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Global Europe

Preface, Étienne DAVIGNON	3
Introduction. Global Europe: A Vision — A Power?, Sven BISCOP	5
Security	9
The EU and the Middle East Peace Process: A Balance, Costanza MUSU	11
Europe and the Gulf: Strategic Neglect, Richard YOUNGS and Ana ECHAGÜE	29
The EU and “Conflict Peacebuilding” in the DRC, Hans HOEBEKE	43
The EU’s Multiple Strategic Identities: European Security after Lebanon and the Congo, Richard GOWAN	59
The Internal — External Security Challenge for the EU, Magnus EKENGREN	81
External Action under the Community	107
EU Trade and Development Policy: on Pyramids and Spaghetti Bowls, Jan ORBIE	109
The Doha Round Between a Narrow Escape and Freezing, Pierre DEFRAIGNE	119
Partners	135
China and Europe: the Myth of a Postmodern World, Jonathan HOLSLAG and Gustaaf GEERAERTS	137
Russia and the EU: the Challenge Ahead, Laetitia SPETSCHINSKY	151
EU-US: from Godchild to Partner?, Hugo PAEMEN	171
The European Union and the United Nations: Global <i>versus</i> Regional Multilateralism, Thierry TARDY	191



Concepts, Institutions and Capabilities	211
A Human Security Agenda for the EU: Would It Make a Difference?, John KOTSOPOULOS	213
The Legal Personality of the European Union, Philippe DE SCHOUTHEETE and Sami ANDOURA	233
The EU's Quest for Coherence in Peacebuilding: Between Good Intentions and Institutional Turf Wars, Nicolas J. BEGER and Philippe BARTHOLMÉ	245
The Ambiguous Ambition — The Development of the EU Security Architecture, Sven BISCOP	265

THE EU'S MULTIPLE STRATEGIC IDENTITIES: EUROPEAN SECURITY AFTER LEBANON AND THE CONGO

Richard GOWAN*

If, therefore, there is any political entity the question of defence is bound to arise, because in, practice, defence cannot ever be divorced from politics.

Lord Gladwyn (Gladwyn Jebb) on "the necessity for European political integration", 1967, ten years after the Treaty of Rome^[1]

ESDP is but a means to an end, a step on the road.

Julian Lindley-French on "a long-term perspective on military integration", 2005, forty-eight years after the Treaty of Rome^[2]

For advocates of a strong and distinct European security identity, 2006's fiftieth anniversary celebrations for the Treaty of Rome inevitably brought ambiguous feelings. It has been easy enough to praise the success of Europe's "peace project". Yet there is a growing recognition that this project is in some ways a victim of its own success: for younger citizens of the EU, continental peace alone is now too familiar to be a motivating force politically. The chance to look back to 1957 and the origins of European cooperation also highlighted a deeper problem. While the "peace project" is usually explained as a reaction to the horrors of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, the Treaty of Rome must also be understood in terms of 1954 and 1956. In an otherwise largely positive March 2007 survey of the EU, *The Economist* underlined the significance of these dates:

True federalists actually saw the Treaty of Rome as a move away from the building of a European superstate that they had hoped would develop from the European Coal and Steel Community, set up in 1951. But in fact the [European Economic Community] grew out of two other events: the French National Assembly's rejection of the proposed European Defence Community [EDC] in 1954 and the Suez crisis of 1956. The first pointed to a

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[1] Lord GLADWYN, The necessity for European political integration, *International Affairs*, Vol. 43, No. 4, October 1967, p. 634.

[2] Julian LINDLEY-FRENCH, A long-term perspective on military integration, in Sven BISCOP (ed.), *E pluribus unum? Military integration in the European Union* (Gent, Academia Press, Egmont Paper 7, 2005), p. 39.

reassertion of nation-states at the heart of Europe; the second led France to conclude that a European community was in its vital interest.^[1]

This is an unsettling reminder that, if the EU is indeed a peace project, it is one that was born out of two European strategic failures. To the collapse of the EDC idea, and the Anglo-French Suez debacle, we might add a third such failure that followed in the years immediately following the Treaty of Rome: the breakdown of the Fouchet Plan for defence cooperation, intended as an alternative to the EDC but also ultimately undermined by differences between France and its neighbors. The European Communities, and so the EU, were rooted in a series of severe post-1945 setbacks to European security collaboration. Current policy literature frequently (if understandably) minimizes this uncomfortable fact in discussing how to advance that collaboration today.

As Renata Dwan has noted, there remains a preference to ignore the efforts to project a European strategic identity in the 1950s and 1960s. Scholars instead focus on the “neo-functional” position that “successful integration... can only take place as part of a gradual spillover process from one sector to another beginning with issues of low political salience”.^[2] It is arguable that the failures of 1950s confirmed this thesis — but as Dwan shows, the founding figures of the European project were initially committed to an explicit linkage of European security and political identity. Jean Monnet, for example, played “a far greater part in the foundation of the EDC initiative than has been recognized”, with his interest in it “based increasingly on its potential for its accelerated political integration in Europe”. The gradualist reality of European cooperation was in many ways a second-best option for Monnet. Neo-functional integration was salvaged from a decade of failed efforts to achieve a more dramatic shift to strategic cooperation.

If the Treaty of Rome should not entirely obscure those failed initiatives, the distinction between *gradualist integration* and *strategic direction* remains central to European security debates. If the EDC experiment ended in the “reassertion of nation-states at the heart of Europe”, the current European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) demonstrates the continued primacy, and centrifugal effects, of national decision-making. It has accurately been characterized as “an intergovernmental structure that represents an old-fashioned military alliance within the three pillar structure of the Treaty of European Union” — it has even been suggested that this type of state-centric cooperation “actually endangers the project of ‘ever

[1] John PEET, *Fit at 50?*, *The Economist*, 15 March 2007.

