

**THE DECISIONS TAKEN AT THE MADRID NATO SUMMIT
AND WEU'S RELATIONS WITH
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND WITH RUSSIA**

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I. The decision taken in Madrid

1. NATO's decision, taken in Madrid on 7-8 July 1997, to enlarge and to invite three countries, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, to begin accession negotiations, and accompanied by the promise that no other applicant that met given objective criteria would be ruled out and that a degree of priority would be given to applications from Romania and Slovenia, undeniably marks the end of an era, since, for the first time, countries long regarded as Soviet Union satellites are now in principle accepted for membership of the USSR's erstwhile adversary, the Atlantic Alliance. The fact that the accession process for those countries has not met with categorical opposition from the Russian Federation, the main successor state to the Soviet Union, but could rather be described as having its unspoken agreement merely adds to the historic significance of the event.
2. It is clear nonetheless that while the new European security landscape that has emerged as a result of NATO expansion, together with, *inter alia*, the creation of a Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, an enhanced Partnership for Peace arrangement and the signature of the NATO/Russia Founding Act and the NATO/Ukraine Charter, represents a milestone in Europe's history, such developments are still very far from providing solutions to the problems raised by the aspirations of certain European countries or the at times conflicting interests which underlie them.
3. Moreover the European Commission's decision, which will almost certainly be ratified by the European Council in Luxembourg in December, to invite six countries (the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia) to begin negotiations in January 1998 on future accession to the European Union, is likely to have an impact on the shape of European security – the more so in view of the fact that, leaving aside the three central European countries that are soon to join the Atlantic Alliance, the political and economic positions of Slovenia and Estonia, which both hope to accede to NATO as soon as possible, are considerably strengthened by the prospect of their being admitted to the European Union. In short, while there is no question whatsoever of applicant countries accepting the principle of accession to the European Union as a trade-off in the

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short run for their not being admitted to NATO, the idea has caught on in other circles and even found outright expression in the views of no lesser person than the US Secretary of State, herself¹. Furthermore, it is obvious that membership of a dynamic and prosperous politico-economic organisation such as the European Union carries with it substantial diplomatic and security advantages and is, in any event, preferable to the relative isolation of non-membership of either institution.

4. The purpose of this working paper is not to make a detailed study of the current situation in Europe and even less to offer an analysis of WEU's relationships with eastern European countries as a whole. Rather, characteristic examples of countries of major political standing, such as Russia and Ukraine, have been selected for attention, together with the highly specific case of the Baltic States. The need to grasp the nettle of the internal restructuring required of a WEU made up of 28 countries (comprising full and associate members, associate partners and observers) as a result of the imminent change in the status of a number of them and in the light of new international circumstances forms the second part of this brief overview of the vast subject of European security and of the need for Western European Union to adapt to the new political and security environment in the continent and within the Euro-Atlantic community.

¹ *Le Monde*, 16 February 1997.

