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**'Closing the Capability-Expectations Gap?'**

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Paper written for the Panel on 'Developing a Credible Common Foreign and Security Policy: Practical and Theoretical Perspectives', chaired by Michael E. Smith (University of California at Irvine).

The idea of the 'capability-expectations gap', which I first introduced in a presentation to a special Journal of Common Market Studies conference in Edinburgh in November 1992, was not intended as a static concept, or as contribution only to the analysis of contemporary events - important as that last phase of the Maastricht ratification process was.<sup>1</sup> It was intended to provide a yard-stick by which the process of change in European foreign policy might be measured.

Of course 'European foreign policy' itself was, and remains, an elusive concept. It can be applied to the tout ensemble of what 'Europe' does in world politics, although we then run straight into the next problem of defining 'Europe' and 'European'. It can be taken to be simply the behaviour of the European Union in the form of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, which would have the merit of taking the EU's claim to have an integrated ('Common') foreign policy at its word. Both in 1992 and in the present, however, this has too pedantic an effect, excluding as it does both what emerges from Pillar One/Community institutions and the national diplomatic activities of the fifteen Member-States. My preferred starting-point, rather, is certainly the European Union and not other European states or institutions, but also the sum of what the EU and its Member-States do in international relations. Only by taking an overview of all the elements of what we optimistically call 'European foreign policy' can we identify a pattern of behaviour and assess the respective contributions of the various parts - positive and negative.

To return to the idea of measuring or evaluating achievements over time, the idea of a 'gap' between expectations and capability at least has the merit of enabling us to compare the size of the gap at different points in time. If we accept the premise that expectations and resources can get out of line - a familiar enough proposition in most walks of life - then it should be possible to see whether a chasm has narrowed to a fissure, or whether something that was at one time bridgeable has now widened to the proportions of a Grand Canyon. And in principle this is something that could be continually monitored, just as capabilities are regularly assessed in the foreign policy analysis of

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Hill, 'The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe's International Role', Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol.31, No.3, September 1993. Reprinted in Simon Bulmer and Andrew Scott, (Eds.), Economic and Political Integration in Europe: Internal Dynamics and Global Context, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994, pp103-126, with a comment by Michael Smith, pp127-9. The 1992 conference marked the JCMS's 30th anniversary.

states. Yet this is not a matter of mere capability analysis. The whole point of the original conceptualisation was to argue that the relationship between ends and means was particularly problematical with respect to European foreign policy, and that ends themselves were hardly settled. Rather, they were in flux, the result of continual interaction between external and internal definitions, making it difficult to know what resources the EU did in fact need to mobilise - how much money? Its own armed services? What forms of economic leverage? Moreover there remained the more straightforward matter of a potentially painful contrast between what publics or outsiders might think the EU could/should do, and what it actually could deliver. Both of these dimensions are addressed by the idea of the capability-expectations gap (CEG), and both can be seen in the third dimension, of change over time.

The present paper, five years on from the original, seeks to take stock of what has happened with respect to EU foreign policy, and to draw up a balance-sheet of both capabilities and expectations, to see if the CEG has changed, and if it has become more or less pertinent as a way of understanding Europe's international position.<sup>2</sup> To that end, I shall

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<sup>2</sup> What might appear a self-regarding exercise may be explained by the fact that this paper has its origins in an invitation to present a paper on the subject to a Research Workshop convened at the University of Glasgow from 31 January to 1 February 1997 by John Peterson and Helene Sjursen of the Department of Politics, entitled 'The European Union as Global Actor: Capabilities, Expectations and Three Years of the CFSP'. The paper will be appearing in the two convenors' edited book for Routledge in 1998, The European Union as a Global Actor. It is also the case that the original article has often been cited in the literature on European foreign policy since 1993. See in particular Martin Holland, 'Bridging the Capability-Expectations Gap: A Case-Study of the CFSP Joint Action on South Africa', Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol.33,4, December 1995 (largely reproduced in the same author's edited book Common Foreign and Security Policy: the Record and the Reforms (London, Cassell, 1997); Elfriede Regelsberger and Wolfgang Wessels, 'The CFSP Institutions and Procedures: A Third Way for the Second Pillar', in European Foreign Affairs Review, Vol.1,1, July 1996, p30 et.seq.; also Roy Ginsberg, 'TransAtlantic Dimensions of CFSP: the Culture of Foreign Policy Cooperation', in Elfriede Regelsberger, Philippe de Schoutheete de Tervarent and Wolfgang Wessels (Eds.), Foreign Policy of the European Union: From EPC to CFSP and Beyond, London, Lynne Rienner, 1997, pp297-8.

begin this paper by considering the changed historical context since 1992, and move on to measure the original definition of the CEG against the current situation with respect to both expectations and capabilities, each category containing within it a number of different sources and elements. The analysis then turns to consider, in the light of the CEG as it stands now, whether the EU's various roles in the world have been diminished or enhanced, and finishes by widening the scope of the argument again to compare the EU's international condition with that of other international organisations, particularly those important to the geo-political area we call Europe.

