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European Integration: The Contribution of the West European Union

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Abstract

The birth of the European idea finds its descentance from the negative consequences created by the catastrophic menace of the Second World War. The West European Union (WEU), founded in 1954 as Europe's defensive arm against the German or the Soviet threat, proved more helpful in the cause for European integration rather than towards the aim of its inception. Nevertheless, as the forces of history worked their way, the WEU played a role of no lesser importance. According to this frame of thought the WEU functioned as the archetype on which the EU was based, supporting on varying levels of cooperation and actions in an effective manner the very cause of European integration.

1. Introduction

The birth of the European idea, as experienced nowadays in the contemporary European reality, finds its descentance from the negative consequences created by the catastrophic menace of the Second World War (financial problems, food shortage, low agricultural production, minimal industrial production). In effect, the Second World War had catalytic consequences on the preexisting nationalist aspirations of the European states and significantly contributed to the building up of Europe in parallel with the realization of the European vision.

During the interwar period, two, initially contradictory, trends were formulated, which, in turn, developed into a dialectic relation on the issue of the European integration: on the one hand, there was the federalist trend, the full realization of which would constitute the acceptance of a union based on the federalist state model (federal entity, unionist integration) and on the other,

there was the trend for common governance through an intergovernmental cooperation. These two trends, out of which the first functions in a centripetal and the second in centrifugal fashion, have developed throughout history a dialectical relation, the outcome of which is nothing less than the current European reality. The preponderance of the one form over the other, however, would guide the European venture to a different orientation. Jacques Delors' initial thought for the creation of a federation of nation states, found allies in the faces of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Helmut Schmidt, who took the initial idea one step further by proposing a federal approach for the eurozone in the European Union (EU) context. As of May 12, 2000, Joschka Fisher, was referring to the union using the term authentic federation. All of a sudden, Jean Monnet's and Robert Schuman's vision became of interest once again. It was restored, as one could well put it, by the decision makers mentioned above, in the context of the discussion of the course Europe should follow nowadays in order to base its future on solid foundations (Sidjanski, 2002). Yet, the normative power of reality is the one to determine which model will prevail, as the several approaches towards the one or the other direction attempted by their respective proponents and the architects of the European venture, will come together in one final shape. This shape, to a great extent, will bear the characteristics of the prevailing trend, but will also bear –yet only suggestively- the elements of the trend that failed to prevail in the end.

In any case, however, it is certain that in the dynamics of the EU integration experienced so far, there was a number of parameters which contributed to its formation, to a lesser or larger extent. The West European Union (WEU), founded in 1954 as Europe's defensive arm against the German or the Soviet threat, proved more helpful in the cause for European integration rather than towards the aim of its inception. The WEU truly contributed to the realization of the European vision. It would have been almost impossible for the European states to move towards a political integration from the very beginning through a supranational entity, which would regulate the sensitive issue of defense. It was much too soon for such a development to happen, something that was actually proven with the rejection of the European Defense Community (EDC), which is mentioned further in the text. This difficult role on the intergovernmental level was carried out by the WEU. So, the European integration went forward untrammled, in the field of the so-called low politics, that is, mainly in economic functions, based on a functional approach, which led to the creation of the initial unifying fields. (Haas, 1968, 84, P. Ioakeimides, 1994, 24, Kouskouvelis, Poitita Publications, 2004,

435).¹ Nowadays, the increased cooperation of the EU member states, starting from the intergovernmental level, has already approached the supranational one, exhibiting increasing integration tendencies in other fields as well, both in broadness and intensity.

In the current analysis, we will attempt to approach the issue of European integration through the analysis of the dialectical relation developed between the EU and the WEU. The evolution of the WEU, from its inception until its incorporation within the EU and the assessment of the contribution of the organization to the European integration, will be examined. We will, next, highlight the landmarks in the course of the WEU's evolution that carried the European venture forward.

