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IN THE NINETIES**

by Gianni Bonvicini

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The debate on EC-US relations in foreign and security policy has recently had renewed impetus and, given its urgency and complexity, it is destined to dominate the coming months and years. While present concerns may be focussed on the analysis of transformations in the East and, to some extent, in the rest of the world, there is every indication that in the future the key issue will be the new configuration of transatlantic relations. In a changing international scene, these relations have constituted the only credible element of stability; but if they are to remain so in the future, the nature of their dynamics must be adapted and a new internal equilibrium must be achieved.

The Declaration on EC-US Relations

That EC-US relations would necessarily have to be recast became immediately apparent following the events of 1989, though the issue is rooted in the past. This pressure for change led to the November 1990 Declaration on EC-US Relations. While reactions to it have generally been cool and sceptical, the Declaration does make several useful considerations for a new framework of transatlantic relations.

The first of these pertains to extending the principle of partnership to all fields of cooperation: to the economy, where it is already operating; to foreign policy, where the mechanisms have yet to be devised; to security, where the relationship remains one of leadership. The concept is interesting, if not new, and it would seem that this time both sides feel a need for shared responsibility in a way that is much less academic than in the past.

This first issue is tied to the recognition of an accelerated process of EC integration, a process which should lend credibility to Community requests for equal partnership. What is emphasized in the Declaration is the affirmation that the EC is developing its own "identity", one characterized by autonomy, unlike the rather partial image suggested by "European Pillar", another term which has been in vogue for several years.

Finally, the task of a Euro-American partnership is that of promoting a system of international security, not in guarded exclusivity, but in collaboration with other countries, as well as with regional and international institutions (e.g. the UN). In other

words, it must encourage the creation of a complex framework providing a coordinated effort to ensure stability and resolve crises.

As regards the institutional process of consultation, however, the Declaration is rather weak, simply referring to well-tested procedures, or making proposals that have already been tried ad hoc in the past. But in today's new context, it is clear that the issue of institutional machinery must be radically redefined.

Furthermore, the Declaration does not go far enough when specifying the areas to be included in the consultative process, citing only terrorism, drugs, the environment, etc., without dealing with crucial fields which are currently not regularly addressed in EC-US relations: foreign policy on Eastern Europe; economic, diplomatic and security policies to be adopted in out-of-area crises.

But of course it is not reasonable to expect more from a simple declaration of intent than a few significant affirmations in principle, such as those recalled in the preceding discussion.

Europe at the Centre of International Change

The fact is that the recent radical geostrategic and geopolitical transformation has taken place in Europe. It is Europe that has strongly returned to the centre of historic international debate. After years of immobility and status quo, it is from here that the reconstruction of the international order begins once again. Clearly, therefore, institutional changes must be far-reaching and long-term in perspective; there will inevitably be some reservations and faltering, but there must be no further delay.

If we consider Western Europe and take a moment to look at the past, we notice, for example, that defence had been accorded last priority with respect to other interests and that the only real commitment of Europeans (including the French) was to avoiding American decoupling. Their main tasks were to block Soviet expansionism and to accommodate the FRG within a collective framework for defence. Interest in the latter arose both because of the position of the FRG as a border country and because its inclusion was seen as a guarantee against a revival of German militarism. Clearly the US presence played a key role in upholding these commitments.

But today it is difficult to attribute the same weight and relative priority to these objectives of the past: aside from the current transformations, the dynamics of the EC-US relationship have gradually been changing and we are now far from the situation of total dependence/hegemony of the late 1960s.

EC-US Relations Recast

A. Economy

The area in which most progress has been made toward equal partnership is clearly that of economy. In this regard the Economic Community has played a decisive role, with the result that in addition to its recognition within the G7, it has taken the lead on behalf of the G24 to coordinate economic aid to the East. The economic role of the EC has been of such

significance that we now speak of a "regionalization" of international relations, the region potentially of most importance being the European one. This creates new problems of coordination with other regions, particularly with North America and the Far East, though several mechanisms of mediation and coordination are already in place and can easily be adapted to the new world geoeconomic conditions. The priority for Europe is that of avoiding the temptation of becoming a Fortress or of giving preferential treatment to its neighbouring areas in the East and in the Mediterranean, while maintaining close cooperation with the US and Japan.

