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The Working Relationships between the EU, WEU and NATO.
John Roper

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In addressing the working relationships among the three institutions responsible for European and transatlantic relations in the field of security, it is necessary to examine why they were relatively separate until the beginning of this present decade, why they had initially so much difficulty in developing affective patterns of cooperation, why this is now improving, and what the prospects are for their future cooperation into the 21st century. It must be noted from the onset that some of the problems of developing effective working relationships arise from the different, albeit overlapping memberships of the European Union and NATO; and while all the full members of WEU are members of both NATO and EU, the existence of a third player cannot be said to have always been helpful.

THE COLD WAR: AN EFFECTIVE DIVISION OF LABOUR

Until 1990 there was a broad functional division between NATO and the European Community (as it then was), NATO had been created in 1949 as a collective defence organisation with primarily political and military functions for its member states. When the European Economic Community was established by the Treaty of Rome in 1957 it had an implicit security purpose referred to in the phrase in the preamble where the signatories talk of their resolve “to strengthen the safeguards of peace and liberty by establishing this combination of resources”. One of the driving factors behind the Treaty

(as it had been behind the earlier Treaty of 1951 establishing the European Coal and Steel Community - ECSC) was the determination to provide an economic framework for the reconciliation of France and Germany and to put an end to the running conflicts between those powers which had in the lifetime of those negotiating the treaties twice brought such devastation to Europe. The whole of the European Communities' work until 1970 (and very largely until the end of the Cold War) was therefore in the economic area, although it did have an essential security function in helping to create, together with NATO, a network of cooperation and integration among its members so as to establish a "security community" among its members in the terms defined by Karl Deutsch: "one in which there is real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way"¹.

In foreign and security policy there was a broad distinction made: NATO took the responsibility for the external security of Western Europe, while the European Community set out to develop an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity under the security umbrella of NATO and, particularly, the nuclear guarantee of the United States. It is true that NATO in the case of the recurring disputes between Greece and Turkey and the episodic "cod wars" between the United Kingdom and Iceland did attempt (more or less formally) to use its good offices to resolve conflicts between NATO members, but in both cases these involved non-members of the European Community. After 1970, the development of European Political Cooperation (EPC) among the member states of the European Community meant that the foreign policy was to some extent coordinated, but this very clearly excluded security policy and the member states had a "self-denying ordinance on anything with a military flavour"².

The five countries who had signed the Brussels Treaty in 1948 to create the forerunner of WEU did so to provide evidence of European readiness to make arrangements for their own collective defence; however, with the creation of NATO and the development of its integrated command structure, the organisation became more formal than substantial. And, indeed, when the Brussels Treaty was modified in 1954 to create the Western European Union and provide a basis for German membership of WEU and NATO, a new Article IV was inserted making this clear.

"In the execution of the Treaty, the High Contracting Parties and any Organs established by Them under the Treaty shall work in close cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Recognising the undesirability of duplicating the military staffs of NATO, the Council and its Agency will rely on the appropriate military authorities of NATO for information on military matters."

As a result of this WEU had, before 1993, no military staff of its own, apart from some officers in the ARMS Control Agency who were exclusively concerned with obligations among WEU's members.

By 1954, the original Brussels Treaty, which had in 1948 set itself broad goals for economic, social and cultural collaboration as well as collective self-defence, came to be modified, also. Understand by then that both OEEC (later OECD) and ECSC had been created; thus Article 1 of the Treaty, which set out the economic objectives, was amended to avoid any competition with them by the addition of the following clause:

“The co-operation provided for in the preceding paragraph, shall not involve any duplication of, or prejudice to, the work of other economic organisations, in which the High Contracting Parties are or may be represented, but shall on the contrary assist the work of those organisations.”

WEU's activities were very largely formal for most of the next three decades, but it can be seen that it was treaty bound not to trespass on the clearly defined areas of NATO and the European Communities. Thus, until the end of the nineteen eighties there was very little requirement to develop working relationships; in place of these, a benign but unplanned synergy existed between NATO and the European Communities which ensured the peace and prosperity of the West.

PROBLEMS OF SUCCESS: FUNCTIONAL OVERLAP AFTER THE END OF THE COLD WAR

This neat division did not survive the end of the Cold War; all three institutions had to adjust to a very different security environment. Although there was a large overlap among their membership (total in the case of the WEU), the adjustments were made in ways which reduced the combined effectiveness of the organisations and have led to situations in which they have often appeared competitive rather than complementary and mutually supporting. The description of them (together with the OSCE) as being “interlocking” has too often led to the uncharitable comment that they've been more frequently “interblocking” than “interlocking”.

