

DOCUMENTI

IAI

**STRATEGIC THINKING ON EUROPEAN SECURITY.
THE EUROPEAN VIEW**

by Maurizio Cremasco

Discussion paper prepared for the conference
“Turkey in a Changing Europe: Security Challenges of the 1990s”
Istanbul, 21-22 November 1991

IAI9135

ISTITUTO AFFARI INTERNAZIONALI

STRATEGIC THINKING ON EUROPEAN SECURITY. THE EUROPEAN VIEW
by Maurizio Cremasco

1. Introduction

In the last two years, the European security picture has been drastically changed by a series of revolutionary events.

The fall of the Berlin wall brought German re-unification and the progressive collapse of all Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe.

The formal dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the withdrawal of Soviet military forces from the territories of the former allies, to be completed by 1994 with the last Soviet soldiers leaving the ex-GDR, made NATO's strategy obsolete and altered NATO's defense requirements.

The Gulf crisis and the coalition war against Iraq tested Western resolve to oppose aggression and the European willingness and military capacity to participate with the United States in the defense of common security interests.

The failed coup in the Soviet Union led to the fall from power of the Communist Party, the disintegration of the Soviet empire and the emergence of a power vacuum ready to be filled.

Finally, the Yugoslav civil war is a stark reminder of the "new" parameters of the European security equation.

Today, the "threat from the East" has dissolved together with all the related military scenarios. There is no longer an enemy on the other side of the dismantled iron curtain. NATO's flexible and graduated response doctrine, with its concepts of forward deployment and defense, nuclear first strike option and escalation ladder, has been thoroughly reviewed. The new emphasis is on crisis management and the creation of smaller, multinational and very mobile units with a high level of operational readiness, capable of rapidly reacting to any crisis situation.

NATO has decided to eliminate all ground-launched nuclear systems and to reduce the number of air-delivered nuclear weapons. The total reduction in the current NATO stockpile of sub-strategic weapons in Europe will be roughly 80 per cent.

The United States is curtailing its military presence in Europe, while NATO-European countries are re-organizing their armed forces and reducing their defense budgets.

But risks to Europe's security still remain. Total peace is not around the corner. The threat has disappeared but new risks are emerging. Before, Europe could respond to the Warsaw Pact military threat with a sound defensive strategy. Behind the strategy and the military planning, there was the firm collective willingness of all NATO members -- even those not directly participating in the integrated military structure of the Alliance -- to respond to any aggression.

The elements of the European security picture were clear, as was NATO's political and military posture.

Now, quoting the last NATO strategic document, the risks are "multifaceted in nature and multidirectional, which makes them hard to predict and assess".

Today, how can NATO and/or Europe respond to an eventual political, economic, and social collapse of the former Soviet Union? Or to the possibility of destabilizing ethnic conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe? Or to the war in Yugoslavia and the likelihood of its spreading, in the near future, into the Bosnia, Macedonia or Kosovo regions?

How can NATO and/or Europe respond to the control of nuclear weapons and nuclear know-how in a disintegrating Soviet Union and to the potential risk of a nuclear proliferation in Belorussia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan ?

How can NATO and/or Europe respond to the risks coming from the South of Europe, ranging from the expansion of a radically anti-Western Islamic fundamentalism movement to the proliferation of ballistic missile technology and arms of mass destruction in North Africa and the Middle East ?

Europe is painfully discovering that the "day after" of the communism in Europe might be more dangerous than the divisions of the Red Army, and that the uncertainty and unpredictability of the new strategic situation is less manageable than were the traditional scenarios of the cold war.

This paper will focus on the views on European security of the major European countries (France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom) even though it is recognized that this approach will somewhat confine the scope of the analysis. Expanding the analysis to other European countries, such as Turkey, would certainly lead to a different picture of the European perceptions.

What follows should be considered as a discussion paper only

2. The Security Debate in Europe

A debate has opened in Europe on the means to cope with the new security challenges and on the issue of the future of European security and defense cooperation. The elements framing and shaping this debate are basically three: the American attitude toward their commitment to Europe in terms of both military presence and political and economic links; the future construction of a European Political Union which will entail a common foreign and security policy with the long term perspective of a common defense policy; the differences that still characterize the approach to the issue of a common security and defense identity on the part of the major European countries.

The doubts about the United States' attitude -- and the underlying worry about an American trend toward a new form of isolationism, stimulated by the failure to address the domestic situation

-- have been dispelled by the clear position assumed by President Bush during the recent NATO summit in Rome.

In the longer term, however, this position appears to be contingent on some outcomes.

