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The Institutional Issue

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1. Security was the first instinct that battered post-war Europe felt, to the East and to the West of the resulting continental divide. On our side of it, the Brussels Treaty opened the way for the Washington Treaty and provided the basic linkage between Western security institutions. It is therefore around NATO and WEU, waiting for the European Community to speak on this subject that any further initiative must revolve: the credibility of Western defence does not require any basically different instrument, but rather a deeper consultative process driven by a more decisive common political determination.

In fact, the malaise resurfacing in our "troubled relationship" must be viewed as a recurring and normal occurrence, merely underlining the basic asymmetries which characterize the Alliance since its inception, both in its own structure as well as in its posture towards Eastern Europe: they are geographical, structural and functional, and acceptable among sovereign states. It is however only now, as the American INF presence in Europe is being reviewed, that the underlying complex texture of the intra-European and transatlantic relationship reemerges and enhances the conventional component of Western dissuasion.

Compounded by the American deficits and heightened by Congressional urgings during the Presidential campaign, the issue has recently been given new labels (in this decade, after the ET and CDI acronyms, we now have CAPS, "burdensharing" and "discriminate deterrence"), all of which point to the persistent need that European allies contribute more to the common defence.

2. Since conventional armaments are the responsibility of each ally, the main consequence of the present drive towards disarmament, modernization and burdensharing will be that the allies, rather than conveniently huddle under the nuclear umbrella, will each respond according to national economic possibilities, operational requirements and political sensitivities. The resulting dispersion produces a feeling of disarray and desegregation that leads some of the best strategic minds on both shores of the Atlantic to call for a reassessment of the goals and missions constituting the Atlantic commitment. We are however witnessing only a physiological resurfacing of an old rash, rather than the explosion of a dangerous illness.

Alongside the syndrome which accounts for the European Allies complaining when Washington and Moscow drift apart as well as when they embrace, there also exists an American syndrome which leads Washington, in spite of its recurring calls for an equal partnership, to complain when the Allies do not provide for common defence, but to cry wolf whenever Western Europeans consider their integration process also under its security aspect. Necessarily, as the French would put it, "on ne fait pas d'omelette sans

casser des oeufs", but for the gourmet the important aspect is the recipe and final result.

3. Of course, to put the record straight, the Western European capitals may be accused of having neglected the recipe for a "European security identity", as they find themselves yet again back to square one in such an endeavour. Given their different political perceptions and abilities, this basically means different emphases and therefore diverse but not necessarily differing efforts and purposes. Thus, as "variable geometries" reappear as a fact of life, they must and can appropriately converge and complement each other, in order not to damage the common security, reinforcing instead its credibility.

The Western Europeans undoubtedly share defence interests, while maintaining specific perceptions about the intensity and thrust of the threat they each have to face: it would be unjustified, and therefore straining for the Alliance, to expect uniform commitments from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. The common song-sheet can and should allow for polyphony, with more harmonic and persuasive results than could be achieved by a monodic sound accompanying the American nuclear "basso continuo".

It must be borne in mind that the integrated NATO structure applies only to military contingencies, and must not be expected in the day-to-day political consultations, which must instead profit from an ample variety of evaluations and capabilities.

A more articulate and diversified contribution by individual allies could in effect provide the common political strategy with the flexibility and adaptability best suited to cope with any possible international development. Such an approach would also best absorb and distribute the burdens and responsibilities within the Alliance itself, with beneficial results for both the modernization and the disarmament sides of the Harmel dual-track.

4. Security is much more than defence, which intervenes only when political, economic and even demographic factors of instability have not been properly contained. No exclusively military posture can meet present-day international requirements, as West-West and North-South dimensions are inserted in the global security equation, beyond the East-West dominant component.

In the US, the renewed Congressional calls for a reduced American presence in Europe point to urgent economic considerations, and by no means to a fundamental displacement of the strategic centre of gravity. Decoupling is a useful bogey, but American deficit worries, compounded by the visions of a "fortress Europe" in 1993, must not however be allowed to spiral into any protectionist and unilateralist reflex.

Conversely, the American requirement for a wider European participation in meeting regional ("out of area") responsibilities must not be neglected, as the rapprochement

between Washington and Moscow also leads to a possible enhancement of the role of the UN machinery. A more diffuse distribution of roles and influences may therefore prove useful to cope with a host of indirect and diverse ("low intensity") challenges, which call for a diversified rather than a uniform Western response.

