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**THE ROLE OF THE WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION
IN EUROPEAN SECURITY**

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Introduction

The assessment of the role of the Western European Union (WEU) in European security has to be carried out against the background of several pertinent considerations.

(i) The world's multipolarity has been furthered by the end of the Cold War and the increasing economic interdependence of the majority of its states. The term security has lost its exclusively military meaning and now includes economic, humanitarian and social factors.

(ii) The end of the Warsaw Pact and the dissolution of the Soviet Union have dramatically changed the European security picture. Moreover, NATO and European Union enlargements are bound to condition the transformation and shape the development of that picture for the foreseeable future.

(iii) Issues and prospects about the European security situation will be assessed and evaluated in different, and sometimes diverging, ways by the countries on the European continent and in those adjacent areas, whose events are likely to affect directly or indirectly that same security situation.

(iv) Security trends in Europe are somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, the trend is towards integration and expansion, as shown by NATO's enlargement and EU's single currency and prospected enlargement - though it has taken 40 years to reach the present stage. On the other hand, the trend is also towards regional fragmentation, domestic instability and ethnic conflicts. Moreover, European security is bound to be negatively affected by all-encompassing threats such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD); domestic and international terrorist threats, possibly strengthened by chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons blackmail; new confrontations in regions of significant European interest such as the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and the Balkans.

(v) Russia continues to be a major European power in geostrategic terms and a nuclear superpower, as it is the only nation with a nuclear force capable of seriously threatening the United States. The role of Russia in the prospected building of a new European security system is of paramount importance. No new European security system can be stable without Russia's stability and contribution. The same can be said for Ukraine's role. Ukraine's independence and sovereignty are essential for European security and stability.

(vi) Future European security arrangements will be conditioned by the varying membership of NATO, the EU and the WEU. The WEU has ten Full Members which are also NATO members;¹ three Associate Members, which are also NATO members,² and five Observers -- only one of which is a NATO member.³ Finally, the WEU has developed an Associated Partnership with seven central-eastern and south-eastern European countries and

¹.. Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom.

².. Iceland, Norway and Turkey.

³.. Austria, Denmark (NATO member), Finland, Ireland and Sweden.

the three Baltic states.⁴ Of the 18 WEU Members (Full and Associate) and Observers, 15 are also EU members. Congruence between the membership of NATO, the EU and the WEU is thus not complete. In contrast to the position within the EU, there are specific security rights and responsibilities in NATO and the WEU.

(vii) There will not be a Common European Security Policy without a Common European Foreign Policy. There will not be a Common European Defence Policy without a Common European Security Policy. There will not be a European Defence without a Common European Defence Policy.

(viii) The legitimacy of a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) has been fully endorsed by NATO and, in June 1996, strengthened by the decision taken by the NATO Council on the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) concept.

(ix) A specific and defined reference framework for the WEU role in European security is provided by Title V of the Treaty of Amsterdam and the "Declaration of Western European Union on the Role of Western European Union and its Relations with the European Union and with the Atlantic Alliance", which was adopted by the WEU Council on 22 July 1997 and attached to the Final Act of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) which concluded with the signature of the Treaty of Amsterdam on 2 October 1997.

The most significant tenets and provisions of the two documents are as follows: (a) WEU Member States' objective is to build up WEU in stages as the defence component of the EU; (b) the WEU is an integral part of the development of the Union providing the Union with access to operational capabilities notably in the context of the so-called Petersberg missions, which consist of "humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking"; (c) when the EU avails itself of WEU, WEU will elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the EU which have defence implications; (d) WEU is an essential element of the development of the European Security and Defence Identity within the Atlantic Alliance and will accordingly continue its efforts to strengthen institutional and practical cooperation with NATO. The Atlantic Alliance remains the essential forum for consultation among Allies and the framework in which they agree on policies bearing on their security and defence commitments under the Washington Treaty; (e) WEU affirms that this identity will be grounded on sound military principles and supported by appropriate military planning and will permit the creation of militarily coherent and effective forces capable of operating under the political control and strategic direction of WEU.

