

Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung  
Center for European Integration Studies  
Rheinische Friedrich Wilhelms-Universität Bonn



Guido Lenzi

# **The WEU between NATO and EU**

**Discussion Paper**

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Dr. Guido Lenzi trat nach seinem Universitätsabschluß in Rechtswissenschaften 1964 in den Auswärtigen Dienst Italiens ein. Seine dreißigjährige Karriere als Diplomat führte ihn nach Algier, Lausanne, London, Moskau und New York. In Rom war er Leiter des NATO-Büros. Dr. Lenzi war Berater des italienischen Verteidigungsminister und des Senatspräsidenten sowie stellvertretender Kabinettschef des Außenministers. Er ist außerordentliches Mitglied des International Institute for Strategic Studies und Vorstandsmitglied des Istituto Affari Internazionali. Seit Oktober 1995 leitet Guido Lenzi das Institute for Security Studies der Westeuropäischen Union in Paris als dessen Direktor.

*Guido Lenzi*

## **The WEU between NATO and EU**

I must mention from the start that I am not Mr WEU. The Institute of WEU is in Paris, away from the bureaucratic influence of Brussels. That should ensure our independence of thought. We are a think tank, a research center where we try and think aloud about what could, should, and may happen to Europe in the years ahead. We are researchers, not necessarily finders. We bring up material, which we then discuss. That is the reason why the Institute is not only a center for research, but also a meeting place for people like all of you, who want to brainstorm ideas about the European Security and the Defence Identity.

We thrive with the intellectual contributions of full members and non full members of Western Europe Union. We can produce best to the extent that we are recipients of thoughts and ideas produced everywhere. That is why I hope that our two institutes can, together with others, establish a working relationship.

That being said, the theme of my discussion today is „Western European Union between NATO and EU“. What I will try to address and talk over with you – since I have not made up my mind yet – is whether the European Union is energized or on the contrary stifled by these two organizations, after NATO’s Berlin and Madrid ministerials and the EU Amsterdam Summit, both of which have indicated that Western European Union is an instrument at their disposal. It is now clearly established, even if not as clearly as we may have wished, that Western European Union is firmly set in the sights of NATO and the European Union as a possible vehicle for their future activities. Is this situation, of having two suitors, a reason for optimism and encouragement or could it become a reason for discou-

agement and passivity? In other words, is Western European Union propped up by these two more comprehensive European organizations or is it stuck in between them and less able to move than it would have been otherwise?

Let me take one step back. I think we have to realize that security matters are today quite different than they were during the Cold War years. We are not talking only about territorial security, anymore. We are talking also about cooperative security, i.e. putting military instruments at the disposal of international solidarity cooperation and interposition. That is, using them not to fight, but to prevent fighting and to engage in non-lethal missions; which is something that the military (those who are among us today know it well) are precisely trying to come to grips with. The nature of security is changing. But also the relevance of security is different than what it was, for public opinion. The public has been so far somewhat distant from the decision-making process in security matters, which was a prerogative of the executive in many of our countries, when there was something looming out there that was dangerous or at least intimidating. We were well aware for fifty years of what that was.

Nowadays, security issues are less cogent, less obvious. The man in the street, the electorate, is less concerned about security. Precisely because of that, he has to be involved as he has never been in security matters. Defending territorial integrity and the Heimat is the self-evident responsibility of every citizen. On the contrary, the interposition in the Great Lakes, in Bosnia, in Algeria, in Albania is not a self-evident truth. It has to be organized and explained to public opinion and parliaments; governments have to discuss it and demonstrate that it is feasible and worthwhile. For politicians, policy-makers, those who assist them and the man in the street, this is a completely different environment. That is why a sense of fatigue may develop about engaging ourselves in external missions. Algeria is in a great mess. Something must absolutely be done about it, everybody says, but who will do it and how is not so clear. This is the

situation that we Europeans have to cope with: a new ball game, as they say in the States. The rules are different and the players are different.