Such is, broadly speaking, the backdrop against which Western Europe is yet again asked to perform, according to more specific roles and taking full advantage of the existing institutions, which appear capable of providing the appropriate political legitimacy and international credibility. Any exploration of new venues must pass the test of the latter fundamental criteria.

5. Recollection of what may have been must not lead to regrets and recriminations, but rather to the awareness that since the war a steady progression has taken place in the perception of European defence as a necessary element of political harmonization.

It was from the humus of the Brussels Treaty that the Washington Treaty sprung, at first a political commitment which turned into a more structured military organization only when the Europeans asked for an extension of the US Strategic Command. The project of a European Defence Community (basically multinational units, as light as would permit operational efficiency, fully integrated into NATO) then ran aground in the shallow waters of the unwillingness to consider a superior political authority. WEU therefore expanded to all Coal and Steel Community members, producing not only the accession of the Federal Republic of Germany to NATO's integrated military structure, but also, which is equally important, the devolution to NATO of all WEU operational tasks and commitments.

The ulterior European initiatives in the security field have been of the most varied kind, some devoted mainly to explore national sensitivities, others demonstrating only the persistent public frustrations and exhortations, few if any disposing of the necessary widespread political consensus. Their list represents the proof of an instinctive endeavour, and not the demonstration of its irrelevance.

In 1961-62 the Fouchet plan tried to proceed along multilateral rather than supranational lines, but it excluded the UK and appeared much too French-inspired. London then went one way, towards the Nassau nuclear connection, as Paris concluded with Bonn the Elysée Treaty, which the Bundestag soon cut down to size. Washington responded with the Multilateral Force, which proved much too cumbersome under every respect. NATO then headed towards the flexible response, losing France along the way and inspiring the remaining Europeans into the Eurogroup which still tries to articulate their common efforts. Such was the final outcome of

President Kennedy's 1962 invocation for an "equal partnership" (and a transatlantic Trade Expansion Act to sustain it – just as today, 25 years onwards).

Kissinger's 1973 "Year of Europe" soon ran out of Arabian petrol. It nevertheless led to the 1974 Ottawa declaration on European-American relations and to the 1975 Tindemans report on European identity, painstakingly producing the most recent Colombo-Genscher and Spinelli initiatives inadequately taken into account by the Single European Act. While providing for the 1993 economic breakthrough, the latter has also institutionalized the long-standing European Political Cooperation, encouraging it further along.

The Single Act provides for the "coordination of respective positions on the political and economic aspects of security", also through "the safeguard of the relevant technological and industrial conditions", adding that "no obstacle is raised against greater cooperation by some members in WEU and in NATO". The WEU platform approved in the fall of 1987 reciprocates the concern, stressing "the conviction that the edification of integrated Europe will remain incomplete until it will not extend to security and defence". The vision remains, the political critical mass is however still insufficient.

6. Will Europe be willing and able to live up to the present-day international opportunities?

William Pfaff (IHT, 29-30 October 1988) maintains that "European resurgence is likely to prove the dominant force affecting world affairs during the half-century to come" and adds that "a successful Western Europe inevitably will draw Eastern Europe into its orbit". On the other hand, Cristoph Bertram (in the IISS 1988 Conference) argues that Western Europe's contribution can only be "complementary; one of assistance to the US, not of direction... the position of a back seat driver (towards the US), albeit one whose suggestions can be formulated more articulately and with greater authority".

The "European identity", whatever its actual substance may be or become, is already perceived and reckoned with by the US and the USSR, as much as by Third World countries, as an essential term of reference if not always as a consistent protagonist of international affairs. The American burdensharing prodding, the Soviet luring to a common European house, as well as the Third World's longing for a loosening of the East-West embrace, all attribute to Western Europe (acting also on behalf of Eastern Europe) an international role and responsibility which it cannot conveniently continue to shy away from.

European intentions are both encouraged and mistrusted both by the US and by the USSR, with multifaceted implications which Europe should exploit to the advantage of more meaningful transatlantic and transeuropean relationships.

In its response, requiring the expression of a more coherent and perceptible foreign policy, Western Europe does not need any new formal Declaration or Treaty, as existing ones suffice and can already provide the institutional instruments necessary to forge and transmit a common political will, whenever it will emerge also in the security domain.

7. The European credibility as a political force will be measured by the ability to respond timely in international events and to influence them. The search for abstract improved architectures should therefore not get in the way of a widening and deepening of Western consultative processes whenever they can occur and are called for.

