

CONNECTIONS

The Quarterly Journal

Connections vol. 1, no.1

January 2002

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CESDP and the Group of Six

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The development of a security and defense policy to accompany European integration has triggered an interesting discussion in an unanticipated field. It was easy to foresee that the institutionalized establishment of the second pillar will have an influence on the relationships between the EU and NATO, more specifically on U.S.-EU relations and on its most sensitive component, French-American affairs. Neither was it difficult to forecast that the accord between the countries interpreting the final objective of the integration in different ways would not be clear, nor that the neutral EU member states would have difficulty with the Common European Security and Defense Policy (CESDP), originating in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Few experts considered, however, that the treatment of those six countries (Iceland, Norway, and Turkey, along with the three new members, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary) that are members of NATO but are outside the European Union would turn into an independent issue.

The dual (European Union and NATO) process itself is well-known: NATO, consisting mainly of European countries, since 1994 has been shaping those structural frameworks within which European capabilities could be developed without damaging the collective defense functions of the organization. A proposal was on the agenda at the 1996 NATO conference of ministers of foreign affairs in Berlin on a crisis management operation executed within NATO-WEU frameworks—that is, without U.S. participation. Later on, it was one of the elements of the crisis management exercises (e.g., CMX/CRISEX 2000) that procedural, legislative, and military aspects of European crisis management operations should be examined and practiced.

During the rapid development of the CESDP after 1998 (Saint-Malo), the first signal for the common treatment of the Group of Six was given by the famous “three D’s” of Madeline Albright. The U.S. Secretary of State, unsatisfied with the defense capabilities of the European allies, expressed the worries of the American administration in connection with the common European security and defense policy. In her opinion this development should not generate de-coupling, duplication or discrimination. The last of the three D’s indicated those American worries that non-EU member NATO countries may face negative discrimination due to the development of the CESDP. Lord Robertson, the new Secretary General of NATO, introduced three “Is” instead. They stress, from NATO’s point of view, the importance of the indivisibility of the transatlantic alliance, a dramatic improvement of European defense capabilities, and the inclusion of each NATO ally into the defense policy of new Europe as basic requirements in the process of developing autonomous European defense capabilities.

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The issue of the Group of Six was first articulated by the EU at the Helsinki summit in December 1999. This meeting was where the assignment of the Common European Security and Defense Policy was first defined, establishing autonomous capabilities allowing the EU to launch and carry out military operations in crises, and where the frameworks of the Headline Goal were approved. In accordance with the latter, by the end of 2003 the EU should be able to deploy a 50,000 to 60,000-strong military force within two months' time and sustain it for at least one year. A decision was also made on developing certain fundamental military capabilities, such as deployability, sustainability, interoperability, flexibility, mobility, survivability, and improving Command and Control capacities. A resolution was also approved on the major elements of the institutional structure, establishing the Committee of Security Policy, Political Committee, Military Committee, and a Military Staff.

As for the involvement of the countries outside the European Union, the Helsinki summit stated that a consultation mechanism would be established for the non-EU members and the EU candidates that would be unrelated to the decision-making autonomy of the EU. Within this framework, questions related to the security and defense policy of the EU and also to concrete crisis situations could be discussed. In accordance with the Helsinki document, non-EU member states will always be invited for participation if/when an EU-initiated crisis management operation involves NATO assets and capabilities. If the Union acts without NATO assets the invitation would be made on the basis of the Council's specific decision.

In December 2000, the EU took further steps to involve non-EU European NATO members and EU membership candidates. Above all, it is the Nice document that highlights the openness of the EU, indicating that in executing Petersberg-type missions the EU would rely on the contributions of both the non-EU member NATO states (Group of Six) and EU membership candidates (Group of Fifteen). A new element, compared with the previous stages, is that these states are allowed to select one member of their Brussels delegation who would take up the job of a liaison officer in the Political and Security Committees when CESDP issues are involved.

It is therefore apparent that the EU documents, unlike the American approach, do not consider the Six as a separate group and treat the European candidates (the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary) separately from the other three countries. From the beginning of the idea of CESDP, however, the six countries concerned have made every effort to be included in the developing system of decision-making. They aimed at being involved in the making of those decisions that have an influence on their neighborhood, since they have all offered units for the joint military capabilities under the framework of the Headline Goals. Nevertheless, the EU in practice speaks merely about the concrete contribution to the prospective crisis management operations and the related limited rights.

