

**The European Union's Growing International Role :
Closing the Capability – Expectations Gap?**

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Abstract

Europeans want the EU to play a bigger international role but while the expectations of citizens remain high the Union's capabilities have only gradually improved. Nearly a decade after the CFSP was established at Maastricht, and despite playing a more assertive global and regional role, the EU continues to move forward at a slow pace in foreign and security policy. In other areas such as trade (WTO/Doha), environment (Kyoto) and development policy (Cotonou) the record is more positive. Although the EU's involvement in Yugoslavia was a difficult learning experience, its obvious weakness in the Kosovo military campaign accelerated moves towards an EU military capability (ESDP). More recently, the EU has become the principal stabilising actor in the Balkans, a role it has played for some time in central and eastern Europe. The events of 11 September 2001 posed a major challenge for the Union. The EU was swift to express its solidarity with the US and rush through a range of measures largely in the sphere of justice and home affairs designed to combat terrorism. Although, the military campaign against terrorism exposed tensions between the larger and smaller member states and the institutions, the EU readily agreed to provide the lion's share of the peacekeeping forces for Afghanistan and the funds for its reconstruction. The Amsterdam treaty led to modest improvements in the CFSP machinery but there is renewed pressure for further reforms to ensure that CFSP remains effective in an enlarged Union of 25 member states and to strengthen the EU's voice in the international arena. Reforms are under discussion in the Convention and proposals for change will be forwarded to the IGC. It is unlikely, however, that there will be major changes either in the treaties or in the *modus operandi*. Gradualism will remain the main characteristic of the CFSP. In the past decade, the capability-expectations gap has been narrowed but not closed.

Introduction

Although the EU has steadily increased its presence on the international stage, the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) of the European Union (EU) has not had an easy first decade. Even as it was being born in difficult circumstances at Maastricht, there were some who predicted that the CFSP was doomed to failure simply because of the predominantly inter-governmental structure of its procedures under a separate pillar. Others doubted whether twelve, later fifteen, countries with different interests, capabilities, traditions, and connections could possibly establish a common policy in such a sensitive area as foreign and security policy.¹ The reasons for launching the CFSP were variously ascribed to the need for the EU, as the major actor in global trade and development assistance, to "punch its weight in the world", to shoulder more of the transatlantic burden and to develop externally apace with internal developments (single market, single currency, enlargement). CFSP was also a popular endeavour. Opinion polls revealed (and continue to reveal) a high level of public support across the EU in favour of closer co-operation in foreign and security policy.² In a widely quoted article, one analyst suggested that there was a substantial "capability-expectations gap" in terms of what the public expected the EU to deliver and the capabilities it had developed in this area. Looked at from the perspective of 1993, the EU "was not an effective international actor in terms both of its capacity to produce collective decisions and its impact on events".³ Despite the doubts, the CFSP did start to fly on schedule and although it experienced some heavy turbulence it eventually reached its cruising altitude. This article examines its bumpy ride, assesses its in-flight performance and considers the changes being considered to cope with the extra passenger load in future.

A Difficult Start

The CFSP could hardly have been launched at a less auspicious moment. As Yugoslavia disintegrated into civil war, there were some who forecast that ‘the hour of Europe’ had arrived.⁴ But far from the EU being regarded as the strong actor that could bang heads together and bring peace to the warring factions in Yugoslavia, it was regarded as weak and divided, both in the Balkans and in Washington. The fact that the US was not prepared to get involved in the Balkans or shoulder the humanitarian burden did not prevent it criticising the EU for its efforts. Leaving aside the blame game, it was clear to all that the EU, alone, was unable, to bring peace to the region. It took a mixture of American F16s and Richard Holbrooke to strike a deal at Dayton in 1995. The EU representatives at Dayton were informed rather than consulted by Holbrooke, a fact did not go unnoticed in Balkan capitals. Four years later, the EU was again ignored as it tried to impress upon Milosevic the consequences of his actions in Kosovo. This time Holbrooke was also ignored. But again the F16s did the job.⁵

The whole Balkan experience, and Kosovo in particular, was a tough learning experience for the EU but it did have some positive results. First, it demonstrated to member states the futility of trying to pursue an independent policy in the Balkans. After a messy ten years involvement together in the Balkans, the EU now has a common policy towards the region encompassing foreign, trade and development policies wrapped up in the Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAAs). The EU sanctions on Serbia helped to bring down Milosevic. A joint EU-NATO mission helped defuse an incipient civil war in Macedonia (FYROM) while the EU helped broker a deal that allowed Montenegro to remain within Yugoslavia. Second, the