It may be useful to recall that, on every occasion in which the fabric of the transatlantic commitment was scrutinized, practically as each new generation came to the fore, WEU was looked upon as the political core of a more coherent European defence and security identity, while in the distance the Community political ambitions persist. WEU could therefore preserve a security dimension in store for the Twelve, taking advantage of the common presence of the Foreign and Defence Ministers, as well as of an Assembly constituting a useful resounding board. The common presence in the Gulf provided the first sizeable opportunity to experiment: it was not however fully exploited.

Under the pressure of the budgetary constraints both in Europe and North America, the technological and industrial aspects of defence constitute a federative factor to the extent that they demand a pooling of resources, from which a more accurate definition of common operational requirements and mission components will necessarily emerge. Even this functional approach will however demand a wider political vision and will, in order to produce conclusive results. The Independent European Program Group's recent "action plan" for competitive bidding should complement the "competitive technical programs" (CTPs). Such prospects accord with the Vredeling Report, but still ring an ominous bell to American ears, sensitive as they are to the ghost of "fortress Europe".

In the background looms the European Parliament's political authority stemming from direct elections, and its declared ambition to achieve a greater integration in the security and defence policy, as demonstrated eminently by its 1984 approval of the Spinelli draft Treaty for a European Union and by subsequent explicit Resolutions (echoed in the WEU Assembly).

Under the pressure of the above-mentioned multiple international promptings, variable geometries and different speeds among Europeans are already emerging. Such "internal federative factors" appear both within the existing institutional structures and

with various bilateral initiatives best suited to the consultative and cooperative requirements of each, in the political, strategic and even industrial spheres.

The existing spontaneous reactions are of course beneficial, to the extent that they are indicative of national instincts to adapt, provided that they operate in concentric circles sustaining and promoting each other, instead of encouraging exclusive directorates or hegemonic tendencies. Any instrument available to like-minded governments can operate towards the progressive widening of the European security awareness and consensus. The general purpose of such a multiple approach should be to acquire a greater operational dimension in which to project national policies, and not merely to seek external support for them. The structural change may therefore result at the end, rather than be required at the beginning, of such a political process.

Security policy constitutes the resulting factor, and cannot by any standard be considered a prerequisite, of European identity. There can be no European Union without security. But security will only emerge as the roof of the European edifice, capping the whole architecture. Any other sequence would deprive common security policy of the required legitimacy and therefore of the necessary credibility.

In welcoming Spain and Portugal, a few weeks ago, WEU restated its conviction that the construction of Europe must extend to security and defence. Which does not necessarily mean that the Nine wish to complete it soon, but at least that they feel the urge.

8. Any attempt to recast existing cooperative Western institutions in the field of security, as suggested by authoritative experts (such as Kissinger and Vance) and equally authoritative bodies (such as the Congressional Schroeder Committee and the NATO Assembly Special Report "NATO in the '90s") might prove politically helpful to the extent that they do not raise excessive public expectations, with the resulting disappointments. The WEU "platform" as well as the "global concept" being worked out in NATO basically reformulate the general commitment to the existing common posture. In an Alliance of sovereign states, such as NATO (the same applies to WEU and other Western organisms), operational structures are firmly geared to the rule of consensus; trying to specify commitments and contingency planning beyond general principles, may therefore provoke needless rigidities and disputes.

There already exist multiple fora and institutions where cross-fertilization can occur. Even though duplications may happen, their respective functions must stimulate each other and produce successive accretions: bilateral and multilateral ties (such as those between France and RFG), the so-called "special relationship" between London and Washington, the strengthening of Mediterranean links between Italy, France and Spain,

as well as the various industrial cooperative formulas (Tornado, EFA, EH-101, Helios, etc.), operate according to particular requirements. They need not produce exclusive relationships, but can instead operate usefully in the progressively wider fora of the WEU, the Summit of the Big Seven, EPC, EEC industrial policy, IEPG and Eurogroup, NATO and CNAD, fanning out to the UN peace-keeping forces which are finding ever increasing employment.

The progression will be intergovernmental and by no means federalistic. A quality leap in political terms will however remain needed to achieve a better distribution of roles and an improvement of the consultative connections, in a web of variable geometries best suited to the individual national sensitivities, as well as to the present evolving international circumstances.