[2] Renata DWAN, *Jean Monnet and the European Defence Community*, *Cold War History*, Vol.1, No. 1, 2000, p. 143.

closer union”.^[1] The 2003 *European Security Strategy* may have brought some focus to defense debates, but it still seems to reflect the EU’s identity as a “sort of halfway house, indicative of the hybrid quality of the EU itself: not a federal state (like Brazil, India or the US), but much more than a typical international organization (like the NATO, the World Trade Organization or the United Nations)”.^[2]

Difficulties arising from this “hybrid quality” are frequently cited as the primary obstacle to the emergence of a clearer European strategic identity. As Janne Haaland Matlary has argued, “the ‘actorness’ of the EU is being built from the bottom up in various ways that do not involve sensitive questions about national sovereignty” — a security-oriented version of the neo-functional gradualism described by Dwan.^[3] Politically acceptable methods to achieve “actorness” have included the development of crisis management capacities within the European Council and Commission, relatively small-scale military schemes such as the battlegroups, and the formation of the European Defense Agency. Yet Matlary immediately warns that “the question of whether the EU is a strategic actor with a strategic culture distinct from the incremental capacity-building process” must be answered with reference to the cases in which it initiates strategic *action* — “the problem with regard to strategic culture is not primarily military culture, but political will”.

And this emphasis on the necessity of political will was to prove particularly salient in 2006. If 2007 was designed to be a year of European commemoration, 2006 had been a year of European action. In the face of mounting challenges, the EU made a series of deployments in the broader Middle East and Africa. If *The Economist’s* March 2007 survey offered a reminder that the EU descended from strategic failures, it was equally ready to allow that current European security efforts are proving somewhat more effective: “it has sent troops (*sic*) as far afield as Aceh and Congo and co-ordinated big national deployments in Lebanon”.^[4] The EU’s response to the war between Israel and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon proved particularly striking. Fifty years after Suez, another rapid deployment of thousands of European troops to the Middle East was widely cited as proof that the EU might yet confirm its strategic worth. And yet, if “national assertiveness” once sunk the EDC, it was

[1] LINDLEY-FRENCH, *loc.cit.*; Mette EILSTRUP SANGIOVANNI, Why a Common Security and Defence Policy is bad for Europe, *Survival*, Vol. 45, No. 3, Autumn 2003, p. 201.

[2] François HEISBOURG, The ‘European Security Strategy’ is not a security strategy, in Steven EVERTS and Daniel KEOHANE (eds.), *A European Way of War* (London, Centre for European Reform, 2004), p. 29.

[3] Janne HAALAND MATLARY, When soft power turns hard: is an EU strategic culture possible?, *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2006, p. 111.

[4] PEET, *op. cit.* It should be noted that, although many of the EU personnel sent to Aceh in 2005-6 had military training, all were technically civilian personnel.

striking that the “big national deployments” to Lebanon were just that: national deployments under the UN banner, *not* explicitly EU forces. Simultaneously, European troops were fighting in Afghanistan under NATO command. Although an EU-flagged force went to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), its role was confined to temporarily reinforcing a far larger UN force.

So while the anniversary of 1957 was a chance to trumpet the “gradual spillover process” of integration, the year leading up to that anniversary had seen another sort of “spillover” — a steady flow of European troops into missions under the authority of, or at least for the sake of, other international organizations. While the operations involved gained considerable public attention, the diffusion of European forces under multiple flags was not a new phenomenon. By 2003, as Bastian Giegerich and William Wallace remarked, the EU’s members appeared to be missing the ESDP Headline Goal (set in 1999) of being able to “deploy rapidly and then sustain” some fifteen brigades, equal to an army corps, at one time. Yet as they “were slipping past the Headline Goals target, they were sustaining 50-60,000 troops [*i.e.* approximately one corps] on operations outside their common boundaries, in more than 20 countries in southeast Europe, Afghanistan and Central Asia, Iraq and the Gulf, and Africa”.^[1] These included contributions to NATO, the UN and coalitions of the willing as well as ESDP missions. “In terms of numbers,” Giegerich and Wallace concluded, “if not in terms of equipment, European governments [had] in effect met the Headline Goals”. But they did so through a highly pluralistic approach to utilising security institutions rather than any narrowly EU-focussed policy.

The multiple deployments of 2006 were thus an extension of pre-existing trends. Indeed, the growth of the European presence in Afghanistan, DRC and the Lebanon was partially off-set by reductions elsewhere, such as the Western Balkans and Iraq. Nonetheless, as the table below shows, all the major European military players (including ESDP’s most dogmatic proponent, France) continued to deploy significant numbers of troops across a range of theaters under the authority of a range of institutions. This continued plurality of commitments raises hard questions. Is it possible to discern any common strategic direction or political will that binds these institutionally incoherent deployments? Or does the fact that the vast majority of European forces abroad are on non-ESDP missions indicate that the EU is still incapable of asserting itself as a discrete strategic player?

[1] Bastian GIEGERICH and William WALLACE, Not such a soft power: the external deployment of European forces, *Survival*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer 2004), p164. It should, of course, be recognized that some of these European forces — specifically British and other contributions to the Multinational Force in Iraq — had originally deployed in the face of political opposition by other EU members.

Military Contributions by Selected EU Countries: 30 September 2006 ^[1]

[Figures in square brackets show UNIFIL contributions on 31 October 2006.]

	EUFOR RD Congo	EUFOR ALTHEA	ISAF	KFOR	UNIFIL	TOTAL
Mission Size	2370	5935	32600	16160	5147 [8741]	62212
<i>Selected EU Contributors</i>						
France	1090	477	1000	2100	1531 [1653]	4667
Germany	730	861	2750	2900	0 [933]	7241
Italy	50	888	1600	2200	1074 [1512]	4738
Netherlands	40	301	2000	*	0	2341
Spain	130	350	600	750	614 [1393]	1830
UK	*	573	5000	400	0	5973

* signifies a small number of troops, usually individual personnel.

1. A BLURRED STRATEGY?

This article sets out to respond to these questions by analyzing Europe's involvement in the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the ESDP mission to the DRC in 2006. The full diplomatic and operational histories of both missions will not be written for some time, and this article is not meant to be a detailed chronicle of the two operations. Rather, it aims to use the EU's decisions over UNIFIL and EUFOR RD Congo to inform a discussion of the nature of the EU's engagement in international security, and the extent to which a "European identity" was projected through the two deployments. And identity is obviously at the core of the argument that follows. One very positive assessment of EUFOR RD Congo for the Assembly of the Western European Union (WEU) describes the mission as a "political symbol" and "essentially 'Euro-centric'" (although, it hastens to add, "nothing to do with a desire for domination or imperialism").^[2] This recalls an earlier academic analysis of the EU's previous military mission to DRC, 2003's *Operation Artemis*: "the impact of Artemis lay more in its European character than

[1] Table based on Center on International Cooperation, *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations 2007* (Boulder CO, Lynne Rienner, 2007), p. 8.

