

Preface

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URL: <http://www.cvce.eu/obj/preface-en-5ffe116e-e591-49b3-82b3-7d90c84d5dd7.html>

Last updated: 31/10/2016



Preface

The thematic ePublication entitled ‘Franco-British diplomatic games and issues in WEU (1954–1982)’ is the result of the ‘Diplomacy within Western European Union’ research project carried out by the CVCE. It is based on an exploration of the archives of Western European Union, which were transferred to Luxembourg following the closure of the organisation.

On 31 March 2010, the Presidency of the Permanent Council of Western European Union announced that its ten Member States had decided to put an end to the organisation’s activities by the end of June 2011. With its decision of 11 May 2011, the Permanent Council approved the proposal of the Luxembourg Government for the WEU archives to be hosted at the Luxembourg National Archives and for the CVCE to be given the task of exploiting the archives for research purposes.^[1] This decision reflected the importance of keeping the organisation’s heritage together in a single place so as to make it easier to consult the archives for research projects carried out in the public interest.

Before the Maastricht Treaty was signed on 7 February 1992, laying the foundations for a common foreign and security policy between the European Community Member States, WEU was the only European organisation that specifically focused on the question of collective security and defence in Western Europe.^[2] France and the United Kingdom were the two key states throughout the organisation’s existence. However, they sometimes acted as a brake on WEU’s activities rather than as a driving force for the organisation.

Against this backdrop, the CVCE’s thematic ePublication looks at the diplomatic relations and interactions between France and the United Kingdom in relation to a series of topics associated with the changing geopolitical context in Europe and its immediate geographical surroundings which were addressed by WEU. It is primarily based on the organisation’s archives. This ePublication also emphasises the interests and role of France and the United Kingdom in the development of a European security and defence policy. The analysis of archive documents sheds light on the institutional constraints that membership of WEU placed on French and British foreign policy.

This thematic ePublication has been submitted for review to a committee composed of the following experts:

- Yves BOYER, Professor at the École Polytechnique (part of the University of Paris-Saclay) and Deputy Director of the Foundation for Strategic Research.
- Anne DEIGHTON, Professor of European International Politics and Governing Body Fellow at Wolfson College, University of Oxford.
- Álvaro DE VASCONCELOS, Project Director at the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI) and Coordinator of the Steering Committee of the Global Governance Group (GG10), former Director of the EU Institute for Security Studies and Co-founder of the Institute for Strategic and International Studies (IEEI) in Lisbon.

The thematic ePublication is available in French and English.

[1] Western European Union. Secretary-General’s note. Council decision on WEU archives. C(11)05 final. Brussels, 10 May 2011.

[2] The European Defence Community, the treaty for which was signed on 27 May 1952 in Paris, was more ambitious than WEU. Following France’s refusal to ratify the founding act of the organisation, it never came into force.