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In spring 2001, two years after the outbreak of the war in Kosovo (and six months before the terrorist atrocities in the United States), the political balance in the Balkans seemed to shift decisively. A pro-western, post-Tudjman government was elected in Croatia. The long dreamt of downfall of Slobodan Milosevic – ultimately leading to his arrest and trial for war crimes – took place virtually without bloodshed in Serbia. A fragile peace, at least, held in Bosnia.

Then, rather suddenly, the Balkans appeared on the brink of yet another war. The failure of NATO forces to seal its Kosovo’s borders allowed Kosovar Albanian rebels to move arms and fighters into neighboring Macedonia, where they sought to foment the discontent of Macedonia’s large Albanian minority and provoke a new war. In March 2001, Albanian rebels attacked the border town of Tetovo, defended by the poorly-equipped and trained and largely conscripted Macedonian army. Eventually, no less than 67,000 more Balkan citizens, most of them Macedonian Slavs, became refugees. The events prompted frantic diplomacy by the European Union (EU), led by its High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Javier Solana. The new American administration of George W Bush remained very much in the background.²

Within a month, EU foreign ministers were signing a new political and economic (‘Stabilisation and Association’) accord with Macedonia, which traded the promise of eventual EU membership for an end to discrimination against Macedonian Albanians.³ The political unity of the EU, and speed with which it had acted, led Srgjan Kerim, Macedonia’s Foreign Minister, to comment, ‘This is a Europe that speaks with one voice and that is efficient’.⁴ Arben Xhaferi, a leading ethnic Albanian Macedonian, observed that, ‘Troops and weapons did not stop the violence. What did was the hope provided by the EU that it would intervene in starting political negotiations’.⁵

If these comments were reported at all in the US media, they must have shocked the EU’s many detractors amongst America’s pundits and political class.⁶ Yet, the EU-brokered agreement signified a decisive if little-noticed (especially after 11 September) shift in the balance of power between the US
and EU in the Balkans. Regardless of the fragility of the Macedonian settlement, and the crucial role of NATO in preserving it, the actions, influence, and magnetism of the EU have made it the clear diplomatic leader of the west in the region. Carl Bildt, the EU's envoy to the region for most of the 1990s, goes as far as to claim that 'the new empire [in the Balkans] is the EU'.

This paper grapples with a simple question: what does the record of western policy in the Balkans tell us about the relationship between Europe and America? Have policy successes in the region — bringing peace to Bosnia, prosecuting the war in Kosovo, fostering democracy in Croatia and Serbia, and preventing (with luck) a fourth Balkan War in Macedonia — been the fruits of a kind of US-EU partnership? Or have the interests of the transatlantic partners simply overlapped, producing limited policy success despite copious myopia and infighting? Especially now that the new, global 'war on terrorism' promises to recast US-EU relations (and many other international relationships), this paper asks whether the experience of the Balkans suggests that a new, more general, and pragmatic division of labour is possible between Europe and America (see Chalmers 2001).

The paper develops three central arguments. First, the US had become a junior partner in the Balkans even before the terrorist attacks of September 2001 marginalised the region as a concern in Washington. The US provided only about 15 per cent of the military peacekeeping forces in the region even in advance of signals that Washington would redeploy forces from the Balkans to Afghanistan. America's contribution to the non-military costs of Balkan reconstruction was always very small. Despite the Bush administration's preference to scale back the American presence in the region (declared long before September 2001), the role of minor partner is not one that the US is used to or can be expected to adjust to easily.

Second, the experience of the Balkans reveals that an important force for European unity in foreign policy — perhaps even a precondition — is American prodding. The Americans demanded EU unity on Balkans policy consistently, as a first-order goal, starting from when war first broke out in 1991, again during the Bosnian war, and yet again in Kosovo. Each time, the EU showed progressively more unity. In European circles, the extent to which the US becomes a regulator of the EU's almost natural tendency towards national hypocrisy in foreign policy remains underappreciated.

Third, it is impossible to read the early, eyewitness diplomatic history of the Balkans wars (see Owen 1996; Bildt 1998; Holbrooke 1998) without being struck by how very young the EU was as a foreign policy player when Yugoslavia first began crumbling. The CFSP, unveiled with great fanfare in the
early 1990s, is perhaps only now beyond infancy. There is no doubt that it will be many years before the EU realises its ambitions to have a credible European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP; see Howarth 2001). NATO remains the primary channel for America’s European diplomacy in the eyes of Washington. But it is now possible, far more than ever before, to speak of the EU as a single foreign policy actor – at least in the Balkans – and even to see US-EU exchanges as gradually supplanting NATO, very slowly but gradually, as the most important conduit for transatlantic exchanges.

This paper does not provide either a chronology or thick description of events of the post-1991 Balkan Wars. Instead it offers an overview of how the US and EU have interacted and cooperated – or not – since Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia declared their independence from Belgrade. Its theoretical ambitions are limited to posing (without definitely answering) the question of whether the ability of the US and EU to keep their partnership intact on Balkans policy is attributable to the commitment of both to the ‘logic of arguing’ (Risse 2000). When allies embrace this logic, the goal of acting together, even when divisive clashes of view have to be reconciled, becomes a first-order goal. The question has become far more interesting since the election of George W. Bush and particularly in the aftermath of 11 September 2001.

The paper begins by examining the mechanisms that now exist for US-EU exchange and cooperation on foreign policy generally and Balkans policy specifically. Then, after assessing US and EU policies towards the Balkans individually, the paper evaluates the record of transatlantic cooperation. Third, it identifies lessons that have been learned in the Balkans by foreign policymakers on both sides that are likely to inform future policy. Fourth, the paper assesses the state of the transatlantic relationship on matters of foreign policy more generally. The conclusion seeks to give a rounded, sober answer to the question: how has the foreign policy nightmare in the Balkans shaped perceptions about the scope for genuine US-EU partnership on foreign policy more generally?

The Mechanisms for US-EU Cooperation

Despite close scrutiny by observers and academics, one important change in US foreign policy in the 1990s was never really ballyhooed, or even much noticed. The US shifted fundamentally to embrace a regular, institutionalised dialogue with the EU, as opposed to its individual Member States or its European counterparts within NATO. The US-EU dialogue established itself as a key strand of transatlantic diplomacy, supplanting US bilateral dealings with individual European states and exchanges within NATO. First the Bush (Sr.) administration, via the Transatlantic Declaration of 1990; and then Bill Clinton,
via the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA) of 1995 made the European Union itself a focal point of US diplomacy.

In Bush's case, the EU was embraced as an anchor of geopolitical stability after wrenching and rapid changes in post-1989 Europe found the US foreign policy community struggling - often stumbling - to respond with sensible policies (see Peterson 1996). In Clinton's case, concern about the severe Euro-American split within NATO over Bosnia combined with hard, high-level lobbying by the US ambassador to the EU, Stuart Eizenstat (a seasoned, political heavyweight), to produce a major upgrade on the Transatlantic Declaration process in 1995. The NTA marked a shift from mere dialogue to actual policy cooperation (see Peterson 1996; Ginsberg 2001). By the end of the 1990s, the US and EU were locked into a multi-layered and very thick set of exchanges between officials, representatives of civil society, and political leaders, with twice-annual high-level summits at its apex (see Pollack and Shaffer 2001).

