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Guest Editorial

Why Europe Needs a Common Foreign and Security Policy

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The revolutions of 1989 put an end to the Cold War and to the barriers which had divided our continent for more than four decades. At last the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe could live in conditions of political and economic freedom and rejoin the mainstream of international life. The response of the West was immediate. The European Union mounted a major assistance programme to speed the transition to democracy and the market economy, opened its markets and promised that Union membership would follow. A special bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, was founded to reinforce these efforts. NATO and the Western European Union forged links with countries of Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time the European Union developed a new partnership with Russia and other independent states of the former Soviet Union, to make clear that they too had a valued role to play in the wider process of European cooperation.

Other things being equal, these events could be expected to contribute to peace and stability in Europe and throughout the international system. And, indeed, they did accompany an unprecedented process of arms reduction and progress in international disputes which had remained blocked for decades, such as the Arab–Israeli conflict. They also permitted greater cooperation in the United Nations than would have been thinkable previously, allowing a collective response to such threats to world order as the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

Regional cooperation, involving actors from all parts of Europe, became a new reality in areas as diverse as the Black Sea, the Baltic and even the Arctic. For the first time in decades, it became possible to plan for the future on the basis of cooperation rather than conflict.

History had not, however, come to an end as abruptly as some observers supposed. On the contrary, the thaw also applied to hostilities and tensions with origins stretching back into past centuries, which had been frozen by the Cold War. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the former Yugoslavia. Without the apparatus of state power and the pervasive influence of the Communist Party, the patchwork state which Tito had stitched together fell apart. In the resulting confusion, those who played rough and had a clear vision of their own objectives usually got their way.

The international community was ill equipped to respond to such ruthlessness. The watchwords of the Cold War had been containment, deterrence and defence against a possible attack across the Iron Curtain. These provided no clue as to how to respond to a shooting war elsewhere in Europe, exacerbated by 'ethnic cleansing' and other massive violations of human rights. Above all there was no common vision of what was at stake in the former Yugoslavia for Europe as a whole.

Yet the European Union itself clearly had an interest in preventing, or failing that, bringing to an end, a cruel war in a territory located between its own Member States. The European Union did act to supply humanitarian relief and Member States did provide troops to the United Nations, with the mission of protecting the delivery of such assistance. Now the war is over, the Union is playing a major role in peace implementation and in the reconstruction of areas devastated by the war. But these actions, valuable though they are, fall well short of effective and timely conflict prevention, management and control.

These are crying needs in the uncertain conditions of the post-Cold War world. The tragedy in Bosnia is only the most acute example of regional conflicts which threaten the harmonious and peaceful development of a truly united Europe. Potential or actual conflicts are not lacking around the rim of the European Union. Nor is Europe's interest in peace and stability limited to its own immediate environment. As the world's major trading power, the Union, and its Member States, have interests across the globe and cannot expect that others will also step in to preserve the peace.

Public opinion in the Union is not an obstacle to a more coherent, more proactive approach to foreign and security policy. On the contrary, the Union's limited progress in this sphere, especially in the former Yugoslavia, is one of the factors contributing to disenchantment with Europe, even among those committed to its long-term goals. People in different walks of life increasingly understand that national interests and European interests are not poles apart. Common action at the European level is often the most effective way, perhaps the only effective way, for Member States to achieve their national goals. This is evident in fields as diverse as environmental protection and the control of international crime, not to mention security and defence.

The need for effective common action is all the greater in the light of the Union's impending enlargement. Either the Union will be enlarged as a genuinely integrated structure, bound by common interests, based on unity, while respecting the diversity of its Member States, and speaking with one voice in world affairs; or a wider Union will become a kind of Congress of Europe, with little internal coherence and, consequently, little external clout; a largely intergovernmental organization, slow at taking decisions, fragmented in its policies, and unable to compete on an equal basis with the USA, Japan and the world's other major powers.

This latter scenario is a recipe for decline, in which Europe becomes once again little more than a geographical expression, condemned to stagnation. The former scenario is a recipe for growth and dynamism, in which Europe is a force to be reckoned with, not only in trade and commerce, but also in ensuring peace and security. This is not just a personal preference. It is the only kind of Europe which can respond to the needs of its citizens in an increasingly complex and and increasingly unpredictable world.

It is up to the Union and the Member States, acting together, to ensure that this kind of Europe indeed becomes a reality. The Maastricht Treaty took an ambitious view of Europe's future but did not, itself, provide all the means to make that future a reality. It did not, for example, resolve problems arising from the fact that the Union's present institutions were designed for a Union of six Member States and have remained substantially unchanged through the subsequent enlargements which have brought us to fifteen. Does anyone seriously imagine that the same decision-making rules will prove effective when we are twenty, twenty-five or thirty?