- First, that the EPU will not eventually marginalize the NATO functions and the U.S. role in European security and defense to an unacceptable degree. On this point, President Bush has been very explicit. In his speech at the opening session of the Rome summit he declared that if the ultimate aim of the Europeans was to provide independently for their own defense they should make that clear "today" (1). Moreover, in a bilateral meeting with Italian Prime Minister, Giulio Andreotti, President Bush was quoted as warning that the United States will strongly oppose any move that could in any way weaken the role of the Atlantic Alliance -- even involuntarily (2). At the same time, Bush gave a strong U.S. commitment for the creation of a European security identity in a way that complements NATO. He said the United States "support without hesitations the European integration process including the prospect of a political union and a defense identity" (3).

- Second, that there will be a sharp improvement in the American economic and social situation which would help change the widespread popular perception of a United States doing too much to solve problems abroad and not enough for the American people at home.

- Third, that the 1992 presidential election will not bring to the White House a president elected on the basis of a campaign which focused on the necessity and the virtues of an American retrenchment from Europe.

The different perceptions of the European partners center around three main points: the role of NATO vis-à-vis the Central and Eastern European countries and crises erupting in regions outside its area of responsibility; the role of the WEU within the framework of a European defense identity; the institutional and organizational aspects of a European common security and defense, in terms of WEU/NATO and WEU/EC links, establishment of European military forces and their command structures, relationship of these forces with those earmarked for assignment under NATO planning.

On October 2, 1991, in a joint German-American declaration on the steps needed for strengthening and extending the Transatlantic Community, German Foreign Minister Dietrich Genscher and American Secretary of State James Baker pointed out that the common objective is a Euro-Atlantic community that extends from Vancouver to Vladivostok. They stressed the need for NATO to develop fresh institutional relationships with the new democracies in the East and the Soviet Union through a series of initiatives ranging from the establishment of a routine set of meetings among the NATO sixteen and the liaison countries to a NATO contribution in support of the conversion of defense industries in the East to civilian production (4).

In fact, since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland have been looking for a security guarantee and asked explicitly to become members of the Atlantic Alliance.

The Rome declaration fell short on opening NATO to new members. The prospect for the Alliance of extending its security guarantees to the Soviet border -- and perhaps beyond it -- was

discussed, but considered a long-term objective. Instead, NATO, in line with the German-American document, endorsed the establishment of institutional relations of consultation and cooperation on political and security issues between NATO, the members of the former Warsaw Pact and the three independent Baltic Republics -- the North Atlantic Council of Cooperation. The first meeting of the Council is scheduled to be held in Brussels on December 20 (5).

Also on the management of out-of-area crises, the Rome summit fell short of approving a specific NATO military role which would have explicitly expanded the Alliance's area of responsibility. In the final document, however, it is recognized that NATO's interests could be jeopardized by external events ranging from nuclear proliferation, to attempts to cut the oil flow, to terrorism and sabotage. In such cases, NATO countries will consult and decide the appropriate course of action (6).

On October 4, 1991, Italy and the United Kingdom released an Anglo-Italian declaration on European security (7).

In that document, the British accepted for the first time the concept of a common European defense identity, compatible with NATO's defense policy. London and Rome envisaged the development of a European defense identity in such a way as to reinforce the Atlantic Alliance, while the WEU was seen as performing its role in two complementary directions: as the defense component of the EPU and as the means of strengthening the European pillar of NATO. The WEU was supposed to "take account in its activities of the decisions of the European Council, in the context of the common foreign and security policy, and of the positions adopted in the context of the Alliance, bearing in mind the different nature of its relations with each body".

On October 14, 1991, French President Francois Mitterand and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl sent to the acting president of the European Council, the Netherlands' Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, a draft document on a European common foreign and security policy (CFSP), within the framework of a treaty on the European Political Union (8).

Unlike to the Anglo-Italian proposal, the Franco-German document's emphasis was not on NATO and the trans-Atlantic ties, but on the EC and on the WEU as an integral part of the European Union process, and as a component of the defense of the EPU. In the document, it is said that practical dispositions will be taken to assure the transparence and the complementarity between the WEU and the Atlantic Alliance, but also that organic and close relations between the WEU and the Union and an operational organization of the WEU will be developed. Finally, a promemoire was added to the draft text stating that the Franco-German military cooperation will be strengthened beyond the existing Brigade to a Corps level, to form the basis of a European military force open to the participation of military units from other WEU members.

On the issue of a European defense identity a compromise was reached at the NATO summit in Rome on the basis of a common denominator, i.e. the shared-by-all view that the European political union will be meaningless if it is unable to formulate a common security and defense policy. But, even though the prospect of a strengthened WEU role was expressed as a positive development, the final document did not specify which practical measures will be developed to assure the transparence and complementarity between the Alliance and the European security and defense identity. And the role, functions, organization and links of the WEU with

NATO and the future EPU, topics which constitute the point of contention among the European partners, were not specifically addressed.