Kosovo experience led directly to proposals to establish a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). With a change of government in the UK in 1997, there was no longer any ideological objections to a greater EU defence role (pace some voices in Denmark and Ireland). Tony Blair seized the initiative and brought the French onboard at St Malo in 1998 thus paving the way for the proposals to establish an EU rapid reaction force (see below).⁶

The Growing Magnet

There is little doubt that the EU's external policies have been most effective in its immediate neighbourhood. The top priority has been assisting the candidate countries of central and eastern Europe prepare for accession to the Union. This involved new contractual relationships as well as a massive financial and technical assistance programme (Phare). The Western European countries unwilling to join the EU (Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein) were offered an European Economic Area (EEA) agreement while a bilateral agreement was signed with Switzerland pending clarification of its membership application.⁷

Further east the EU offered partnership and association agreements (PCAs) with Russia, Ukraine and other former members of the Soviet Union. Again these agreements were underpinned with financial and technical assistance programmes (Tacis). To the south the EU established the Barcelona process, aimed at assisting the Mediterranean countries with economic development and providing for regular political dialogues. Within the context of these agreements, there is the prospect of a 500 million strong free trade zone stretching from Casablanca to Vladivostock. The EU has thus been a strong magnet for its neighbours and as a result of its mix of

carrots and sticks has been able to ensure the spread of its norms, whether political or economic, throughout the continent.

In the Middle East, the EU has moved a long way in the past decade and has a consistent policy based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338; acceptance of Israel's right to peaceful existence within safe, internationally recognised borders; the right of the Palestinian people to an end to the occupation of their territories and to form a viable and democratic state; and the implementation of all of the Mitchell Report recommendations. The EU has played an active role in the peace process, from the 1995 Madrid conference to bankrolling the Palestinian authority to Solana's membership of the Mitchell Commission. In the spring of 2002 the EU was part of the Quad, a new diplomatic arrangement also involving the US, UN and Russia, that met on an ad hoc basis to discuss and coordinate policy towards the Middle East. Yet the EU has not been able to make a decisive impact mainly because of doubts by the two principal actors. While Israel is suspicious of the EU's alleged pro-Palestine bias, the US wishes to retain its leading role in the peace process, and can be the only credible security guarantor of any peace agreement. Under these circumstances the opportunities for the EU are limited.

EU policies towards other regions have developed at different speeds. In Asia, there has been a steady deepening of ties with Japan and China, while with Korea, the EU has strongly supported the sunshine policy of President Kim and sent a ministerial troika to North Korea in the summer of 2001 to try and maintain a dialogue with Pyongyang. In Latin America, the EU has become the main partner of Mercosur and the Andean Pact and has negotiated free trade agreements with Mexico and Chile. In

Africa, the EU has concentrated on improving its development assistance, supporting regional economic integration and negotiating new agreements with South Africa.

The EU has not been able to build a consensus in all areas. There have been disputes, for example, over human rights in China and how to deal with Iraq. But overall the trend has been towards greater EU cohesion in its external policies towards the rest of the world. The same can be said for EU support for the multilateral institutions where, for example, the EU is the largest contributor to the UN budget, the largest provider of development assistance and the strongest proponent of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Doha Development Agenda. The EU has taken a leading role in supporting the Kyoto protocol, the International Criminal Court (ICC), and a range of arms control treaties, including the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), rejected by the US. These differences with the US over unilateral versus multilateral diplomacy have given rise to some tension between the EU and US.⁸

If one places CFSP within the wider framework of the EU's overall external policies, the picture is more positive. As the Commissioner for External Affairs, Chris Patten, put it, "there has been a real change of gear. At long last, European foreign policy is properly linked into the institutions which manage the instruments needed for its accomplishment; external trade questions, including sanctions, external assistance, external aspects of JAI including migration policy and transnational crime".⁹ But although these links now exist, there are often too many cooks in the kitchen. Turf disputes are not uncommon between the various actors involved in the EU's external affairs.

The Brussels Machinery

One of the most significant changes in CFSP after Amsterdam was the improvement to its operating machinery. While the political oversight via the European Council and the General Affairs Council remains unchanged, the motor running the CFSP has been greatly enhanced by the establishment of the Brussels based Political and Security Committee (PSC) – known more frequently by its French acronym (COPS).

The PSC, which has a remit to cover all aspects of CFSP including defence issues, meets once or twice a week and is the hub around which the CFSP revolves. Comprising senior officials from the member states, Council and Commission, the PSC monitors international affairs, guides the work of the Military Committee and all CFSP working groups ; prepares and oversees the implementation of CFSP decisions; leads the political dialogues at official level and maintains links to NATO. The PSC, which also handles crisis situations, has thus largely taken over the work previously done by the Political Committee which used to meet on a more leisurely monthly basis. Although the PSC is nominally responsible to Coreper, it rarely interferes in PSC business. The PSC is assisted by the European Correspondents who prepare its meetings and co-ordinate daily CFSP business; the CFSP Working Groups, composed of member state experts) who elaborate policy documents and options for the PSC; and the CFSP Counsellors, who examine horizontal problems, in particular legal, institutional and financial aspects. There is thus a greater urgency about CFSP and an improved capacity to respond swiftly to crises situations.

