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**THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION.  
POLITICAL AND SECURITY ASPECTS**

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# THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION. POLITICAL AND SECURITY ASPECTS

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## 1. The political aspects

The road toward the European Political Union appears steeply uphill and filled of stumbling blocks.

All the major European countries (France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom) are going through a phase of historical change whose outcome is still blurred and full of unknowns.

Germany is struggling with a bleak social and economic situation. The recent signature of the "Solidarpakt" is only the starting point of a difficult and long process aimed at integrating the former DDR. The political coalition is weak and it is confronted with the spreading influence of the extreme right which has gained significant consensus in the latest municipal elections in Saxony. The social malaise in Germany, though generated mainly by the economic situation, is bound to influence domestic politics and, in turn, it might also influence German European policy.

In France the Mitterand era is at its end. The socialists are expected to loose the political elections which will take place this week end and the result will be once more, the so-called co-habitation of a socialist president and a center-right government. Which will be the new attitude of France toward the European integration process is to be seen. The fact that about 60 per cent of the neo-Gaullist have voted against the French ratification of the Maastricht treaty appears as an ominous sign.

Also in the UK an era is going through its last stage. The era of the conservatives who have failed in their ambitious goal of giving back political and economic vitality to what TIME has defined as the "island of despair". If the Labour Party would eventually regain power, the prospect of a British ratification of the Maastricht treaty will become even dimmer than it is today. And, by the way, the same uncertainty is true also for the second referendum in Danemark.

In Italy the tragic economic situation is made even worse by the social and political malaise resulted from the slow death of the old political system strangled by its own widespread corruption.

The overall effect of these developments is a sharp turn toward domestic policy and the lesser priority given to European and international affairs.

This means that the prospect of the European Community being able to build a Common Foreign and Security Policy is pushed back in the foreground and a longer term endeavour than foreseen at the time of the signature of the Maastricht Treaty.

Moreover, there is the possibility that, by the year 2000, other European countries -- Austria, Norway, Sweden and Finland and perhaps also some central-eastern European states such as Hungary, Poland and the Czech and Slovak Republics -- will become member of the Community. How a 15-20 member Community will then operate? Do we really believe that a CFSP will have a future, considering the present difficulties in forging a common policy among the Twelve?

## 2. The Security Aspects

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. Today, there are 26 conflicts in the world and 47 areas in which ethnic tensions and national rivalries could be a source of conflict.

Today, Europe is confronted with a series of new issues: the uncertainties of Russia's move toward democracy and a market economy, and the possibility of a further worsening of the ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Union; the prospect of a Balkanization of the conflicts raging in the former Yugoslavia involving the intervention of other regional and extra-regional actors; the risks of new crises in the Gulf; the regional repercussions of the Arab-Israeli conflict; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, long range ballistic missiles, and high-tech weapons systems; the spreading influence of Islamic fundamentalism 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 have forced Europe to address the problem of a European security -- and eventually defense -- identity within its process toward Political Union.

The Maastricht Treaty indicated the following:

\* The common foreign and security policy 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 defense, compatible with that of the Atlantic Alliance.

\* The Western European Union will be developed as the defense 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 defense policy and carry forward its concrete implementation through the further development of its own operational role. Close working links between the WEU and the Alliance will be developed, as will 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.

\* The WEU, which is an integral part of the development of the European Union, will be requested to elaborate and implement those decisions and actions of the Union which have defense implications.

\* The Alliance will remain the essential forum for consultation among its members and the venue for agreement on policies bearing on security and defense commitments of Allies under the Washington Treaty.

\* The WEU's operational role will be further developed defining appropriate missions, structures and means including: a WEU planning cell; closer military cooperation complementary to the Alliance in the fields of logistics, transport, training and strategic surveillance; military units answerable to WEU; enhanced cooperation in the field of armaments with the aim of creating a European Armament Agency.

The language of the Maastricht Treaty attempted to satisfy two somewhat diverging requirements: the need to establish the principles of a European security and defense identity and the need to confirm the centrality of the Atlantic Alliance so as not to jeopardize the security relations between the United States and its European allies.

In fact, 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.

And there is a subtle contradiction in considering the Alliance as the essential forum for security consultation, and stating that the WEU will act in conformity with the positions adopted in the Atlantic Alliance, and, at the same time, establish that the WEU will formulate common European defense policy and carry forward its concrete implementation, and stating that it will be requested to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defense implications.