[2] Ignacio COSIDÓ GUTIÉRREZ (rapporteur), *European Union operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) — reply to the annual report of the Council*, Assembly of the European Union, Document A/1954, 20 December 2006, pp. 5 & 31.

its military merits or even its effect on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo”.^[1] Similarly, the WEU Assembly lamented the fact that “the EU has not been able to extend its active approach to Lebanon, although it is not impossible that the European forces engaged in [UNIFIL] will be able to ‘emancipate’ themselves under the Union flag”.^[2]

This article questions whether the projection of the EU's security identity is really best-served through simply sticking a Union flag on any and every mission available. Instead, it argues that it is possible for the EU (acknowledging its own “hybrid quality”), to project a more influential identity through hybrid security arrangements with other organizations. The Lebanese and Congolese cases both offered lessons in this. The Lebanese crisis saw the European Council play a central role in determining the shape of the UN force, blurring the lines of authority with the UN Security Council. Conversely, the Congolese deployment had a clearly-defined — and much-vaunted — EU identity but only made sense in the framework of the far larger UN deployment to the DRC. Although their lines of command remained separate, EU-UN cooperation on the ground once again blurred institutional identities for the sake of effective action. This article proposes that if the EU is to prove credible strategic actor, it must not merely accept the need for such “blur-ri-ness” but take advantage of it, finding innovative responses to complex security challenges. An obsession with identity may actually constrain action.^[3]

This argument admittedly runs counter to much recent policy literature. In a useful recent typology of commentators on European security, Richard Whitman contrasts Realist and Humanist schools of thought.^[4] The Realists hold that the EU requires “aspects such as a strategic concept, a defence white paper and more military capability if it is to be more internationally significant”.^[5] The equation here is simple enough: greater clarity of purpose will multiply the impact of enhanced capabilities. While the Humanists adopt a less traditional strategic approach — and

[1] Sébastien LOISEL, Les leçons d'Artémis: vers une approche européenne de la gestion militaire des crises, *Les Champs de Mars*, No. 16, Spring 2005.

[2] COSIDÓ GUTIÉRREZ, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

[3] In concentrating on the EU-UN relationship to make this argument, this article may be accused of dodging the main problem: the balance of responsibilities between the EU and NATO. There is no question that this relationship has deteriorated over recent years and even months, and that it is also the most important relationship in terms of defining European security. Nonetheless, we will focus on the EU-UN relationship, for while it may be secondary, it has also permitted a surprising degree of latitude for innovation by the EU's members. While overshadowed by the NATO question, EU-UN cooperation has arguably provided more instructive precedents for greater creativity in defining an EU security identity.

[4] Richard WHITMAN, Road map for a route march? De-civilianizing through the EU's Security Strategy, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Spring 2006), pp. 1-15.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

insist that “human security” must be at the core of the EU’s thinking — they too are in search of a “new European security doctrine”.^[1] Once again, conceptual clarity is seen as a precondition for the effective utilisation of European capabilities. As a team led by Mary Kaldor (generally recognized as the prime intellectual mover among the Humanists) has declared:

Human security refers to the security of individuals and communities, expressed as both “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”. [...] Terms matter, and human security is not simply a leitmotif for EU security policies, or an analytical label which categorizes the EU’s international role in a way that concepts such as normative power or civilian power have done. Rather, it provides an enduring and dynamic organizing frame for security action, a frame which European foreign policy texts and practices currently lack. Thus human security can be seen as a proactive strategic narrative with the potential to further EU foreign policy integration.^[2]

Arguments such as these have clear attractions. It may seem perverse to argue in favour of the alternative of a European security identity that relies on blurring institutional boundaries rather than creating new narratives and frames. Nonetheless, it is possible to make a clear political case for such a deliberately diffuse security identity. Richard Whitman’s typology includes a third approach to European security, which he calls Pragmatist — “exemplified” (for good or ill) by *Global Europe*, a 2004 pamphlet by this author and Mark Leonard.^[3] This article is not intended as a retrospective defense of that essay, much of which now strikes me as more *idealist* than pragmatist, but Whitman correctly notes that much of it is aimed at solving one particular conundrum: the EU (through the *European Security Strategy*) “is committed to multilateralism as the guiding principle for its foreign policy but what if multilateral institutions are not up to the job?”^[4] Its response should be defined “in terms of a ‘positive multilateralism’ that derives its legitimacy from its efficacy in resolving crises as well as confirming international legal norms”.^[5] This position deliberately defined the EU’s goals as going beyond the development of European concepts and capabilities alone — rather, *Global Europe* highlighted the need to revitalize the UN, strengthen entities such as the African

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[2] Mary KALDOR, Mary MARTIN and Sabine SELCHOW, Human Security: a new strategic narrative for Europe, *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 2 (2007), p. 273.

[3] Mark LEONARD and Richard GOWAN, *Global Europe: implementing the European Security Strategy* (London, Foreign Policy Centre/British Council, 2004).

[4] WHITMAN, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[5] LEONARD and GOWAN, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

Union, and engage in *ad hoc* multilateral activities such as the American-designed Proliferation Security Initiative. Indeed, the EU should aim to bind these institutions and initiatives closer together: “it should set out policies to link the activities of the UN to those of regional organizations and single issue coalitions so that they can be endowed with permanence and legitimacy”.^[1] In short, the EU's aim should not be to clarify its differences with other multilateral organizations as far as possible — but to *connect* them.

Blurring the boundaries between the EU and other multilateral institutions can thus be advocated as both a pragmatist approach to crisis management, and a deliberate political choice to reinforce multilateral cooperation on security issues. The goal is not to enhance the EU as a security actor alone, but rather to enhance its broader ability to influence international security cooperation. “Effective multilateralism requires not only broad international support and legitimacy,” as Hanns Maull has compellingly argued, “but also the capacity to generate initiatives, and political leadership to set the agenda, define deadlines, mobilize resources and promote effective implementation. A key qualification in this context is the ability to form and sustain broad-based coalitions”.^[2]

Returning from theory to practice — and to contextualize the Lebanese and Congolese cases — we should note that such coalition-building is increasingly common, and relatively easy to quantify, in European military, police and civilian deployments. We have observed that the “hybrid quality” of the EU hampers its options, but “hybrid operations” between international organizations are now an accepted element of peacekeeping and peace enforcement. Here, “hybridity” is used to describe complementary co-deployments by international organizations (and/or individual countries) in a given country or territory.^[3] This may take a number of forms: *integrated operations*, in which organizations participate in a single structure (as the EU participated in the UN-led structure in Kosovo from 1999); *coordinated operations*, in which organizations maintain separate but coordinated command structures (as in the EU-UN cooperation in DRC we will discuss below); and

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 26. It must be admitted that the initial *Global Europe* pamphlet was distinctly skeptical towards the UN in particular — more so than this article and (for now) this author. For a more positive assessment of EU-UN relations from the same project see Espen BARTH EIDE (ed.), *Effective Multilateralism: Europe, regional security and a revitalized UN* (London, Foreign Policy Centre/British Council, 2004).