Since Amsterdam, the Council's role has increased with Javier Solana becoming an increasingly visible figure of European diplomacy. He is supported by a Cabinet, a Directorate General and a Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit (PPEWU). These

bodies have not always worked in close harmony which, according to some Council officials, has weakened their combined impact. The PPEWU has a relatively small staff with just one official from each member state, plus Council and Commission representatives, and has struggled to find a role. Like national planning staffs it has had to fight to make its voice heard. Its mandate includes monitoring, analysis and assessment of international developments and events, including early warning on potential crises.¹⁰

The Amsterdam Treaty was deliberately vague on the responsibilities of the High Representative, stating that he "shall assist the Council in matters coming within the scope of the CFSP, in particular through contributing to the formulation, preparation and implementation of policy decisions, and, when appropriate and acting on behalf of the Council at the request of the Presidency, through conducting political dialogue with third countries". The High Representative is also supposed to "assist the Presidency" in the external representation of the EU and in the implementation of decisions in CFSP matters.¹¹ Given this vagueness in the treaties, much depends on the personality of the office-holder. In appointing Javier Solana to the post in October 1999, the member states chose one of Europe's most distinguished statesman, a former Spanish Foreign Minister and Secretary General of NATO. Solana's stature has helped ensure that the EU's voice is heard regularly in Washington and other major capitals. He speaks constantly by phone to US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, a tradition started during Madeleine Albright's tenure at Foggy Bottom.

There has been much speculation about the roles played by Solana and Patten. Both get on well together and accept that each has his own separate and substantial agenda

to fulfil. In his Dublin speech, Patten explained “that Javier Solana and I have different roles. Javier’s role is to help the Council rally the member states to our common policies and to represent those policies to the world. My role is to ensure that the EU can deliver on those policies, to come up with the necessary ideas and proposals, to implement them and to ensure consistency”.

The roles of the Commission and Parliament were unchanged at Amsterdam and Nice. The Commission remains ‘fully associated’ with the CFSP and most importantly, implements the Community budget on which many CFSP policies and actions depend. Certainly, the re-organisation of the Prodi Commission to make Patten the chair of the various Commissioners dealing with external affairs has led to a more coherent Commission approach to CFSP. Patten’s determination to improve the delivery of EU assistance has also been appreciated by member states – and recipients. The Commission has not sought a role in the military dimension of ESDP but equally it has argued that it has an important role in the non-military dimensions such as defence industrial co-operation, funding and training of police, customs officials and border guards, economic sanctions, de-mining operations, election monitoring, and restoring local administrations in societies emerging from conflicts.

The Parliament has a right to be consulted and informed about the CFSP and has also been able to influence the CFSP at the margins through its control of the budget. Its active Foreign Affairs committee, chaired by Elmar Brok, has sought to maximise its influence through committee hearings and preparation of policy documents. It has also developed links with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and is likely to incorporate the functions of the WEU Assembly.

Unanimity is the general rule in CFSP but Amsterdam allowed for constructive abstention while Nice provided for enhanced cooperation, albeit in limited areas as regards CFSP. The Council may also act by qualified majority vote (QMV) when adopting joint actions, common positions or taking any other decision on the basis of a common strategy, and also when adopting any decision implementing a joint action or a common position. The scope for QMV is restricted, however, by the fact that no such vote will be taken if a Member State declares that, for important and stated reasons of national policy, it intends to oppose the adoption of a decision to be taken by qualified majority. In such a situation the Council can, acting by a qualified majority, request that the matter be referred to the European Council for decision by unanimity. Furthermore, qualified majority voting does not apply to decisions having military or defence implications. In reality, there has never been a vote on CFSP matters (apart from electing the chairman of the Military Committee) since Amsterdam.

CFSP Instruments

The CFSP has developed a number of instruments including

- * Common Strategies (adopted by the European Council)
- * Joint Actions (legally binding operational actions with fixed aims and financial means)
- * Common Positions (defining the Union's approach towards particular geographic or thematic issues)

In addition, the European Council sets broad guidelines for CFSP and the GAC encourages systematic co-operation in third countries. In the early years of CFSP, debates on policy were too often overshadowed by ideological arguments over

whether an action was to be funded by member states or the Community budget. These disputes were usually resolved in favour of using the Community budget for CFSP actions. But such disputes remain a handicap to the efficient operation of CFSP as does the woefully inadequate budget (depending on various calculations, 10 to 20 million euro in 2002).

