

From the early days of the European Movement, launched at The Hague in 1948 under the chairmanship of Winston Churchill, the countries that later formed the European Union have had the ambition of one day creating their own foreign policy and their own defense and military institutions. This was part of trying to ensure that the tragedies of World Wars I and II would not be repeated. Thus, following the first step toward West European integration—the Schuman Plan, which became the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951—it seemed natural to try creating a European Defense Community (EDC);¹ also, as the cold war deepened, there was a requirement to find a way to rearm Western Germany and bring it into the Western alliance. The treaty that resulted, signed by six West European countries (France, Germany, Italy, and the three Benelux states) was defeated by the French parliament in 1954, mostly because it provided for too much devolution of sovereignty too soon.² In its place, the Western Union organization of 1948 was updated and transformed into the Western European Union—the six EDC countries and the United Kingdom—and it became the vehicle for Germany’s rearmament and its parallel entry into NATO, the

¹For text see *Traité Instituant la Communauté Européenne de Défense et Documents Annexes*, nouvelle édition, Paris: La Documentation Française, August 1, 1952.

²See Daniel Lerner and Raymond Aron, eds., *France Defeats EDC*, New York: F. A. Praeger, 1957. For a discussion of the early period of the WEU and of NATO’s development, see Robert Hunter, *Security in Europe*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, Second Edition, 1972.

paramount Western alliance, dependent on U.S. commitment, leadership, and military power.³

This early effort to create a European military organization thus introduced twin themes that have been present in debate and developments ever since: on the one hand, the desire of European states to move integration forward, including a defense element (and, concomitantly, arrangements for making possible a “European” foreign policy); and, on the other hand, a recognition that, for many purposes, U.S. strategic commitment, military power, and the preeminence of a U.S.-led alliance have been indispensable. Usually, these twin themes have been more-or-less compatible; but at times—like the present—they have also been a source of tension among allies.

For its part, the United States has long supported European integration, for a variety of reasons, including its own historical sense that this would reduce the risk of future conflict among states belonging to a European community, with the need for the United States thus, once again, to “sort out” European problems. Furthermore, from early on the United States saw value in arrangements that would increase incentives for Europeans to assume a greater share of the common defense burdens that developed from the late 1940s onward. The product of these and other motives led to U.S. support for a so-called European pillar within the broader Atlantic Alliance.⁴ In practice, however, during the cold war the United States imposed one major qualification: It was loath to see the European pillar develop in ways that could be fundamentally at odds with U.S. strategic objectives or overall U.S. leadership within the alliance. Within that general qualification, a minor theme was that European states might develop some limited foreign policy initiatives at variance with U.S. goals and objectives—perhaps even as an exercise in being different from America for the sake of being different, to promote European

³Spain and Portugal joined the WEU in 1990; Greece joined in 1991. Denmark, although a NATO ally that also belongs to the European Union, has chosen to remain only a WEU “observer.”

⁴See François de Rose, Ambassadeur de France, “A Future Perspective for the Alliance,” *NATO Review*, Vol. 43, No. 4, July 1995, pp. 9–14. Also see President John F. Kennedy, Address at Independence Hall (“Atlantic Partnership”), Philadelphia, July 4, 1962.

cohesion and integrity through opposition to Washington's lead.⁵ A more important theme was what the United States believed to be the overriding strategic imperative: that Washington should have charge of the central direction of the cold war—and especially the nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union. A European pillar could have its uses, but it must not interfere with NATO's role or the United States' lead and influence.

The end of the cold war brought a new round of discussion and decisions among the European Union countries regarding foreign policy and defense institutional arrangements, as well as a significant change in the U.S. perspective. Regarding the latter, the United States was obviously no longer concerned that security arrangements among European states could interfere with management of strategic relations with the (newly defunct) Soviet Union; indeed, the United States has come to see that the European pillar of the alliance has some particular benefits. These have included the long-term value of European integration for the recurring theme of more-equitable burden sharing. In addition, European efforts to organize for defense can be an added incentive for West European states to continue taking defense seriously, thus undertaking military efforts—and sustaining military budgets—for EU institutional reasons and, in the process, also benefiting NATO and its capabilities.

Regarding the European Union, the 1990s saw significant advances in the direction of further European integration—"deepening," in the EU's shorthand—at the same time as it was beginning to involve itself in the fate of countries in Central Europe, including the idea of eventually bringing virtually all of them fully into the union ("widening"). As progress was made in the economic and political elements of integration—leading, most dramatically, to the January 1999 introduction of a common currency, the Euro, among 11 of the 15 member states—it was natural that the union turned again toward developing a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and, as

⁵Thus, as the European Community (EC) began trying to develop a fledgling foreign policy, there were constant struggles over the extent to which the United States could be given access to deliberations while they were still in process. One approach was the "Gymnich Formula," whereby a troika of leaders—immediately past, present, and immediately future presidencies of the EC—could brief the Americans on what the EC states were discussing within their "European Political Cooperation" (EPC).

part of it, a European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI)—now called by the EU the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). These initiatives were set forth as goals and as practical steps in the EU treaties of Maastricht (1992) and Amsterdam (1997).⁶ In the realm of defense, efforts focused on being able to undertake a range of military missions, the so-called Petersberg Tasks, so named for a WEU council of ministers' meeting in June 1992.⁷ These potential missions, as later incorporated in the Amsterdam Treaty, would “include humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making.”⁸ Notably, NATO allies rapidly pledged support for the new ESDI.⁹

⁶*Title V: Provisions on a Common Foreign and Security Policy. Maastricht (The Single European Act of 1992)* laid out the framework for CFSP and set as a goal “the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence” (Article J.4.1). The WEU was asked “to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications” (Article J.4.2). However, member state obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty were respected, and EU policy was to be “compatible with the common security and defence policy established within that [North Atlantic Treaty] framework” (Article J.4.4). At the same time, the Maastricht Treaty’s “Final Act” included a declaration by the then nine members of the WEU that the “Member States of WEU welcome the development of the European security and defence identity” (ibid.). Thus the term ESDI was launched.

The Amsterdam Treaty went beyond Maastricht, referring to the “progressive framing of a common defence policy . . . which might lead to a common defence, should the European Council so decide” (paragraph 17.1, Title V of the *Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union*). Amsterdam provided for “the possibility of the integration of the WEU into the Union, should the European Council so decide” (ibid.). Also, “The progressive framing of a common defence policy will be supported, as Member States consider appropriate, by cooperation between them in the field of armaments” (ibid.). In addition, when the EU used the WEU “to elaborate and implement decisions of the Union,” all member states would be “entitled to participate fully in the tasks in question” (ibid., paragraph 17.3). That meant inclusion of EU members that are not also members of NATO.

⁷See Western European Union Council of Ministers, *Petersberg Declaration*, Bonn, June 19, 1992, paragraph II.4.

⁸*Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union*, Title V, Article 17.2. The very limited nature of these Petersberg tasks is sometimes overlooked, by both some European proponents and some U.S. critics of ESDP.

⁹See NATO, Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, *Final Communiqué*, M-NAC-2(93)70, Brussels, December 2, 1993, paragraph 2:

Foreign Ministers . . . reaffirmed their full support for the emerging European Security and Defence Identity and for the further development of close cooperation between NATO and WEU on the basis of transparency and complementarity. They believe that this will contribute to strengthening

the European pillar and, by doing so, the Alliance itself, and result in a strengthened and more equal transatlantic partnership.