

Global and regional crises and challenges, coupled with developments within the EU, have made new demands on the EU's external activities. Given the importance of the external relations and security policy of the EU in the present international climate, we have asked three specialists on foreign and security policies to express their views on the challenges EU is presently confronted with.

THE FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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ABSTRACT: In only a decade the European Union has moved from being a new kid on the block in terms of foreign and security policies to being a high profile and surprisingly effective international actor. Certainly, it has failed to match the ambitions of some of its most enthusiastic proponents. Certainly, too, European publics know next to nothing about what the Union does in the international realm. It is because of this that, despite their potential and their effectiveness to date, EU policies in this sphere were widely derided as failures following the moment when the attacks of 11 September 2001 shook the western world to its core. The Convention on the Future of Europe and subsequent intergovernmental conference look set to make significant institutional changes to the Union's foreign and security policy systems. In undertaking these reforms, Convention members and national governments are doubtless motivated by the laudable objective of enabling the Union to do more on the international stage. One can only hope that these motives notwithstanding, they do not simply propose reforms for their own sake and, in the process, undermine a system that, to the surprise of many, has continued to function respectably in an ever more complex and ever more dangerous world.

Introduction

The last few years have been a period of extremes for the Union in the foreign and security policy spheres. On one hand, they have represented one of the highest profile areas of EU activity since the end of the 1990s. The development of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) following the December 1998 Franco-British summit at St Malo, the high profile initiatives embarked on by both External Relations Commissioner Chris

Patten and the High Representative Javier Solana, and the increasing salience of security issues following the terrorist attacks in the United States of 11 September 2001 all have contributed to focusing both scholarly and public attention on this policy sector.

On the other hand, at the time of writing – April 2003 – it would be all too easy to lapse into fatalism, not to say profound cynicism, about the European Union's foreign and security policies. After all, the Union played no

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role in either the crisis leading up to, or the subsequent prosecution of, the war against Iraq. Indeed, insofar as it figured on the international politics radar screen at all, this was largely via periodic appearances to air its divisions.

Yet, whilst crises such as that in Iraq necessarily dominate the headlines and the international agenda, there is far more to contemporary international affairs than the war against Iraq. Out of the limelight, and often in areas of little interest to either European publics or many of their political leaders, the Union has in fact become a highly active and, in some respects, highly influential, actor on the international stage. Low profile achievement has, in other words, accompanied high profile crises.

It is worth adding a rider to what follows at this point. Insofar as the Union's role in international politics is concerned, events are happening fast. The combination of the war in Iraq, and the ongoing debates within the context of the Convention on the Future of Europe about EU external policies have implied a need to shoot at a rapidly moving target. What follows, therefore, is a desperate attempt both to analyse current events and to put these in broader context. This article is divided into three parts. Part one provides the background to recent developments, placing foreign and security policies in historical context. Part two focuses on developments over the last three years, focusing on the development of EU competence in the field of defence, and the CFSP. Parts three and four assess the prospects for the future in light of the Iraq war and developments within the Convention on the Future of Europe respectively.

Background

European integration has, from its inception, been concerned with issues of foreign and defence policy. Indeed, its first institutional embodiment was the 1948 Brussels Treaty of Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defence. Similarly France and Germany would not have created the European Coal and Steel Community had it not been for a desire on their part to eliminate the possibility of future conflict between them.

However, following the failure of the French National Assembly to ratify the European Defence Community in 1954, foreign and security affairs were effectively removed from the agenda of European integration. Whilst EC members took steps to coordinate their foreign policies from the 1970s in the framework of European Political Cooperation (Nuttall 2000), it was not until the Single European Act of 1985 that the EC itself was formally given a purview over this policy sector.

The European Union Treaty (EUT), signed at Maastricht in December 1991, built significantly upon these foundations. Title 5 created the legal basis for the development of a common foreign and security policy (CFSP). It incorporated European Political cooperation within the legal structures of the European Union and empowered the EU to implement a common foreign and security policy including the framing of a common defence policy which might in time lead to a common defence. (art J 4 1). In relation to defence matters, the Union was given the right (Article J4) to request the West European Union (WEU) to 'elaborate and implement decisions and

actions of the Union which have defence implications.’