Common Strategies, introduced at Amsterdam, have to be adopted by the European Council "in areas where the Member States have important interests in common". Common Strategies are not just regarded as CFSP instruments but as a means to ensure consistency of EU external policies as a whole. As a consequence a Common Strategy may cover first and third pillar issues along with CFSP matters and combine EU/EC and Member States national means. As the Council and the Commission are jointly responsible for ensuring the consistency of EU external relations, the latter has an important role to play in the elaboration and implementation of Common Strategies. To date, the EU has adopted Common Strategies on Russia, Ukraine, the Mediterranean (with particular reference to the Barcelona process and the Middle East Peace Process) and the Western Balkans. To most observers the Common Strategies have made little impact on the countries or regions that were targeted. They have, however, ensured a certain consistency in member states policies and also spawned a number of meetings between ministers and officials that have helped to spread understanding about the EU in the countries and regions concerned. Although other Common Strategies were proposed, the European Council decided in 2000 to concentrate on ensuring the success of the existing strategies before deciding to endorse other proposals.

There has been equally little attention paid to the EU's Joint Actions and Common Positions. The Joint Actions have covered the first Stability or Balladur Pact covering central and eastern Europe, numerous operations in the Balkans such as the administration of Mostar, election monitoring in Russia, South Africa and elsewhere, and the appointment of special representatives. Common Positions have covered countries, such as Myranar, regions such as Chechnya as well as arms control issues. Again both instruments have been useful in ensuring harmonisation of member state policies.

Who Speaks for Europe ?

To describe the EU's external representation as confusing would be a huge understatement. If it was an individual, the CFSP would have long been locked up in a psychiatric ward with doctors assessing how it could have survived so long with such a deep split personality. Its schizophrenia was programmed at birth and further complicated by the addition of the High Representative. Who speaks for the EU? According to the treaty it is the Presidency but the Presidency is assisted in this, as in other tasks, by the High Representative. In many parts of the world, including the US, Javier Solana is seen and increasingly described in the media as 'the EU's foreign policy chief'. This shorthand term may irk some, especially the foreign minister holding the rotating presidency, but journalists cannot be expected to remember 15 different telephone numbers.

Amsterdam dropped the previous holder of the presidency from the troika - a merciful decision as the previous holders were usually exhausted by their six-month stint. But the EU side of the table at political dialogue meetings is still rather cumbersome with

the Presidency, the future Presidency, the Council (in a speaking role since Amsterdam) and the Commission. In the author's experience, it is often the case that there is more negotiating with the host country over seats for the EU delegation than over the substance of the agenda.

The EU's external representation is further complicated by the growing habit of appointing 'special representatives' to deal with particular problems. These envoys are appointed under the Joint Action procedure and their salaries and expenses are paid from Community funds. In recent years, the EU has appointed Aldo Ajello for the African Great Lakes Region ; Miguel Angel Moratinos for the Middle East peace process; Nils Eriksson to oversee the implementation of the EU's assistance programme to support the Palestinian Authority in its efforts to counter terrorist activities; Bodo Hombach (later Mr Eduard Busek) to carry out the tasks defined in the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe; Francois Leotrad, later Alain Le Roy for FYROM. These special representatives have varied in their ability to ensure added value to the CFSP.

The embassies of EU member states and the 128 Delegations of the European Commission are also encouraged to co-operate locally and present a united front to their host country or international organisation. This co-operation varies considerably from country to country and is often very dependent on local personalities. In many capitals there may be no resident presidency representative which complicates matters. Often the Commission delegation is the only permanent part of the troika. If there is little personal experience of the Brussels machinery there may be a tendency to go-it-alone or invent procedures. More than one member state ambassador has had

to be reminded that the Commission is a permanent part of the troika. In important posts such as Washington and Moscow there is a further problem in that the larger member states in particular often prefer to plough their own furrow rather than maintain EU solidarity. There is certainly considerable scope for member states and Commission delegations to co-operate more effectively in third countries. Jointly the EU and the member states dispose by far the largest diplomatic machinery in the world. With over 2,000 diplomatic missions and more than 20,000 diplomats, the EU has ten times more missions and three times more personnel at its disposal than the US. But as Solana has dryly remarked, it is not obvious that the EU is ten times more effective than the US in foreign policy. In other international fora the EU is scarcely more coherent. Despite the advent of the euro there is still no common EU voice at IMF or World Bank meetings. The situation is different in trade negotiations where the Commission has competence but confusion often reigns in areas of mixed competence such as the environment. Pascal Lamy has proposed that the Commission be given a mandate to negotiate and represent the Union in all international economic fora.¹²

