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Last month, the EU celebrated the tenth anniversary of the St Malo Declaration – surprisingly quietly. Over on this side of the Channel, we saw a Ministerial meeting publicised by an understated MoD Press Release, as John Hutton entertained Herve Morin at Northwood; no fanfare, no parades, no interviews from enthusiastic politicians and Generals, at best the odd sidebar in national news coverage.

However, to deploy a little hyperbole, the St Malo Declaration may be thought of as the most pivotal moment in the history of European security since the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine. It was the Zero Hour moment when the two key European

leaders gave the go order for future unified security operations, and it served notice that ESDP (also examined previously here at Defence Viewpoints) will no longer be guided solely under the aegis of NATO and so effectively helmed from the Pentagon. More than any of the various other documents and Treaties involved in the evolution of the ESDP, the St Malo Declaration represents a turning point that historians will surely cite a hundred years from today.

The EU itself doesn't trumpet the St Malo Declaration, instead focussing on three Treaties, Maastricht (1992), Amsterdam (1997) and Nice (2000). To clarify, Maastricht laid the foundations for the Western European Union to formulate and implement a common security and foreign policy for the EU as a whole, while Amsterdam codified the "Petersburg Tasks" (the WEU's 'set menu' for the scope of potential humanitarian, peacekeeping and peacemaking operations, dating from 1992) into the Treaty of European Union and so set out the legal basis for future common EU defence and security operations. The Treaty of Nice later smoothed out some of the rough edges of the project – arguably a direct consequence of the Saint-Malo summit.

Why doesn't the EU like to fly the flag for Saint-Malo? First and foremost, the summit did not involve the EU as an institution. It was Britain and France alone sending the clear message 'we can do or we can teach', signalling to the other EU partners that it was time to stop simply talking a good game and to step up to the plate. The Saint-Malo Declaration itself talked of "making a reality of the Treaty of Amsterdam" and of Anglo-French determination to "unite in our efforts to enable the European Union to give concrete expression to these objectives", also highlighting a commitment to pan-European cooperation in supporting the defence industry as a means to building an effective EU military. And the second clause of the Declaration offered the crucial statement of policy,

"...the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises."

The summit was a response to the events in Kosovo in the late 1990s, and the perceived failure of the international community to intervene in time, not to mention the fear of a total breakdown in regional stability in eastern Europe and the Balkans area. The Rwandan genocide arguably played a role, too – a number of prominent EU missions have since been deployed to Africa under the aegis of the ESDP.

The influence of Britain and France was crucial at the time. First and foremost, the Anglo-American 'special relationship' is recognised as the cornerstone of NATO, and to create a conflicting framework would have been unthinkable before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Whilst an evident compromise of Britain's leanings towards NATO and France's drive for the full primacy of the EU, the Declaration served as midwife to a new political reality. That Britain under the then recently-elected Blair government was willing to put its signature to this document signalled that the terms of discourse were shifting decisively, and the potential consequences for NATO's role in Europe were surely lost on no-one present despite the differences in underlying political positions. Of course, the Declaration paid lip-service to NATO membership, but the talk was of "conformity with our respective obligations" and a "modernised Atlantic Alliance", more a case of Britain and France hedging their bets and offering a measure of diplomatic balm to the sooth the potential wound than a resounding endorsement of a future in NATO for ESDP.

Secondly, at the time the participation of France was key to the participation of the the rest of the WEU. It was a *fait accompli* – where Paris led, Berlin would inevitably follow, and Madrid and Rome would not be far behind. Furthermore, the Saint-Malo declaration was a signal to those countries within the WEU's natural sphere of influence that the two key European powers would in future raise much stronger objections to the wayward actions of any state which developed a penchant for butchering its own population, and were growing more willing to back up their words with military deployments.

However, entering 2009, there seem to be fewer political guarantees of multi-national involvement in security and defence policy. The divisions that arose as a result of UK participation in the US war in Iraq have drawn Britain further back into the NATO fold and the enthusiasm for trans-Atlantic cooperation in Sarkozy's France has served to underline how many bridges need to be rebuilt. Meanwhile, Germany is drawing away from France and Britain, pointedly avoiding confrontation with Russia thanks to the politics of oil and gas, and reticent about committing troops to foreign conflicts. Spain too has proved reluctant to recognise the autonomy of Kosovo, seeking clarification of the legalities of the post-UN political landscape.

So, has the EU actually managed to stop jawing and grow a pair in the last ten years? The answer is yes, though a very qualified and tentative yes. The EU has taken a leading role in Kosovo, with a visible presence for monitors during the recent, and very delicate, onset of regional autonomy. The European Union Rule of Law Mission for the province, EULEX, is currently in process, and will eventually see the deployment of up to 1900 people, including civilian police and judges and military peacekeepers. Additionally, EUFOR deployments have been seen in Bosnia (EUFOR Althea, successor to SFOR, mandated to enforce the Dayton Agreement), and as far afield as Chad (led by France) and DR Congo (in 2006).

