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The Politics
of
European Defense Cooperation

by
Roger Morgan

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Introduction

The arguments in favor of closer military cooperation among NATO's European members are much the same at the start of the Alliance's fourth decade as they were in its first: that some form of European defense entity would represent an increase in Europe's share of the burden, and thus encourage a consolidated U.S. commitment to the defense of Europe; that a more self-sufficient European defense capacity would be a deterrent to Soviet threats or pressure if the credibility of this U.S. guarantee in fact were to decline; that greater integration of European defense efforts would reduce the waste entailed by separate and often competing national systems of equipment procurement; and that the process of integrating the highly sensitive sector of defense and security policies would promote the closer political union of the states which participated.

The arguments advanced against a European defense entity, likewise, are similar a quarter-century after the demise of the European Defense Community (EDC) to those that were current at the time: that greater European self-sufficiency might weaken the American commitment, rather than strengthening it; that the Europeans, despite all their economic resources, could never assemble a military deterrent strong enough to replace the American guarantee; that "it is not possible to foresee at present a move towards a common defense policy

of the Nine or circumstances...which would make such a move either necessary or desirable"; that "rationalization of defense procurement and strengthening of conventional defense are being pursued energetically in NATO with the U.S. participation which is so essential"; and that, far from promoting political unity, a common defense policy would compromise it, since "the Nine are at a very early stage in the process of evolving a common foreign policy and it is essential to concentrate on constructive elements which lead towards a progressive alignment of policies and to avoid elements which would be destructive."¹

There is thus a somewhat enervating sense of déjà vu about the arguments in presence: Harold Macmillan recalls in his memoirs that when the Council of Europe was being set up in May 1949 "the British government tried to rule out defense from the scope of the new body (as being dealt with by NATO)."²

However, it is clear that there will be some new factors at work, as Europe and NATO move from the 1970's to the 1980's, which will modify the shape of the familiar problem, and add urgency to the attempt to solve it. Among these new factors, which will be considered in the succeeding sections of this paper, are the following: -The mounting scarcity of resources for spending on conventional defense, which strengthens the case for greater coordination of European procurement efforts as a contribution to a genuine "two-way street" in NATO;

-The perceptible if unsteady advances towards European political unification marked by the direct election of the parliament, the establishment of the EMS, and the progress of European Political Cooperation;

-And the evident need, in the light of "gray area" problems revealed in the SALT II negotiations, for the European members of NATO to clarify their common strategic interests and to promote them collectively, whether negotiations for SALT III agreement take place or not.

The economics of conventional weapons procurement.

Although the European members of NATO have responded without too much difficulty to the recently agreed program for an increase of 3% in defense spending, it is clear that by the mid-1980's the cost of producing up-to-date conventional weapons on a convincing scale, along the nationally-organized procurement methods in use today, will be prohibitively high. The European Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, in its comments on the industrial aspects of the Parliament's 1978 report on arms procurement, emphasized the reasons why in the age of high technology "the cost of defense equipment has increased far more than general rates of inflation", and continued:

The combination of less resources for military research and development in the European aircraft industry (than in the USA) and the dispersal of these resources between a far larger number of companies has undoubtedly had an extremely adverse effect on the competitiveness of the military and civil sector.³

The prospective worsening of this situation, with its negative consequences not only for the military capability of NATO's European members, but also for their competitive capacity in high technology industry in general, should certainly focus the attention of governments on the possibilities of greater efficiency through a rationalization of procurement procedures. The urgency of the problem will be enhanced by the continuing rise in the cost of energy, and by the consequent pressure on European

governments to re-allocate energy supplies away from sectors of industrial production characterized by wasteful duplication of effort (both in R & D and in production) such as the arms procurement industry.