### **Changing historical contexts**

The sense that expectations of the EC's (as it then was) international performance might be outrunning its capacity to live up to them arose out of the febrile atmosphere of 1991-2, when the debate over the Maastricht Treaty was overlaid by the dramatic dissolution of first the Cold War and then the world's second superpower, the two together amounting to a significant part of the west Europeans' external environment. Internally, the debate was becoming increasingly hectic over whether a new treaty would be ratified at all (with the Danish and French referenda administering heavy shocks to the process), and polarised between those who hoped for a great leap forward and those who feared an end to national liberties. Either way, the 1980's mood of eurosclerosis had been replaced by an atmosphere of constructionism, with the Single Market reaching completion, new life being breathed into the project of European Monetary Union, and talk of a new, integrated European foreign and security policy.

Of course these were also years of unparalleled change and unpredictability, and crises like that over the Exchange Rate Mechanism of September 1992 served only to heighten the general excitement and tendency to exaggerate in political argument. The upheaval in the international system tended both to create a sense of the EC being an island of stability in a sea of troubles and to spill over into the EC's internal affairs. How could they not, when in a matter of months the main external threat was being removed, the eastern border of the EC was becoming permeable for the first time and huge new responsibilities/opportunities were presenting themselves to the West, an important state to the south-east (Yugoslavia) was on the brink of civil war, and Germany was achieving its longed-for reunification? These events had political, economic and financial reverberations, but even more importantly they had psycho-cultural effects in terms of making it impossible for the EC to consider its own evolution quietly and in decent privacy. From now on, the spotlight was on Brussels and the queue of demandeurs at the gates increasing by the day.

The newly liberated states of eastern Europe, for example, were not slow to seek special relationships with what they understandably saw as a prosperous and secure harbour close at hand. Likewise the already rich and independent states of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), soon abandoned their 'European Economic Area' agreement with the EC, only just negotiated, in favour of a sauve qui peut race for actual membership. In so doing they were setting the pace both for the aforementioned east Europeans and for some Mediterranean countries fearing a newly powerful but protectionist 'fortress Europe', with a centre of gravity well to the north.

In these circumstances it was not wholly surprising that the EC should have enjoyed a far more positive international image than at any time previously, or that the policy-makers concerned should have become over-excited. Jacques Poos of Luxembourg, as President of the Council, uttered the most notoriously optimistic interpretation in the first months of the Yugoslav crisis, when he told the world that 'this is the hour of Europe'<sup>3</sup>, but there were many others who both wanted and expected the Europeans to be able to assert themselves far more in what was now something of an economic and political vacuum in Europe. After all, in the first months of the post Cold War world it seemed that the EC's status as a civilian power, consisting of rich, liberal-minded states, made it perfectly suited to take the lead in an environment where military force now suddenly seemed irrelevant. Moreover the United States, the world's undisputedly dominant force, actively supported the idea of the Europeans taking on more responsibility (and paying more bills). If the EC, happily and coincidentally, was also on the brink of restructuring itself to become a far more effective entity and international actor, then what could be more reasonable than to expect it to take the lead in at least the 'recasting of the European security order'<sup>4</sup> There is no doubt that in 1991-2, a period of flux in which history was changing direction (if not coming to a dead stop), many observers, inside and outside the Community, thought that it should take on this task and more besides.

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<sup>3</sup> Cited in Andreas G. Kintis, 'The EU's Foreign Policy and the War in former Yugoslavia', in Martin Holland (1997), p148. Poos added, revealingly, '...not the hour of the Americans'.

<sup>4</sup> The phrase is almost the title of the book edited by Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup, Pierre Lemaitre, Elzbieta Tromer and Ole Waever, The European Security Order recast: Scenarios for the Post-Cold War Era, London, Pinter, 1990. This prescient volume canvasses all the possibilities for the EC's evolution in its chapter 'The Triumph of Integration' (pp202-228), but it does not fall into the error of equating Europe with the EC.

Five years later, as we emerge out of transition into a new era for which we must soon find a name that is not defined by the past (ie not 'post' anything) the general ambience of European international relations is far less turbulent - less optimistic perhaps, but also less unpredictable. And with greater stability has come a degree of depression. The obstacles to progress seem to have multiplied since the revolutionary idealism of the early 1990s. Inside what is now the European Union the momentum for change has indisputably been slowed. It is true that the project of a single currency is still just about on track for a 1999 beginning, but EMU has also opened up new divisions between Member-States and even inside states like Germany, members of the federalist core. The strategy of enlargement continues to move forward, but the difficulties here have only just begun, and will pose formidable problems for the EU in terms of the reform of existing policies and pressure for institutional change. To insiders at least, this is now more apparent. Even though the determination to go ahead with enlargement is still evident, there is now also a widespread anxiety about the costs of so doing, and an uncertainty about both where it should end, and the consequences of including some applicants and excluding others. In practice, the famous widening versus deepening debate has been stalled and key choices avoided.