Especially for contingencies that fall beyond the scope of NATO, WEU and EPC mechanisms, either geographically or functionally, a pragmatic approach appears the best suited to cope with the relevant issues, which constitute hazardous moving targets. The consideration applies both to political and negotial exercises, such as the CSCE process, Ostpolitik in general and regional issues, such as those arising in the Middle East, Africa and Central America.

Recent events have amply demonstrated that regional crises often occur and develop beyond the reach of the main powers: containment is no longer sufficient, and reabsorption becomes a drawn-out process which calls for as wide a range of contributions as possible. The European allies most directly concerned and better able to act, or to exert their influence, should do so either nationally or in conjunction (not necessarily in common) with other like-minded allies, in ways which converge with all necessary prudence. Within flexible intergovernmental mechanisms, rather than rigid integrated ones, what is required is the convergence and compatibility of various national initiatives rather than emergency interventions. In other words, a behaviour characterized not by unanimity or unicity, but rather by operational coherence and continuity, with a higher degree of European visibility and political credibility.

Meeting heterogeneous indirect challenges and "low-intensity conflicts" with a precise contingency-planning would prove counterproductive, to the extent that too big a target would be provided. Individual national actions appropriately coordinated in a consultative and non crisis-management framework (and therefore in a non-institutionalized form) would prove much more effective.

9. If some method were therefore to be sought, if only for intellectual guidance as to the way ahead, experience would suggest to stay away from the theological disputes between pragmatists and idealists, between minimalists and eurofanatics, and

concentrate instead on a concentric (or overlapping) Chinese-boxes approach best suited to circumstances.

Military defence requirements must fit into the arms control and reduction perspectives, which in turn are to be included in the wider political, economic and humanitarian CSCE framework, as well as towards "out of area" stability requirements. Western institutional fora are already exerting themselves in such a comprehensive exercise: as NATO considers "modernization - cum - global concept", WEU examines the follow-on to the 1987 Platform, and the CPE promotes the coordinated action required from Europe in the most diverse regional contingencies. Each of these efforts, often involving the very same officials and experts, reinforces the others and thereby consolidates the overall Western cohesion, as each European institution performs the task it is best suited for.

The present process of increased consultations must therefore be considered an effective form of cooperative institutionalization, best suited to the present practical requirements of Western cohesion. NATO itself is increasingly asserting its role as the only permanent consultative forum available for transatlantic cooperation with a more extensive and flexible concept of widespread participation which remains essential for solidarity and deterrence purposes.

The variety of consultative and cooperative fora available for European, Atlantic and generally Western coordination in the security field constitutes the best context for the intense brainstorming especially required by present circumstances. Tinkering with the available institutional machinery may instead disrupt the fundamental consensus existing around basic principles. Legal and institutional disputes need not arise, as any "holier - than - thou" temptation could well split the allies, either European or Atlantic: the highly-committed hard would stand out, but the less-inspired ones could be tempted to drop by the wayside.

Mrs. Thatcher's recent speech in Bruges contains the following sentence which constitutes an admonishment, rather than a skeptical consideration, addressed to all: "It's not an institutional problem. It's not a problem of drafting. It's much more simple and more profound: it is a question of political will and political courage, of convincing people in all our countries that we cannot rely forever on others for our defence". In the same vein, although with a different emphasis, the Italian Premier De Mita, greeting his British colleague in the Pallanza bilateral Summit: "the idea that Europe could become nothing more than an economic entity deprived of political instruments is an absurdity". With academic precision, Christoph Bertram (at the IISS annual meeting) adds that: "The only way Europe could speak with one voice on security matters is by a deliberate West European act, dictated not by concerns over security (these will always favour the

Atlantic structure) but by the determination to create a political union. It is the logic of a Western European federation, not a logic of European security, that will, if at all, produce such a result".

Meanwhile, on the other shore of the Atlantic, the basic question remains: "how much unity do we want? How much pluralism can we stand?" Such was the issue around which Professor Kissinger's book "The troubled partnership" revolved back in 1965, with the following punch-line: "Perhaps the deepest danger we face is that, as with all great achievements, nostalgia for the patterns of action that were appropriate when America was predominant and Europe impotent may become an obstacle to the creativity needed to deal with an entirely new situation".

Finally, in the year which celebrates the centenary of Monnet's birth with the solemn burial of his ashes in the French Pantheon, a final quotation from the diminutive, unassuming patient and persevering Father of Europe: "Institutions are more important than men; but only men can transform and enrich things which institutions transmit to successor generation".