Expanding Europe's Security

Europe's Common Foreign and Security Policy

by Sir David Hannay

The European Union (EU) is making steady if slow progress toward building a common foreign and security policy. It is a work of years, if not of decades. It will remain for the foreseeable future, like the EU itself, an unusual hybrid creature that does many things in common but that does not submerge the member states' separate identities or their ultimate responsibility for their own security.

The creation of a common EU policy in these areas could affect transatlantic relations to an important extent. Whether it will be a source of division and friction within the Western alliance or will significantly strengthen it is as yet unclear. Therefore, it is important to understand what is at stake and what needs to be done if the second, and highly desirable, outcome is to be achieved and the first avoided.

Background

Attempts to build a common foreign and security policy for Europe are not new. They began as long ago as 1970 and have, over the years, resulted in a considerable unification of members' diplomatic actions, particularly in multilateral organizations such as the United Nations. But it has not been easy to move on beyond purely declamatory actions—such as the adoption of communiqués and of common positions on UN resolutions—to the concerted use of all the instruments of foreign policy, loosely known as the projection of power. All too often, unity on paper has led to no effective action. Henry Kissinger's well-known jibe, "But whom do I telephone when I want a decision?" is revealing of the divided counsels within the union. Progress toward a common foreign and security policy has been much slower and pursued more hesitantly than the EU's achievements in other fields, such as the establishment of a customs union and then a single market, the creation of a single currency, and the union's emergence as a trade policy superpower. In the security field, attempts to build up the Western European Union, which groups together most of NATO's European members, led to much talk but also to much frustration with the eventual lack of concrete results.

A number of things have changed in the last few years. First, the member states have become conscious of the fact that as they do more things in common, external policies that remain separate are an anomaly. This is even more the case as the capacity

Sir David Hannay is currently the British government's special representative for Cyprus. Before that, he was British permanent representative to the UN (1990–1995) and to the European Union (1985–1990).

of any member state, even the larger ones, to pursue effectively a national foreign policy different from that of its partners is steadily eroded. Secondly, the failure to maximize resources and to unify policy instruments is undermining the capacity of member states to protect and to further their external interests and those of their citizens—the object of any foreign policy worthy of the name. The crises in Bosnia and Kosovo brought this reality home all too clearly. Europeans may be spending 60 percent as much as the United States on their security, but they certainly are not getting 60 percent of the latter's punching weight for it.

The failure to maximize resources and to unify policy instruments is undermining the capacity of member states to protect and to further their external interests.

As Europe moves toward enlargement to include most, if not all, of the countries of Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe, these anomalies become more glaring and less tolerable. Moreover, it has become ever clearer that the post–cold war world is not living up to its early promise of peace, security, and prosperity worldwide. There is a need for Europe to work effectively together to achieve these objectives.

Steps toward a Common Policy

The European response to this challenge came first in the Treaties of Maastricht (1991) and Amsterdam (1997), when the EU's member states considerably strengthened the overall framework for developing common external policies. A particularly important step was taken in 1999 when, following ratifications of the Amsterdam treaty, the EU appointed Javier Solana, a former Spanish foreign minister and the secretary-general of NATO during the Kosovo crisis, to a new post as high representative for common foreign and security policy. Since then, Solana has been building a structure that, while short of a fully fledged foreign ministry, is still well beyond the skeletal secretariat that existed beforehand. At the same time, the British and French governments came together in a new effort to breathe life into the security dimension of the union's work. It is important that their effort is taking place within the overall framework of NATO, which should bury definitively the old feud over whether European security cooperation need in some way be seen as a challenge to NATO solidarity. The target has been set by the European Union of making it possible to muster a force of sixty thousand to carry out tasks that NATO as a whole might choose not to undertake: above all those in the fields of peacekeeping and humanitarian action. All this work is due to come forward for decision at the European Council in Nice, France, in December 2000.

Cooperation and Competition

What has all this got to do with U.S. foreign policy? Quite a lot, I would suggest. The end of the cold war was both a triumph for the NATO alliance and a huge relief

to all its members. But what it was *not* was the end of history predicted by some scholars. In the 1990s, we discovered that the alliance remains as crucial a part of the external policies of NATO members on both sides of the Atlantic as it ever was, even as its purposes have shifted to meet the needs of the times and its operating methods have been adapted to new threats and challenges. We have also discovered that the world is still full of threats to international peace and stability, which have the potential to damage our own security and prosperity. While old familiar threats have receded, there are many new challenges that are global in nature—threats from drugs, terrorism, the degradation of the environment, the spread of weapons of mass destruction—which challenge the capacity of any single state to deal with them and require global action if they are to be mastered. The ability of Europeans and Americans to work together will be a critical determinant of whether the challenges of this continually expanding agenda can be successfully met.