Despite the fact that the Maastricht Treaty was only ratified in November of 1993, the member states committed themselves in it to undertake a review of the CFSP in 1996. The Amsterdam Treaty, partly conceived in order to carry this out, amended the CFSP provisions of the Treaty in several significant ways. First, it introduced a new form of foreign policy decision. The European Council was empowered to provide a general framework and strategic direction for foreign policy activity across the three pillars by defining, via consensus, common strategies. Once a common strategy is agreed, the Council may implement it through joint actions and common positions adopted by a qualified majority.¹ As early as December 1998 the Council recommended three common strategies to the European Council – on Russia, the Ukraine and the Mediterranean.

Second, the Treaty provided for the creation of a High Representative for Foreign Policy (HR-CFSP). He is responsible for assisting the Council in CFSP-related matters by contributing to the formulation, preparation, and implementation of decisions. At the request of the Presidency he acts on behalf of the Council in conducting political dialogue with third parties and endeavours to improve the visibility and consistency of the CFSP. The Cologne Council meeting of June 1999 appointed Javier Solana, NATO Secretary General, as the first incumbent.

To offer administrative and institutional support to the High Representative, a policy planning and early warning unit was set up in

the General Secretariat of the Council under the authority of the High Representative for the CFSP. The unit is charged with monitoring and analysing developments in areas relevant to the CFSP; providing assessments of the Union’s interests in relation to the CFSP; providing timely assessments of events, potential political crises and situations that might have significant repercussions on the CFSP; and producing policy option papers for the Council.

Finally, the new Treaty made modest amendments to the provisions concerning defence policy. A semantic shift in wording enabled the European Council to ‘avail itself’ of the WEU rather than simply ‘request it’ to carry out missions, as stipulated at Maastricht. In October 1999, the High Representative was appointed as Secretary-General of the West European Union so as to enable him to preside over the other major initiative introduced by the Amsterdam Treaty – its incorporation into the EU. The new Treaty also incorporated the Petersberg tasks, namely ‘humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking’.

No sooner had the ink dried on the new Treaty than startling developments occurred in an area where least progress had been possible at the summit itself. At Amsterdam, as at Maastricht beforehand, progress in the sphere of defence was stymied by the United Kingdom. The new British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, arrived at his first EU summit armed with the arguments of his predecessors concerning the importance of separating defence issues from the Union. As he reported

¹ There remained a safeguard clause enabling Member States to block majority voting for important reasons of national policy. In such cases, when the Member State concerned has stated its reasons, the Council may decide by a qualified majority to refer the matter to the European Council for a unanimous decision by the Heads of State and Government.

back to the House of Commons after the summit:

‘Getting Europe’s voice heard more clearly in the world will not be achieved through merging the European Union and the Western European Union or developing an unrealistic common defence policy. We therefore resisted unacceptable proposals from others.’

(House of Commons, Hansard, 18 June 1997, Col 314).

Yet within months of the summit, the British position began to shift. A myriad of supposed explanations for this change have been put forward, ranging from increasing dissatisfaction with the United States following experience in the Balkans, to a desperate desire for Europe to do more in order to convince the US of the continued vitality of NATO in the light of increasingly clear concern in Washington about the military utility of the Alliance, to Mr Blair’s desire to assert ‘leadership’ in Europe (Howorth 2000; Whitman 1999).

Whatever the root cause, the shifting of the British position led to dramatic results. On 4 December 1998, Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac signed the St Malo declaration which advocated the development of an ‘autonomous’ political and military capacity for the EU. At the Cologne European Council meeting of the following June, the Union created the institutional framework necessary to take political decisions concerning defence matters, and the following December at Helsinki the Heads of State and Government established the so-called Headline Goals setting force targets for the Union’s military capabilities (for a full discussion, see

Howorth 2002: 37-41). Foremost amongst these targets was the decision to create, by December 2003, a EU Rapid Reaction force. The idea was that this should be capable of undertaking the full range of Petersberg tasks and be militarily self-sustaining with the necessary command, control and intelligence capabilities, logistics, other combat support services and, as appropriate, air and naval elements.

The changes brought about at successive European Council meetings were codified at the Nice European Council of December 2000. Few changes of any significance were made to the provisions for foreign policy. In terms of defence, however, the new Treaty removed virtually all references to the WEU, thereby underlining the fact that the Union itself was now empowered to take and implement defence decisions. Moreover, a report from the French presidency submitted to the summit formalised the existence of the interim ESDP institutions (the Political and Security Committee, the Military Committee and the Military Staff) which, by then, were functioning routinely. These became permanent institutions in January, April and June of 2001 respectively. A year later, paragraph A of the Laeken declaration declared ESDP operational.