3. The European Positions. Points of Agreement and Disagreement

The presentation of the two documents gave the impression that European security perceptions were split between an Anglo-Italian and a Franco-German axis, the first centered on the preminence of the Atlantic Alliance and the second on the preminence of the EPU -- and the WEU as its defense identity.

Ironically, even though this was basically true, the two documents could be read in ways proving their substantial compatibility.

One could take the paragraph on the WEU's roles -- "the WEU will develop its role in two complementary directions: as the defence component of the Union and as a means to strengthen the European pillar of the Alliance" -- to demonstrate that the Anglo-Italian document is indeed truly "European", its clear "Atlanticist" flavor notwithstanding. In fact, it could be noted that the word "component" was used with reference to the EPU -- which implies that the WEU will eventually be integrated in the EC -- while the word "means" was used with reference to the role of strengthening the European pillar of the Alliance -- which implies a function that might eventually fade away in parallel with the gradual establishment of the EPU.

On the other hand, one could take the paragraph on the cooperation between the WEU and the Atlantic Alliance of the Franco-German document to demonstrate its "Atlanticist" concern, where it says that "practical dispositions will be taken to assure the **transparence** and the **complementarity** between the WEU and the Atlantic Alliance".

In fact, the word "complementarity", the verb "to complement" and the adjective "complementary" were the most used in the Summit documents and by European and American officials in addressing the role of the WEU vis-à-vis NATO.

The language of the final Rome declaration on peace and cooperation -- in some parts taken verbatim from the Anglo-Italian proposal -- reflected the shared conviction that Atlantic Alliance and stronger European defense identity are not two rival options and that the WEU should and would complement the Alliance.

France endorsed the declaration, but this does not mean that the fight will not reopen in the forthcoming WEU meetings -- and President Mitterand alluded to that in his press conference -- and in Maastricht, in December, in a truly "European" setting, without U.S. participation.

In fact, the issue of the European defense identity ranges among the major European countries between the two extremes of the British and French approach.

The British worry about the possibility of a weakening of the trans-Atlantic links in a delicate moment of American political juncture, and of a military disengagement which would

break European security and defense posture in the middle of a very uncertain phase of East-European and Soviet evolution. They worry about a duplication of military efforts which they rightly consider senseless in the presence of declining defense budgets and shrinking armed forces. For London, NATO must maintain its primacy in European defense as the main decision making forum on defense matters in Europe.

For Italian Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis, the fact that Britain accepted for the first time the concept of a common defense in exchange for a clear WEU tie with NATO, even though secondary respect to that with the EC, is an evident success of Italian diplomacy and the confirmation of a broker role that only Italy can perform. Italy, with Britain, does envision the development of a WEU rapid reaction force, capable of responding flexibly in a range of possible scenarios outside the NATO area. Such a force would be autonomous and separate from the NATO structure (9).

Germany's approach appears to be in the middle of the spectrum. In signing the Franco-German document, and in approving the establishment of a joint force, Bonn gave the impression of leaning toward the more autonomous French position. However, the Chancellor Kohl's speech at the Bundestag on November 6, and the details on the joint force provided by German Defense Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg at the DPC meeting in Taormina, contributed to a different perspective of the Franco-German initiative. Stoltenberg made clear that the force would be complementary to NATO, and not its competitor, and that it would be staffed largely by German troops which would also retain their assigned NATO responsibilities (10).

France understands that a U.S. military presence and defense commitment is still needed for Europe, and agrees on it. At the same time, however, points toward a long-term, autonomous, common European defense. French policy is based on the perception that the new strategic situation requires a new approach, that the American forces would not remain forever in Europe, and that the EPU needs a common security and defense policy to be real, credible and effective. For France, an organic relation between the WEU -- as the defense component of the Union -- and the EPU should be established. Quoting the French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, Paris wants "une défense par les Européens de l'Europe pour l'Europe". The proposal to expand the Franco-German brigade appears to be tied to the problem of keeping French troops on German territory. In fact, the French decision to withdraw the French forces, a decision taken without consulting with Bonn, was perceived as a sign of the French "mefiance" towards the "new" Germany. The maintenance of French units in Germany, and the stationing of German soldiers on French soil, within the creation of a larger joint force, will solve this bilateral problem. Moreover, an expanded Franco-German military cooperation is welcomed as a means of strengthening German integration into the European fabric and dispelling any potential German illusory temptation of distinguishing between national and European interests.

The main elements now shaping the European security views, elements which form the thread of a fabric in which the European positions seems to converge, can then be summarized as follows:

NATO had begun the transition from an alliance formed to defend peace into an alliance

committed to promote peace.

The Alliance's reach toward the East has taken a new step with the development of a more institutional relationship of consultation and cooperation on political and security issues. This process might lead to a more comprehensive form of security guarantee which could eventually include membership.