The engine room of the NTA process was meant to be a Senior Level Group (SLG) of US sub-cabinet officials, senior European Commission officials, and top officials of the state holding the rotating Presidency of the EU's Council of Ministers. The SLG was to oversee transatlantic relations in the most general sense. Centrally placed in the US-EU 'political dialogue' (see figure 1), the SLG was to cover all transatlantic issues in a horizontal manner, and work at the centre of a compartmentalised, 'hub and spokes' set of dialogues on trade, aid, environment, trans-border crime and so on. In practice, however, the SLG became increasingly dominated by the US and European foreign policy communities after 1995, with exchanges focused on a relatively narrow agenda of 'straight' (that is, non-economic or environmental) foreign policy issues.

In the view of the European Commission (2001: 7), the NTA had produced 'many success stories, the most prominent being the effective coordination of policy and action in the Western Balkans'. In other areas, such as environmental diplomacy and trade disputes, the results were far less impressive. By 2001 both sides were disparaging what had become a 'vast bureaucratic symphony with few benefits' (Commission 2001: 16), and were looking for ways to make the NTA 'more action-oriented' (US State Department 2001: 1).
A specific problem was that the urgent tended to drive the important out of bilateral exchanges. The only transatlantic summit mentioned in Richard Holbrooke's (1998: 67) long and detailed Balkans diary notes that it 'quickly turned into a Bosnia crisis session, and the rest of the agenda – including economic, trade, law enforcement, and environmental issues – was swept away'. Conversely, the 1998 London summit was dominated by a looming crisis over the Helms-Burton US trade law, leaving little time for discussion of the rapid deterioration of the situation in Kosovo. Generally, however, the 'former Yugoslavia remained on top of the agenda of EU-US cooperation' throughout the 1990s (Frellesen 2001: 334).
Of course, the NTA framework was only one channel for exchanges between America and Europe on the Balkans, and often not the most important one. US-EU exchanges became a second order channel on Balkans policy compared to exchanges within NATO, particularly when the west intervened militarily in Bosnia in 1995 and Kosovo in 1999. Arguably, in Bosnia and Kosovo, ‘NATO’s military intervention was dictated predominantly by the need to establish a new role for itself in the post-Cold War’ world (Weymouth 2001b: 2). The NATO military operation in Bosnia was the first it had ever undertaken, and it came at a time when its relevance was subject to question, with many pundits arguing that it had to go ‘out of area or out of business’. The western action in Kosovo began almost simultaneously with the 1999 Washington NATO summit, which both celebrated the institution’s 50th anniversary and officially welcomed the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland into NATO’s fold. Certainly on the US side, but also on the European, the exchanges that mattered most on the Balkans when the violence in the region was at its worst took place within NATO.

Moreover, with the EU struggling to make the CFSP work in 1994, the west’s special envoys to the former Yugoslavia, Cyrus Vance and David Owen, were obliged to accept (reluctantly) the so-called Contact Group to coordinate western diplomacy. First proposed by the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, the Contact Group brought together lead officials of the US and Russia along with Germany, France and the UK (eventually Italy) in a cabal that left other EU states isolated. Even those shut out of the Contact Group could not deny its usefulness in keeping Russia on board and the US engaged as the conflict in Bosnia threatened to spin out of control. The Contact Group (alongside exchanges within the Group of Eight) facilitated the kind of agile, rapid decision-making, especially compared to more formalised NTA exchanges, needed for crisis management. Nuttall (2000: 268-9) argues that the Contact Group could ‘in different conditions, have been presented as a dynamic new form of foreign-policy making within the CFSP’ but that ultimately it ‘impaired the credibility of the CFSP’, and the EU more generally. However much the Union had found its feet in foreign policy seven years on, the Contact Group (not the EU itself) drew up a political ‘road map’ for Kosovo in spring 2001.

Meanwhile, bilateral (and multilateral) diplomacy between the US and the European permanent members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council shaped western policy after 1991 in important ways. However, the UN was gradually eased out of a front-line role in the Balkans. Especially after its humiliation in Bosnia, where UN-designated ‘safe havens’ were overrun with tragic humanitarian consequences, the UN appeared completely marginalized by the time of Kosovo: ‘it was unable to defuse the crisis. It was unable to establish
a political presence in Kosovo. It was unable to secure the consistent cooperation of the parties. It did not oversee the ceasefire. It did not use economic sanctions. And it did not authorize either the threat or the use of force by NATO' (Travers 2001: 272). Hamstrung by inadequate resources and a lack of American support, the UN faced charges of 'moral defeatism'. In particular, it was forced to offer a humiliating apology after an internal investigation of its conduct in the days surrounding the fall of the safe haven of Srebrenica in July 1995, when as many as 10,000 Muslims were massacred (see Rohde 1997).

The UN was and remains a major player in the Balkans, not least because it and its agencies now are responsible for much of the administration of Kosovo. The International Criminal Tribunal (ICT) for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague, to which the UN gave life, continues to pursue (with varying levels of assistance from NATO) and try war criminals, not least Slobodan Milosevic. But the widespread perception that the UN fundamentally failed in Bosnia dealt a crushing blow to the organization, from it recovered only when it became a vital foil for assembling a global coalition against terrorism after September 2001. Still, particularly in the US but also in Europe, the experience of the Balkans made the UN seem a less essential channel in the transatlantic relationship.

In short, the Balkans has remained at the top of US and EU foreign policy agendas for most of the past 10 years. All the institutions noted in this section, above all NATO, have been crucial channels of transatlantic exchange. However, after 1995 the transatlantic allies were locked by the NTA into meeting with each other biannually at the highest level, and at senior official levels another 10 times per year (Philippart and Winand 2001b: 399). What remains to be seen, in the rest of this paper, is what has been achieved by these exchanges and with what effects.

The Record of US-EU Cooperation

An evaluation of how much and how effectively the US and EU acted together in the Balkans conflicts first requires analysis of American and European policies towards the Balkans, as discrete entities in themselves, in the decade after 1991.

The EU

The verdict on the EU’s performance when hostilities in the Balkans initially erupted is quite clear: the Union failed utterly and miserably. In retrospect, the notion that the EU could somehow solve the problem by itself, brokering a peace settlement between Belgrade and the breakaway republics of Croatia and
Slovenia, was naïve. The subsequent determination of Germany to recognise the independence of Croatia and Slovenia in 1991, although not without support from other EU Member States, probably made the war in Bosnia inevitable. As it dragged on the Union spoke and acted with a single voice only because, first, the US insisted on one; and, second, it became the only way to ensure the safety of European military personnel involved in the humanitarian aid effort.

