

Defence Policy and Integration in Western Europe

Anand Menon

Defence has become a central issue in discussions on the future of European integration, figuring prominently on the agenda of the Maastricht Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) and in the current negotiations on European Union Treaty revision. Indeed, one of the major rationales for holding a further IGC to review the European Union Treaty (EUT) born at Maastricht was the perceived need to review its provisions on security and defence. This article considers the recent debates over the possible creation of a European defence identity, focusing in particular on the links, if any, such an organisation might have with the European Union and its institutions.

It is divided into three sections. The first considers discussions concerning such a European defence organisation prior to the end of the Cold War. The second examines the debates which led to the signing of the EUT and examines the content of that Treaty. Finally, the article investigates debates on European defence in the framework of the current review of the Maastricht Treaty. It demonstrates that, since the early 1950s, defence has featured sporadically, if at all, on the agenda of European integration. It goes on to argue that whilst, especially in the aftermath of the EUT, some commentators expressed confidence that a corner had been turned and that Europe was on the way to providing itself with a defence identity of its own, less than month into the IGC called to review the Maastricht Treaty, it appears that the European Union will not succeed in providing itself with such an organisation.

Defence and Integration Before Maastricht

During the early post-war years, the issue of assuring the defence of Western Europe was closely related to other areas of European cooperation and integration. This was neatly symbolised by the March 1947 Brussels Treaty, whose full title was the Treaty of Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defence. Similar links between defence and integration were apparent in the most far-reaching project to date aimed at increasing cooperation in the defence sphere between European states, the European Defence Community. This, accompanied by the little-noticed European Political

Community project drawn up by the High Authority of the ECSC, was to represent a single step to European Union.

The EDC project collapsed, of course, with the refusal of the French National Assembly to ratify the EDC Treaty in 1954 (Fursdon 1980; Aron and Lerner 1957). With the signing of the Paris Accords later the same year and the resulting entrance of West Germany and Italy into NATO, the two dominant parameters of European security for the next 25 years were put into place: the pre-eminence of NATO and the clear separation of defence issues from the institutions of European integration.

The predominance of NATO in assuring West European security transformed the relationship between defence and integration. Henceforth, Europeans were faced with a choice when considering the institutionalisation of West European defence cooperation: should this take the form of a European third force in *world* politics, with the concomitant risk of undermining the American security guarantee to Europe through the creation of alternative structures, or a second force in *transatlantic* politics, entailing European structures complementing, rather than competing with, NATO?

Early French initiatives to promote security links between Europeans were clearly inspired by the first of these conceptions. The notion of a '*Europe européenne*', propounded by President Charles de Gaulle, implied a Europe able to play a specific and autonomous role in world politics, independent of the two blocs, and eventually capable of acting as an arbiter between them (de Gaulle 1959: 179-80). Yet de Gaulle was not interested in incorporating defence questions within a supranational framework. Rather, he foresaw any security cooperation that occurred between West European states as taking place on a strictly intergovernmental basis: his *Europe Européenne* was to be a *Europe des États*.

In the early 1960s, de Gaulle proposed schemes to create European security structures to rival the transatlantic security partnership. First, Paris presented the Fouchet Plan to its five partners as an institutional blueprint for cooperation in the fields of foreign and defence policy and as an institution that would not only guarantee an independent voice for Europe but also, it was to be hoped, one day supersede the decision-making processes of the EC with intergovernmental alternatives.

When this initiative met with rejection at the hands of France's EEC partners, de Gaulle switched to a bilateral alternative. The Élysée Treaty, signed with German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in January 1963, included ambitious military clauses. De Gaulle's intention was both to pull the Federal Republic away from the transatlantic security relationship and to place the new Franco-German security arrangements on a strictly intergovernmental (or preferably interpersonal) footing. The reasons for the failure of this, the General's final 'European' initiative are instructive. Faced with a clear choice between a security relationship with France and continued reliance on the American nuclear guarantee, the German Bundestag did not have to think for too long before making its choice. The preamble it added to the Treaty clearly indicated that the Federal Republic was happy to consider intra-European defence cooperation as long as this in no way undermined existing transatlantic links.

In contrast to such French initiatives, other West European states were keen to use European defence cooperation as a means of reinforcing, rather than undermining the transatlantic link. Hence:

[t]he British-German initiative to establish the Eurogroup in 1970 [was] firmly rooted within the NATO framework, intended to demonstrate to members of the US Congress the willingness of their European allies to shoulder a substantial share of the common defence (Forster and Wallace 1996: 415).

In 1973, however, dissatisfaction with American leadership and what was seen as an unhealthy attempt on the part of the Western superpower to deal with security issues on a purely bilateral level with the Soviet Union (thereby relegating Europe to the level of a regional power), led to the final Cold War attempt to define a distinct European defence identity (Harrison 1981: 170-82).

On this occasion, French distrust about and dissatisfaction with superpower domination of European affairs either through conflict or excessive collaboration¹ was shared by many of its European partners. In November, German Chancellor Willy Brandt declared that '[i]n a world whose destiny cannot and should not be determined by two superpowers alone, the influence of a united Europe has become indispensable' (Goldsborough 1974). Dissatisfaction was also manifest within the EC. At the Copenhagen summit between the heads of government of the Nine on September 10 and 11, European leaders insisted that the United States 'welcome the intention of the Nine to ensure that the Community

establish its position in world affairs as a distinct entity' (*New York Times* 9.11.73). Paris also submitted a new version of the NATO declaration that was under negotiation, in which it was acknowledged that the EEC move toward unity should affect defence policies as well (*New York Times* 19.11.73), an initiative which received the discreet support of the Heath government.

