnership between the European Union and the United States'.⁴⁹ However, notwithstanding this general sense of partnership, the impression prevails that the USA is to be at the head of this common undertaking. In the words of the National Security Strategy: '[T]he United States seeks to extend freedom across the globe by *leading* an international effort to end tyranny and to promote effective democracy.'⁵⁰ This interest in bolstering the EU, as well as the American claim for leadership, both appear likely to be continued by the Obama administration: whereas Barack Obama, still as a presidential candidate, announced in his speech in Berlin that 'America has no better partner than Europe' and that the Americans 'need a strong European

⁴³ European Security Strategy, note 31 above, p. 9; see also pp. 8 and 12 in this regard.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

⁴⁵ European Council, Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World, Brussels, 11 December 2008, <www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/reports/104630.pdf>.

⁴⁶ National Security Strategy, note 33 above, p. 38.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, inter alia pp. 5, 16 and 38. It should be noted though that on page 20 it refers to 'EU partners', i.e. in plural.

⁴⁹ Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 'U.S. President George W. Bush visits the European Union', press release of 22 February 2005, <www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/communiqués/2005/02/22us-com/index.html>.

⁵⁰ National Security Strategy, note 33 above, p. 3. Other examples include: 'The United States will *lead* and calls on other nations to join us in a common international effort' (p. 7); 'America will *lead* in this fight, and we will continue to partner with allies and will recruit new friends to join the battle' (p. 12); 'The United States must *lead* the effort to reform existing institutions and create new ones' (p. 48); 'America must *lead* by deed as well as by example. This is how we plan to *lead*, and this is the legacy we will leave to those who follow' (p. 49) (all emphases added).

Union',⁵¹ he underscored half a year later in his inaugural address as president that it was the USA that was 'ready to *lead once more*'.⁵²

In conclusion, it can be stated that on the one hand, in terms of strategy and general attitude, the EU today fully embodies the 'spirit' of which President Kennedy spoke back in 1962. On the other hand, by claiming an undisputed leading role among its partners in the world, the US views Europe, albeit as a crucial ally, rather as a *primus inter inferiores* than as what President Kennedy called 'a partner with whom we can deal on a basis of full equality'.

2. Structures and Capabilities

Moving down from the high and at times lofty politics of general guidelines and designs to the level of actual institutional structures and operational capabilities, the extent to which the two sides are capable of living up to their aspirations and of effectively sharing the common burden can be assessed.

First, it has to be stated that much has been achieved in recent years to make use of synergies and to close the infamous capabilities gap between the military forces of the USA and the EU thanks to NATO. On the institutional level, the eventual implementation of the Berlin Plus arrangements in 2003, through which the EU is entitled to avail itself of NATO assets and capabilities, can be seen as a milestone in the interlocking of the ESDP with NATO and in paving the way for genuine EU operations.⁵³ Furthermore, this is underpinned by regular meetings between NATO and EU officials, e.g. most prominently between the North Atlantic Council and the EU's Political and Security Committee, and the creation of an EU cell at SHAPE, NATO's headquarters in Europe.⁵⁴ Also, as the European Council concluded last December, '[t]he EU and NATO have worked well together on the ground in the Balkans and in Afghanistan',⁵⁵ a success that has to be largely attributed to this new inter-institutional set-up.

This appears thus to be a viable approach in order to both enable the EU to carry out operations by itself, as stipulated at the European Council in Laeken 2001, and at the same time to reassure the USA that this will entail 'no

⁵¹ B.H. Obama, speech in Berlin, 24 July 2008, <www.nytimes.com>.

⁵² Obama, note 37 above (emphasis added).

⁵³ For a detailed discussion see M. Dembinski, 'Die Beziehungen zwischen NATO und EU von "Berlin" zu "Berlin Plus": Konzepte und Konfliktlinien' in Varwick, note 29 above, pp. 61–80.

⁵⁴ See NATO, *NATO–EU: A Strategic Partnership*, NATO Topics, 25 April 2007, <www.nato.int/issues/nato-eu/evolution.html>. For a critical assessment see Howorth, note 32 above, pp. 160–177.

