
U.S. Views on the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy

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In many ways, it is easier to talk about where the European Union (EU)'s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) will be in 2010 than where it is today. At present, it is easy to criticize the EU for having made too little progress in the ten-plus years since it agreed at Maastricht in December 1991 to take on the challenge of developing a more robust political and security identity. At the time, many EU leaders felt that with the end of the Cold War, they could advance efforts at foreign policy cooperation to a level similar to that of their single market economic cooperation. The Maastricht decision coincided with the dissolution of Yugoslavia, a thorny issue for the EU to address and one that required many years—and many lives lost—before a common approach could be forged.

While this new approach to key foreign policy issues has been somewhat slow in developing, it has become increasingly clear to the United States and to other international partners of the EU that something interesting is unfolding. The precise outline and impact of continuing European integration in the area of foreign and security policy is still not clear to us, but that is not surprising, as none of this is necessarily clear to Europeans themselves at this point. But already the United States is devoting increasing resources and attention to working with the EU on issues within the CFSP.

The difficulties in the Balkans were a wake up call to the Europeans, signalling that if they wanted to act together in the foreign and security policy

arena, they would have to develop a stronger institutional base. It was only four years ago that the United Kingdom and France agreed to push ahead with the development of an EU military force that could be used for certain humanitarian and peacekeeping operations. When one looks at the EU today, the most striking change has been the emergence of an effective High Representative for CFSP, due in large part to the personality of Javier Solana and his ability to work effectively with External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten. In addition, several new institutional bodies—the Political and Security Committee, a Military Committee, and a Military Staff—have been established.

It is true that the achievements of these institutions have been modest so far, but that does not mean that they have not been real. CFSP has its most concrete existence in the Balkans, with the presence of EU envoys with real duties and policies to implement in Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Come 1 January 2003, the first operational mission of the European Security and Defense Program (ESDP) will begin its work as the EU Police Mission in Bosnia. In this part of the world, the conduct of U.S. policy has adapted to engage with these new EU institutions, and we do so on a daily basis.

But the Balkans are not the only example of where U.S. policy has increasingly taken account of the EU and its common institutions. Through the Quartet process for the Middle East and our joint support for reconstruction in Afghanistan, we interact with the EU collectively as our partner in building a

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more stable and safer world. Of course, working with the EU on foreign policy issues is no easier than managing any of our bilateral relationships with major allies. There are issues on which our approach has differed significantly, such as the recent example of the proper role and functioning of the International

Criminal Court (ICC). What is obvious, however, is that we will get the best results when we can create mechanisms for close consultation and when each side is able to take effective policy decisions with real accountability.

That is one reason why we watch with interest as the many institutional issues that lie ahead for the EU in deciding how to conduct a common foreign policy are debated in the Convention on the Future of Europe, which aims to propose a new constitutional treaty for the EU. These issues include questions of the relative roles and powers of the current Commission, Council, and Parliament; how the enlargement of the EU to include 10 new members in 2004 and others in the years beyond that will affect EU decision-making; how the EU as an institution will find a way to appeal to European publics (the so-

called “democratic deficit”); how it will handle external representation in international organizations, including the UN Security Council; and how it will structure its embassies abroad.

As noted, the United States has a strong interest in the outcome of these institutional changes. Will the EU emerge as a confident, strong power that can develop flexible, creative responses to future challenges? Will it be a strong partner for us, or will the transatlantic relationship that won the Cold War now decrease in its relevance as we seek to deal with the larger, more global challenges unleashed after 11 September? I would like to set out below some of the key factors that will provide answers to these questions in the years ahead.

The Need for Accountability, Transparency, and (Above All) Flexibility

If the EU is to be an effective actor in international affairs, it will need to have some sort of executive body that can exercise leadership. There is now general recognition of this necessity, and the Convention is discussing a number of different models, from a President of the Council to direct election of the President of the Commission. I would argue that while the Council will likely principally remain an instrument of the Member States, the chief executive will also need to have a direct link to the peoples of Europe. Currently, the EU as an institution is battling perceptions within Europe that it is a remote, bureaucratic structure—a situation that will become even more acute after enlargement.

