

**Strengthening EU-WEU Relations:
Needs, Options, and Prospects**

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ABSTRACT

From the end of the Second World War to the fall of 1989, the geopolitical map of Europe was well-ordered and clear. The continent was divided into two parts, the democratic West and the communist East. The term "Cold War" was used to describe the tense relations between these two camps, which for more than forty years, kept a close and wary eye on each other while building up their military arsenals. Thus, Europe became the most militarized zone in the world, bringing the fear of a global nuclear war as a potential consequence of escalated conflict between the two superpowers. Accordingly, many of the past steps taken to prevent war on the continent were born out of the existing geopolitical considerations.

However, the events of 1989 and beyond significantly changed the politics in Europe. The climate of an East-West ideological confrontation, military competition, and economic containment has now given way to the notions of democracy, market economy, multi-dimensional integration, cooperative security system, and multi-layered regional and sub-regional cooperation. With the end to the communist threat, the previous definitions of security no longer fit and new ones must be worked out. In a

short time, the European security agenda expanded conceptually to deal with the new circumstances. It reaches beyond the traditional military/strategic security concerns, to include the discussion of such new (and not so new) concerns as the resurgence of nationalism, the explosion of ethnic warfare, an increased flow of refugees, cross-border migration, a rise in organized international crime, increased drug trafficking, social unrest, economic disparity, and environmental degradation.¹ Today, scholars and policymakers must come to a fundamentally new understanding of the security scene on the European continent. This effort is captured in the phrase: *building a new European security architecture*. Indeed, there is an ongoing effort to define and establish some new security arrangements and institutions which would be both suitable and effective in addressing the current and the future European security concerns. This paper seeks to contribute to this ongoing effort by briefly examining the emerging European security scene, broadly outlining the main visions of the new security architecture, and most importantly, by examining the Western European Union and evaluating the Maastricht Treaty idea of strengthening the relations between the European Union (EU) and the Western European Union (WEU).

EMERGING EUROPE

The issue of European security is one of the major stumbling blocks to European integration. It is evident that the end of the Cold War has not been

¹For a comprehensive account of the new dimensions in European security, see Buzan, Barry *et al.*, *The European Security Order Recast: Scenarios for the Post-Cold War Era* (Pinter: London, 1990).

synonymous with unity, peace, and stability in Europe. The emerging picture of the post-Cold War Europe shows that the political, economic, and security scene of the continent is fragmented and tense, paradoxically more so than it was during most of the years of the Cold War.

First, there is the democratic, highly-developed, and prosperous Western Europe with its already fifteen-member-state European Union. In many ways, the citizens of these countries have already achieved functionalists' hopes and are "making frontier lines meaningless by overlaying them with a natural growth of common activities and common administrative agencies."² However, with a closer look, even this seemingly most stable part of Europe, offers its share of unrest over social and monetary policies. The recent strikes and protests in Germany, France, Spain, and Britain, as well as the repeated separatists calls in Belgium and Italy, and even the symbolic Danish challenge to the constitutionality of its government's signature on the Maastricht Treaty, all point to more troubles on the horizon.

Second, in another part of Europe, shared by Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia the situation is also complicated. The end of the Cold War paved the way for Central Europe's "return to Europe,"³ understood as the reentry of

²David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966), 63.

³"The Return to Europe" theme was first introduced by Vaclav Havel, then the Czechoslovak President, in a speech to the Polish Parliament, January

these countries into the mainstream of European politics and economics. Today, all of these four countries are making considerable progress on their path to democracy, a free market economy, and memberships in NATO and the EU, but not without an array of challenges bringing political and economic unrest. The environmental degradation, increasing illegal immigration, wide-spread corruption, rising crime, and the general collapse of civility are just some of the other more visible challenges to the security of the region.

Third, on the edge of Europe, there is Russia, which, as a former Polish Deputy Defense Minister observed, poses more challenge to itself than to others as it remains "a deeply traumatized country struggling with the triple legacies of empire, dictatorship, and economic lunacy in conditions hardly conducive to the growth of liberal democracy."⁴ Nationalism, organized crime, corruption, economic inefficiency, and the resurgence of anti-Western sentiments are all widely spread. Furthermore, the safety of many of the nuclear warheads stored around the country remains in question as the Russian military lacks the proper resources to store, maintain, and protect them.