2. The first step towards the creation of the WEU: The Dunkerke Agreement, 1947

The Dunkerke Agreement constitutes the first step, taken by both the Great Britain and France on March 4, 1947, in order to check the potential threat stemming from Western Germany. The agreement would function as a defense umbrella for the two states against the potential –but then improbable– case that the Western Germany attempted the revision of the treaties it had signed as the defeated power, as was the case in the First World War (K. Ioannou and G. Koumoutsakou, 1992, 11). Yet, the regulatory power of things has already started to compose a different jigsaw than the one sketched by the balances of the Second World War. A new threat, the Soviet Union, appeared in the international strategic environment upsetting the balance of power that was shaped after the end of the Second World War. The unfruitful Moscow conference, on April 1947 for the accommodation of the German problem and the Prague coup d'etat, on February 1948, exacerbated Western Europe's concerns for a potential Soviet military intervention. These concerns promoted the level of communication among the states of Western Europe and formulated the preconditions for a different stance towards Germany. The need for the conclusion of a defense agreement that would correspond to the developing situation, determined the drift of events. However,

¹ A detailed analysis on the functionalist theory is beyond the scope of this study. Let it be noted here, that based on this theory, through the unification of basic fields of operations of the national states in gradual steps, and with the end state being the creation of a supranational community, groups of people or politically acting individuals could transfer their initial interest or the focus of the initial centre to a new one “the institutions of which already possess or claim competence and authority over the pre-existing national states”. The fundamental motive for such a move would be the pursuit of their interest and the increase of their prosperity.

Germany's participation in a defense treaty was viewed problematic at that time, as it stumbled upon the reaction of the Western European states, which were not yet ready to turn the page to the recent past and the tragic memories of the Second World War.

3. The Treaty of Brussels, 1948

In this context, Germany was not invited to participate in the consultations preceding the Brussels Treaty, which was signed under the initiative of Great Britain, on March 17, 1948 (Treaty of Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defense, <http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b480317a.htm> The Treaty was put into force on August 25, 1948). According, however, to a provision of the latter treaty, which succeeded the Dunker Agreement, other states that were not signatory parties, were also allowed to accede as members in the future (Christodoulides, 2001).² It was evident that this was a clear hint, directed towards Germany and Italy. The opportune climate that was gradually formulating, was reinforced by the Soviet threat that was steadily growing, altering the field of international relations to a bipolar one (East-West). At that time, the Korean War was imminent and the Western European states were already in a position of dependence from the US, as far as security was concerned. The latter having undertaken the burden of the defense of Western Europe, and regarding a Soviet offensive against Western Germany quite likely, pressed for the immediate rearmament of Germany. It was mainly France, which expressed reaction towards those pressures. This problem was quite hard to resolve. Germany, had to enter the western camp at any cost, in a manner that would not cause reactions to other states, and especially France.

4. A failed attempt: the European Defense Community (EDC), 1952

It was fate's play that it was France, which opened the door of Western Europe to Germany. On May 9, 1950 the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, addressed a proposal to six European states, among which West Germany and Italy were included, for the creation of a supranational –and

² Due to the extended participation in the Treaty of Brussels (the BENELUX states were also participating), a broader security perspective was created that overcompensated for the feared rebirth of the German threat. This is because the system of mutual guarantees, that was envisaged in the Treaty, was not to be activated only in the case of the German threat –even though it was the only one mentioned in the preamble.

not intergovernmental- European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). It is noteworthy, that the supranational nature of the Community as opposed to an intergovernmental one, means that the states that are involved in it, cede to the Community a part of their national sovereignty on issues that are dealt by the Community. Thus, hereafter, the Community and it alone, was competent for the regulation of the issues that the member states had agreed to cede to it.