The Intergovernmental Conference of 1996-7, due to end at the Amsterdam Summit this June, has made nothing like the progress which those who looked towards a 'Maastricht II' expected. Partly through problems with a lame-duck Conservative government in Britain, but more profoundly because of the diversion of energies into the EMU debate and a certain loss of nerve all round about a quantum leap forward towards federalism, the IGC has had to fall back on further tinkering with the EU's existing system, particularly in the area of foreign policy, where the post-Amsterdam dispositions seem likely to make no discernible difference to the everyday conduct of diplomacy.<sup>5</sup> The Western European Union (WEU), for example, which in Article J.4 of the Treaty of European Union was prefigured as the means for the development of 'a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence', has been shut firmly back in its NATO-owned kennel. It is simply not big or powerful enough to act as Europe's guard-dog by itself.<sup>6</sup> In short, while many still bemoan the

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<sup>5</sup> This is not to disparage the modest improvements in procedure which will come out of the IGC, such as a Planning and Assessment Unit for CFSP, or the writing in of the 'Petersberg tasks' to the Treaty. It is simply to point to the scaling down of reformist pretensions.

<sup>6</sup> For the various developments which have led to the disappointment of hopes for the WEU, see Paul Cornish, 'European Security: the End of Architecture and the

EU's lack of international clout, few now labour under the same illusions about its capacity or imminent metamorphosis in the way that they did five years ago.

This is due as much to external factors as to the EU's own internal differences. Indeed the interaction between the two has been crucial, as unilateralism on the part of Member-States has undermined European solidarity in Bosnia, and states like China or Iran have played on the CFSP's loose intergovernmentalism to weaken the collective EU resolve.<sup>7</sup> In general the international context of 1996-7 has not encouraged either outsiders or the members of the IGC to believe that Europe is on the verge of becoming a major power. It is not that there is any the less demand for money or assistance of various kinds from the EU. But the United States and NATO are clearly still central to European security, and NATO enlargement has even to some extent subordinated EU enlargement as the process of main interest to the countries of central and eastern Europe. It has certainly exerted awkward pressures towards further EU expansion. To the extent that Russia is unhappy about all this it is the United States not the EU which has the capacity to make a deal with Moscow. Further south, the Balkans remain a cauldron of potential conflict, but the EU having been tried in the fire and apparently having failed, a major role for the Fifteen qua Fifteen is not the mostly likely scenario, as recent events in Albania have shown. More positively, German unification and the EFTA accessions have now settled down, so that the immediate environment of the EU does not seem as urgent a priority as it did five years ago.

What all this means is that the context in which the CFSP operates is significantly different from that in which its predecessor EPC operated in 1991-2 and in which it was expected to evolve. Whereas in 1992 there was in retrospect a naive optimism prevalent about what might be hoped for from a European foreign policy (rather like that now being expected of the foreign policy of the new Blair government in Britain), by 1997 the experience of five years of painful struggle to achieve substantive results for CFSP has, if anything, led to the pendulum effect of underestimating what might be achieved through European cooperation. Many still want aid from the EU, whether in the form of money, preferences, legitimacy or actual accession. And these demands still far exceed what the EU can parcticably be expected to deliver. But few now expect 'Europe' to balance the United States as

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New NATO' International Affairs, 72,4, October 1996.

<sup>7</sup> In April 1997, for example, China effectively isolated Denmark from its major European allies for having dared to continue with a UN motion criticising Beijing's human rights' record. The Independent, 8 April 1997.

a player in the New World Order, or to 'solve' problems like the Balkans embroglio. Few indeed are surprised when a peacekeeping force to Albania is sent under the flags of the UN and the OSCE rather than that of the EU. Expectations seem to have been lowered.

### **The original argument**

It may be that expectations of what the EU can do ebb and flow naturally, and that contextual differences should not lead us to assume that the CEG has narrowed permanently. In order to make a more detailed assessment it is necessary to break down both capabilities and expectations into their subordinate parts, and then to see how significantly each has changed since the unusual days of 1991-2. Before even this can be attempted, however, the original argument should be briefly but systematically restated.

The capabilities of the Union are taken to be the conventional instruments of foreign policy - the use and threat of force, diplomacy, economic carrots and sticks, cultural influence - but also the underlying resources of population, wealth, technology, human capital and political stability, together with cohesiveness, or the capacity to reach a collective decision and to stick to it. Not all of these capabilities are possessed by the EU to the same degree, of course, and they vary over time. Expectations, on the other hand, are those ambitions or demands of the EU's international behaviour which derive from both inside and outside the Union. They can be many and various: political pressures to grant membership of the EU to supplicant states, or to provide 'solutions' to the problems of third countries; pressures for economic assistance, in the form of aid, trade preferences or even access to the Single Market; intellectual expectations that the EU can resolve the problem of the nation-state, provide a new framework for European order or an alternative identity for the non-American West.

Given these definitions, the gap between capabilities and expectations was seen as the significant difference which had come about between the myriad hopes for and demands of the EU as an international actor, and its relatively limited ability to deliver. The gap was seen as potentially dangerous because it could lead to debates over false possibilities both within the EU and between the Union and external supplicants. It would also be likely to produce a disproportionate degree of disillusion and resentment when hopes were inevitably dashed. All this would divert energies from



other projects which might be more realistically pursued. It was argued in 1993 that the EC (sic) was therefore facing 'difficult choices and experiences that are the more painful for not being fully comprehended'.<sup>8</sup>

This dilemma was seen as having two elements. First was the particular set of difficulties which seemed likely to arise over the impossibility of the Maastricht formula delivering what many wanted and expected from it. With the passage of time it is naturally forgotten how feverish was the excitement over a new dawn for European foreign policy, especially among those less than well informed about EPC and the continuity between it and CFSP. This diagnosis has been largely borne out by events, although it is worth acknowledging that the Treaty anticipated a second round of reforms with the provision for the review conference we are now engaged in. This ratchet effect will be assessed below.