[2] Hanns MAULL, Europe and the new balance of global order, *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 4, p. 786.

[3] The definitions used in this paragraph follow Bruce JONES with Feryal CHERIF, *Evolving Models of Peacekeeping: policy implications and responses (s.l., UN Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, 2004)*.

sequential operations, in which organizations implement a coordinated handover of responsibilities (as in the EU's takeover from NATO in Bosnia). Of fifty-four peace operations underway around the world in 2005, forty were deployed in locations hosting at least one other mission.^[1]

While the EU's members (*pace* Denmark) may have pursued ESDP missions since 1999, even a cursory reading of European policy statements in this period highlights the importance of hybrid operations to the Union's evolving security identity. The earliest ESDP military missions relied on coordination with NATO, while the original 2004 battle-group concept was explicitly related to support for UN missions:

On 8th December 2003, the [European] Council mandated that the EU's military rapid response capability should be further developed. Separately, UK, France and Germany have considered how the Union can contribute further to conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations in close cooperation with the United Nations (UN). Together, we have proposed that EU should aim to [develop] [...] a number of battle-group size forces available to undertake autonomous operations at short notice, principally in response to requests from the UN.^[2]

Now that the battle-group concept is operational, it has been suggested that the EU and UN should make further efforts to "increase the intensity and frequency of [their] exchanges, both through staff-to-staff contacts and "more frequent tabletop exercises to test decision-making processes across both organizations".^[3] While we will concentrate on EU-UN relations below, it should also be noted that the years since 2003 have also seen the EU enter into hybrid operational arrangements with the African Union in Darfur, and with members of ASEAN in Aceh. In the case of Darfur, the EU's support to the AU has been not only involved an ESDP operation but political and financial assistance. Meanwhile, the EU-ASEAN cooperation in the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) — an ESDP mission involving personnel from the EU and five members of ASEAN in an integrated structure — represented an important opportunity for both organizations to reassess their security identities.

[1] Richard GOWAN and Ian JOHNSTONE, *New challenges for peacekeeping: protection, peacebuilding and the "war on terror"* (New York, International Peace Academy, Coping with Crisis working paper, 2007), p. 9.

[2] "The battlegroups concept — UK/France/Germany food for thought paper" in *EU security and defence: core documents 2004* (Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, Chaillot Paper 75, February 2005), p. 10.

[3] Gustav LINDSTROM, *Enter the battlegroups* (Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, Chaillot Paper 97, April 2007), p. 75.

This was the first ESDP mission in Asia, but the EU's engagement gave its Asian partners an operational framework for political innovation:

For ASEAN, participation in AMM signals a move away from past policies of “noninterference” in activities of member states, and toward an emerging common security or defense mechanism. [...] The combination of EU and ASEAN monitors has provided increased legitimacy for AMM. ASEAN personnel contributed cultural awareness and regional knowledge, while the EU presence provided diplomatic and financial weight, as well as managerial coherence.^[1]

ESDP has thus become increasingly associated with hybrid operations. We have seen that there have been numerous efforts to identify the “European identity” of missions such as that to the DRC. But these should not detract from the basic strategic fact that such missions — like the battle-group concept as a whole — *assume hybridity*. And while I have contrasted the Humanist search for conceptual clarity with the less dogmatic Pragmatist approach, it should be noted that Mary Kaldor and her colleagues are also convinced of the operational importance of hybridity. For them, effective multilateralism means not only “a commitment to work with international institutions, and through the procedures of international institutions” and “a commitment to creating common rules and norms”.^[2] It also “has to include synthesis and interoperability, rather than duplication and rivalry”. This requires parallel tasks: creating coherence *within* the EU while fostering cohesion *between* the elements of the European system and the UN, regional organizations and the international financial institutions. Maull's coalition-building remains an essential tool.

If there is a growing acceptance that the evolution of the EU's security identity will involve engaging in hybrid operations, there is a concomitant need to think how these engagements can be made most effective. We will see that neither the Lebanese nor Congolese deployments were entirely smooth: indeed, both proved both politically and operationally problematic. This highlights the need for a more strategic approach to hybrid operations on the part of the EU — an approach that prioritizes impact over identity. But the last section of this article will claim that the two operations under analysis provide imperfect models for two important types of strategic engagement by the EU, which I have previously described as *strategic subordination* and *interpenetration* (it must be admitted that, if these models are to

[1] Center on International Cooperation, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48. It should be noted that the “ASEAN” monitors technically represented their countries of origin rather than ASEAN as an institution *per se*.

[2] KALDOR, MARTIN and SELCHOW, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

gain sustained traction in policy circles, they would benefit from better nomenclature — readers are invited to suggest alternatives, but the current names will have to suffice for academic purposes). Strategic subordination can be defined as the deployment of EU forces within a hybrid framework *with the deliberate intention of reinforcing a strategy set by another international institution*. This was identifiable in efforts to set the terms for ESDP deployments prior to 2006, as in the European Council's adoption of a declaration on EU-UN cooperation in May 2004:

[The declaration assumes] that, in all high-intensity situations, EU forces should maintain *operational* autonomy [...] Conversely, the Council's concept effectively assumes that these forces should be *strategically* subordinate to UN missions — providing “bridging” or “reserve” support rather than engaging in [long-term] peace operations *per se*. This dichotomy points to a desire to contribute towards the UN's strategic goals combined with the fear of any “mission creep” that would drag EU forces too deep into the achievement of those goals.^[1]

It was precisely this sort of self-limiting operation (and the associated concerns) that the EU conducted in the DRC in 2006. By contrast, the Lebanese crisis arguably resulted in a case of interpenetration — *a blurring of political authority and operational responsibility* — between the EU and UN. I have argued elsewhere that recent years have seen forms of EU-UN interpenetration across a variety of fields, including in development and efforts to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.^[2] In the case of Iran, for example, the EU (led by the “E3” of France, Germany and the United Kingdom plus Javier Solana) have worked so closely with the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency that they have effectively had a common strategy through much of the crisis. EU trade and other incentives to Tehran have been tied to its fulfillment of UN-regulated obligations. But the clearest test for the idea of interpenetration remains the deployment of uniformed personnel: the need to define viable chains of command and coordination mechanisms in the field means that it is easier to map emerging symbioses than in diplomatic negotiations. And so the Lebanese and Congolese operations were not only major operational tests for the EU — but tests of its political and strategic identity as well.

