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A Regional Perspective on European Defense

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NATO, the European Union (EU) (through the Western European Union), and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) had been the principal institutional players in European security until the United Nations recently made its presence felt in such matters. Italy in particular, based on a careful reading of Article 11 of its Constitution, delegated the safeguarding of its own interests to international organizations for nearly half a century.

Until ten years ago NATO had a monopoly on providing security in Europe. But the limits of the Washington Treaty became evident in the early 1980s when the first Gulf crisis--the war between Iran and Iraq--dramatically underscored for Europeans the potential reach of events beyond Europe's borders and beyond the Mediterranean. Although such events may occur outside the geographical scope of the NATO treaty, they can--and have--put the interests of NATO members at stake.

To offset NATO's reluctance to become involved in "out of area" matters, it was quite natural after the dissolution of the Soviet Union for the EU to look to the Western European Union (WEU) as the organization most capable of providing the security framework to safeguard the interests of its member countries. The catchphrase at the time was "to revitalize the WEU." Security considerations in the climate of East-West confrontation had for a long time required the diversion of resources to NATO. Without that confrontation, entrusting European defense to the WEU appeared to some to be more a matter of providing a new structure rather than adjusting the old one. The initiative for the Franco-German brigade, now grown to a corps-sized organization involving the forces of five nations (France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Spain), is one consequence of the search for an alternative to NATO.

Another contributor to European security has been the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The CSCE, established in 1972 as a proposal of the former Warsaw Pact countries, was to set the final seal on the map of Europe as drawn at Yalta. As the transformation of Europe was taking place, the CSCE itself underwent a change in mission. The three principal decisions of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act set in train initiatives that eventually encouraged and accelerated the pace of change in Europe. The human rights initiative undoubtedly helped establish the new democracies in Europe. The economic initiative served to foster development and trade and contributed to recent events related to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The security initiative paved the way--through the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty and the process for confidence- and security-building measures (CSBM)--for the remarkable changes that led to the Warsaw Pact's demise and the end of the Cold War. Thus, the genesis and outcomes of these processes were fundamentally different from the intentions of those who had established the CSCE.

With the 1990-91 Gulf War, the United Nations has sought to assume the role of guarantor of world security. Until that time, problems susceptible to being solved were dealt with through Moscow-Washington channels, which left to the UN the role of peacekeeping under Chapter VI of the Charter. With the emergence of the United States as the only surviving superpower, consensus and legitimacy for US initiatives has been sought in the only forum chartered to grant them: the UN.

Against this backdrop of intertwining initiatives and changes, the maelstrom of upheavals in the East, and the recurring and violent out-of-area crises which draw ever nearer to the heart of Europe, we need to examine the machinery actually at our disposal to meet all these challenges. National roles should be assessed in light of each international organization's ability to protect common interests.

NATO and Other International Organizations

NATO has at times appeared to be constrained by the boundaries set by the Washington Treaty, despite its declared

willingness to support peacekeeping operations in the framework of the CSCE and the UN. Recent events have demonstrated that the UN resolutions against Serbia would not have been enforced were it not for NATO. The NATO Alliance is a uniquely credible institution which can rely on a functioning integrated command and control system to carry out peace-enforcing operations without fielding ground troops--at least for the time being.

NATO was the only reliable alternative when it came to enforcing UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 836, which provided the basis for NATO's ultimatum to Serbia. Thanks to its sufficiently broad international membership, NATO alone conveys the perception that the operation in Bosnia is truly multinational, aimed only at making peace.

The WEU and the CSCE, by contrast, have no geographical constraints, but they lack effectiveness as well as the resources and structures to carry out any plan they or others might devise. The CSCE in particular has a weak structure compared to its broad membership base. For the present at least, the CSCE has less utility than the WEU for enforcing the will of its members. This is demonstrated by Europe's vacillation in crises such as the one in Yugoslavia, which was born, nurtured, and matured before the eyes of a disbelieving Europe.