The Views of Others

How do the EU's principal partners view the CFSP? More often than not it does not figure highly on their radar screens. The EU's confusing external representation has already been highlighted. Equally, the numerous statements and declarations of which the EU is so fond cuts little ice in the chancelleries of Washington, Moscow, Beijing and Baghdad. What counts is action not words. The EU was able to make a small but significant impact during the period that led to the downfall of Milosevic by providing the funds for energy supplies and for opposition parties. The EU's role in the Balkans,

especially in defusing the FYROM crisis, was appreciated by both the Clinton and Bush administrations if not by the Congress. America continues, with some justification, to criticise declining EU defence budgets. It pays scant recognition to the EU's soft power capabilities although some US officials are quite blunt about viewing the EU as a cash cow to support US foreign policy priorities. Other Americans are more impressed by the EU's contribution to international security. One observer has suggested that "the EU already wields effective power over war and peace as great as that of the US. But this 'civilian power' does not lie in the deployment of battalions or bombers, but rather in the quiet promotion of democracy, and development through trade, foreign aid and peacekeeping".¹³

There are also signs that Putin's Russia takes the EU more seriously as a foreign policy actor. Although many in Russia's foreign and security policy elite measure influence in the strength of armed forces, there are an increasing number who recognise the soft power that the EU projects around its borders, particularly as the EU has a major say in how Russians in Kaliningrad will be able to move to neighbouring countries. Military forces from EU member states have also worked closely with Russian forces in peacekeeping missions in the Balkans. Further afield, in Tokyo, Beijing, Dehli, Brasilia, Pretoria, the EU still faces problems in being recognised as a foreign policy actor as opposed to a powerful trade giant. Its efforts, in opposition to the US, to secure ratification of Kyoto and the ICC, did, however, increase the EU's global profile.

The Defence Dimension

Although Maastricht and Amsterdam provided the treaty framework for the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), what really provided the launch pad was the EU's dismal performance in Kosovo. At the Cologne (June 1999) and Helsinki (December 1999) European Councils, decisions were taken to ensure that the EU developed a 60,000 strong rapid reaction force (RRF) by the end of 2003 capable of deployment within 60 days and sustainable in the field for a year. The RRF would essentially carry out the so-called Petersberg tasks (i.e. humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping and crisis management including peacemaking) explicitly mentioned in the Treaty. A military staff and committee were also established leading to an influx of uniformed personnel in the corridors of Council buildings.¹⁴ Although the Belgian presidency declared ESDP operational in December 2001, there were still a number of problems that had to be resolved including meeting the capability requirements and agreeing its role in the Aegean. First Turkey, then Greece blocked an EU-NATO agreement that would have given the EU automatic recourse to NATO assets in a crisis.¹⁵ The fact that several EU member states were involved in the peacekeeping mission to Afghanistan in 2002 may have impressed on laggard member states the urgency of defence reform. As NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, regularly complains about the Europeans, there remain too many national armies geared to territorial defence, with conscript armies unusable abroad and too few precision munitions. A successful civil-military planning exercise took place in May 2002 while the prospect of taking over NATO's 'Amber Fox' operation in the Balkans may also spur reforms.

Perhaps of equal importance, the EU has been making impressive progress in establishing a range of instruments in the areas of conflict prevention and dealing with 'failed states'. The EU has established 'headline goals' to provide police and civilian administration capability to assist in the reconstruction of states following conflict. The European Union Police Mission (EUPM), due to take over in Bosnia from the UN in January 2003, should have 5,000 officers in situ by 2003, with the ability to deploy 1,000 within 30 days. There is also a 300 strong EU judicial 'headline goal' in terms of providing judges for conflict-torn societies.

For its part, post 11 September the US seemed to stop its carping about the principle of ESDP and asked why the Europeans were not spending more on defence and taking on more peacekeeping roles in order to free the US military for cutting edge operations. The EU reacted with impressive speed to the terrorist attacks of 11 September. It not only expressed its complete solidarity with the US but moved swiftly to agree a whole range of measures, many in the sensitive area of justice and home affairs, that would assist the fight against terrorism. Some however saw the US preference for dealing with the major member states on terrorism as a sign of the declining importance of the CFSP. Others viewed the European response, partly through the member states, partly through the institutions, as inevitable and thus led to an overall strengthening of CFSP.¹⁶ Certainly, as regards the practical measures for combating terrorism, such as money laundering and customs surveillance, the Commission had considerable practical experience and competence to act. The Spanish presidency also issued a declaration on CFSP/ESDP and terrorism at the Seville European Council pledging the member states to cooperate more effectively across the board in tackling terrorism.