[1] Richard GOWAN, *The Battlegroups: a concept in search of a strategy?* in Sven BISCOP (ed.), *E Pluribus Unum? Military integration in the European Union* (Gent, Academia Press, Egmont Paper 7, 2005), p. 16.

[2] For this fuller definition of “interpenetration”, see Richard GOWAN, *The global objective: effective multilateralism*, in Sven BISCOP and Jan Joel ANDERSEN (eds.), *The European Security Strategy: Forging a Global Europe* (London, Routledge, 2007).

2. 25 AUGUST 2006: THE EU'S LEBANON MOMENT

The cessation of hostilities was maintained in general in the past 24 hours...

UNIFIL distributed 53,000 liters of drinking water to villages...

A group of additional hundred and fifty French soldiers arrived today to Naquora to reinforce UNIFIL.

Items from the daily UNIFIL press release, 25 August 2006, the day that the European Council met to pledge forces to an expanded UN Interim Force in Lebanon.^[1]

In the late summer of 2006, the Lebanese crisis presented the EU with one of its sternest security challenges to date. From the early days of Israel's invasion of southern Lebanon to confront Hezbollah, EU leaders joined UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in calling for the deployment of a sizeable peacekeeping force to help end the conflict — and it was widely assumed that this force would largely consist of European troops.^[2] While the United States was initially skeptical towards this proposal — and indicated that it might prefer any peace force to be led by its regional allies Turkey and Egypt, with an assertive mandate to disarm Hezbollah — the European position gradually gained traction as the war ground on. There were unexpected highly-publicized set-backs: while it was widely assumed that France would provide the core of the new force, Paris created consternation when its first offer of new troops consisted of just two hundred soldiers.^[3] This sparked a poorly-concealed bout of diplomatic competition between France and Italy over who should lead the mission. But by 25 August, when the European Council met to discuss force contributions, the EU's members were finally groping towards a coherent policy. France, Italy and Spain pledged significant contingents to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Smaller states such as Belgium were also keen to be involved, and the Council adopted a relieved (perhaps even self-congratulatory) tone:

The significant overall contribution of the Member States to UNIFIL demonstrates that the European Union is living up to its responsibilities. The Council welcomes Member States' intentions to commit a substantial

[1] Available at http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unifil/unifilpress_jas.html

[2] For brief comments on this process written during the crisis, see Richard GOWAN, *A Special Relationship?, El Sharp*, September-October 2006, pp. 49-51, and Richard GOWAN, *UN Peacekeeping: taking the strain?, Signal*, Autumn 2006, pp. 45-51. <http://www.cic.nyu.edu/internationalsecurity/docs/UNTakingTheStrain%5b1%5d.pdf>

[3] See James ROBBINS, *Lebanon: Europe's hour?, El Sharp*, November-December 2006, pp. 24-26.

number of troops to be deployed in Lebanon, as well as significant maritime and air assets, command, communications and logistical support. Additional contributions are likely to be made in the future. This gives a leadership role for the Union in UNIFIL.^[1]

This up-beat assessment was not confined to the EU's members. Attending the Council meeting, Kofi Annan declared that "Europe had lived up to its responsibility and provided the backbone of the force".^[2] *The Economist*, remaining typically wary of excessive optimism on European security cooperation, still felt that the Lebanon crisis helped demonstrate "the substance of a common European foreign and defence policy, including the use of force abroad".^[3] It compared UNIFIL to recent EU-flagged peace operations. "If the ability to project force is now the hallmark of an independent foreign policy," it concluded, "the EU could be said, at last, to be getting a bit more bloody, bold and resolute". Others concurred that Lebanon represented a useful chance to judge progress towards the *European Security Strategy's* three basic conditions for an internationally effective Union: "could the EU show itself itself 'capable' as well as 'active' and sometimes 'coherent'?"^[4] Ultimately, the results looked rather mixed:

Europe did not pass this test brilliantly, but it hasn't failed it either. [...] So the eventual outcome in Lebanon, whatever the failings, divisions, jealousies and obsessions and along the way, probably leaves a very slowly evolving common policy looking a bit fitter on the security side, even if the foreign policy side took a hammering.^[5]

The months following the 25 August European Council meeting provided further evidence that the EU could "show itself 'capable'", at least in simple military terms. Using their own logistical arrangements, rather than those employed by the UN for its other missions, the European troop contributors moved their forces into Lebanon relatively rapidly. By 30 September UNIFIL had grown from its previous strength of 2,000 to 5,147 troops. Of these 3,635 (70%) were from EU members.^[6] One month later, the force had grown to 8,741 soldiers — 6,699 (76%) of them of EU origin. At the time of writing, UNIFIL numbers over 13,000 and while the

[1] European Council, Council Conclusions on Lebanon, 25 August 2006.

[2] "Europe has agreed to provide 'backbone' of strengthened UN force in Lebanon", UN News Center, 25 August 2006.

[3] "Abroad be dangers", *The Economist*, 24 August 2006.