⁵⁵ European Council, note 45 above, p. 11. However, it was also acknowledged that 'formal relations have not advanced' ever since.

decoupling, no duplication, no discrimination'⁵⁶ of NATO and of the American contributions to it. Moreover, this also led the Gaullist camp within the EU to finally abandon its plans of setting up military structures independent from NATO, which had been formulated in Tervuren in April 2003. To the contrary, France under President Sarkozy has recently announced that it will rejoin NATO's integrated military structure after having left it no fewer than 43 years ago. Vice-President Biden already affirmed that 'the United States, like other Allies, would warmly welcome' such a decision, expecting that this would also 'strengthen the European role within the Alliance'.⁵⁷

Thus, from an institutional point of view, the trend is definitely towards closer cooperation between the USA and the EU through NATO structures. Accepting the setting-up of proper EU structures within – or at least not in opposition to – the transatlantic framework indicates that the USA has come to terms with the further development of the EU as a reinforced and more homogenous component of the Alliance. Notwithstanding, it is yet too early to qualify this as a 'basis of full equality'.

Apart from the institutions as such, it has been frequently stressed that 'what matters'⁵⁸ in the area of defence is actual capabilities.⁵⁹ Here it is more than obvious that the USA and the EU are anything but equal. To illustrate this, a look at the respective defence expenditures in 2005 reveals that all EU Member States combined spent around 40 per cent of the amount the USA spent.⁶⁰ Despite the rising number of ESDP missions, this situation has not changed and leaves EU defence ministers complaining that the USA still has 'more than double' in terms of budget.⁶¹ However, more striking is in fact not the amount of money spent, but rather what the EU spends it on, namely 'to fund 25 armies, 21 air forces and 18 navies'.⁶² What is more, 'the imbalance is especially acute in spending on research, technology and development [where]

⁵⁶ As expressed by the former US foreign minister, Madeline Albright ('The Right Balance will secure NATO's Future', *Financial Times*, 7 December 1998, p. 16).

⁵⁷ Biden, note 37 above.

⁵⁸ C. Grant, 'Reviving European Defence Cooperation' (2003) 51/4 NATO Rev., <www.nato.int/docu/review/2003/issue4/english/art2_pr.html>.

⁵⁹ See C. Bennett, ('Foreword' (2002) 50/3 NATO Rev., <www.nato.int/docu/review/2002/issue3/english/foreword.html>): 'When Lord Robertson became NATO Secretary General he said that he had three priorities: capabilities, capabilities, capabilities.'

⁶⁰ See G. Lindstorm, 'EU-US Burden Sharing: Who Does What?' *Chaillot Paper*, No. 82, EUISS, Paris, 2005, at p. 89 (Table 32).

⁶¹ European Defence Agency, *A Strategy For the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base*, Brussels, 14 May 2007, p. 3, <www.eda.europa.eu>.

⁶² Howorth, note 32 above, at p. 117. To these, the armed forces of Romania and Bulgaria would have to be added today.

the ratio is currently some 6 to 1⁶³ between the USA and the EU, which is experiencing a rapid revolution in military affairs.⁶⁴

While remaining reluctant to increase spending, the EU has launched initiatives aiming at making European capabilities more efficient, like the Helsinki Headline Goal (1999), the European Capabilities Action Plan (2001) and finally the Headline Goal 2010 (2006). However, progress in this respect has been rather slow and significant deficits remain until today.⁶⁵ Since NATO itself is also concerned with the enhancement of European capabilities, it has made efforts alongside the European Union, like the Defence Capabilities Initiative of 1999, later readapted at the Prague Summit of 2002 in order to 'strengthen the European pillar in NATO'.⁶⁶ An interesting feature of this is the NATO Response Force (NRF), which is now fully operational. The NRF is not only providing the Alliance with a technologically advanced, highly ready force, but also has the formidable advantage that owing to its rotation principle among the participating forces, it serves as a catalyst for modernization by using NATO (i.e. above all US) military infrastructure.⁶⁷ Therefore, it enables continuing improvement of European capabilities while maintaining the ability to work together with US forces, i.e. guaranteeing interoperability, and thus avoiding decoupling.⁶⁸

Nonetheless, the slight differences in the analysis of threats and responses as outlined in the preceding section also account to a certain extent for the differences in the current force structures. It has been stressed that while Europeans will be dependent on the USA for high-intensity operations, they may be better trained and equipped for peacekeeping, post-conflict and stabilization missions. This is especially due to the fact that the EU has built sophisticated civil–military capacities including police forces, civil protection

⁶³ European Defence Agency, note 61 above, p. 3.

⁶⁴ For a comprehensive analysis of this development see A. Erger, *Futurismus im Pentagon: Neue Kriegsformen - Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)* (2005, Braumüller, Vienna).