The Substance of Foreign and Security Policies

A process of rapid institutional change has thus occurred as far as common foreign and particularly security policies are concerned. Yet, as ever, European leaders were not left in peace to perfect the institutional architecture intended to lay the basis for common external policies.² Rather, within a year of the signing

² Being overtaken by events has hardly been a new experience for European leaders in their attempts to forge a collective capacity in foreign and security affairs. Discussions in the context of the IGC preceding the Maastricht Treaty were overshadowed by the outbreak of the Gulf conflict, whilst the short period of time in which the Maastricht provisions were in force prior to their renegotiation at Amsterdam were dominated by the appalling scenes from the Balkans.

of the Nice Treaty the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 rocked the world and, particularly the United States. Such was the impact of those events that international politics came to be dominated by their aftermath, Washington's 'war on terrorism'. Consequently, and somewhat unfortunately as far as the Union was concerned, it was in the context of the post 9/11 world, and of America's activist policies, that its foreign and security policies came to be judged.

The inability of the European Union to make any kind of military contribution to the post 9/11 American campaign contributed to a growing sense that, once again, expectations of the Union in the area of foreign and security policies had clearly exceeded its capabilities.³ Not only that, but profound and highly public disputes between EU member states over the conflict with Iraq led many to proclaim that the Union's foreign and security policies were effectively moribund. Thus Alexander Stubb, an adviser to the European Commission, wrote in the *Financial Times* (13 March 2003) that:

'in the past few weeks we have been subjected to an unprecedented European foreign policy cacophony. The Union had a unique chance to show that Europe can speak with one voice in international crises. The failure was as fantastic as the opportunity and it seems that everyone is to blame.'

In even more striking tones, Anatol Lieven (*FT* 3 February 2003) declared that it 'may be time to admit that there will never in fact be a common European foreign and security policy'. Certainly there are clear reasons as to why one might reach such conclusions. A more

balanced assessment, however, shows that they might be premature.

The reality of ESDP

If any area exemplified informed frustration about the chasm between stated intentions and outcomes, it was defence policy. Following the St Malo declaration, the conference circuit was overflowing with those confidently predicting that the Union, because of the political momentum behind the project, was about to take a qualitative step forward in equipping itself with a meaningful defence policy (Howorth 2002: 93).

Yet for all the fanfare accompanying the development of the ESDP the Union made no military contribution to either of the military actions (so far) undertaken by the Americans as part of the 'war against terrorism'. Indeed, following the apparent triumphs of Saint Malo, Helsinki and Nice, it became increasingly difficult to discern when, if ever, the Union would be able to act militarily at all. Thus when the Belgian Foreign Minister announced to the press in the margins of the Laeken European Council on 14 December 2001 that the EU was going to send a 'multinational force' to Afghanistan, he was almost immediately publicly reminded - by both the British Minister for Europe, Peter Hain, and the German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer - that this was not an EU force but an international one backed by the UN (*Europe*, 15 and 16 December, *The Guardian*, 15 December). During 2002, despite much public speculation about the possibility of the Union replacing the NATO peacekeeping force in Macedonia, nothing - for the moment - actually transpired.

³ Though of course it is debatable whether Washington would have wanted such a military contribution even if it had been forthcoming.

At least three factors explain this apparent lack of progress. First, the Union was, of course, not the only institution interested in stamping its imprimatur on European security affairs. As it was engaged in creating incipient structures to handle defence policy, NATO was in the process of adapting its own structures to handle the new security threats of the post 11 September world. Most striking in this regard was the decision taken at the NATO Prague summit of November 2002 to create a rapid response force. The stark differences with the EU's own planned force could hardly have been more striking: the NATO undertaking was predicated on the reorganisation of existing capabilities for high intensity war fighting. (interview with Lord Robertson, NATO Secretary General, *European Voice*, 21 November 2002). In terms of actual military capabilities, while the EU rapid reaction force of 50-60000 was to be available at 60 days' notice and in the field for one year, the NATO equivalent was to number up to 21000 and be deployable within 5-30 days. One senior Council of Ministers source commented wryly on the EU undertaking that it is 'not necessarily rapid, not necessarily reactive and not necessarily a force'. (*European Voice* 21-27 March 2002)