The EU’s performance during the Kosovo crisis is a matter of considerably more debate. One view holds that ‘few events in the history of European integration have undermined the EU’s image as much as the member states’ collective impotence in the Kosovo crisis’ (Ramirez and Szapiro 2001: 122). According to this view, the EU was ‘inconsequential’ on Kosovo, and ended up either wielding old policy instruments that were weak and inappropriate (‘pouring new wine from old bottles’) or supporting the initiatives of others, including NATO and the Americans (Ramirez and Szapiro 2001: 124). Advocates of this line concede that the EU’s aid effort to the Balkans in the 1990s – more than €5 billion from the EU alone (and about the same amount from individual Member States) in the 1990s – was substantial, even if much of it was wasted in various ways. They also acknowledge the EU’s lead in applying economic sanctions and its postwar Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, which included unilateral trade preferences and could fairly be described as ‘the first EU preventative, strategic and pan-continental action’ undertaken under the CFSP (Ramirez and Szapiro 2001: 130). But supporters of this view also point to the admission of several European leaders, including the Greek Prime Minister Costa Simitis, that the Union took far too long in preparing the Pact: ‘The EU should have been bolder and developed an integrated strategy for the Balkans rather than intervening selectively and spasmodically’.16

An alternative view is that ‘the EU did do what the EU traditionally does well: it contributed to the last minute diplomacy that led Milosevic to cease hostilities and it took international leadership of the stabilization of the countries of the western Balkans and of the reconstruction plan for Kosovo’ (Ginsberg 2001: 357-8). Going even further, the French President, Jacques Chirac, insists that ‘From Rambouillet through to the mission of the Finnish Presidency [of 1999], Europe showed a real solidarity and a real political dynamism’.17 Once the NATO bombing began in late March 1999, the Union –especially Joshka Fischer, the German Foreign Minister, and Romano Prodi (at this point still President-designate of the Commission) – took the lead in efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis. Fischer could rightly claim to be the father of the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe.18 Less than a year after assuming office, Fischer showed himself to be both a powerful intellectual force and uncompromising critic of past western policy in the Balkans:
A German Green and former pacifist, Fischer also turned out to be a strong ally of Albright in insisting on hard-line military response to Serb repression of Kosovar Albanians. For his part, Prodi – before taking over a lifeless and demoralised Commission (see Peterson 2002) and while still commanding media attention – joined Fischer in insisting, only days after the NATO bombing began, that the only solution for the Balkans was regional: a ‘new Southeastern Europe’ closely associated to the EU. Less than two months after the bombing over Kosovo stopped, the Union was co-chairing both an international donor conference and then an international summit on the Balkans, which together channelled significant amounts of aid not only to Kosovo but also nearby states which had suffered through the war: Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia.

Ultimately, the image of the EU as the true power broker in the Kosovo conflict rests largely on the crucial role played by Martti Ahtisaari, the Finnish President, who was appointed as the EU’s envoy to the region. A fluent Russian speaker and vastly experienced international diplomat, Ahtisaari (together with Victor Chernomyrdin, acting as Russia’s envoy) negotiated a ceasefire in early June 1999 that ended the NATO bombing and led to the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo. Having sealed the deal in Belgrade, Ahtisaari pointedly passed up the chance to hold a joint press conference with the US Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott, and instead reported directly to the Cologne EU summit and then appeared at the EU’s own press conference. Cologne saw European leaders adopt the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and, perhaps above all, anoint Solana as the EU’s first High Representative for the CFSP.

This confluence of events and decisions, in some ways coincidental, made it easy to overstate the EU’s new maturity as a foreign policy actor. Yet, as a senior State Department official at the forefront of US-EU relations observed a few months later:

Kosovo was seen as a military event in Washington and the EU isn’t really seen as more than a reconstructor in the region. But Solana is seen as a serious figure. Given the enormous scepticism on our side about the CFSP, it would’ve cost the EU a lot in terms of their credibility with us if they’d appointed a lightweight to that job.
Ultimately, Kosovo required a diplomatic solution. It is plausible to think that the successful, joint diplomatic initiative of the EU and Russia could only have been activated by the Union, with the Americans one step removed but very much in the background. It is equally plausible to think that the EU itself kept the European side of the NATO alliance from collapsing, despite the enormous domestic political difficulties of the Italian and Greek governments in supporting NATO bombing. Finally, it can be argued that the Union hung together only because the Clinton administration stubbornly insisted on European unity.

In Macedonia, Solana emerged, alongside NATO’s Secretary-General, Lord (George) Robertson, as the west’s leading mediator. More generally, the pacification (at least temporarily) of the Macedonian conflict, which several times appeared ready to erupt during summer 2001, showed that the EU had learned to use the powerful symbolism of European unity, as well as its substantial economic power, as diplomatic tools. To a considerable extent, the Union managed to do what only it could do: defuse the powerful tensions arising from the west’s rigid adherence to the principles of self-determination and the inviolability of borders even though large and often victimized Albanian minorities were marooned within states – Macedonia and Yugoslavia – which discriminated against them systematically (see Eldridge 2001). The EU engineered what the French journalist, Jean-Baptiste Naudet, called a ‘change of script’ in the Balkans: the discrediting of demands for ethnic separatism or independence and the promulgation of values that could help the Balkans ‘join Europe’, including human rights, minority rights, and regional cooperation (see Judah 2001: 36). The new script is now clear in the daily utterances of the region’s political classes:

we want these borders to become less important. We are thinking of joining the EU so want this to be a region of cooperation. The philosophy of nationalism, of extremism, goes against the principles of a united Europe. The nationalists and extremists want to close borders and create small nation-states. For us that would be counterproductive. 21

The US

A close reading of the diplomatic history of the 1990s yields the verdict that US policy in the Balkans was truly decisive only twice. 22 First, after a (probably but not certainly) Serb mortar killed at least thirty-seven people in a Sarajevo marketplace in February 1994. Second, when Serbian forces and paramilitaries began systematic ethnic cleansing in Kosovo in 1999. In between Dayton and Rambouillet, the Balkans commanded little diplomatic attention and few resources in Washington. To illustrate the point, as late as February 1998 the US chief mediator in the Balkans described the Kosovo Liberation Army as (KLA)
‘a small, irrelevant terrorist group’. Four months later, the KLA controlled about 40 per cent of Kosovar territory (Ramet 2001b: 168).

Even when US policy was decisive, it was subject to strong domestic constraints that the Clinton administration overrode only with persistence and even political courage. The Dayton peace accord would have been undermined if Congress had not voted in favour of a large US contribution to the peacekeeping force that was sent under NATO’s command to enforce it, and Clinton had to lobby hard to get a positive vote. Just after the NATO bombing mission began in Kosovo, no fewer than 41 US Senators (including 38 of Clinton’s rivals from the Republican party) voted against using force against Belgrade.23

The American aid effort to the Balkans has never come close to matching up to Clinton’s own conviction (expressed in 1995) that ‘if we can get peace, we should be prepared to put up a billion dollars’ (quoted in Holbrooke 1998: 87). All US efforts to mediate in the Bosnian war relied heavily on what Richard Holbrooke (1998: 87) himself termed ‘an obvious inconsistency’: the promise of a ‘comprehensive program for regional economic reconstruction’, but a lack of US commitment to fund it. By 2001 USAID’s Support for East European Democracy (SEED) channelled about half of all of its funding – less than $400 million per year – to Bosnia. The entire programme was worth about same as EU aid to Kosovo alone.24

The US certainly paid in other ways. NATO spent nearly $6 billion on the military effort in Kosovo, with the lion’s share of the cost borne by the US: it deployed 80 per cent of NATO aircraft and delivered 85 per cent of precision-guided munitions (UK House of Commons: 6). Dogged American determination to bomb targets in Serbia, including ones almost certain to lead to civilian casualties, arguably tipped the internal political balance in Russia towards hard-liners and the military, as manifest in the brutal Russian assault on Chechnya a few months later (see Skidelsky 1999). The accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade had a huge diplomatic fall-out.