The second element of the cautionary diagnosis was a deeper tension, which not be resolved in the short-run. This was the gap between the EU's very limited actorness, particularly in the political and military spheres, and the vacuum which seemed to be emerging as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and an apparent turning-inwards on the part of the United States. Since actorness is a function of constitutional change as much as converging interests or diplomatic skill, this tension remains a fundamental problem.

The original argument was conceptual more than theoretical, and had no pretensions to comprehensiveness. Nonetheless, it can be regarded as an application of systems theory to European foreign policy, in that it sees the CFSP as a sub-system of the general international system, with internal dynamics as well as external influence. Moreover the relationship between capabilities and demands is seen as homeostatic to the extent that too great a divergence between the two can have pathological, dysfunctional consequences. Holland has correctly identified this as a form of 'dissonance' in Europe's behaviour, rather than the mere deficiency of power that realists routinely draw attention to.<sup>9</sup> The author's initial intentions were also to provide a conceptualisation of the interactions between (i) internal and external factors; (ii) agency and structure; (iii) the imagined and the real. These interactions are endemic to all foreign policies, indeed to all collective forms of behaviour. But they have not been the focus of most studies of European foreign policy. This second

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<sup>8</sup> Hill, 'The Capability-Expectations Gap', JCMS 31,3, p306.

<sup>9</sup> Holland, JCMS December 1995, p557

discussion of the CEG aims to help redress the balance.

### **Changes over five years**

Since Maastricht changes have taken place in both capabilities and expectations, accordingly changing the relationship between the two.

#### (1) Capabilities

As we have seen, capabilities can be broken down into resources, instruments and cohesiveness. In terms of fundamental resources, the EU's position has been strengthened, at least in principle, during the 1990's. The 1995 enlargement from 12 to 15 states did, after all, (together with the absorption of the DDR) increase the Union's population from 325m to 365m, and its GDP from 5,523 to 5,909 Bn ECU, or 10% more than that of the United States and 64% more than that of Japan. The size of the Union has increased by 42%, and geo-politically it is now the most significant factor in central Europe and Scandinavia - including, through Finnish accession, a 1,200 kilometre border with Russia. The EU's positions as the world's biggest trader and (with the Member-States) source of development aid are now even more clearly established.

Such new assets have not yet, however, been translated into useable power, and therefore threaten in the short term to exacerbate rather than diminish the CEG. This is particularly so because the defence dimension of the Union, created at Maastricht, has notably failed to develop. The hopes vested in the WEU as the arm of EU foreign policy, or at least the mechanism which buckled it effectively to NATO, have largely been disappointed.<sup>10</sup> To be sure, the Member-States have done things which they have never before attempted collectively, such as helping to enforce sanctions against Yugoslavia in the Adriatic and on the Danube, and administering the broken city of Mostar. Furthermore the new NATO concept of Combined Joint Task Forces (agreed at the Berlin Council of June 1996) makes it possible for the Europeans to act on their own by borrowing equipment and facilities from NATO which they would otherwise lack. But this very arrangement is a demonstration of the EU's military

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<sup>10</sup> For a variety of interesting reflections on the WEU and disappointed aspirations, see Anne Deighton (Ed.), Western European Union 1954-1997: Defence, Security, Integration, Oxford, St. Antony's College, 1997

weakness, and the inability of European states to afford the military-industrial complex still present in the United States. So far the EU has been striking by its absence from the peace-keeping forces sent to the conflict zones in Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda and Albania, in all of which demands were heard for a more active CFSP.<sup>11</sup> Thus defence is more a theoretical than practical addition to the EU's armoury. The foundations have been laid for future development, and we have come a long way since the days of a dormant WEU in 1982, but so far the only consequence has been the further out-running of experience by ambition. Other innovations, like the WEU's Planning Cell and satellite image interpretation centre in Spain are small beer in the context of the requirements for independent action. If the EU is a power, it is still a civilian power.

Even the financial aspect of resources, where the TEU made specific new provisions, has created as many problems as it has solved. Article J.11 of Title V allowed for expenditure on the administration of the CFSP to be charged to the Communities' budget, and 'operational expenditure' either to be charged to the budget (by unanimous decision) or to Member States. Either way, this was an important innovation and implied that there would in future be more collective action requiring common financing. Thus far, however, to the extent that there have been more common policies, there has not been a parallel development of common funding. Member States have been reluctant to use the EC budget, both because they do not want to see it grow and because it would give, *ipso facto*, the European Parliament more powers over foreign policy. In 1996 the CFSP, including Mostar accounted for only 68.3 million ECU, or 0.08% of the draft budget.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand national governments, even where they have agreed to a 'scale' of charges, as foreseen in J.11, as over humanitarian aid to Bosnia, have been delinquent in the extreme in meeting their obligations. As Jörg Monar has said, tensions over CFSP financing will remain for the foreseeable future, attenuated only by procedural tinkering. Until the Member-States decide both to communitarise financing and to divert funds from other activities, it is unlikely that European foreign policy will have many

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<sup>11</sup> For a good case-study on the limits of the EU's role in the Somalia case, see Patrick Keatinge, 'The Twelve, the United Nations, and Somalia: the Mirage of Global Intervention', in Regelsberger et. al., Foreign Policy of the European Union (1997), pp275-296.