That such initiatives finally came to very little, culminating simply in the recognition of the role played by British and French nuclear weapons in assuring the security of Western Europe at the NATO summit at Ottawa in 1974, was due primarily to the dominance of the Americans in defence matters and the pressure Washington was able to bring to bear on the European states, especially Bonn.

Following this abortive attempt to create European defence structures, West European states were to use cooperation as a means of reinforcing, rather than challenging, American-dominated transatlantic security links. Hence, the reactivation, in 1982, of the security clauses of the 1963 Franco-German Treaty was motivated, on the French side, by a desire to combat the rising trend of pacifism in the Federal Republic and to tie the latter more firmly into NATO (Gnesotto 1986: 24-8). The resurrection of the WEU in 1984 was also intended to reinforce NATO and was possible because the organisation was subordinate to NATO and purely intergovernmental, having no formal link to the EC (Forster 1994: 56). The absence of such links also neatly circumvented the problems that would have been caused by the inclusion of neutral non-WEU members in discussions on security. Later in the same decade, European unease concerning Reagan's foreign policy merely led to a perceived need to strengthen the European voice within NATO. By the end of the decade, Geoffrey Howe (1989) had good reason to state that all 'the members of the WEU agree that the North Atlantic Alliance needs to have a strong European pillar.'

The years between the collapse of the EDC proposal and the end of the Cold War, therefore, were marked by the absence of any sustained attempt to link defence with European integration. Whilst EEC member states were happy enough to discuss limited foreign policy cooperation within the EPC framework, defence policy remained a separate issue, to be discussed, if at all, in intergovernmental fora. Indeed, after the attempts to deepen intra-European security co-operation of 1973, it was generally accepted that defence policy was essentially the purview of the Atlantic Alliance, with intra-European cooperation being intended to strengthen, rather than compete with, NATO.

The end of the Cold War and the Maastricht Compromise

The end of the Cold War undermined the reluctance on the part of some states to see defence brought within the ambit of European integration for two reasons. First, there was the question of Germany. The prospect of a unified Germany, unburdened by restrictions on its sovereignty and, more fundamentally, by the Eastern threat which had made it so reliant on the other Western powers, was not one that was universally welcomed. For many EC members, the only means to control such a Germany was through the deepening of European integration (Forster and Wallace 1996: 421).

For France, the crucial policy objective was progress towards monetary union as a means of exercising a degree of influence over the Germany economy. It was in order to guarantee this that French leaders allegedly agreed to strike a deal with Germany whereby monetary union and the loss of the D-Mark was agreed to by Kohl on condition that moves towards political union, incorporating defence and foreign policy matters, were accepted by Paris (*L'Express* 19.10.90).

Second, the collapse of the Berlin Wall precipitated a reawakening of French interest in the idea of a *Europe Européenne*. In the uncertainty surrounding the end of the Cold War, France found itself in competition with the United States for a position of leadership in the new Europe. Paris increasingly resented American attempts to preserve or even increase US influence over European security. In particular, Mitterrand was hostile to any expansion in the tasks conferred on NATO, which he viewed as an instrument for American dominance (Grant 1996: 59-60). As a result, the creation of a European security identity increasingly came to be seen as a means to challenge the dominance of the United States.

As a result of these convergent pressures, the IGC on Political Union was called in parallel with that on EMU, and defence questions were placed on the agenda of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on Political Union. As the negotiations progressed, it became clear that there existed a distinction between two groupings of states. On the one hand were those anxious to ensure the continued survival and pre-eminence of NATO. The British (and perhaps even more so the Dutch) conception of Europe was one of a second

force in transatlantic affairs, safely contained within NATO. For London, the WEU certainly had its uses, but these were connected with the need to strengthen and not rival NATO, as the 1991 British Defence White Paper made clear:

To thrive, NATO needs a strong European pillar. In building this we see a central role for the WEU...In the British view the WEU can serve as a bridge between the transatlantic security and defence structures of NATO and the developing political and security policies of the Twelve....Building totally distinct Western European Defence entities, involving the eventual absorption of the WEU by the Twelve, would be disruptive of NATO (*The Guardian* July 10 1991).

London's ideas on security were formalised in a joint Anglo-Italian letter to the Presidency published on 4 October. In this, emphasis was placed on retaining the overall primacy of NATO over security matters. The special relationship with the United States was a 'key element of the European identity'. Reform of the Alliance and an increased European contribution to security were described as complementary, parallel processes. In order to emphasise the point that the 'development of a European identity in the field of defence should....reinforce the Atlantic Alliance', London and Rome endowed the WEU with a split personality as both a defence component of the Union and European pillar of the Alliance. Thus, although a move to Brussels by the organisation and harmonisation of its meetings with those of the EC institutions were envisaged, the WEU was merely required to 'take into account in its activities the decisions of the European Council', as well as, inevitably, the policies adopted by the alliance. In order to give a semblance of operational capacity to the European organisation, a European Reaction Force under the aegis of the WEU was proposed, which could act outside the NATO area in peacekeeping or other operations.