(x) It would be wrong for the WEU to build capabilities and structures that are in competition with those of NATO. In shaping WEU's role in European security, it must be recognized that NATO should not be undermined by pretending that its core tasks are going to be transferred to a European body. In this context, key words should be "no duplications" and "separable but not separate" military capabilities.

The Role of the WEU In European Security. Problems and Prospects

I will try to evaluate the WEU's role in European security by answering five basic questions related to (i) the WEU's operational capabilities, i.e. its capacity to effectively perform the Petersberg missions; (ii) the programs aimed at strengthening those operational capabilities; (iii) the WEU's response to recent regional crises; (iv) the WEU's relationship

⁴.. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

with NATO and the EU; (v) the WEU's prospected development.

1. WEU operational capabilities

Since 1991, the WEU has gradually but consistently improved its military capacity to effectively perform the humanitarian and crisis management operations explicitly indicated in the Petersberg Declaration.

WEU has neither its own forces nor its own command and control system, nor an integrated military structure like NATO, but it has a politico-military structure for the management of the crises.

The WEU member states have designated forces that can be assigned to WEU, the so-called "Forces answerable to WEU" (FAWEU). In addition to national units, a number of multinational formations have been designated as FAWEU: (i) the EUROCORPS composed of troops from Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Spain; (ii) the EUROFOR, an on-call rapid deployment force with ground units provided by France, Italy, Portugal and Spain; (iii) the EUROMARFOR, a maritime force composed of naval units from France, Italy, Portugal and Spain; (iv) the Spanish-Italian Amphibious force. In addition, NATO has earmarked its Multinational Division Central (composed of units from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom), and its UK/Netherlands Amphibious Force for WEU assignment. Finally, Germany and the Netherlands have nominated the Headquarters of the First German-Netherlands Corps as a HQs answerable to WEU.

Other assets that strengthen WEU operational capabilities are: (i) the Planning Cell, mainly responsible for contingency planning for FAWEU's employment, recommendations for C3 arrangements for each WEU operation, coordination of the preparation of the deployment of forces under WEU auspices and authority, and coordination of exercise programs; (ii) a Situation Centre, capable of operating around the clock, whose main mission is to monitor crisis areas designated by the Council, as well as the progress of WEU operations, and to collect and produce the information required for Council decisions; and (iii) a Satellite Centre, in Spain, whose main task is the interpretation and analysis of satellite data for the verification of arms control agreements, crisis monitoring and management in support of WEU operations, and maritime and environmental surveillance.

Finally, in those cases in which the WEU intends to lead crisis management operations which the EU may wish to undertake, while the Atlantic Alliance (in fact, the United States and Canada) decide not to participate directly, the WEU could ask for NATO support. In other words, in deciding to confront a crisis, and autonomously conduct peace support operations within the framework of the Petersberg Declaration, the WEU could ask NATO to use its assets and capabilities, under the political control and strategic direction of the WEU Council, through the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) concept. In fact, NATO's new military structure includes CJTF mobile Headquarters which can be expanded in case of need and utilized by the WEU for its military operations. Moreover, WEU could use specific NATO military assets, such as AWACS and JSTAR aircraft, long-range transport, electronic warfare systems, and strategic intelligence data.

Now, considering the present FAWEUs, the additional military capabilities that the twenty-eight WEU countries, individually or collectively, can provide to the Organization, and the assets eventually made available by NATO, there is no doubt that the WEU as the military arm of the EU is fully capable of performing the Petersberg Tasks.

2. The WEU programs to enhance operational capabilities

These programs encompass different but closely interrelated fields: the build-up of the operational structure, the acquisition of new assets and means, the training of the forces so that they can operate more effectively in joint, multinational missions, the establishment of clear and effective procedures for the use of NATO assets. For several of these programs, follow-up decisions and work are expected.

As for the operational structure, the WEU has: (i) improved the functioning of the military components at WEU Headquarters; (ii) established a Military Delegates' Committee (MDC) to provide constant and coherent military advice to the Council; it will represent a strong reference point for national MODs and military staffs, and a clear counterpart to NATO MC; its Chairman will direct WEU's military staffs and act as WEU Secretary General's military advisor and Point of Contact for operational commanders when needed; (iii) approved the initial harmonization of crisis management mechanisms and procedures and the framework concept of an autonomous WEU operation; (iv) decided on modalities for mounting Headquarters of multinational FAWEU.

