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**THE NEW COMMON EXTERNAL AND SECURITY
POLICY IN PRACTICE.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A EUROPEAN SECURITY
AND DEFENCE IDENTITY**

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IDENTITY

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1. Introduction

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.

But risks to Europe's security still remain. Peace is not around the corner. Quoting the last NATO strategic document, the risks are "multifaceted in nature and multidirectional, which makes them hard to predict and assess". In the past two years, hopes for a "new world order" have been replaced by the cold reality of a "new world disorder" and a fragmentation of the international system, which will presumably last for decades. The war in Bosnia is only one of the 26 conflicts in the the world at the start of 1993, but it is the closest to Europe's doorsteps; and the Balkans is only one of the 47 areas in which ethnic tensions and national rivalries could be a source of conflict or the further spreading of violence.

European security has never depended only on the the elements of military preparedness, even though it played a determinant role in the Cold War period. But a credible defense posture, albeit necessary, is not sufficient to cope with today's complex security risks and to confront crises which are expected to occur very likely outside the traditional NATO's area of responsibility. Today, European security encompasses a larger set of values and increasingly depends on the synergetic use of military, diplomatic and economic instruments, within the framework of a clear crisis management strategy.

During the Cold War, Europe could respond to the Warsaw Pact military threat with a sound defense strategy. Behind the strategy and 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.

Today, Europe is confronted with a series of new issues: the remaining uncertainties of Russia's move toward democracy and a market economy, and the possibility of a further deterioration of the ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Union; the prospect of a Balkanization of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia involving the intervention of other regional and extra-regional actors; the risks of new crises in the Gulf; the possible regional repercussions of the still unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, long-range ballistic missiles, and high-tech weapons systems; the eventual spreading influence and access to power of

Islamic fundamentalist movements in North-Africa; the growing social disruption potential, and security repercussions, of widespread migration to Europe as a result of domestic political instabilities, bleak economic prospects and ethnic tensions in the South and East; the deepening of the international connections and the spread of cooperation among mafia-type criminal organizations; the prospect of nuclear blackmail and terrorism.

These new security challenges and a readiness to play a more visible role in international affairs have pushed Europe to address the problem of a European security identity (eventually including defense) within the context of its move toward Political Union.

The Maastricht Treaty has broadly indicated the way, the instruments and the organization (the Western European Union) responsible for reaching that goal.

2. The Maastricht Treaty and the Weu Declaration

At this point, it is important to recall the salient statements pertaining to the role of the WEU made in the "Provisions on a Common Foreign and Security Policy" of the Maastricht Treaty and in the "Declaration on Western European Union".

The Treaty indicated the following:

- * The common foreign and security policy (CFSP) shall include all questions related to the security of the European Union, including the eventual framing of a common defense policy, which might in time lead to a common defence.

- * The Union requests the Western European Union, which is an integral part of the development of the Union, to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications.

The Declaration on Western European Union indicated the following:

- * WEU members states agree on the need to develop a genuine European security and defense identity and a greater European responsibility on defence matters. This identity will be pursued through a gradual process involving successive phases. WEU will form an integral part of the process of the development of the European Union and will enhance its contribution to solidarity within the Atlantic Alliance. WEU member states agree to strengthen the role of the WEU, in the long term perspective of a common defence policy within the European Union which might on time lead to a common defence compatible with that of the Atlantic Alliance.

- * The Western European Union will be developed as the defence component of the European Union and as the means to strengthen the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance. To this end, it will formulate common European defence policy and carry forward its concrete implementation through the further development of its own operational role.

- * The objective is to develop WEU as a means to strengthen the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance. Accordingly, the WEU is prepared to develop further the close working links between the WEU and the Alliance and to strengthen the role, responsibilities and contributions of WEU Member States in the Alliance. This will be undertaken on the basis of the necessary transparency and complementarity between the emerging European security and defense identity and the Alliance. WEU will act in conformity with the positions adopted in the Atlantic Alliance.

- * WEU Member States will intensify their coordination on Alliance issues which represent an important common interest with the aim of introducing joint positions agreed in WEU into the process of consultation in the Alliance which will

remain the essential forum for consultation among its members and the venue for agreement on policies bearing on the security and defence commitments of Allies under the North Atlantic Treaty.

* The WEU's operational role will be strengthened by examining and defining appropriate missions, structures and means, covering in particular: a WEU planning cell; closer military cooperation complementary to the Alliance in particular in the fields of logistics, transport, training and strategic surveillance; meeting of WEU Chiefs of Defence Staff; military units answerable to WEU. Other proposals will be examined further, including: enhanced cooperation in the field of armaments with the aim of creating a European Armaments Agency; development of the WEU Institute into a European Security and Defence Academy.