Second, the EU was hamstrung by a simmering row involving Turkey and Greece, which stymied negotiations with NATO about EU access to NATO assets for almost two years. The heart of the problem was that, given its limited military capacities, the Union was reliant, for most conceivable military operations, on guaranteed access to NATO experts and planning facilities – the so-called Berlin Plus formula that had been agreed at the German city in June 1996. Turkey, however initially blocked the signing of

implementation agreements between the Union and NATO. As far as Ankara was concerned, the EU's new defence policy decision-making arrangements discriminated against non-EU NATO European member states (*IHT* 26 Jan 2001). At the end of 2001, a deal was finally struck whereby the Union guaranteed that its rapid reaction force would not intervene near the Turkish geopolitical sphere of influence. Turkey in return gave up its demand for a right to have a say in the operational decisions guiding the force (*Le Monde* 15 December 2001). Following this, the Greek government expressed its opinion that too much had been conceded to the Turks, and themselves blocked the signing of the agreement. It was not until mid-December 2002, at the Copenhagen European Council, that a solution was finally arrived at.

Finally, the slow progress in setting up an operational defence policy is explicable in terms of the second thoughts of certain states concerning the viability and value of the project. From the start, EU member states had vastly different opinions about the idea of ESDP (Menon 2001). Crucially, the single most important state in terms of the effectiveness of any European defence initiative – the United Kingdom - was far from totally committed to the undertaking, and certainly uncommitted to ambitious French objectives for it. The preference of the British for working with the Americans was never in doubt – and was illustrated clearly by the UK bombing targets in Iraq with US a mere two weeks after declaration at St Malo. From the first, the EU defence initiative was openly viewed by London as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself, a tactic to improve military capabilities rather than a political project intended to strengthen the Union itself. As

Defence Minister Geoff Hoon stated to the Brookings Institution in January 2000, 'Helsinki is all about enhancing military capability. It is not about political niceties... If hanging a 'European' tag on it is what it takes to make it happen, then so be it.' Moreover, at British insistence, the Union moved to stress its relatively limited defence ambitions, and the continued primacy over security affairs of NATO. Thus the Helsinki declaration stated unambiguously:

'The European Council underlines its determination to develop an autonomous capacity to take decisions and, where NATO as a whole is not engaged, to launch and conduct EU-led military operations in response to international crises. This process will avoid unnecessary duplication and does not imply the creation of a European army (European Council Presidency Conclusions Helsinki 10-11 December 1999).'

The events of 11 September 2001 and America's activist foreign policy thereafter forced London into a more explicit choice between Europe and the US than British policy makers could possibly have foreseen at the time of St Malo. Whilst the choice has been neither as clear cut nor as definitive as those who see Prime Minister Blair as simply a 'poodle' of President George WBush imply it is clear that the divisions in Europe over Iraq – divisions that have centred round a confrontation between the two leading proponents of ESDP will severely impair progress in that particular field for some time to come (Menon and Lipken 2003).

However, it is not yet time to sound the death knell for the ESDP. For one thing, given

the events of September 2001, it is simply unfair to judge Europe's nascent military capabilities against the backdrop of American military might revealed so massively and effectively in the 'war' against terrorism. The absence of the EU from the military responses to 11 September should be put into context. First, the EU is not Europe. Whilst the Union found itself unable to act, several European states made important contributions both to the operation in Afghanistan and to the conflict in Iraq. The picture that Charles Grant (2002:141) paints of 'US forces hunting for terrorists in caves, and Europeans keeping the peace on the streets of Kabul' is misleading in that several European states made major contributions to the war fighting in Afghanistan. It was often British special forces that did the searching in caves whilst the French military contribution was also highly significant (Shapiro 2002). Nor should the importance and difficulty of peacekeeping – be it in Kabul or elsewhere – be underestimated.

Moreover, for all its failings, ESDP has, at last, become operational. The deployment of peacekeeping troops to Macedonia (operation Concordia was launched (worryingly) on 1 April 2003) provides a nice illustration of both the shortcomings and strengths of ESDP. For a period of six months, around 250 troops from 15 EU countries will participate in this Berlin Plus mission under the operational command of German Admiral Rainer Feist, currently Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, with the objective of overseeing the agreement reached in 2001 between the Macedonian government and Albanian rebels.⁴

⁴ France is sending most of the 350 soldiers and will therefore assume most of the responsibility on the ground, but a total of 27 countries will take part in the mission. They will wear national uniforms with insignia bearing the letters 'EUfor' and will have a badge with the European colours (blue with gold stars) on their right shoulders.