Yet, whilst the tenth anniversary of the St Malo Declaration has seen the launch of Operation

ATALANTA (a joint EU mission to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia, involving a British Frigate and commanded by Royal Navy Rear Admiral Phil Jones), the EU still lacks the capability to conduct substantial unified combat operations. If America suddenly decided to wash its hands of Europe - to withdraw from NATO, quit its bases, and repudiate the Monroe Doctrine – there would be no effective transnational substitute to act as a guarantor of regional security.

As noted by a CDI research paper, the objective has been,

"...to be able to deploy rapidly and then sustain forces capable of the full range of Petersberg tasks, including the most demanding, in operations up to corps level (up to 15 brigades or 50,000-60,000 persons). The aim was to make those forces self-reliant (without dependence on U.S. support), deployable within 60 days, and sustainable in the field for a year. This means the force would actually have to number around 180,000 troops so as to provide rotating replacements for the initial forces."

This "Headline Goal" was formulated in Helsinki in 1999 as a direct consequence of the groundwork laid by the Saint-Malo Declaration and became official policy in 2001, but is still nowhere near to being achieved. The EU does have a headquarters and command structure, Joint Permanent HQ, based at Northwood, and the so-called Helsinki Force Catalogue, which details the commitments offered so far by member nations, though it is worth noting that member nations retain full discretion over if, when and how they make their troops available for EU service and there are no guarantees that any particular unit will be made available in the event of a crisis. Of course, the EU itself already has the appropriate political control structures formalised and ready to be used when necessary. But the military infrastructure – troops, tanks, aircraft, ships, command and control centres, unified logistics and supply systems – isn't even close to being up to spec.

Funding and the 'NATO question' remain the most important stumbling blocks to the full operational implementation of the ESDP – one a subject left unaddressed by Saint-Malo, the other its thorniest problem. Russian opposition to the transfer of the UN administration of security in Kosovo into EU hands is also an example of the political obstacles arrayed before any increased security and defence role for the EU.

As considered at greater length by the Heritage Foundation, America often views the ESDP as a consequence of the long-held French goal of building a militarily unified Europe strong enough to actively challenge an American-led NATO. Not surprisingly, this is seen to directly threaten US strategic interests, including the ability to create alliances in which America is the dominant partner. Analysts have even gone so far as to make doom-laden prophecies of the potential for ESDP to directly undermine trans-Atlantic security. NATO in its current form (foreswearing any discussion here of any changes to the nature and structure of the organisation) already has some thorny European issues to deal with.

For example, Turkish membership of NATO conflicts with the EU membership of Greece and Cyprus, and wrangling over mutual assurances delayed the EU's Macedonia mission, Op Concordia, in 2002. The risk of weakening the 'Western' negotiating position in Eastern Europe

– especially against Russia – is sometimes seen as reason enough to maintain the primacy of NATO at all costs. And then there's the Anglo-American Special Relationship; the Heritage Foundation makes the argument that the British position would be weaker as a central member of an active ESDP, but fails to highlight the limitations upon Britain inherent in close ties to the US, or the advantages of Britain's prominent place in the ESDP framework.

Likewise, detractors argue that the EU doesn't yet have the military-industrial framework necessary for unified operations. However, the Eurofighter project has been a qualified success, and international technology transfer within the EU has often seemed to proceed much more easily of late when contrasted with America's reluctance to share its favourite toys even with its closest allies. With the ESDP still effectively in its infancy, neither can we expect all the pieces to fall into place immediately, but it is clear that progress is being made, if slowly, as witnessed by the efforts of the EDA. There's also the argument that individual EU nations will lose out by sacrificing some autonomy in making procurement decisions, but the Heritage Foundation contrasts this with the need to "globalise procurement" - code for America's interest in retaining market share and technological dominance, thinly veiled under the legitimate point that co-operation aids tech development and produces economies of scale – so it may be said that what's good for the goose would be good for the gander.

Current shortfalls in funding for manpower and facilities shouldn't detract from the progress that is being made, and it's clear that the EU would benefit from increasing its ability to negotiate and form alliances on its own terms, especially with the geopolitical reputation of the US at a low thanks to the war in Iraq, lingering doubts over US missile defence, and the resurgence of Russia. Though there has been the odd operational prize turkey as the ESDP finds its legs, a goodly proportion of the operations undertaken in the last ten years have been a success.

At its tenth birthday, the European Security and Defence Policy is still in junior school. But it's a bright pupil, hard-working and with a great future ahead of it. There is likely to be a puberty moment at some point – a period when the rebellious ESDP often bangs heads with father NATO and mother domestic security and defence policy, and doesn't always get its own way – but with a resurgent Russia and the ever-present ethnic tensions of the Balkans and the Caucasus it is certain to some day come into its own, and we can be optimistic about seeing it shine.