Opposing such minimalist ideas were those in favour of an independent European defence organisation. France was the most vocal amongst this group, anxious to promote a European alternative to NATO. German support for French ambitions, though usually forthcoming, was, at least in the first half of 1991, ambivalent. Bonn found itself:

caught in a squeeze between France, which placed a premium on enhancing Europe's security identity, and the US, which continued to insist on the primacy of NATO. Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher walked a narrow line, attempting to please everybody, at the risk of pleasing nobody (International Institute of Strategic Studies 1992: 46)

That Bonn's support for the French became firmer as the year progressed was due in no small part to annoyance at the fact that Britain was given command of the new NATO Reaction Force (created in May 1991 at least in part to pre-empt discussions within the IGC), a role to which German leaders felt their contribution to NATO conventional defence capabilities entitled them.

Intent on creating European defence structures, France and Germany forwarded a series of proposals to the IGC, culminating in a joint letter addressed to the Presidency in October 1991. In this, they insisted that the aims of the Union included the implementation of a common foreign and security policy, which, 'in the long run would include a *common defence*'.² The CSFP was to include 'all questions relative to the security and defence of the union'. In contrast to the Anglo-Italian text, which portrayed the WEU as a 'bridge', equidistant between NATO and the EU, the Franco-German initiative underlined that the decisions 'taken by the Union in this area may be developed and implemented entirely or in part by the WEU, which is an integral part of the process of European union'. Further, Paris and Bonn announced their intention to expand their existing joint brigade, with the prospect of it becoming a model for European cooperation within the WEU and a 'European corps incorporating forces from other countries'. Unlike the Anglo-Italian proposals which had underlined the complementarity of the missions of NATO and their proposed European Reaction Force, by limiting the latter to an out-of area role, the Franco-German alternative did not clearly specify the roles of the Euro corps, raising fears in the Bush administration concerning the implications for Germany's NATO commitments (Grant 1996: 60).

Debate at the Maastricht European Council crystallised over these different conceptions. Thus, Britain argued that the WEU be placed equidistant between the EU and NATO, whilst Paris insisted that the links between the EU and WEU should be of a qualitatively different kind to those between the WEU and NATO, with the WEU responding to instructions from the European Union to carry out military tasks. As Britain demanded that WEU membership should be open to all NATO members, France countered that, in keeping with the notion of a European defence organisation intrinsically linked to the EU, membership should be open only to EU members (Menon et. al. 1992: 111)

Divisions between the two camps cut across cleavages concerning the decision-making procedures to be used. Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy, for example, welcomed the

ambitious goals contained within the Franco-German proposals, but, unlike the French, worried about a possible marginalisation of Community institutions.³ Whilst Britain and Denmark were as sceptical as Paris regarding any communitarianisation of defence, they worried about the ambitious goals for a European defence policy propounded by Paris. Although the Dutch were generally more Atlanticist in outlook than even the British, they insisted on a role for the Community in any external policy eventually agreed on. Indeed, alone amongst the member states, the Hague initially expressed a desire to see the European Court of Justice involved in external policy (Cloos et. al. 1993: 466).

Such cross-cutting divisions proved to be crucial. In particular, the fact that France and Germany, whilst sharing the aim of endowing the European Community with a defence role, could not agree as to whether defence matters should be incorporated within or outside Community decision-making structures hampered progress. Discussions stalled owing to differences between the strongest protagonists of a European defence organisation, as '...the defence ministry in Bonn began to think that French reluctance to move beyond declaratory policy to the detail of military integration reflected an unwillingness to consider any form of military integration, which for Bonn was *the* most important purpose of any European defence identity' (Forster 1996). French reluctance to contemplate concessions concerning its beloved 'independence' in defence matters served merely to reinforce German attachment to NATO, and to weaken the coalition backing ambitious defence schemes.⁴

The outcome of the year-long negotiations represented an ambiguous compromise between the various negotiating positions. Under the EUT, the European Union is endowed with a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) which covers 'all areas of foreign and security policy' (Articles J.1, J.4). Whether this covers defence questions, however, is unclear, given the statement that the CFSP includes 'the *eventual* framing of a common defence policy, which *might in time* lead to a common defence' (Article J.4.1, emphasis added). Defence ambitions are set out, therefore, whilst a provision for a defence policy *per se* is not.

As for institutions, the WEU is defined as 'an integral part of the development of the Union' and may be requested by the Union to 'elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications' (Article J.4.2). Symbolically, provision is made for the relocation of the WEU Council and Secretariat to Brussels (Declaration on West European Union C.6). On the other hand, the ability of the Union to

make requests of the WEU falls short of the French desire to see the former empowered to instruct the latter.⁵ Moreover, the WEU is not legally incorporated into the Union, as symbolised by the attachment of a separate declaration to the Treaty outlining its roles. This fudges the issue of relations between the WEU, EU and NATO, stating that the WEU 'will be developed as the defence component of the European Union and as a means to strengthen the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance' (Declaration on Western European Union 2). Regarding WEU membership, again a compromise solution was found between the French and British positions. EU members were invited to join as either full members or observers, while other European members of NATO were accorded the right to become associate members 'in a way which will give them the possibility of participating fully in the activities of WEU' (Declaration on Western European Union II).