Even if the EU’s Member States were providing more than two-thirds of troops to KFOR, the peacekeeping force in Kosovo by 2001, it was worth recalling that the original deadline for ending the US military presence in Bosnia was December 1996. Clinton’s second term Secretary of Defence, William Cohen (a former Republican Senator), argued during his 1997 Congressional confirmation hearing that Europe should become fully responsible for peacekeeping in Bosnia after 1998. Yet, American troops (around 10,000 of them) remained on the ground in the Balkans until the Bush administration signalled in autumn 2001 that it was preparing to redeploy some or all to
Afghanistan. In short, successive US administrations took genuine political risks in the Balkans. The eventual toppling of hard-line nationalist governments via democratic elections in Serbia and Croatia in 2000 sustained the view that the use of American military power brought peace to the Balkans, in much the same way as Reaganites could claim that their massive military build-up induced the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Yet, in Bosnia, European complaints about the Clinton administration’s lack of will to enforce the political side of the Dayton agreement were shared by American opinion leaders, one of whom insisted that it was ‘a big stretch to advertise [Bosnia] as a Clinton foreign policy success’ (Lewis 1996: 6). In Kosovo, the administration clearly miscalculated the extent to which Milosevic was willing to hold out under fierce military attack. The weekend before a deal was struck to end the NATO bombing campaign, officials in the National Security Council were openly admitting that the US stood on the brink of one its worst ever foreign policy disasters, and even began seeking support for the option of arming the KLA instead of bombing the Serbs, to the astonishment of many European diplomats (see Peterson 2001: 181-2).

Clearly, the Kosovo war ended because of deft diplomacy in which the EU was a major player. In retrospect, Kosovo was difficult to celebrate as either a triumph of US foreign policy or NATO strategy (see Galen Carpenter 2000; Daalder and O’Hanlon 2000; Clark 2001). More generally, few would dispute the assessment of an Italian diplomat that the Balkans showed how American foreign policy became overwhelmingly ‘more “issue-driven” than “vision-driven”’ in the 1990s (Massari 2000: 104). Only after the terrorist atrocities of September 2001 did Washington seem to come to grips with the simple reality that vision requires sustained commitment to a set of principles to be defended, as opposed to ad hoc responses to crises as they occur.

Transatlantic Cooperation or Conflict?

One way to gauge the importance of US-EU exchanges on Balkans policy under the NTA is to consider what transpired before and after it was agreed in 1995. The four years after 1991 were marked by plenty of transatlantic conflict or cases of solo diplomacy by the US, EU, or members of the latter. Germany shocked many of its EU partners, as well as the US, by unilaterally recognising Croatia and Slovenia in December 1991. The Clinton administration chose to ignore arms shipments from Iran to the Bosnian Muslims in 1994, when it was meant to be helping to enforce an arms embargo. The Dayton accord was brokered by the US with the European Union’s envoy, Carl Bildt, and representatives of the EU members of the Contact Group literally locked out of the negotiating rooms.
By the time the NTA was agreed at the end of 1995, Croatia and Slovenia were internationally recognised states. The Dayton accord on Bosnia was in place. Kosovo was smouldering but subdued. Thus, the focus of the NTA — more particularly its Joint Action Plan (JAP) — was on ‘peace and post-war reconstruction in the former Yugoslavia’, which was placed at the very top of the JAP’s very long list of specific cooperation actions or aspirations. Specifically, the JAP committed the US and EU to cooperate to:

- restore respect for human rights (particularly ‘the right of return’ of war refugees) in the Balkans,
- support the War Crimes Tribunal,
- establish democratic elections in Bosnia,
- demilitarise the region, and
- coordinate their aid efforts together with other international institutions (Gardner 1997: 123)

Scrutinising this list of aspirations against eventual achievements, the record of post-NTA cooperation is mixed but not unimpressive.

Respect for human rights in ex-Yugoslavia was always going to be mainly a product of domestic political developments, as opposed to US or EU policies, coordinated or otherwise. Both transatlantic partners could be accused of failing to keep an eye on the deteriorating situation in Kosovo after 1997. But the eventual election of reformist governments in Serbia and Croatia and something like one in the Muslim-Croat sector of Bosnia, along with a committed NATO effort to ensuring the right of return (albeit with very mixed results, see Eldridge 2001: 46), combined to make for a very considerable improvement on human rights in the region by 2001.

Both sides gave considerable verbal support, at least, to the War Crimes Tribunal. However, the key to charging and apprehending suspected war criminals who remained at large, such as Ratko Mladic or Radovan Karadzic, was the US. Only it possessed the intelligence and military resources to nab suspects and then provide WCT prosecutors with the legal evidence needed to secure prosecutions. It was widely reported that Mladic, Karadzic and other suspected war criminals moved freely throughout the region after 1995, including through NATO checkpoints.

The election of the UK’s Blair government in 1997 changed the equation considerably. Within months, British troops swooped on the Serbian enclave to seize a number of suspects, probably aided by American intelligence. By spring 2001, the biggest catch of all, Milosevic, was in a Serbian jail and then was shipped to The Hague after both the US and EU insisted that no new western aid
would be available unless he faced trial there. The WCT had plenty of suspects in custody to keep it busy. An extraordinary experiment in the enforcement of ‘moral univeralism’ (Ignatieff 2000: 129), the WCT was an area where the US and EU appeared to push each other to embrace something considerably higher than the lowest common denominator.

As for démocratisation in the Balkans, US and EU efforts have been mostly joint ones, and mostly successful. In 1997, municipal elections in Bosnia and Assembly elections in Republika Srpska both took place peacefully. By 2001, the Muslim-Croat alliance in the Croat-Bosniak half of Bosnia was on the ropes, with Bosnian Croats pulling out of its joint federal executive. But both the US and EU moved quickly to condemn the move, and mobilised to encourage moderates and isolate extremists amongst the three ethnic groups in Bosnia. Transatlantic efforts in late 1999 to boost the Serbian opposition and map out a ‘post-Milosevic scenario’ were very closely coordinated and mostly led by the EU. An October 1999 declaration by EU Foreign Ministers that the EU would lift sanctions immediately and press Croatia to accept displaced Croatian Serb refugees if Milosevic was ousted gave powerful incentives to Serbian voters.

Demilitarisation in the region was mostly a NATO task, and one that was both outside its traditional remit and an extraordinarily difficult one. The NATO force sent to Macedonia to conduct ‘Operation Essential Harvest’ in August 2001 faced a daunting task, with the border region with Albania and Kosovo awash with arms and criminal gangs actively trafficking them. Nearly half of the NATO force consisted of British troops, with the American contribution limited to helicopter lift support and medical facilities. In the event, Operation Essential Harvest went far more smoothly, despite rather dubious claims about how much it really did to disarm Albanian rebels (see ICG 2001b), than many within NATO circles dreamt possible. The operation showed that while demilitarisation was one of the most difficult policy challenges facing the US and EU, and both lacked the instruments – jointly or singly – to solve the problem, coordinated action with all relevant regional organisations could produce results.

The post-war aid effort saw the US and EU engage in far less coordination than was either desirable or even reasonable. The flamboyant UN ‘governor’ of Kosovo, Bernard Kouchner, complained that total western aid budgeted for the province amounted to ‘the cost of just half-a-day’s bombing by NATO’, but was particularly scathing about the lack of coordination between national European contributions, either with one another or EU-funded programmes, let alone with the US. National capitals, according to Kouchner, insisted on attaching their names to specific projects, which could be presented as trophies to their largesse, rather than funding, say, salaries for teachers. Of course, these were familiar pathologies of EU aid policy, which was the focus of
a sweeping reform effort led by the External Relations Commissioner, Chris Patten. The US aid contribution to the Balkans was miserly and much of it wasted due to rampant crime and corruption in Bosnia (see Eldridge 2001: 46-9). However, a number of attempts were made, at least, to coordinate with European contributions (see Frellesen 2001: 334-5). An interesting twist post-Kosovo was the seeking of advice from the joint forum of top business leaders, the Transatlantic Business Dialogue, on how private investment could be attracted to the region.

