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**High Politics and European Integration:  
From EMU to CFSP**

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## High Politics and European Integration

### Introduction

Discussions about a dimension in foreign and defence policy for the European project have always been very nebulous. They seem never to come to a conclusion although slight progress is made intermittently, but it is more in pretence than substance. It is as if the failure in the early 1950s of taking the big jump into both a political community and a defence community gave the founding fathers of the project such a shock that their offspring only very reluctantly have dared to approach the subject ever since. They decided to take the low road of economic integration, thinking that spill-over would get them into high politics. And indeed, considerable inroads into the sovereignty of the member states have been made, particularly after the signing of the Single Act in 1986. But high politics lies at the core of sovereignty and that core has not yet been broken into.

The reason why is in fact very simple. The European Community or Union does not know what kind of political animal it is. It is more than a regime, but less than a polity, as William Wallace has said. For more than forty years it has been the promoter of prosperity and economic growth and likes, therefore, to be seen also as a promoter of peace. But it has not been able to enter high politics directly, because it is a political system without an authoritative power. It is an anarchy – and as such it has done very well in areas of low politics. But it lacks authority, the seat of the monopoly of legitimate power.

High politics covers issues that pertain directly to the political and economic integrity of the state and its legitimate use of power. Boiled down to the essential, high politics has two dimensions: the use of the instrument of armed force to maintain external security and internal order, and the use of the instrument of the value of national money, the exchange rate, in the pursuit of prosperity. They should both be used with prudence, of course. Personally I am sceptical with respect to the *real* progress made so far in both matters. True, the nation-state is not what it used to be or, rather, pretended to be. The concept of sovereignty has paled to the extent that it looks like ‘organized hypocrisy’ as Stephen Krasner calls it.<sup>1</sup> But we still live in the age of nationalism, even within the European Union, because we seem unable to square the system of democracy and consent with the ever rising need for common governance in the core issues of high politics.

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With the Maastricht Treaty, later backed up by the Treaty of Amsterdam, it seemed that the territory of high politics was within reach. Monetary Union is no longer just a chimera. It is a reality and a common single currency will be introduced in less than two years time. Furthermore, the prospect of a common foreign and security policy (CFSP) with a dimension in defence is now the hottest issue on the agenda. Does that mean that the European Union in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will become a true union, a single polity firmly established in high politics? Perhaps – but it will require from our political leaders an ability to think and act in terms quite different from what they have done in the last two decades, not to speak of the last two centuries.

### **Monetary Union**

Let me first deal with money because it seems that here the problems have been overcome. I shall not recount the story from the plan espoused in the Werner report in the early 1970s and its failure after the collapse of the Bretton Woods system. Then came the sad tale of the European Monetary System and the Exchange Rate Mechanism from 1978 until its collapse in 1992-93. And finally the Delors Report leading up to One Market, One Money and the Maastricht Treaty with its timetable for Monetary Union and the formal launch of EMU in January 1999. It is all well known.

But so far, the high politics of monetary union has not really been tested. We have been living the last few years with a system of fixed exchange rates. That has been tried several times before, but only for a period of ten-twelve years at most. Certainly, the system is now backed up by strong political will and we might succeed in locking it in with a common currency in 2002. But the real test comes in the long run when we shall see whether the so-called ‘new economics’ will be better able to control inflation than old-fashioned Keynesian economics were able to control unemployment. I remember clearly how in the 1960s we felt that economics had proceeded so far that we could tune the economy to deliver strong growth and full employment. We learned a hard lesson in the 1970s. Now a new generation of economists promise politicians that they can deliver strong growth without inflation; Moreover they promise to do so in as vast an area as the European Union, with one monetary policy for a

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty, Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, 1999).

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diversity of political cultures and social structures. I wish them luck, but I remain sceptical. I fear that the euro was a bridge too far. If we do not succeed, monetary union will break up and Europe will suffer. But the jury is still out; In the meantime the EU faces the other dimension of high politics.

### **Political Union**

The other dimension of high politics is political union; not in the sense of the European parliament, majority voting and the 'democratic deficit' but in the sense of authority and the use of legitimate power, army and police, to defend the union's integrity against external and internal threats. Note that the issues of high politics have always been kept at a distance from parliamentary politics. They cannot be handled by the procedures of democracy.

This story also goes back to 1970, to the Davignon Report that opened the way for political co-operation. That was a much more sensitive issue than monetary co-ordination, and has remained so, perhaps because the power of money is so elusive and badly understood by both politicians and political scientists.