In this sense, the establishment of the ECSC, on a supranational level, aimed at the creation of a common market in which coal and steel, the fundamental raw material for Europe's reconstruction after the Second World War, would circulate freely. The supranational nature would prevent any antagonisms among the member states of the ECSC and would contribute to their indispensable reconciliation. In particular, the reconciliation between France and Germany, which worked to the interest of the former state in the sense that it would tame the potential economic despotism of the latter. The reconciliation, however, "was to the interest of Germany as well, in the sense that it would reinstate the respect and trust of the international community [towards it]" (Stephanou, 1999). It is worth pointing out, that the French Foreign Minister, who is considered as the inspirer of ECSC plan –along with Jean Monnet- addressed his proposal to all European states out of which only five approved of it, namely Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Luxemburg.

The positive dynamics for integration that the ECSC created, inspired the French prime minister, Rene Pleven (Kouskouvelis, 1995), to move forward with the proposal of a draft treaty, which would in the end lead to the creation of a European army. A series of events has contributed to the proposal of such a plan. On the one hand it was the Korean War, which as of June 1950 had already started, plus the fact that the US due to their engagement, pressed this time more than any other for the immediate rearmament of Germany. On the other hand, the Pleven plan could function in a catalytic manner for the reactions expressed by France and Great Britain, as this plan, let alone the ECSC, had a supranational nature and in this sense it would deprive Germany of the authority to rearm itself. It is well expressed that, instead "of the German rearmament, the Germans could rearm in the framework of a new European community", a supranational defense community (Christodoulides, 2001, 39).

The European Defense Community (EDC), however, the fruit of Pleven's plan failed. The initial signatures of Germany and Italy, on May 27, 1952, were not followed by those of Great Britain and later France, which followed Britain's example. As it was mentioned in the French parliament, on August 30, 1954, it was impossible for a defense agreement to provide any sense of security to Europe if Germany would participate but Britain

would abstain (Naskou-Perraki, 2002, 285). Professor Christodoulides eloquently comments on EDC's unfortunate course: "the moribund attempt of agglomeration in the field of defense had walked its short path. The people of Europe had to wait four full decades for a new historical challenge in order to repeat this venture, losing the supranational cloak, in a minor institutional and substantial expression" (Christodoulides, 2001, 41).

5. The establishment of the WEU, 1954.

In September 1954, Britain tried to promote the idea of the European integration through the framework of the Atlantic Treaty (NATO), without excluding Germany this time. One month later, in October 1954, the Brussels Treaty was amended, four new supplementary protocols were signed in Paris (the Paris Protocols)³ and the WEU was established.⁴ The Supplementary Protocols were put into force on May 6, 1955 and referred to the financial, social and defense cooperation of the members, the enlargement by two new members (Germany and Italy)⁵, the military forces of the new Organisation⁶

³ See Protocol Modifying and Completing the Brussels Treaty, Protocol No. II on Forces of Western European Union, Protocol No. III on the Control of Armaments, Protocol No. IV on the Agency of Western European Union for the Control of Armaments. For the text of the Protocols see Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Western European Union. Fifty Years from the Brussels Treaty (1948-1998)*, Athens, 1999, pp. 84-131 (hereafter Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

⁴ Western European Union, Union de l'Europe Occidentale, www.weu.int The Brussels Treaty of 1948, revised through the Paris Protocols, will be mentioned as Revised Treaty. For texts see K. Ioannou & G. Koumoutsakou, op. cit. Appendix, pp. 55-61.

⁵ As far as the enlargement is concerned see the Preamble of the first Protocol, which mentions: "Inspired by the common will for the enhancement of peace and security. Wishing towards this aim to promote and encourage the gradual unification of Europe. Convinced that the accession of the Federal Republic of Germany and of the Italian Republic in the Treaty would constitute a new substantial progress towards the fulfilment of the aforementioned aims..." in *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, op. cit., pp. 84-85. See also the Declaration Inviting Italy and the Federal Republic of Germany to Accede to the Brussels Treaty, which was adopted in parallel to the Paris Protocols.