Fourth, it could be argued, many former Soviet Republics, Belarus in

1990, Warsaw.

⁴Radek Sikorski, "The New Shape of Europe," *National Review*, 27 December 1993, 27.

particular, are "halfway between a suzerain state system and an independent system."⁵ Their future, if not survival, remains to be seen. Then, in the lands of the former Yugoslavia the self-destructing ethnic conflict continues, despite several peace initiatives, making this part of Europe highly unstable. Finally, in South-Eastern Europe, many states, are proceeding "more tentatively in introducing market transition and privatization programs" and still remain "constrained by their bureaucratic apparatuses and by serious social and political instability."⁶ These states seem to have great economic difficulties in keeping up with the harsh demands of the market. For instance, Albania has already experienced a breakdown of law and order, and Bulgaria remains threatened by political and economic crisis.

In sum, the "new world order," however defined, has not made as significant strides in Europe as it was hoped for at the beginning of this decade. However, on the whole no state in Europe wishes to make trouble, and what trouble occurs is limited in scope and largely caused by domestic, ethnic, environmental, economic, and social factors rather than by marching armies. Even the Central European *angst* and calls for a "security umbrella" may very well be less a response to a real threat than a way to accelerate their acceptance into the West. (It might also turn out that the sympathetic American response is guided by an equally strong *angst* to preserve their military

⁵Hugh Miall, *Shaping a New European Order*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994), 74.

⁶Janusz Bugajski, *Nations in Turmoil: Conflict and Cooperation in Eastern Europe* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 7.

presence in Europe and establish new markets.) In any case, a united, prosperous, and peaceful Europe is some distance away. As one author has pointed out, "the fall of the Iron Curtain removed an artificial barrier between countries of Europe, but it will take many years to remove the legacy of differences."⁷ However, this process can be accelerated if an appropriate *security architecture* is established, that is one which will be the most effective in addressing the existing security concerns. In 1992, Josef Joffe observed that

NATO has the means, but is losing its mission. The EC/WEU and the CSCE have a mission but no means. It would be tempting to conclude that purpose will sooner find power than power can find a new role. And so, the European Community, a vibrant and growing institution, might conceivably blow life into the dormant WEU and then proceed to organize security *a la europeene*.⁸

Five years later, it could be said that NATO has found its mission, OSCE is searching for a consensus on its mission, and the EU/WEU "dream team" faces the mission impossible.

VISIONS OF THE NEW EUROPEAN SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

There are those who can not envision a European security model that can stand without the United States. They place faith in the *collective security* and the Cold War proven institutions, especially NATO, and would like to maintain the old ways of

⁷Richard Rose, *What is Europe?* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1996), 17.

⁸Josef Joffe. "Collective Security and the Future of Europe: Failed Dreams and Dead Ends" in Steven L. Spiegel and David J. Pervin, eds., *At Issue: Politics in the World Arena* (St.Martin's Press: New York, 1994), 67.

managing security affairs on the continent. Their arguments are often along the thought expressed by U.S. General John R. Galvin who wrote that "NATO's main advantage is that it is a political-military alliance. Therefore, NATO can act, as was evident in the Gulf War that followed the end of the Cold War."⁹ There is, however, an ongoing debate within NATO itself regarding the best way to establish the new goals and how to fine tune the policies of the organization. The picture which seems to emerge resembles the 1993 recommendation by Zbigniew Brzezinski.

The best course would be a far reaching NATO proposal for a formal treaty with Russia and a simultaneous initiative...with the three or four Central European states. The treaty would reassure Russia that NATO is a partner, not a potential adversary; the initiative would begin the long process of enlarging NATO.¹⁰

Politicians who are not comfortable with the significant NATO and U.S. involvement in European security affairs, prefer the 1992 Franco-German idea of the "Eurocorps"¹¹ as a step towards an effective all-European, multi-national security force "that was to give substance to the CFSP"¹² (Common Foreign and Security Policy) and as a possible step towards making the WEU the military instrument of the European

⁹John R. Galvin, "Structures for Security in Europe" in Kenneth W. Thompson, ed., *NATO and the Changing World Order: An Appraisal by Scholars and Policymakers*, (University Press of America: Lanham, Maryland, 1996), 45.