Finally, regarding decision making, Anglo-French intergovernmentalist notions clearly triumphed. Not only is defence not formally incorporated within the CFSP framework, but it is also explicitly stipulated that issues 'having defence implications' are not subject to the provisions for foreign policy 'joint actions' whereby, in certain tightly-defined situations, majority voting maybe used. Although the Commission enjoys the same rights for non-exclusive initiative over security questions as it does for the rest of the CFSP, decision-making arrangements are overwhelmingly intergovernmental. Indeed, even as concerned proposals for revision of EUT, the sole right to forward such proposals is given to the Council of the EU which is mandated to present a report to the European Council (J4 para 6) - in contrast with procedures for making proposals for revision of other sections of the Treaty where the Commission is explicitly authorised to submit proposals (EUT Article N 1).

A year of tortuous negotiations, culminating in an equally arduous ratification process in many member states, resulted in the first steps towards the incorporation defence within the ambit of European integration. Certainly, whilst the European Union did not acquire the legal right nor (and especially) the means to pursue its own defence policy, the member states were now signatories of a statement of intent to work towards a common defence policy

Post-Maastricht: Towards an Intergovernmental European Pillar

Despite the deliberate ambiguities of the EUT, post-Maastricht scholarly evaluations have tended to be positive about its implications for enhanced European defence cooperation and have stressed the fact that Europe seemed to be moving towards a European defence structure. Thus:

...a treaty commitment to review defence arrangements in 1996, along with the expiration of the WEU's own charter in 1998, suggest that the Community's defence identity will increasingly assume a European rather than an Atlanticist appearance....in the long term, the outcome of the EC-NATO-WEU debate tilts in favour of an independent EC defence position' (Dinan 1994: 472; 496).

Immediately following the Maastricht European Council of December 1991, such beliefs seemed to have a basis in fact. The WEU base was moved from London to Brussels (even before Maastricht was ratified), symbolising its closer links to the EU. In a meeting in Bonn in June 1992 the WEU Council of Ministers was quick to capitalise on the new-found dynamism of this previously sleepy organisation and published its Petersburg declaration. This outlined the willingness of the WEU to undertake not only humanitarian, rescue and peace-keeping, but also combat (peace-making) missions. The declaration also stressed the centrality of the Union in the foreign and security policy field and eligibility of all EU members to join WEU. Further progress was registered with the creation of a WEU Planning Cell, set up under Italian Air Force General Caltabiano. A wave of ambitious rhetoric emanated from those states which supported a defence role for the European Union: Mitterrand raised the tantalising prospect of the eventual emergence of a European deterrent force, whilst French Prime Minister Balladur spoke in terms of moves towards a European Army (*Le Monde* 9.12.94).

Yet as the IGC dubbed 'Maastricht 2' approached, it became clear that real divisions still existed between proponents of different visions of a European defence identity. Indeed, so deeply rooted were these that the WEU contribution to the IGC discussions was unable to adopt a common position or advocate necessary reforms, rather merely outlining three alternative visions of the way ahead for European defence (WEU 1995).

Of these, the most ambitious, broadly supported by Germany, Belgium and Spain, foresees the incorporation of the WEU within the EU. Proponents of this idea, critical of what they see as the problems caused by Europe's lack of a real defence identity, have floated various schemes to establish closer institutional ties between the two organisations. Under some, defence would become not simply part of the Union, but also subject to the jurisdiction of

Community institutions. One idea is that the WEU Secretary General simultaneously hold the office of EU Commissioner for CFSP, or Commission Vice President (Bourlanges 1995). Such increased involvement of the supranational institutions points towards a communitarianisation of defence. Under such arrangements, financing of defence would possibly be from the Community budget. Moreover, decisions would be taken by majority (perceived as a necessary palliative to the immobilisme apparent in a second pillar governed by the unanimity requirement), although even the staunchest proponents of a full integration of the WEU into the EU accept that states cannot be asked to contribute troops to an operation against their will (Dehaene 1995: 8;).

Less ambitious alternatives for merging the WEU and the EU include the incorporation of defence as either an additional, fourth pillar of the EU, or within the CFSP. Whilst serving to reinforce the links between WEU and EU and also possibly to allow for greater co-ordination of the different aspects of the external policy of the EU, such a solution would offer the possibility of incorporating defence whilst avoiding any communitarianisation of the sector. Thus, in keeping with the other intergovernmental pillars, defence would not be subject either to funding by the EU budget or to the jurisdiction of the Court. One concrete proposal that has been tabled which allows for incorporation of the WEU without communitarianisation is that there should be a single figure as political secretary-general of EU Council of Ministers and Secretary-General of the WEU.⁶

The notion of incorporating the WEU within the Treaty structure raises questions concerning the possibility of including aspects of the Brussels Treaty within the EU Treaty. Under any kind of merger, the modified Brussels Treaty would disappear as an independent entity, and the WEU would cease to be an international organisation in its own right. Proponents of a merger argue in favour of the incorporation of the WEU's peacekeeping and humanitarian tasks within the EU and tend also to favour the strengthening of the WEU's operational capacities in these areas through, for instance, the creation of a WEU operational task force (Dehaene 1995: 6-7). On the other hand, there seems to be a broad consensus that the role of territorial defence is one that would be best carried out outside the EU framework.