B. Foreign Policy

Progress has also been made in the field of a common foreign policy with the introduction of European Political Cooperation (EPC) in the 1960s. This diplomatic instrument operated at a low level for a long time, more as a well-meaning club than as a source of effective policy for action and mediation in world affairs. Somewhat paradoxically, in the early 1970s, EPC achieved its greatest accomplishments in the field of security (which has always been rigorously excluded from its competencies) through its positive experience in the various phases of the CSCE. The "near turning point" in the role of EPC came with the decision for a closer link between measures taken in external economic policy and those which are strictly diplomatic (the so-called consistency principle, SEA art. 30), that is, a link between EC and EPC decision-making processes. In addition, the decision to give the rotating presidency (within the Troika) the responsibility for carrying out missions on behalf of the Twelve has also been achieving some significant results. Coordination with the US, however, has been more problematic because of the lack of adequate mechanisms in the consultative process. The reason for this is twofold: on the one hand, the slow, inefficient European process does not enjoy much credibility in the US; on the other, the traditional reservations of the French, who feel influenced in some way by our transatlantic partners. Thus, consultation has been based on pragmatic formulae, to which the Declaration on EC-US Relations adds rather little.

C. Security

The situation is much more uncertain in the field of security and defence. Aside from European participation in NATO, the EC has taken few steps forward in the area of defence to make a credible request for equal partnership with the US. While it is true that the issue has recently been brought back to the negotiating table of the Twelve - essentially on the initiative of Mitterrand because of his concern over German unification and turmoil in the East - it certainly cannot be said that significant innovations have been made in European defence in light of the fall of Communism and requests from the East for security and stability. Furthermore, the issue has been given little attention at the level of public opinion as changes are seen more in terms of disarmament than in stable structures of military defence. What has been done in recent years, therefore, has been little more than symbolic:

- the 1987 WEU Platform;
- the creation of a Franco-German Defence Council in 1988 together with a common brigade;
- more widespread use of EC-EPC policies in security matters, including both economic sanctions or withdrawal of aid to certain countries;
- an effort to provide WEU with a practical role in the coordination of out-of-area military operations.

These are all initiatives which demonstrate that the EC is more committed to establishing its own identity in security and defence, but there is still no clear blueprint for the role and nature of this new identity.

Europe and the Future of the Atlantic Alliance

In order to define the requirements and range of a European defence policy, it is necessary to consider the future of the Atlantic Alliance and the role of Europe within and beyond it.

It is now evident that NATO must be explicit about its tasks for the future. The Alliance's Strategy Review Group has already modified its concept of "threat", referring instead to "challenges and risks" in four areas: the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, direct and indirect challenges out of the NATO area. Generally there is a tendency toward multidirectional risks reminiscent of the tous azimout of the de Gaulle era. Since the fall of the Soviet Empire and rising Third World tensions, uncontrolled proliferation looms in the guise of nuclear deterrence. This may necessitate more discriminate forms of nuclear strategies. The military capacity of the Third World is growing, while the number of troops in the West is decreasing. There is a need to maintain definite technological superiority, but this is expensive and national budgets are becoming tighter. Conflict

management has become much more complex. The scenario has thus become much less clearly defined, as has the enemy.

These changes affect the Alliance in various ways:

- US professional and technological capabilities are assuming much more importance;
- the presence of American soldiers in Europe is rapidly declining;
- the credibility of extended nuclear deterrence could be reduced by the concept of discriminate deterrence;
- the Europeans are reducing their own troops;
- out-of-area threats will increase in number and intensity.

The Future the Atlantic Alliance

What orientation could the Atlantic alliance assume in the future? Would a broader role for NATO be credible? Is it possible to charge the Alliance with political and economic competencies in addition to its military ones?