In the past 50 years, the development of the EU has done a great deal to improve the daily lives of its citizens, but it must find better ways to convince them of this fact. Strong foreign policy leadership will require accountability and transparency to the people as well as the states. This issue of the “democratic deficit” is under intense debate in the Convention, so we may soon see proposals designed to correct this problem and the related one of how an EU of 25 Member States or larger can come to decisions and make them stick. It is possible that just as the difficulties in the Balkans eventually forged a common EU approach, difficulties in enlargement may ultimately force resolution of difficult issues, such as voting rights of Member States. But what is certain is that the EU will not have an effective foreign and security policy if it fails to resolve these problems.

There has been much talk in the last two or three years of whether the EU will end up with a “single telephone number” on foreign policy. I would argue that this is not the key problem. As is the case with the United States, we are likely to end up with an EU in which other voices also enter the foreign policy debate. Just as foreigners sometimes ask me whether it is the administration or Congress that makes U.S. foreign policy, we may need to interact with the

Parliament, Commission, Council, and Member States for years to come. It seems clear to us that in 2010, the Member States will still be the primary actors in setting the EU's foreign policy objectives and priorities, even though there will be an increasing inclination to act together on the international stage. This is not necessarily a cause for concern. It is not diversity of opinion in policy formulation that matters, but whether that diversity can be harnessed to decision-making that works and incorporated into institutions that can both reach decisions and implement them.

What is most important is the quality of the decisions the EU will make. One risk the EU faces is that the common foreign and security policy it develops will tend to be overly cautious or fail to take any decisions at all in areas where consensus is elusive. But it seems to me that this is far from the only, or even most important, risk facing the future CFSP. A key test of any revised CFSP apparatus will be how well it can consult with other partners as policy is formulated and how agilely that policy can adapt to changing conditions, including changes in the policy of key partners such as the United States. If common positions, once adopted, become rigid instruments that are too difficult to amend, they could have a serious negative impact on the international influence of the EU's Member States.

Liberalization and Growth-Oriented Economic Policies: Key to Influence

The EU has achieved its present status as a result of its economic union. It is now a key player on trade, it has just launched a single currency, and it is ever more important as a source of regulations with global impact. The EU has committed itself, under the so-called "Lisbon Process," to become the most dynamic economy in the world by 2010. To do that, it must undertake an ambitious program of internal reform to liberate its market forces and the dynamism of its people.

Unsurprisingly, implementation of these reforms is proceeding unevenly. It is hard to gauge how much success will eventually be achieved, but the importance of this process should not be underestimated. Together, the United States and the EU account for roughly 50 percent of the world's GDP; our economies are deeply intertwined, with over a trillion dollars in bilateral trade and investment each year that contributes to the employment of some 3 million people on both sides of the Atlantic. What happens in Europe matters a great deal to U.S. business. Moreover, the impact of our two economies on the rest of the world cannot be overstated; any negative trend in the United States or in Europe immediately leads to job losses in the Third World. And our inability to carry out certain initiatives, such as the liberalization of agricultural trade agreed to at Doha, has equally far-reaching consequences.

While the strength of the U.S. economy has a definite impact on our foreign policy, that impact is very much stronger for the EU. The EU already has a long international agenda, even without CFSP, due in large part to the size and health of its economy. On trade policy, on climate change, on assistance issues, and on regulatory decisions, the EU already advances a wide range of international goals. In the vast majority of cases, this is done in ways that complement and reinforce U.S. objectives and policies in these same areas. In those areas where we find ourselves more at odds over policies, such as climate change or biotechnology, the critical test will be the same as in other areas of foreign policy: how well we can consult and adapt to policy differences to achieve common objectives.

There are also a series of economic policy challenges that the EU must meet if it is to be a powerful global force in 2010. It must find a more flexible mechanism for promoting economic growth while preserving the stability of its new currency. It must reform its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). It must implement the market liberalization measures identified at Lisbon. And it must develop transparent, fair, and smart regulations that balance the interests of business and consumers. This is a daunting set of goals, but if the EU meets them, it will become much more of an international player than it is today, and this will, in turn, affect its foreign and security policy as well as its economic interests.

Capabilities Key to Security Policy Role

For many years now, much has been said and written about the need for Europe to develop its military capabilities. Indeed, since the end of the Cold War, European military readiness has declined, so that it has less to offer today than it did 10 years ago. Improved military capabilities are essential if NATO is to function properly or if the EU is to deploy its own military force, able to perform the humanitarian and peacekeeping missions it has set for itself.