⁶ See article 1 of Protocol II which refers to the administration of the military forces: "The ground and air forces, which each of the High Signatory Parties would place under the orders of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, in times of peace, will not exceed in total force and number of units..." in *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, op. cit., p. 92.

and the control of armaments through the WEU Agency for the Control of Armaments.⁷

According to E. Kouskouvelis' approach, the WEU finds the ideological support for its establishment and the definition of the role it was called upon to play, within the frame of mind that the Western European states should coalesce against the Soviet or German threat. He specifically mentions: "the ulterior aim of the WEU's existence was the functioning of NATO in Europe and a presupposition for that functioning was the rearmament and the incorporation of Germany within its framework. In order, however, to ease reactions by France and the United Kingdom, Germany would be incorporated in the WEU, in parallel with NATO, through which the German rearmament would be checked. The German accession, nevertheless, had as a natural implication the abolition of one of the fundamental aims of the Brussels Treaty: that of defense against any threat, expressly including the resurgence of the German aggressive policies" (Kouskouvelis, 1995, 90)⁸

During the three first decades following its establishment, the WEU functioned more as a forum for discussion among the European states rather than a military arm. It promoted the European integration and forged the Great Britain-Europe relation. In this dire international environment, the WEU acted as a bridge between the Western European states and the United Kingdom, contributing immensely both in the course of European integration as well as in the accession of the latter in the European family –the then EEC- in 1973. The WEU clearly constitutes the cradle for the birth of the European idea and surely, the protective arm that salvaged it, in difficult times for the communication among the peoples of Europe. It served as the minimum necessary capital the investment of which was bound to bear future profit.

6. The reactivation of the WEU: from the Hague, to Maasticht and Amsterdam

The reactivation of the WEU occurred essentially on October 1987, during the WEU Council Summit in the Hague, with the adoption of a text, which at a practical level promoted the European cooperation in the field of armaments, their control and their non-proliferation, while in parallel it reinforced NATO's European arm. Under the title "Platform on European Secu-

⁷ See Protocols III and IV in *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, op. cit., pp. 96 and 104 respectively.

⁸ See also the Preamble and article VII par. B of the Revised Treaty.

riety Interests”, also known as the Hague Platform, this text signaled also the accession of three new states in the WEU: Spain, Portugal and Greece.⁹

The Maastricht Treaty was the next landmark in the course of the WEU evolution, in the sense that the WEU undertook a series of important activities having to do with the security within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). On this basis, on December 10, 1991, the leaders of the WEU member states adopted the Statement on the WEU role and on its Relation with the Atlantic Alliance, and a Statement on WEU’s enlargement, both of which constituted Annex V of the Maastricht European Council Presidency Conclusions.¹⁰ Furthermore, the field of the WEU’s competences and especially the Council were broadened in such a manner that would allow the concerted action of the WEU, the EU and the CFSP, as far as security is concerned (Powner, 2000, 10). The second statement recognized the need to develop a European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI), which would hereafter connect the EU and NATO, as the military arm of the former and the European pillar of the latter and would promote at the same time the evolution of the WEU as far as its operational role is concerned.

This Statement signaled the accession of Greece in the WEU, which, nevertheless, did not confirm Greece’s initial optimism. The mutual assistance clause of article V of the WEU, which could strengthen Greece’s security against Turkey, proved ineffective because of Turkey’s accession and second because of the redrafting of the clause by the WEU member states. From that point onwards, the clause did not cover a WEU member state in the case that it engaged with a NATO member state. Obviously, Turkey is a NATO member state and the ‘innuendo’ targeted Greece.

The Petersburg Declaration of June 19, 1992 during the WEU Council Bonn Summit reaffirmed WEU’s support on conflict prevention, crisis management and the efforts to maintain peace at a regional level in cooperation with the OSCE, UN Security Council, along the lines of the Helsinki Final Act. However, the Maastricht Treaty, despite the important steps it took in the field of the promotion of European integration and the field of defense

⁹ The accession Protocols for the first two countries were signed on November 1988, while Greece’s on November 1992. Portugal and Spain entered the alliance on March 1990, while Greece in 1995.