Now I submit to you that the Gordian knot that has to be untied slowly (not cut, mind you, simply loosened) is the one involving European relations with the United States. This is a conundrum that has yet to be tackled. We have solved somehow our relationship with Russia, putting it on a good footing. We have established meaningful relations with Central and Eastern European candidates to economic, political, and military integration: I think they are less frantic about enlargement today than they were a year ago. And yet, we have not addressed the shape, the mechanics or the components of our new security relationship with the United States. The main ingredient of every event in European affairs is the position that the United States take. What we have to reestablish clearly, in the new international situation, is the scope of their presence in Europe and how their relationship with the Europeans is going to hold. We all know that the United States have always been the common denominator for every European country. Even France, who played the lone ranger for a while, has always known fully well that the American factor in European matters was an essential stabilizing element. The Americans (as you know so well in Germany) have even engineered German unification in the presence of widespread European cold feet, here and there („too soon, too fast; maybe we should talk about it and wait and see how it develops“). As you have experienced in your own households, German unification was essentially the making of American reassurances towards Gorbachev.

NATO continues to take care of everything that moves in Europe, here, there, and everywhere. NATO, of course, meaning also the Europeans, but with an American preponderance in the decision-making and in the military posture. After fifty years of it, we shy away from discussing a possible new configuration of this relationship: we are not encouraged by the US to do so, and we feel that we should first be able to indicate what the alternative would be. I would argue, however, that it is not necessary

to find new architectures for the transatlantic relationship. The important thing is that this relationship be allowed to breathe more confidently on both sides of the Atlantic.

The task that we have before us, paradoxically, is how to reconnect the various European institutions dealing either directly or indirectly with security. How do we restructure NATO and the European Union, in order to make them more flexible. We know that NATO itself is destructuring, in the recognition that there could be circumstances when a cloning of NATO, a smaller military coalition, may be detached from the fully integrated structure and put at the disposal of this or that smaller combination of allied countries, and possibly even of Western European Union. Thus, the concept of making more flexible the structure of NATO has been accepted.

I even wonder if and to what extent the European Union itself could and should destructure its three pillars, in order to allow for a more visible and significant involvement of the candidate countries in the first and third pillar, which they already are for many intents and purposes. The third pillar is more communitarized than the second; the advances made in the third pillar (concerning law enforcement and judicial matters) have yet to be achieved in the second pillar. For CFSP purposes, would it be possible to establish some clearly recognizable and institutionally well-established relationship with the Central and Eastern European friends before their economic criteria (3%, 60% and so forth) are met? Without, of course losing the „acquis“. Preserving the „acquis“ while allowing for flexibility is the crux of the discussion about European integration. How much can we demultiply? It's like a differential in a car, how much can you allow one wheel to go faster and the other slower as you reach a bump or a turn? I think the discussion in the European Union is and will increasingly be in the future precisely about this restructuring.

There must therefore be, I feel, a combination between pragmatism and institutional reform. Between the bottom-up process of doing things among the able and willing at different speeds, and the indispensable top-

to-bottom institutional recognition providing the actions and initiatives of individual countries acting together with different geometries, with the necessary credibility, greater solidarity, and necessary legitimation. Legitimacy is an indispensable requirement for national actions in military and security matters, nowadays. European countries do not go it alone, any more: even France and Britain, who used to act unilaterally, loathe to do so nowadays, most obviously. And even the reform of the defence posture in the various countries, the national defence reviews, are undertaken in order to allow national armed forces to operate multinationally, not necessarily under the orders of WEU. An improved relationship will have to be established between the ad-hockery which circumstances may require, and the necessary international recognition and legitimization, which will dismiss any institutional syndrome: out of institutional conformity and more into the business of doing things. Germany, for national reasons, has taken some time, but is now also coming around to this type of approach.

Let us address now some of the technicalities of what has happened. I mentioned Madrid, Berlin and Amsterdam. Let us go further back to 1991 in Brussels, when NATO accepted that a separate (but not separable) „European Security and Defence Identity“ could grow, provided that it did so within NATO. There was some wavering about it, but finally even the French accepted it. That is the way that we should now do it. NATO went a bit further in 1996, with the Berlin decision that accepted the concept of „Combined Joint Task Forces“. That concept has not yet been turned into practical terms, which would allow Western European Union to take care of CTJFs in certain circumstances.