<sup>12</sup> The Week, European Parliament's Central Press Division, 11-15 December 1995, p10. By comparison administering the Commission and other Community institutions took up 5%. It is worth noting that other external policies, including the various kinds of aid disbursed by the Commission, took up 4223 m.ECu, or 5.2%.

financial resources at its disposal - certainly not on a flexible basis, outside those committed through Lomé and other Association agreements.<sup>13</sup>

Turning from resources to instruments, the position is arguably more positive. The TEU made possible specific new instruments of diplomacy, and reinforced others. The 'Common Positions' and 'Joint Actions' of J.2 and J.3 might in some respects be the mere formalisation of what had been previously produced under EPC, but they did also encourage the specification of the issue-areas in which common policies might be feasible (notably in the 'Lisbon list' even before the Treaty was ratified), and thereby more thought about the relationship between ends and means than had previously been evident under EPC.<sup>14</sup> The need to specify 'Actions' rather than merely to issue declarations may also have encouraged a greater degree of realism in the kinds of task undertaken. Thus, far from being dismissed as they so often are, as hopelessly inadequate small steps in the face of great problems, Joint Actions such as those relating to the Pact of Stability or election monitoring in South Africa and Russia can be seen as the product of lower and more realistic expectations of what the EU can actually do outside its own frontiers.<sup>15</sup> Holland has revealingly admitted that, 'the EU's claim to full "actorness" remains tentative even among those loyal to the communautaire spirit'.<sup>16</sup> It is true that the very concepts of Common Positions and Joint Actions are ambiguous and ill thought out, and the portentousness of Title V's language meant that political hopes tended to be expressed in the same unnecessary upper case.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For an authoritative discussion of this problem, see Jörg Monar, 'The Financial Dimension of the CFSP' in Martin Holland (Ed.) Common Foreign and Security Policy (1997), pp34-51.

<sup>14</sup> For the 'Report to the European Council in Lisbon on the likely development of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) with a view to identifying areas open to joint action vis-à-vis particular countries or groups of countries' see Bulletin of the European Communities, EC 6-1992, External relations, Annex 1, pp18-21.

<sup>15</sup> To this extent I agree with Martin Holland's case-study based critique of my original article (JCMS, December 1995), although I remain more sceptical than Holland about what can be built on these beginnings.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p570.

<sup>17</sup> For a critical analysis see Roy H. Ginsberg, 'The European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy: retrospective on the first eighteenth months', in

Maastricht also strengthened considerably the possibilities for 'consistency', a sine qua non of the development of more effective foreign policy capabilities. The 'Common Provisions' of the TEU refer for the first time to the need for development policy and foreign policy to be pulling in the same direction, thereby institutionalising the conditionality which been becoming evident since the late 1980's in the EC's aid-giving policies. In September 1992, moreover, Community funding had been used for the protection of humanitarian convoys in Somalia, making it obvious that the separate 'pillar' structure of Maastricht would not obviate the need for CFSP to draw down on the instruments available through Community external relations, if it was to mean anything at all.<sup>18</sup>In any case, no-one could pretend that the aid granted to Eastern Europe or to Mediterranean states did not have primary political purposes; indeed 'soft power' was the only available approach in the attempt to stabilise these crucial bordering zones. Even here there is a dilemma, for 'success breeds expectations', and the more preferences are given or agreements signed, the wider the sense that the EU is the place to turn to for help.<sup>19</sup>

Lastly, the TEU has furnished the Europeans with a more effective instruments for imposing sanctions on third countries whose policies displease them. Where the Treaty of Rome did not deal with the problem directly, and there were thus in the 1980s many disputes over a possible legal basis for the use of sanctions, Maastricht contains a new Article 228A which allows the Council to act (on a proposal by the Commission and by a qualified majority vote) to implement a sanctions decision taken (unanimously) under J.2 or J.3 of Title V. This gives a proper legal basis for EU sanctions, and creates a bridge between Pillars 1 and 2.<sup>20</sup> Sanctions are by definition political at the strategic level and largely economic at the tactical. Even, therefore, if they come to be an ever more frequently used instrument of European foreign policy, they must still constitute the ultimate consistency problem for the Union.

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Fraser Cameron, Roy Ginsberg and Josef Janning, The European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy: Central Issues...Key Players, US Army War College, 1995, pp27-47.

<sup>18</sup> See Patrick Keatinge, 'The Twelve, the United Nations and Somalia' in Regelsberger et. al. (1997) pp288-9.

<sup>19</sup> The quotation is from Holland, JCMS 1995, p570.

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 19, 'Sanctions' in I. Macleod, I.D. Hendry and Stephen Hyett, The External Relations of the European Communities: A Manual of Law and Practice, Oxford, the Clarendon Press, 1996, pp352-366.