The UN, unique among supranational organizations, can develop the broad consensus needed to deal with many regional issues. But despite the advantages of seeking UN initiatives to settle such issues, the absence of a functioning UN military structure has proven to be a crippling liability. The UN must therefore rely on the countries or organizations that are able and willing to support it. One result of this situation is a chronic distortion in its decisionmaking procedures. Without an effective military staff group, the Secretary General or his appointed representative on the scene issues instructions directly to the force commander, a procedure being followed in the former Yugoslavia. It was also the preferred means of doing business in Somalia and in Mozambique. This procedure can be effective in purely humanitarian operations (distribution of food, medicines, and other goods to a civilian population, for example), but it is ineffective if events dictate a transition to operations that could require the use of force. When the shift from Chapter VI to Chapter VII operations occurs, neither the Secretary General nor his personal representative on the scene is in a position to translate political guidelines into orders to the force commander; those orders must take into account the precise terms and conditions established when each nation agreed to provide forces for a UN operation.

Another development is that UN-flagged NATO operations in Europe immediately involve Russia, as in Bosnia. The same could happen in the so-called "gray belt," the former Warsaw Pact area. If taken lightly, this aspect of UN operations risks adding new destabilizing elements in a Europe which already has its fill of challenges to stability. One example will suffice: the UN/NATO ultimatum to Serbia entailed the acceptance of 400 Russian paratroopers on Bosnian soil under the UN banner. So Russia, a country which has traditional and cultural links to the Serbs, and which has frequently brought pressure to bear on the Balkans, now has a military presence there. But more than that, its presence in the region during a period of domestic instability could aggravate the underlying tensions that precipitated the intervention.

A Common Goal

Europe now needs to unite in employing existing international organizations.

To develop a strong sense of common purpose, and to plan and carry out joint and combined operations, the first idea that comes naturally to mind is the establishment of links among the UN, NATO, the CSCE, and the WEU. This would entail an attempt to pool their staff operations, resources, experiences, and goals in order to converge on a statement of purpose and a set of objectives that could be supported by all these organizations. Many Europeans are well aware of the great differences existing among the organizations--such as in the procedures to achieve consensus on political decisions, or in the often disparate contributions each organization requires of its members. Realistically, however, we cannot expect any of the four organizations to adopt the decisions, projects, or even the statement of principles of the others. The reasons are manifold; the most important in this case may be that over the past two years the map of Europe has been redrawn more than once, and the latest edition may not be the last.

NATO has certainly been the quickest to respond to these changes in the makeup of Europe. It has embarked on a fundamental review of its strategy and its command and force structures. One result has been the creation of the ACE Rapid Reaction Corps, which features a strong European participation and is commanded by the UK. With regard to

the "Partnership for Peace," it is an undertaking of wide scope, whose intent is to accommodate the needs of many countries in Eastern and Central Europe. Yet NATO retains its sense of purpose and its commitment to common defense, in contrast to suggestions to the contrary in the aftermath of the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

The swift and necessary reshaping of NATO, however, did not take place in concert with the other European security organizations; NATO already enjoyed a solid structure at the end of 1990 when its review process began, while the WEU and the CSCE were still in search of their separate identities and common perspectives on defense.

The reshaping of NATO has not been easy. While the transformation of NATO was in process (and it has still to be completed in many respects), the NATO countries in northern and central Europe were reluctant to shift their attention, and the NATO focus as well, to the south. They were naturally inclined to adhere to previously held concepts that ascribed to some countries, such as Germany, far greater influence than other countries in the NATO decisionmaking structure, even in regard to the Southern Region. It is not that the importance of those northern and central states has diminished; rather, the relative significance of other countries in the defense debates has increased.

When the focus of crisis shifted from Eastern Europe to the Balkans, Italy, from its position astride the Mediterranean (which it divides and controls), became the base for NATO operations in and around Bosnia--air, naval, and even land if circumstances should dictate. But so long as the greatest risks to European security emanate from the east, the commitment of NATO's southern countries, Italy included, is required to prevent a period of vulnerability and uncertainty about regional security.

The WEU, feeling that new responsibilities were demanded of it and seeking to leave the sideline to which it had been relegated during the Cold War, has tried to develop a more prominent role in European security matters. Under WEU auspices, France and Germany have sought leverage through the Franco-German Corps ("Eurocorps," as Paris and Bonn like to call it). As originally conceived, this unit was to involve forces and missions which were not compatible with those of NATO. Subsequently Paris and Bonn clarified their position, at least in part, by agreeing that this formation would fall under the operational command of the SACEUR when engaged in NATO missions.

The establishment of the Eurocorps had the merit of highlighting, at a time when debate within the international organizations was at a standstill, that while multilateral diplomacy may be preferred when guided by strong and proven leadership (as in NATO), sound decisions could nonetheless be made through bilateral initiatives. One benefit of bilateral negotiations is that they often can work as a catalyst and an accelerator for decisions to be made within the major multinational organizations.