The difference within the Group of Six is rooted in their different geopolitical situations and relations to the EU. Norway, Hungary and the Czech Republic seek solutions while taking into consideration (also) the interests of the EU. Turkey

subordinates all questions in the field of cooperation between NATO and the EU to the issue of the inclusion of Turkey (and the Six) into the institutional and decision-making system of the CESDP on a base equal with the EU member states. Poland, which considers itself as a European middle power, is closer to the first group as far as content is concerned, but its formal approach makes it closely related to the Turkish platform. Iceland, which has no army at all, is not really interested in the issue as is indicated by its sporadic participation in foreign policy coordination in the above question.

The Six sense the trans-Atlantic and inter-European strategic and tactical fault lines and try to incorporate the lessons learned from them into their own positions. They clearly see that American policy has become more understanding towards the CESDP, and they presume that this is not because of U.S. approval of the independent European security policy but instead due to the promise of a long-urged increase in the European defense capabilities. They are also aware of the fact that, for London, developing the CESDP is a tool of strengthening NATO, while for the French it is a means to better protect their interests and degrade NATO in the long run. For them it is also obvious that Turkey, though a member of the Six, considers the issue of European defense—as it does many other problems of foreign affairs—in the context of Greek/Turkish relations. The same applies to Greece, too, which is interested in building a European system that would exclude Turkey. The latter is willing to accept only a solution that guarantees Ankara influence similar to that of Greece. It is absolutely natural that the biggest distance, and consequently the hottest conflict, is between the French and the Turkish, who represent the two extremes of this system of interests. It should be seen, however, that in this diplomatic conflict the countries representing extreme points of view in practice provide one another with support; that is—though from different directions—they mutually slow down the formation of a situation necessary for EU-NATO decision-making.

The three Visegrad countries consider CESDP as a political element of their EU membership due within a few years. They are aware of the fact that at present the CESDP is able to give only political responses to actual security and military problems. They also see that these responses embody a European evaluation, and the participating countries are forced to express the common European values in a more distinct way. This is the source of their caution, as is especially perceptible in the case of Hungary. As a country located in the neighborhood of the largest European trouble spot, Hungary regularly emphasizes that NATO is the only effective force in the field of military crisis management, while the EU capabilities are in the phase of political planning. As, according to all indications, Hungary's EU accession cannot take place before the establishment of the institutional system of the CESDP, it is clearly understandable that the objective would be to get Hungary involved in the process of decision-preparing and decision-making at the earliest possible stage, and in the most comprehensive way.

In the summer of 2000, the Polish expressed their specific requirements and did so in the name of all six countries concerned. In their opinion, the frameworks defined in Feira for the Six are insufficient as to the quantity and content of meetings. The Polish

would prefer an EU-coordination at the political (ministerial) level before every session dealing with any issue. Furthermore, they suggest the appointment of permanent representatives, a setup of a 15+6 working group, and, at the military level, the participation of the Six both in the meetings of the EU Chiefs of Staff and the activity of the Military Committee, and also the participation of liaison officers in the daily work of the Military Staffs of the EU.

Under strong pressure from NATO, the Turkish did not block the launch of the NATO-EU cooperation initiative but, since mid-2000, Ankara has been threatening to obstruct it unless the Six get sufficiently involved in the process of the CESDP. Turkey regards the current tendency of the CESDP as a direct danger to its national security interests. According to the Turkish position there cannot be a differentiation between the EU member states and the Six. Since Turkey wishes to be granted a status equal to that of the EU members, it connects the issue of EU access to NATO's operational planning capabilities with a guaranteed involvement in the decision-making procedures of the EU. In Ankara's opinion, a setup of a NATO-independent European planning system would be extremely costly and time-consuming; thus, Turkey manages to force its main opponents—France and Greece—to support the Turkish position. Therefore Ankara would accept a framework in the CEDSP similar to that of the WEU (covering 21 states) instead of the 15+6 version.

The decisions made at the Nice summit are considered basically acceptable by the Visegrad countries and Norway. They feel that the frameworks provided by the Nice document can be enlarged and filled with content simultaneously, which means they are interested in a sufficiently intensive dialogue to support the pre-planned meetings at the political level. They intend to participate in the EU-planned military exercises and the review of the Headline goal.

All in all, it can be stated that the Six does not comprise a unified group concerning the CESDP. On the one extreme there is Iceland with its lukewarm indifference. The group of the Visegrad Three and Norway approach the issue in a constructive manner and occupy the middle of the spectrum. Turkey constitutes the other extreme, both as to interests and ambitions; indeed, the success of their dialogue with the EU will greatly depend on Ankara's diplomatic skills. For the moment, the challenge posed by and from the Group of Six remains only partially addressed.