A less ambitious alternative to merger is the political subordination of WEU to EU. Several such schemes have been mooted including (WEU 1995: 22-27): allowing the

European Council to formulate General Guidelines on Defence Policy; military action by the WEU; reformulating Article J.4(2) of the EUT to make the political and operational subordination of the WEU to the EU clear through the replacement of the word 'requests' by 'instructs' (as the French had initially proposed at Maastricht); or finally, through the institution of legally binding links between the WEU and the EU. Under such arrangements, the EU would enjoy an obligatory mandate over WEU, without the latter being incorporated within it. Some supporters of the idea of WEU inclusion into the EU see this as a first step on such a road. Belgian Premier Jean-Luc Dehaene, for instance, has spoken of allowing the European Union to order the WEU to use certain military means as the first step in a (longer term) process of fully integrating the WEU within the EU (Dehaene 1995: 8).

The final option is a simple strengthening of the links between the EU and the WEU. Some proponents of an independent European defence capability, such as Commissioner van den Broeck, support this idea, arguing that in order to obtain a defence component in the first place, it would be best to keep the WEU and the EU separate for the moment at least (*Europe* no. 6392, 6 January 1995). However, the strongest support for this minimalist position comes, not surprisingly, from the United Kingdom. Whilst it was reported in some quarters that the British Government might be prepared to accept the incorporation of defence as a fourth pillar in the Union (*The Guardian* 27 October 1994), just under six months later it was clear that London was firmly opposed even to this. Indeed, as the IGC approached, Britain seemed to be explicitly retreating from the earlier claims of John Major that it intended to regain a place 'at the heart of Europe.'⁷ The formal British negotiating position on defence was laid out in a memorandum produced in spring 1995 (UK Government 1995).⁸

In contrast to the clear desire amongst some of its partners to overcome European dependence on NATO for many military tasks, the British assessment of the IGC actually commences with the statement that the Conference 'should take account of the over-riding continuing importance of NATO' (para 2). The fundamental understanding of the UK Government is that Europe's ambition is to 'build WEU capabilities that are compatible with, not in competition with, those in NATO. We are not prepared to invest in this area if the consequence is that it will be setting up competitive structures' (para 29). Thus, moves to create independent European forces at the disposition of the WEU were not likely to be welcomed by London. The autonomy of the WEU from the Union would be

preserved in that the organisation could act either on its own behalf or in response to request from the EU 'if it wished' (Para 14).

The central theme of the British memorandum is the notion of a 'task-based' approach to European defence co-operation, meaning that the 'definition of a European defence policy should start with a hard-headed assessment of what the Europeans can realistically expect to do together' as basis for defining new institutional arrangements (Para 7).⁹ Clearly, one implication of this is that NATO should remain the crucial organisation as far as territorial defence is concerned. More controversially, 'it would be wasteful to develop separate, wholly European military structures'(para 10), and thus continued reliance on NATO means for carrying out military missions was acceptable.

Opposition to any kind of formal link between defence and the European Union was largely inspired by hostility to any reduction in national prerogatives over defence. Hence, Britain opposed any 'involvement of the European Commission or the European Parliament which is provided for elsewhere in the European Union's structure'(para 27). On the contrary, each nation 'must be able to preserve its freedom to act in the defence of its own national interests, without constraint.' Cooperation should be purely inter-governmental and based on unanimity (para 21). Such was the emphasis on unanimity that even tentative schemes under discussion between Paris and Bonn such as the notion of 'constructive abstention' whereby one state could not block actions on which the others agreed (and indeed had to show solidarity with its partners during the course of any such action), were dismissed by the Foreign Minister as impractical (Rifkind 1996: 11).¹⁰

Although far less ambitious than its partners regarding a rapprochement of the EU and WEU, London still sees the utility of a limited reinforcement of the WEU. Thus, the Government proposed the creation of a new WEU body at Head of State and Government level, further suggesting, in order to strengthen links with the EU (if only symbolically), that it could meet back-to-back with the European Council. London also stressed the need for the WEU to possess an enhanced planning capacity, such as a Situation Centre, to which the UK would be willing to contribute staff (paras 31, 32). As one British official put it, '...the WEU needs...more oomph and more capabilities', something Defence Minister Portillo argued for at the WEU Ministerial meeting in Spain in November 1995 (*Sunday Telegraph* 12.11.95).

Yet whilst acknowledging the need for enhanced European cooperation, the British position is undeniably far less ambitious than those envisaged by its partners. As the reflection group under Spanish Count Westendorp charged with formulating proposals for the IGC prepared to report to the European Council, numerous press reports appeared detailing the isolation of London on defence questions, often reinforced by frustrated comments from some of Britain's partners (AFP; Reuters; Atlantic News, all of 15 November 1995; Interviews, Paris, London and Brussels). Even London's staunchest ally at Maastricht, the Dutch, had adopted a far more pro-integration stance, the Hague arguing for an immediate incorporation of the WEU into the EU (interviews, Foreign office).