[4] ROBBINS, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[6] September and October figures based on Center on International Cooperation, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

force includes units from China, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey, the bulk of the force is still of EU stock.^[1]

The European response thus offered grounds for some qualified optimism about the efficacy of the EU's capabilities and its willingness to use them. And yet the Union was still confronted by the conundrum that this show of determination had not resulted in an ESDP mission. Through July and August 2006, there was widespread speculation that the answer to the Lebanese crisis might be a deployment under ESDP. But by late July, it was being argued in Paris that the EU already had "much to do militarily in Bosnia and in [the Democratic Republic of] Congo" and that an inevitably high-risk ESDP mission in Lebanon would be a step too far for the relatively young policy.^[2] Nonetheless, after the European Council boasted of "the leadership role for the Union in UNIFIL", some commentators seem to have forgotten that **UNIFIL** is not **EUIFIL**. One expert has described UNIFIL as the "EU mission in Lebanon" and declared that its "success could be a testament to the success of ESDP".^[3]

This conflation of UNIFIL with ESDP may have political uses, but it is also analytically misleading. We have noted that ESDP is an "intergovernmental structure" or even an "old-fashioned military alliance", but it was striking that the European contributors demanded that an entirely new intergovernmental military entity be formed within the UN to handle the enlarged UNIFIL. This was the Strategic Military Cell (SMC), formed in August 2006 to oversee the new deployments to Lebanon. It is arguable that is the role of this Cell in directing the mission that ensures that UNIFIL has a qualitatively European identity, rather than simply the quantity of European troops in Lebanon. The SMC consists of some twenty-seven officers, from the troop contributors and Permanent Five Security Council members — posts were initially distributed to reflect contributions to UNIFIL, and two-thirds of the Cell's staff have been from EU Member States. Its first two commanders have been Italian and French generals. This largely European body has bypassed normal UN structures, irritating those governments (such as Bangladesh and Pakistan) who deploy large numbers of troops in Africa without any such mechanism.

Nonetheless, the European desire for such a "privileged" command mechanism was not entirely new: when the original UNIFIL was initially deployed in 1978, many

[1] Current UNIFIL figures are available at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/contributors/>.

[2] Alexandrine BOUILHET, Paris could lead the intervention force in Lebanon, *Le Figaro* (English version), 27 July 2006.

[3] Borut GRGIC, The New Security Front: making Europe count in the Middle East, *Internationale Politik* (Transatlantic Edition), Vol. 7, Fall 2006, p. 74.

of the European contributors had been keen to have a clear say over the force's activities.^[1] Washington was sympathetic, and in 1980 its Permanent Representative to the UN floated the possibility that the Security Council might ask the Secretary-General to "work closely with a commission composed of States contributing to UNIFIL to discuss and formulate new ways to help ensure the security of Lebanese inhabitants of that region." This met immediate Soviet opposition, but in the 1980s UNIFIL contributors convened *ad hoc* inter-governmental discussions, sometimes at the ministerial level, on the force.

So the idea that those countries risking troops in UNIFIL should have a clear say in their use was well-established long before 2006. But the consultations of the 1980s were doubly problematic: operationally they had little impact on the national contingents on the ground, which took highly divergent approaches to how tough or cautious they should be. Politically, the inter-governmental discussions gradually descended into complaining forums, with some governments (such as the Netherlands) using them to set political conditions for their continued participation. By contrast, the current SMC has clear operational authority and has been far more than a political talking-shop. In April 2007, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reviewed the SMC's first six months of activity:

The activities of the Strategic Military Cell to date include the initial Force Requirement Review to configure the UNIFIL force in accordance with its expanded mandated tasks within the current operational environment. The Cell continues to supplement the UNIFIL concept of operations with additional strategic guidance covering the military aspects of the Force. That guidance has been incorporated in an operations plan and a set of contingency plans to prepare the Force to face various potential scenarios. In addition, the Strategic Military Cell reviewed and adjusted, in consultation with UNIFIL [...] rules of engagement for UNIFIL.^[2]

While the SMC's director reports to the UN's Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the SMC also liaises with European governments. Ban Ki-moon explained that it "has developed and maintains contacts with the Military Advisers of the Permanent Missions in New York of the countries contributing

[1] This paragraph and the next follow Richard GOWAN, UNIFIL: old lessons for the new force, *Signal*, Spring 2007. That article's analysis (and the 1980 quotation repeated here) draw heavily on Bjorn SKOGMO, *UNIFIL: International Peacekeeping in Lebanon, 1978-1988* (Boulder CO, Lynne Rienner, 1989).

[2] United Nations General Assembly, *Comprehensive Review of the Strategic Military Cell*, 26 April 2007 (UN document A/61/883), pp. 5-6.

to UNIFIL to discuss military matters of concern and to share information”.^[1] Thus, the primarily European Cell has responsibility for discussing operational issues with the primarily European troop suppliers — and these officer-to-officer discussions are liable to be as important to shaping the mission as the more formal communications between the UN and governments. While UNIFIL is thus not formally a hybrid force, its *de facto* strategic command structure is a complex one, largely relying on the interaction of European militaries.

So although UNIFIL is not an EU mission it relies on the sort of intra-EU inter-governmental interplay that underpins the formation of ESDP military deployments — in essence, the UN has provided an alternative to ESDP as the framework for European military cooperation in this one case. In so far as the European Council acted as an important forum for governments to agree on the shape of the force, this cooperation did have an EU dimension at its inception. If the European Council's involvement blurred the lines between EU and UN in 2006, the role of the SMC as a mechanism for European cooperation is a reminder that ESDP is not the sole basis for the EU's military actions.

3. EUFOR RD CONGO: THE COMPLEXITIES OF COMMAND

“No use of tear gas, weapons down, only self-protection,” orders the NCO. In case of trouble or demonstrations the section will immediately retreat. Soldiers are told to friendly wave back to the population and keep smiling.

A Belgian soldier deployed with EUFOR RD Congo describes his rules of engagement, 2006.^[2]

If the political process that led to the 25 August European Council meeting on Lebanon was highly imperfect, it has been favourably compared with that leading to the deployment of an ESDP mission to DRC (EUFOR RD Congo) to provide security during its high-risk national elections. The UN initially made a request for support from an ESDP mission to the outgoing British presidency of the EU in late December 2005, but it was not approved by the European Council until March 2006, nearly halfway through the Austrian presidency. It is arguable that this relatively slow process was justifiable as the force was not required immediately — but the eventual approval of the mission was overshadowed by a perception that there

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[2] Hans HAEGDORENS, “On EUFOR patrol in Masina (Kinshasa)”, available at the ESDP website of the European Council: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=1095&lang=en.

was little real enthusiasm for the mission in the EU. Many were also unconvinced by the mission's rationale. "With 2,000 soldiers, the coming operation is largely cosmetic," Jean-Yves Haine and Bastian Giegerich editorialized as the mission got underway, and "like most cosmetic operations, it is more about European form than African substance, comforting rhetoric than relevant action".

