

THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A GLOBAL PLAYER: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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***ABSTRACT.** Strengthening the external action of the Union has emerged as a powerful expectation shared both by a large majority of members of the Convention on the future of Europe, and more significantly by public opinion when it has been consulted on this issue. Although there is a consensual desire for Europe to speak with a stronger voice in global affairs, the ways and means to achieve this objective still divide those called to clarify the path to be followed. The European Union is already a significant presence in world politics by its considerable share in the international trade, or its dominant contribution to development aid. Many criticise on the other hand the lack of consistency in the more classical dimensions of foreign policy, or the lack of credibility in the capacity to act attributed to the absence of defence capabilities. Such concerns are currently addressed in the larger debate on the future of Europe, either within the dedicated framework, the European Convention convened to design the future of the EU, or outside the Convention, both among politicians and academics. It is generally considered and accepted that Europe will gain in political influence once the unification of the continent is completed, i.e. the current enlargement objectives are achieved. It goes without saying that devising and making operational appropriate instruments and capacities to act coherently outside its borders are a necessity as well. Institutional guarantees that Europe could in the future continue to influence the course of events in world affairs are becoming imperative. This article will explore some of the proposals in that sense. It will also address the place for Romania as a future EU member state in the new architecture of Europe and its possible contribution to the Common Foreign and Security Policy.*

1. The EU has already become an important actor on the international arena

Despite criticism it is safe to argue that while aiming to build on its own assets, in the new context of increased globalisation, Europe itself is an enduring example of how to achieve peace and prosperity through integration based on the respect of democratic values. It is a success story it intends to bring forward to the world as a recipe for managing tensions generated by globalisation.

The starting point for integration in the

broader area of external relations was the competence the Community acquired in the field of trade. From its inception the Community aimed to achieve a customs union and exclusivity for external trade. Today the Union has become the world largest trading bloc, with a share of 1/5 of all global exchanges. The impressive success is due mainly to the capacity of the Member States to make use of trade opportunities and of their comparative advantage. Yet, credit should be given also to the way the policy in this area has institutionally been organised and carried out.

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In conformity with the EC Treaty, the Commission enjoys exclusivity on this field, it negotiates (under a mandate by the Council) all external agreements concluded by the Community with third partners and controls their implementation. The solidarity of the Member States gives the necessary weight in bilateral or multilateral negotiations in which the EC is taking part. One particular example of this solidarity at work was the way that the Community conducted negotiations within the World Trade Organization (WTO), and indeed in the World Conference in Doha, when its contribution was determinant for the outcome. The EC has gradually become the key partner for many, and a key actor in framing and strengthening the rules of international trade.

The other example of an early role for the Community is the development co-operation. Historical ties of some Member States to countries in poorer regions, especially to Africa, evolved gradually into a full-fledged Community policy of co-operation for development. Successive agreements of Yaoundé, Lomé or more recently Cotonou have provided a legal framework for trade facilities, direct assistance, and transfer of rules.

EU is today the main assistance donor and the main trade partner for developing countries. Its development assistance budget amounts to over 6 billion Euro annually, including 1 billion Euro for emergency and humanitarian aid. Supplementary, the African, Caribbean and Pacific Groups of States countries receive assistance via the European Development Fund, constituted from direct financial contribution from Member states. More recently developing countries also qualify for loans from the European Investment Bank.

Particularly significant and important is the

fact that the success of integration in the Western Europe seem to have become in time a possible model or source of inspiration for solving endemic problems, of poverty and continuous conflicts, in other parts of the world.

Co-operation with Europe has also been identified by many as a channel for integration into world trade. In implementing its strategy for promoting development, the Union has made use of the link between trade and development, thus adopting in 2001 the trade liberalisation initiative «Everything but Arms», which gives free access on the Community market of products from developing countries. The Union is also promoting fast-track accession for developing countries to WTO (particularly for the least developed ones) and to that end provides technical assistance and capacity building for those countries.

The paramount priority in the EU's action in favour of development is given to the fight against poverty, with particular emphasis on the political dimension on this endeavour, i.e. democratisation and human rights, including gender equality, good governance, conflict prevention and resolution and peace promotion. The social dimension and the preservation of environment are also at the core of the general concept of sustainable development. In this context, the Union is concerned by the possibilities for people in developing countries to access social services, such as health and education, the EU being a major contributor to the Global Fund for AIDS and Health.