Unlike the two World Wars of this century, where a good deal of time was spent during the war in foreign ministries in planning for the post-war arrangements, there was little preparation for the post-Cold War. There was a need for readjustment both in understanding what the objectives and priorities of foreign and security policies were, and also, in agreeing on via what institutional frameworks they would be conducted. On this there were not only differences among Western European countries and across the Atlantic, but also on certain occasions within countries and even within governments. The organisations themselves had their own implicit if not explicit agendas.

It is not necessarily the case that Secretariats or Commissions have always been neutral - they have had their own interests if only of self-preservation. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the development of effective working relationships has been difficult, and may not be fully completed until the new millennium.

There have been different reasons for this apart from the political differences in approach of key member states. While NATO and the EU Commission and Council had all three been based in Brussels for over twenty years, there were very considerable differences in culture, both in their secretariats and in the missions from member states. NATO was explicitly a political-military organisation and the EC a civil organisation, and it was always surprising how little contact there was between them. Their geographical collocation had very little effect on even informal contact. WEU was until January 1993 based in London; and, even when it arrived, its very small size³, compared with NATO or the EU, meant that its presence could do little to bridge the gap between two very disparate cultures. Even though it was also a political-military organisation with the obligation in its 1954 Treaty to rely on NATO for military advice, it took until May 1996 before a Security Agreement was reached between NATO and WEU permitting the exchange of classified information and documents between the two organisations. The fact that there were two, and in some cases three, diplomatic missions from the member states in Brussels reporting to different parts of their foreign and defence ministries meant that even the commonality of membership hardly guaranteed any effective coordination.

1991 was to see parallel developments in NATO and the European Community, as it then was called, which were to lead to the institutional incoherence of the early nineties. Perhaps as significant to see, also, was the beginning of the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia: Indeed, it was the inadequacies of the response to this problem by the key members of the various institutions that was one of the factors which led the drive for a more rational structure after 1995. In November 1991, NATO agreed on its New Strategic Concept setting out the risks - no longer threats- that its members faced in the post-Cold War. In setting out the principles of Alliance strategy it asserted "The Alliance is purely defensive in purpose: none of its weapons will ever be used except in self-defence...." Although there was some discussion of crisis management and conflict prevention, treating this issue was still very much in its preliminary stage.

At the same time, the members of the European Union and WEU were busy preparing the texts of the Treaty on European Union and the Declaration by the members of WEU to be agreed at Maastricht a month later in December 1991. These (very much as a result of Franco-German initiatives) were to establish a structure to develop a Common Foreign and Security Policy for European Union (CFSP) and a much more prominent position for Western European Union, which its then Secretary

General William van Eekelen saw as acting as a bridge between NATO and European Union. In the context of this paper there was no discussion of the working relationship between NATO and the European Union; however, the Treaty on European Union states in Article J,4.2, “ The Union requests 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”. In addition, the Declaration of the Member States of Western European Union on the role of WEU and its relation with the European Union and the Western European Union with the Atlantic Alliance⁴ does make explicit statements on the development of the working relations between WEU and the other two bodies.

Before looking at these it is worth noting what all members of WEU agreed at Maastricht.

“WEU Member States agree on the need to develop a genuine European security and defence 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 WEU, in the longer term perspective of a common defence policy within the European Union which might in time lead to a common defence, compatible with that of the Atlantic Alliance.

WEU will be developed as the defence component of the European Union and as a 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”.

Turning to the development of closer relationships with European Union, the WEU declaration made five specific proposals:

- as appropriate, synchronisation of the dates and venues of meetings and harmonisation of working methods;
- establishment of close cooperation between the Council and Secretariat-General of WEU on the one hand, and the Council of the Union and the General Secretariat of the Council on the other;
- consideration of the harmonisation of the sequence and duration of the respective Presidencies;
- arranging for appropriate modalities so as to ensure that the Commission of the European Communities is regularly informed and, as appropriate, consulted on WEU activities in accordance with the role of the Commission in the common foreign and security policy as defined in the Treaty on European Union;
- encouragement of closer cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly of WEU and the European Parliament.