However, for all this apparent isolation, London's position is arguably far stronger than it was in 1991, for four reasons. First, the short time-span between the coming into effect of the Maastricht Treaty and its revision is not propitious for those wanting to undertake a far-reaching revision of the former. Whilst the insertion of clauses concerning a revision of the security clauses of the EUT was initially seen as a victory for the more ambitiously pro-European states, the lack of time so far available to assess the workings of the CFSP, coupled with clear memories of the debilitating battles over Maastricht ratification will militate against far-reaching reforms. Even some staunch defenders of the notion of Communitarianisation feel 1998 is too early to think of integrating the WEU into the EU. (See Aguilar, explanatory memo para 10). Little flexibility is available in terms of the timing of the Treaty revision in that the argument has gained currency among European states that revision of the defence clauses must happen in the next year, prior to the renegotiation of the Brussels Treaty scheduled for 1998.¹¹

Second, events since the ratification of the EUT, in particular the practical experience of military conflict, have tended to undermine the notion of Europe as an independent force in defence matters. Many of the pronouncements on WEU made in recent years have been more political statements of intent to create a meaningful European security identity than initiatives to strengthen European operational capacities (Howorth 1995: 334). In contrast, Europe's dependence on American military capabilities and NATO infrastructure were graphically illustrated both in the Gulf and the former Yugoslavia. A corollary was an unwillingness to use European structures. No formal use was made in February 1994 of the facility for the EU to request the WEU to implement decisions and actions with defence implications over the decision to protect the Sarajevo exclusion zone by threatening air

strikes: instead, the commitment was transferred from the European Council to a NATO meeting (Santer 1995: 6).¹²

Reliance on America has been reinforced by another aspect of the Maastricht Treaty itself. The convergence criteria linked to the achievement of monetary Union by 1999 have imposed serious fiscal constraints on member states. Given the prohibitively high costs of achieving an autonomous European defence capacity based on European as opposed to NATO military assets -- estimated at around 1.5% of GDP on top of current defence expenditure by member states for around ten years (*The Economist* 25.2.95) -- 'free-riding' on American capabilities, even at the expense of reduced European autonomy, seems an attractive option.

Third, the European Union that will negotiate the revisions to the Maastricht Treaty has welcomed the accession of three new members since the EUT itself was signed. This raises further problems for those who wish to see links between the EU and the WEU significantly enhanced. First, the new members are even more sceptical than the UK about endowing the EU with a defence role. Lena Hjelm Wallen, Swedish Defence Minister has stated that Stockholm is 'not interested by a common European defence', adding that this is a position 'we share with the Danes and the Austrians' (*Le Monde*, 21.9.95). With an EU defence policy also extremely unpopular amongst their populations, the extremely low turnout of the first Swedish elections to the EP (41%) and the success of parties on anti-European platforms such as the former communists and the Greens clearly illustrated the ratification problems that could face any ambitious Treaty in this country.

Whilst such states will therefore act as an obstacle to moves to integrate the WEU into the EU, their membership will also raise problems in the unlikely event that such a merger takes place. In particular, overlapping institutional memberships pose a problem (which, as pointed out earlier, was one the advantages of using the WEU as an institutional framework for intra-European security discussions in the 1980s, as the neutral states were not members of it). Denmark, Ireland, Austria, Finland and Sweden, whilst EU members, are only observers in the WEU. The WEU itself has acknowledged that non-overlapping WEU and EU memberships raise problems concerning eventual communitarianisation of the former WEU (WEU 1995: 5). In particular, it remains difficult to see what decision-making mechanisms could be instituted to satisfy both those states not involved in military activities (because not full members of the WEU), but nevertheless presumably asked to

support them (and, in the event of Communitarianisation, pay for them) and the WEU members themselves.

Complicating the picture still further, as a result of Maastricht, Iceland, Norway and Turkey have become associate members of the WEU, meaning that they can participate in WEU military initiatives but not block them. On the one hand, this increases the constituency of those opposed to creating explicit legal links between the EU and WEU: Norway has actively lobbied Britain (as if this were necessary) to speak against an EU absorption of the WEU (the Norwegian Foreign Minister flew to London in October 1995 to discuss the subject with Malcolm Rifkind). Secondly, the position of these states has reinforced the arguments against an EU-WEU merger, if only because of the institutional problems that would be caused regarding participation at European Council meetings where policy would presumably be made.¹³ Such complications are grist to the mill of the British cause.

The final factor reinforcing the British position has come from what, to many, is an unexpected quarter. Since the election of President Chirac, French defence policy has undergone a significant revision. Since taking office in May 1995, Chirac has brought about a substantial rapprochement between France and NATO, in contrast to the arms-length relationship that prevailed under his predecessor (Grant 1996). French officials have been particularly sensitive to the effectiveness of American-led military interventions in the Gulf and Bosnia, and the relative operational weakness of European forces.¹⁴ Moreover, given the parlous state of the French current account and the determination with which Paris is clinging to the aim of ensuring EMU by 1999, the Maastricht convergence criteria are having perhaps their most profound impact on public policy in this state. The resulting pressure on defence budgets (as illustrated by recent cuts) means that French Governments can no longer hope to help in the creation of the autonomous European defence forces to which they once aspired.