Earlier studies of the means towards more efficient procedures for European arms procurement⁴ have recently been supplemented by two detailed analyses which make concrete suggestions on ways to go forward. One of these studies, the report prepared for the Political Committee of the European Parliament by its rapporteur Dr. Egon Klepsch, makes detailed proposals for an amplification of the European Community's industrial policy to embrace the militarily and economically vital sector of weapons procurement.⁵

The other report, by a study group sponsored by the Federal Trust for Education and Research in London, ranges more broadly in its recommendations, which include the establishment of a European Defense Institute, and intensified consultations on strategic doctrine concerning nuclear weapons.⁶

Both reports suggest, as their central recommendation in the field of weapons procurement, an active involvement of the European Community, through its industrial policy, and preferably through a development of the existing Independent European Programme Group in the alliance.

These arguments - which receive indirect but powerful endorsement from a recent study of the existing limitations and failings of Community policy in the aerospace sector⁷ will not be repeated at length in the present paper. It is enough to state here that the balance of the arguments, which

has so far told against any systematic attempt to promote weapons procurement at the European level, now appears certain to shift, in part for the economic reasons outlined above, in the opposite direction.

The context of European politics:

The effect of these economic factors will be reinforced by current and impending developments in the politics of the European Community, including the election of its Parliament by direct suffrage, the move towards monetary integration, and the strengthening of the system of European Political Cooperation.

The increased authority given to the European Parliament by the direct elections of 1979 will allow it to intervene with greater influence on issues where even the previous Parliament expressed quite specific views, among them the issue of European defense cooperation. In June 1978 the old Parliament gave emphatic endorsement to the Klepsch report, and called for "a European action program for the development and production of conventional armaments within the framework of the common industrial policy."⁸

The new Parliament will certainly press the Commission very hard for an effective response to this demand. The main reason for this is that defense policy, especially where it is linked with critical issues of industrial and economic policy, will provide an obvious sector of activity for members of the European Parliament concerned to extend the Parliament's influence into areas of "high politics." It is also relevant to note that several members of the new Parliament have an active

interest in military affairs: one of them, the British Conservative Derek Prag, was the author of a proposal for a European defense force entailing a high degree of integration.⁹ It should also be noted that the author of the Klepsch Report has himself been elected to the new Parliament, and re-elected as Chairman of its influential Christian Democratic Group.

Brief mention should also be made of the establishment of the European Monetary System early in 1978. This important step towards financial and economic integration (in which Britain under its Conservative administration is likely to join) will have the effect of strengthening the economic and political solidarity between the EC's members, and laying foundation on which cooperation in military and security matters can be developed.

One element in this development is the system of European Political Cooperation which has grown from the Davignon Report of 1970, and which provides for permanent consultation and co-ordination between the foreign ministries of the Nine. There have been, and still are, several obstacles in the way of extending this diplomatic cooperation to the military field: these include France's non-participation in the NATO command structure, and Ireland's non-membership of the alliance, as well as substantive differences in military policy among member-states. However, the EPC system has been used by the Nine to coordinate their policies on certain areas of international security problems - in, for instance, the CSCE and in the UN's discussions on disarmament - and it is extremely likely that in

the fairly near future this practice will be extended.

The new British Conservative administration has a much more positive view of European defense cooperation than its labor predecessor - there is support for the plan that the Nine's defense ministers and their officials should meet on the same regular basis as the Foreign Ministers - and such moves are likely to receive strong German support, whether Herr Schmidt or Herr Strauss is elected Chancellor in 1980.

The Global Strategic Context: Europe and SALT III

The current and impending evolution of the SALT dialogue between the USA and the Soviet Union provides a further incentive for NATO's European members to coordinate their policies in defense matters, and such a development appears likely, though by no means automatic.¹⁰

In 1978-79 the discussion of SALT II has changed from being a US-Soviet negotiation to one between the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government; West European concerns about some of SALT II's implications for European Security have been much less forcefully expressed than they were in 1977-78. The governments of America's European allies want the SALT II treaty to be ratified, but their current relative silence will give way, when and if ratification is achieved, to the expression of distinctive European concerns on a wide range of issues some of which have been present since the days of SALT I.