II. Russia

5. Notwithstanding the demise of communism in Eastern Europe, the end of the cold war and the break-up of the Soviet Union – not to mention Russia's transitory economic and political weakness in the post-communist period – a number of basic aspects relating to this great country have naturally not changed. The Russian Federation, given its vast geographic area, its population size and its awesome economic and military potential, and because of its history, is a decisive factor for security and stability in Europe and an essential partner in any realistic attempt to organise a European or Euro-Atlantic collective security system.
6. The Atlantic Alliance, aware of the major political and geo-strategic influence that Russia can wield – an influence which has received a further boost in recent months from President Yeltsin's recovery from illness, his growing political strength, the rising star of supporters of reform within his government and, last but not least, the first signs of economic recovery – has, happily for Europe's future stability, adopted a policy of allaying Russian fears as much as possible and reached a decision that the initial phase of NATO enlargement should be accompanied by a series of measures substantially to strengthen the Alliance's relationship with Russia, at the same time recognising that country's specific difficulties and securing its tacit acceptance that NATO, long regarded as its prime foe, now extends to the very borders of the former Soviet Union. Thus, when they met in Helsinki, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin drew up the broad outlines of a charter governing NATO-Russia relations and at the same time reached agreement on renegotiating the CFE (Conventional Forces Europe) treaty, the future conclusion of a Start III agreement, Russia's greater involvement in G7 meetings and increased economic aid to that country.
7. The NATO-Russia Founding Act signed in Paris on 27 May was the crystallisation of the new co-operative relationship at institutional level, setting forth, *inter alia*, principles as to indivisibility of the security of all the states within the Euro-Atlantic community, recognition of the primacy of the rule of law, respect for human rights and civil liberties and abstention by either party from the threat or use of force against the other. A mechanism for consultation and close political and military co-operation was also envisaged with the creation of the NATO-Russia Permanent Council, through which Russia is involved in most major decisions taken by NATO in relation to the security of the Euro-Atlantic area, but without right of veto. The document also makes provision for re-negotiation of the CFE treaty and against stationing new nuclear weapons.
8. Western European Union's political need to take account of the new realities surrounding the mammoth Russian state is not in question; nor the necessity for some form of institutionalisation of its relations with that great country. However the fact remains that, at present, contacts with Russia, important though they are, lack the systematic character that an international agreement would confer on them. It might perhaps be appropriate for Alliance institutions to give immediate thought to the matter.

III. The case of Ukraine

9. Ukraine has been part of Russia since 1654, its sole period of independent statehood being from 1918-1920. For a number of years it seemed to vacillate between the pro-Russian influence that predominates mainly in the eastern part of the country and the pro-western thinking that holds sway largely in the west and in government. The situation was further complicated by differences between it and its vast Russian neighbour (over the status of the Crimea, the Black Sea Fleet and the arrangements over Sevastopol) which have proved a major set-back to getting initiatives off the ground on the international front. However the country now seems to have emerged from this difficult and irresolute state and the last year or so has seen a distinct improvement in Ukrainian-Russian relations with the emergence of a clear policy of rapprochement with the West imbued with political realism. Thus in March 1997, Mr Udovenko, the Ukrainian Minister for Foreign Affairs, described Ukraine's integration into European and Euro-Atlantic security structures, including NATO, as one of his country's strategic objectives². At almost the same time, the Ukrainian ambassador in Athens, in an address to a colloquy organised by the WEU Assembly on the future of European security, confirmed that strategic orientation – although he also added that the issue of Ukraine joining NATO would not arise for at least another ten years and that Ukraine's immediate policy objective was to conclude a security and co-operation agreement with NATO – while stressing that the development of good relations between the Atlantic Alliance and Russia was a necessary preliminary to European security³. Again, in a letter to the WEU presidency in August 1996, the Ukrainian foreign affairs minister requested that relations between his country and the European Union should be strengthened – envisaging *inter alia* Ukrainian involvement in WEU-led operations or peacekeeping missions, Ukrainian observers attending training exercises, the appointment of liaison officers to the various headquarters and the setting up of a co-operation programme between the Torrejón Satellite Centre and the Ukrainian Space Agency. A month later, during the WEU Secretary-General's visit to Kiev, Ukraine requested associate partnership status in WEU.
10. The NATO-Ukraine Co-operation Charter was signed on 9 July 1997. It included, among other provisions, arrangements for consultation between the two parties in the event of an apparent threat to Ukraine's territorial integrity. It was preceded by the signature on 31 May of a partnership and co-operation agreement with Russia, governing, among other matters, the Crimea question, including the use of the port of Sevastopol by the Russian Black Sea Fleet, thus laying the basis for normalisation of relations between the two countries. In the Rapporteur's view, the virtually simultaneous conclusion of these two agreements defining the framework of Ukraine's relations with East and West alike is no coincidence, but rather attests to Ukraine's concern to maintain a balanced relationship with both sides, in order to avoid becoming a vast buffer state, a mere "grey area", between Russia and the West. The conclusion in

² *Le Figaro*, 21 March 1997.

