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NATO AND THE WEU: COMPLEMENTARY OR COMPETING ALLIANCES

by Robert Kennedy

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The demise of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War military threat to Western Europe, the rise of newly independent states in Central and Eastern Europe, and the concommitant increase in ethnic and nationalist crises and conflicts in many of those same countries which recently have achieved independence has raised questions about the future security needs of the countries of Europe and about the institutions that might best suit the environment of the future. The broader debate has focused on five institutions: the United Nations (UN), the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the European Community (EC), the Western European Union (WEU), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). However, in the wake of the Maastricht agreements, to a considerable degree discussions within the Atlantic Community of nations have focused on the future of cross-Atlantic relations in the context of the WEU and NATO.

The Treaty on European Union signed at Maastricht in December of 1991 called for a common foreign and security policy among Union members, "including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence." Furthermore, [Article J.4 of the treaty proclaimed thed WEU as "an integral part of the development of the Union" and charged the WEU

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"to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications."¹ The treaty also noted that The provisions of this article shall not prevent the development of closer cooperation between two or more Member states on a bilateral level, in the framework of the WEU and the Atlantic Alliance (emphasis added).

Meeting at the same time in Maastricht, member states of the WEU issued a "Declaration on the Role of the Western European Union and its Relations with the European Union and with the Atlantic Alliance." In that document member states agreed among other things³

- * on the need to develop a genuine European security and defense identity and a greater European responsibility on defense matters
- * that the process be gradual, involving successive phases,
- * and, that the WEU would not only form and integral part of the process of the development of the European Union but also will enhance its contribution to the solidarity within the Atlantic Alliance

Moreover, WEU member states affirmed their interest in seeing the WEU

- * develop as a means of strengthening the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance
- * forge close working links with the Atlantic Alliance
- * and, strengthen the role, responsibilities and contributions of WEU member states in the Alliance on the basis of transparency and complementarity

Despite the positive objectives outlined at Maastricht, there have been lingering doubts among some on both sides of the Atlantic concerning the role the WEU can and should come to play in the post-Cold War era and whether that role can be complementary to rather than competing with the Atlantic Alliance. In short, is there room for two security alliances and, if so, can there be a rough division of labor which would make the alliances truly complementary?

BACKGROUND

The Western European Union traces its beginnings to the early days of the Cold War. By the end of 1947, the wartime stength of the western allies had been greatly reduced. Soviet expansion into central Europe was near complete, the western powers had found it impossible to reach agreement with the Soviet Union on Germany, the USSR had refused to take part in the Marshall Plan, had formed the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), was pursuing threatening policies in Iran, and with Turkey, and Greece, and clandestinely was supporting strikes in Italy and France. In January 1948 Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Minister, proposed a form of western union.

THE BRUSSELS TREATY

The Communist "coup d'etat" in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 lent urgency to the security problem confronting western Europeans. By March Britain, France, and the Benelux countries had signed the "Treaty of Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defence" - the Brussels Treaty. The treaty was one of the first steps taken toward European unity. Moreover, it extended to Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands the same kind of security guarantees shared by Britain and France the result of the

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The Brussels Treaty was modified in Paris in October 1954. Among the goals set forth in the preamble were:

- * strengthening economic, social and cultural cooperation
- creating a firm basis for European economic recovery
- assisting each other in resisting aggreession,
- * promoting the unity and progressive integration of Europe

The treaty established a continuously functioning council as its executive agent. This body was to be known as the "Council of the Western European Union." Furthermore, the Council was to report annually to an Assembly composed of representatives of the signatories who were members of the Consultative (today Parliamentary) Assemby of the Council of Europe. This was the first time a treaty of alliance established an overwatching body composed of members of the parliaments of its member governments who were

charged with monitoring treaty performance. Germany and Italy acceded to the treaty and the WEU was born.

The cornerstone of the treaty was Article V which set forth the obligations of the signatories should any one of them be subjected to an armed attack:

> the other high contracting parties will...afford the party so attacked all the military assistance in their power.

Thus the treaty established an alliance with security provisions which were far more binding than those set forth in the Washington Treaty which called for member states to consult on the steps that would be warranted in case of an attack.

Furthermore, Article VIII, paragraph 3 opened the door for coordinated efforts in "any situation which may contitute a threat to peace, in whatever area this threat should arise, or a danger to economic stability." Thus, potentially the treaty had wider applicability than did the Washington Treaty.

Nevertheless, the treaty went on to specify that member states and "any Organs established by Them under the Treaty shall"

- * "work in close co-operation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization," and
- * "rely on the appropriate military authorities of NATO for information and advice on military matters" in order to avoid duplicating the military staffs of NATO.