The fact is that we are moving away from a multi-purpose Alliance; and it is the member states as well as other regional and international institutions which are moving in this direction. While NATO was extremely useful in the Gulf crisis, it never assumed the central role of decision-maker. We are moving rapidly toward a new, multipolar security system in which the actors are numerous and variously structured.

Now, let's consider more recent events:

- the UN has rediscovered its original vocation;
- the Atlantic Alliance is limited by East-West agreements and mechanisms such as CSCE and CFE;
- the process of European integration centred around the EC increasingly involves economic and security aspects;
- the US is tending toward a policy of strategic independence;
- in the absence of institutions for dealing with out-of-area crises, ad hoc multilateral efforts are arising case by case.

Towards a Multidimensional System of Institutions

It would seem that the Atlantic Alliance is losing its distinction as the only forum for coordination between Europeans and the US with the aim of reaching common military and security policies. Furthermore, this is not a sudden development: this function has

not been limited to the Atlantic Alliance for some time. For example, the G7 summits which were primarily concerned with economic issues have gradually become an instrument for the political management of major international crises, beginning with those affecting collective security and disarmament. It must be noted, as it is an element which will become part of multilateral security in the future, that Japan is a participant in the G7 summits and this is a definite sign of the first enlargement of collective responsibility beyond the Atlantic Alliance.

This process is now being accelerated and major crises are dealt with by institutions in addition to the Atlantic Alliance: G7 summits, G24, EC-EPC, the Council of Europe and the UN. This is certainly true with regard to Eastern Europe, which was once strictly under the competence of NATO, at least in terms of security; in the past, discussions began within EPC (e.g. on the military coup in Poland) but were moved to the context of the Atlantic Alliance because security and defence aspects of the issue were considered dominant and because it was the only context in which consultations could take place with the US. This is no longer true today.

The same could be said of out-of-area crises. Not only does NATO have no competence in these cases, forced therefore to play "behind the line", but the prerequisites for intervention include a much wider political front than that represented by NATO and, possibly the umbrella of other international institutions, beginning with the UN.

In sum, there is an increasing feeling that just as it should be strengthened to face the much more complex issues than those it faced in the past, NATO finds itself in the uncomfortable situation of being relegated to the margins of a major remodelling of international security. This is simply the result of decisions made by its main member states, the US and the EC partners in the Alliance to use different venues when responding to crises in recent years.

Thus, the problem of Euro-American consultation on security and foreign policy issues must be considered within a broader perspective. Proposals for the future must take into account the greater complexity of the context and address the question of finding a new balance of responsibilities and roles in security of foreign policy such as that which has already been achieved in the economic sector.

The Main Security Issues of the Future

What, then, are the main issues that Europe and the US must strive to resolve in the future? Attention will turn primarily to the nature of relations to be established with Eastern Europe and with what was formerly the Soviet Union; to the coordination of

conflict management out-of-the NATO area; and to the equilibrium in Central Europe since the unification of Germany.

(a) Eastern Europe

The issues we face with regard to the countries of Eastern Europe are profoundly different today than they were only a few years ago. Clearly, the compelling requests from the East for stability and security have very little to do with the military and defence concerns of the past; now guarantees for stability lie largely in economic policies. Thus the European Community, as noted earlier in this paper, has taken on a role that could not have been imagined in its former context. While it is particularly difficult to posit direct military intervention regardless of the composition of the force, even in crises and open conflicts such as that in Yugoslavia, for example, the main instruments for intervention now include economic sanctions as well as diplomacy and negotiation. Peace-keeping or interposition forces may be a possibility, in addition to observers as is currently the case. Together with the EC, regional institutions such as the CSCE, the Council of Europe and the UN could also play a major role in case of increased intensity or spread of conflicts. NATO could then play its traditional "behind the line" role as an additional forum for consultation between Europe and the US. Thus the formula for managing future crises in Eastern Europe would seem to include the comprehensive use of economic, diplomatic and security policies together with reliance on several institutions.

