***THE EU'S FUTURE ROLE IN DEFENSE: ISSUES FOR THE BALTIC REGION***

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The search for a working definition of "European defense" is now more than half a century old. The first post-war attempt to find a formula was reflected in the first Treaty of Brussels signed by five West European Allies in March 1948, which envisaged combining a mutually guaranteed joint defense with measures of political, economic, social, and cultural integration. Within a few years, however, the ideas of collective defense and of European integration had been picked up to be pursued more intensively in the framework of two different organizations - NATO and the precursor of the EU - with different European memberships. The French initiative for a European Defense Community based on the pooling and joint management of resources, implying a true "European army", was rejected in 1954 by the National Assembly of France itself. Thus, the lines of conflict and contradiction, which would continue to block real progress on the issue for several more decades, were drawn: the clash of global and continental, Atlantic and purely European perspectives; the tension between integrated solutions and the instinct to regard defense as the innermost stronghold of national sovereignty. And throughout much of that period, of course, the European nations of Central and Eastern Europe had no free say in the matter at all.

The debate on European defense, notably in the context of a "European pillar" for NATO, started reviving from the middle of the 1980's but it was the ending of the Cold War that brought more decisive change. The end of blocs and easing of the existential threat to Europe allowed more attention to be focused on the non-Article 5 challenges of crisis management, in which it was easier to imagine Europeans playing an independent role. The EU's non-military strengths as an influence for security became more obvious, not just in relation to "hot crises" where EU political leadership and money could help to rebuild, but also through the stabilizing influence the Union exerted over its candidate countries in the context of enlargement. It was against this background that interest started growing again in finding ways to bridge the 50-year-old NATO-EU divide; and the fact that Europe's (re)new(ed) democracies approached both these Western institutions as part of one and the same integration strategy perhaps offered a healthy lesson to Westerners who had been taking an over-partisan, over-theological line in their attachment to one or the other.

The 1990's thus became a decade of experimentation in this, as in so many fields of European security; and the Brussels Treaty-based Western European Union (WEU) turned out to be an important laboratory. From 1992 onwards, WEU chose to dedicate itself to the so-called 'Petersberg tasks' - military missions for humanitarian, peace-keeping, and other crisis management-related purposes - and focused on building up the decision-making machinery and expertise required to design, launch, and supervise such operations under purely European leadership. This approach avoided any interference with NATO's role in collective defense, and did not prevent NATO itself from becoming a major player in new-style crisis management, especially at the "harder" end of the scale. But WEU went even further than this in trying to avoid duplication with the Alliance. It reached an agreement with NATO, set out in increasingly practical detail from 1996 onwards, that allowed NATO's own military commanders, structures, assets,

and capabilities to be borrowed for use under a European flag when required. There were, of course, also other options for setting up a European operation such as using the headquarters of multinational Euro-forces like the Eurocorps, or headquarters provided by a "lead nation" or an *ad hoc* coalition, but as the great bulk of these other headquarters were also available to NATO this did not prevent WEU and NATO planning procedures from being aligned very closely.

While WEU was developing in this way as a potential "European arm" of NATO, giving new meaning to the notion of building a European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) within the Alliance, it was also identified more and more clearly as the potential "defense arm" of the EU. The Treaty of Maastricht introduced the idea that WEU could be asked to carry out specific military tasks on the EU's behalf, normally as a way of complementing other measures (political, economic, humanitarian) which the EU would take from its own resources to pre-empt, to control, or to rebuild after a crisis. The Treaty of Amsterdam foresaw even closer and more direct EU control of the WEU instrument, allowing the EU to give "guidelines" for WEU's conduct for a European-mandated mission just as it could guide its own staffs and subordinate bodies. This concept was put to the test in 1998-1999 with the issuing of three EU mandates, two of which involved actual WEU deployments - a police training and advisory mission to Albania and a de-mining assistance mission to Croatia - still going on today.