It would seem that prospects for any "multinational" initiative after the 1990 London NATO Summit Declaration have faded as officials try to piece together military formations suitable to the organizations vying for primacy in European security matters. NATO is on the right track to succeed in this enterprise, although considerable effort remains before NATO can declare success. There are reasonable doubts that other European organizations, in which regional interests are paramount, can ever succeed to the degree that NATO has. Such interests, particularly those related to out-of-area matters, which require less effort to develop consensus among neighboring nations, obviously prevail over more general interests. So it is that the French and the Germans have set themselves common goals in Central Europe, with normally skeptical British and Dutch support. To the south, an agreement is imminent among Italy, France, and Spain, whose common interests have strengthened with time.

Analysis of NATO-WEU coordination and the activities of the WEU military planning cell demonstrates the failure of multilateral diplomacy. There is still no institutionalized forum for NATO-WEU political coordination. The planning cell remains what it is, nothing more than a "cell," without an integrated military command or even an effective staff counterpart to NATO's International Staff. Notwithstanding the initial enthusiasm inspired by this initiative, there are now doubts about its effectiveness.

Awareness of the difficulties inherent in multilateral diplomacy may have altered the NATO objective of expansion to the former Warsaw Pact countries. If pressures to do so--mostly from the Germans--had prevailed, it would be extremely difficult today to achieve a consensus within NATO. This outcome highlights the obstacles that the CSCE, with its much broader representation, will face if it does not succeed in finding appropriate objectives and support for

its initiatives.

After the "Paris Charter for a New Europe" was signed in 1990, the CSCE began a process of institutionalizing its programs. One step was to set up a Council of Ministers, along the lines of NATO, with permanent representatives and supporting staffs. Once that process concludes, the CSCE will have a capability for improved dialogue with the other European institutions, provided that its decisionmaking machinery is compatible with theirs. As a matter of principle, dialogue is possible only among institutions which make decisions on the same subjects in comparable periods with compatible organizational structures. European nations have had years of experience in aligning their individual national security processes to NATO's way of doing business. It is unlikely that they will try to accommodate the tempos of two more multinational groups as well.

What Should We Do?

If Europe is to assume responsibilities in the defense field, we must have a clear picture of the political goals we intend to set for ourselves.

First, Europe can operate as a "sub-level" of NATO because emerging crises, whether out-of-area or in regions contiguous to NATO nations, require timely, gradual, and credible responses. In Bosnia--and maybe also in Croatia and Slovenia--it would have been better to intervene in the early stages of the fighting under the NATO banner, but on a European scale based on political decisions shared with the United States. By doing so, the involvement of Russia probably could have been avoided. The questions for similar future challenges become: "by which means?" and "under whose leadership?" For example, if we postulate a European defense system, the issue of its leadership cannot continue to be linked to the provision of US resources as a *conditio sine qua non*. On the other hand, either the leadership issue is resolved because the European countries are willing to find a European identity or we will let crises worsen, as in the Bosnian case, by increasing the number of interacting agents (Russia enters the scene) without the assurance that the crisis can be resolved. Such ad hoc policymaking creates a high potential for unintended consequences far more significant for Europe than the outcome of the crisis itself.

Second, we are building a united Europe on the basis of equality. So, while shared responsibilities and the allocation of certain roles and functions has become easier since the Cold War, equality could prove to be a disadvantage in matters affecting security. The military organization required for an effective partnership requires a mission, forces to perform that mission, and strong leadership to guide those forces. Leadership in security matters in the new Europe is a particularly complex issue, especially for Europeans long accustomed to having the United States in that role, and especially since the configuration of a military decisionmaking structure immediately conveys the idea of each country's political weight. It is clear that if we want equality within the European security structure, leadership within that structure will have to be clearly defined and continuously exercised.

It would be unrealistic to think that if economic leadership exists within a coalition, it does not lead to political and eventually military leadership. And the line separating leadership in all areas and regional supremacy is almost too narrow to define. Hence the process of developing a European defense system introduces the possibility of leadership capable of bypassing the political agreements that underpin the defense system itself. Conversely, we cannot renounce the concept of a European defense policy. These circumstances create a fundamental dilemma for the WEU and CSCE in defense matters.

Third, a clear and established political division of defense roles is necessary. This division must remain linked to geographical areas and their associated risks. In this sense, the division of Europe into Northern Europe, Central Europe, and Southern Europe is still valid.