³ WEU Assembly: Official record of the colloquy on enlarged security held in Athens

late June of an agreement with WEU on long-haul air transport also marks a further step in Ukraine's constantly evolving relationship with that organisation.

IV. The Baltic countries: the need for an imaginative solution

11. The three Baltic countries appear to be concerned about their security, on the basis both of their past history and their geographic location next to a vast country which, while it no longer presents a direct security threat to them today, has on many occasions past dominated the entire region. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania's relatively small size, their population structure, characterised, as far as the first two are concerned, by the presence of very large Russian minorities, coupled with the fact that Estonia and Latvia also have disputed borders that are not readily defensible, are additional factors contributing to the risk of destabilisation. For these reasons, the three Baltic nations are pressing to join the three Western politico-economic or politico-military organisations (NATO, the EU and WEU) and regard membership of such bodies as a major factor in achieving both international and their own internal stability.
12. The case of the Baltic States is the one that has aroused most criticism of the NATO summit decision to invite only Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to join the organisation. According to a view fairly widely held among western observers, this initial enlargement involved only countries that least need a security umbrella, while others like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which feel, perhaps with some justification, that membership of Western organisations can guarantee their independence, have been ruled out, at least for the time being. The reason for this – an open secret – seems to be categorical opposition from Russia. President Yeltsin, in a letter to President Clinton dated 20 June 1996, described the idea of any NATO enlargement that included the Baltic States as unacceptable, going so far as to suggest that if it were to occur it would wipe out the basic framework for stability in Europe, but at the same time proffering assurances that Russia would be prepared to offer them security guarantees. Those involved in the Madrid decision were careful not to rule out any applicant, to emphasise that the Alliance was open to all democratic countries and to make reference to Baltic aspirations to membership. Nevertheless Russian opposition, coupled with the existence of still partially unresolved bilateral differences between some Baltic countries and their vast neighbour, would appear to be at the root of the decision not to include them in the first wave of NATO enlargement.
13. However the West does have a degree of sympathy with the Baltic countries' determination to forge the closest possible ties with Western political and security structures. The European Commission's decision to support Estonia's application for European Union accession, the military co-operation programmes several western countries (Germany, Sweden, Finland and Poland even) have set up with one or other or all three Baltic States and, above all, the now stated intention of the United States to guarantee Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania's independence unilaterally are responses – partial maybe but substantial nevertheless – to the question of what the West could do, at least in the first instance, to make those countries feel more secure.

14. In a report adopted in June 1997⁴, the WEU Assembly drew attention to the security needs of the Baltic States, which have been WEU associate partners since 1994, and requested the Council to strengthen co-operation between WEU and those countries and at the same time lend encouragement to the resolution of their bilateral difficulties with Russia, particularly as regards border recognition. More specifically, this would involve, *inter alia*, organising joint military exercises, strengthening the Baltic countries' presence in relevant WEU politico-military bodies and enhancing participation by Baltic armed forces in tasks undertaken by WEU. Moreover, it might perhaps also be appropriate to envisage consultations taking place on regional issues in which the Baltic States and WEU member countries would take part. Improved relations with Russia could even make it possible to involve that great country in those consultations.

⁴ "Enlarged security: the security problems posed by the enlargement of NATO and the European institutions". Rapporteur: Mr Urbain