The results of all these activities by the three now-interlinked organizations, NATO, EU, and WEU, were disappointing in the sense that no major European-led operation, involving deployment of conventional troops, was actually launched under institutional management in the 1990's. But some aspects did work well, notably the sharing of information and resources as well as the refining of consultation procedures along both the NATO/WEU and WEU/EU axes. This was possible in large part due to WEU's deliberate strategy of involving as many countries as possible in its activities, to ensure, as it were, that it would have friends in all the relevant camps. Not only did it invite the NATO countries not in the EU to join it as Associate Members, and the EU countries not in NATO to join it as Observers, but it also created in 1994 a status of "Associate Partner" for those Central European countries seeking membership both in the Union and NATO.

All three Baltic States at once took up this status, and the number of countries holding it currently stands at seven (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia). The Associate Partners sit in WEU's decision-making Council at least once a fortnight and take part in a wide range of subordinate bodies - plus parliamentary and research activities - to deal with subjects as diverse as WEU exercise policy, civil-military cooperation, trans-Atlantic dialogue, and WEU's relationships with Russia, Ukraine, and a group of seven Mediterranean partners. They have taken the opportunity to take part in WEU's Albanian and Croatian missions and participated fully in the first-ever NATO/WEU joint crisis management exercise, "CMX/CRISEX 2000", carried out in February 2000. The relationship with WEU has, understandably, been far less politically prominent for these nations and had far less material impact than the NATO or EU pre-accession process, but all of them seem to feel it has been a positive experience on balance. It has not only provided an extra influence upon and an extra forum for developing their own defense reforms, and indirectly reinforced their NATO and EU entry strategies (because of the positive image they have

been able to convey along WEU/NATO and WEU/EU channels), but has also made them a very visibly part of the "European family" in the particularly significant field of defense and security - a point whose symbolism was not lost, for instance, when the Baltic States appeared as part of the WEU "team" for WEU/Russia meetings.

Precisely because of these good experiences, however, there has been a keen edge to the partner nations' interest in the latest dramatic set of changes regarding European defense. As is well known, the impact of the Kosovo crisis has driven leading European nations since autumn 1998 to seek a new and stronger way of expressing Europe's unity in both the diplomatic and the military handling of non-Article 5 emergencies. At the Franco-British Summit of St. Malo and then in the EU's collective statements at the Portschach, Cologne, and Helsinki European Councils, a distinctive new formula has emerged according to which:

- the European Union will acquire a direct capability to carry out military crisis management missions within the range of the 'Petersberg tasks'. (It will not take over any obligations or functions of collective defense);
- it will prepare for this new role by setting up political-military structures within the existing second pillar of the Union, including a permanent Political and Security Committee, a Military Committee, a European Military Staff (these three have been launched on an interim basis already from March 2000), and a Satellite Center and Institute for Security Studies (to be taken over from WEU);
- the EU will aim to have all these arrangements ready by the end of 2000, at which time - if all goes well - WEU would be able to close down its own crisis management related activities;
- the EU will aim to maintain the same arrangement that WEU has enjoyed with NATO allowing the possible European borrowing of NATO assets and capabilities.

The finding of consensus on this formula among all the EU's Fifteen nations was itself a remarkable political achievement, and the speed of the actions taken to bring it into effect has also surprised many commentators. Not only has the EU made large strides, already by mid-2000, in preparing its new political-military mechanisms and defining their future tasks and operational philosophy; not only has it begun laying the foundations for the future partnership it will need with NATO; but it has taken major initiatives in two further areas where the WEU did not so obviously prepare its way. The first is the so-called 'Headline Goal' for defense capabilities, which reflects the European leaders' determination to strengthen their actual military instruments as well as the procedures for using them. As defined at Helsinki in December 1999, the EU wants to be in a position by the year 2003 to be able to muster a force of some 60,000 personnel for any "Petersberg" mission within sixty days and to maintain it for a year, with all the supporting elements (transport, command structures, C3I) needed to do so on a truly autonomous basis if necessary. Secondly, the EU has decided to carry out a similar analysis and set similarly tough targets for the non-military capacities it might want to deploy for crisis management purposes, thinking primarily of police operations but not excluding the range of other civilian skills that might be crucial for internal stabilization and control.