Amsterdam may have been disappointing for those of us who wanted the merger of two organizations, but I feel that we have nevertheless gotten something more than we had achieved in Maastricht. The mechanisms of the relationship between EU and WEU have been clearly established. We have not acquired in Amsterdam an institutional relationship; on the other hand, no subordination resulted for Western European Union in legal

terms, only a possible functional relationship. The European Union has established that if and when it thinks it could and should do something that implies military instruments, it would turn to Western European Union to decide on its own. Western European Union is therefore not an executing agency of the European Union. Western European Union, as it stands presently after Amsterdam, will not take orders purely and simply from the European Union. Of course, all of the ten members of the Western European Union are at the same time members of the European Union (and of NATO, for that matter). Inevitably, some kind of interlinkage will be established as the consultations in the decision-making process develop. Once that the strategic direction is provided and the political directives indicated by the European Union, the Western European Union will turn around and decide on the possibility of that operation and the willingness of individual countries, the ten in particular, with others also welcomed to join in. In other words, whether the proposed security operation is feasible and whether national forces are available to be put together. So a double decision-making process, in a functional relationship, was established between two self-standing organizations.

In practice however, I feel, in this whole process with NATO asserting its operational priorities (which have political implications, of course) and EU asserting its role of provider of a political mandate, Western European Union has been discouraged in practical terms from taking the initiative, from acting autonomously. WEU can still do so, legally. We all argue that Western European Union can act either on behalf of NATO or on behalf of the European Union. Western European Union is on record as saying that it will even take a mandate directly from the OSCE or of course from the United Nations, which in any case remains the supreme mandating authority. But Western European Union can also go it alone and decide autonomously. These are the possibilities, but I would argue that Western European Union tucked in the embrace of EU and NATO may be smothered in its ability to either act on its own or initiate a mission in security matters either in NATO or in the European Union.

There is another thing I should mention. European Union and NATO have in 1991 both gone political, NATO with a new strategic concept deciding to go beyond Article 5 territorial defence; it was going political, projecting security crisis prevention over the whole continent, engaging itself in the enlargement process. European Union at the same time, in the same weeks, in Maastricht also decided to go political. It decided to add a political dimension, a second pillar to its first pillar economic integration. These two organizations unknowingly, I would say, pretending that they were acting in parallel, in actual fact started stepping on each other's toes. This has gone on until Madrid and Amsterdam last year. After 6 years we are again witnessing two processes elbowing each other out, i.e. a NATO enlargement and a European Union enlargement. These are both very well-meaning processes, but they are based on different parameters and different perspectives.

Throughout all the things I said, the question emerges of how the Europeans will get their act together with the Americans, now that an institutional triad has been formally established. NATO and Western European Union have improved their relationship; so have the European Union and Western European Union. Western European Union is thus ideally the pivot, the hinge. What is still lacking is the relationship between NATO and the European Union. Now, I put to you this question: do we really think that this relationship can be established through the Western European Union? Or shouldn't a more clear broad-ranging consultative process be directly established between the US and Europe, much beyond what has been achieved so far by the Transatlantic Agenda. In security and political matters, a link is missing between NATO and the European Union, which the Americans have not been encouraging. We know that the Americans do not want to be confronted with a European caucus, i.e. a place where Europeans take their own decisions, and then go and put them on the table, on the scales, as it were, of NATO. Moreover, the Americans are afraid of the possible spillovers of a European operation. They are afraid that if we go into Albania with European Union and Western European Union flags flying, we will mess things up to the point

where the Americans, meaning NATO, will have to come in and do the cleaning up. We must admit that this attitude is justified, and not necessarily ill-meaning.

These are the facts. The CJTF concept was conceded a year and a half ago, but we have not gone much further than that. What has happened, as you know, is a reduction in the number of NATO headquarters, but the breaking-down of CJTFs has not yet been expressed. The Americans are also doubling-up NATO's PfPs with a host of bilateral relations, not only with the new-comers, but also with each one of us, the old timers of the European Union, which may be good. We all feel very reassured about all of this. But these new relationships must overcome the residual ambiguities and restraints that still linger in US-European and NATO-European Union relations.