It is difficult from material in the public domain to analyse how far these five proposals were implemented, but some comments can be made. While some working groups involving experts from capitals of the WEU and EU have met on consecutive dates (to economise on travel costs), the fact that there was no overlap between the representations in Brussels to the WEU and the EU (unlike the partial overlap in NATO) meant that there was no need for synchronisation of the weekly cycles of Brussels-based meetings. The venues of the regular ministerial meetings were not synchronised, although during the Yugoslav crisis WEU foreign ministers did come to meet on occasions in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Councils of the EU, as happened in the Hague September 19, 1991. In reverse, the EU Foreign Ministers met in Luxembourg in the margins of the WEU Ministerial Council on November 22, 1993.

The second commitment to ensure close cooperation between the two Councils and Secretariats was implemented primarily through the country which had the presidency of the European Union, which included in its representation to the WEU Council representatives of the EU Council Secretariat and, sometimes, members of the Commission for selected items of WEU business. There was some exchange of documents. Liaison in the other direction was handicapped by the very small size of the WEU Secretariat.

The proposal on the harmonisation of the Presidencies of the two organisations was advocated by those who wished to see the rapid integration of the WEU and EU, and opposed by those who did not. In fact, the duration of the WEU Presidency was reduced to six months from July 1, 1994, which may well have had some negative effects on the organisation; still, the only time in which the Presidencies have coincided was in the first half of 1996 when Spain had the Presidency of both bodies, and there is little evidence that this overlap significantly improved working relations.

The proposal for cooperation between the European Parliament and the Assembly of WEU seems to have remained intact. The WEU Assembly has to date been enthusiastic about plans to bring the two bodies closer together and opposed to merger.

The 1991 Declaration of WEU Member States also made proposals "to develop further the close working links between WEU and the 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.

- Where necessary, dates and venues of meetings will be synchronised and working methods harmonised.

- Close cooperation will be established between the Secretariats General of WEU and NATO.

The results here were mixed. As far as the development of “joint positions” is concerned, progress was very slow and the number of occasions on which such joint positions introduced very limited. Nevertheless, the fact that there was some overlap between the representation of Member States to WEU and NATO meant that there was an opportunity for more informal exchanges. The Ambassador of the country holding the Presidency of the WEU reported on work in WEU to the weekly meeting of the North Atlantic Council, although this practice did not occur in the reverse direction after attendance at the WEU Council included countries not members of NATO.

In view of the overlap in National Delegations, WEU’s weekly schedule of meetings in Brussels had to take into account the NATO schedule. There were joint meetings of the permanent Councils of the two organisations every six months or so but, initially, these tended to be more formal than substantial. WEU Ministerial meetings tended to take place in advance of NATO Ministerials, yet these were not harmonised formally. On the only occasion when a WEU Ministerial and a NATO Ministerial occurred on the same day in the same place, namely in the margins of the CSCE Summit in Helsinki on July 10th 1992, it is easier to interpret the motivation as being one of competition rather than of cooperation.

There were formal meetings at middle levels between the secretariats of the two bodies, but the restrictions on the exchange of classified information until 1996 limited their effectiveness. The Secretaries General exchanged visits to the two Ministerial Councils, though it is probably reasonable to evaluate these as having been primarily symbolic rather than substantial.

Part of the explanation for the limited development of cooperation can be attributed to the internal dynamic of the three organisations as each tried to define its role and substantial policies for European security in the unfamiliar surroundings of the post-Cold War world. Part must, however, be attributed to the strong views of some of the key countries about their own preferences for the institutional development. France, Germany and Spain wished to see the fullest development of a defence role for the European Union - even at the cost of NATO, as was suggested in the case of France. Britain and, initially, Portugal, Denmark and the Netherlands were very defensive of NATO’s position and reluctant to see it eroded, believing that this would run the risk of reducing North American commitments to European security. Britain, in addition, was very sceptical about any growing role for the European Union and appeared to resile rapidly from the commitments she had taken at Maastricht about the WEU being built in stages as the defence component of the European Union. Such discordant views certainly handicapped developments as can be seen by the inadequate responses to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

1991-1995 EUROPE'S YUGOSLAV DISASTERS

This is not the occasion for a complete analysis nor a complete judgement of the combination of errors by European and North American countries which occurred between 1991 and 1995 in and around the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. There were many remarkable, positive efforts by individual Europeans and their armed forces which should not be minimised; but, as regards dealing with the first post-Cold War crisis, the efforts did not very often demonstrate the effective working relations between the various bodies, and indeed all too often saw a reversion to patterns of diplomatic activity more reminiscent of a nineteenth century “concert of powers” than of the constructive development of a European Security and Defence Identity.