3. The Ambiguity of the Official Documents

It can be argued that the language concerning security and defence adopted in the Maastricht Treaty was purposely chosen to avoid too constraining and binding interpretations. In fact, it attempted to satisfy two somewhat diverging requirements: the need to establish the principles of a European security and defence identity and the need to confirm the centrality of the Atlantic Alliance for European security, as the basis of the security relations between the United States and its allies, and of the American commitment for Europe's defence. This resulted, however, in a lack of clarity which could lead to confusion.

There is more than a semantic ambiguity surrounding the reference to the WEU both as an "integral part" of the development process toward the European Union and, at the same time, as the "means" for strengthening the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance.

Furthermore, stating that the Atlantic Alliance is the essential forum for security consultation and that the WEU will act in conformity with the positions adopted within that forum seems to contradict the statement that the WEU will formulate and implement a common European defense policy as well as decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications.

If the Alliance remains the venue for agreement on policies bearing on security (since Yugoslavia, NATO's security role appears to be destined to expand beyond its old area of responsibility) and if the WEU is supposed to act in conformity with the positions (i.e. the decisions) adopted in the Atlantic Alliance, is there still a need to formulate a common European security policy? And what about the potential case in which decisions and actions of the Union which have security and defense implications are different from those of the Atlantic Alliance? Would the WEU implement the Union's decisions, or follow the Alliance's positions?

It seems that it will be difficult for the WEU to play both roles, i.e. to be integrated into the European Union, and eventually become Europe's "military arm" and, at the same time, be the "European pillar" of NATO, strengthening the European presence and responsibility in the Alliance. And that it will not be easy for the WEU to respond to both the Atlantic Alliance and the European Union.

One could argue that at present the problem is more theoretical than real because all the major EC states are also WEU and NATO members. The position of France, which is in the Alliance but outside NATO's integrated military structure, does not seem to represent a real problem either, since European security issues connected

with the management of out-of-area crises are bound to be discussed and dealt with by the Alliance's political bodies, in which France participates. Moreover, if the present French political trend continues, Paris is likely to rejoin the NATO Defense Planning Committee (DPC) and perhaps also the NATO Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) in the near future.

However, on the one hand, the problem is not about the illogical eventuality of the major European countries adopting different positions in NATO, the EC and the WEU; it is about the possibility that the overall European position might diverge from that of the United States as expressed in the Atlantic Alliance framework.

On the other hand, the problem is likely to become real, if the prospect of EC security and defence decisions being made within the framework of the CFSP is adopted. When Austria, Sweden and Finland (all countries with a traditionally strong policy of neutrality) and, in the longer term, the former Warsaw Pact central-eastern countries become members, it will be very difficult for this enlarged EC to shape a CFSP and, within it, a common crisis management policy involving the possible use of military force -- much more difficult than it is already now.

4. A Proposal

Let me advance a proposal which might seem provocative and which is bound to be controversial.

To operate with better prospects of efficiency and success, the WEU should not be developed as an integral part of the European Union (EU), but as an autonomous organization which would be both the "European pillar" of the Atlantic Alliance and the "European pillar" of the EC, responsible for dealing with specific European security and defence issues, which would not or could not be dealt with by NATO. In other words, the WEU should not merge or dissolve into the EU.

Autonomy, but with continued strong political and operational links with both NATO and the EC, will enhance WEU's freedom of action and add to the flexibility of employment of its military means. Obviously, the links with the EU would be more comprehensive and direct because the WEU would maintain its special responsibility in expressing the "European" security and eventually defence positions and policies in the face of international crises.

The prospect of a truly common foreign and security policy it seems unlikely, if, as it is now, decisions can be made only when full consensus is reached among members (except when adopting "joint action"). The recent international events clearly demonstrated how difficult it is for the European countries to agree on a crisis management policy when the use of military force is contemplated. This was the case in the Gulf and in the Yugoslav crises and it is easy to predict that it will be the same in future cases. The anticipated EC enlargement will further complicate the matter.

In certain crisis scenarios involving European security, a "European" force could be more easily employed, and with fewer political repercussions, than a "NATO" force. But it should be clear that the majority of the European nations are not in the position of fielding both NATO and WEU forces. In fact, the trends in Europe are toward stable or declining defence expenditures, a reduction of armed forces and a growing diversity of the processes of restructuration of forces and weapons systems acquisition. This could ultimately lead to the re-nationalization of Europe's defense policy, and eventually jeopardize the achievement of a common

European security and defense identity. The military contribution of the majority of the European countries will be forcefully limited and based on few units, i.e. the ones which for their operational characteristics (high mobility, high combat readiness and high-technology weapons systems) will be capable of performing NATO or WEU peace-keeping and peace-enforcing missions. The application of the concept of "double-hatting" ("triple hatting" if one considers the possibility of those forces performing strictly "national" military missions) is thus the only way out of the impasse.