The first attempts just to talk about foreign policy among the foreign ministers were very cautious. They were kept strictly separate from the Council talks. I remember well the day in October 1973 when the foreign ministers met in Copenhagen (the capital of the presidency) in the morning to discuss issues of foreign policy and then after lunch all got into a chartered plane and flew to Brussels to resume their meeting on the agenda of Community affairs. That was 'organized hypocrisy' if anything was. Only slowly did this forced posture loosen up, and since the Single Act in 1986 it has not been necessary to pretend that Community affairs and foreign policy affairs can only be discussed in physically separate venues. But still, the Single Act only became 'single' because the two themes were dealt with in quite separate documents that were later stapled together to become 'single'; and we are still living in a European construct without firm foundations of identity and common interests, but with three pillars, pretending that they are all under one roof, the Union. The last step forward towards a common foreign policy was the nomination of a High Representative for foreign and security affairs, Mr Javier Solana, who serves under the aegis of the Council – alongside no fewer than four jealous Commissioners in the field of foreign affairs (external relations, trade,

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enlargement and development aid). But what authority does he represent? The European Council in session or the Presidency? Who is in charge? ‘Where does the buck stop?’, to play with Truman’s words.

## **The American Conception**

To understand the problem it is necessary to take a hard look at the myths of the European project. The founding myth is that it was created by great Europeans, Monnet and Schuman. That is not true. The European project was started by the Americans against the will and wish of most Europeans.

It may sound a paradox, but we cannot understand the European project without focusing on the United States and the American hegemony. We can only talk realistically about European politics if we understand American politics. Much of what I am going to say will therefore be about America.

Right after the Second World War, in 1945, American foreign policy was strongly influenced by two tendencies, isolationism and multilateralism. There was definitely a wish for withdrawal from Europe. President Roosevelt, however, had been in no doubt that the United States had to play a leading role in the re-ordering of the world. He was clearly influenced by the idealism of Wilsonian policies, but well aware of the need to avoid the pitfalls that had led to the failure of the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations. In 1942 he had initiated the negotiations that preceded the establishment of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, the political and economic foundations of a multilateral world order. Unfortunately, he did not see it unfold. He died a month before the war in Europe ended and Truman became the 33<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States.

Truman’s Midwestern instinct may have been isolationist and his initial attempts to get along with Stalin on the basis of a typical American approach of morality and legality were clearly naive. However, when he saw that Stalin could only think in terms of ‘objective’ reality and when it became obvious that Britain was too exhausted politically and economically to meet his expectations of becoming the stabiliser in Europe, he emerged as hard headed realist. He put the multilateral world on hold and announced as his doctrine that ‘the policy of the United

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States [is] to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures'. Strong realists such as George Marshall, Dean Acheson and George Kennan constructed the Atlantic world of the Marshall plan and NATO while the multilateral institutions of UN and IMF were put into abeyance.

The realists' vision of Europe was characterised not only by fear of the Soviet Union, but also by fear of what the West Europeans could do to themselves. The history of the 1920s could easily be repeated and the Americans were set to avoid that. Therefore they forced the West Europeans into co-operation. The means were clearly those of high politics, first money and later weapons. They set up Marshall Aid and insisted that the Europeans should administer the programme through a co-operative organisation, the OEEC, and not on a bilateral basis with the United States. They supported the establishment of a payments union, EPU, and saw it as a forerunner for a monetary union. They urged the countries to lower tariffs and trade barriers by common agreement and thus paved the way for the Common Market. And they wanted to see the Germans drawn into the integration process and restored as a nation. That had to be done by reconstruction and rearmament within a tight European framework, but under American control. Hence NATO – the organisation and not only the Treaty – with a supreme command structure.

The French on their side had their own European ambitions. They wanted to become an industrial power on the same level as Britain and at Germany's expense. De Gaulle had in September 1945 appointed Jean Monnet to head an industrial planning board, the *Commissariat du Plan*, for the modernisation of France. At the time it was the policy of the allied powers to internationalise the core of industrial Germany, the Ruhr district, and France was the strongest promoter of that idea. However, when the Americans changed their minds and wanted to re-install Germany as an economic power, the French ambition to promote national industrialisation by the resources of Ruhr began to look a little improbable. That was when Monnet showed his genius. If only the coal and steel industries of Germany could become Europeanised and not internationalised – and Britain could be trusted to stay out of such a supranational adventure – then France could control and benefit from such a project and thus achieve its national aims. And that was what happened. Monnet's idea of a European Coal and Steel Community, controlled by a non-political supranational High Authority, proved to be the perfect fit for both French and American desires. Only a Frenchman could

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become president of the High Authority – Jean Monnet himself – *plus Va change, plus Va reste la même chose*.

Of course, Monnet was a true European, believing that mere co-operation between governments cannot suffice. He pursued his federal ideas when the plans for EPC and EDC were developed – and became as frustrated and disappointed as the Americans when these projects collapsed in 1954. Soon afterwards he retired into his Action Committee for the United States of Europe, lobbying for his plan for a federal technocracy for the following twenty years.