As far as capabilities are concerned, a new force, the recently established Multinational Land Force (MLF) composed of units of Italy, Hungary e Slovenia, will be made available to WEU. Moreover, WEU has significantly improved the technical capacities of its satellite centre, while work is in progress for WEU access to the advanced HELIOS satellite imagery and use of a mobile ground station offered by France for crisis management operations. Moreover, the WEU is considering the possibility of improving its strategic mobility, its joint logistic support capability, and its C3 system.⁵

As for training, apart from the exercises conducted at national level, and within the framework of the already established FAWEUs, the WEU has adopted a draft exercise program to the year 2001 and is planning the first full-fledged joint crisis management exercise with NATO in the year 2000. Moreover, work is progressing on the joint use of training facilities in the member states' territory.

3. The WEU response to international and regional crises

The record of WEU response to recent international crises is a clear sign of the dichotomy between capabilities and political will. The WEU countries have never found the political consensus needed to adopt a common position and a common decision to intervene.

In fact, the WEU was only able to adopt a minimum common denominator policy and operate at the fringe of the crises in a limited commitment, low-risk missions.

In April 1993, within the framework of the international effort to manage the Yugoslav crisis, the WEU decided to assist Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania in enforcing the UN sanctions on the Danube by a "police and customs" operation. It was stressed that the operation, which was to be of a "non-military" nature, would be based "on a system of coordinated control areas upstream and downstream of the Serbian border", to check that transports toward Serbia did not contain goods banned by the sanctions.⁶ To contribute to the patrolling operations, the WEU provided eight fast patrol boats and a 250-man force.

In August 1993, the WEU contributed a police contingent to the EU administration of Mostar, which was deployed in early July 1994 and withdrawn on 15 October 1996. The

⁵.. Work is being carried out for the development of pertinent concepts of operation for both cases.

⁶.. See the text of the WEU "Declaration on implementation of U.N. sanctions on the former Yugoslavia" in Atlantic News, n. 2514, 7 April 1993, pp. 1-2.

goal was to assist the Bosnian and Croat parties to set up a unified police force for the town

Finally, on 14 March 1997, the WEU Council met at ambassadorial level to discuss the situation in Albania, but no decisions were taken. The final communiqué contained no words on WEU's prospective willingness to play a role, nor a reference to its readiness to act within the framework of a formal call on the part of the European Union, in accordance with the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty, only a generic commitment to support the initiatives of other international organizations.

However, the WEU felt that it could not be totally absent from the international efforts to rebuild Albanian institutions.

In May 1997, the WEU Council decided to send a Multinational Advisory Police Element (MAPE) to Tirana. A small-scale, civil-police, advisory team, whose task was to provide advice and train instructors, was considered to be an effective way of assisting the new Albanian Government on public order, border policing and the reconstitution of the Tirana Police Academy.

The split within the EU, in which Germany and the United Kingdom strongly opposed a European military intervention, logically reflected on the WEU position towards the Albanian crisis.

However, the WEU could have at least acted as the legitimizing organization for that "coalition of the willing" which was taking shape and for the Multinational Protection Force (MPF) which was eventually deployed. After so many declarations about the need for a more visible European Security and Defence Identity, after the approval in 1996 of the concept of the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF), and thus the possibility of requesting NATO assets, the WEU could have made the most of the golden opportunity offered it and demonstrated its capacity to confront and manage a regional crisis autonomously, while acting as a catalyst for the intervention of other WEU countries, either associate members, associate partners or observers.⁷

Several WEU countries eventually participated in the military intervention in Albania, but the MPF was not a "WEU" force.

The WEU let this golden opportunity pass, losing credibility as an organization capable of playing a stabilizing regional role by providing the necessary peace-support capabilities or, at least, the political-military framework for a mission undertaken solely by European countries.