As a result, the French stance on the relationship between defence and integration has altered since the time of Mitterrand. There is no longer talk of an independent European defence autonomous of NATO. Rather, officials tend to stress the need to build a European pillar of the Alliance. Secondly, Paris is no longer speaking of the need to merge the EU and WEU immediately, having come to realise both the military value of acting through NATO and the dangers of communitarianisation inherent in moves to bring the

WEU and EU closer. In this latter respect, the intergovernmental nature of NATO makes it a forum better suited than the EU for the preservation of French independence.

All this is not to say that President Chirac represents a natural soul mate for John Major on European affairs (Menon: 1995b). On numerous other issues including EMU and majority voting (not to mention beef) British and French positions differ substantially. Even over defence, the French position on European cooperation is far more ambitious than Britain's. French officials are still concerned by what they perceive to be the relative lack of autonomy granted to Europeans under the Combined Joint Task Forces scheme, first introduced at the Brussels NATO summit in January 1994 and refined at Berlin in June 1996 (Grant 1996). Paris still favours closer links between the EU and WEU than does London, inclining towards the notion of assuring the subordination of the WEU to the EU. France, moreover, is acutely aware of the need to make sacrifices and compromise to maintain the Franco-German Alliance within the Union. As such, given German proclivities regarding decision making, French officials are likely to accept a slight watering down of the unanimity principle in foreign affairs (and possibly defence) in the form of constructive abstention. Moreover, the French position could change before the completion of the IGC; in particular, a hardening of France's stance towards NATO coupled with an increase in France's ambitions for Europe might occur if the upshot of the CJTF deal struck at Berlin fails to give rise to what Paris considers to be acceptable moves towards a greater balancing of European and American influence within the Alliance. Yet, for the moment, it would appear as if France will not be Britain's leading opponent over defence as was the case at Maastricht. If the two most militarily powerful European states do not favour the more ambitious reform plans, it is difficult to see how such reforms could be accepted.

Ironically, even when the French have in recent times attempted to reassert their European credentials, the result has often been simply to strengthen the cause of the British. Chirac, for instance, has raised the possibility of France one day sharing its nuclear deterrent force with its European partners. The reaction of these partners, however, made it clear that this was not the best way to encourage progress on creating a European security identity. Although Klaus Kinkel initially expressed mild enthusiasm for the idea (Le Figaro 8.9.95), he, along with most other leading German figures, soon appeared less than enthralled by Chirac's initiative (Liberation 15.9.95). Introducing nuclear weapons onto the European agenda in fact provoked serious disagreements amongst member states, with Swedish

Foreign Minister Lena Hjelm-Wallen remarking acidly that '[w]e've been seeking a nuclear-free Europe for 35 or 40 years.' (Wall Street Journal 11 September 1995; see also Le Figaro 11 September 1995; Liberation 11 September 1995).¹⁵ As one senior EU diplomat remarked, 'the last thing we need is an EU group discussion [of nuclear weapons]'. Chirac's initiative actually served to increase the scepticism of many concerning the desirability of an EU defence component.

Conclusions

Thus, as the IGC approaches, it seems Europe will not manage to develop an independent military capability within the European Union. Yet this is not to say that European states, confronted with a choice between national action and integration have chosen the former. In the first place, in opting against a defence component of the Union, they will in effect be opting for institutionalised cooperation within the Atlantic Alliance. Moreover, European defence cooperation shows no signs of lessening in intensity outside the formal institutional structures of the EU. There have been a huge number of co-operative ventures launched in recent years: Britain, France and Germany are going ahead with the creation of a European Arms Agency; France, Italy and Spain have joined together to create rapid reaction ground and naval forces (Eurofor and Euromar); Britain and France have created a joint Air Command based in High Wycombe, not to mention the famed Eurocorps, which now has a concrete existence.

Cooperation is flourishing, therefore, if only because states are increasingly coming to realise the financial, material and political problems confronting independent national action (Menon 1996b). That this cooperation is taking place outside the framework of integration is perhaps explicable by two factors. First, the very existence of a pre-existing alternative framework tends to divert attention and resources away from the idea of linking defence with the EU. The fact that NATO exists and that it seems to work cannot be underestimated. Second, states tend jealously to guard their autonomy over public policy unless compelling reasons exist for them to turn to integration as a solution. Even in areas where the EU nominally enjoys a great deal of influence over policy developments, member states have been anxious to preserve their freedom of maneuver (Kassim and Menon 1996 esp. Ch. 14).

This is all the more true for defence policy. Those states which have a tradition of independent military action (Britain and France in particular) are anxious to maintain control over their armed forces and frequently use references to national sovereignty to justify their reluctance to countenance integration. In part, such references to sovereignty can be taken at face value - special importance *is* accorded to the notion of national defence capabilities. This helps to explain continued British and growing French willingness to see NATO as the prime security institution in Europe, as it is an intergovernmental organisation where decisions are taken on the basis of unanimity.

References to sovereignty also, however, disguise the fact that, in defence policy as in other sectors, integration would imply painful national choices involving the specialisation by countries on certain aspects of defence to the detriment of their other capabilities, the size of national armed forces, the future of national arms industries and other questions closely related to sensitive issues of national economic performance. Thus, even whilst it might plausibly be argued that, in the post Cold War world, the traditional 'high politics' of defence and security is losing its salience relative to other policy areas such as high technology, the residual symbolic importance of defence, along with the real economic and social spin-offs associated with it render defence policy a sector not easily amenable to integration.

