


The activities of WEU

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The activities of Western European Union

Post-War

Western European Union's chief mission after World War II was to carry out surveillance of the defeated Germany, a task which was to some extent implied in the Brussels Treaty of solidarity and collective self-defence. Fairly soon, however, the Cold War made it necessary to take the American point of view (shared by certain European countries) into account. According to this view, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) should sign up fully to the Western military bodies — including by rearming and incorporating its forces completely into the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) — just as the first European Community had allowed to happen in the politically and economically highly strategic area of coal and steel.

Thus, the first task of the WEU Council was to set up the Agency for the Control of Armaments (ACA). Of the four protocols supplementing and modifying the Brussels Treaty in 1954, the last two laid down provisions relating to the control of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons (NBC) and prohibiting the manufacture of certain types of so-called conventional weapons. The Agency carried out investigations in the establishments concerned, such as chemical factories, biological laboratories and missile factories. Preliminary research was carried out using information supplied by the FRG on request. Monitoring of stock levels involved both paper checks (documentation supplied and information gathered) and on-the-spot checks (verification of the validity of data obtained through answers to ACA questionnaires). Even though the questionnaire on quantitative monitoring involved all the Member States, the primary objective was actually to carry out surveillance on the FRG. This was gradually scaled down until it was finally abolished by decision of the Permanent Council on 27 June 1984. This was the outcome of geostrategic realities in Europe, full German involvement in democratic institutions and the control regulations themselves when applied to forces assigned to NATO.

WEU's second major historical act was to commit itself to finding a solution to the problem of the Saar. The ill feeling created by the special status of the territory, which was given to France as part of war reparations in 1919, returned to Germany in 1935 and then included in the French occupation zone after World War II, eventually led to the Saar, under the Paris Agreements of 1954, being given European status under WEU authority. On 23 October 1955, WEU held a referendum to decide on the ultimate fate of the territory, but the outcome was that most Saarlanders voted against retaining that status. After elections held under WEU auspices, the Saar rejoined the FRG. WEU was a driving force in rapprochement between France and the FRG. It also helped bring the United Kingdom and the WEU Member States on the mainland of Europe closer together, as witness, for example, the maintaining of British forces along the Rhine (the BAOR) ⁽¹⁾ or the WEU's role as intermediary in the negotiations between London and the European Communities until the United Kingdom acceded to them.

Reactivation and decline of WEU

After going through a dormant period and then being reactivated with the Rome Declaration of 27 October 1984, WEU set itself the target of promoting closer cooperation among the Member States, with NATO and with the EU bodies. WEU restructured its institutional bodies so that they could carry out research into different aspects of security (defence technologies, threat assessment, arms control verification, cooperation on armaments, logistics and training), set up a special working group on the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) and take the decision to establish the WEU Institute for Security Studies, which was active from July 1990, and the Torrejón Satellite Centre, which became operational in May 1997.

In the same way, between 1998 and 2001, it was involved in a series of temporary, small-scale missions (in the Persian Gulf, the Adriatic, Yugoslavia, the Danube, Mostar, Albania and Croatia). From June 1992 — on top of its common defence mission (under Article V) — it defined the 'Petersberg tasks', i.e. humanitarian or rescue missions, peacekeeping missions, and combat force missions for crisis management, including peacemaking operations.

WEU's operational role, which in practice came down to the designation of the forces answerable to WEU

(FAWEU) and the few crisis management and conflict prevention missions in which it was involved, was to be phased out in favour of a 'NATO-isation' of the organisation and the conferring of greater powers on the European Union (EU) from the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 onwards, and particularly from the Amsterdam Treaty of 1998, which took over the Petersberg tasks. WEU's position as the interface between NATO and the EU turned into a subordinate position of dependence. In the end, WEU had to acquiesce in the transfer of its heritage to the EU and the fading away of the modified Brussels Treaty Organisation.

As from the WEU Marseille Council in November 2000, the effects of the inclusion of certain WEU functions in the EU were considerable: the Council stopped meeting, the Secretariat (the guardian of the modified Brussels Treaty) became dormant, the operating resources allowed to the Parliamentary Assembly, which was still working in Paris, were cut, and the Institute for Security Studies and the Satellite Centre were transferred from WEU to the EU.