## **The United States between Isolationism and Unilateralism**

Digging deeper into the reasons for the strong American influence on European politics we must be aware of the basic parameters in the American political culture. In 1776 the Founding Fathers had looked upon the new nation as a great experiment. In order to succeed it should be kept isolated from the balance-of-power politics of Europe. ‘Steer clear of permanent alliances’, Thomas Jefferson warned. Throughout the nineteenth century the Americans tended to turn their back on the world and build their own society.

When, around the turn of the past century, the experiment seemed to be succeeding and the United States was becoming the leader in economic and technological progress, this attitude began to change. It is Henry Kissinger’s view that throughout the twentieth century the United States has wavered between two contradictory attitudes towards foreign policy: isolationism and internationalism. ‘The first is that America serves its values best by perfecting democracy at home, thereby acting as a beacon for the rest of mankind; the second, that America’s values impose on it an obligation to crusade for them around the world’.<sup>2</sup>

On the whole it was the internationalists who won, but isolationism has never been far below the surface. And again, among the internationalists there are two tendencies, if not schools. There are the realists in the tradition of Theodore Roosevelt, and there are the idealists in the tradition of Woodrow Wilson. Now and then one of these two schools outmanoeuvre the

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (London, 1994) p.17-18.

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other – and then the old isolationists win, as they did in the inter-war period, when the United States refused to join the League of Nations and withdrew from world affairs.<sup>3</sup>

At other times they merge in odd combination, called multilateralism if the idealist tendency is strongest, and unilateralism if the realists dominate. Multilateralism is the order of Franklin Roosevelt, of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, where countries pursue common interests by agreeing on rules of conduct commonly applicable to all.<sup>4</sup> But note, it was never American policy to endow multilateral institutions with significant independent powers. The United States made sure that it would be in control of both the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund. The Americans have always resisted being tied down by alliances or organisations.

When the realists dominate among the internationalists, policy takes the form of unilateralism. It is not nationalism, or a policy in pursuit of national interests as traditional European power politics would be. Americans resist the idea that they have *national* interests in that sense. The United States is not a nation-state. It is an idea-state. It has *global* interests and global obligations – to be a crusader for the right political order. This idea makes it possible for the idealists to line up behind the realists. The Americans are prepared to pursue a unilateral policy for the sake of freedom, democracy, self-determination and human rights. They are not in pursuit of power, as Europeans would be.

This attitude requires more explanation for a European to grasp. Much of the misunderstanding that from time to time arises between Europe and the United States is caused by the belief that Europeans and Americans are very much alike. That is not true. American political culture is vastly different from the European political culture – to the extent that it is possible to describe the Europeans as belonging to a single culture.

Cultures have very deep roots. They are formed over centuries by the accumulated experience of many generations. They change over time, of course, but only very slowly and with reluctance. The American political culture has its deepest roots in the experience and mind-sets of the early settlers and the pilgrims of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They were puritans and, in

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<sup>3</sup> John Gerard Ruggie, *Winning the Peace, America and World Order in the New Era* (New York, 1996) ch.1.

<sup>4</sup> Ruggie (1996) p.20.

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common with many of their followers in the following 300 years, they saw the new world as a promised land, virtually in terms of the Old Testament, a place given to them by God where they would be freed from the misery they had suffered under their European oppressors. Not only the Pilgrims, but also many of the later immigrants were or became very religious, not surprisingly because they had turned their back to their homeland, their *Heimat*, and severed the links with that part of their identity. Religion therefore came to fill that vacuum, and it has since assumed such a powerful role in American politics that to many Europeans it seems hypocritical.

The place of religion in American political culture adds tremendous power to the force of exceptionalism that has always been the determining element in American foreign policy. It supports the myth that the United States is a 'redeemer' nation, a nation that has a divine mission in this world. 'Our nation is chosen by God and Commissioned by history to be a model to the world', according to presidential candidate George W. Bush.<sup>5</sup> It is not a nation-state based upon a people with a common history, tradition and decent. It is an idea-state, based upon a secular ideology that has universal validity.<sup>6</sup> The Americans come from a diversity of *natio*s, but the Declaration of Independence is their common doctrine of faith. It obliges them to bring freedom and independence to all peoples of the world. It is a belief that makes them interventionists as promoters of the gospel of democracy, the true secular ideology. As Richard Hofstadter has noted: 'It has been our fate as a nation not to have ideologies, but to be one'.<sup>7</sup> But that fate, in their view, also gives them the right to resist any foreign intervention in their own affairs.