FROM 1954 TO 1984

From 1954 to 1973 the Western European Union played two important roles.

- * as an integrator:
 - ** it provided a basis for the integration of the FRG into NATO
 - ** it also served as a liaison between the European Community and the United Kingdom
- * as a confidence builder:
 - ** it insured that the provisions of Protocol IV, concerning the FRG pledge not to produce certain categories of armaments, were adhered to, and
 - ** it insured general quantitative control of stocks of armaments defined by the treaty for member countries

From 1973 until 1984 the activities of the WEU slowly diminished. While it continued its work as confidence builder through the Agency for the Control of Armaments (ACA), it no longer was required as an integrator. NATO had already taken over the WEU, s more strictly military responsibilities. The European Economic Community, established in Rome in 1957, had already superceded the WEU as the preferrred organization for the coordination of economic activities. The WEU's social and cultural responsibilities had been transferred to the Council of Europe in When the United Kingdom joined the European Community in 1960. 1973, the WEU lost its role as liaison between the two. Moreover, once comfortably a part of NATO, the FRG worked to strenghten its relationships with the United States. This guite naturally made NATO the preferred forum for FRG security interests, particularly since the WEU treaty embodied language which discriminated against Germany.

Even in the field of armaments control, the WEU was losing its relevance. The Standing Armaments Committee role of promoting joint production had already largely been taken over by NATO organizations with parallel tasks and by the Independent European Programme Group (IEPG). Furthermore, as confidence in the FRG grew and Alliance needs changed, the commitments made to armament controls in Protocol IV of the modifiled Brussels Treaty were progressively reduced. Indeed, a decision of the Permanent Council on June 27, 1984 almost entirely eliminated them.⁷

THE WEU REACTIVATED

In the late 1970s and early 1980s intensely divisive and highly acrimonious debates emerged within the western alliance. These debates were sparked by improvements in Soviet forces and focused on how NATO should respond. The Soviet Union had initiated a series of improvements of its forces deployed in eastern Europe and was developing and deploying a vastly improved array of intermediate and intercontinental missiles.

The so-called "Euromissile debates" and the debates following President Reagan's announcement of the American Strategic Defense Initiative (which was done without consulting the Europeans first) had two major effects on the Alliance. First, they convinced many on both sides of the Atlantic of the need for a strong European pillar. Americans, in particular, were seeking an increase in European defense efforts on their own behalf. Second, Europeans

began seeking a greater say in Alliance decisions, as a means not only of influencing Alliance defense posture, but also as a way of influencing East-West relations. Indeed, some people in Europe feared that policies being forged by the U.S. were responsible for the heightening of tensions which characterized that period.

Unfortunately, there were no alternative mechanisms available for the establishment of a European defense pillar. European political cooperation within the framework of the European Community excluded matters relating to defense and security. Thus, Europeans turned to the WEU.

ROME DECLARATION

While momentum had gathered for the reactivation of the WEU at the WEU ministerials in Paris in June of 1984, it was at the joint meeting of WEU foreign and defense ministers held in Rome in October 1984 which saw real progress. The "Rome Declaration" stated

- * there was a continuing need to strengthen western security
- * better use should be made of the WEU to strengthen cooperation between member states
- * better utilization of the WEU would contribute to ** the maintenance of adequate military strength, political solidary, and the security of Western Europe
 - ** the common defense of all the allies of NATO
 - ** and, greater solidarity among the NATO members

The declaration went on to pledge that member states would hold comprehensive discussions and seek to harmonize their views on:

- * defense questions
- * arms control and disarmament
- * the effects of developments in East-West relations on the security of Europe
- * Europe's contribution to the strengthening of the Atlantic Alliance
- * the development of European cooperation in the field of armaments

The Rome Declaration also reaffirmed the willingness of WEU member states to "consider the implications for Europe of crises in other regions of the world."

The Declaration concluded by noting that the "Ministers (had) decided on a number of specific measures" to improve the "functioning of the WEU structure and organization."⁸ In a separate document which was appended to the Declaration Ministers agreed among other things to reactivate the Council, which under normal situations was to meet twice a year at ministrial level in which both foreign and defense minister would meet.⁹

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE ROME

With a few notable exceptions, the reports of most ministerial meetings of the WEU from 1984 until 1987 sounded like the reports of an organization in search of a mission. Alfred Cahen succeeded Edouard Longerstacy as Secretary General after the Bonn ministerial in April 1985 and energetically trooped about extolling the value of a reactivated WEU. By 1987, however, the WEU was showing signs of life. In August senior officials from the foreign and defense ministries began discussions on the situation in the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war. In October, the WEU adopted a "Platform on European Security Interests" at the Hague ministerials. The "Platform" outlined current conditions on the continent which affect European security, set forth the criteria upon which European security should be based, and highlighted the responsibilities of WEU member states for defense, arms control and disarmament, and East-West dialoque and cooperation.¹⁰ NATO welcomed the document at its December meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC).

