
THE ROLE OF WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION
AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY

Horst Holthoff

THE ROLE OF WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY (*)

It is indeed a privilege to address this Fourth European Session of Advanced Defence Studies.

Since the first Session in November 1988, the aim has been to bring European security and defence questions to the attention of the personalities in all walks of life in our countries who hold positions of responsibility and are able to influence public opinion. By transcending frontiers and professional barriers, a highly productive formula has been found, conducive to intense debate. You will certainly agree that, in a new security environment characterized by the growing complexity of international affairs, the existence of the European Session of Advanced Defence Studies is still fully vindicated.

Under these circumstances it is not just a useful but also a necessary exercise to suspend everyday routine from time to time and reflect with colleagues on the rapidly evolving security landscape. We are grateful to our German hosts for the choice of the idyllic setting of Ebenhausen. The «Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik» has amply proved that the closeness of the Bavarian Alps is conducive to fruitful debate on European security and defence issues.

Our Fourth European Session has special significance for two reasons: firstly, after the European revolutions and the Gulf conflict, the international environment is clearly still in flux. Topical issues like the situation in Central and Eastern Europe, arms control and disarmament, the architecture of European security and military and non-military risks for Europe are still high on the agenda and are duly reflected in the programme for our Working Group Sessions. Secondly, our Fourth European Session of Advanced Defence Studies is taking place only a few months after the Maastricht Summit. This Summit is, obviously, of special importance for WEU, whose development

(*) Conferência proferida em 24 de Março de 1992 pelo Embaixador Horst Holthoff, Subsecretário-Geral da UEO, na Fourth European Session of Advanced Defence Studies, que teve lugar na Alemanha, em Ebenhausen/Dresden, no período de 23 a 26 de Março de 1992, e na qual o IDN se fez representar.

is closely linked with the inception and organization of the European Sessions of Advanced Defence Studies.

The dramatic political upheavals which have taken place inside and outside Europe since 1989 have indeed initiated a dynamic adaptation of existing European security structures to the new environment. The far-reaching Treaty on European Union will reshape Europe. Western European Union's role and place in the process of European integration and in the new European security order have now been defined. For WEU, the Maastricht summit marks the end of the reactivation stage, and the Organization is now entering a fully operational phase.

WEU's agenda has been set by the results of the Maastricht summit. Of obvious importance are issues related to new members, associate members and observers, as well as the Organization's relations with European Union and NATO. Maastricht gave a massive boost to earlier efforts aiming at a more operational role for WEU. In the new security environment, WEU's relations with the Central and Eastern European States clearly acquire crucial importance, as the Organization is making its own contribution to stability, security and peace on the European continent.

The Article of the Treaty on European Union relating to common foreign and security policy, as well as the two Declarations by the Western European Union member States on the occasion of the European Council meeting in Maastricht, define WEU's role as the defence component in the process of European integration and as the instrument for strengthening the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance. The Treaty Article on common foreign and security policy sets the course for WEU's development by outlining a three-stage process. The first stage is already fully specified, as it unequivocally refers to Western European Union as «an integral part of the development» of the European Union and as the link between the European security and defence identity and the evolving Atlantic Alliance. In the second stage the aim is «the eventual framing» of a common European defence policy which — in a third stage — «might in time lead to a common defence». The conceptual and preparatory work for implementing the measures listed in the Declarations by the WEU member States on the strengthening of WEU's operational role and on the shaping of its relations with the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance started immediately after the Maastricht Summit.

It is in the nature of the relationship between the European Union and WEU that WEU membership must be open to the member States of the European Union. These States are therefore being invited to accede to WEU on conditions to be agreed in accordance with Article XI of the modified Brussels Treaty, or to become observers if they prefer. Simultaneously, invitations are being extended to other European member States of NATO to become associate members of WEU, so that they can participate fully in WEU's activities.

Independently of the ratification of the Treaty on European Union, WEU member States aim to conclude corresponding agreements by the end of this year with those States seeking full or associate WEU membership. Since the modified Brussels Treaty as it stands contains no provisions on associate membership, WEU member States need to define their own position first. I think the preparatory work done in this respect will be approved by Ministers at their next meeting, thus allowing discussions to start.

As regards the procedure, a broad consensus among WEU member States exists. In all likelihood, the Nine will adopt a Political Declaration on relations between WEU and the other European member States of the European Union or the Atlantic Alliance. Member States of the European Union accepting the invitation to accede to WEU would have to subscribe to the modified Brussels Treaty, its Protocols and associated texts, and the agreements concluded among the member States pursuant to the Treaty. They would have to undertake to develop WEU as the defence component of the European Union and as the means of strengthening the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance, in keeping with the «Declaration on the role of WEU and its relations with the European Union and with the Atlantic Alliance».