4. The WEU relationship with the EU and NATO

A true WEU role in European security would be difficult to perform if attempted outside the framework of a close relationship with the EU and NATO. The first is needed because, as previously noted, if there is no minimum consensus among the EU members that are also WEU members, there will not be a common position within the WEU, and no significant military action can be undertaken in managing international crises. The second is needed because NATO could fill some of the WEU operational requirements and allow for a smooth transition in case an autonomously initiated WEU military mission were to become a NATO mission with the participation of the United States. And both are necessary to attain a higher degree of compatibility between the WEU's two major functions: being the

⁷.. José Cutileiro, WEU Secretary General, speaking at a seminar for the 50th anniversary of the Institut des Hautes Etudes de Défense Nationale, stated that the risks of the ad hoc coalitions is that of leading to the renationalization of European military systems, and that the WEU could and should have intervened in Albania. WEU Documents, Paris, 6 June 1998.

European pillar of NATO and, at the same time, the defence component of the EU, in other words, its military arm.

a. As far as cooperation with the EU is concerned, the "Rhodes Declaration" issued at the end of the WEU Council held on 11-12 May 1998 outlines the work being done in this field: (i) the development of a practical model for linking the decision-making processes of both organizations in crisis management operations; (ii) the framing of a Common European Defence Policy; (iii) the fuller use of WEU/EU ad hoc groups to facilitate and enhance practical cooperation between the two organizations; (iv) the improvement of the working relationship between the WEU Secretariat and the EU Council Secretariat; (v) the cooperation and contribution of the WEU to the future Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit of the Union (vi) the submission to the EU of the image interpretation provided by the WEU Satellite Centre.

Moreover, the WEU developed a procedural document that details how the EU could use the new provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty to deploy the FAWEU for a military task, and this modus operandi was employed in a joint seminar, in June 1998, in a specific crisis situation scenario.⁸

Finally, the WEU decided to harmonize its Presidency system with that of the EU. By 1 January 1999, the two institutions will be led by the same country, except when the country is not a full WEU member.⁹

b. As for cooperation with NATO, the same "Rhodes Declaration" outlines the work conducted in this field: (i) the establishment of clear and concrete WEU/NATO consultation arrangements, to facilitate the linkage of the two decision-making processes; (ii) WEU participation in NATO's force planning process in order to evaluate the military capabilities of both European Allies and non-Allied EU members for carrying out the Petersberg Tasks, making it possible to identify problems and shortcomings; (iii) the elaboration of contingency planning for possible crisis scenarios in which the use of WEU and NATO forces is anticipated, as well as the establishment of consultation and institutional interaction mechanisms during the different stages of the crisis; (iv) determination of the technical and procedural modalities for the transfer, monitoring and return of NATO assets and capabilities requested by the WEU for the autonomous conduct of peace support operations.

5. WEU's prospected developments

There are two developments that are bound to shape the WEU's future identity and structure, thus directly affecting its capacity to play an effective role in European security: its enlargement and its proposed integration into the EU, a move that finds open opposition among the members.

The first is an uncontroversial development that will take place with the enlargement of the EU to those Central and East European countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia) with whom accession talks are currently being conducted. With their entry into the Union, the new members will be invited to accede to the WEU in accordance with Article XI of the modified Brussels Treaty, or to become Observers if they so wish. For the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland the passage from Associated Partners to Associated Members will take place earlier with their entry into NATO in April 1999. The number of Associate Partners will decrease accordingly and more resources will be

⁸.. Alyson J.K. Bailes, "WEU in the European Security Architecture", A paper for the 1998 Halki International Seminar, September 1998, p. 5.

⁹.. In those cases a full WEU member for the old rotation cycle will step in. A.J.K. Bayles, cit., p. 5.

available to the WEU for crisis management operations, considering that the Observers are also fully involved in the work of the Permanent Council "at 18" today.

The second development, mainly supported by France and Germany, is a controversial proposal aimed at bringing the WEU into the EU's fold. In Amsterdam, in July 1997, the United Kingdom, together with Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Sweden defeated this proposal, but the issue is still open and debated.

On the one hand, EU enlargement raises the problem of its direct impact on the EU decision-making process, on the viability of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and, indirectly, on WEU's role in European security. There is a clear possibility that the enlargement will make a true CFSP even more difficult and aleatory than it is today, as demonstrated by its failure in the Yugoslav and Albanian crises. But if the enlarged EU is unable to take a decision on military action, it would be very hard for the WEU to agree on it. This problem is likely to become more complex if the WEU is eventually merged with the EU.