By the end of 1988 WEU, member states had engaged in "Operation Cleansweep." Belgian, British, Dutch, French, and Italian ships were sent to the Persian Gulf to sweep mines from international shipping lanes. The FRG provided replacement naval forces in the Mediterranean and Luxembourg provided some additional funding. This was outside of the NATO area of operations. However, it was a clear signal that European states were prepared to assist other nations, including the United States, where their mutual interests were in danger. Also in 1988, the WEU had opened its doors to new members. In November Portugal and Spain were invited to accede to the modified Brussels Treaty.

By 1990 the Cold War was rapidly becoming history. Indeed, some pundits were speculating whether war itself had become a thing

of the past. Then on August 2nd Iraq invaded Kuwait. Within twenty four hours the President of the WEU Assembly issued a communique strongly condemning the invasion. By the end of 1990, forty-five naval ships belonging to WEU member countries were deployed in the area of the conflict and the WEU had been the task of coordinating the military presence of member states in the Persian Gulf. When the conflict was over the WEU continued to play an important role coordinating humanitarian aid provided by WEU member states and the European Community in liaison with the European Commission.¹¹

In the wake of WEU actions in the Persian Gulf, the European Union invited the WEU to become an integral part of the development of the Union. It did so carefully, by first underscoring the fact that a "common security policy shall include all questions related to the security of the Union, including the eventual framing of a common defence policy which might in time lead to a common defence." And second, by emphasizing, once again, the importance of the Atlantic Alliance.

> The policy of the Union in accordance with this article (J.4)...shall respect the obligations of certain Member states under the North Atlantic Treaty and be compatible with the common security and defence policy established within that framework.¹²

COMPLEMENTARY OR COMPETING

Despite such language embodied in both Maastricht agreements, there are some on both sides of the Atlantic who fear that the WEU and NATO are headed toward eventual confrontation.

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They are less than confident that the two alliances can exist side by side, each comlementing the other. Some Americans are schizophrenic. On the the one hand they welcome initiatives by Europeans to assume greater responsibility for their own security. They have never considered American troop presence in Europe as an open ended commitment. Now with the demise of the Soviet Union and Russia neither able nor disposed to pose a conventional military threat to western Europe, they believe that an economically powerful Europe should be able to deal with the security issues likely to confront them in the future.

On the other hand, they are concerned that as the role of the WEU expands, the importance of NATO will inevitably shrink. Since NATO has been not only an enormously successful alliance but also an important vehicle for American influence in Europe, any action that threatens NATO's future role is viewed with suspicion.

A number of American believe that the establishment of a European pillar, either as a caucas within the Alliance or in the form of the WEU, will reduce the flexibility for cross-Atlantic dialogue and negotiation. Having spent political capital seeking common positions on security issues, European will find it difficult to make compromises to accommodate North American views. Thus, according to this view, the concept of a North Atlantic community will slowly but most assuredly give way to a distancing. Cross

-Atlantic dialogue, which was just beginning to replace the American monologue or earlier Alliance years, will be replaced by cross-Atlantic dickering.

Some Europeans share a similar schizophrenia. On the one hand, they are eager to seize upon the times to advance the cause of European unity and their can be no truly united Europe in the absence of a common foreign and security policy, and ultimately a common defense policy. Thus, they see the WEU as an important step in the right direction.

On the other hand, they find it difficult to conceive of a Europe without an American military presence. Hence they are troubled by actions which might diminish the relevance of NATO and presage an American withdrawal form the continent.

Europeans generally tend to disregard the notion that the establishment of a European defense pillar will threaten cross-Atlantic dialogue. However, they harbor a certain concern that absent American leadership, Europe will be unable to act effectively on its own behalf. According to this view, Europeans will find it difficult to accept one of their own as a replacement for American leadership. The result will be the lowest common denominator - in action. Some cite European policy failure in the former Yugoslavia as an example.