The Treaty itself provides for a new conference to be held in 1996 to review progress and to decide what further steps may be needed to achieve its objectives. This is now all the more necessary to prepare the Union for further enlargement. The main challenge facing the conference will be to make the institutions more democratic, more effective, more transparent and more responsive to the needs of the citizen. At the same time the IGC will need to strengthen the common foreign and security policy so that the Union can make a real contribution to peace and security.

In handling serious political crises, especially those involving armed conflict, the Union too often speaks with different voices. In the international contact group on the former Yugoslavia, for example, three major Member States have pursued their own path, in the absence of more effective common action by the Union. Other *ad hoc* groups of Member States meet informally to discuss specific foreign policy problems, with little concern for the need to analyse and act on the basis of broader European interests.

Unless common action becomes the normal response of the Union when faced with an external challenge, the Union will continue to serve as a paymaster rather than as a peacemaker. To be sure, the UK and other Member States have made a vital contribution in crisis situations from the Gulf and the Middle East to the former Yugoslavia. But how much longer can the Union remain absent from the important security issues which are shaping world politics in our times? Are we really once again going to leave the resolution of European political and security problems, such as the Cyprus question, to the USA?

The Union itself needs to articulate much more clearly its common interests and to dispose of the power to pursue those interests robustly. This does not exclude national policies but, under the CFSP, national policies should be

complementary to common actions and not the other way around. The prevention of conflict and of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, for example, cannot possibly be effective on a purely national basis. Nor can crisis management which, alas, will remain a priority for the foreseeable future.

Any foreign policy worthy of the name must be based on the best available analysis of objectives, interests and risks. Accordingly, the IGC should establish a proper policy planning staff at the Union level to identify common European interests and to shape common policies. It should be composed of experts from the Member States, the Commission and, possibly, the Western European Union. The formulation of foreign policy would also be improved if a permanent political committee were set up in Brussels, as part of the Council's decision-making structure.

Until now, action under CFSP has required the unanimous agreement of the fifteen and so is subject, at best, to the rule of the lowest common denominator and, at worst, to the national veto. The challenge is to find a formula which will facilitate decision-making and ensure a genuinely Union approach. This can only be achieved, in my view, by basing decision-making on qualified majority votes. Specific rules would apply for decisions involving military matters.

As the Commission pointed out in February, there are times when some, but not all, Member States wish to take action. It should be possible for such actions to be taken in the name of the Union, as long as they are in accordance with its general interests, and the Union is properly represented.

The IGC will also consider how the Union's foreign policy position should be implemented and presented to partners around the world. Giving the Commission a more visible role, in conjunction with the Presidency, which passes to a different Member State every six months, would enhance the coherence and continuity of the Union's foreign and security policy.

The important role played by the larger Member States, two of which are Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, should be acknowledged. But anything resembling a 'directorate' by the larger Member States must be avoided. Should we not try to strike a bargain between recognition of the inherent extra political weight of certain Member States, expressed, for instance, by a carefully adjusted voting formula, in exchange for their firm commitment to a distinctly Union approach to foreign and security policy?

If Europe is to become a real political union and an equal partner of the USA, it needs a convincing security and defence identity. To be credible, the Union needs power behind its diplomacy and power to act if diplomacy fails. NATO will remain fundamental to Europe's defence for the foreseeable future and I believe that strengthening the Union's defence identity, notably through the Western European Union, will strengthen NATO as well. We should also recall that the need for greater security is one of the main considerations

leading the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to seek membership in the Union and in NATO.

Discussions on defence issues and practical military cooperation are still in their early stages. But one thing is already clear: no troops could ever be committed to action by the Union without the approval of the government concerned. At the same time, no one should be able to prevent action being taken by a majority of Member States, wishing to act together.

With these considerations in mind, the Commission has recommended that the IGC should decide to include Union commitments to missions aimed at restoring or keeping peace in the European Union Treaty (the 'Petersberg' tasks), provide for meetings of defence ministers in the Council framework, and review the role of the Western European Union, with a view to incorporating it into the Union according to a definite timetable. The Commission also made a number of recommendations concerning the rationalization of defence-related industries.

For some Member States, these recommendations already go too far, for others they do not go far enough. The Maastricht Treaty itself reflected a compromise which should now be clarified and carried forward so that the Union's defence identity can become a reality. This is not a matter of dogma; it is a pragmatic response to the many challenges Europe now faces. A European defence identity would complement NATO and enable Europe to begin to assume responsibilities which are commensurate with its weight as an economic power.

In this short editorial, I have drawn attention to some of the questions which appear to me of crucial importance on the eve of the Intergovernmental Conference. This is a propitious moment for the launching of the *European Foreign Affairs Review*, a new journal which will provide a forum for contending opinions on questions which are decisive for Europe's future. I look forward to following the debate in the *Review*'s future editions.