V. WEU in the face of the new European reality

15. The enlargement of NATO, the conclusion of the Founding Act with Russia, the Atlantic Alliance's signature of a partnership charter with Ukraine, the start, in its turn, of the European Union enlargement process, and the prospect of an American security guarantee for the three Baltic States, coupled with the legitimate aspirations of the other East European and Balkan states all highly motivated to become privileged associates if not equal partners with the West, are all bound to have their effect on Western European Union, which has a very different European political and diplomatic landscape to deal with than that of a year ago. There is a need to draw the implications from this, taking the necessary political decisions and adapting WEU's internal structures to take account of the accession of the three new members, the Czech Republic Hungary and Poland, that together are to join both NATO and the European Union. Moreover it will be necessary to initiate a new phase of co-operation with other countries, whose status in WEU undergoes a change as a result of their accession to the EU or NATO.
16. It must of course be borne in mind that according to the principles adopted at Kirchberg in 1994, countries which become EU members without joining NATO (including Cyprus, Estonia and Slovenia) should, at least initially, be regarded as WEU observers, while those joining NATO but not the European Union would be associate members. Although strict application of those rules does not appear for the time being to change the rationale or content of WEU's relationship with its associate partners, it would be absurd for Estonia and Slovenia's changed status vis a vis the EU to lead to a weakening of their relationship with WEU where they have had associate partnership status since 1994. Consequently, imagination and flexibility seem essential when considering the various possible scenarios and it would appear that there is no call to shy away from departure from the rules laid down in the Kirchberg Declaration if it were the wish or in the interest of the parties concerned.
17. Developing WEU's relationship with Russia and Ukraine would appear to be a major aspect of the readjustment to – not to say change of direction in – WEU's policy towards eastern Europe. Thus as far as Russia is concerned, a highly fortuitous expansion of contacts at various levels is currently taking place (the Secretary-General's visit to Moscow, co-operation with the Torrejón Satellite Centre, exchanges of views with between the WEU Assembly and the Duma, co-operation between the WEU Institute for Security Studies and the Russian Academy of Sciences and so on). However the absence of institutionalised relationships between WEU and that great country is, undeniably, a lack that must be remedied in order to give the development of relations between the largest nation in Europe and the continent's sole defence organisation the impetus that circumstances seem to demand. Quite a different situation obtains with regard to Ukraine which appears to regard deepening relations with WEU as a strategic objective of its policy towards Europe and which a year ago applied to become an associate partner in WEU. It is clear that although that request could not be granted for reasons unconnected with the importance WEU attaches to Ukraine (associate partner status is

linked to prospective accession to the European Union) the relationship is developing apace as the recent signature (end June 1997) of the co-operation agreement on long haul air transport serves to demonstrate.

18. This brief attempt to analyse the apparent need for internal and external adjustment by WEU to new prevailing conditions would manifestly be lacking in balance without some mention of the need for the Organisation to institute a policy towards eastern European countries which are not associate partners (Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, FYROM and possibly Belarus) but which are nonetheless trying to establish some form of co-operation with Western European Union. It is necessary at this stage to establish the criteria for such co-operation and to give immediate thought to the form it might take, especially in view of the fact that several of those countries are situated either within or immediately adjacent to areas of crisis and therefore assume major importance to an organisation whose task it is to see that Europe is secure and defended.
19. The final aspect to which I should like to draw attention here is the difficulty brewing within WEU itself over possible changes to the admission criteria for full membership. For years, simultaneous membership of NATO and the European Union has been a prior condition for full membership of WEU. However Ambassador Cahen, a former WEU Secretary-General, and the author of the doctrine that bears his name, observed, during the course of the colloquy the WEU Assembly organised in Athens in March, that under the present circumstances it might be necessary to consider amending that doctrine, in particular to enable applicant countries that have already signed up to the enhanced Partnership for Peace arrangements and are members of the European Union to become full members of WEU.
20. Clearly therefore, beyond a certain point, the criteria formerly used to define the respective statuses of the 28 WEU countries cannot continue to be applied without adjustment to take account of the new circumstances. Equally obvious is the fact that the climate internationally – and especially in Europe – has recently changed, allowing WEU, indeed placing an obligation upon it, to take new political and even institutional initiatives suited to Europe's new political and military outlook. The search for the necessary solutions calls for open-mindedness and putting them into practice requires an indomitable political will.