5. Concluding remarks

Two additional series of considerations stem from the analysis of the statements of the documents signed in Maastricht.

The first is related to the WEU call for "closer military cooperation complementary to the Alliance in the fields of logistics, transport, training and strategic surveillance". While this development is certainly important if WEU forces are to be capable of performing a credible military role, utmost attention should be given to the possibility that it would eventually lead to unnecessary and costly duplications. The fact that this cooperation should be complementary to the Alliance might contribute to avoid the pitfall of duplication. However, the experimented law of growth of any organization is that of a gradual development beyond the limits initially established, and in this case "complementary" is a word which might lead to different interpretations.

The second is related to the statement that the eventual framing of a common defence policy might in time lead to a common defence compatible with that of the Atlantic Alliance. It is obviously very difficult to predict the future shape of the international scene, but it is unlikely that Europe will need the defense system of the size and type built during the Cold War period in the future. On the other hand, it would be risky to dismiss as obsolete the elements of deterrence and defense present in the transatlantic strong security and defense relationship provided by NATO.

If the following three conditions obtain:

- the future threats to Europe's security are not derived from the prospects of a massive military attack but from a situation of widespread political and economic instability and endemic conflicts;

- the EC enlarges and NATO expands its security guarantees eastward;

- the globalization of NATO's security role continues and NATO is ready and willing to perform peace-keeping and peace-enforcing roles within a UN or a CSCE mandate;

then:

- the development of a European security and defence identity will find its true meaning in a WEU capable of expressing a European position on security and defence issues and injecting it into NATO;

- and in a WEU capable of "securing" specific European political and economic interests in an area of responsibility that will be forcefully constrained by the WEU limited military capabilities.

Let me conclude with some final considerations.

(i) Given the incompressible technical times and the inherent sluggishness of the political process, the European security and defense identity is a long-term prospect, beyond the end of the century.

The WEU planning cell has been operational since April 1993. The satellite center in Torrejon near Madrid is expected to start its full operations in two-three years. The Franco-German Corps, which is seen as the bulk of the future European military force, will not be fully operational until 1995. Finally, the year 1996 is the date established for the WEU to re-examine the provisions established in the WEU Declaration. This re-examination will take account of the progress and experience acquired and will extend to relations between the WEU and the Atlantic Alliance.

Moreover, it seems that it will be very unlikely to achieve a European Union before the year 2000. And the Union is the necessary, though not sufficient, condition for Europe to express a truly common foreign policy, which is, in turn, the "sine qua non" condition for a feasible security and defence policy. Seven years is a very long time if compared with the speed of change of the international situation and the multifaceted and multidirectional risks to European security.

(ii) NATO's role as a stabilizing framework, as the main venue for the maintenance of the essential political and military links with the United States, and as the main security reference for Central Eastern European countries should not be underestimated and should be taken into due consideration in shaping the future European security system.

(iii) Europe is divided on the ways to respond to today's international challenges. The European countries should seriously address the possibility of European security contingencies whose development will need quick decisions and rapid military actions. This will mean that, at least initially, they should be confronted within the framework of a European mandate. However, it appears that for some countries not even a mandate based on a decision taken by the European Union within the framework of a Common Foreign and Security Policy would be sufficient to agree on military action.

(iv) Moreover, Europe does not possess, or possesses only to a limited extent those military capabilities (widespread and real-time intelligence information, strategic airlift and sealift, JointSTARS aircraft, modern electronic warfare systems, high-tech precision guided systems, stealth fighter-bombers, sophisticated C3I systems) needed to intervene effectively in out-of-area crises occurring far away from its borders. In other words, Europe would not be capable of militarily confronting another crisis in the Gulf alone.

(v) Europe does not seem ready today -- and may not be ready tomorrow -- to build the military forces which would permit it to act autonomously in such contingencies.

(vi) Today, no European country challenges the need for preserving NATO and the American presence in Europe. However, Europe should keep in mind that the United States will not accept a European defense cooperation which does not treat it as an integral partner. The United States will not accept marginalization within the Atlantic Alliance or the relegation of NATO to "alliance of last resort".

(vii) The demise of NATO will have an impact on the construction of the European security and defense identity. The danger is an ominous trend toward a re-nationalization of the European defense policy and effort.

(viii) The Yugoslav crisis amply demonstrated Europe's weakness and political inconsistency. The development of credible military instruments will not replace the need for a political will to use them. No matter how operational the WEU becomes, and no matter how combat-ready the forces earmarked to the WEU are, the European security and defense identity will only be the result of the political willingness of the European countries to comply fully not only to the rules but to the spirit of the CFSP.