The mission's rationale has more to do with French-German cohesion and with the EU's desire to bolster the credibility of the European Security and Defense Policy after the fiasco over the European constitutional treaty's rejection in referendums in France and the Netherlands. The actual reality on the ground in Congo is only a secondary factor.^[1]

Similar criticisms have followed the mission's conclusion, in spite of the fact that the Congolese elections were largely peaceful. It has been argued that the elections cannot guarantee lasting stability, and that EUFOR RD Congo's limited deployment was thus "precisely the kind of operation that should not be promoted as part of the EU's Africa strategy".^[2] The DRC's post-electoral calm certainly remains tenuous, but we can reflect on how effectively the ESDP mission projected an EU identity — and the extent to which it successfully functioned as a hybrid with the UN's force in DRC, MONUC. In some ways EU-UN cooperation, although *ad hoc*, actually proved more straightforward than EUFOR's internal coordination. The mission involved 1,090 troops from France, 730 from Germany, 130 each from Spain and Poland and contributions of fewer than 100 from Belgium, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden.^[3] As Karl von Wogau has observed, the mission was hampered by interoperability problems:

In theory, the use of NATO Standards should help avoiding problems of interoperability. However, the reality of integrating different national contributions into the small EUFOR proved more difficult. It was suggested that a prior training period for all troop-contributing states would help to overcome a lot of the interoperability problems... Moreover, the use of different — and often incompatible — equipment and armaments by the participating units led to extra costs and reduced efficiency.^[4]

[1] Jean-Yves HAINE and Bastian GIEGERICH, In Congo, a cosmetic European operation, *International Herald Tribune*, 12 June 2006.

[2] Georges NZONGOLA-NTALAJA, Lessons learned from the Artemis and EUFOR operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Alexander MATTELAER (ed.), *The EU's Africa strategy: what are the lessons of the Congo mission?* (Bruxelles, Security & Defence Agenda, April 2007), p. 32.

[3] Center on International Cooperation, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

[4] Karl VON WOGAU, Lessons learned from EUFOR RD Congo: successes and concerns, in MATTELAER (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

Yet the mission's troubles were not matters of operating procedures and equipment alone. With its Force Headquarters in Kinshasa, Operational Headquarters in Potsdam and political oversight from Brussels, decisions had to go up and down a lengthy chain of command. To one French official, this was a potentially very dangerous situation:

Artemis was a mission mainly carried out by France in [the] service of the European Union. EUFOR DRC was a truly European multilateral mission, with all its operational drawbacks. The distances between the strategic, operational and tactical headquarters have induced hazard and risk in the mission. We need to reunite permanently [the] strategic and operational facilities of the European Union. Otherwise we risk losing the ESDP, this instrument of peace and stability that we have created for ourselves and in the service of international crisis management.^[1]

Yet it is arguable that, while EUFOR RD Congo was hampered by its cumbersome chain of command, its most important operational arrangements were with MONUC. While a rationalized European chain of command might have assisted the mission, its impact was inevitably going to be decided by how effectively it interacted with the UN. If EUFOR had the tactical capacity to reinforce MONUC, it was MONUC that had the resources and mandate to define and implement a strategy for the Congolese elections. Since the deployment of *Artemis* in 2003, the EU had taken a number of initiatives to work within the security framework offered by the UN in DRC.^[2] It had two non-military ESDP missions in place by 2006: a police mission (EUPOL Kinshasa) and security sector reform team (EUSEC DR Congo). These boasted a combined manpower of little more than thirty, but the EU also provided three hundred observers to cover the 2006 polls, while it and the UN jointly presented humanitarian and development plans for DRC.

The decision-making structures for the ESDP missions in DRC have proved particularly complex. If *Artemis* demonstrated that the EU was ready to deploy its resources to reinforce the UN, it also highlighted the status of the European Council as a separate locus of decision-making to the UN Security Council. *Artemis* was mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1484, which called for a multinational force but did not specify its institutional origin. The mission was authorized by a Joint Action of the European Council that located responsibility for launching the mission and "the powers of decision with respect to the objectives and termination

[1] Jean DE PONTON D'AMÉCOURT, *The EU's Africa strategy: where do we come from and where do we go?*, in MATTELAER (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.36.

[2] The two paragraphs that follow are an edited extract from GOWAN, *The global objective*, *op. cit.*

of the operation” firmly in Brussels, while operational control of the largely French intervention force was routed through Paris. Authorized in 2004, EUPOL Kinshasa did not receive a specific mandate from the UN, although it referred to Security Council Resolution 1493 of the previous year, which encouraged support for the Congolese police — EUSEC RD Congo was launched on a similar basis. Both were made answerable to an EU Special Representative (EUSR) in Kinshasa, reporting to Brussels. EUFOR RD Congo received a mandate in Security Council Resolution 1671 in April, and a Council Joint Action authorized the operation shortly thereafter. As in the case of *Artemis*, the European Council retained the “powers of decision” over the mission’s goals and conclusion, but it also recognized the level of organizational complexity on the ground, instructing that:

The EU Force Commander in coordination with the EUSR and the Heads of Mission for EUPOL Kinshasa and EUSEC RD Congo respectively shall, on issues relevant to his mission, maintain close contacts with MONUC and local authorities, as well as with other international actors, as appropriate.^[1]

In terms of high politics, the variety of means by which the missions were initiated — including UN mandates, Council Joint Actions and *ad hoc* informal requests — suggested that the decision-making structures of the EU and UN were increasingly intertwined. Operationally and tactically, UN and European officials muddled through reasonably well, improving on *Artemis*, during which EU-UN coordination in the field was poor.

That does not mean that EUFOR-MONUC cooperation was perfect.^[2] At the planning stage, there was frequent frustration over the lack of formal coordination structures. Irritations arose over issues such as sharing documents. In the field, a particularly worrying problem arose from the fact that the two missions generated independent threat assessments — creating differences over precisely when deterrent action was necessary. But in Kinshasa, there was good chemistry between the senior officers on both sides (the EU’s field commander was French, while the UN’s was Senegalese, meaning that they shared a common Francophone military culture). When, in late August, it looked like militia fighting in the city might escalate out of control, EUFOR and MONUC troops mounted an effective joint action to contain it. At times, EUFOR seemed to be constrained less by the UN

[1] European Council, Council Joint Action 2006/319/CFSP: on the European Union military operation in support of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) during the election process, 27 April 2006.