At the EU level, the loud challenge launched by the anti-globalisation protesters functioned as a catalyst for a process of clarification of the profile of the Union in this context and of the idea that the social and economic model that emerged

from the European integration was an essential part of the possible contribution that the EU could bring to the management of globalisation. This coincides with a political process of re-defining the European project, and of determining the direction the integration would take.

The impact of the 11th September 2001 translated also in a need to re-evaluate and re-dimension the policy of co-operation for development, in order to integrate new objectives such as the one of establishing bridges between civilisations. The same consideration applies to the Union's relations with areas that acquire a special geo-political significance in the new context (for instance the Central Asia).

Equal to itself, the Union is not using in this exercise of self re-considering the tools of a traditional realpolitik. In the context of globalisation, the EU proposes its own model of integration based on multiple-level interaction and therefore compromise, with various sources of legitimacy all considered when this compromise is searched for, and founded on a common «*socle des valeurs*», with solidarity at its centre. In an inspired formula, the European Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy, associated the Union with a «*laboratoire de la mondialisation maîtrisée*»¹.

The European recipe for managing the globalisation starts with trade liberalisation, contained by clear and transparent rules that do not prevent the developing countries to participate in the process, therefore promoting the inclusiveness.

Between protectionism and uncontrolled liberalisation, EU suggests a «third way», a positive approach, of promoting the sustainable development and defending collective values (including a departing move from the narrow market logic and consequently taking into account the public interest of ensuring the access to essential services, such as food safety and clean water, for all).

Another dimension of the EU pattern is the synergy between development and environment. The EU promotes the view that neither should become an obstacle for the other. The market logic should not impede upon the environment protection, nor should the environment constrains become unjustified trade barriers.

In a broader perspective, the Union is making use of a wide range of relations with third countries and regions. The logic of EU in organising its external interactions is centred on the prominence of the geographical proximity. Organically, the complex mixture of interests for different regions and of challenges raised by them has determined the Community to conclude a variety of types of bilateral or multilateral agreements with its counterparts: association agreements (particularly, European or Euromediterranean), association and stabilisation agreements (for Western Balkans), partnership and co-operation agreements (with Russia and other partners in Eastern Europe), classical association or co-operation, general or sectoral trade agreements etc.

These agreements could combine strict trade provisions with more evaluated possibilities for sectoral co-operation or even set-up institutional framework of political dialogue. A basic

¹ Pascal LAMY - **L'Europe, laboratoire d'une globalisation maîtrisée** (*Le Soir*, Bruxelles, 7 septembre 2001)

component of the political dimension of relations consecrated in this multitude of agreements is the omnipresent human rights clause that enables the parties to suspend the execution of the agreement in a situation of non-respect of the human rights commitments.

As an illustration of promoting its own model in external relations, the EU approach favours the regional dialogue between Europe and other partners interested by the virtues of peaceful integration. The EU has therefore an already traditional dialogue and co-operation with South and Central America, and with Asia. The same logic is reproduced in the business the Union conducts with its Southern Mediterranean neighbours (that is the quest for security and prosperity), in the stabilisation of the Western Balkans or the Eastern Europe. The best example of a successful regional approach is by all means the policy promoted by the Union toward its immediate neighbours aiming to join it, the Central and Eastern Europe, Cyprus and Malta.

Last but not least, the Union's privileged relations with North America have found a comprehensive expression in the New Transatlantic Agenda and in the bi-annual institutionalised dialogue between heads of state and government from both shores of the Atlantic. An essential element of the external policy is the co-operation in multilateral fora. The international impact of the Union's policies is widely acknowledged. However, its status and representation in international organisation is less clear and complicated by a variety of reasons.

As such the EU does not enjoy an explicit legal personality, therefore residing normally on the representation via the European Community, when the latter exercise an exclusive or shared competence (as it is the case in the WTO), or in

specific bodies within the UN system (such as Food and Agriculture Organization). This presence could be as a full member as in the abovementioned cases, or with an observer status (in the UN General Assembly, ECOSOC, or other UN bodies).