Some in Europe go a step further arguing that Europeans prefer diplomacy to force. The standard joke for years in NATO was that the acronym stood for No Action Talk Only. At a time when military action might have resulted in mutual annihilation, forceful diplomacy which suggested the possibility of conflict may have been enough to deter, since the cost of miscalculation was unimaginably high. In conflicts of the kind the world is currently experiencing, failure to back up diplomacy with the credible threat of force is unlikely to secure desired objectives. While Europeans frequently have been dismayed by American willingness to use of military force, the United States is not often viewed as a military quadripeligic. The result of such thinking is a distinct preference for close cross-Atlantic relations and NATO as the guarantor of stability and security in Europe.

It is, of course, impossible to forecast with certainty what the future holds. However, if there have been any objectives that have been consistence since the framing of the first Brussels Treaty in 1948 they have been, first, a desire on the part of Europeans for greater unity and, second, a desire to maintain a close cross-Atlantic link. These objectives were explicitly stated in the modified Brussels Treaty, the Rome Declaration, the Haque Platform, both Maastricht agreements, the Petersburg Declarations, and in nearly every WEU ministerial communique since its reactivation, including the most recent from the Luxembourg meeting in November 1993.

If these two objectives continue to guide and inform leaderships on both sides of the Atlantic, there is little reason to fear that NATO and the WEU are headed toward eventual confrontation. Indeed, a continually maturing relationship between Europe and North America suggests a high probability the relationship between the WEU and NATO that is likely to develop, indeed is developing, will be a complementary one.

WEU: FUTURE ROLES

It is from these two persistent objectives that the most promising roles for the WEU emerge. First, the WEU can play an immensely important role as the center piece of a common European security and defense policy. As an organization that brings together both the foreign and defense ministers, it holds the promise of being an effective forum for consultation on matters relating to European security and more broadly, on threats the European interests worldwide.

It is axiomatic to say that there can be no genuine European unity in the absense of a common foreign and security policy and a security policy without defense teeth is no security policy at all. For Americans who have long endorsed European unity, the European Union has taken a promising step in requesting the WEU become an integral part of the development of the Union. Moreover, for Americans who have longed for the time when the Europeans will be

able to deal effectively with their security problems without American help, the WEU is an important first step. For Europeans concerned that America will eventually withdraw completely from Europe, the WEU is an essential step. And even if the Americans remained, inevitably there will be time when the Europeans feel compelled to act and the Americans do not.

Second, the WEU can serve as the European pillar within the context of the Atlantic Alliance. It is a well-understood principle in management that optimum performance occurs when those who bear responsibility for carrying out tasks play a major role in the fashioning of the decisions. It is no less true with nations. Europeans will be better partners of the United States as they engage themselves more frequently and in greater depth as they will inevitably need to do in order to forge common foreign and security policies.

Americans concerned that a European pillar will reduce flexibility for cross-Atlantic dialogue and ultimately result in North Americans being confronted with a unified European position should be comforted by two factors. First, at Maastricht, WEU nations not only pledged themselves to complementarity but also transparency. This means, in effect, that the United States and Canada will have every opportunity to influence thought, ideas, concepts, and actions in European capitals throughout decisionmaking processes. It is true that the United States may not always

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get its way. But this will be the case even in NATO in a post-Cold War maturing relationship. Second, cross-Atlantic dialogue is not simply an outgrowth of the NATO experience. Indeed, it is probably more correct to say that NATO is an outgrowth of a host of historical, cultural, and philosphical factors that Europe and the United States obarc in common. As a result, Europe will remain the United State's most promising partner on the world seen for the foreseeable future.

For Europeans concerned that investment in the WEU might diminish the relevance of NATO, a WEU conceived as not only the defense arm of the European Union, but also firmly imbeded as the European pillar within the Atlantic Alliance need not be a problem. This, however, will require some careful managing. This gets to the heart of the idea of complementarity.

FORGING COMPLEMENTARITY

WEU and NATO must be complementary on at least two levels: the strategic/theoretical and the operational/practical. At the strategic/theoretical level the two alliances will be complementary if they each compensate for weaknesses, perceived or otherwise, of the other. For example, if NATO were unable to act because of perceived treaty limitations, then European states should be able to turn to the WEU as a means of coordinating actions with other countries within the international community.¹³ Or if, for example, agreement can not be reached in a given situation that threatens

European security interests then Europeans should be able to call upon the WEU.