If one looks only at the European region and its periphery, there are a considerable number of cases where the United States and Europe must work together if we are to secure our common objectives. The lesson of the early years in Bosnia is ever present to remind us of the capacity we have to get at cross-purposes, with neither of us achieving our objectives successfully. The foreign policy of the new incumbent in the Kremlin remains something of an enigma. But President Putin's stated aim of reversing the decline in Russia's international standing and influence is one that is bound to give rise to concerns as it develops. In the Balkans, we are heavily engaged in the frustrating but essential task of ensuring that ethnic disputes and nationalist pretensions do not again lead to conflict. In the Middle East, the prospects for peace hang by a thread, and both Americans and Europeans have a vested interest in ensuring that that thread does not break. The chaos in Africa, its poverty, and the threat of AIDS there are matters that cannot and must not simply be swept under the carpet. Neither Europe nor the United States has a particular national agenda to pursue there, but together, we have the potential to make a real difference in the lives of many people.

There are a considerable number of cases where the United States and Europe must work together if we are to secure our common objectives.

If we are to work successfully together, we will need to take full account of changes taking place on both sides of the Atlantic. The first priority is to ensure that we have the machinery to work together, to share information and analyses, and to thrash out differences of view before they break the surface and become matters of public contention. Otherwise, we risk turning what should be a series of joint ventures into a succession of petty squabbles. Do we now have that machinery? I rather doubt it. Of course, much can be achieved by adopting well-tried NATO procedures. But something more than that will be needed, and some direct link is likely to be required between U.S. foreign policy and Europe's emerging common external policies: a link

that enables both sides to take account of the other's views and priorities at every stage in the process.

Naturally, all this will not be achieved without some friction and some open spats. To believe otherwise is to risk appearing naïve and foolish. If one looks only at the field of trade policy, it is obvious that the United States and Europe—which are, and will remain, competitors as well as partners—are not going to see eye to eye on everything. We may settle bananas and Roquefort cheese, but inevitably something else will come along to spoil the party. Here, three points are vital. The first is to sustain the trade policy conflict-resolution mechanisms that emerged from the Uruguay Round[1] by respecting their rulings, however uncomfortable they are for one or the other. The second vital step is to launch without further delay a new Millennium Round of trade negotiations and to ensure that this time, the legitimate concerns of developing countries are not brushed aside. The third is to ensure that however many trade spats there are, we do not allow them to poison the atmosphere to an extent that undermines our shared foreign policy objectives.

No doubt, friction will extend beyond trade. It is no secret that there are deep concerns in Europe over the question of National Missile Defense, which will be high on the agenda of the new U.S. administration. Europeans are worried by developments that could leave them exposed to new threats while their U.S. partners are protected from them and that could trigger new variants of earlier arms races, undermining rather than strengthening international peace and stability. These concerns cannot just be dismissed: they must be addressed and discussed in depth before irreversible decisions are made. Europeans on their side must understand that it is not reasonable to ask the United States simply to accept increasing vulnerability to the missile capacity of a number of states whose intentions are a good deal less easy to predict than were those of old cold war adversaries. Nor is it in Europe's interest that the United States be vulnerable to those threats. The alliance had difficult debates in the early 1980s over the deployment of Pershing missiles and came through united and successful. There is no reason to think it cannot do so again.

The idea that the United States can somehow be left on the side of international instruments and agreements is as much anathema to Europe as it is to the United States.

One major, almost cultural difference will underlie many future discussions between Europe and the United States: our respective attitudes toward multilateral institutions and disciplines. In Washington, there is much hesitation and some hostility, the latter particularly in Congress, toward the UN, toward instruments such as the International Criminal Court, and toward obligations such as the Kyoto agreements on reducing environmental pollution. On the European side, there is no such hesitation and hostility. There is a very strong conviction that, however flawed these organizations and disciplines may be in their present form (we have few illusions about that), they are far better than the alternative of an international free-for-all. The re-

sponse to flaws and weaknesses in these institutions should therefore be to remedy and to strengthen them. But that can only be achieved if they enjoy the willing and active support of the United States and Europe. The idea that the United States can somehow be left on the side is as much anathema to Europe as it is to the United States. No one wishes to relive the experience of the League of Nations and the tragedy of the United States' self-exclusion from it.

Conclusion

Successive U.S. administrations since President Truman's have all encouraged Europe to achieve greater unity of purpose and action. The results have been beneficial, I believe, to both Americans and Europeans. U.S. companies benefit from the single market as much as their European counterparts do. The prosperity and stability of Western Europe was a key factor in concluding the cold war successfully. The future enlargement of the European Union to include the countries of Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe will make a vital contribution to healing the wounds of the past and to securing foreign policy objectives that are common to us all. So it should not be beyond us to ensure that a new European common foreign and security policy marks a step along that road of successful partnership. But its continued progress, like that of the transatlantic partnership itself, will need to be worked at, not just taken for granted.

Notes

[1] The trade agreement negotiated under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade that, among other things, created the World Trade Organization.