In the north, Great Britain has a natural function to control and protect the polar and North Atlantic routes, the straits and the coasts of mainland Europe. In the center, Germany, the pivot between northern and southern Europe, helps to contain instabilities originating in the east and has much to contribute to controlling the conditions that create instability there. In the south, Italy, with its northern frontiers in the heart of the European subcontinent and its foot in the middle of the Mediterranean, retains its undiminished importance as an outpost and a link with the most unstable areas of the continent. Each of these three countries plays a role which cannot and must not be avoided. Were one of them to fail, one of the other two would have to assume the responsibility for safeguarding a second area or, worse, the

remaining two might become involved in a struggle over that responsibility.

Disruption of this natural evolution to sub-regional responsibilities could lead to an imbalance which could in turn rekindle rivalries among the north, center, and south of Europe, with unimaginable consequences. Therefore, if a single operational military command is necessary, it is also necessary to break it down into interdependent sub-regional headquarters. This division will in turn produce the appropriate command structure for forces based on the geographical location of an emerging crisis--north, south, or center.

Fourth, of perhaps equal importance, the recent trend toward interventions at the request of troubled states or on behalf of the populations of so-called "failed states" poses a real challenge to NATO and to the organizations that seek to complement NATO or replace it. The unique characteristics of out-of-area operations, a fringe issue during much of the Cold War, must now be dealt with effectively. Our inability to meet this challenge successfully as the former Yugoslavia was dissolving cannot dissuade us from applying the lessons of that situation in a creative and constructive fashion. Establishment of the Eurocorps is one form of response; unfettered by the constraints in the NATO Charter, this organization has the potential to go a long way to providing the military means of responding to out-of-area issues. Political will and leadership will determine its effectiveness in the next such crisis.

All these elements will have to be assimilated and harmonized in a broad forum, one in which differences can be ironed out fairly and expeditiously. This means coordination within and among NATO, WEU in the broader UN context, and the CSCE. Effective coordination will promote stability and will foster confidence that future interventions will serve common interests rather than the individual interests of participating countries.

These aspects of the emerging political-military structure of Europe can be developed only by collective political agreements. In this sense, technical military agreements, either bilateral or multilateral, while perhaps necessary, are clearly not sufficient to shape a European response to future challenges. Indeed, they can produce the opposite effect if they are interpreted as a sign of the political absence of one or more parties essential to the agreement. Instead, it is political agreements that reflect and safeguard the role of each individual country. Therefore, the military chain of command must at all times be subordinate to a joint military body, with that body in turn subordinate to a joint political body--not only within NATO but also within the UN, WEU, and other institutions. This joint political body would be the forum for political and political-military decisions and for coordination, first at the political, then at military level, with other European organizations. Only this organizational concept will provide reasonable assurance that national identity and interests will be reflected in international commitments. Nothing less will enable Europe to face the issues of the next century, the shapes of which can already be seen in outline, if not in detail.

Conclusion

Future European defense policy should be based on the following broad principles:

- compatibility among all organizations committed to security, in order to reinforce strengths and compensate for weaknesses among participating nations
- best use of the resources already earmarked by coordinating the activities of existing structures, thereby avoiding further dilution of European responses to matters of mutual concern
- a commitment to parity among partners, particularly in regard to national positions on matters both known and unpredictable

It is evident that if one of the three principles is ignored or abandoned the other two alone will not produce a balanced European defense policy. The opposite result--in the form of a bitter debate--is more likely to follow the failure of one of the three. Such an outcome would create anxiety about the principle of mutual support in defense matters and would inevitably contaminate political, economic, and social discussions as well.

The UN, NATO, WEU, and CSCE decisionmaking bodies should have a capability for timely dialogue at appropriate decisionmaking levels, especially when they deal with peace management, crisis prevention, and crisis management. To be successful the dialogue must be conducted by nations on equal footing. These mechanisms cannot be a matter of improvisation: it is the habit of coordination, first at the political and then at the military level, that will create a sound and sure basis for responding to crises. Once these mechanisms have been created, it will be easier to put in place the

machinery for the management of conflicts. Finally, only when this political framework has become clear will we have an accurate picture of the military structure that can ensure and strengthen, rather than threaten and weaken, stability in Europe.

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Reviewed 5 May 1997. Please send comments or corrections to carl_Parameters@conus.army.mil.