Outside the global organisation, the Community is a full participant in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, attends as an observer, via the Commission, the Council of Europe activities or the OSCE and participates in most of the activities of the G7/G8.

All the same, the Member States are bound by the Common and Security Policy rules to follow in the multilateral fora, positions determined jointly in advance within the EU framework, with the Presidency speaking in the name of the Union. As a political and regional group the EU has presented and defended many initiatives on behalf of the EU (significantly enough these positions are regularly backed by the candidate countries, thus forming a powerful and influential «regional bloc»). A further concertation obligation concerns the European members of the UN Security Council, they being expected to co-ordinate among themselves and to defend the EU interests. Similar behaviour is ensured within the IFI's.

The bulk of criticism over the lack of coherence and credibility of the EU foreign policy concerns mainly its inability to mobilise in the event of a crisis. The response given by Europe in early '90s to the Balkan emerging conflicts was a revealing factor for many shortcomings of the Maastricht's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Furthermore, the on-going conflict in the Middle East, with its entering into a more acute and bloody phase, underlined the weak influence of

the Union, despite the mobilisation of considerable financial and diplomatic means (especially of the intensive use of the High Representative presence in the region and of the office of the special envoy Moratinos). That being in case it is however fair to say that latest developments indicate an increased awareness of the need for improvement and determination to act more efficiently and rapidly as well. The decision to take over the police mission in Bosnia – Herzegovina and the willingness to also take over the mission in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are just two examples in this respect.

Indeed there is increased awareness of a need for greater EU involvement in the world affairs, manifested from the inside, but equally from third actors that expect the Union to balance the present world order. For analysts and politicians alike it became clear also the fact that the weight of the EU in economic affairs and in the world trade should be matched by credible means to project its own agenda in political affairs.

The Union has proven the capacity to think and act differently in cases of disagreement with the only world superpower, the US, on issues such as the death penalty, the global warming, or more recently the International Criminal Court. There is a manifest need for the world to see that different paths are possible where individual interests have to and can be dealt with within a larger framework of global and other regional and individual interests. The fact that Europe speaks with a powerful voice while showing that it has the necessary means in order to make its declarations credible, clearly is bringing its

contribution to such a development. In other words it helps increasing the awareness that problems of multilateral/global dimension need multilateral/global solutions. As Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglits recently pointed out it would mean restoring a measure of multilateralism to the international scene ².

The existence of transatlantic disagreements though, should not be misleading. The EU-US relations are as strong as ever, and both parties are committed to ensure a constructive dialogue, when needed. The traditional solidarity, founded on the attachment to shared basic values such as the human rights and the liberty, was strongly demonstrated in the aftermath of the 11th September and it will continue to be so.

The deficit of credibility (signalled not only from the exterior) is to be addressed both by a review of instruments and procedures and by ensuring the military and financial means to achieve jointly agreed objectives.

Security has been considered to be a part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) since its insertion in the Treaty on the European Union, at Maastricht. Following that, the Amsterdam Treaty made explicit the possibility of the Union to participate in a range of crisis management missions (the so-called Petersburg tasks). The interest of the Union for this field has been contained therefore by this crisis management approach and it did not involve the territorial defence. The issue of a common defence still divides the Member States since some are NATO allies, already having mutual assistance commitments, and others being attached to their neutrality.

² William PFAF - **A Plea for a Greater European Role in World Affairs**, *INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE*, 18 JULY, 2002.

Against this landscape, the Union has pursued the objective to develop a Rapid Reaction Force for intervention in cases of crisis, with a headline goal of ensuring that such force is operational as soon as possible. The process of developing a European defence capacity is meant also to take full advantage of the NATO experience and assets and to avoid duplication and competition. Actually the development of a genuine European Security and Defense Policy has to be looked at within the larger framework of transatlantic links and as a contribution to better streamlining and increasing the efficiency and capacity of the democratic world to cope with the security challenges of today. That means inter alia that a division of labour could be contemplated based on complementarities and not at all on competition.