⁶⁵ Council of the European Union, Declaration on Strengthening Capabilities, Brussels, 11 December 2008, pp. 3–4, <www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/esdp/104676.pdf>; also European Council, note 45 above, p. 10; see also in greater detail Council of the European Union, Capabilities Improvement Chart I/2006, <www.consilium.europa.eu>.

⁶⁶ NATO, 'Defence Capabilities Initiative', press release NAC-S(99)69, 25 April 1999, <www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99s069e.htm>.

⁶⁷ I. Garnett, 'NATO Response Force' (2003) 148/6 *The Royal United Services Institute Journal*, pp. 20–25 at p. 23.

⁶⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the NRF see N. Eitelhuber, 'Die NATO Response Force. Ihre Bedeutung für Europa' (2002) 52 *SWP-Aktuell*; and B. Renne, 'Die Europäische Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit: Probleme und Perspektiven der EU-Eingreiftruppe unter besonderer Berücksichtigung ihres Verhältnisses zur NATO-Response Force' (2004) 134 *Hamburger Beiträge zur Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik*.

units in case of disaster and significant numbers of experts in the fields of rule of law and public administration.⁶⁹ Although on a less drastic scale, there is a point in contrasting the hard power gap in favour of the USA with a soft power gap in favour of the Europeans, since the USA has only recently begun to develop such capabilities.⁷⁰

This divergence, however, if not straightened out, poses the danger of a permanent 'division of labour, whereby the high-tech allies (principally the USA) provide the logistics, strategic air- and sealift, intelligence and air power, and the others, by default, find themselves increasingly responsible for the manpower-intensive tasks such as long-term peacekeeping',⁷¹ which is prone to become 'politically unsustainable',⁷² put 'enormous strain on NATO's unity and cohesion',⁷³ and would become increasingly a twenty-first century version of the cold war division of labour mentioned above. Therefore, and instead of fully catching up to the Americans in the revolution of military affairs (which has turned out not to be a panacea for providing security either), it seems more expedient for both to meet in the middle.

To sum up, a drifting apart of the structures used by the USA and the EU has been prevented through institutionally interlocking the ESDP with NATO, thus preserving partnership. However, especially when looking at the actual capabilities, there is an apparent lack of equality. Whether the EU – and to a lesser extent the USA – will be able to close this gap remains to be seen. Here Kennedy's prediction that '[b]uilding the Atlantic partnership now will not be easily or cheaply finished' holds most true.

3. Defence Industries

Moving down to the last point of discussion, the question has to be asked how the EU intends to acquire the hardware for these new capabilities referred to in the preceding section. Drawing up declarations and charts with large numbers

⁶⁹ Council, Declaration on Strengthening Capabilities, note 65 above, pp. 2–3; see also Council of the European Union, Civilian Capabilities Improvement Conference 2006, Ministerial Declaration, Brussels, 13 November 2006, <www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/civilian_crisis_management_20.11.pdf>.

⁷⁰ See V. Heise, *Die ESVP in transatlantischer Perspektive. Mehr Unterschiede als Gemeinsamkeiten?*, discussion paper of the Stiftung für Wissenschaft und Politik, March 2006, Berlin, 2006, p. 6. Note also the initiative by the new US administration to 'Integrate Military and Civilian Efforts: The Obama–Biden Administration will build up the capacity of each non-Pentagon agency to deploy personnel and area experts where they are needed, to help move soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines out of civilian roles.' The White House, The Agenda: Defense, <www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/defense>.

⁷¹ Appathurai, note 13 above.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

of high-end forces on ministerial conferences is one thing, but being able to actually produce the materials needed for such units is far more complicated. Without an adequate and effective industrial and technological basis, these aspirations will not be realizable. Therefore, it is indispensable to take into account the conditions of the defence industry of the EU, also in comparison to the USA.

The first observation to be made here is that one cannot even speak of a single European defence industry. Rather, the EU is fragmented into 27 national industries that vary remarkably in size. Furthermore, except for dual-use goods, trade in defence equipment is virtually excluded from the Internal Market through an excessive recourse to Article 296 of the EC Treaty, thus inhibiting the free circulation of these goods within the EU, complicating joint procurement programs and thus, as the European Commission itself put it, 'effectively assimilating Member States to third countries'.⁷⁴ This is both an ineffective and highly costly situation.⁷⁵