Assessing the EU's External Role

Based on the rather vague, 'motherhood and apple pie' objectives set out in the treaty, it is not difficult to argue that the CFSP has been a modest success. The five fundamental objectives for CFSP (as modified slightly by the Amsterdam Treaty) are:

- to safeguard the common values, fundamental interests, independence and integrity of the Union in conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter;
- to strengthen the security of the Union in all ways;
- to preserve peace and strengthen international security, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the objectives of the Paris Charter, including those on external borders;
- to promote international co-operation;
- to develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Overall the CFSP has made a reasonable contribution to meeting all these objectives. Most critics and most EU citizens, however, would look at the experience of the CFSP in Yugoslavia, the Middle East and the Gulf and doubt whether the CFSP had helped 'to strengthen peace and international security'. It is not easy to find accepted measures to judge the CFSP's performance. Assessments will vary whether one is looking at the CFSP from the perspective of the Commission, Council, Parliament, the member states, third countries or the general public. A Bosnian Muslim and a Kosovo Muslim may have very different views of the EU's role in the Balkans. Like other policy areas, the CFSP reflects the 'multiple realities' that make up the EU. But given the sensitive nature of foreign and security policy, there are additional tensions

between the member states (not just between large and small), between the institutions, and between the CFSP machinery and the growing influence of the NGO world. The CFSP is also a moving target. One week's failure to prevent the outbreak of conflict in FYROM may lead to next week's success in arranging a cease-fire. Furthermore, many successes in the field of conflict prevention often pass unnoticed. As mentioned above, it is also difficult if not impossible to isolate the CFSP from other external policies of the EU. Projecting stability may be achieved as much by enlargement, liberal trade policies and generous development assistance, contributing to improved living standards, than by any number of CFSP 'common strategies' or declarations.

Both Solana and Patten, while recognising the deficiencies of CFSP, have been bullish about its progress. According to Patten "we do not sing in unison, but we sing in harmony. We do not attempt a single policy, but we have a common one. The CFSP is not a beauty contest, a competition with the Americans for attention and influence on the world stage." Rather, the CFSP was about projecting stability and had three priorities - the EU's immediate neighbourhood ; promoting multilateral co-operation ; and combating US unilateralism.¹⁷ Speaking in Brussels on 19 February 2002, Solana said that the progress made in the past three years "was really quite extraordinary, especially the major achievement of stabilising the Balkans".¹⁸

Writing in 1992, Chris Hill identified a number of functions on which to judge the EU's international performance.¹⁹ It is perhaps useful to reflect on these functions from a 2002 perspective.

(1) *The stabilizing of Europe.* Hill gave the EU credit for its contribution to stabilizing Western Europe. Most observers would agree that the EU has also played the major role in stabilizing Eastern Europe after the collapse of communism. Indeed the whole enlargement process, "from Copenhagen to Copenhagen", may be viewed as a significant contribution to European security as a whole. After a distinctly unimpressive start in its attempts to stabilize the Balkans after the outbreak of fighting in 1991, the EU has also emerged as the principal actor providing stability to the region.

(2) *Global intervenor.* Hill postulated that the EU would have to develop a credible military force if it was to be able to intervene in crisis situations. Here the EU has been slow to act. Its RRF is not due to become fully operational until the end of 2003 and even then will only undertake a limited range of missions (Petersberg Tasks). In the meantime, the EU's member states have provided by far the largest troop contingents for peacekeeping in Afghanistan as well as in Bosnia, Macedonia and Kosovo. At the same time, the EU has made considerable strides forward in developing its tool box for conflict prevention.

(3) *Bridging the north-south gap.* The EU has a new Cotonou agreement replacing the old Lome convention which grants nearly all developing countries both financial and technical assistance as well as preferential access to the EU market. Some critics such as Oxfam maintain that the EU is still too protectionist when it comes to agricultural imports but the EU has reduced substantially its subsidies to farmers while the interests of the developing world are high on the Doha development agenda. (Meanwhile the 2002 US farm bill has massively increased subsidies to American farmers, a move that will have a negative impact on the developing world.)

(4) *replacing the Soviet Union in the global balance of power.* The 1990s were not good for Russia which lost its empire, its ideology and much of its wealth. More recently, boosted by high oil prices and a pragmatic president, Russia has stabilised its position, but remains far from superpower status. It has retreated from many parts of the world, including Cuba, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Vietnam. The EU has not sought to fill this vacuum although it has signed agreements with most countries previously under Soviet influence. Most of these agreements contain conditionality clauses committing both parties to maintain democracy and the rule of law. The US has criticised the EU for some of these agreements with alleged "rogue states" and adopted extra-territorial legislation designed to target EU companies and entities trading with them. This has prompted a stern EU response warning Washington that it was prepared to take any such cases to the WTO. Further rifts have emerged between the EU and US over issues ranging from the ICC to land mines, from Kyoto to the CTBT. The EU has certainly provided an alternative Western voice in international affairs, one with the accent on support for the multilateral rules based system rather than a brand of unilateralism based on military power.