Member States of the European Union which accept the invitation to become observers, although not being a party to the modified Brussels Treaty, could attend meetings of the WEU Council and be invited to meetings of working groups. However, under certain conditions attendance at Council meetings could be restricted to full members. Other European member States of the Atlantic Alliance which accept the invitation to become associate members of WEU, although not being a party to the modified Brussels Treaty, would generally be able to participate in Council meetings, meetings of subordinate bodies and other activities. Here again, under certain conditions, participation in these meetings and activities could be restricted to full mem-

bers. Associate members would have the right to speak but not to block a decision that has obtained the consensus of full members.

The approach adopted by Western European Union in its relations with Political Union and the Atlantic Alliance clearly conforms to the principle of «interlocking institutions». Needless to say, the respective networks of solidarity created by Articles V of the Brussels and the Washington Treaties are complementary and not in conflict, and thus cannot be invoked by any member State of both organizations independently of each other. The relationship between member States and associate member States will be governed by the principle of peaceful resolution of international disputes, in accordance with the obligations resulting from the modified Brussels Treaty, the North Atlantic Treaty and the United Nations Charter, as well as the commitments entered into under the terms of the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, and the other generally recognized principles and rules of international law.

Of crucial importance is the planned closer concertation of WEU member States within the Atlantic Alliance. As a result, Europeans will be able to make their voice heard in the Alliance more clearly than before. Efforts by WEU member States to create a European defence identity will also help to consolidate the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance.

Cooperation between WEU and the Atlantic Alliance is in a spirit of mutual trust, respecting the principles of reciprocal transparency and complementarity. WEU can thus make a major contribution to the transatlantic partnership, as explicitly recognized by the North Atlantic Council meeting in Copenhagen, the NATO summit in Rome and the North Atlantic Council meeting in Brussels.

The key element of the Maastricht agreements in the field of security policy is the conclusion that WEU will form an integral part of the process of development of the European Union. At the European Union's request, WEU will formulate and implement the common defence policy in a too distant future.

Indeed, Maastricht opens up the prospect of a common European defence policy, which might in the longer run lead to a common European defence. The path to a European defence will be an evolutionary process, with Maastricht being only one of several stages, albeit a crucial one.

In WEU's relations with European Union, what matters now is to synchronize the dates and venues of meetings and to harmonize working methods. The establishment of close cooperation between the Council and

Secretariat-General of WEU, on the one hand, and the Council of the Union and General Secretariat of the Council on the other is envisaged.

Consideration is now being given to the possibility of harmonizing the sequence and duration of the respective Presidencies.

Given the prospect of being in Brussels and in accordance with the Declaration of the Nine in Maastricht, representation on the WEU Council should be such that the Council is able to exercise its functions continuously in pursuance of Article VIII of the modified Brussels Treaty. For this reason, and notwithstanding the sovereign freedom of decision of the member States, homogeneous representation on the Council is the goal.

To facilitate the strengthening of WEU's role, the Nine decided in Maastricht to transfer the seat of the WEU Council and Secretariat to Brussels. This is an expedient measure, as the move to Brussels will greatly ease close cooperation with the Council of the Union and General Secretariat of the Council as well as with the Secretariat-General of NATO. The practical arrangements for implementing this measure are currently under consideration. Preparations for the transfer are under way. The Belgian Government has offered a suitable building in the Belgian capital.

Given the prospects for European integration opened up by the Maastricht summit, WEU member States have decided to make the Organization more operational.

Even during its reactivation process, Western European Union has already assumed a growing operational role. In two Gulf crises, it has proved its ability to act. In contrast to NATO, WEU's field of action is not limited geographically. Under Article VIII of the modified Brussels Treaty, the WEU Council is explicitly called upon to consult with regard to any situation which may constitute a threat to security or to economic stability, "in whatever area this threat should arise". Thus WEU's competence is of real benefit to the Alliance as well, because it provides a framework for concerted action by Europeans and ad hoc cooperation between Europeans and their North American allies outside the North Atlantic Treaty area.

It is hardly surprising that initiatives by WEU member States in the run-up to the Maastricht summit — such as the Anglo-Italian Declaration of 4 October 1991 and the letter of the Federal Chancellor and the French President of 14 October 1991 — also stressed the question of enhancing WEU's operational role. Without such a role, WEU would hardly be in a position

to play a credible part as the defence component of the European Union and as the means of strengthening the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance.

After Maastricht, cooperation among WEU member States will become more operational in the politico-military field and in the military field proper. The respective efforts can build on the progress already made in the run-up to Maastricht.

Prominently featured is cooperation among member States on space, where they can achieve significant results by pooling their resources. The crucial importance of intelligence in the Gulf conflict has demonstrated the value to European countries of acquiring an independent satellite observation system. Apart from crisis monitoring, such a system is equally useful for the verification of arms control agreements and for environmental monitoring.