¹⁰Zbigniew Brzezinski. "A Bigger-and Safer-Europe" *The New York Times*, December 1, 1993, p. A23.

¹¹Eurocorps have replaced an experimental Franco-German brigade set up in the late eighties.

¹²John McCormick, *The European Union* (Westview Press: Boulder, Colorado, 1996), 285.

Union. Although "Germany insists that Eurocorps would complement NATO...the United States suspect that France's objective is to displace the U.S. dominance of NATO."¹³ The formation of the "Weimar Triangle," a military cooperation between France, Germany, and Poland, clearly points to the fact that the Franco-German military nucleus is interested in attracting new European allies.¹⁴ It also shows that the "Eurocorps" idea is also appealing to those outside the EU, even though the Polish goal might be just to get closer to membership in NATO. In any case, the "Franco-German military cooperation [is] a necessary thought not a sufficient condition for a stable and enduring Western European security architecture."¹⁵

Another, widely-shared vision of European security is rooted in the concept of pan-European *cooperative security* as manifested by the widely inclusive and 55 countries-strong Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). When the Berlin Wall collapsed, a great many hopes were attached to this institution whose membership stretches from Vancouver to Vladivostok and enables its members to hold each other accountable for internal and external policies related not only to military/security issues but also to human rights, democratization, free elections, preventive diplomacy, economic warfare, etc. Until the mid-1992, CSCE, (as this

¹³McCormick, p. 285.

¹⁴A significant military cooperation agreement between France, Germany, and Poland was signed by the defense ministers of "Weimar Triangle" countries in Warsaw on March 31, 1997.

¹⁵David Haglund, "Who's Afraid of Franco-German Military Cooperation?", *European Security*, Vol.2, No.4, (Winter 1993), p.628.

organization was known until late 1994) was regarded as a serious contender to NATO as the principal security institution in Europe. The strength of the organization lies in its comprehensive view of security, its weakness lies in the difficulty in achieving the required consensus when it comes to decision-making and the ability to execute its decisions. Thus, in the midst of the Balkan crisis the organization proved to be ineffective and "it began to seem as though the CSCE would serve little purpose, except for being the repository of Europe's conscience."¹⁶

Another important component of the new European security architecture is based on the Maastricht Treaty idea of revitalizing the WEU and establishing strong relations between the EU and the WEU. In fact, the Maastricht Treaty calls for concrete steps in making the WEU the defense arm of the EU. Article J.4 proclaims that the WEU is an integral part of the Union, and that it should "elaborate and implement decisions and actions" of the Union that are of a defense character, and that the WEU will be "developed as the defense component of the European Union and as the means to strengthen the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance." This decision is the logical progression of European integration: if economics and foreign policy affairs are integrated, then military affairs must follow. The challenge lies in linking the workings of the power politics-inspired military institution with the functionalist-inspired economic and political union.

¹⁶Stephen Iwan Griffiths, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict: Threats to European Security* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1993), 92.

WEU/EU

The Western European Union, although in existence under that name since the May 6, 1955,¹⁷ has its origins in the 1948 Brussels Treaty. Despite its approaching fiftieth anniversary, the WEU remains a rather little-known and undervalued European security organization. This is because the WEU, whose intended purpose was to shape a coherent pan-European approach to defense and security issues, never yet fully unfolded its wings.

Different reasons are given for this state of affairs. First, it is said, the WEU was "rendered anachronistic as NATO was set up in 1949 and admitted West Germany to membership in 1955."¹⁸ Then, "as other European institutions matured, the WEU shed many of its original goals. In June 1960, its social and cultural activities, for example, were transferred to the Council of Europe, and in 1970, the WEU's Council suspended consideration of Europe's economic reconstruction."¹⁹ In reality, the WEU was overshadowed by its rich and more dynamic cousin, NATO, and the WEU is said to have become "a place where you found jobs for retired Italian admirals."²⁰

¹⁷A date on which the "Treaty of economic, social and cultural collaboration and collective self-defense," signed on October 23, 1954 in Paris, came into force.

¹⁸Elizabeth Pond, "Europe Seems to Lose Interest in its Newly Revived Security Forum," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 23, 1985.

¹⁹Robert Haslach, "The Western European Union," *Europe Magazine* January/February 1991, 19.