A number of initiatives to improve this have been taken, most prominently by setting up the European Defence Agency and by adopting the legally non-binding European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports (1998) as well as the Code of Conduct on Defence Procurement of the EU Member States Participating in the European Defence Agency and the Code of Best Practice in the Supply Chain (2005). However, it remains unclear whether these efforts will eventually lead to a truly common market for armaments. Javier Solana, the EU's High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (who is also head of the EDA) harshly criticized the current situation in early 2007, reminding EU Member States that '[n]o one should remain under the illusion that a healthy and comprehensive DTIB [defence technology industrial base] can be sustained on a national basis'⁷⁶ and calling for 'radical changes'.⁷⁷ Whether this verbal pressure will suffice to bring about these necessary changes remains yet to be seen. By the end of 2008, the EU Council at least acknowledged that '[a] robust and competitive European

⁷⁴ Commission of the European Communities, Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on simplifying terms and conditions of transfers of defence-related products within the Community, COM (2007) 765 final, 5 December 2007, at p. 3.

⁷⁵ According to a study for the European Commission, market fragmentation alone produces annual costs of around EUR3.16 billion per year; P.-E. Schmitz and M. Flammang, 'Analysis of the impact of a proposal for intra-Community transfers of defence products: Impact Assessment', final report of the study 'Analysis of the impact of a proposal for intra-Community transfers of Defence products', carried out by Unisys for the European Commission, Brussels, February 2007, p. 42.

⁷⁶ J. Solana, keynote speech, EDA Conference on the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base, S040/07, Brussels, 1 February 2007, available at <www.eda.europa.eu>, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 1.

defence technological base . . . is both a strategic and an economic necessity for the EU',⁷⁸ and pledged to reinforce its efforts to that end.

By contrast, the US defence industry is not only organized in a single market and dealing with one main procurement agency, namely the Pentagon, but also has – and with remarkable speed – consolidated into a limited number of large corporations, the so-called 'system integrators'. Of these, the EU has only EADS to offer, which is marked by recurring crises among its different national shareholders.⁷⁹ This is certainly the aspect in transatlantic relations where one could speak least of equal footing.

Moreover, so far there has been hardly any cooperation in this respect across the Atlantic (apart from simply purchasing US products), with MEADS (the Medium Extended Air Defence System) being a rare exception.⁸⁰ Whereas Europe's defence industry is characterized by its heterogeneity, so is that of the USA by its foreclosure against the outside world. Foreign companies have almost no access to the American market, and there have hardly been any mergers of corporations across the Atlantic. Therefore, the term 'Fortress America'⁸¹ in this respect is quite appropriate. As the EU defence ministers, meeting as the EDA steering board, put it in May 2007, they continue to see 'the problem of accessing the US defence market, and of establishing balanced technology exchanges across the Atlantic'.⁸² In turn, this required them 'to cooperate more closely to ensure the future of their own'⁸³ defence technological and industrial base.

In the end, it remains true that if such a "fortress America" persists, and if Europe develops a common armaments policy "in opposition" to the USA, there is a risk of confrontation between two closed systems, with damaging consequences for relations within industry in particular, but also for transatlantic relations in general'.⁸⁴ Conversely, apart from economic and technological advantages, enhanced cooperation of the defence industries across the Atlantic would also have a beneficial linking effect for the Alliance

⁷⁸ Council, Declaration on Strengthening Capabilities, note 65 above, p. 5.

⁷⁹ For an overview see B. Blumenau, F. Groba, J. Larik and D. Rosen, 'Deutschland und die europäische Rüstungskooperation: Perspektiven für einen hochsensiblen Politikbereich' in A. Niemann and A. Brand (eds), *Interessen und Handlungsspielräume in der deutschen und europäischen Außenpolitik* (TUD-Press, Dresden, 2007), pp. 215–239 at pp. 230–234; also C. Grams, 'Transatlantische Rüstungskooperation: Wandel und Bedeutung' (2003) 10 *Kieler Analysen zur Sicherheitspolitik*, pp. 5–13.

⁸⁰ See J. Rohde and A. James, 'The Future of Transatlantic Armaments Co-operation', working paper for the Stiftung für Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, July 2004, p. 9.

⁸¹ B. Schmitt, 'Fortress America in a changing transatlantic defence market' in idem (ed.), 'Between Cooperation and Competition: The Transatlantic Defence Market', *Chaillot Paper*, No. 44, EUISS, Paris, 2001, pp. 3–49.

⁸² European Defence Agency, note 61 above, p. 2.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ B. Schmitt, 'Introduction' in *Chaillot Paper*, No. 44, note 84 above, pp. 1–2 at p. 1.

as such. It is thus apparent that most remains to be done in this respect, both in terms of equality and partnership.