¹⁰ The first Statement, among others, mentioned the following: “the WEU member states agree to the need of developing a genuine defense identity, as far as security and defense are concerned and to undertake a greater European responsibility on defense issues... The WEU will constitute an indispensable part of the development of the European Union and will strengthen its contribution in the solidarity of the Atlantic Alliance members...”. See K. Ioannou & G. Koumoutsakou, op. cit. Appendix, pp. 59-61.

and security¹¹, did not manage to give a convincing answer to many issues concerning security, regardless of the fact that it addressed them, including the common defense policy.¹² The adoption, for example, of article V of the WEU, which would lead to the incorporation, or in particular the “merge” between the EU and the WEU, providing at the same time defense capabilities to the EU, did not materialize (Lamprides and Yfantis, 2003, 589).

The next treaty was the Amsterdam Treaty, which was signed in June 1996 so as to revise the Maastricht Treaty and promote the role of the WEU as the EU’s basic defense pillar. This promotion had to do with the development of a common defense policy in the areas of crisis prevention and management (Duke, 2000, 585, Ioakeimides, 2001, 586). Yet, this time the WEU was put under the European Council’s “guidance”¹³ while, for the first time the issue of the “potential incorporation of the WEU to the EU was put on the table, since the European Council was the one to decide on the matter”. It is true that this last clause signaled and foretold WEU’s future. As it is aptly noted, the fact that the Amsterdam Treaty transferred the responsibility for any military operation directly to the EU, rendered the WEU “without subject matter” and proved “its existence without meaning” (Ioakeimides, 593). The countdown for the WEU had just begun. By June 1999, the Cologne European Council decided the establishment of the Defense Policy Commission, a Military Commission and the transfer of specific competences and organs from the WEU. It was also stated, that the WEU will have accomplished its mission with the promotion of the procedure of deepening in the field of defense. The appointment of the Secretary General of the EU Council as Secretary General of the WEU, on November 1999, signaled an irreversible course of WEU’s incorporation to the EU.

March 1, 2000 was the day when the Secretariat of the WEU council, the Political and Security Commission, and the Interim Military Body operated in Brussels.¹⁴ The commission in question was incorporated during the Nice European Council, on December 2001, in the Nice Treaty (Ioakeimides, 2001, 593), which also amended article 25 of the EU Treaty, deleting any reference to the EU-WEU relations. The result was that the EU also consti-

¹¹ See Title V of the Treaty.

¹² See article J.4.1 of the Treaty.

¹³ It is worth pointing out that this particular development had caused the strong reaction of the USA in the past. On this issue see more in P. Ioakeimides, *European Political Union, Theory, Negotiations, Institutions and Policies, The Maastricht Treaty and Greece*, Themelio, 1993, pp. 266-267.

¹⁴ Let it be noted that the suspension of the WEU activities was decided by the WEU Council on the November 2000 Marseilles Summit, in which the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs of the member states participated.

tuted from then on a “military institution”, while the WEU “a legal entity with no substantial authority” (Ioakeimides, 2001, 592).

7. Conclusion

The WEU never functioned in accordance to the intensity or the broadness of the authorities and the aims for which it was created. Nevertheless, as the forces of history worked their way, the WEU played a role of no lesser importance. It functioned as a basis for the European edifice of the future, it bridged differences that historically existed among the European states and in short, it educated its European audience to think in many cases in a mutually supranational manner. The CFSP stemmed from the WEU, as a more sophisticated model for communication-cooperation on issues of foreign and defense policy. It was responsible for the structuring of institutional arsenal, spheres of responsibility, procedures for the easing off of disputes and creation of consent. According to this frame of thought the WEU functioned as the archetype on which the EU was based and it contributed effectively to the historical course, supporting on varying levels of cooperation and actions in an effective manner the very cause of European integration.

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