

Barry Posen's recent research looks at the European Union Security Plan (ESDP), which he said was an effort to conceive, plan, and carry out military planning in support of EU goals. He said that in the long-term, there is likely to be a unified military and security plan, but that it will be designed to allow for great flexibility for member states.

Posen said that the need for a military component to the EU has been on the agenda for many years, but that their inability and the United State's unwillingness to intervene during the conflict of the Balkans was the impetus for the creation of a military policy. The process was accelerated after 9/11, when NATO's offer of military support of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan was rejected. After years of heavy-handedness in its foreign policy and the perception that Washington flaunted its power in offensive ways (Posen cited its refusal to share intelligence in NATO's mission in Kosovo as an example), this rebuke offended many in the EU, who concluded that Washington neither wanted nor needed their help, and that European states were not important in any way.

Posen said that it is necessary to include NATO in discussions about the ESDP, because it is likely going to be complement the older organization and not replace it. Posen said that France is unique in its desire to push for a military arm completely independent of NATO.

ESDP will be designed to support EU goals, including humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacemaking and peacekeeping, and crisis management responsibilities. On paper, it appears to be autonomous, but Posen said that in reality, NATO will still be tapped to respond to conflict. Only if NATO decided not to get involved would an EU military group get involved. He added that the current ESDP does not explicitly call for the creation of an army, although it is implicit for many. NATO would remain the classic defense unit and have first "rights of refusal," said Posen.

Posen said that the people working on ESDP, including Javier Solana, Secretary-General of the Council of the EU and High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), are senior diplomats who are excellent scholars and understand that ESDP must fit into larger, global security policies. Despite this, Posen identified several potential problems with the current plan.

He said that one shortfall is that the people who would be identified to be part of an EU military unit are the same as those used by NATO and their own country's units. Also, because NATO has first shot at any action, this diminishes the role that ESDP forces could play.

These shortfalls deny the EU an opportunity to create a first-class military, said Posen. While admittedly nowhere near the U.S military in strength or expenditures, European states are quite capable militarily, said Posen.

He thought it was effective to look at American power through the eyes of EU member states, because it helps to explain why they are approaching ESDP as they are. Posen said that there are several outcomes to current US strength and unipolar action. According to offensive realist theories, Posen said the U.S. can be expected to manipulate their power for their own gain, and with great disparities in strength, powerful states like the United States need not fear coalition strength.

The EU can respond to this by bandwagoning, and Posen predicted that a tempered form of this will result. He does not foresee a situation where the EU member states wholly reject NATO or their alliance with Washington, but he anticipates an uncomfortable bandwagoning among EU states that allow them to "keep their options open." He says that this will likely take place over a long period of time, because history has shown that the EU moves slowly and methodically. He added that according to polls, many in Europe seek a unified foreign policy before a security or military policy.