²⁰McCormick, p. 283.

The first visible effort to revitalize the organization was taken in October 1984, at the WEU's Foreign and Defense Ministers meeting in Rome. The meeting produced a Rome Declaration that was to mark the beginnings of a new, active era, but in reality the organization became only half-awaken. The 1984 revitalization attempt was driven partly by the bipolarization of the Western Alliance, the growing sense of a European security identity (which was brought about in light of President Reagan's SDI initiative), and partly by the emerging Franco-German military initiative which, it is believed, already then envisaged possible closer relations between the WEU and the EC.

Not until the Gulf War did the WEU manage to succeed in actually playing a specific, tangible role in the European defense and security scene by coordinating NATO's naval operations in the Gulf. Then again, in June 1993, in the midst of the Bosnian crisis, the WEU took a similar role in the Adriatic Sea under the code name "Operation Sharp Guard." This was a successful implementation of the June 1992 Petersberg Declaration which asked the member states to make their military units available for tasks conducted under the authority of WEU. Realizing the importance of the Central and Eastern European countries in the post-Cold War Europe, the May 1994 Kirchberg declaration committed the WEU to "anchoring them in the European political and security structures and to stabilizing the situation in Central and Eastern

Europe."²¹ In 1996, as the beginning of the 1996 IGC was approaching, NATO and the WEU conducted talks on closer military cooperation and on giving the European security and defense identity a permanent and visible place within the NATO structures (the WEU as the European pillar of the NATO concept).

Finally, in Paris, in May 1997, the WEU reached an agreement with NATO regarding the use of the alliance's infrastructure by the WEU. The meeting of the defense ministers of the organization, which was chaired by France, the WEU's current president, disappointed "French ambitions to merge the organization with the European Union [for which France pushes] in the intergovernmental conference (IGC) negotiations in Brussels."²² However, since the issue is still on the IGC agenda, the very near future could bring some new developments in this area. Especially that the new British government of Tony Blair is expected to soften its opposition to the idea of merging the two organizations together. Then again, with so much attention focused on the future European monetary union, the serious discussion of the proposed union of the EU and the WEU might be not on the top of the agenda.

Today, nearly fifty years after it was conceived, the WEU has ten full members, five observers, three associate members, and ten associate partners.

²¹Assembly of Western European Union, Information Report, March 1995.

²²*The Financial Times*, May 13, 1997, p. 3.

WEU Membership as of May 1977

<u>Full members</u>	<u>Observers</u>	<u>Associates</u>	<u>Partners</u>
Belgium	Denmark	Iceland	Bulgaria
France	Ireland	Norway	Czech Rep.
Luxembourg	Austria	Turkey	Estonia
Netherlands	Finland		Hungary
United Kingdom	Sweden		Latvia
Germany			Lithuania
Italy			Poland
Portugal			Romania
Spain			Slovakia
Greece			Slovenia

NOTE: The full members are both members of the EU and NATO and have the right of decision. Observers are, with the exception of Denmark, also members of the EU, but not of NATO. Their rights are limited but include the participation in all meetings and policy proposals. The three Associate Members are members of NATO, but not of the European Union. These group plays a full part in the activities of WEU, but their input might be restricted under special circumstances. Finally, the Associate Partners, the East and Central European countries which have concluded association agreements with the EU.

Twenty-eight countries, that is 72% of the European states, belong, in one form or another, to the WEU family.²³ This fact prompts some important questions. If almost three fourths of Europe, including the continent's political and military heavyweights such as Germany, Britain, and France, are WEU members, then why does the organization remain so inactive and rather insignificant? The most important reason for the WEU's meager track record on the European security scene is the fact

²³The number of countries in Europe is calculated as 39.

that for over forty years, the WEU was regarded as the "second-best" institution of the west-European security scene and, thus, its potential was never developed or even explored. The WEU was maintained with the "just in case" thought in mind. This only speaks to the fact of how uncertain were the politics of Cold War Europe.