The specific form and manner of all this will depend partly on how soon a SALT III negotiation is undertaken - if indeed it

is. There is also, as just indicated, no guarantee that European governments will think or speak in agreement on these issues. However the likelihood is that in the global strategic and political environment of the early 1980's, West Europeans will be forced to think together on the following issues, among others:

Firstly, how does the probable vulnerability of the American ICBM force affect the security of Europe, and what measures (including possible SALT III negotiations and also the stationing of more U.S. missiles in Europe) would Europeans like to see the U.S. take in consequence?

Secondly, what measures would European governments wish NATO to undertake in order to maintain the strategic balance in the European theatre? Should the Western response to the SS20 missile and the "backfire" bomber be a determined attempt to limit their deployment, and if so, what Western systems should be limited in exchange?

Thirdly (a critical issue in any consideration of a more coordinated West European defense effort), what steps should be taken to maintain the "seamless web" linking NATO's conventional forces with the U.S. strategic deterrent, and to prevent "decoupling" at any point in that web?

Fourthly (a question essentially for the British and French governments), will the renewal and maintenance of their two "independent" nuclear forces take a more "European" form, even though this raises the difficult question of the FRG's association with the project?

Fifthly, will any extension of the non-transfer provisions of SALT II make it difficult for the USA in the future to continue support for the airborne components of the British and/or French deterrents, and what problems might arise from the inclusion of MIRVed air-launched cruise missiles, transferred to European control, in the total permitted to the USA?

Sixthly, how should the European members of NATO be represented, if at all, in a SALT III negotiation which will vitally affect their interests? Should European observers be included in the actual negotiations, or should Western positions be coordinated outside these, perhaps through delegation of authority to some special NATO representative or representatives?

This section of the paper has deliberately posed questions rather than suggesting answers: the questions, however, are ones to which Europeans will be under increasing pressure to find collective solutions.

Conclusion-

The attempt to promote greater West European cooperation in defense, as indicated at the start of this paper, has a long and unimpressive history. However, the combination of pressures outlined here suggests that if cooperation is pursued in the right ways - through work on the procurement of equipment and through consultations on doctrine, rather than through any premature attempt at the establishment of integrated European defense forces - the next phase of the story may be more successful.

FOOTNOTES

1. Quotations from a ministerial letter from Frank Judd, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Lord Gladyn, 30 May 1978, in European Defense Co-operation (federal Trust for Education and Research, London.)
2. Harold Macmillan, Tides of Fortune, 1945-55 (London, 1964), p. 164.
3. Two-Way Street. USA-Europe Arms Procurement. The Klepsch Report (London and New York, 1979), pp. 59,63.
- 4 See, for instance, Francois Duchene, "A New European Defense Community." in Foreign Affairs, Vol. 50, No. 1 (October 1971), and J. Robert Schaetzel, The Unhinged Alliance: America and the European Community (New York, 1975), Chapter VIII, "The Community and Defense."
5. Two-Way Street. USA-Europe Arms Procurement. The Klepsch Report (London and New York, 1979).
6. European Defense Cooperation (London, in 1978 or 1979).
7. The European Alternatives. An Enquiry into the Policies of the European Community, edited by Ghifa Ionescu (Alpen, Netherlands, 1979), pp. 283-312.
8. Two-Way Street. USA-Europe Arms Procurement. The Klepsch Report. (London and New York, 1979) p. 83.
9. Foreign Policy and Defense: A Role for Europe, published by the Conservative Group for Europe.
10. For further discussion of the issues raised in this section, see Strategic Arms Control and European Interests (Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, 1978): Robert Metzger and Paul Doty, "Arms Control Enters the Gray area", International Security, Winter 1978-79; Christopher Makins, "Bringing in the Allies"; Foreign Policy, Summer 1979; and articles by Francois de Rose and Gregory Treverson, Foreign Affairs, Summer 1979.