In short, if the goals the US and EU set for themselves in the Balkans in 1995 can be viewed as constituting a true test of transatlantic cooperation, the two partners can be judged to have passed the test, although certainly not with anything approaching a perfect score. By no means have all stated goals been realised. Yet, objectives have been defined and pursued, for the most part, in a truly joint way that would have been unimaginable in the absence of the New Transatlantic Agenda.

Lessons Learned?

In an era of globalisation, smaller governments and stronger international organizations, policy analysts have begun to confront questions about how public policies incorporate lessons learned from previous policy experiences. A policy lesson is a ‘detailed cause-and-effect description of a set of actions that government can consider in the light of experience elsewhere’ (Rose 1993: 27). Very little of the ‘lesson learning’ literature is concerned with foreign policy, and for good reason. Most foreign policies are considered specific to a particular time and political reality in a specific part of the world. For example, the Gulf War yielded few (if any) lessons that might be applied to future military conflicts, perhaps because ‘it was the last of the old wars’ (Ignatieff 2000: 5).

The Balkans wars of the 1990s could be seen the first of the ‘new wars’; that is, wars driven by identity politics and/or religious rivalries and often fought between rival ethnic groups using non-traditional means, such as ethnic cleansing, terrorism and manipulation of the western media. The wellsprings of the new wars are economically downtrodden regions presided over by weak, corrupt, insecure states (see Kaldor 2000: 1-24). So, if lessons about how to intervene in ‘new wars’ have been learned in the Balkans, what are they, and to what extent have they been learned collectively by the US and EU?
The first lesson of the Balkans is that western military intervention – other than via high-altitude air strikes or cruise missile attacks – becomes possible in ‘new wars’ only if and when the military balance between combatants shifts in a desired direction. Such a shift never occurred in Bosnia until the Serbs suffered setbacks in both Croatia and Bosnia in 1995, after which NATO intervention was able to reinforce the existing Serbian predisposition to sue for peace. In Kosovo, only after western air power weakened the Serbian military – by how much is a matter of debate – was the deployment of western ground forces even remotely imaginable for the Clinton administration (which refused even to give permission to plan for a ground war; see Clark 2001).

This lesson is one that, in large measure, reflects the way in which the media defines what is politically possible and narrows strategic options for western governments. In the US, coverage of the initial Yugoslav civil war after 1991 was minimal, thus reinforcing the Bush (Sr.) administration’s reluctance to intervene, even diplomatically. The Bosnian conflict was mostly presented as simple war between good (Muslim) and bad (Serbs) guys, with each side investing massively in public relations in the US to try to shape the debate.31 Still, it was only after the Serbs were in retreat post-1995 that the US policy could stretch beyond the myopia of ‘lift and strike’.32

In Kosovo, the images of Kosovar Albanian refugees fleeing Serb repression were powerful ones that were given nearly as much prominence in the US media as in Europe itself. Official US government statements that appeared to inflate vastly the number of Kosovars who were murdered or missing were widely reported, as were claims (including one by Tony Blair) of ‘racial genocide’ (Weymouth 2001a: 150-1). However, the actual human costs of the subsequent NATO bombing campaign received scant coverage in America – far less so than in Europe – with the exceptions of the accidental bombings of a civilian Yugoslav train and the Chinese embassy in Belgrade (Halimi and Vidal 2000). Public outcry in the US about the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo both pushed the Clinton administration to act and strengthened military hawks such as Albright. But Republican opposition to the NATO campaign and the difficulty of selling the Balkans to the US public as an area of American interest ruled out the deployment of US ground forces, as was strongly favoured by the UK, before a ceasefire was in place. So the only option was high-altitude bombing, which carried little risk to NATO (mostly US) pilots but also ensured high levels of ‘collateral damage’ and civilian casualties.
Despite rhetoric about how Kosovo was a war fought in defence of human rights, it was fought in such a way as to defend the principle that western intervention in ‘new wars’ has become possible only when it reinforces an existing shift towards the good guys. The focus – even obsession – of US forces in the Balkans on their own ‘force protection’ became a source of considerable tension within NATO, with British officials claiming it allowed their American colleagues to do little else (such as stop the arms flow to Albanian rebels in Macedonia; see Eldridge 2001; Judah 2001). In principle, in the absence of a direct attack on the west – such as those on New York and Washington in September 2001 – military intervention must now entail as close to zero risk to western (especially American) military personnel as possible. This lesson has become something close to doctrine, without being acknowledged as such, in both the US and Europe.

**Avoid Interblocking Institutions**

A second lesson was learned in Bosnia and applied in Kosovo. No single western institution ‘owned’ these problems, and the idea that multiple institutions – the UN, EU, NATO, OSCE, etc. – should be involved in their amelioration always made intellectual sense. But when ‘dual key’ arrangements were put in place to govern the use of military force, as occurred in Bosnia when air strikes needed the approval of both the UN and NATO, interlocking institutions often produced gridlock, particularly when civilian (UN) diplomats were placed in a military chain of command (see Clark 2001). The experience of Bosnia helps explain the lack of enthusiasm (at least on US side, but also amongst European states including Britain) for a UN mandate for the military action in Kosovo.\(^{33}\)

Clearly, managing European security will always require the reconciliation of the positions of multiple organisations with different memberships and priorities. One important reason why is that the EU has now matured politically to the point where its political approval, or at least acquiescence, is required before any decision can be taken by NATO to deploy militarily. On Kosvo, Deighton (2001: 7) argues that ‘it is inconceivable that NATO action could have been sustained had the EU taken a publicly hostile position to it’. If nothing else, the EU’s role in bringing the bombing of Kosovo to an end and then averting all-out war in Macedonia in 2001 has chastened American policy-makers and opinion leaders to the point where few would argue that NATO now exists independently of the EU, or that the latter has no call on what may be done by the former.
A fundamental feature of the transatlantic relationship is that American mediation helps keep a lid on intra-European conflicts such as the Greek-Turkish dispute in Cyprus or Unionist-Nationalist divide in Northern Ireland. But the experience of the Balkans yields a broader lesson: one of the main priorities of US diplomacy on nearly anything to do with European security is usually to pressure, cajole or manoeuvre its European allies in the direction of unity, and in a way that chimes with US policy. At every juncture after 1991, a fundamental American objective was to encourage the EU to act as one: from Yugoslav-Slovene conflict when US Secretary of State, James Baker (with DeFrank 1995: 483), judged it ‘time to make the Europeans step up to the plate and show they could act as a unified power’, to the bombing of Kosovo when strenuous US efforts were made to keep the Italians and Greeks from defecting from NATO policy. When the US disengaged, and thus did not press the objective as hard, the EU lapsed into internal bickering and disunity, as it did over the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. However more mature the EU is now than it was in the early 1990s, it often still needs the Americans to surmount its fissiparous tendencies. This role is emerging as one of the most important played by the US as a ‘European power’.