If the EU is to play an influential role in this area, it will need to develop a more robust approach to security and the capabilities to back it up. This will not be easy; the EU has been built thus far on the basis of “incrementalism.” In other words, it took a “technical” step, such as agreeing to a common tariff, which led logically to a common trade policy. It proposed a common currency that over time may well lead to extensive coordination of fiscal as well as monetary policy. It committed itself to ESDP, with its goal of 60,000 troops ready to deploy at a month’s notice for up to a year, without having a clear picture of where this force would intervene. But “incrementalism” in security policy is different from the other policies mentioned. Whereas the earlier changes have been largely internal, security policy is by definition one with great impact

beyond EU borders. “Incrementalism” does not necessarily work as well in the security context.

We remain strong supporters of ESDP as a complement to our allies’ participation in, and obligations to, NATO and as a means of enhancing European capabilities. But it is obvious that ESDP does not in any respect

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represent the sum total of Europe’s security needs. A central element of Europe’s security must always be vested in Europe’s participation in NATO and the transatlantic relationship. In any case, drawing up a security policy for the EU will not be at all

easy. In addition to the differing views of the three “big” powers (France, the United Kingdom, and Germany), the EU must accommodate the perspectives of four neutral members and, as enlargement proceeds, a large number of former Warsaw Pact or Soviet countries.

Over the past several months and on both sides of the Atlantic, there has been altogether too much attention to the argument that the EU’s emphasis on a “multilateral” approach to problems will allow it to pursue its security interests without investing in a robust military force structure. There are two points that I think must be made in response.

First, the EU was able to develop because it profited from the nuclear shield and other protection offered by the United States, both against the threat posed by the Soviet Union and from fears that old European rivalries would be renewed. The process of developing a united Europe—which the United States has supported since its inception over 50 years ago—was not independent of military force. On the contrary, the two were intimately linked.

Second, the use of law and force continue to be inextricably linked, as we have seen recently in the case of Iraq. It is a false dichotomy to depict one partner (the EU) as representing international law and the other (the United States) as representing brute force. Those seeking to rely on the rule of law must have some means of enforcing it; those using force must do so in a way that is broadly accepted as legitimate if their action is to have long-lasting results.

One central element of this discussion is to define what a security policy is for. Any security policy, whether the national security policy of a sovereign state or the common security policy of an entity such as the EU, will in some sense be defined by the nature of the threats perceived in the world around it and by the objectives of the foreign policy attached to it. In the post-Cold War world, the EU’s security is no longer dependent on guarding the Fulda Gap. But

that does not mean the need for military capabilities is removed, or even necessarily diminished. Actions such as the military campaign in Kosovo, the conflict in Afghanistan, or a whole host of other actions around the globe aimed toward the fight against terrorism are crucial parts of creating and defending an international system that promotes the rule of law and that can deliver a more peaceful order. While assistance programs, humanitarian aid, and the strengthening of international organizations all play important roles in creating a more prosperous and democratic world, military capabilities are also vital.

What this means, in terms of the EU's future, is that it must develop military capabilities if it wants to be taken seriously not just by the United States, but more importantly, by other powers who do not necessarily respect democracy, market economics, human rights, or the rule of law.

Transatlantic Relations and CFSP

The United States has many interests in the ongoing European commitment to forge a common foreign and security policy. This process is still in its early stages, and its eventual shape is unknown. If the EU can develop an accountable and transparent foreign policy process with clear, effective, and adaptable decision making; if it can maintain, liberalize, and grow its current economic base; and if it can develop credible military capabilities, then it may become a strong, if often independent-minded, partner for the United States in addressing global problems.

None of this can be achieved overnight. And, as I noted at the outset, it builds on work that has been ongoing for several years already. There is no shame in the fact that CFSP began with a heavy focus on the Balkans, and we have worked well with the EU in that region.

It is true that the EU has played much less of a role further afield from Europe, but that does not mean that the United States has not continued to find constructive and important European partners there in the form of the Member States, our traditional allies and long-time partners. What I have discussed here are some of the issues that I see as central to any effort to build a more credible European Union CFSP. It is the EU's choice how many foreign and security policy decisions it wants to make in common. But it is important to remember that even if CFSP makes no progress at all over the next decade, the United States will continue to find its most important partners in foreign policy among the nations of Europe. 