The following are perhaps the most depressing examples of the failure to use the three institutions as mutually reinforcing bodies: Reference has already been made to the extraordinary situation in Helsinki on July 10, 1992 when, after a special WEU Ministerial Council had been held in the margins of the CSCE summit to agree on the dispatch of a naval force under WEU auspices to the Adriatic to monitor UN embargoes and sanctions against former Yugoslavia, the same nine ministers from WEU countries - now accompanied by their American, Canadian, Danish, Greek, Icelandic, Norwegian and Turkish colleagues - met an hour later as a special NATO Ministerial Council and agreed on the despatch of a second force under NATO auspices. In fact, thanks to skillful Italian command, these two forces operated together and were eventually combined as operation “Sharp Guard”. However, allied cooperation was seriously challenged in November 1994 when the United States announced the withdrawal of its direct support for the enforcement of the UN arms embargo, a decision which had potentially serious effects on the WEU/NATO forces on the eve of a WEU Ministerial meeting at Noordwijk.

The meeting of a group of members of the UN Security Council in Washington on May 20, 1993, where a Joint Action Plan was decided on that effectively abandoned the Vance-Owen Plan, was a clear occasion when a group of countries acted without consultation in either the North Atlantic Council or the European Union Council. The Danish Presidency of the European Union, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands all made it clear that they were opposed not only to the content of the decision, but also to the process by which it had been arrived at.

A year later the establishment of the “Contact Group”, whose creation did not derive from either the European Union or NATO, effectively by-passed the existing institutional channels. The European members were not the troika of the European Union Presidency; instead, the three major European powers were. Without disputing the Contact Group’s effectiveness, its creation must be seen as again by-passing the institutional structures and, to that extent, as an example of reducing their relevance.

Finally, when President Chirac convened in Paris on June 3, 1995 a meeting of troop-contributing countries who were also members of the European Union and NATO, this was done as an *ad hoc* meeting of nations without any institutional framework. The decision to deploy a more heavily armed Rapid Reaction Force with armour and artillery from Britain, France and the Netherlands was taken outside any institutional framework - such a force was totally unrelated to either WEU or NATO.

This set of examples (apart from the first one) has been given to show that while there may not have been particularly close working relations between the institutions, this was in part because the key states at critical moments chose to bypass institutional structures. Although there were some examples of effective intra-institutional cooperation - as in the EU's civil administration in Mostar where WEU provided some police assistance, or in the post-Dayton cooperation between NATO and the European Union in Bosnia - the overall picture was not encouraging.

1995-1997 - SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT

The January 1994 NATO Summit launched the concept of Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTfFs), which was a mechanism to permit forces and headquarters made available to NATO to be deployed in some circumstances under European control. This was intended to provide a mechanism for effective cooperation with WEU. For the first eighteen months to two years after the announcement little progress was made on developing the modalities of such cooperation - tensions between the United States and Europe over policy in former Yugoslavia and traditional French suspicions of NATO mechanisms being partially responsible for this. In some ways the experience of IFOR, which itself had many of the characteristics of a CTJfF, was to help to transform the situation. The new attitude of France and Spain also helped to change the atmosphere. Both countries had been outside NATO's integrated command structure, but on December 5, 1995 France announced that it would follow the Spanish model and participate fully in the work of NATO's Military Committee and International Military Staff. This change in climate was demonstrated in the communiqué of the NATO Ministerial meeting held in Berlin on June 3, 1996, in which for the first time considerable progress on the way a CTJfF would work in practice was shown, including the "creation of militarily coherent and effective forces capable of operating under the political control and strategic direction of the WEU."