The lessons of Macedonia are threefold. First, discussions concerning its inception illustrate the divisions amongst member states concerning the scope of ESDP. The Union was originally intended to take over the NATO mission in October 2002. However the simmering dispute with the Turks about ESDP meant that the requisite agreements with NATO could not be signed. Several member states, including France and Belgium, argued that, because the operation was relatively small (the NATO force numbered only some 800 troops) the EU mission should go ahead even in the absence of any EU-NATO accords. This was blocked, however, by Britain, Spain and Germany. Not only were this latter group concerned about the implications for the transatlantic alliance of such a move, but their military commanders pointed out that, whilst the proposed mission was itself small, there was still the possibility of escalation, in which case the Union would need support from NATO.⁵

The fact that the Macedonia mission has been designated a Berlin Plus operation marks a recognition on the part of all the member states that, even in undertaking small-scale missions, the Union faces the possibility of escalation and will therefore need to be able to turn, in the last resort, to NATO for back up and assistance. As NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson pointed out, it 'marks an important milestone in the development of the EU-NATO strategic partnership. The full set of agreements for ready access by the EU to the collective assets and capabilities of NATO for EU-led operations is the key for the European

Union to take over NATO's mission in Macedonia.' (*EU Observer* 19 March 2003)

Third, Macedonia is symptomatic of an emerging functional division of labour between Europeans and Americans. Operation Concordia is in keeping with a broader pattern whereby American troop withdrawals from the Balkans have been compensated for by Europeans. There is a real possibility that this trend will be taken further as and when the European Union takes over the NATO operation in Bosnia, as is scheduled to happen either later in 2003 or early in 2004. Further afield, European forces make up the bulk of the International Stabilisation and Assistance Force that is currently patrolling the streets of Kabul. Thus, at the lower end of the military spectrum, the European Union, or European states acting through other fora, are increasingly coming to complement and reinforce American military might.

ESDP moreover, also includes non-military tasks. Away from the public gaze (focused very much on its military dimension) the EU has also created a civilian ESDP. The Nordic countries in particular, drawing on their strong traditions in the area of conflict prevention and supported by Germany's Red-Green coalition, insisted that civilian crisis-management capabilities be developed alongside the military aspects of ESDP. The Cologne European Council of June 1999, and subsequent meetings at Helsinki, Feira and Nice, and Gothenburg thus developed civilian ESDP. In keeping with the approach adopted for military forces, the June 2000 Feira European Council meeting emphasised four non-military areas: police, the administration

⁵ Peter Feith, the senior EU official in charge of the operation stated: "We should never exclude even the worst case scenario. If there would be a requirement to extract the force, then that would be done under NATO command and control with the assistance of NATO-led forces." BBC News online, 28 March 2003.

of justice, civilian administration and civil protection. Specific targets in each of these areas were laid out at Gothenburg in 2001, and in November 2002 the Danish Presidency declared that the four civilian headline goals had been met. In tandem, institutional structures were put in place, with the Committee for the Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management, which reports to the PSC, set up in June 2000. Just two months after the headline goals had been met, the Union embarked on its first civilian ESDP mission, with the deployment of a police training force to Bosnia in January 2003.

Certainly one should not exaggerate the significance of this first mission. The EU Police mission (EUPM) represents a rather unchallenging debut for civilian ESDP in that it is following in the footsteps of a United Nations mission which had been on the ground since 1995, and the Union had twelve months warning prior to taking its place. However, the importance of civilian ESDP is that its existence provides the Union with the full gamut of foreign and security options from which to draw. It also marks an acceptance of the fact that military power is not the only aspect of external policy with a role to play in contemporary external relations, a notion stressed by Scandinavian officials in the EU (interviews, Brussels, January 2003).

The Fate of CFSP

If civilian ESDP serves to show that military force is not everything in international affairs, other aspects of the EU's foreign and security policies reinforce this message. The term 'soft power' is an ambiguous one, used in some cases pejoratively in others to refer to non-military forms of power, and still others as power to attract, rather than coerce, others.

