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Guest Editorial

Some Reflections on the Common Foreign and Security Policy*

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What does it take to have an effective foreign and security policy of more than local importance, whether as a country – say the USA, or France, Germany or UK – or a group of countries like the EU? By effective I mean in the sense of having a policy at all, with an intended impact on events in pursuit of established interests and objectives, and taken into account by the other players.

Area, size, population, economic resources, including wealth, industrial base, technology and organization are all necessary ingredients of the kind of identity Europe wants. Now with EMU and a single currency added to all the previous common policies, the EU indisputably has all of these, so much so that less than ten years ago (in *Foreign Affairs* in 1989) Samuel Huntingdon predicted that the twenty-first century could be the century of Europe. Europe has certainly been able to exploit the weight that flows from these attributes in world trade, where it – with the USA and to a smaller extent Japan – is a world-class player.

However, one thing which Huntingdon referred to, and the EU does not have, is its own serious military power projection or territorial defence capability. That is why NATO was formed in 1949 and one reason why it has been retained even after the end of the cold war. The EU is of course developing a capability through the WEU and the creation of a European security and defence identity (ESDI) within NATO, based on combined joint task forces (CJTFs), combining European troops and NATO (i.e. American among others), logistical,

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command and control, and other assets. This will make it capable of some types of military action. But power projection implying the use of coercive force is, at least in some circumstances, an important aspect of an effective CFSP for the kind of power which the EU would like to be. To achieve this we shall have either to make an unlikely economic effort to create a serious war-winning military capability (even if only small wars); or recognize that, our military means being limited, we must just live with this weakness; or accept that the EU, when it needs a serious military capability beyond what it can achieve through the WEU, will need to work closely with the USA.

The present crisis[1] in Kosovo illustrates the dilemma. On the one hand there is strong pressure among the 15 for the Europeans (i.e. the WEU responding to the EU under Maastricht) to 'do something military' (observers, interposition force) on the Albanian/Kosovo border. At the WEU Ministerial Meeting in Rhodes, there was a strong but not universal feeling that the WEU was capable of this, whether or not using NATO assets, together with a feeling that the WEU had little point if not tasked to do it. On the other hand a WEU operation could not afford to be a failure and require rescue by the USA (at one point the prospective fate of UNPROFOR); and some felt that there was a lot to be said for US (i.e. NATO) involvement in such an operation. NATO is, indeed, now in the lead in considering options.

The trouble for us Europeans is that military clout, even if unused, does translate into political clout. In areas in which the EU and the USA both have interests – which, given common values, are likely fortunately to be shared – experience shows that we either work and succeed together, or we fail separately.

But if the EU is to be more than a mere side-kick of the USA, it must be able to make a contribution, partially military certainly, but above all political and economic, which the USA feels obliged to work with and respect in a partnership of equals.

This is, of course, more easily said then done; and a relative lack of military power, as long as it lasts, will put the EU at an undeniable disadvantage in some situations. But the EU can strengthen its position if, in helping to manage the international environment, it is a genuinely valuable partner of the USA, but not only the USA – of any country sharing the ideals, objectives, standards and (for the most part) interests which underlie the European–US relationship.

A crucial ingredient in being a genuinely valuable partner is political will, translated into effective political organization – the ability to reach decisions and machinery to implement them. The USA has this.

[1] Written in May 1998.

Above the inter-agency fray, the President takes decisions and the machinery of government implements them. In everyday life it is clearly not quite as simple as that, not least because of Congress. But when the US President decides to act, the USA can do so politically, economically and militarily.

The EU is in a different position. It has no president to take decisions, only a Presidency of the Council who is little more than the manager of a multi-headed college which has to reach decisions by consensus. The means for implementation are dispersed among the Commission for trade and aid, with political responsibility for foreign and security policy falling to a Presidency lasting only for six months. There is nobody consistently responsible for policy formulation or follow through. Maastricht, in creating the CFSP, failed to provide for the institutional leadership over an extended period necessary for on-the-ball policy formulation and effective and durable implementation.