## **American Nationalism Does Exist**

The Americans maintain that they are not nationalists, at least not in the European sense. That is not quite true. They are nationalists in their own 'universalist' way. There is a tribal culture within American society of no less strength than the folk cultures of European nations. It has a folk-ideology that has its roots in an immigrant culture where the social and economic solidarity of European peasant communities has been overpowered by the individualism of

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<sup>5</sup> *International Herald Tribune*, September 9-10, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, *The Cycles of American History* (London, 1987). See also George F. Kennan, *Realities of American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1966).

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the frontier. Michael Lind argues that the ‘overwhelming majority of Americans – whatever their arbitrarily defined ‘race’ – already belong, not just to a single citizenry, but to a single people, a single cultural nation, defined by common language, folkways, memories, and more’. Popular nationalism, as a sentimental attachment to people and customs and country, may be much stronger in the United States than in Western Europe, but it is against the American myth to accept that. ‘American nationalism ... is the political doctrine that dares

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Lind’s description of this vernacular culture fits well with the picture given by Walter Russell

<sup>9</sup> Jacksonians carry the isolationist tradition in America. They have clear and simple values and their own sense of realism. Honour is a core value in their culture. It is based on courage, self-reliance and honest, hard work, it is unimpressed by authority and has a strong sense of equality. Jacksonians value firearms and the freedom to own and use them as a mark of civic and social equality. Whatever the theological views of the individual Jacksonian may be, they are regular churchgoers who believe in Original Sin and favour capital punishment. They view military service as a sacred duty. An honourable person is ready to kill or to die for family and flag. Honour is not simply a personal matter. It is also a question of the respect and dignity one commands in the world at large.

Nationalism breeds a special, simplistic approach to foreign policy, in the American case as elsewhere. Jacksonian Americans are instinctively protectionist and see the preservation of American jobs as the obvious task of US trade policy. They have a profoundly populist world-view, accepting that problems might be complex, but believing solutions should be simple. Countries, like families, should take care of their own, but as life is and will remain both anarchic and violent, the United States must be vigilant and strongly armed. Therefore, they have small regard for international law and international institutions. They do not think that there could be any other reason for fighting than a threat to the nation and its vital interests (including the lifeline of an unrestricted supply of oil). But honour is important. ‘It is a bad

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted from Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism; A Doubled-Edged Sword* (New York, 1996) p.18.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Lind, *The Next American Nation; the New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution* (New York, 1995) pp.4-7 and 260.

<sup>9</sup> The following section relies extensively on Walter Russell Mead, ‘The Jacksonian Tradition and American Foreign Policy’ in *The National Interest*, no.58, winter 1999/2000. Mead picked the term in honour of the sixth President of the United States ‘who brought the American people into the political arena’.

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thing to fight an unnecessary war, but it is inexcusable and dishonourable to lose one once it has begun.’<sup>10</sup> It should be fought with all available force and the highest technology to spare the life of American soldiers without second thought about longer-term political consequences. These must be sorted out later. For the people, this approach is ‘realism’. The aim is unconditional surrender. There is no room for compromise with the devil. But when victory is achieved, the American people is ready to show magnanimity.

‘The Jacksonian views on foreign affairs are relatively straightforward, and once they are understood, American foreign policy becomes much less mysterious’, says Walter R. Mead. Ronald Reagan was a product of Jacksonian America and a proof of its strong influence in foreign policy. But he was upsetting to the liberal elite, the political realists of the Kennan school, because he was as un-intellectual as could be, according to Henry Kissinger.

## **A Confused and Chaotic Europe**

The rupture of the European political map that took place in the last two-three months of 1989 caught European politicians completely unprepared and revealed the frailty of the European project and the shallowness of its institutions as well as its dependency on American leadership. In a way it brought Europe back to 1949.

The European reaction to the fall of the Berlin Wall revealed a distrust among the members of the Community, directed particularly against Germany, and a tendency to fall back on narrow national interests. Could it be that the European Community of 1989 was not a ‘pluralistic security community’ wherein use of force to settle disputes and conflicts among its members is unthinkable, because it is governed by the rule of negotiation or law?<sup>11</sup> Efforts to tie the countries more closely together into a ‘community of fate’ resulted in the Maastricht Treaty signed in December 1991 followed by the Amsterdam Treaty in December 1997. These were clearly steps designed to take the project into high politics. Maastricht changed not only the name to European Union, but also the substance of the project when it was set on course towards Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) no later than 1999 - to be complemented by a

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<sup>10</sup> Mead (1999/2000) p.21.

<sup>11</sup> The term ‘pluralistic security community’ originates from the classical work of Karl W. Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organisation in the Light of Historical Experience* (New York, 1969). Deutsch gives the Nordic countries as an example of a pluralistic security community.

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Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) including a European Defence Identity as outlined in the Amsterdam Treaty.