On the other hand, the two alliances will be competing and international cooperation will suffer if potential actions that could be taken within a broader community are blocked simply as a means of advancing the interests of the narrower community. In a general sense what this suggests is that international responses should always be sought within the broadest possible international forum. With regard to the NATO/WEU relationship, this suggests adherence to the formula advanced at Maastricht designating NATO as "the (emphasis added) essential forum for consultation among (WEU) members and the venue for agreement on policies bearing on the security and defense commitments of the Allies under the North Atlantic Treaty."¹⁴

In a strategic/theoretical sense WEU operations in both Gulf wars, on the Danube, and in the Adriatic were complementary. Although the Adriatic case has a mix of competitive and complementary elements.

At the operational/practical level the WEU can only be complementary to NATO to the extent that the WEU member states are prepared to provide the WEU with an effective planning staff and adequate forces. And only then can the WEU assist in providing for the common defense of member states and their common interests worldwide. Here there is much to do. The creation of a WEU planning cell was an important first step. However, if the WEU member states wish to avoid costly duplication, the need to forge close cooperation with NATO is an imperative. Contigency plans will need to be drafted and should be harmonized with NATO. Forces answerable to the WEU (FAWEU) will need to be identified, as well as those forces that might be ear-marked for use or otherwise made available. The time-phased marshalling and deployment of forces and logistics will need to be addressed, as will joint operational and command training and exercises.

To be truly effective and complementary NATO and the WEU may have to consider new force configurations that permit notional tasking and black-boxing. Notional tasking could identify European units that might pick up tasks currently assigned to North American units within the NATO framework.

Equally important, the WEU will have to address its weaknesses in

- * command, control, communications, and computers
- * strategic and tactical intelligence, and
- * transportation and logistics

The WEU has moved in the direction of addressing some of these problems at the Petersberg and Rome ministerials. Perhaps the most promising initiative currently underway is the effort to free collective assets of the Atlantic Alliance for WEU use. As was

noted in Luxembourg recently, this would greatly aid Europeans in undertaking their responsibilities in peacekeeping and peace enforcement, and in rendering humanitarian assistance.¹⁵ As of this writing there appears to be no real roadblocks to the use of Alliance collective assets. It is, however, likely that before collective assets are relinquished, the Alliance will need to have the opportunity of deciding whether it wishes to act in its own right.

Expansion of the WEU to include members for central and eastern Europe before those countries are admitted to NATO would impose some constraints on WEU/NATO planning coordination and on the use of certain joint assets. However, given good will on all sides, none of these constrains are likely to impose great inefficiences on WEU operations.

In sum, I am personally optimistic about further NATO-WEU relations. I am confident that both Alliances will serve the interests of the Atlantic community and will become increasingly complementary rather than competing.

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ENDNOTES

1. Treaty on European Union, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1992, p. 126.

2. Ibid.

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3. WEU Related Texts Adopted at EC Summit, Maastricht - 10 December 1991, London: WEU Press and Information Section, n.d.

4. Denis Healey, "Britain and NATO," in <u>NATO and American Security</u>, ed: Klaus Knorr, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959, p.209.

5. The European Defense Community (EDC) was to have been an outgrowth of the European Coal and Steel Community (Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) which was established in May 1952. The EDC was to include the forces of all six countries which were to be placed under the guidance of a single European authority.

6. See Brussels Treaty: As amended by the Protocol modifying and completing the Brussels Treaty, signed at Paris on October 23, 1954. Reprinted by the Western European Union, nd.

7. Western European Union: Information Report. Assembly of the Western European Union, February 1993.

8. "Rome Declaration: 27 October 1984" reprinted in The Reactivation of the WEU: Statements and Communiques 1984-1987. Unite Kingdom: Western European Union, nd., p.9.

9. Ibid. The WEU is the only Alliance in which the foreign and defense ministers are required to meet jointly. In practice they sometimes meet jointly and sometimes meet separately.

10. "Platform on European Security Interests" reprinted in The Reactivation of the WEU, pp.37-41.

11. Western European Union: Information Report, p.22.

12. Treaty on European Union, p.126.

13. Some observers have suggested that NATO and the WEU might divide labors. NATO's focus might be within the originally defined treaty area, whereas the WEU might be responsible for so-called "out-ofarea" tasks. On the surface this has some appeal. Among other things, the WEU has already involved itself "out-of-area." Over the years, NATO discussions have almost always broken down on issues deemed to be "out-of-area." On the other hand, depending on the definition of "out-of-area," NATO is already so involved. Perhape, more important, the WEU has only limited C^4I , transportation and logistics assets to deal with such problems. NATO has what the WEU lacks in this regard.

14. WEU Related Texs Adopted at EC Summit: Maastricht, 10 December 1991. London: WEU Press and Information Section. nd.

15. Conseil des Ministres du 22 novembre 1993: Declaration du Secretaire general, p.2

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