[2] This paragraph and the two that follow are edited extracts from Richard GOWAN, EUFOR RD Congo, UNIFIL and future European support to the UN, in MATTELAER (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 30.

than by the range of national caveats among its own contingents. Yet this mission proved that an ESDP operation can operate within the strategic framework of an existing UN deployment. It also suggests some fairly obvious ways to enhance future co-deployments: the development of standard joint operating procedures for coordinating operations at the strategic and tactical levels, and in particular methods of generating joint threat assessments to act as the basis for joined-up decision-making.

Whereas the UNIFIL experience was a reminder that ESDP is not the only vehicle for European military cooperation, therefore, EUFOR RD Congo showed that the presumption that an ESDP mission equals EU autonomy is also problematic. It is certainly true that, in formal terms, EUFOR RD Congo was independent of MONUC, but in operational and strategic terms it was reliant on the UN presence if its deployment was to have any meaning. In this, it differed from the earlier *Operation Artemis*, which was deployed to stabilize an area of the eastern DRC in which the UN had effectively lost control. By contrast, EUFOR RD Congo was a deterrent force, alongside a UN force that, while overstretched and unpopular in Kinshasa, retained control of its situation.

It is arguable that the *Artemis* experience, and its role in stimulating the battle-group concept, has had an excessive influence on thinking about military ESDP missions — and especially the role of ESDP missions deployed in hybrid frameworks alongside forces of other international organizations. After *Artemis*, it became quite orthodox in ESDP circles to assume that future missions would be “Artemis II”, “Artemis III” and so forth. That meant that these missions would follow a certain pattern. They would (i) be in Africa; (ii) involve a brigade-strength force with a robust mandate; (iii) deploy for a fixed period of three to six months; (iv) operate firmly outside UN command structures. Up to a point, EUFOR RD Congo confirmed these assumptions, in terms of its size and period of deployment as well as its chain of command. But what these earlier assumptions had obscured was the need to think in a more nuanced fashion about how future deployments would fit into hybrid structures and respond to new and complex security challenges.

In reality, the EUFOR RD Congo experience saw the ESDP mission adapt to fit a framework set by the UN — the European troops were within a UN framework, even if they were outside its chain of command. We have seen that the insertion of large numbers of European forces into UNIFIL permitted the EU's members to effectively reshape the mission (and especially its command structures) to suit their needs. By contrast, the Congolese case saw a subtle adaptation of the European mission to fit into an existing UN framework. For those inclined to obsess with

questions of identity, it might be healthy to ask which of the two missions was the more genuinely “European”: the UN mission that was taken over by European governments, or the ESDP mission that was strategically, if not operationally, subordinate to MONUC’s goals in DRC?

4. BEYOND LEBANON AND DRC: SHORT AND LONG-TERM PROSPECTS

If 2006 was indeed a year of European action, what will follow? And what lessons can we take away from 2006 that might permit the EU to respond more effectively to future crises? As this author has argued elsewhere, this may prove to be a matter of immediate urgency, as mounting challenges in Kosovo, Lebanon and Afghanistan might result in a “multi-center crisis”, with spikes of violence in two or more theaters simultaneously. Thanks to Lebanon, “2006 was the year that Europe showed it was willing and able to get troops to trouble-spots impressively fast”.^[1] But while getting troops on the ground may win praise, having troops on the ground brings problems of its own: “if Europe is to be a credible player in world affairs, 2007 must not be the year in which we find out how quickly, and under what pressures, those troops will evacuate”.

But if the EU’s members can weather any such immediate storms, there are longer-term lessons from 2006 about how the Union can project its security identity. As has been suggested above, these lessons center on the utility of *strategic subordination* and *interpenetration* in dealing with other international organizations to achieve international security. The EUFOR RD Congo story is admittedly a flawed advertisement for *strategic subordination* — here was a mission that was probably unnecessary, the authorization and implementation of which generated political and operational embarrassments. Nonetheless, it revealed that there is potential for more innovative strategic thinking on how the EU deploys ESDP missions to support the UN (or, in other conceivable scenarios, a regional organization such as the AU). This thinking must move beyond the post-*Artemis* orthodoxy to focus on questions of how to maximize coordination in hybrid operations, from the planning through to tactical and operational implementation. Having expanded the EU’s military arsenal through the battle-group concept, it is now necessary to look beyond the EU’s capabilities to see how they fit with those of others.

This may lead to less of a concentration on identity and more on *interpenetration* — how, where ESDP missions are deployed, can they balance their operational

[1] Richard GOWAN, Europe’s peacekeeping nightmares, *The Globalist*, 28 March 2007.

autonomy with the need to operate extremely closely with partner missions? Such issues have already arisen not only in EU-UN relations, but in ESDP support to the AU in Darfur. It is time to move beyond *ad hoc* solutions in such situations. Nonetheless, the UNIFIL experience should remind us that EU-UN interpenetration will not always take the relatively straightforward form of inter-institutional relationship-building. It may also take the far more complex form of EU member states negotiating on crises and missions in multiple forums (as Lebanon was debated in the UN and in the European Council) and forming operational entities such as the SMC to coordinate a European-led strategy outside ESDP structures. The UNIFIL story was an undeniably convoluted one, but it nonetheless ended with both the European powers and the UN looking unexpectedly relevant in resolving a Middle Eastern crisis. There will be further occasions in which European governments will find that it is easier to effectively manage a crisis through non-EU structures — to limit this flexibility in the name of identity would be a foolish mistake.

Indeed, as long as the EU remains a “hybrid” entity, with “its ‘actorness’ being built from the bottom up”, the ability of its members to be flexible in making choices about how to respond to specific crises remains one of its greatest assets. Rather than look for an “ESDP answer” to every problem, the EU’s members should be able to work through the UN and other multilateral partners to find the best solutions available. This brings us back to Janne Haaland Matlary’s warning that “the problem with regard to strategic culture is not primarily military culture, but political will”. If the EU is to be an effective strategic actor, the challenge is not to perfect ESDP. It is to develop a shared political will to work through the whole range of multilateral institutions, and maximize their efficacy. Fifty years after the Treaty of Rome, the EU now looks ahead to an uncertain world of unpredictable crises, to which it will have to find an ever-increasing variety of solutions. To search for one EU identity is insufficient — the EU needs to project and adapt its identity across a multiplicity of international institutions, to face a multiplicity of crises.