A German Europe?

The experience of the Balkans also offers a lesson about the intergovernmental balance of power in the EU, and a partial answer to the question of whether German unification would ultimately yield a ‘German Europe’ or a ‘European Germany’. Leaving aside its unilateralism on the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, Germany consistently acted as a consensus-builder and team player in EU diplomacy towards the Balkans. But the enhanced importance of Germany to EU foreign policy has been visible – not least in American eyes – from the first outbreak of conflict in 1991 to Fischer’s support for bombing of Kosovo (and then in Europe’s response to the events 11 September 2001). One Washington insider was emphatic that, regardless of its actual military importance (which was minimal), ‘the German contribution to the military effort in Kosovo made a big impression in DC’.³⁴ Germany was also one of few EU states that actually came up with new money (about €500 million), as opposed to redirecting existing aid to the Balkans, to support the reconstruction of Kosovo. In Macedonia, Germany took command of an 800-strong force, which featured no US troops, charged with protecting western monitors after ‘Operation Essential Harvest’ was finished. After the September 2001 terrorist atrocities in the US, Schröder pledged ‘unstinting loyalty’ to Washington, but moreover insisted that the days when Germany was a ‘secondary player’ in foreign policy were over: ‘that includes, and I say this quite unambiguously, participation in
military operations to defend freedom and human rights and to create stability and security.\textsuperscript{35}

Furthermore, the Schröder government was a prime mover (rhetorically, at least) in the effort to make the EU’s fledgling Rapid Reaction Force more than, literally, a ‘headline goal’. Germany pledged the largest (13,500) number of troops to the RRF of any EU Member State, thus accentuating the importance for the ESDP of the German effort to ‘upgrade and downsize’ their military, making it smaller, more professional, and more mobile.\textsuperscript{36} The Schröder government’s support for the RRF probably helped the German candidate, Rainer Schuwirth, become Head of the EU’s nascent Military Staff in late 2000, despite the obvious logic of appointing a national of a state fully integrated into NATO’s military command (unlike France) and fully committed to the OSCE-based Helsinki process. Despite the appearance of Anglo-Franco leadership on the ESDP post-St Malo, Germany has become close to a political equal on nearly any matter of EU foreign policy. The point is now widely acknowledged in political capitals (despite continued, grudging denials in Paris and London) on both sides of the Atlantic.

\textit{Europe’s Military Weakness}

Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned from the Balkan wars was that swingeing budget cuts and wrenching internal reforms after the Cold War’s end had caused Europe’s military capacity to atrophy to a point of alarming weakness. The result, never fully appreciated until Bosnia, was that the overwhelming majority of Europe’s military resources did not even approach ‘military readiness’, or the ability actually to fight. The EU’s headline goal of providing 60,000 troops for a pool of forces potentially available for EU-led operations is thus more ambitious than it might seem. In Kosovo, Europe laboured to provide 40,000 troops, even though it had fifty times this number of troops in its armed forces (Deighton 2001).

Transatlantic friction over the construction of ESDP was always unavoidable, even before the election of George W. Bush. Afterwards, seemingly arcane debates about (\textit{inter alia}) whether the EU would plan its military operations using existing staff and facilities at NATO’s existing SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers in Europe) in Mons, Belgium or at some newly-constructed EU planning cell in Brussels masked real power struggles which will determine precisely what kind of European power the US will be in the future. A powerful background factor was intense American irritation with the failure of EU countries to put up the money and forces needed not only to make a meaningful contribution to security in the Balkans, but even to realise the Union’s own ‘headline’ goals for defence. On one hand, the EU’s
bold rhetoric and timorous action on defence acted to undermine the EU’s credibility in Washington and encouraged ‘NATO-first’ attitudes. On the other, particularly after 11 September 2001, any US administration would have found it impossible not to welcome European efforts to fix the problem of an EU of states that could barely defend themselves, let alone unite to become an effective regional military power.

The State of Foreign Policy Cooperation

At first, the election of George W Bush seemed to mark a watershed in transatlantic relations. A week before Americans voted, one US pundit bellowed: ‘whoever wins the presidential election, Europeans can be sure that America’s days as a well-bred doormat for EU political and military pretensions are coming to an end’ (Bolton 2000). A few weeks later, the author of this diatribe was US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control. One journalist spoke for many in speculating that the new US administration was ‘philosophically further from European ideals and goals than perhaps any US administration in the last 50 years’ (Baker 2001: 9).

Of course, the terrorist attacks in September 2001 seemed to trivialise such differences in the face of a new and genuinely common threat to the western world, and much of the world beyond it. Yet, even in this new political context, there was reason to believe that habits of transatlantic cooperation in the Balkans had become ingrained, with implications for other foreign policy questions. Before the attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon, no other foreign policy problem of the post-Cold War era was as complicated or difficult to solve as the wars in the Balkans. It was thus hardly surprising that the transatlantic allies, each enchained by powerful domestic constraints, clashed bitterly on matters of strategy. Take, for example, enormous friction between the closest of bilateral allies – US and UK – over the deployment of ground troops in Kosovo, with Albright essentially taking the UK side in arguing that ground forces could not be ruled out. Yet even hinting that US forces might be sent in probably would have killed Congressional support for the NATO air campaign.37 Somehow, the US and UK lived through it, as did the Europeans and Americans more generally on nearly all matters of Balkans policy.

Even if other channels for exchange were never eclipsed by it, the NTA process gave the US and EU a conduit for dialogue that helped to smooth over disputes that flared within NATO or the UN. For example, the chief prosecutor of the UN’s international criminal tribunal put the failure of NATO to apprehend suspected Bosnian war criminals down a ‘lack of communication’ between French and American units of the NATO-led multinational force.38 Yet, considerable transatlantic solidarity was shown on the question of how to deal...
with the electoral defeat of Slobodan Milosevic in September 2000. Both the US and EU offered considerable support, with aid and a promise to lift sanctions, to the Serbian opposition under Vojislav Kostunica.

Six months later, the western response to the outbreak of violence along the Kosovo-Macedonia border was single-minded and effective (at least initially). It was EU-led but it featured vital US activism (including a visit by Bush’s Secretary of State, Colin Powell, to Skopje) despite the initial appearance of American disengagement. It was also about what one would have expected from the Clinton administration.

Of course, it was possible to argue, particularly after the Bush administration initially seemed to disengage from the Middle East and Korean peninsula, that the Balkans was a *sui generis* case, and the only region in the world where the US and EU operated something like a joint foreign policy. However, the NTA process, in which ‘straight’ foreign policy issues dominate, has given rise to significant transatlantic solidarity on other foreign policy issues where the EU is active and has real leverage: that is, in relations with the Union’s ‘near-abroad’. The US and EU now usually speak with one voice, and often combine resources on aid projects and support for democratisation in Turkey, Ukraine, Cyprus, the Caucasus, Russia, and Central and Eastern Europe.

However, in all of these places, as well as in the Balkans, it is now the European Union that is usually in the policy lead on any non-military question and deploying real resources, especially aid or trade concessions.39 The Balkans is simply where the EU policy lead is most visible and expensive: the Union and its Member States have targeted more than €19 billion for region over 2000-6. American political, economic and (particularly) military support remains essential to the reconstruction process in the region. But the US has become a junior partner to the EU.