Where does all this leave the non-EU European States who have worked together so far on crisis management within the WEU framework? Since the early days of the EU defense initiative, both the non-EU European Allies and the Central European partners have made two things abundantly clear. First, they understand and generally share its motives and second, they want to (and believe that they have a right to) be fully involved in carrying it forward. They have been able to offer a number of arguments for this, not just limited to mentioning the clear precedents from the WEU but also including such political factors as the importance of the non-EU Allies' cooperation in ensuring good EU/NATO relations. The EU applicant status that all the Central Europeans have gives them an evident interest in the EU's future policies. On a short-term basis they have also pressed for maximum information and transparency on the EU's intentions, and the WEU has been playing an important part in ensuring this through joint EU/WEU and WEU/NATO meetings as well as in the WEU Council's own debates.

The EU for its part has developed its policies on this aspect with a speed which reflects its members' understanding of the seriousness of the issue. At Helsinki in particular, the European Council statement spelt out in some detail the two basic ways in which non-EU countries could be "involved":

(a) "upstream" of decisions, that is on a permanent basis in the preparation of EU plans and concepts and then in the early stages of addressing an individual crisis;

(b) "downstream" of decisions, i.e. by contributing forces or other material support to operations which the EU has decided to launch and for which it has declared itself open to participation by others. Non-EU countries contributing in this way will have practical access to the running of the operation through a "troop contributing nations" mechanism, in addition to whatever part they may play in detailed planning, command structures, and activities in the field.

In short, the only action which will definitely not be opened up to others is the formal legal decision to launch an operation, and the EU Member States are firmly believe that this has to be reserved to themselves for both political and practical reasons. (For example, if the EU succeeds in developing a truly "multi-functional" approach for dealing with crises, the decision on military action might be combined with other measures e.g. of a financial, economic, or immigration-related kind, and these will clearly be matters for the Fifteen alone.) On the other hand, while there may be some practical variations in the matters discussed with the six non-EU Allies and the full group of non-EU partners respectively, the EU has left itself the clear possibility of inviting all the interested States to help in all operations if it thinks the conditions are right. Finally, the EU also offered these States at Helsinki a further route for involvement in its new defense policies by saying that they could all volunteer force elements to be included in the "Headline Goal" and some have made the rapid decision to exploit this opening.

It remains to be seen during 2000 how these arrangements will develop in terms of practical detail, how well they will satisfy the various non-EU players involved, and how they will fall into place within the wider pattern of the EU's pre-accession and CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy) interactions with the nations of Central Europe. The States concerned are understandably interested in the small print of decision-making practices, hoping that these will give them a real chance of contributing to the EU's thinking and of ensuring that wider geographical interests are taken into account. They

are also calling for a chance to establish contact with the EU's own new structures already in the interim phase of their activity from Spring 2000, and many of them have made clear that they would welcome the chance to contribute to the building-up of the EU's non-military capabilities as well.

Regardless of how exactly these uncertainties are resolved, however, it is already clear that the EU's new ambitions have brought significant and lasting change to the environment in which the Central European nations must develop their security and integration strategies. In the rest of this paper I shall try to list some of the issues that might *prima facie* arise in this context for the North-East of Europe and the Baltic region, without trying to offer solutions and predictions which would at best be premature at this stage.