That such leadership makes a difference can be seen, paradoxically, from the example most widely considered the greatest failure of the CFSP, namely Bosnia. Passing over the events leading to its recognition as a country, one thing the EU cannot be accused of is not having a policy. You may not have liked it, although given the constraints (no willingness either to use force or to walk away) it may have been the best available (humanitarian aid and protection combined with brokering a political solution). It might even have worked had it not been opposed by the USA: Dayton proved possible for various reasons, not least of which was that at long last the EU and USA worked together. There are important incidental lessons: that the EU, and equally the USA, cannot solve problems in which the other has a strong interest without cooperation between them; and that in such situations it is risky to deploy European without American troops.

But a policy the EU had: from the Cutilhero Plan through the Vance–Owen Peace Plan, the Invincible Plan and the European Action Plan: the product of giving a leadership role to someone, mainly David Owen, to propose, persuade, negotiate and implement, with the authority and ability to deal not only with the parties on behalf of the 12, but also within the Council to persuade Member States of what was necessary. In a lesser way and at a lower level the EU's Special Envoys for the MEPP and Great Lakes illustrate the same point.

Amsterdam has sought to remedy the gap left by Maastricht over leadership by the appointment of the Secretary-General of the Council as High Representative for CFSP, as well as by other steps. These include qualified majority voting (QMV) for the implementation of decisions taken under legally binding instruments (albeit with a probably essential let-out provision); and the establishment of a Policy

Planning and Early Warning Unit (PPEWU) in the Council Secretariat in Brussels (although it is a misperception to think there is no policy planning in Brussels: the Council machinery is devoted to it). These will help to make a difference, but in my view not a fundamental one. The prospect or the possibility of QMV will help decisions to be arrived at more readily; and the PPEWU can develop policy options for ministers in better ways. But the fundamental difference will come if the Council provides, under Amsterdam, for leadership in CFSP just as, in the economic area, the Treaty of Rome provided for leadership from the Commission.

It remains to be seen how the High Representative will work. Much will depend on who he is, his level, his authority and skill. He will have a difficult task. He cannot challenge the authority of the Council, whose servant he is, nor of the Presidency of the day, which will continue to be responsible under the Treaty for the management of CFSP. But he could be a partial answer to the famous Henry Kissinger question, providing the Council gives him the authority to pick up the phone and to speak for the Council in particular areas.

By itself this will not be enough. Indeed, there can be no single solution to so complex a problem as getting 15 Member States, let alone 26, to act as one. We can never be as fleet of foot as, say, the USA. But the better the High Representative works and the more clout he has, the greater the contribution he will make to solving another problem, up to now largely unspoken because so sensitive, but one which I feel should be addressed if the EU's foreign policy and security identity are not be permanently weakened – and all the more so with a larger number of Member States.

All Member States are of course equal, especially where consensus is needed. But this is not the way the outside world necessarily sees us or is prepared to treat us. The Americans, notably, want to deal in Europe with the countries which in their view matter and with which they feel they can work on whatever the issue in question is – and it will not always be the same country or countries. The Contact Group on Yugoslavia is only the best known – and most obviously resented – manifestation of this.

The problem is that the USA in particular tends to deal perfunctorily with EU interlocutors, even reinforced by the status of the EU Presidency, which in their view are not the major players. They will continue to deal with the countries which they do regard as the major players. And those countries will not say no, don't talk to me, go and talk to the Presidency (although I hope they will also say go and talk to the Presidency – and the High Representative as well). The Contact Group phenomenon will continue, openly or surreptitiously. An effective CFSP needs to find a way of harnessing this fact in some kind of

arrangement which will subject such contact groups to the influence, if not the actual control, of the EU at 15. It may be that a High Representative with the confidence of all Member States, small and large alike, developed over a period longer than the six months of any Presidency, and earning the respect of the EU's interlocutors will help to resolve this problem, a problem which will be more acute in an enlarged EU. And it needs to be addressed as an issue in its own right if the CFSP is to command the allegiance of all Member States necessary to make it effective.