**Conclusion**

Returning to the central question posed at the beginning of this paper, the record of US-EU cooperation in the Balkans does reveal quite a lot about the nature of the transatlantic relationship on matters of foreign policy. First, the relationship is asymmetrical in two senses: in that policy cooperation in the Balkans has been more intensive than cooperation on ‘non-European’ issues (if still reflective of a good amount of joint action to the EU’s east and south), and in the sense that the EU now takes the clear lead on western policy towards the Balkans. With Europe providing the lion’s share of both aid and troops to the region, the transatlantic partners have hit on a division of labour that ‘works’.
More generally, the EU has matured considerably since the initial outbreak of hostilities in the former Yugoslavia. In a way that never could have been imagined 10 years ago, it is logical to see the election of George W Bush as good for the EU, in that (in a variety of ways) it encouraged both European unity and leadership at a time when the Union is becoming capable, as never before, of both. In retrospect, the timing was fortunate, with Bush’s election coming after the Clinton administration had bailed the EU out politically twice in the 1990s: in the Balkans by deploying US military force and in Central and Eastern Europe by insisting on NATO enlargement. Thus, the EU was given time, breathing space and room to grow as a foreign policy actor. By 2001 it was plausible to claim, along with Douglas Hurd (2001: 23), that ‘today in the Balkans there is no distinctive British, German or French policy – as opposed to occasional jostlings for position’.

Western policy in the Balkans after 1991 was frequently subject to bitter Euro-American disputes. Ultimately, however, the alliance held. Why? At least part of the answer may be that both sides have remained committed to joint action and, more broadly, the ‘logic of arguing’ in their relationship with one another. This logic applies when actors in a negotiation seek, above all, a ‘reasoned consensus’ on common goals with their negotiating partners, as opposed to a strict and complete fulfilment of their own fixed preferences (see Risse 2000). Over the course of more than a decade of conflict in the Balkans, preferences were never fixed for long on either side of the Atlantic on much of anything – besides the general goal of ‘peace’ – while the NTA process reinforced both existing exchanges and the general bias towards ‘communicative action’ in transatlantic relations. Dense interaction patterns are now routine within the process, arguably yielding what could be called a ‘common lifeworld’, in which the goal of reasoned consensus on Balkans policy remains paramount (Risse 2000: 15). If any major international relationship is truly governed by the logic of arguing, it is that between the US and EU.

Yet, a precondition for arguing (as opposed to bargaining) is that both sides come to the table prepared to change their preferences. Logical, well-structured arguments must have the potential to prevail over sheer, naked interests and power politics. The NTA’s institutions are at least in theory capable of accommodating this style of argumentation, even if there is little hard evidence to show that actual preferences have changed in response to reasoned discourse. It may well be the case that US and EU interests simply converged or overlapped in the Balkans in the 1990s, and just enough to prevent outright rupture. It is also possible to argue that the US commitment to the logic of arguing disappeared along with the Clinton administration. One empirical test for determining whether the logic really governs the transatlantic relationship would be whether the Bush administration – itself split between unilateralists
and multilateralists – accommodates European preferences for a war on terrorism that is limited to Afghanistan, seeks UN approval for any further military actions, and embraces postwar reconstruction in Afghanistan as well as a settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁴⁰

Even if the Balkans dropped rapidly down the western hierarchy of foreign policy concerns after September 2001, the story of conflict arising from the break-up of ex-Yugoslavia is far from over. If history is any guide, as Glenny (1999) insists it is, the impact of the west on the region has been decisive in fomenting ethnic hostilities and could be again. The EU now has enormous responsibilities in the region and the scale of its task is daunting: one study in 2001 concluded that more than €100 billion in aid will be needed over the next 10 years to create true political stability in the Balkans.⁴¹ The EU remains more than capable of national hypocrisy with disastrous results both for the region, with the Albanian and Montenegrin questions still far from solved, and transatlantic relations. The George W. Bush administration promises to be far less tolerant of the EU’s adolescent behaviour than its predecessor.

Yet, the EU clearly has succeeded in impressing upon political leaders in the Balkans that they face a ‘fundamental choice…between becoming ever more Balkan, in the worst sense of the word, and becoming more European, in the best sense of the word’ (Bildt 2001: 158). This success has been possible, after 10 years of both humiliating EU failures and impressive policy triumphs, only because the Union now acts as one in the Balkans. One important reason why is that the Americans continue to demand, as they consistently have done, nothing less as the price of their commitment to the region.

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Bibliography


Endnotes

1 The title of this paper has been borrowed from Hurd (2001), who thus ends up having what are almost the first and last words of this paper. An earlier version was presented as part of a panel on transatlantic relations to the European Community Studies Association 7th Biennial International Conference in Madison, Wisconsin on 31 May 2001. I am grateful to participants at this event, particularly David Allen and Bill Burros, as well as Fraser Cameron, Anne Deighton, Ricardo Gomez, Michael Lessnoff, Michael O’Neill, Mark Pollack, and Becky Steffenson for thoughtful comments. Any remaining errors or omissions are my own.

2 No senior US official visited Macedonia in the six weeks after the outbreak of hostilities. By the time that Bush’s Secretary of State, Colin Powell, visited Skopje on 12 April 2001, the EU’s High Representative, Javier Solana, had visited Macedonia four times and the German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, had come once.

3 The Slav-dominated Macedonian government also was compelled to commit itself to regional cooperation in the Balkans generally as well as specific, internal economic and political reforms.

4 Quoted in Financial Times, 10 April 2001.

5 Quoted in European Voice, 5-11 April 2001.


7 A peace agreement between Macedonian Slav and Albanian political leaders was signed on 13 August 2001. The agreement, brokered jointly by the US and EU, sent a 4500 strong NATO force to Macedonia to undertake ‘Operation Essential Harvest’ to gather weapons held by Albanian rebels. Although NATO presented the operation as a success, one influential and dependable non-governmental organisation, the International Crisis Group, noted ‘a perceptibly growing siege mentality’ in Macedonia (especially ahead of January 2002 parliamentary elections), and insisted that ‘Macedonia is still very far from being at peace’ (see ICG 2001b: 1; see also ICG 2001a).

8 Quoted in Financial Times, 29 March 2000.


10 Two indicative examples of the abundant literature on US foreign policy (neither of which give much prominence to the NTA) are Hyland 1999 and Kissinger 2001.

11 Looking across the range of NTA activities, a rough estimate is that only about 5 per cent of the policy initiatives targeted in 1995 for US-EU exchanges have yielded some kind of actual joint action, while another 20 or 25 per cent have yielded some kind of co-operation, or adjustment of policy by one side take account of the policy of the other (Philippart 2001). Overwhelmingly, the NTA simply involves the exchange of information (see Philippart and Winand 2001a), but it seems to have ‘refocused[ed] de facto the relationship on a limited number of zones (mainly EU flanking regions) and issues (mainly soft security and economic matters)’ (Philippart and Winand 2001a: 460).

12 Moreover, Holbrooke (1998: 67) described the summit as ‘chaotic’, with Clinton and the French President (during the French EU Presidency), Jacques Chirac, meeting alone for well over an hour instead of the scheduled 20 minutes, ‘while Vice-President [Al] Gore, [Secretary of State Warren] Christopher, and half the American Cabinet milled around in the Cabinet Room, chatting with our perplexed European Union visitors’.