This brings us to the last element of capabilities, the cohesiveness of the EU in its external policies. It should be said straightaway that setting things down more explicitly and logically in treaty form is far from ensuring a greater degree of cohesion. Indeed Simon Nuttall and Michael E. Smith have both pointed out that one consequence of the disappearance of the old EPC informalities has been to create less mutual trust among decision-makers and to slow down the process of consultation because 'officials are drafting CFSP texts with the understanding that legal precedents are being set'.<sup>21</sup> This has not stopped Joint Actions emerging on such questions as Extra-territoriality and Dual-Use Goods, both of which EPC found largely beyond its capability in the 1980s.<sup>22</sup> But if cohesiveness is the ability to take decisions and to hold to them, then the CFSP's record is not yet very positive. The issue of policy towards the recognition of new states, which it might be thought would be ideal for the EU's emphasis on diplomatic concertation, has been a shambles throughout the last six years, starting with Germany's extraordinarily erratic behaviour over Croatia and Slovenia, and reaching new depths of public disarray over Macedonia. Equally, despite enthusiasm in the European Parliament during March 1997 for action to restore order in Albania, the Dutch President of the Council proved incapable of persuading his colleagues to act through CFSP, despite the geographical proximity of the crisis to two Member-States. In terms of holding to decisions once made, we may point to the Joint Action on Extra-territoriality formulated in November 1996 (aimed at countering the Helms-Burton legislation which sought to punish European companies trading with Cuba). No sooner was the ink dry on the Action than a deal had been done to ensure that the EU backed off and the issue did not appear at the Dublin Summit. It is, of course, possible that the Joint Action was a signal which had a salutary effect.

The Treaty of European Union might have been designed to improve European foreign policy-making at the procedural level, but even here it has left many loose ends. More Commissioners are involved in external policy, but despite Jacques Santer's 'Relex' mini-Cabinet, no-one is able to pull all the

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<sup>21</sup> The quotation is from Michael E. Smith, 'What's Wrong with the CFSP? The Politics of Institutional Reform', paper prepared for the 5th Biennial ECSA Conference, Seattle 29 May - 1 June 1997, p8. (to appear in Pierre-Henri Laurent and Marc Maresceau (Eds.), The State of the European Union, Volume 4, Boulder, Lynne Reinner, 1997. See also Simon Nuttall's paper for the Seattle conference, 'The CFSP at Maastricht: Old Friend or New Enemy?')

<sup>22</sup> For a list of Common Positions and joint Actions up to the end of 1995 see Roy H. Ginsberg, 'The EU's CFSP: the Politics of Procedure', in Holland, Common Foreign and Security Policy (1997), pp18-22.

strands together. The Commission does not use its right of initiative and has not been able to find a settled place in the overall process. The expanded role of the Council of Ministers' Secretariat and of COREPER has created confusions over the standing of the Political Committee and its working groups. Special Representatives are beginning to proliferate (Bosnia, the Middle East, Great Lakes, 'Mr. CFSP') but all are beholden to the Council's government by committee. Foreign policy may not have been 'renationalised' by Maastricht, but it has certainly not been made any less intergovernmental.

Some improvements have, of course, been made, as we saw in relation to development policy. The 'Brussels-isation' of the process has gone on apace, with the WEU headquarters moved to the Belgian capital, and members of the CFSP working groups getting to know their equivalents in the Council of Ministers Secretariat and the Commission. But there is still a long way to travel before the effective balance of powers evident in Community decision-making over trade policy is the norm in the CFSP. The United States has commented, with a mixture of irritation, bewilderment and relief, on the non-transferability of the EU's effectiveness in the GATT to the realm of high politics. The Union has had increasingly to attempt what 'political mixity', in order to operate in such areas as the arms trade, Helsinki review procedures and Palestinian agricultural exports.<sup>23</sup> And as Paul Cornish has shown in relation to Dual Use Goods, it is capable of achieving political mixity, albeit after slow and painful negotiations.<sup>24</sup> On the whole, however, little has been done to invalidate Philippe de Schoutheete's judgement of 1986, that 'les procédures du traité de Rome, n'ayant pas été conçues pour le type de décision qu'il faut prendre en politique étrangère, ne sont pas adaptées à celles-ci'.<sup>25</sup> The last thing the pillars structure has delivered is a 'common' policy in the sense of consistency.

On the front of capabilities, therefore, the conclusion is irresistible that while there has been some amelioration of resources, instruments and cohesiveness, and some foundations have been laid for

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<sup>23</sup> 'Mixity' is the legal term used to describe EC agreements which require participation from both the Community and the Member-States. See Macleod, Hendry and Hyett, The External Relations of the European Communities (1997) pp142-44. 'Political mixity' is my own adaptation of the concept.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Cornish, 'Joint Action, "The Economic Aspects of Security" and the Regulation of Conventional Arms and Technology Exports from the EU', in Holland, Common Foreign and Security Policy (1997), pp73-91.

<sup>25</sup> Philippe de Schoutheete, La Coopération politique européenne, Brussels, Editions Labor, 1986, p65.

further improvements, the fundamental insufficiency remains. Indeed, with future enlargement bringing more budgetary pressures and complications of decision-making, and the current IGC unlikely to initiate radical change, the available capabilities for foreign policy may well diminish. The EU continues to impress more in potential than in action.

## (2) Expectations

Disappointment always leads to lower expectations. Thus the punctured balloon of hopes for the CFSP should have closed the CEG by bringing expectations back into line with capabilities. The trend may indeed have been in this direction, but the matter is not so simple as it might appear from a personifying approach. Structural forces exist which keep expectations up just as they limit the growth of capabilities.