Whatever the definition one chooses, the fact is that the Union's foreign and security policies have more resources at their disposal than many seem to believe. Indeed, one of the problems with over hasty judgements about the EU's international performance in recent years has been the fact that debates about its foreign policy role have been subsumed beneath public and political discussion about the state of the military aspects of ESDP.

On a non-military level, the Union's response to the attacks of 11 September was both more rapid and more united than most would have predicted. As early as 14 September, it issued a joint declaration on 9/11 at level of heads of state and government. More practically the Union moved quickly to upgrade its cooperation with the US in the area of Justice and Home Affairs (Den Boer and Monar 2002: 14). On 12 September, the Commission tabled proposals for a European Arrest Warrant.

EU diplomatic activity also had a more direct impact on events following 11 September. The Union, prior to the events of that day had gradually been building its links with the Iranian regime. This process of constructive engagement culminated on 10 September 2001 in a meeting between External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten and the Iranian Foreign Minister, at which the EU announced its intention to negotiate a trade and cooperation agreement. Following the terrorist attacks in the US, the EU played a crucial role in bringing Iran within the ambit of the global coalition against terrorism and in liaising, through Javier Solana, over the future of Afghanistan (Allen and Smith 2002: 107).

The Union was also active in helping bring about a successful resolution to the Afghan conflict itself. Two respected observers have

commented that the 'UN-backed agreement on political transition in Afghanistan signed in Bonn on 5 December would not have been possible in its final form without EU efforts in the CFSP context' (Den Boer and Monar 2002: 15). Moreover, not only was it predominantly European troops that remained in the country to make up the bulk of the stabilisation force in Kabul, but the EU, following the end of hostilities, remained engaged economically providing 280 million euros in 2002 and, on 17 March 2003, pledging a further 400 million euro package of reconstruction for the country for 2003-4.

The real test for the Union's ability to wield political influence via the exercise of 'soft power' has been the Middle East. In terms of direct political influence, the EU has clearly been dwarfed by the United States. That being said, it has become an irreplaceable source of aid in the region, particularly for the Palestinian authority. From 1993 to the end of 2001, the EU committed about EUR 1 billion in grants and loans to the region (Soedentopf 2002: 288). Together with the contributions of individual member states, the EU contributes about 50% of the total aid to the Palestinian Authority (Everts 2003: 23-4). As Roy Ginsberg has noted (2001: 136): 'the Palestinians have come to depend as much on the EU for an economic lifeline and diplomatic support as the Israelis have come to depend on the US for diplomatic support, military cooperation and economic aid.'

From such economic beneficence stemmed a degree of political influence. In 1999, the Union was instrumental in persuading Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to step back from his threat unilaterally to declare Palestinian statehood. (Soedentop 2002: 290-1). The following year, Javier Solana was

present at the summit meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, where the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Arafat - together with President Bill Clinton, the Secretary General of the UN and the leaders of Jordan and Egypt - tried to define ways to end the violence between Israel and the Palestinians. Solana became one of the five members of this Sharm el-Sheikh Fact Finding Committee, the so-called Mitchell Committee. In April 2002 Solana and the EU special Representative Miguel Moratinos brokered the agreement on the release of the Palestinians holed up in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in April 2002.

Certainly it would be foolish to exaggerate the EU's influence in this region. Whilst it has become a recognised partner of the US in the region, (as witnessed by America's creation, at a meeting in Washington in May 2002, of a Quartet on the Middle East, composed of the US, EU, Russia and the UN), it could do little but watch as Israeli troops brutally destroyed the infrastructure it had funded. In April 2001, a high-level diplomatic mission to Israel in April, comprising of the High Representative and the Spanish Presidency were not permitted to visit President Arafat in his besieged headquarters. Moreover it is hard to argue with one cynical Foreign Office observer who told this author that it will be clear if and when the United States ever becomes serious about promoting peace in the Middle East. At that moment, Washington will cease to work through the quad, as it does when it is keen to share out the blame for failure, and act alone (interview London, March 2003).