A first and rather obvious set of implications concerns the impact on the nature of the EU itself. It will not, as a result of these measures, become a collective defense organization. Nor has a clear route been mapped to achieve this result at any particular time in the future. However, any State that joins the EU from now on will be joining a defense <u>community</u> in a specific and concrete sense. It will be drawn into permanent and detailed cooperation in fields like force planning, military planning, development of military concepts and procedures, exercises, and perhaps coordinated training related to "Petersberg" operations, and its troops will stand side to side with European comrades in all specific operations which it decides to join. This seems bound to bring a deepening of EU solidarity and the emergence of something like a shared military culture, at least across all crisis-related fields. Furthermore, for those Central European democracies who have already joined NATO or who may join it before or around the same time as joining the EU, the new EU / NATO relationship will make them part of a "European pillar" within the trans-Atlantic alliance structure in a much clearer and more constructive sense than ever before. Those partners who are not yet in NATO can still gain the experience of dealing and working <u>with</u> NATO in a very intimate way through the EU / NATO channel, experience which they may be able to draw on to refine and reinforce their national efforts to complete the standards required for NATO entry. For countries who are not committed to seeking NATO membership, the EU's possibility of using NATO assets and capabilities under European control should give a chance to share many of the benefits of NATO's strength in the non-Article 5 context, while the <u>purely military</u> adaptations these nations would have to go through if they did after all decide to become Allies will be still further narrowed down.

Of course, some of these positive implications might be offset if the addition of non-Article 5 defense to the EU "acquis" turned into a further obstacle for NE. European applicants to overcome and reduced the chances of all of them entering the EU in a reasonable time. On the face of it, however, this ought not to happen precisely because of all the efforts these States have made already to grasp and respect European defense norms - not just material ones but those relating for example to openness, social justice and democratic control - in the context of their membership of PfP / EAPC and their activities in the WEU framework. If any pattern of "flexibility" were to develop in the EU's defense domain with some States accepting a higher degree of integration than others, countries like the Baltic States who have made great use of all these opportunities and are totally committed to NATO membership might on the face of it be closer to the European "hard core" or median standard than some existing members of the Union.

As a matter of general analysis, these latest developments may have once again underlined that the most effective - or at least, most attractive - solutions for Nordic/Baltic nations' security identity are provided by larger European, not Baltic-specific structures. However, the determination of local States to seek their destiny within the EU or NATO or in both has not in the past discouraged them from active regional and sub-regional cooperation, and the new EU formula should still allow these different layers of identity to coexist. Groupings like the Council of Baltic Sea States have, in effect, already been developing cooperative approaches in a number of non-military, "soft" dimensions of security and have been able to do so in an inclusive way, with the support of the EU on the one hand and the involvement of Russia on the other. The measures of defense cooperation which can be expected to develop now in the EU framework and in the wider circle of the EU's partners should actually make the policies and experiences of the involved countries, at least in the non-Article 5 field, more homogenous. They should demonstrate yet again that like-minded neighbors can work together for positive aims of security despite all variations in their Allied or non-Allied, EU or non-EU, applicant or non-applicant status. It will be important for all local States to try to draw out these positive consequences for their shared regional responsibilities, avoiding behavior which might tend instead to create or sharpen "dividing lines," and the importance of a welcoming attitude by the EU Fifteen to their NATO and Central European defense partners should be obvious again in this context.

There is one further respect in which efforts for local cooperation might be "mutually reinforcing" with the success of the EU's collective ambitions. The whole philosophy of the Headline Goal is to try to make European nations think harder about pooling their military resources, sharing their expertise, harmonizing their standards, and pre-adapting to closely integrated cooperation with each other in the field. Only with such an approach can there be any hope of using Europe's aggregate defense resources more effectively and minimizing the requirement, which everyone knows will be tough to meet, for an actual rise in expenditure. States in the Nordic and Baltic region have already made several successful experiments, bilaterally, trilaterally, and in small groups, in this kind of practical cooperation. It is sufficient to mention the long-standing Nordic framework of cooperation in military peace-keeping, the joint peace-keeping unit developed between Poland and Lithuania, the German/Danish/Polish triangle, the many "tri-Baltic" projects (BALTBAT, BALTRON, Baltic Defense College etc.), and the practical support given by other regional countries to the latter. It could be argued that projects like these have given the nations concerned something of a "running start" in meeting the aims of the EU Headline Goal and their political significance - successfully bridging as they do a number of institutional "dividing lines" - also seems very much in line with the new initiative's spirit.