There are good reasons for questioning both parts of this interpretation of the events. There can be no doubt that the European Community of 1989 was a pluralistic security community and had been so for a number of years, quite independent of continued American presence in Europe. Of course, power still played a role in inter-communitarian relations; it always does where politics is involved. But the use of force had become unthinkable. Next, the actions taken by the Maastricht Treaty and subsequent decisions have made only nominal incursions into the power of high politics because they have not confronted the issue of political authority – that also goes for EMU because there is only a central bank, but no equivalent to a Chancellor of the Exchequer or Minister of Finance. It is a Union only in name. However, there can be no doubt that the tremors released by the fall of the Wall resulted in a severe test for the cohesion of the Community, and the project could have stalled, if not failed, in 1990, had the Americans not already sent a clear signal of guidance in late 1989.

As mentioned, the Europeans leaders were caught completely unprepared for the thought of German unification. In contrast, the Americans had dared to think of that possibility in advance although, of course, they had not expected it to become pressing so quickly as it did. Soon after the Bush administration came into office in January 1989, a high level group of officials had started looking at a new security order for Europe, and the early thinking had enabled President Bush to say in a speech in Germany in late May 1989 that he wanted ‘to help Europe to become whole and free’.<sup>12</sup> This was clearly meant as support for the ultimate unification of Germany.

President Mitterrand and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher were unable to hide their horror at the thought of German unification, and they did their best to find a common strategy to avoid it. Mitterrand even went to Kiev on 6 December to meet with Gorbachev and find out whether he could get his support in order to prevent it. It all came to nothing, and at the European Council meeting in Strasbourg on 8 December the Europeans supported the

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<sup>12</sup> Robert J. Art, ‘Why Western Europe Needs the United States’, in *Political Science Quarterly*, Spring 1996. Reprinted in *American Leadership, Ethnic Conflict and the New World Politics*, ed. by Demetrios James Caraley and Bonnie B. Hartman, The Academy of Political Science (New York, 1997). Art takes the opposite view of

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American position of peacefully and gradually achieving unification of Germany within the EC and NATO. But there was a catch to that. The preceding European Council in Madrid in June 1989 had adopted the Delors plan for monetary union, much to the dismay of Mrs Thatcher, without setting any timetable for it. Chancellor Kohl may have been favourably inclined, but the German Bundesbank and the German public were not. Therefore, if nothing else had happened it might have been shelved like earlier blueprints for monetary union. Now in Strasbourg it reappeared as a means of tying Germany into Europe. Therefore, the European Council also decided to call an Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on economic and monetary union. The issues of unification and EMU became linked, although not explicitly.

One important issue still had to be settled to achieve peaceful unification. The Soviet Union had to accept that a unified Germany could be member of NATO. On 18 March 1990 a large majority of East German voters made it clear that they wanted to unite with West Germany as quickly as possible, and the same month Helmut Kohl, on a visit to Moscow, got the answer from Gorbachev that he had wished for: that it was up to the Germans themselves to decide what they wanted. With that ace in hand, Kohl met Mitterrand upon his return to Bonn and asked for full French backing for unification. Mitterrand settled, on condition that Kohl would unequivocally back not only monetary union, but full integration of Germany into a political union. Kohl, who for his own strong reasons, was also fearful of a strong Germany, had no difficulty in accepting that and the two therefore told the President of the European Council, the Irish Prime Minister Charles Haughey, to use the occasion of the next meeting of the Council to launch a second intergovernmental conference on political union which would meet in tandem with the conference on monetary union. The two conferences started work in December 1990.

## **An EDI within NATO?**

The two conferences ran parallel and ended with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in December 1991. The monetary conference drew up the detailed plan for EMU, but the conference on political union came to virtually nothing, because the twelve were unable to

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mine with respect to Europe as a pluralistic security community, but many of the details in the following are taken from his excellent review.

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find common ground for a common foreign and security policy. It came down to disagreement about the extent to which the European Union, as was now the official name of the earlier EC, could assume a posture separate from the United States, particularly with respect to a European Defence Identity (EDI), as it euphemistically was called. To put it briefly, France took a 'European view' while Britain took an 'Atlantic view' with Germany sitting uneasily on the fence because it was inclined to remain 'Atlantic', but wanted to maintain the German-French special relationship as motor of European integration.

The European Community had fallen into an identity crisis and tried to solve it by 'deepening', by extending its scope in economic matters beyond the internal market, and by changing its name to European Union. But NATO suffered in a way from a more severe identity crisis because it had lost its enemy and thus its *raison d'être*, at least a major part of it. It had been a defence alliance, an 'alliance against war' in the American terminology, but in the new Europe war seemed highly unlikely, at least in the traditional sense which NATO had prepared for. But remembering Lord Ismay's famous formulation, that NATO was in Europe 'to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down,' there were still two valid reasons for keeping the Alliance alive. A mood of isolationism, of withdrawal from Europe, had crept up in the United States and something had to be done to keep the Americans in. And Germany had become fully sovereign and by far the largest power in Europe. It was necessary to continue keeping her down.