The inheritance left to the EU by WEU

The EU inherited a number of benefits from WEU.

The **military heritage** resides in the Planning Cell (1993), the Military Committee (1998), the Situation Centre (1996), the Torrejón Satellite Centre (1993), the generic plans ⁽²⁾, the definition of the forces awaiting deployment (pre-designation), the FAWEU ⁽³⁾, the WEU exercises and WEU's experience of crisis management missions. WEU operations in the Gulf and the Balkans, though of course modest, gave the EU an opportunity to try its hand and, in particular, to assimilate a range of instruments and functions which would give a boost to the rising power of the European security and defence policy (ESDP). This also includes the principle of European police forces which WEU had initiated earlier in Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina) from 1994 to 1996 and in Albania (the Multinational Police Advisory and Instructor Training Element) from 1997 to 2001. Crisis management is the field in which the EU has most effectively drawn on the preparatory work done by WEU. The same applies to the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF), for which the doctrinal and operating premises were laid down jointly by NATO and WEU. To conclude, the EU has aligned itself on WEU/NATO standards as regards security certification.

The **doctrinal heritage** consists of the Petersberg tasks, which the EU took over for itself when the Amsterdam Treaty was signed, and even more directly at the EU Cologne Summit in 1999. The conceptual thinking surrounding the Petersberg tasks was sufficiently well-supported and in keeping with the values written into the EU Treaties to be rapidly assimilated by the EU, at the cost of dropping the idea of including common defence.

There was a **strategic heritage** because the EU took account of the methodological difficulties WEU had in quickly drawing up a kind of strategic concept. This was especially true when the WEU's Lisbon documents were issued in May 1995 and its Madrid documents in November 1995; these gave rise to a great many differences of opinion and debates over the meaning of terms ⁽⁴⁾.

There was a **diplomatic heritage** because WEU was an instrument for institutional rapprochement and pan-European dialogue with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, Ukraine, the Balkan countries, the neutral countries and the countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. In a way, WEU built bridges and paved the way for cooperation, preparing the ground, in a sense, for the future enlargements of the EU and NATO because of the different statuses of its members, even though these tended to throw things into disorder and complicate the procedures.

The **parliamentary heritage** came with the WEU Assembly, now one of the few parliamentary instruments which, through its reports and its discussions, raises an awareness of the importance of common security and defence, of the need to keep up transatlantic bridges and of the urgent necessity of organising a European interparliamentary structure which associates it with the national parliaments and the European Parliament.

The **intellectual heritage** was the WEU Institute for Security Studies, a dual-purpose body (know-how and advice, and public information) which provided food for political and military thinking on questions relating

to diplomacy, security and defence.

The **technical and industrial heritage** came with the Western European Armaments Group (WEAG, 1993) and the Western European Armaments Organisation (WEAO, 1996). What was inherited here was existing networks, the importance attached to intergovernmental working and the practice of taking the special characteristics of military planning and programming into account, rather than the practical results, which were fairly mixed.

Most of all, there was a **political heritage**, which was what made it possible to transfer WEU's functions (and not WEU as such) to the EU, for statutory, diplomatic and strategic reasons.

These transfers show that WEU consisted of elements which were useful to the emerging task of organising the ESDP without running into two snags: firstly, the risk of duplication, had it been necessary to create, from scratch, parallel politico-military structures which would have existed side by side, and secondly, the risk of political tension, had it been necessary to assimilate the entire WEU into the EU by creating a fourth pillar for defence.

(December 2009)

(1) British Army on the Rhine

(2) Plans for force deployment planning according to predetermined scenarios covering the whole range of the Petersberg tasks. These generic schemes are updated, put into practice and carried out when there is a political decision to commit forces in the field.

(3) The European Corps (or Eurocorps), Eurofor, Euromarfor, the Spanish-Italian Amphibious Force, the UK/NL Amphibious Force, the UK-Belgian-German-Dutch Multinational Division (Centre), the Staff of the 1st German-Dutch Corps, the European Air Group (EAG).

(4) See WEU Council of Ministers, *European security: a common concept of the 27 WEU Countries*, Madrid, 14 November 1995.