Soft security therefore, has its limits as a means of exerting global influence. Yet it remains the case that, often behind the scenes, and certainly with little if any political or public recognition, the Union has been both active

and surprisingly effective in the foreign and security policy spheres. Clearly it is extremely difficult to measure the effectiveness of such policies in terms of their impact on security and particularly on western security. Yet, as Javier Solana, the Union's foreign policy High Representative commented recently:

'as far as contemporary security is concerned, there is no standard "unit of account". How much additional security does an aircraft carrier bring? Is it more or less than spending the equivalent amount of money on peacekeeping or the reconstruction of failed states? Security today is a multi-dimensional concept. Bringing peace, stability and order is an effective way of "draining the swamp". Nation building is not for wimps, as we have found out in Afghanistan and as we will be reminded in Iraq. And Europe's security contribution and her ambitions are relevant and useful.'

(Solana 2003: 5).

The Impact of Iraq

The Iraq conflict not only dominated headlines during the spring and early summer of 2003, but also had a profound effect on Europe's aspirations to become an influential global actor. In the first place, the crisis heightened fears, already prevalent in many parts of Western Europe, concerning the dangers of American unilateralism. Such fears have hardly been lessened by the rhetoric of the neoconservative right in Washington which has criticised European weakness and painted the EU as a powerless actor in the face of American might (Kagan 2003).

Moreover, sections of the American right have not only encouraged the administration to adopt a unilateralist approach to international affairs, but have also propounded a policy of divide and rule towards the Europeans themselves. A striking feature of US policies towards Europe has been the willingness of the administration to promote divisions amongst Europeans on issues ranging from the ICC (where the administration placed heavy pressure on European states to sign bilaterals exempting US personnel from the jurisdiction of the court) to Iraq. At the annual Wehrkunde meeting in the spring of 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made a point of insisting that there were more differences among Europeans on Iraq than between the US and Europe (*Financial Times*, 10 February 2003).⁶

Not, of course, that outside intervention has proved necessary in order to foster divisions between EU member states. Public differences between the major European players were marked and increasingly vitriolic in the build up to war. Perhaps most significantly, the Iraq crisis has driven a wedge between France and Britain. Immediately before the war, relations between London and Paris in particular degenerated to an alarming degree. Each side clearly had a different agenda as concerned transatlantic relations at a time when they had appeared to be converging over the necessity to create an EU defence capability. It will take time before we can accurately assess the full implications of the high levels of personal resentment that the crisis has spawned. What is clear is that the public falling out between Europe's two most

⁶ Certain right-wing US commentators have explicitly propounded cherry picking as an approach destined to maximise American influence whilst minimising the constraints upon it. See, for example, Charles Krauthammer, 'American Unilateralism', speech given at the third annual Hillsdale College Churchill Dinner, Washington, DC, December 4, 2002. <http://www.hillsdale.edu/newimprimis/2003/january/default.htm>

militarily powerful states will almost certainly stymie developments in the sphere of ESDP if only because it has reopened old divisions about whether ESDP has a 'Europeanist' or Atlanticist' vocation (for a fuller discussion of this, see Menon and Lipken 2003).

Institutional reform

The second source of uncertainty concerning the future are the on-going discussions concerning the future institutional shape of the Union, begun in the Convention on the Future of Europe, and due to be taken up again by the Intergovernmental Conference later this year.

In the foreign and security policy spheres, the debate about institutions has been dominated by the twin issues of coherence and leadership. Multiple actors are involved in the formulation and implementation of the Union's foreign and security policies, including four European Commissioners, several sectoral Councils (above and beyond the External Relations Council), the Presidency of the Council and the High Representative for foreign policy. Perhaps inevitably therefore, the Union is plagued with problems when it comes to ensuring that its actions in the international system are coherent. In an internal memo of late June 2000, Commissioner for External Relations Chris Patten complained of an 'unresolved tension' between the intergovernmental and community methods in external relations, complaining that the creation of the HR-CFSP had complicated foreign policy (*Financial Times* 6 July 2000).

Indeed, certain aspects of external policies are characterised by multiple overlapping institutional jurisdictions. Thus, although they come under the formal authority of the High

Representative, EU Special Representatives are paid for out of the Community budget. Whilst civilian ESDP belongs in the second pillar, the Commission paid for some 80 per cent of initial training for the civilian ESDP experts. Moreover, in the wake of the development of civilian ESDP the EU now concurrently operates two different civil protection schemes – one in the Council and one under the Commission.

Perhaps predictably, the Convention on the Future of Europe has been dominated by the need for big ideas to rejuvenate the Union's international role. Consequently it has focused on the need for clear and effective leaderships as a way of resolving the issue of coherence and making the Union a more effective presence on the international stage.