To keep the new American isolationism at bay, NATO's strategic concept and thus its purpose had to be fundamentally revised. The first significant step was taken at the NATO Council meeting in Rome in November 1991 when the old terminology of flexible response and nuclear deterrence was discarded and replaced by a broad approach to security with economic, social and political dimensions. Instead of being an alliance against war it was becoming an 'alliance for peace and co-operation'. For good measure, the communiqué of the meeting explicitly said that 'the alliance is the essential forum for consultation among its members and the venue for agreement on policies bearing on the security and defence commitments of allies under the Washington Treaty'. This sentence was an assurance against the threat of devolution coming from the EDI debate.

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Seen from the United States, the conflict between NATO and EDI is irresolvable. Either NATO functions as a multilateral organisation (under American leadership) or the EDI creates a situation where the Europeans co-ordinate their positions and then present the negotiated compromise to the Americans with very little room, if any, for further negotiation. NATO cannot become a bilateral organisation as long as the Europeans have not established a single political authority with which the Americans can discuss matters on equal terms. Talks about a European pillar and EDI are only a rhetorical cover for a challenge to American leadership – quite apart from the fact that EU membership is not congruent with NATO-membership as long as there are EU-countries that are not members of NATO.

The idea of using the WEU as a catalyst was kept alive for a number of years, but has now waned and the organisation is about to be dissolved into the EU. By 1999, it was agreed that whatever defence capacity the EU as such might be able to establish would be kept tightly within the NATO frame and rely on NATO for planning, command structure, logistics and intelligence, as well as for peacekeeping operations. This was the price to be paid for keeping the United States engaged on the continent and avoiding a re-nationalisation of defence policy. In fact, the United States performs a quasi-governmental function in Europe and serves as a ‘balancer of last resort’, because the Europeans do not trust themselves to provide it collectively. As an experienced European diplomat once said: ‘Among Europeans, it is not acceptable that the lead nation be European ... We can agree on U.S. leadership, but not on

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## **The Unilateral NATO in Action**

During the 1990s NATO was moving away from a collective defence alliance becoming an organisation which could undertake military operations in the Euro-Atlantic area in its own right in case of crisis and conflicts of religious, economic or ethnic origin, the aim being to maintain existing borders and respect for human rights. That is the core of the revised strategy adopted by the NATO-Council at the meeting in Washington in April 1999, marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alliance. The relationship between EU and NATO is established by the following updating in art. 17 of the formulation in the 1991 Rome communiqué: ‘The development of a common foreign and security policy (CFSP) includes the progressive

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<sup>13</sup> Art (1996) p.72.

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framing of a common defence policy. Such a policy, as called for in the Amsterdam Treaty, would be compatible with the common security and defence policy established within the framework of the Washington Treaty'. The books on a separate EDI were thereby closed.

The road from Rome-1991 to Washington-1999 ran through Yugoslavia, through Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. The break-up of the socialist federal republic in 1991 and the reaction of the European Community/Union to the tragedies that followed proved convincingly that the EU lacked not only the institutions and instruments to deal with political disruption and violence in its immediate vicinity, but also the political cohesion to formulate a consistent policy and to carry it out in practise. The Americans kept back for a long time, and the Europeans were quick to assert that they also saw this as a European affair. Indeed, they wanted to take it as a chance to prove that the EU could act as stabiliser and problem solver in high politics. However, it soon became apparent the opposite was the case.

I shall not go further into describing the tragic events that took place in Krajina, Srebrenica and Sarajevo; they are well known. The fact of the matter is that the Americans lost patience with the wavering Europeans and got into the waters, pressuring the parties in Bosnia into an agreement in Dayton in November 1995. It 'was hailed as a triumph of the West's commitment to a multi-ethnic state', but in reality it confirmed the total partition of the country. It set up a unified Bosnia as a constitutional fiction, including provisions for the protection of human rights and maintained by an international force, but the agreement 'is so fragile that the war will start again should the international troops ever leave. Bosnia is a military protectorate, but one for which the occupying force is reluctant to take political responsibility'.<sup>14</sup>

The discord and bewildering confusion among the EU/NATO powers, which resulted in failure to take action that could at least mitigate the hostilities instead of at times spurring them on, go a long way to explain why the situation in Kosovo evolved as it did. Everyone knew that the province was a time bomb with a very short fuse. It is not unlikely that it was lightened by the outcome in Bosnia where the Serbs had been defeated with the help of the international community. But the West did not take it seriously until 1998 when the crackdown of the Serb forces on the terrorist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) started to look

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like 'ethnic cleansing'. When the Western powers belatedly woke up, they were united by a sense of shame. The governments had to restore credibility among their electorates as well as in the international community. They had first of all to present a firm and uncompromising position towards Serbia, and second make sure that they would be ready to take strong action and stick together, no matter what might come. The power and cohesion of NATO had to be proved.