### *Internal expectations*

it is inside the EU where expectations have been lowered most in relation to the CFSP. The morale of the Commission in this area has suffered a collapse, with the game of musical chairs over the roles of DG1, 1A and 1B a symptom of uncertainty. On the other hand the confidence of the old Political Committee order has also been shaken by the new legalism of Title V, and the system is in danger of falling between two stools, as Nuttall suggests.<sup>26</sup> It also became very quickly clear that the ratchet mechanism which ensured that reform would soon be back on the agenda, in the IGC prefigured by the TEU, did not guarantee substantive change. Despite the many inputs from enthusiastic outsiders, political and academic, the agenda for change in the CFSP side of the IGC soon fell back on the familiar ground of procedural innovation: a Planning and Assessment Unit; a Mr or Ms. CFSP; a soupeçon more of QMV. Big issues which transcend institutions, like the possible move of the WEU into a much closer relationship with the EU, lost momentum through external complications as well as the lack of internal consensus obvious during the Reflection Group's deliberations.<sup>27</sup>

Yet the hope that external policy might be the motor for the whole integration process is not wholly dead. it is, after all, inherent in the EMU process that the arguments for a common currency rest partly on the need for greater international competitiveness, and the achievement of a currency on a

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<sup>26</sup> Nuttall, 'The CFSP at Maastricht: Old Friend or New Enemy?' (1997), p1.

<sup>27</sup> The Reflection Group was set up in June 1994 at Corfu to begin work a year later. It reported in time for the Madrid Summit in December 1995. See Neill Nugent, 'Editorial: Building Europe - A Need for more Leadership?' in Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol.34, Annual Review, August 1996, pp6-8.



par with the dollar would be an enormous boost to the EU's international presence. The Treaty of Amsterdam will almost certainly retain the ratchet, in the form of the provision for a further review conference, and it is unlikely that the integrationist lobby among the fifteen will give up its belief in a federal future, not least because of the clear relation between enlargement and unmanageability. On the other hand domestic politics may restrict the ability of the Franco-German couple to continue to give a decisive lead, and the emergence of the principle of 'flexibility' may reduce expectations that Europe will act as a whole in international relations. The Contact Group for Bosnia, Operation Alba in Albania and unilateral provisions in the central African crisis are all evidence of the CFSP being pushed into the background. There is now much less talking up of the CFSP by insiders, even in traditionally enthusiastic circles. The experiences of the Balkans, Chechnya, Algeria, Iran and Chinese human rights, among others, have left their mark.

### *External Expectations*

Some outsiders have always been aware of the limitations of European foreign policy, especially those in no particular need of EU assistance, such as the USA at one end of the spectrum and Singapore at the other. Others have had the weakness of Europe born in on them, enjoyably from the viewpoint of Milosevic's Serbia, or depressingly from that of the East Timorese. The United States became seriously frustrated with what it perceived as European inaction and paralysis over Bosnia. It is probably true that as the first euphoria of the post Cold War, post-Maastricht years has faded, with it has gone the idea that the EU represented a panacea for many of the world's problems, with its combination of great wealth and civilian foreign policy. One would have to be particularly naive to believe still that it is the EU, as opposed to various combinations of national states, and/or other organisations such as NATO, which exerts the most influence on behalf of Europe in the most difficult areas of conflict.

On the other hand there are a number of aspects of external relations short of serious disorder where the EU continues to have an important role and where, accordingly, third countries continue to harbour great hopes of what it can do for them. There are four major categories of these demands:

- from developing countries: the ACP states are becoming increasingly concerned lest the EU lose interest in development policy, as there are certainly signs of them doing. Now that 70 states are Associates of the Lomé Convention, including all states from Sub-Saharan Africa except South Africa, which is pressing for admission, it is clear that the idea of 'Eur-Afrique' has not lost its allure. Although the ACPs complain about their declining advantages relative to other poor countries, their aim is to extend ties with the EU rather than to seek alternative

sources of help. It is revealing that South Africa, potentially the continent's most important state, sees itself as having a natural relationship with Europe that extends to seeking help with its own internal political development.<sup>28</sup>

It is not just out of Africa that high hopes continue to flow. The Latin American states, encouraged by the new policy guidelines approved by the Council of Ministers in 1995, and a promise to increase aid up to the year 2000, look to Brussels more than ever before.<sup>29</sup> Nor is it only the poor states which seek assistance. The Mercosur group of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay signed a framework and cooperation agreement with the EU in 1995. The San José process with Central American states, and the annual meetings with the Rio Group are also still continuing. All want access to the dynamic Single Market.<sup>30</sup> All this quite apart from the well-known pressures from both Mediterranean and Eastern European states for special relationships - pressures met by the vague 'Euro-Mediterranean Partnership' in the case of the former, and the uneasy moves towards enlargement with respect to the latter. Given the United States' established preference for encouraging development through tough conditionality and self-reliance, needy states will continue to look to the EU as their main source of salvation.

from applicants for membership. The demand for entry into the EU shows no sign of drying up. If Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are now almost sure of membership, this serves only to encourage greater hopes for themselves among the remaining states of central and eastern Europe, notably the Baltic states, Slovenia, Slovakia, Roumania and Bulgaria. The further the perimeter of the EU stretches, the more those just outside it come to believe that their turn will inevitably come. As peace returns to the Balkans, so the expectations of

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<sup>28</sup> David Lowe, 'The Development Policy of the European Union and the Mid-Term Review of the Lomé Partnership', Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol.34, Annual Review, August 1996, pp15-28. The European Parliament has particularly close links with South African political groups and the CFSP Joint Action of December 1993 provided for assistance with the running of South Africa's first democratic elections.