It is difficult to argue against the thought that during the Cold war, the NATO alliance, with its American muscle, was better-suited to guard Europe and stand against the Soviet threat. Indeed, NATO's collective security was appropriate when there was a threat of "clear and present danger" from the Warsaw Pact. However, it could be argued that today with the strong Council of Europe, prosperous EU, active OSCE, and post-communist Russia and Eastern Europe entering the path to democracy and market economy, the new, largely democratic Europe is not likely to need NATO's muscle anytime soon. Furthermore, the nature of the existing security threats in Europe, which shifted from strictly geopolitical dimensions to other areas, requires different solutions than NATO seems to be able to offer.

Here, the WEU could come nicely into place. Its lack of Cold War baggage might actually today work in its favor. It will allow the WEU to reenter the post-Cold War European security arena without the controversy which accompanied NATO's, another Cold War creation, return to the political spotlight. Next, strengthening the WEU and the EU relations would favor of both organizations. It will fortify the EU's overall defense and security posture and benefit its common foreign and defense

policy. Especially, that so far, as the former Belgian foreign minister Mark Eysens, pointed out, the image of the European Community is that of "an economic giant, a political pygmy, and a military larva."²⁴ At the same time, the WEU would benefit from the EU's experience in the economic, environmental, social-conflict, and political aspects of security. This is very important, since as it was pointed out earlier in this paper, so many current European security threats are springing out of these areas.

Another compelling reason for support to the WEU and the EU close cooperation and even its merger includes the scenario when security of the EU nations is challenged by military factors. In this scenario, the EU/WEU might be pressed to take some decisive actions in the part of Europe which is "out of the area"²⁵ for itself and for NATO. In this situation, its strong link to the WEU, which can operate outside of its member states (thus "out of the area") might be an enormous asset.²⁶ Furthermore, should at some point in the future, NATO become less responsive to the specific security needs of Europe, a strong WEU/EU relationship could spare the EU from creating a new, costly, and time consuming security organization. In other terms, an option to develop their own defense policies independent of the United states

²⁴Quoted in Kenneth Christie, *Problems in European Politics* (Nelson-Hall Publishers: Chicago, 1995), 223.

²⁵The term "out of the area" usually refers to the territories beyond NATO's mandate. There is more chance that the security of Europe might be threatened by factors originating in those areas than by factors born inside the democratic EU and NATO area.

²⁶With the planned expansion of NATO, this advantage might be diminishing.

will be that much easier to achieve. In the meantime, a close EU/WEU relationship can provide a useful means of building closer relations between the EU and its European neighbors who are already members of the WEU, namely Norway, Iceland, Turkey, and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

It is becoming clear that the Maastricht-ordered WEU's "back to the future" move will not be easy. First of all, as the words of one European scholar prove, the WEU's potential role in bringing about security and peace on the continent is being not taken as seriously as the founders of the Maastricht Treaty expected. He writes,

As regards the WEU, it did not exist in practice in the past and does not exist yet either. However, it may follow the others, becoming another *ersatz*²⁷ organization in order to fulfill the illusions and hopes of some functionalist scholars and politicians.²⁸

Second, the success in bringing the two organizations together depends on the strength of the lingering notion of a European security identity, which, in the absence of a direct threat from the outside world, seems to be not all that strong today. However, when the concept of European security becomes effectively redefined from strictly military considerations to include economic, political, social, and ecological dimensions, it will become clear that the WEU/EU institution is a new European security architecture structure suited to work towards a united, prosperous, and

²⁷Valki refers here to the concept of *ersatz* institutions (substitutes).

²⁸Laszlo Valki, "A Future Security Architecture for Europe?", *European Security*, Vol.2, No. 4, (Winter 1993), 508.

peaceful Europe.

It could be argued that without being strongly linked to the EU, the WEU is in grave danger of remaining a dormant organization, if not withering away completely. After all in the world of downsizing, it will be difficult to justify maintaining an aspiring duplicate of NATO. At the same time, the EU needs the WEU to prop up its international posture and maintain the drive for multifaced European integration. Of course, the evolution of the WEU and the EU are complex processes. The degree of their success in making Europe safe for all of its citizens and making Europe safe for the world depends on a number of internal and external factors, such as the status of the monetary union, the state of the world trade, NATO's new *raison d'etre*, developments in Russia, American influence in Europe, and so on. In fact, there are so many uncertainties, that it is even understandable to wonder if, despite the EU/WEU plan, has the post-Cold War opportunity to create an Europe-wide nuclear-free zone of peace, political stability, economic justice, and prosperity already been lost?