13 The UN’s authority -- if not its actual authorisation -- was, in fact, important to the UK and other European partners to the US-led military action in Kosovo. Two 1998 UN Security Council resolutions on Kosovo, as well as two reports (in 1998 and 1999) by the UN
Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, warning of a humanitarian catastrophe without western intervention, were important elements in the construction of a legal case for the airstrikes.

14 In October 2001, the international criminal tribunal in the Hague indicted Milosevic for war crimes committed in Croatia in the early 1990s, a crucial step given the explosiveness of charges of war crimes which had been committed by (as opposed to against) Croats during the same period.

15 The frequency of meetings obviously cannot be taken as an indication of the importance of the exchanges. The point was reinforced in 2001 when both sides agreed that US-EU summits should be scaled back to one per year (instead of two) in future (see Commission 2001; US State Department 2001).

16 Quoted in Financial Times, 28 July 1999.

17 Quoted in Financial Times, 7 June 1999. Many would dispute the claim about the Rambouillet process, launched by the Contact Group and chaired by the Americans to try to achieve a political settlement on Kosovo during the winter of 1998-9. According to Rubin (2000a; 2000b), the Italians—out of concern for their ‘lucrative business dealings with neighbouring Serbia’—tried to sabotage efforts to paint Kosovar Albanians as the clear victims by blatantly ‘carry[ing] water for Milosevic’. The charge was furiously denied by Dini (2000). For their part, the French refused to allow NATO commanders even to enter the grounds of the château at Rambouillet where the negotiations were held because, according to Rubin, ‘they hated any prominence being given to the military arm of the NATO alliance, which they have never joined’ [sic—France was part of NATO’s military command at its creation but withdrew in 1963].

18 The Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe was launched in June 1999 under the auspices of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), but as an EU initiative which wove together the efforts of the Union, NATO, G8, and international financial institutions to promote reform in the Balkans. However, the EU’s own Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAA), eventually offered to Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia, Croatia and Yugoslavia, were viewed as far more important in the region because they offered the prospect of eventual EU membership (see UK House of Commons 2000).

19 According to Rubin (2000b: IX), Fischer at one point stunned fellow ministers during a conference call by blurtling out, ‘Refugees being herded into boxcars, the killing of intellectuals, there hasn’t been anything like this since the Nazis’.

20 Interview, US State Department, 30 August 1999. It is worth considering Zielonka’s (2000: 27, 40) argument that ‘the CFSP proper does not deal with the most crucial problems on the transatlantic agenda’ and prediction that ‘in the years to come, relations between the EU and America will seldom be conducted within the CFSP framework’.

21 The Albanian Foreign Minister, Paskal Milo, quoted in Judah 2001: 37. One of the strongest incentives for Macedonian Albanians and Slavs to accept the August 2001 peace deal was the prospect of an international donors conference, convened by the EU (with the World Bank and others) after ratification of the deal and passage of a law on political decentralisation by the Macedonian parliament.

22 Arguably, a third case was the US diplomacy leading to a peace deal between Greece and Macedonia in September 1995, which defused very powerful tensions and led to the lifting of a Greek economic blockage of the former Yugoslav republic. Holbrooke (1999: 127) claims, with justification at the time, that the US initiative ‘demonstrated anew two central truths of the region: the United States was the only country that could force all the parties to a solution; but to do so, we had to be assertive’.

23 The US House of Representatives was split down the middle – 213-213 – on a vote to endorse US participation in the Kosovo NATO mission. The House also schizophrenically
voted down a diverse range of other policy options: sending ground forces, unilaterally withdrawing US forces, or declaring war (Ramet 2001b: 175-6).

24 To put the EU’s growing global role as a donor of aid into perspective, the Union contributed more than 60 per cent of all aid to Central America after Hurricane Mitch in 2000.

25 In spring 2001, the US line on how long American troops would remain in the Balkans, as expressed by Secretary of State Colin Powell, was that, ‘There is no end point. We have established no time by which US troops have to be out’ (quoted in *Washington Post*, 12 April 2001). However, the onset of the US-led military action in Afghanistan led to a US request to NATO (in October 2001) that its European members agree to make up for shortfalls in the Balkans if US forces were redeployed, thus putting paid to Powell’s repeated pledge that: ‘We, NATO, went in together and we will leave [the Balkans] together’ (quoted in *Financial Times*, 8 October 2001).

26 As Bildt (1998: 124) points out, ‘In a formal sense, there was no European delegation [at Dayton]. I had a mandate from the EU…but formally speaking did not represent the European Union. To the astonishment of the Americans, this had been made clear to them by the different European governments. There was no common foreign and security policy to which they were subordinate and, accordingly, there was no single European negotiator or representative’. Holbrooke (1999: 242) insists that the arrangements were a recipe for European weakness at Dayton: ‘What troubled us most was the hypocrisy of the European Union in giving a distinguished former Prime Minister such a grandiose title, then undermining and hamstringing him from the outset, and later blaming us for friction in the negotiations’.

27 The texts of both the NTA and Joint Action Plan are reproduced in Gardner (1997: 113-46).

28 Western efforts to promote reform in the Republika Srpska half of Bosnia were largely fruitless. Six years after the Dayton accord, it remained mostly ‘unreformed and true to its wartime self’, with corruption and organised crime so rampant as to raise questions about whether the west’s large aid effort was a ‘fool’s errand’ (ICG 2001c: 1). Bosnia as a whole remained essentially three mono-ethnic entities, each with its own army, by late 2001. At this point, with new question marks hanging over the US military presence in Bosnia, it remained the case that if ‘[western] troops were withdrawn today…a new war would break out tomorrow’ (Bildt 2001: 149).

29 US and EU positions on the April 2001 election in Montenegro, which produced a pro-independence government, were closely coordinated if also somewhat hypocritical. With a nervous eye on the ‘Albanian problem’, the US and EU insisted that any move towards Montenegrin independence, whether or not backed by democratic majorities, would be met with western sanctions.


31 The success of the Bosnian Muslim side in winning the propaganda war led US policymakers mostly to turn a blind eye to evidence of links between Islamic fighters who fought alongside Bosnian Muslims in 1992-5 and terrorist networks. Speculation about such links was revived when police in the Bosnian Muslim-Croat Federation arrested a suspect in early October 2001 after he allegedly phoned one of Osama bin Laden’s senior aides (see *Financial Times*, 8 October 2001).

32 The policy called for lifting the arms embargo on the Bosnian Muslims and launching NATO airstrikes on Serb military targets.

33 In fact, despite the protests of France and Russia, the lesson was applied in the bombing of Iraq by the US together with the UK in the early days of the George W Bush administration, with only a token gesture made to seek a UN mandate.

34 Interview, European Institute (Washington DC), 1 September 1999.
36 By no means was the reform of Germany's military untroubled. For example, plans for closing a large number of military bases to facilitate consolidation of forces were considerably behind schedule by late 2001 due to political opposition in the German Bundestag. In important respects, it is the scale of the German effort still required to make ESDP a reality that makes Germany important to the project rather than what it has achieved so far.
37 Any deployment of US ground forces would have required a Congressional vote, which was never likely to be secured
38 Quoted in Financial Times, 22 August 2000.
39 Moreover, the EU moved quickly to pledge about €300 million to a UN fund for postwar reconstruction of Afghanistan after the September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US.
40 I am grateful to Mark Pollack for his astute comments and suggestions relating to this section of the paper.
41 The study, by the Vienna Institute for Economics, is available from http://www.vwl.tuwien.ac.at/index.html.
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