Since then, there has been a good deal of practical planning: on one hand, WEU identifying illustrative missions which it might wish to undertake; and on the other,

NATO military staff developing initial plans for such missions. WEU has also, since its Ostend Ministerial meeting of November 1996, begun to play an active part in NATO's defence planning process, having made a contribution to the 1997 NATO Ministerial Guidance that will set the future parameters for such planning. The discussions on a framework agreement between NATO and WEU to govern the transfer, monitoring and return of NATO assets and capabilities referred to in WEU's Paris Declaration of May 13, 1997 shows that practical details are now being taken forward. There is now planning underway for the first exercise whereby the CTJF formula would be used with the WEU Council in political control. It can therefore be claimed that, due to the change in French attitudes towards NATO, working relationships between WEU and NATO have significantly improved over the last eighteen months. There are, however, still other issues outstanding in the development of the new NATO; and, it is of course possible that if these are not resolved before the NATO Madrid Summit on July 8-9, 1997, the progress in WEU/NATO relations may be set back.

There has been less progress in the working relationship between the EU and WEU. This has been partly due to the slow progress in the development of the CFSP and the difficulty in defining two things: first, what sort of foreign policy actor the European Union should be; and second, how far the foreign and security policy was to be either a replacement for the policies of the individual members or rather an addition to what they would continue to do by themselves. The lack of progress has also resulted from the continuing division between Britain and the other full members of WEU on the implementation of their Maastricht commitment "to build up WEU in stages as the defence component of the European Union". It is by no means clear whether the recent change of government in Britain has affected this. Initial signs are not particularly encouraging. Most members would like to see some progress at the IGC, which is expected to complete its work at Amsterdam on June 16/17, 1997. There is still a possibility that language will be found to ensure that a reference to the "Petersburg" tasks of WEU - humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking - may be incorporated in some way into the EU's missions. Interestingly enough, language along these lines was put forward in the Finnish-Swedish memorandum of April 25, 1996 and, therefore, should not present problems to the five EU members who are not members of WEU.

Until the language issue is resolved it will be difficult to take cooperation between the EU and WEU forward. Still, the WEU Paris Ministerial Council May 1997 Declaration does make reference to "meetings of a WEU/European Union *ad hoc* group and the holding of a seminar which had brought together representatives of States belonging to both Organisations..." as examples of the intensification of work between the two bodies. It also stated work has been done on the "modus operandi" for the

implementation of paragraph 2 of Article J, 4 of the Treaty on European Union signed at Maastricht. The response that WEU had made to the request made by the European Union on the Great Lakes region in application of Article J.4.2 of the Treaty is referred to, though the fact that WEU was unable to take positive action in this case, nor in Albania, is seen by some as disappointing. It is probably inevitable that the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the IGC will have had its impact on the development of closer working methods in advance of Amsterdam in June; after Amsterdam, though, and perhaps irrespective of the outcome of the IGC, the removal of uncertainty may make it possible for more progress to be made.

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

At least as far as NATO/WEU relations are concerned there are now, subject to other issues being resolved before the Madrid Summit, positive signs of developing relations. A satisfactory Europeanisation of the command structure of NATO would clearly facilitate this in the future, as would practical experience of the use of CTJF by the WEU. The other helpful development would be the possible accession of Sweden, Finland and Austria to NATO, and then to the WEU. In all three countries this possibility is now being discussed much more openly than in the past; in addition, political changes in Sweden could significantly increase the likelihood that it occurs within the next five years. Such developments would clearly reduce the asymmetries among the memberships of the three bodies and facilitate closer working ties. The future of the CSFP depends on much more than institutional changes in the IGC, though. A consensus about the substance of the CFSP is probably a prerequisite for the next steps forward in clarifying the relationship between the European Union and WEU. The fact that the new British government will be involved from the start in this debate of substance may ease the way for subsequent consequential institutional changes.

While the working relationships among the three bodies have been far from adequate to the challenges facing them during the first half of the nineties, the future prospects would seem to be more encouraging. In the longer term we may even be able to move to a situation where the principle of the 14th Century English Franciscan, William of Occam, known as Occam's Razor, *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*⁵ could be applied, thus leading to only two institutions. The debate on the working relationship between them would at least ensure plenty of work for academic security analysts as well as for those in government well into the twenty-first century.

Notes

1. Karl W. Deutsch, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*, 1957. Westport, Conn., p.8.
2. Simon J. Nuttall, *European Political Co-operation*. 1992. Clarendon Press, Oxford, p.13.
3. The budget of WEU is only one fortieth of that of NATO. It was only after 1992 that it began to develop any operational capacity.
4. The use of the phrase "Atlantic Alliance" was a courtesy to France who still had certain sensitivities to references to NATO.
5. *trans*: Entities should not be unnecessarily multiplied.