Furthermore, the closer military cooperation in the fields of logistics, transport, training and strategic surveillance, while complementary to the Alliance, could be seen as a factor eventually leading to unnecessary and costly duplications.

Finally, it is unclear whether a common European defense, which is compatible with that of the Atlantic Alliance, would mean eventually having two defense systems dealing with the same threat, a politically divisive and militarily unsound solution.

No matter how good the intentions expressed in the Maastricht Treaty were, the reality of the process toward a true European security and defense identity, as it has unfolded in the last two years, is less than convincing.

The experiences of the Gulf crisis, and the shortcomings of the European actions, were not enough for a drastic change of policy when the European Community and the WEU had to decide if and how to intervene in the Yugoslav civil war.

Regarding the Gulf crisis, a number of comments seem pertinent.

(i) Europe's reaction was very slow. Apart from France and the United Kingdom, which quickly reinforced their naval presence in the Gulf (but even their reinforcement was minimal and only London took an immediate decision on 3 August) the other European nations limited their response to economic measures.

It took nineteen days after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, for the WEU Ministerial Council to meet and for some of the member nations to decide on their

participation in the naval embargo. Even though some of the European warships had sailed before the date of the meeting, no WEU naval units other than French and British were present in the Gulf one month after the Iraqi move. At that time, even WEU Secretary General, Willem Van Eekelen, admitted that Europe had reacted "in a dispersed order sending forces individually and, in some cases, waiting for UN actions".

(ii) It took about twenty additional days following the WEU Council to achieve the degree of coordination sufficient for participation (with a concerted WEU approach) in the 9-10 September meeting held in Bahrain among representatives of all naval forces participating in the embargo operations.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, disagreements reportedly still surfaced between French and British naval commanders on the coordination issue in the WEU meeting held before the plenary session.<sup>2</sup> In fact, national patrol areas were established only on September 18, after an agreement was finally reached between France and the United Kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

The overall impression is that the WEU coordination was far from being totally effective. In fact, the good level of practical cooperation, sufficient for the situation at the time, but also the lack of a unified command structure was highlighted in an official WEU document.<sup>4</sup> Another WEU report complained that operatives in the area had not received identical instructions on the nature of their mission and, in particular, on what they were supposed to do in case of hostilities.<sup>5</sup>

The Dutch decision on January 9 to place its frigates under American operational control in the event of war was reportedly caused by the WEU's failure to establish an effective naval command and control. In the end, in the naval war zone only Belgian and Spanish ships remained under French command and control.

(iii) While the WEU countries were willing to coordinate the activity of their naval forces in the area -- an unavoidable operational necessity -- and ready to do so through the organizational mechanisms established within the WEU, they were less willing and ready to put their units under a "European" command.

(iv) In the second WEU Foreign Affairs and Defense Ministers' Council held in Paris in September 1990, the NINE decided to extend the WEU coordination to air and ground forces, to ensure that WEU members new force deployments were complementary, and to pool their logistic support capabilities.

While these military decisions were "still only partially implemented on October 15, in spite of the small number of forces concerned",<sup>6</sup> the WEU

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<sup>1</sup>. The representatives of 20 navies, the majority of them present in the Gulf, met at the Sheraton Al Taj Hotel in Bahrain: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. See Vincenzo Nigro, "Venti flotte da guerra a consiglio", *La Repubblica*, 11 September 1990, p. 6. See also Assembly of WEU, "European security and the Gulf crisis", Document 1244, 14 November 1990, p. 10. On the Bahrain meeting held under joint United States-WEU-Arab chairmanship see Assembly of WEU, Document 1248, cit., 7 November 1990, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>. The Anglo-French dispute during the Bahrain meeting and the alleged support given by the Italian admiral to the French position were amply reported in the Italian press. See Vincenzo Nigro, cit., and Adriano Baglivo, "Contrasti tra i guardiani del Golfo", *Corriere della Sera*, 11 September 1990, p.2.

<sup>3</sup>. Joseph Fitchett, "Europeans Moving to Coordinate Military Campaign Against Iraq", *IHT*, 19 September 1990, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>. Assembly of WEU, Document 1248, cit., p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>. Assembly of WEU, Document 1244, cit., p. 10.