There can be no doubt that the Americans had convinced the other NATO countries that their high-tech air-power could settle the matter in a few days. Therefore they launched the attack without an alternative strategy. But the air campaign failed completely. Ten days later NATO, according to General Wesley Clark, the supreme commander, had one overriding objective: to survive as an alliance.<sup>15</sup> It was no longer just credibility, but simply existence that was at stake for the organisation. Each single action that was taken in the field, or rather the air, had to be weighed in that light. The Alliance was saved, ironically by the Russians who negotiated an agreement reached ten weeks later. But whether the overall humanitarian situation in Kosovo is much better than before the war, is an open question.

Looking back on the ten weeks of war, Adam Roberts asks a crucial question: 'How did it happen that the ancient and ever-contested idea of 'humanitarian intervention' came to be associated with bombing? ... In the long history of legal debates about humanitarian intervention, there has been a consistent failure to address directly the question of the methods used in such interventions. It is almost as if the labelling of an intervention as 'humanitarian' provides sufficient justification in itself, and there is no need to think further about the aims of the operation or the means employed – or indeed to understand the society in which the

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At least part of the answer can be found in a rhetorical question posed in 1993 by Madeleine Albright, then US ambassador to the United Nations and later US Secretary of State. In a discussion with the then Chief of Staff Colin Powell she asked him what the point was 'in having this supreme military power of which you always talk, if we cannot use it'.<sup>17</sup> Powell

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<sup>14</sup> Misha Glenny, *Balkans 1804-1999; Nationalism, War and the Great Powers*. (London, 1999) pp.647 and 652.

<sup>15</sup> UK television Channel Four programme, *Europe at War*, 13 March 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Adam Roberts, 'NATO's 'Humanitarian War over Kosovo'', in *Survival*, vol.41, no.3, Autumn 1999, p.110.

<sup>17</sup> Ref. 'Madeleine's War' in *Time Magazine*, 17 May 1999.

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later said that he nearly had a paroxysm over that remark. Seen in the perspective of the classical American inclination to be a crusader in international affairs the remark becomes frightening. And even more so if one recalls Senator J. William Fulbright's words in the introduction to his book, *The Arrogance of Power*, written when the Vietnam War got out of hand in 1966: 'America is now at that historical point at which a great nation is in danger of losing its perspective on what exactly is within the realm of its power and what is beyond it .... Power tends to confuse itself with virtue and a great nation is peculiarly susceptible to the idea that its power is a sign of God's favour, conferring upon it a special responsibility for other nations – to make them richer and happier and wiser, to remake them, that is, in its own shining image. Power confuses itself with virtue and tends also to take itself for omnipotence. Once imbued with the idea of a mission, a great nation easily assumes that it has the means as well as the duty to do God's work'.<sup>18</sup>

### CFSP - A Chimera?

Now, at the turn of the century, it is obvious that any security and defence dimension of the EU has been locked into NATO. Whatever separate 'identity' Europe might obtain will relate to peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention, and even in such cases it will be under the surveillance of NATO, with the use of the organisation's military assets, which are primarily American, and thus only with American acceptance. The multilateralism of NATO, if it ever existed, has been overtaken by unilateralism. As Madeleine Albright stated, also in 1993: 'Multilateralism is a word for policy wonks, so let's not use it anymore.... Let's call it burden

<sup>19</sup> The United States paid for the destruction in Serbia/Kosovo. Now it is up to Europe to pay for the reconstruction.

Whether CFSP is an unrealisable dream or not depends first of all on what ambition EU has in that respect. Back in 1973, Henry Kissinger, with his 'Year of Europe' initiative, inadvertently provoked a crisis between the USA and Europe, when he noted what to him seemed obvious, namely that 'the United States has global interests, while Europe has regional interests'. French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Michel Jobert, refused to enter into a dialogue on that premise and demanded that 'Europe', the Nine, first had to clarify what they understood by their 'European Identity'. It never really became clear.

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<sup>18</sup> J. William Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power* (New York. 1966) pp.3-4.

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Today it should be obvious to all that Europe cannot become a global power. ‘Europe’s nations, once the very fountainhead of aggressive or expansionist nationalism, no longer seem eager to bestride the world in search of power, order, or a *mission civilatrice*. .... At best, only Britain and France, two ex-imperial powers with global memories, are still willing to risk engagement for the sake of order beyond their borders’.<sup>20</sup> This observation may not be quite true after Kosovo. It could depend on where the borders of Europe are set. Questions about European identity and Europe’s borders have been in the forefront of the Euro-political debate since 1990. Clarification of these issues is unavoidable now when thirteen countries are queuing for a ‘return to Europe’.