(5) *Joint supervisor of the world economy.* There is little doubt that the EU is an economic superpower. It is the world's largest trading bloc, has roughly the same GDP as the US and is by far the largest provider of development assistance. The introduction of the euro has gone smoothly, macro economic stability has been maintained and growth rates have been respectable if not as spectacular as the US in the 1990s. Enlargement will further boost the EU's share of global GDP and trade.

In sum, taking Hill's various functions as yardsticks, the EU has made substantial progress towards its aim of becoming a major, credible international actor during the past decade.

The Future

There is no shortage of ideas to strengthen the CFSP and enhance the EU's role on the world stage. One of the cluster of questions the European Convention was dealing with in 2002 concerned the possible ways in which a more coherent CFSP could be developed. One of the most discussed proposals, advocated by many think tanks as well as the European Commission, concerns an amalgamation of the Solana and Patten functions.²⁰ Some argue that the merger should take place within the Council, others advocate a merger within the Commission. The main argument for such a merger is that it would improve coherence and visibility. Some suggest that most foreign ministers would oppose any such merger as it would inevitably shine the spotlight more on 'Mr CFSP'. Much will depend on whether the IGC accepts the proposal for an augmented European Council with its own president for a two and a half or five year period. Clearly this supremo would overshadow Mr CFSP wherever he was located. There was some strong opposition to the idea when first discussed at the Seville European Council.

Among other ideas that are being debated in the Convention are splitting the General Affairs Council (GAC) into two bodies, one being devoted solely to foreign and security policy. This again ran into opposition at Seville with the Council agreeing to a new General Affairs and External Policy Council that would allow member states to send different representatives the new Council. The question of establishing a defence

council remains open. Another possible change is an end to the six monthly presidency. At present, each presidency sets its own priorities, often in response to domestic concerns. The Swedes emphasise the Baltic region, the Belgians Africa, the Spanish Latin America and so on. It is good that presidencies find the energy to organise meetings on these 'priority' issues but then there is the problem of lack of continuity. Alternative solutions include an elected chair for two and a half years or team presidencies. Yet another variation would allow the High Representative to chair the foreign affairs council. His post would no longer be combined with secretary general of the Council. There is also a trend to abolish the troika system and accept either a Council/Commission duo or ad hoc arrangements according to the mission involved. More controversial proposals on the table include strengthening the provisions for enhanced co-operation, abolishing the protection of national arms industries, and the establishment of an European diplomatic service with its own training facilities and personnel rotating between Brussels and upgraded EU delegations abroad.

For the foreseeable future, bilateral and EU foreign policy will continue to coexist but there will be pressure to increase sharing of premises and other facilities as well as pressure to simplify the EU's external representation. This is acute not only in CFSP but in other international fora including the UN, G8, IMF and World Bank. Some changes are highly pressing. The question of financing has already been mentioned. Another problem area is the massive expansion in the number of political dialogue meetings. The Spanish 2002 presidency reckoned that the number of such meetings had doubled since their last presidency in 1995.

It will also be important to enlist the support of the European public, through the involvement of the EP and national parliaments. This should involve not only a greater role for the European Parliament, but perhaps a six-monthly debate in all national parliaments simultaneously on the CFSP's goals and achievements. This could be based on a short report by Solana/Patten and would ensure that each member state's foreign minister was actively involved in explaining and defending the CFSP. There might also be regular forums for discussions on CFSP aims with NGOs. At present they tend to lobby, often noisily, on single issues. If they were confronted with the full range of problems facing the CFSP, it might help them better understand the limitations of CFSP to react to every lobbying effort.

At some stage in the future, the EU will also have to confront the issue of power. This is a difficult task in the absence of firm, accepted borders. To be effective, the concept of European power must meet approval with the public. This would seem to exclude any 'euro-nationalist' model trying to rival the superpower projection capabilities of the US, and equally exclude the civil power or Swiss power model favoured by some observers. A sustainable concept of a European power may require a new paradigm that redefines the specific European contribution in an increasingly interdependent and globalised world.²¹ As one analyst suggested, "it is perhaps a paradox that the continent which once ruled the world through the physical impositions of imperialism is now coming to set world standards in normative terms."²²

Conclusion

The EU has developed steadily as an international actor during the past decade. Much has been achieved but critics argue that much more could have been achieved with strengthened institutions. This is doubtful. Foreign policy remains a sensitive area and member states are keen to retain their *amour propre*. Foreign ministries are also reluctant to negotiate themselves into oblivion while there remain unanswered questions about legitimacy. There also remain significant differences of foreign policy culture, experiences and expectations within the member states. At the end of the day CFSP depends on the political will of its member states and there are inevitable limitations in the conduct of foreign policy in a Union which wishes to retain the independence and identity of its member states. In some important areas the EU finds itself ham-strung but these areas are becoming fewer as the member states come to accept the advantages of working together. The national obsessions of some member states may indeed have beneficial effects for the EU. The Union would never have paid so much attention to East Timor, for example, without the forceful prodding of Portugal over the years. The task of the institutions is to make it easier for the member states to integrate their efforts and then to promote common policies more effectively.