The second thing that has to be well understood is that NATO will always be, in the foreseeable future, in the enforcement, conflict resolution side of things, in combat-related operations. NATO remains indispensable, because it has not only the assets and capabilities, but also the credibility to do that. Whereas the European Union, because of its DNA, because of its origin, is more into the humanitarian, civil-economic, crisis prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation side of things. How do we establish this sequence between the European Union going in to deal with the causes of tension while, if things do not stop, NATO will have to intervene until, once they have stopped, the European Union goes back in again? This is exactly what has happened and is still happening in Bosnia. How do we connect these different roles, without necessarily expecting that the European Union slips into the shoes of NATO and goes in to do things militarily? We could do them operationally, at times, but we would not always be politically credible, at least not yet. It is not because you wear a uniform and you carry a big gun that you are credible, if you are not tall enough and you haven't been seen around the block.

CFSP is still in its infancy. Foreign and security policies, in themselves, either nationally or internationally, are never a mathematical pre-

established mechanism. We cannot say what we would do, either nationally or internationally, next time in Albania. What will be next time in Albania? What will be the reaction of the international community, of other countries, to the situation developing in the „next Albania“? So, the next Albania will not be the same as the previous Albania. The Great Lakes were never Albania. And Bosnia was never either Albania or the Great Lakes. Each one of those tasks was different and will be different in the future. Therefore (and Amsterdam states it) CFSP can only establish the general principles, orientations, the common commitments, the priorities that the Europeans share among themselves, but can never become a clearly-cut, pre-established blueprint for action.

There is then the problem of leadership. I don't think we Europeans will soon solve the problem of leadership, because we each want to be leaders or, when we do not want to be leaders, we do not accept that someone else becomes a leader. That is normal until a United States of Europe emerges. Until then, for decision-making purposes, a leader will be recognized for individual circumstances. In Albania, the recognized leader was Italy. But, as we increase the number of EU members, the problem of qualified majority arises, and with it the the issues of constructive abstention, enhanced cooperation, variable speeds and geometries. These problems that do not demonstrate the weakness of the European Union; on the contrary, they should push us to realize that we should act in such differentiated ways, taking into consideration the contribution that others can bring, and our relations with the United States within NATO.

As a final conclusion, I would say that Western European Union finds itself at the intersection of the reform processes that the other two organizations are now going through. To the extent that NATO will downsize its operations, with respect to actual circumstances as they occur, and the European Union will upgrade its abilities, there will be a moment, which will change according to the circumstances, where these two curves will intersect. That critical spot will eventually occur. At that precise point, Western European Union ought to find itself ready. We are acquiring the

capabilities. Western European Union is not an abstract organization: it is made up of the same countries which are in the European Union and in NATO. It is just a matter of how we will organize ourselves in order to go and get from the European Union and from NATO respectively the political mandate and the operational assets that we need. We have to go and get them, not wait for another organization to provide them to us. WEU should constitute, as it were, the core group of security-minded Europeans at the forefront of possible initiatives for NATO and EU to consider, instead of waiting for them to take the lead in every circumstance.

We have with us at least one representative from a Central European country. To the candidate countries I would say to remember that WEU and the EU will develop to the extent that the newcomers, the newly-converted will urge us to do things. It will not be easy for the old-timers to come with new proposals. It is you who are the new European blood, the ones in a hurry to do things. It is only if the newcomers will consider supplementing their increasing relations with NATO with a European dimension, that a second leg will be provided to the CFSP progression. The energy for European integration may in the end come from without rather than from within. Once we have agreed amongst ourselves, we must go and tell the Americans about it.

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**Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung**  
**Center for European Integration Studies**  
*Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn*

Walter-Flex-Straße 3  
D-53113 Bonn  
Germany

Tel.: +49-228-73-1880  
Fax: +49-228-73-1788  
<http://www.zei.de>