<sup>6</sup>. Assembly of Western European Union, Document 1244, cit., 14 November 1990, p.10.

coordination was never extended to land and air forces. It is difficult to imagine how WEU could have done this for two reasons: first, the United States had the largest air force of the coalition, and the full spectrum of surveillance, detection, tracking, interception and sea and land attack capabilities; second, the WEU aircraft had to be ultimately inserted in an air environment in which the Americans had total operational control. Moreover, while naval forces were operating in a peacetime situation with the task of imposing the embargo, air and land forces were supposed to be employed only in case of hostilities. In that case, it would have been militarily foolish to have two different command structures for the implementation of a common war plan.

Turning to the Yugoslav crisis, it has been clear that, aside from an early attempt to play a brokerage role between Croatia and Serbia, the EC and the WEU have been unable to influence the course of the conflict and its further extension to Bosnia. The impression was that the EC was always uncertain and late on deciding how and when to use its political and economic leverage (which was not very significant indeed) and this attitude appeared to be mainly the result of the major differences among the Twelve. It was certainly difficult for the EC sustain a brokerage role between two parties who had little intention of seriously looking for a diplomatic end to the war when the already weak EC political tools were not supported by a willingness to use military instruments.

There were many good reasons for the WEU and the EC to reject the decision to deploy ground troops with the task of not just keeping, but enforcing peace in a highly volatile and risky military situation.

Yet, it could be argued that there is no enforcing diplomacy without the ultimate threat to use military force as an instrument of coercion. And it could be argued that the EC unwillingness to apply a limited and calculated amount of military force in the early phases of the crisis to give true substance to its formal admonitions and threats eventually had adverse effects on its overall diplomatic effort.

This does not mean that the WEU should necessarily have sent a ground troop contingent to Yugoslavia, but it means that more serious thinking should have been given to the selective use of air and sea power. The air and naval forces of the major European states were fully capable of performing the three tasks needed to send a strong signal to both Belgrade and Zagreb: first, counterair missions against selected airbases and offensive CAPs conducted in Yugoslav air space to keep the federal aircraft on the ground; second, total sea control of the Adriatic, sweeping away any attempts of naval blockade or naval bombardment on the part of the federal Navy; third, interdiction with surgical strikes of the main assets of Serbian superiority, i.e. tanks and heavy artillery, together with their vulnerable logistic tail.<sup>7</sup> The eventuality of U.S. air and naval forces participating in the operations would have represented powerful support and given an even clearer and stronger signal.

This course of action -- militarily minimal, high-tech, low-casualty, internally approved and wrapped in a peace plan<sup>8</sup> -- could have achieved three goals: reducing

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<sup>7</sup>. This type of assessment has also been conducted by other strategic analysts, experts and journalists and applied not only to the Croatian, but also to the Bosnian case. In particular, see Philip Zelikov, "The New Concert of Europe", *Survival*, vol. 34, n. 2, IISS, London, Summer 1992, pp. 12-30. Brian Beedham, "Europe and America Could Interdict Serbia's Arms", *IHT*, 18 May 1992, p. 4, and Antony Lewis, "What Was That About a New World Order?", *ibid*.

<sup>8</sup>. This definition was given by Stephen S. Rosenfeld, "Moving to Intervention In Yugoslavia", *The Washington Post (WP)*, 22 May 1992, A39.

the military capabilities of the federal armed forces; altering Serbian calculations of costs and benefits of EC peace proposals; indicating EC willingness of going beyond words, thus strengthening its crisis-management effort.

Obviously, the potential political and military risks and repercussions of such an operation were not to be underestimated and each part should have been planned considering all the possible contingencies, and flawlessly executed. Even such a military intervention would probably not have resolved the situation immediately. Moreover, one could not exclude the possibility that the EC would have been forced to contemplate even harsher actions such as the bombing of key strategic assets in Serbia itself, thus opening a totally new phase of the conflict. However, apart from the above mentioned goals, the intervention would have dispelled any allusions about a European double standard, the image of an EC relegated to the role of a bystander, and the impression that it still intended its security in a very narrow sense - three elements which are bound to have long lasting effects within and outside the Community.