A strengthened defence identity for the EU is to be welcomed, since there is a clear need for Europe to address security threats, especially in neighbouring regions. The understanding of this imperative has been tested in the involvement of the EU in the stabilisation of the Balkans where a combination of military and police presence with reconstruction assistance and trade concession was used and brought encouraging results.

The Union is challenged also by an increased migratory pressure to its external borders. More and more people are knocking at the doors of Europe, with an increase number of them being smuggled into EU. A common response at those problems caused by illegal traffic of people, drugs or arms is also expected from the Union. An increased dialogue and co-operation with countries of origin and transit should complement a firm response consisting of tight

external border control with a burden sharing among current and future Member States. In that respect, the Union is already contemplating to combine negative and positive measures in order to curve down the illegal migration. This concern is increasingly becoming a dominant theme for the external action of the Union.

2. Need to substantially strengthen EU's capacity of action: the enlargement's potential impact

A general preliminary conclusion in the debate on the future of Europe is that Europe should strengthen its capacity of action in the field of foreign policy, although the discussion on this issue in the Convention underlined a polarisation of views with a majority in favour of moving toward greater integration and a rather strong minority opposed to that. This polarisation is even greater in the case of the discussion on what should be done in the field of defence.

When reflecting on how to better benefit from acting collectively on the international stage and on what resources should be used to that end, one should address questions³ such as:

- How to reinforce the coherence of views between member states on foreign affairs subjects, avoiding in the same time the least ambitious level of expectations?
- How can be the coherence between different objectives be ensured?
- To what extent could the Community method be extended to CFSP matters? Is it possible to envisage the use of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV)? Is there any scope for flexibility, when national positions differ? Is there room to

³ Questions inspired by the debates in the Convention on the future of Europe

increase the role of the European Parliament or of the national parliaments?

- What are the lessons to be drawn from the experience of having a post of high representative? What are the compatibilities and the divergences with having in the same time a Commissioner for External Relations? Are there any institutional reforms to be contemplated inside the Commission for better managing the external affairs?

- Is it beneficial for the Union to extend its missions in the field of defence, beyond the Petersberg tasks?

- What arrangements could be evaluated for improving the external representation of the Union to third countries and international organisations? Could be possible to envisage a European diplomacy?

To answer such questions is certainly not an easy task. It requires deep reflection and effort. This is exactly one of the reasons for which the Convention was launched. From its debates so far some ideas have emerged which I fully subscribe to. At this stage I would limit myself to briefly comment on two of them.

First, on the possible impact on CFSP/ESDP of the enlargement of the EU. It is obvious that the enlargement of the EU will significantly consolidate its geopolitical weight. The voice of Europe will genuinely become the voice of one continent. The new members will bring with them as a valuable asset the experience, tradition and expertise they have in dealing with countries and regions that will become direct neighbours of the wider Europe. Of course, the enlargement will add to the influence of the Union, provided that

the tensions that manifest themselves already do not become centrifugal, and that the EU will ensure institutional guarantees for allowing both coherence of action and flexibility. The revision of objectives and policies should address issues such as how the common interests are best identified from the outset, therefore improving the capacity for analyse and planning. Here too the input of the new members will be particularly helpful.

That brings me to the **second** comment, namely on whether and how the present EU institutional framework and mechanisms respond to the challenges and, if needed, what should be done better or changed. A dynamic foreign policy implies the capacity to respond promptly to international developments, free of heavy legislative and financial constraints. The quest for increased flexibility could include examination of innovative ways to achieve consensus, such as for instance the constructive abstention. The ideas developed in last May Commission's communication "A Project for Europe" are particularly helpful in the efforts aimed at identifying the most appropriate actions, including in the field of CFSP/ESDP⁴. One thing seems however to be quite evident: there is a clear need for a well devised balance of competences among the EU institutions while keeping in mind that the guardian of the respect of the *aquis communautaire* is the Commission⁵.

The current practice of co-ordination in the capitals of third countries and in international fora should be further pursued, and the possibility to joint representation or resource sharing should not be dismissed. Europe need a single «foreign minister», a one mouth to voice the commonly agreed positions, and further

⁴ A Project for the European Union - Communication from the Commission, COM (2002) 247/FINAL 22 May 2002

⁵ Bulletin quotidien de l'Europe, 17 juillet 2002

inside is needed before deciding if this is to belong to the Commission or to be in the intergovernmental realm, or a combination of the two.