(b) Out-of-Area Crises

A second major objective is that of clarifying procedures and roles in out-of-area crises. At least two important considerations emerge from the recent experience in the Gulf: (i) without US technological supremacy, both professional and military, neither Europe nor any other actor could have intervened alone; (ii) without the political, financial and military support of Europe the undertaking would have been too costly from various points of view even for the US. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the US would be willing to assume a burden comparable to that sustained during the Gulf crisis unless presented with such an exceptional scenario. Evidence of US reluctance to play a role as the only world police force is provided by the situation in Yugoslavia, in which the US readily accepts a dominant role of the EC. A third obvious lesson from the Gulf is that the role of the UN proved fundamental, at least as an umbrella organization and forum for consensus including actors outside the West.

(c) Germany

The third major issue, though it has currently been receiving little attention given other priorities, is the future role of Germany as an axis for the new European security system. In light of economic needs of the Eastern countries and the fragmentation of the Soviet

empire, it is inevitable that Germany will take on a leadership role within the EC; what is important is that this leadership be manifested from within the EC. In the areas of foreign and security policy, a different German course could lead to the collapse of the EC. Even more today than in the past, a Germany with strong ties to the EC is vital. It is unlikely that NATO is sufficient to guarantee Germany's military ties to the West. German concern about the presence of foreign troops on its territory will continue to increase: a dependent relationship as opposed to a full partnership could be rejected by the German government in the future. And given the complexities outlined in the foregoing with respect both to the countries of Eastern Europe and to the out-of-area crises, a German contribution will be essential. The US and EC must not put off resolving this issue.

Conditions for a New EC-US Alliance

The following must be considered when postulating the future nature of the EC-US relationship.

First, the US presence in Europe, even under the new circumstances, will continue to be a decisive stabilizing factor. Hence the Atlantic Alliance and NATO may remain useful instruments. But it is evident that the military presence must not be the only element to be taken into consideration. The renewed US presence in Europe must also involve foreign and economic policy. Even in light of a clear process of regionalization in Europe, these areas will remain global issues and must be treated as such: there must be coordination with the other pole - Japan - and not only with regard to the economy.

Secondly, the European identity must make a leap forward in foreign and security policy. The "to be or not to be" debate on WEU is pointless. Given the complexity and multidimensional nature of the issues we face, action must respond to the consistency principle, that is, that it is taken within the same institution. And this institution is the EC and the Political Union that it will give rise to in the future. The new context requires an EC which functions as one in all sectors. It is not a European Pillar which we need, but rather a Community that is capable of handling all aspects of international relations. This is true both for defence in specific terms - if we are to prevent the fragmentation of competencies and policies among various organisms, which may lead to renationalization of defence policies - and for ensuring stable ties between Germany and a credible European Community.

Finally, emphasis must shift from instruments for military coordination to those for policy coordination. This means that the priority for future Euro-American relations is the establishment of procedures for foreign policy coordination that go far beyond those provided for in the 1990 Declaration. Granted, the reluctance to go beyond the text of the Declaration made following hard-won consensus last November was not primarily on the

part of the US, but rather on the part of France. Nevertheless, the negative attitude of a significant number of US politicians toward a European identity which is independent (but which will be "reflected" in NATO, as conceived by the Franco-German proposal) in the field of security, provides France with an excellent alibi for opposing a substantial improvement in overall EC-US cooperation.

The future of EC-US cooperation will necessarily stem from the strengthening of European integration. And this, as France well knows and is willing to concede, is the primary means for securing stable ties with Germany.

Furthermore, in a scenario which must ensure the coordination of various institutions of profoundly different nature and functions, the existence of strong, closely linked poles - the EC, the US, Japan (it is essential that the Pacific be included in the debate) - will represent a guarantee for the construction of and stability for a new and complex system of international security. In order to achieve this ideal, a new contractual transatlantic relationship is a precondition which must be given priority in the coming months and years.

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