CFSP reform will be on the agenda at the Convention and at the subsequent IGC. It is unlikely, given the sensitivities of member states, that one should expect significant changes to the treaty provisions for CFSP. Most member states appear comfortable with present arrangements although there are several who recognise the importance of changes in the external representation front in light of enlargement.²³ These changes, if agreed, are likely to be incremental in nature. The CFSP approaches puberty after a difficult childhood with little sign that its parents have overly high ambitions for its

future. As Patten has recognised "if the CFSP is to grow to maturity, it needs the nurture of both its parents, the member states and the Community institutions. And - as any psychologist will tell you - the child is more likely to be happy and healthy if those parents love one another".²⁴ To return to our initial question, although the capability-expectations gap has narrowed in the past decade, it will be some time before it is closed.

¹ For a review of the introduction of the CFSP, see the author's *The Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, Past, Present and Future*, Sheffield Academic Press (1999)

² The European Commission's Eurobarometer polls have consistently shown high support for CFSP. See also Richard Sinnott 'European Public Opinion and Security Policy', Chaillot Paper 28, July 1997

³ C.J. Hill, 'The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe's International Role', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31:3 (1993) 305-328

⁴ the unfortunate phrase used by Luxembourg's Foreign Minister, Jacques Poos

⁵ for different perspectives see Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 1998, Random House, Carl Bildt, *Peace Journey*, 1998, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, Sophie Clement 'Conflict Prevention in the Balkans', Chaillot Paper 30, October 1997 ; Wesley Clark, *Waging War*, 2001, Random House

⁶ Cameron (1999) see also Francois Heisbourg 'European Defence : Making It Work', Chaillot Paper 42, September 2000.

⁷ See Graham Avery and Fraser Cameron *The Enlargement of the European Union*, 1998, Sheffield Academic Press

⁸ see the author's *US Foreign Policy Since the End of the Cold War*, 2002, Routledge, for a fuller treatment of this issue. See also the June 2002 edition of *Challenge Europe*, the on-line journal of the European Policy Centre, www.theepc.be

⁹ speech in Dublin, 7 March 2001

¹⁰ see Juliet Lodge and Val Flynn, *The CFSP After Amsterdam :The Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit*, *International Affairs*, April 1998

¹¹ There is a good analysis of these changes in Jorg Monar, *The EU's Foreign Affairs System after the Treaty of Amsterdam: A Strengthened Capacity for External Action*, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, February 1997 ; and Elfriede Regelsberger and Wolfgang Wessels, *The CFSP Institutions and Procedures*, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, June 1998

¹² see Pascal Lamy and Jean Pisani-Ferry's pamphlet *The Europe We Want*, Note, 27, Jean Jaures Foundation, January 2002

¹³ see Andrew Moravcsik 'The Quiet Superpower' in *Newsweek*, 17 June 2002

¹⁴ see the Council's brochure *The Common Foreign and Security Council*, July 2001, for a review of the latest structures.

¹⁵ see Anonio Missiroli, 'Turkey and EU-NATO Cooperation', *Security Dialogue*, vol 33, March 2002. There were hopes of resolving the issue at the June 2002 Seville European Council but no agreement was reached.

¹⁶ For a review of the debate see *Europe after September 11th*, CER, January 2002

¹⁷ *International Herald Tribune*, 2 January 2002

¹⁸ speech at Centre for European Reform seminar

¹⁹ Hill, op cit

²⁰ com(2002) 247 of 22 May 2002

²¹ For the discussion of Europe's role see David Buchan, *Europe:The Strange Superpower*, 1993, Dartmouth ; Curt Gasteyger, *An Ambiguous Power:The European Union in a Changing World*, 1996, Bertelsmann ; John Petersen and Helene Sjursen (eds), *A Common Foreign Policy for Europe? Competing Visions of the CFSP*, 1998, Routledge ; Carolyn Rhodes (ed), *The European Union in the World Community*, 1998, Lynne Rienner ; Jan Zielonka, *Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy*, 1998, Kluwer Law

²² Richard Rosecrance, *Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy*, EUI Working Papers, RSC 97/64

²³ See 'Bigger EU, wider CFSP, stronger ESDP ? The View from Central Europe', occasional paper 34, April 2002, of the Institute for Security Studies

²⁴ speech at IFRI, Paris, 15 June 2000