Further development of the defence policy with the possible emergence of a European army if it achieves a sufficient level of support is to be matched by a consequent level of military capabilities guaranteed by significant budgetary engagement. Otherwise a European defence lacking resources would not be credible, a worrying perspective for the external dimension in general.

3. Where Romania fits in?

Romania places at the centre of the principles that should guide Europe in the future the principle of solidarity and of equality among Member States. As of today solidarity translates for us into political backing for the successful completion of the accession negotiations and increased technical and financial assistance to accompany the harmonisation.

From the perspective of Romania, as a future EU member state the effort of clarification undertaken by the Union is to be welcomed. Hence Romania's readiness and determination to bring all is possible contribution to the debate within and outside the European Convention on the role of the future Europe. That is valid for the area of CFSP/ESDP as well.

As already mentioned enlarging the Union is expected to bring about an increased capacity and expertise in dealing with regions that will physically be at the frontiers of Europe and beyond. Situated in the vicinity of the Eastern Europe and the Balkans which will become direct neighbours of the EU once the present enlargement will be accomplished, Romania is

already contributing and will do it all the more so when a EU Member to the efforts of the EU in projecting stability and prosperity in the adjacent regions, especially in the Balkans as well as in Caucasus and the Middle East. Romania is able and ready to contribute to the development of the Union as a global actor on the world stage.

Concrete examples in this sense are, inter alia, civilian and military presence both in Bosnia and in Kosovo, the participation with troops in Afghanistan in the fight against international terrorism. Such actions complement the most significant share of contribution to the European stability brought along by her own successful political transition, from a communist regime to democracy.

Being at the future Eastern border of the EU, Romania will have an important task in monitoring one of the most sensitive external borders of the Union, which will be confronted with a substantive migratory pressure. Romania has an important role to play in reaching the objective of setting up a common liberty, security and justice area within an enlarged European Union and it is committed to bring its full contribution in this respect notably in: stopping the influx of the illegal immigrants, combating organised crime, blocking the activities of the networks for trafficking drugs, human beings and arms. By developing its infrastructure and the sectors of the European networks on its territory Romania is becoming a bridge between Europe and neighbouring regions. Romania strategically placed in the West shores of the Black Sea can play a role in this respect, irradiating to our Eastern neighbours the most profound European values; reconnecting the Western Balkans to the European spirit, enhancing the European vocation of its Northern and Eastern and Eastern

neighbours by forming a bridge between Europe and the Caucasus⁶.

Another dimension of the external profile of the Union, to which Romania is attaching particular importance, is the sustainable character of the development, and especially the imperative to consider constructively the social implications of the decisions taken by the EU. It is important that the transformations promoted succeed for the benefit of the citizens. A successful transformation is empty of any significance if it is to remain an abstract aim. That brings me to the issue of global solidarity and security, which also requires better responses to the negative effects of globalisation. The external actions of the Union need to become sustainable, which means the integration of its trade, development and security policies and providing a sustainable dimension to each one of them.

Finally and as a thought on how Romania could best equip herself to be an important contributor to the promotion of the EU's CFSP, I think that full advantage should be taken of the enterprise of reforming, underway within the Union, by translating it into an increased effort towards reconsideration on the country's role as a future EU member. The basic point in this endeavour is to start thinking both at the level of political leadership and at that of the public opinion what Romania is to do as a genuine future decision-maker inside the EU with the responsibilities which are not only national but equally of the Union. It will mean for example that Romania would assume its future membership to a club of prosperous countries, therefore departing from self-evaluating herself as a developing country in need for foreign assistance

and preferential treatment. The benefits of EU membership will largely compensate for the loss of any other possible sources of aid.

In foreign policy, the perspective of membership also means increased solidarity with the Union on specific matters or positions. As in the case of any other European country, the interests and expectations of Romania would be better met by belonging to the EU, and therefore by having access to its assets, within the framework of genuine Co-responsibility fully shared by all Member States.

⁶ Adrian Năstase – Romania in the European Union and the Future of Europe, Speech at the European Policy Centre – Brussels, June 6, 2002