The fundamental difficulty behind ‘widening’ is that the European institutions are constructed for a ‘Europe’ widely different from the political Europe of today. The negotiators at the two IGCs in 1991 were not instructed to take account of the geopolitical changes in Europe and to conceive of a political union in other terms than offered by the existing institutional framework. Neither were the negotiators of the Amsterdam Treaty. And civil servants without a brief can only trot along old paths.

The overriding ‘regional’ interest that the 15 members of the EU have in foreign policy is to project democratic stability and maintain respect for human rights in the ‘near abroad’ of the Union. Whatever Common Foreign and Security Policy they might contemplate as a Union should focus on that objective. The EU countries are not exposed to any external threat in the traditional sense, including the threat of annihilation perceived during the balance-of-terror in the Cold War. But in their backyard they are faced with an internal threat of aggressive nationalism and violent ethnic animosity that can only be countered by an order of security that is geared to peacekeeping instead of traditional warfare modified by high technology. The idea that the EU countries could take common action with that aim in mind made an appearance in the talks leading up to the Petersberg agreement in 1993, but it got locked into the discussions of the established frameworks of EU, CFSP, EDI and NATO, and did therefore not lead to a more fundamental rethink of the treaties.

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<sup>19</sup> On the MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour, 30 August, 1993. Ref. Ruggie (1996) p.22.

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When it became obvious that the EU was unable to extend any political cover to the ‘new democracies’, the United States began to push for NATO enlargement, bringing in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, because, as Madeleine Albright rightly said, ‘if NATO expansion can take place quicker, why then wait until the tomato growers in Central Europe start using the right kind of pesticides’.<sup>21</sup> The European Union lost out because of lack of visionary leadership. It could only fall back on the tunnel vision of its institutions and traditional thinking in terms of external security and defence. However, it must have come as an unpleasant surprise to the three countries that twelve days after they were admitted to the Alliance in March 1999, they found themselves at war with a close neighbour.

The discussion of defence procurement within the Atlantic framework has been a pathetic affair, not least after the experience of Kosovo which demonstrated a wide gap between American and European capabilities to undertake the kind of military action that was employed there. The Americans argue that if sophisticated intelligence is coupled with modern precision weapons, victory in the ‘new wars’ can be achieved much faster and with far fewer casualties to soldiers and civilians than ever before. This may be true in the context of America’s global interests, but not seen in the light of Europe’s regional interests. The European Union cannot project stability into the new democracies, including all of the Balkans, by stealth bombers and guided missiles. The notion in itself is absurd and would bring us back to the logic of the terror balance, as happened in Kosovo.

What is needed is a European internal security order that can control civil disorder and combat terrorist attacks that otherwise might escalate into suppression of minorities or acts of ‘ethnic cleansing’. Satellite surveillance, AWAC planes, aircraft carriers, not to speak of cruise missiles sent against civilian infrastructure, are not the appropriate means for that purpose. What is needed is a specially trained police and paramilitary forces with light weapons and equipment enabling them to combat the lawbreakers and quell the disorder before it mounts. ‘Post-modern militarisation’ of the peacekeepers would be self-defeating, as the situation in Kosovo now each day proves.

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<sup>20</sup> Josef Joffe, ‘Internationalism, withdrawal, and Europe’s role in international affairs’ in *International Journal*, (Canadian Institute of International Affairs) Winter 1998-9, pp.54-55.

<sup>21</sup> *The Economist*, London, 15 February 1997.

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Until the European Union is reshaped to manage its 'regional interests' within a political union, in harmony with but independent of the United States, it makes no sense to talk about a Common Foreign and Security Policy. But that presupposes a regime that is more than a 'pluralistic security community'. It needs a polity that is sure about its own identity and therefore able to back the order by the necessary authority and force. In short, it needs a union of nations that are aware of their common interests and therefore able to base the union on a kind of constitution, quite different from the treaties of Paris, Rome, Maastricht or Amsterdam, but *a constitution to which all the twenty-eight countries are signatories*. The rule of law is the first condition for maintaining democracy and human rights. That condition was not met by the moral crusaders in Kosovo.

### About the Author

Erik Holm (MA in Economics, PhD in Political Science, University of Copenhagen) is Director of the Eleni Nakou Foundation, London since 1989. He served as economist with the International Monetary Fund in the 1960s and as Adviser in European Affairs to the Danish Prime Minister in the 1970s. In 1982-87 he was Chief Adviser to the European Commission (DG II) in Brussels; he was also visiting Fellow at the University of California at Berkeley in 1987-89. Among his publications are *Money and International Politics* (1991), Copenhagen: Academic Press; *Europe, a Political Culture* (1994), London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.