A start is fortunately being made. The Benelux Foreign Ministers have written a letter to their colleagues marked by a number of, in my view constructive, features, notably:

- acceptance that *ad hoc* arrangements between some Member States with or without third countries will exist, and that some Member States do have 'superior capacity';
- concerns about this can be met 'if care is taken to ensure that the *ad hoc* arrangements are made consistent with the letter and spirit of Maastricht and Amsterdam' and if the countries concerned formulate their policy approaches to fit in with EU policies;
- that this implies full information, consultation and where necessary involvement of the other Member States.

I hope that ministerial discussion in due course will enable the EU to exploit, rather than simply resent, the strengths which individual Member States and their outside interests and influence can bring to it.

There are many other ways of improving the effectiveness of our CFSP. To mention two:

- More use of Special Envoys. The Americans use them all the time (Holbrooke, Miller, Cleveland, Gelbard, Richardson, etc.). Why should the EU, with probably a greater need given the multiplicity of its voices, be reticent?
- Harnessing our aid and trade weight more effectively behind not just the general promotion of regional peace and stability, but particular political objectives, for example, in Bosnia, Kosovo or the Middle East, and more imaginative use of the human means at our disposal. The High Representative will be a start. But, for example, the EU uniquely has the luxury of 15 Foreign Ministers. Why not use them for the EU?

But I would not want to end by leaving the impression that the CFSP needs restructuring from the ground up because it has not worked at

all. Actually in many ways it works pretty well. It now brings together the views of 15 pretty important countries on a still important continent. As the EU's members increase so will the impact of the common policies thus produced. In addition to giving a platform in foreign relations to countries which may have had difficulty having their voices heard before, it is useful also to countries which had a voice, but have found it declining. It is often said that the UK is valued in Washington to the extent that it can 'deliver' or at least influence the EU as a whole. So the large countries also have an interest in the solidarity, now of 15 later of 26, with the consequent need to work together for both large and small Member States.

People talk as if the PPEWU will fill a void. There are gaps, but no void – the whole Council machinery is a policy planning process. We have developed or are developing strategies towards large swathes of the world, not necessarily strictly CFSP in the sense of the second pillar, but certainly CFSP in the sense of using our combined resources in accordance with politically identified objectives. We have taken or promoted many foreign policy initiatives, whether encouraging countries to cooperate in Europe (e.g. the European stability pact, ethnic problems in the Baltic states), promoting democratic electoral processes in Albania or Cambodia, participating in the extension of non-proliferation, including landmines and conventional weapons, etc. We have developed coherent policy approaches, for example, to Russia and Ukraine. We are in policy dialogue at summit level with important Asian countries (ASEM) as well as others. We are actually rather good at many of these set-piece policy approaches. Where we need to improve our performance is in crisis prevention and crisis management.

Of course, sound set-piece policies – towards Russia, Central and Eastern Europe, the Barcelona process, to give some examples – will be important contributions to crisis prevention through their role in fostering stability. But prevention of specific crises, and their management once they break, is a different matter. Superpowers also have their difficulties – nobody is good at taking pre-emptive action at unknown cost to prevent uncertain effects, often without a clear idea what can be done. Sometimes crises need to develop, and even get worse, before they can be dealt with: a doctrine of ripe time. Certainly it was not from lack of early warning that we, or the USA, failed to prevent the Kosovo crisis.

But what we can do is ensure that situations are understood, options (or even the lack of them) identified and leadership capability provided so that decisions are not taken by default, and that where there is a will to act – and this cannot be legislated or provided for through institutional construction – the instruments are there to provide the means.