IV Concluding Remarks: An Ever-changing, Yet Ever-closer Partnership?

After having analysed the different levels of the contemporary USA–EU relationship within NATO, a conclusion will now be drawn as to whether there is today, in the year of NATO’s 60th anniversary, such a ‘concrete Atlantic Partnership’ in matters of defence as Kennedy envisaged back in 1962.

First, it can well be stated that history confirmed Kennedy’s prediction that such a ‘great new edifice is not built overnight’. Following the end of the cold war, it took the Europeans over a decade to devise a framework of what an integrated European pillar in the Alliance could look like.

In terms of common values, interests and ways to protect these, a common understanding and a strong sense of partnership are evident across the Atlantic, in spite of all the crises the Alliance has endured in recent times. Although a claim of leadership persists on part of the USA, this does not necessarily exclude a prospective partnership in leadership with Europe, to borrow an expression from another former US president, George Bush sr.⁸⁵ This in turn leads to the question of institutions and capabilities, which would be the indispensable underpinning of such a relationship on an equal footing. Here it can be observed that the cooperation between the EU and the USA through NATO has been consolidated by a number of institutional links. However, it remains yet to be seen how this will affect their respective stakes in the Alliance. A look at the capabilities now in place reveals that by no means can one speak of equality and true burden-sharing. Whereas the EU now possesses some key capabilities in the civil–military area, where it is thus by way of an exception ahead of the USA, in general it continues to lag far behind. When eventually looking at armaments cooperation as a means of closing the gap, it has to be noted that there is neither anything close to equality, nor seems there to be a real sense of partnership to start with.

As a bottom line, one could say that the farther one moves away from what is envisaged on paper towards the circumstances in reality, the more remote a tangible, strong European pillar becomes. Then again, it has to be conceded that on all these levels, initiatives have been taken and it will be worthwhile to keep these processes under constant scrutiny. This was also the gist of the last NATO summit that took place in Bucharest in April 2008. In its final declaration

⁸⁵ This concept originally described the new relationship envisaged between the USA and the Federal Republic of Germany; G.H.W. Bush, ‘A Europe whole and free’, remarks to the citizens in Mainz, 31 May 1989, <usa.usembassy.de/etexts/ga6-890531.htm>.

there, the Alliance highlighted the ‘significant progress’⁸⁶ that had been made in terms of transformation, but in the same breath conceded that ‘this is a process that must continue’.⁸⁷ Especially, NATO members were ‘determined to improve the EU NATO strategic partnership’,⁸⁸ stressing that ‘[a] stronger EU will further contribute to [their] common security’,⁸⁹ an attitude which as we have seen is being vocally upheld by the new US administration.

I would like to conclude by presenting a more European interpretation of the way towards establishing two equal pillars. While President Kennedy stressed that ‘[t]he first order of business is for our European friends to go forward in forming the more perfect union which will someday make this partnership possible’,⁹⁰ it could also be argued that there is, through the very nature of European integration, no ultimate point in time where one could say: The European Pillar is now ready and complete. Maybe we should acquaint ourselves with the thought that there is no *finalité* in building the European pillar and indeed the transatlantic relationship as a whole. This realization can also draw on the convictions of the President Barack Obama, whose call for change became the hallmark of his campaign for the presidency. That this notion of change has to be understood more as a continuous effort for improvement than a one-time fix also regarding transatlantic relations was well-illustrated by his remarks in Berlin last summer: ‘true partnership and true progress requires constant work and sustained sacrifice.’⁹¹ Therefore, as with the concept of the ever-closer union, we should also contemplate the Atlantic Alliance as an ever-changing, yet ever-closer partnership, requiring constant improvement and adjustment to a rapidly changing world. In my view, the history of NATO and its transformation actually support such an approach.⁹² President Kennedy said that this partnership would ‘not be completed in a year, but let the world know it is our goal’.⁹³ Perhaps it will never be ultimately completed, but this certainly does not make it any less of a goal to strive for.

⁸⁶ NATO, ‘Bucharest Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008’, press release (2008)049, 3 April 2008, <www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-049e.html>, para. 1.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., para. 14.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Kennedy, note 1 above.

⁹¹ Obama, note 37 above.

⁹² Also at the Bucharest Summit it was stressed that ‘[t]ransformation is a continual process and demands constant and active attention’, note 86 above, para. 45.

⁹³ Kennedy, note 1 above.