On July 10, 1992, in Helsinki the WEU announced that it would send naval and air forces to the Adriatic to monitor respect of the U.N. embargo. On the same day, NATO took an identical initiative. The "OTRANTO" operation was organized, coordinated and directed by Italy. The WEU warships were to patrol the Otranto Channel, while the NATO naval force was to conduct monitoring operations in the Southern Adriatic, opposite the Montenegro coast.

In this context, some considerations seem pertinent.

(i) It took the WEU more than one month to make the decision after the U.N. imposed its sanctions. Too long considering the importance of the trade embargo as a diplomatic tool to pressure Serbia into serious negotiations. Furthermore, such an operation should have been studied and planned by WEU members' military staffs long before sanctions were even considered, and they should have been ready to be implemented at once.

(ii) The Otranto operation was the first true European initiative in the field of defense, and the first in which WEU ships were under a single command -- a totally different situation from that of the embargo enforced against Iraq or the humanitarian relief operations conducted from Dubrovnik by French, British and Italian ships.<sup>9</sup>

(iii) For the first time, NATO and WEU forces operated with a single mission and in the same area (although divided into two main zones), being under two different command authorities. The experience gained in the coordination of the two naval forces was certainly a precious one. However, the double command setting can be appropriately adopted only in a peacetime environment. In case of hostilities, it would be operationally unacceptable.

In general, looking at the European response to the Yugoslav events, it can be said that while the EC and the WEU were trying to find a common position and a coordinated diplomatic posture on paper, in practice each country gave the impression of assessing the crisis and evaluating potential responses through the lens of specific national interests. Among the Twelve, France appeared to play a special role, which seemed somewhat eccentric in relation to the positions of its EC partners and more attuned to a particular French national line.

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<sup>9</sup>. Europe, n. 5650, 20-21 January 1992, p. 3.

The recent deployment of French and British naval forces in the Adriatic with the mission of protecting the French and British soldiers of the UN contingent is another good case in point.

Let me conclude with some final considerations.

It is expected that the development of a European security and defense identity will take a long time. The year 1996 is the date established for a first assessment of its status, including the relations between the WEU and NATO, on the basis of the progress achieved and the experience acquired. Even though it started its operations in October 1992, the WEU planning cell will not be totally functional until 1994. Also the Franco-German Corps, which is seen as the bulk of the future European military force, will not be fully operational until 1995.

On the one hand, mainly because of incompressible technical times, the European security and defense identity is a long term prospect, beyond the end of the century. On the other hand, it seems that it will be very unlikely to achieve a European Union capable of expressing a truly common foreign policy, the "sine qua non" condition for a feasible security and defence policy before the year 2000.

Ten 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.

NATO is undergoing significant changes, but further reform may be necessary. 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.

On the maintenance of order and the management of out-of-area crises affecting security, the European Union rather than NATO would appear to be the logical foundation for European actions.

However, Europe is divided on the ways to respond to these international challenges and 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 decide on military action.

Moreover, Europe does not possess the military capabilities (widespread and real-time intelligence information, strategic airlift and sealift, AWACS and JointSTARS aircraft, modern electronic warfare systems, high-tech precision guided systems, stealth fighter-bombers, sophisticated C3I systems) to intervene in out-of-area crises effectively. In other words, Europe would not be capable of militarily confronting another crisis in the Gulf alone.

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. In fact, today's trends in Europe are toward a reduction of forces, stable or declining defense budgets, and a growing diversity of defense efforts which could eventually jeopardize the achievement of the cooperation foreseen by the Maastricht Treaty.

Today, no European country, not even France, challenges the need for preserving NATO. 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 being marginalized within the Atlantic



Alliance or NATO becoming an alliance of last resort.

In a longer term perspective, the viability of NATO will depend on the maintenance of the American political commitment and military presence in Europe, and on the status of the trans-Atlantic economic and commercial relations. Obviously, the demise of NATO will have an impact on the construction of the European security and defense identity. The danger is a drastic and ominous trend toward a re-nationalization of the European defense.

It is true that a "European" force could be more easily employed, and with fewer political repercussions, than a "NATO" force in certain scenarios. But it should be clear that no European nations would be capable of fielding both NATO and WEU forces. The units will be the same, and provided in accordance with the specific military requirements of the crisis. The application of the concept of "double-hatting" is thus a necessity imposed by the situation. In this respect, the subtle competition which seemed to emerge from the latest WEU and NATO initiatives in response to the Yugoslav crisis is operationally illogical and politically damaging.