Of particular concern has been the perceived need to reform the rotating Presidency of the Council:

"The [six-monthly rotation system] has reached its limits. It creates for Europe a weakness of continuity in leadership: a fatal handicap in the development of an effective Common Foreign and Security Policy. What's worse, each Presidency sees itself as setting its own distinctive agenda for the Union." (Blair 2002)

Certainly there is reason to believe that successive Presidencies have managed to impose their own preferences onto EU foreign policy agendas. From the Northern dimension favoured by the Finns, to the emphasis on the Mediterranean characteristic of French and Spanish presidencies, this is hardly a new trend. At the time of writing (April 2003), the focus of debate seems to be on ways to overcome the perceived deficiencies of the rotating presidency, whilst at the same time avoiding 'duplication' between the Council of

Ministers, responsible for decisions concerning foreign and security policies, and the European Commission, charged with other aspects of foreign policy including crisis management (*European Voice* 11 July 2002).

The problems with the schemes on the table – to create a European Foreign Minister based simultaneously in the Council and the Commission, as well as a permanent European Council chair with some responsibility for representing the Union in the outside world – are manifold. Two in particular stand out. First, reinforcing the Council by providing the European Council with a permanent chair, and the Council of Ministers with an input into the Commission via the new Foreign Minister is bound to exacerbate tensions between the large and small member states. These were illustrated clearly in 2001. First, on the occasion of the Ghent European Council meeting of 20 October when Blair, Chirac and Schroeder held informal talks on Afghanistan an hour before summit started, infuriating both the Presidency and the Commission. More strikingly, the same tensions broke out into the open on the occasion of a Downing Street dinner on 4 November, when, initially uninvited, the Prime ministers of Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, along with the Belgian Presidency and Javier Solana forced their way to the table – in the case of the Dutch Prime Minister at such short notice that he was forty minutes late (*The Economist* 10 November). The small member states see moves towards greater intergovernmentalism not only as a direct attack on a Commission they see as their defender, but also as an attempt on the part of the ‘big’ to create a directorate for foreign and security affairs. Fostering such fears will hardly help in the quest for foreign policy consensus or effectiveness.

Second, it is obviously politically tempting for the Convention – and its president Giscard d’Estaing – to come up with high profile institutional initiatives. However, doing so runs the risk of both undervaluing what has already been achieved and of introducing gimmicks which play well politically at home in the short term, but have little, or even negative, practical effects in Brussels. Certainly the EU’s institutional system is far from perfect. Yet much has been accomplished, as argued above, in the realms of foreign and security policy. And much of what has been accomplished – the judicious use of aid and trade, the use of soft security tools and so on, has been managed relatively effectively by the Commission. Moreover, alongside the Commission, the High Representative has, slowly but surely begun to assume a higher profile and play a more important role. In June 2002, *Newsweek* claimed that ‘quietly and almost unnoticed, Javier Solana has done the unthinkable. He has created a common European foreign policy.’ This is doubtless overstated. Yet the fact remains that the jury is still out on the performance of the institutions created at Amsterdam and Nice for foreign and security policies. Rushing to reform them before they have become properly embedded, on the basis of judgments concerning their performance in a crisis that only one country in the world proved able to confront, smacks of the worst kind of short-sighted short termism.

Conclusions

In only a decade the European Union has moved from being a new kid on the block in terms of foreign and security policies to being a high profile and surprisingly effective international actor. Certainly it has failed to

match the ambitions of some of its most enthusiastic proponents. Certainly too, European publics know next to nothing about what the Union does in the international realm. It is because of this that, despite their potential and their effectiveness to date, EU policies in this sphere were widely derided as failures following the moment when the attacks of 11 September 2001 shook the western world to its core. Yet even in the crises that succeeded the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington D.C., European states, and in certain instances the EU itself, responded rapidly and effectively

The Convention on the Future of Europe and subsequent intergovernmental conference look set to make significant institutional changes to the Union's foreign and security policy systems. In undertaking these reforms, Convention members, and national governments are doubtless motivated by the laudable objective of enabling the Union to do more on the international stage. One can only hope that these motives notwithstanding, they do not simply propose reforms for their own sake and, in the process, undermine a system that, to the surprise of many, has continued to function respectably in an ever more complex and ever more dangerous world.

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