The ad hoc Sub-Group on Space mandated by the WEU Council of Ministers has produced studies on the potential for medium — and long — term cooperation on a European Satellite observation system. A Study Management Team currently operating in Paris under the Italian chairmanship is about to commission a main system feasibility study by industry. This will serve as a basis for further decisions by Ministers.

The second track of our space cooperation has been to establish, with effect from 1 January 1992, a WEU Satellite Centre in Torrejon (Spain). It will at first concentrate on training European experts in the interpretation of satellite data. Later on it will become more operational, especially when it has access to Helios imagery.

A clear link exists between the cooperation of WEU member States on space and their cooperation on arms control. With the growing importance of arms control and verification in the new security environment, it is only logical for WEU to be increasingly used by member States as a forum for concertation and cooperation on verification. This has resulted in practical arrangements for cooperation within WEU on implementing the CFE Treaty verification regime.

Moreover, a set of rules for cooperation among multinational inspection teams under the verification regime laid down in the CFE Treaty has been approved and have been introduced as a contribution to NATO discussions. The search for cost-effective ways of implementing an "Open Skies" agreement remains high on the agenda. The possibility of cooperating with all CSCE member States is envisaged.

This concludes the "pre-Maastricht" phase. After Maastricht, the immediate priority is to strengthen WEU's operational role by examining and defining appropriate missions, structures and means, including those in the military field proper, covering in particular the following four fields:

- Firstly, a WEU planning cell. The WEU Defence Representatives Group, backed up by experts, is currently discussing draft terms of reference as well as the establishment table and manning.
- Secondly, closer military cooperation among WEU member States, notably in the fields of logistics, transport, training and strategic surveillance. The WEU Defence Representatives Group is currently discussing ways of enhancing military cooperation.
- Thirdly, meetings of WEU Chiefs of Defence Staff. In the wake of the adoption of the WEU Declaration, the Chiefs of Defense Staff of the WEU member countries met in Bonn on 27 January 1992 to consider the prospects for regular CHOD meetings, military units answerable to WEU and the creation of a WEU military planning cell. The next CHODs meeting is scheduled in May.
- Fourthly, military units answerable to WEU. The identification of such units, of which the Corps proposed by France and Germany will be one, is high and the agenda of the Council and its working groups.

Among the proposals to be "examined further" are enhanced cooperation on armaments with the aim of creating a European armaments agency and the development of the WEU Institute for Security Studies into a European Security and Defence Academy. WEU member States agree that arrangements for giving WEU a stronger operational role will be fully compatible with the military dispositions necessary to ensure the collective defence of all Allies.

In view of the radically altered environment in which European security policy has to be formulated and implemented, a great effort is being made to include the Central and Eastern European States in a pan-European peace order. The Charter of Paris marked the opening of a new era in Europe, an era of confidence and cooperation. It was in this spirit that the WEU Council of Ministers proposed to the new democracies that a dialogue be initiated. Together with a representative of the Presidency, the WEU Secretary-General

has undertaken fact-finding missions to Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, as well as to the three Baltic states.

Furthermore, since July 1991, special information links have been established among the Embassies of the five Central and Eastern European States and the WEU Secretariat-General, as well as between the Governments of those States and the respective Embassies of the WEU Presidency. These official links have been underpinned by related activities of the WEU Institute for Security Studies in Paris which has organized a seminar attended by high-level civil servants competent for politico-military questions from the Foreign and Defence Ministries of the WEU member States and from the five Central and Eastern European States. A further seminar will shortly take place in Budapest.

At its meeting in Bonn on 18 November 1991, the WEU Ministerial Council resolved to invite the Foreign and Defence Ministers of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania and the three Baltic States to a special meeting with the members of the Council at the beginning of May. This will provide an opportunity to discuss appropriate measures for further cooperation.

WEU is thus taking up the pan-European challenge to create a lasting order of peace and, through its active role in strengthening and consolidating cooperation with the Central and Eastern European States, is making its own contribution to stability, security and peace on the European continent. WEU's activities in this respect, as well as those being directed towards the same end by the Atlantic Alliance and the European Community, are both complementary and mutually supportive. Thus, these activities are entirely consistent with the essential requirement of "interlocking institutions".

Now that WEU's role and place have been defined, a new political dynamism has emerged, one that will lead to a speedy implementation of the WEU Maastricht Declarations. We must succeed in harnessing this dynamism to the full, so that WEU, together with European Union, NATO and the CSCE, can effectively contribute to the emergence and consolidation of a durable European security architecture.

Horst Holthoff

Ambassador
Deputy Secretary-General
Western European Union