Indeed, one could go further and argue that, precisely because the current discussions over European integration are taking place in the post-Cold War world, the prospects for integration are bleak, in that:

As long as there is neither an existential threat nor an existential foe, institutions do not really matter, and so Europe intends to enjoy the luxury of eclecticism - pushing the EC/WEU without eschewing NATO.... Yet, when threats and foes materialize again, the Europeans will behave as nations have always done. They will listen to their national interests, look for like-minded partners, and look for an enterprise capable of deterrence and defence (Joffe 1992: 48-9).

In the absence of a direct threat, there is no clear reason for agreeing to integration.

Yet to argue that the absence of integration is understandable is not to claim that it is necessarily beneficial. Certainly, free-riding on American operational capacities through the emphasis on the CJTF concept is cheap. Yet, dependence on American acquiescence (in the form of support in the North Atlantic Council) in allowing Europe to use such

forces does raise questions concerning Europe's ability to take military action when the two sides find themselves in disagreement. The inability of Europe to act in the defence sphere without American blessing raises questions of significance for the CFSP as a whole. Defence policy is one of the implementation arms of foreign policy. For any European foreign policy to be truly effective requires that, in the last resort, the EU has the ability to utilise military means. Finally, the institutional separation between foreign economic policy, the political aspects of foreign policy and defence policy undermine the ability of the EU to present a coherent face to the outside world. Here again, the failure to take steps to unify these areas within a single institutional framework (incorporating the same members) could prove to be costly. There are good reasons, therefore, for claiming that the relationship between defence and integration should be tightened. However, the practical obstacles to be overcome in so doing imply that such steps will not be taken in the foreseeable future.

Endnotes

¹ During the Cold War, the French were fond of citing a South Asian proverb when discussing the pernicious influence of excessive superpower conflict or collaboration: when two elephants fight, it is the grass between them which gets crushed; yet when two elephants make love, that same grass suffers.

² Emphasis added.

³ Belgian foreign Minister Mark Eyskens, for instance, stated 'We must at all costs maintain the unity of the European Community and avoid the establishment of a Political Union with its own mechanisms, some of which would be intergovernmental, alongside the existing communities (*Le Figaro* 7.6.91).

⁴ 'When, in the past, security seemed to be at stake, Germany always had to opt for Washington and against Paris. But the responsibility for this dilemma lay firstly with the persistence with which France insisted on the independence of its defence policy, a policy which reduced the Federal Republic to the level of a 'strategic glacis' of the Hexagon' Leimbacher 1995: 43)

⁵ The difference is important. As Belgian Premier Jean-Luc Dehaene was to point out, under the notion of 'request', there was no guarantee that the WEU would agree, emphasising its autonomy from the EU (Dehaene 1995: 8).

⁶ This was suggested by Deputy German Defence Minister, Werner Hoyer, speaking at Royal Institute of International Affairs in September 1995

⁷ British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind emphasised that Britain was quite willing to accept a loss of influence within Europe in return for the ability to preserve its own interests. (*The Independent* 22.9.95).

⁸ The memorandum is also included as annexe D in the British White Paper on the IGC (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1996)

⁹ '[T]he debate about the WEU has been too abstract.... Anybody can draft some ringing declarations about European defence. The real challenge is to develop the structures to allow us to deploy our forces quickly and effectively' (Rifkind 1996: 8-9).

¹⁰ Notions concerning different forms of voting for defence, including abstention without blocking had been raised in the Commission submission on foreign policy tabled to the Maastricht IGC in March 1991 (*Agence Europe*, Europe documents nos. 1697/1698, 7.3.91).

¹¹ Some commentators have claimed that 1998 in fact represents a fictitious deadline, as the Brussels Treaty (Article X) merely allows signatories to cease to be a party to the Treaty in August 1988 (having given at least one year's notice) - something no signatory has any intention of doing. The clear implications of such claims is that certain member states are deliberately subjecting themselves to an artificial time constraint in order to limit the scope of any revision of the security clauses of the EUT (cf. Aguiar 1995: explanatory memorandum, paras 7-10)

¹² Note also the comments of Wim Van Eekelen, former Secretary General of the WEU, who complained that 'even in their Yugoslav policy the [EU] Foreign Ministers have seldom sought the views of the WEU and its planning cell' (*European Voice* 9-15 November 1995)

¹³ In response, the Dutch have suggested that Norway be able to attend those European Council that discuss defence matters. What this means for Turkey and Iceland is unclear.

¹⁴ One possible reason for this is that Defence Ministers were largely excluded from discussions on the creation of the Eurocorps, which were dominated by diplomats. As a result, operational issues perhaps did not figure as prominently on the agenda as questions of political symbolism (Menon et al 1992: 110)

¹⁵ A cynical, though superficially compelling interpretation of French actions is that, by proposing a European deterrent force, Paris was maintaining its reputation as an ambitious and enthusiastic proponent of European integration, whilst effectively scuppering any chance that practical progress would entail the sacrifice of national independence.

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