It would be wrong, however, to end this preliminary survey without noting a few aspects of the development of the EU's defense identity in this region which will need particularly careful and sensitive handling. They concern respectively the role of NATO, the role of Russia, and the challenges posed for national defense planning and resources.

In general, the EU's members and the other Europeans who have supported them have stressed that their aim is in no way to interfere, conflict, or compete with the role of NATO and that they are also determined to win the national understanding and support of the North American Allies. As mentioned above, the EU has set the task of preparing its

strategy for EU/NATO relations very high on its agenda and it is certainly everyone's hope that the main lines for a harmonious, open, and complementary relationship will be laid down during 2000. Success in this will evidently be highly important for the Central European partners of the North East region, since they all aspire to join both the EU and NATO and would be put in a very awkward position by any friction (or indeed, duplication) developing between the two institutions. Moreover, it will be in the interests of NATO candidates like the Baltic States to underline that, however welcome the prospect of the EU's growing defense identity may be, it will not involve mutual guarantees and therefore cannot possibly from their point of view undermine or weaken the logic of their parallel application to NATO.

The overall impact of the EU initiative on regional stability and cooperation will also be affected by the way the EU views Russia and the way Russia chooses to view the EU in this context. It is important that Russia should grasp the positive and peaceful intentions behind the EU's plans. It should realize that the EU wishes to uses its powers in the service of universally held values and in the interests of the international community and should feel that it has the chance to play a role itself in the process. The WEU and Russia have had for some time a harmonious and useful dialogue on European crisis management, involving practical support from Russia for some of WEU's activities (e.g. satellite imagery, airlift) and offering Russia the chance in principle to contribute to European-led operations. The EU has an obvious framework for taking over and developing these aspects of the WEU-Russia "acquis" in the shape of the Strategy towards Russia which it adopted during 1999, and which already includes the idea of cooperation in the political-military domain. Timely development of the EU's intentions here, coupled with a deliberate effort in the meantime to explain the real nature of the European initiative to Moscow and dispel possible understandings, seems the best way to avoid two potential and opposite pitfalls. Russia should not be given any reason to fear the "militarization" of the EU or to see the EU's expansion as a strategic threat. But equally, it should not be allowed to get the impression that the EU nations are turning their backs on NATO or creating a new strategic rift in the Atlantic. If the EU can avoid both these misperceptions, and if it can introduce crisis management issues as a <u>positive</u> new element within its existing web of security cooperation involving Russia in Northern and North-East Europe, there should be every chance of maintaining good conditions for an EU enlargement process that takes everyone's legitimate interests including Russia's (and those of Kaliningrad) into account.

Finally, it is already clear that Europe's new ambitions will pose difficult challenges and choices for national defense budgets, in this region just as everywhere else. They will put added pressure on governments to devote a significant part of their resources to rapidly deployable intervention forces, and to ensure that their general military structures and philosophies are capable of generating the human material, the software, and the hardware which this demands. Many nations of the Nordic and Baltic regions, having been either non-Allied States or States at the boundary of the Alliance during the Cold War period, have in the past placed a special emphasis on territorial defense, on manpower-intensive rather than resource-intensive systems, and on widely-based conscription structures which may not at first glance be easy to reconcile with these new European priorities. They have also faced steady political and social pressures to cut defense expenditure or, at least, not to increase it. One of the paradoxes of the new

EU approach (which, indeed, applies to some extent also to NATO's new Defense Capabilities Initiative) is that it does not offer any country the chance of doing less simply because it occupies a "peripheral" geographical place. When the challenge is to deploy forces to hot-spots abroad, and when the watchword is European solidarity, all nations should be logically regarded as equally qualified to contribute and can equally be called to account for their contribution. How will this challenge be perceived and faced by the individual States of North/North-East Europe and what changes may it eventually bring in the defense tapestry of this unique and important region? At this stage and in this respect especially, the EU's new defense identity raises more questions than it can answer. What is not to be denied is that it has already changed the face of Europe and potentially, the world.