On the other hand, bringing the WEU into the EU will further constrain, if not totally end, the present, already limited, WEU decision-making flexibility in the employment of military forces in crisis management situations, freezing the organization in an untenable position.

The nation state is likely to remain, for the foreseeable future, the fundamental entity for cooperation in the fields of security and defence. And this inter-governmental approach to crises will be better preserved if WEU remains an organization with its own specific security identity.

There is no doubt that WEU crisis management will have advantages over crisis management done by "coalitions of the willing", which are potentially divisive and hinder rather than further European integration. However, there will be cases in which some WEU members will be unwilling to participate in a joint military operation. In these cases, the "coalition of the willing" could be the only feasible option. The important point is not to repeat the mistake of a coalition ad hoc or a la carte, such as that established for the Albanian crisis, but to give the countries "willing and able to participate" full WEU legitimizing cover and political support. This would be easier to achieve in the WEU, as it is today and will be after the EU enlargement, than in an enlarged Union encompassing the WEU. The same is valid for the changes in the decision-making rules which will be needed to implement a true WEU crisis management role.

Concluding Remarks

(i) As the WEU Secretary General has declared, the WEU is not an instrument for the prevention of crises, but an instrument for their management, operational today, at the disposal to the Europeans for operations conducted by Europeans.¹⁰

(ii) The operational implementation of the CJTF concept will concretely and effectively strengthen the ESDI within NATO. The procedures related to the NAC's approval of the release of NATO assets and capabilities, and the monitoring and review of their use should not be interpreted as an American effort to maintain a too pervasive droit de regard on WEU-led operations.

(iii) The definition of a European security and defence policy should start with a

¹⁰.. Speech at the Colloquy on the European Security and Defence Identity, Madrid, 4 May 1998.

candid operational assessment of what the European allies would realistically be willing and able to do together. And this assessment should take into consideration that European action in the security and defence fields is bound to be inter-governmental and based on cooperation for the achievement of shared political and military goals. In other words, a "task-based approach" to defence should form the basis for deciding which new institutional arrangements and improvements to existing European capabilities are necessary. The means should be provided only after this complex process has been completed.

(iv) For the foreseeable future, the ESDI should not be intended and developed as a replacement for NATO in the whole spectrum of European security and defence requirements and tasks. It would be useless and wasteful to develop separate, wholly European military structures for the defence of European territory. NATO's cohesion and credibility would be undermined if its core functions were transferred to a European body.

(v) The WEU should not be expected to cope with any kind of crisis or build up the capabilities to confront with any threat to European security. In terms of "task-based approach", the list provided by the Petersberg Declaration is a good starting point, which could be fine-tuned in accordance with the evolution of the international situation. On the other hand, the WEU should be militarily and operationally put in a position where effective, collective European action is possible, when the political will is there to support it.

(vi) The option of having the WEU "dissolved" within the EU, would very likely lead to the paralysis of any attempted European effort at managing regional crises.

European security and defence arrangements should be based on the WEU acting in a reinforced partnership with the European Union. Only by maintaining its autonomy can the WEU truly be developed as the defence component of the EU and a means of strengthening the European pillar of NATO. And it would be able to elaborate and implement those decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications while at the same time building an ESDI within the Atlantic Alliance.

Only by preserving its "profile", would the WEU be able to maintain its international credibility as a potential "crisis manager", and to form those "coalitions of the willing and able" which may be the best (perhaps the only) tool for coping with present and future European security issues, provided that they are clearly the result of a WEU decision and have its full legitimizing cover and political support. Coalitions of those involved could vary from mission to mission, thus European security and defence structures should be able to accommodate this "variable geometry" arrangements.

(vii) A strong trans-Atlantic link continues to be paramount for European security. Not only in terms of Europe's defence but also in terms of management of those crises which touch vital European security interests, and need a concerted effort and the pooling of political skills, economic resources and military capabilities. The ESDI should not be construed as having among its final aims the marginalization of the United States from the new European security system. The threats and the risks of the next century require a strong re-assertion of the value of an Atlantic Community which includes NATO.