NATO retains its basic principles -- defensive nature of the Alliance, possession of adequate military strength, indivisibility of allies' security, permanence of conventional and nuclear American forces vital to the security of Europe -- and its significance and primacy in the realm of defense.

The risks NATO is facing are multifaceted and multidirectional. This makes them hard to predict and assess and requires an effective crisis management capacity and higher flexibility and rapidity in the eventual use of the military instruments.

A European common foreign and security policy need to be complemented by a common defense policy. A European defense identity is recognized to be a fundamental requisite of the EPU's security policy.

The WEU, and the armed forces established within the context of the European identity, should not detract from NATO's credibility and capabilities. The key word in this domain is "complementarity", which means complementarity between any defense organization Europe will eventually establish and the Atlantic Alliance.

Differences are basically centered on the role, mission, organizational architecture, organic or functional relationship between the WEU and the Atlantic Alliance, and on the shape, dimension, participation and tasks of the future WEU force. Should it be a light rapid deployment force or a heavier force built around the joint Franco-German Corps? Should it operate only outside NATO's area of responsibility -- or NATO's "area of competence" as the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gianni de Michelis prefers to say -- or also within Europe in accordance with the European Council's decisions?

There are different underlying views about the future role of the United States in European affairs and a more or less pessimistic assessment of the European capacity of expressing not only a truly common foreign and security policy, but also the political will and the financial efforts needed to create a credible European defense.

There are also some fundamental problematic questions. Will the legitimate European ambitions and aspirations end up endangering the American commitment for the defense of Europe? Will the creation of a European defense identity outside the framework of NATO eventually jeopardize those security structures and defense system which preserved peace in Europe for more than forty years? Could Europe alone provide the necessary geopolitical and geostrategic counterweight for the new statal entity (or entities) that will emerge from the former Soviet Union, considering that it will be still a nuclear power, and the risk of a nuclear proliferation

among the republics?

4. Conclusions

Let me conclude this brief and schematic presentation with some personal considerations.

Today, no European country, not even France, challenges the need for preserving NATO. But it would be naive to think that the French attitude is the result of a changed vision about the future of European defense. Thus, the Franco-American détente during the NATO summit on the future role of the Europeans in their own security and defense appears instrumental and related to the short term period. In other words, it appears the result of a pragmatic appreciation by Paris and Washington of the true elements of the issue of the European defense identity, and a by-product of their respective weaknesses.

In reality, the weakness is not only French. I think that Europe is not ready today -- and maybe it will not be ready tomorrow -- to build the defense structure and the military force which would be capable of acting autonomously to confront in-area or out-of-area crises.

That capability requires widespread and real-time intelligence information -- which only satellites or high altitude aircraft can provide -- strategic airlift and sea transport means, JointSTARS aircraft, modern electronic warfare systems, precision guided ammunitions, stealth fighter-bombers, sophisticated command, control and communications systems, a high level of interoperability and standardization.

The WEU would eventually become the military arm of a EPU truly capable of formulating a common foreign and security policy and possessing its own force. It is true that a European force could be more easily employed than a NATO force in particular types of scenarios. And it is true that to avoid useless duplications, the concept of "double-hatting" should be applied to the WEU force. The issue, however, is that the presently foreseen WEU force would not be sufficient to credibly address scenarios where a strong military action might be required, unless it possesses or it is supported by all the assets mentioned before. Another crisis in the Gulf would be a good case in point to demonstrate that European forces alone would not be capable of effectively fulfilling the military requirements imposed by the situation.

Finally, one last remark. The post-containment world is a world of uncertainty, unpredictability and endemic instability. This world requires a joint Euro-American approach and the maintenance of a strong trans-Atlantic relationship. Both Europe and the United States should prevent their differences from eventually jeopardizing the creation of a stable European security system and the capacity to manage the potential crises in the South. The EPU will need a common foreign and security policy and a common defense. Europe should be aware that to reach that goal there is a price to pay. But the price should not be the dissolution of the Atlantic Alliance.

NOTES

- 1) President Bush's remarks at the NATO Summit in Rome, EUR 403, 7 November 1991, p. 8.
- 2) The Independent, 8 November 1991, 1.
- 3) President Bush's remarks at the NATO Summit, EUR 402, 7 November 1991, p. 7.
- 4) Press Office Document, U.S. Embassy in Rome, 3 October 1991.
- 5) Rome Declaration on Peace and Cooperation, NATO Press Service, Press Communique S-1 (91) 86, 8 November 1991, pp. 4-5.
- 6) Rome Declaration, cit., p. 8.
- 7) Note di Documentazione, n. 17, British Embassy in Rome, 10 October 1991.
- 8) Le Monde, 17 October 1991, p. 5.
- 9) Interview in the Italian daily "La Stampa", 15 October 1991, p. 7. Also Le Monde, 18 October 1991, p. 5.
- 10) International Herald Tribune, 18 October 1991, p. 5.