<sup>29</sup> Lowe, p23. The EU already accounts for more than 60% of official development assistance to Latin America, an extraordinary figure given the historical role of the United States.

<sup>30</sup> David Allen and Michael Smith, 'External Policy Developments', in JCMS Vol.34, Annual Review, August 1996, pp79-80.

Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, even perhaps Serbia-Montenegro, will rise. Even Turkey, which seemed finally to have accepted that it could hope for nothing more from the EU than the Customs Union agreement which entered into force in 1996, is now being encouraged to hope once more, for extraneous and dishonest reasons to do with the need for a settlement over Cyprus. Cyprus itself expects negotiations for entry to open by the end of 1997, although its island partner, Malta, has now backed off. Moreover, even if it is not the EU's doing, some members of the CIS such as Belarus, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine are also probably nurturing ambitions to join at some stage in the future. In other words, up to 20 states have expectations that they will be able to join the existing fifteen and to enjoy similar benefits of EU membership. Only if the Union collapses into crisis and failure are these demands likely to die down.

from the states of east Asia. These demands are less importunate and less problematic, but they represent the way in which the EU is increasingly the focus for states world-wide looking for some counter-balance to the influence of some overbearing power, usually the USA, Russia or China. For some years relations between the EC/EU and the ASEAN region have been less than active, but from 1994, with the adoption of a new Asia Strategy, they have intensified. The first Europe-Asia Meeting (ASEM) was held in Bangkok in 1996, and a second is due in London in 1998. The smaller Asian states have woken up to the fact that China may be emerging as a major economic and military power, and they are anxious to acquire diplomatic support and access to European markets and investment. It was an initiative from Singapore and ASEAN which led to ASEM. The EU was seen as a vital actor in helping to engage China for the first time fully into the international community, and in giving Asians access to the puzzling new environment of east and central Europe. The EU has responded positively and a large-scale new diplomatic process is under way.<sup>31</sup> Thus, as an adviser to DG1 recently concluded, 'it is safe to say that ASEM has raised expectations for the future relationship between Europe and Asia'.<sup>32</sup>

from those interested in political dialogue. Structured political consultations are part of

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<sup>31</sup> It is interesting that 'Europe' in ASEM turns out to mean the EU. The latter's privileged dialogue with ASEAN led to the agreement that the EU should choose the European participants for ASEM. See Victor Pou Serradell, 'The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM): A historical turning point in relations between the two regions', European Foreign Affairs Review, 1,2, November 1996, p195.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, especially pp185-93. The quotation is from p210.

ASEM, and were an important product of EPC from the early 1980s.<sup>33</sup> It has become one of the ways in which to give candidate countries for the EU and/or WEU some induction into the acquis politique. Whether at the level of discussions with other regional groupings, such as ASEAN or the Central American states in the San José proces, or at that of individual third countries like Japan or India, the CFSP is now seriously overloaded with regular meetings and requests for information. European Foreign Ministers and Political Directors have particularly full diaries, and are in danger of fulfilling largely representational functions. With this comes the problem of status; interlocuteurs are easily slighted if dealt with at a less high level than they had anticipated. As Monar has pointed out, '...many third countries are competing for "upgradings" of their dialogues with the Union, asking for higher levels of meetings and/or more frequent meetings. There is a serious risk that the dialogue system will become the victim of its own success'.<sup>34</sup> During the German presidency of 1994, for example, there were 31 different political dialogue meetings at foreign minister level, many of them admittedly conducted by the troika.<sup>35</sup> As 'most of the Union's dialogues have been established on the demand of third countries', seeking influence through association, protection, or simply privileged information, it is clear that external interest in practical involvement with the CFSP is still growing apace.<sup>36</sup>

Looking at expectations as a whole, therefore, we can conclude that inside the EU realism about the CFSP has undoubtedly grown, and that many outsiders, notably in Washington, have emerged from the frenzied days of the early 1990s with a more cold-eyed view of the deficiencies of European foreign policy. Nonetheless, internally the pressures for more activity and decisiveness in foreign policy are not going to go away, while externally there is no shortage of states pressing for political or economic preferences. The CEG might have been narrowed from its post-Maastricht extreme, but

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<sup>33</sup> See Geoffrey Edwards and Elfriede Regelsberger (Eds.) Europe's Global Links: the European Community and Inter-Regional Cooperation, London, Pinter, 1990.

<sup>34</sup> Jörg Monar, 'Political Dialogue with Third Countries and Regional Political groupings: the Fifteen as an Attractive Interlocutor' in Elfriede Regelsberger et.al Foreign Policy of the European Union, (1997), p272.

<sup>35</sup> Data from 'Political Dialogue during the German Presidency', CFSP Forum, 4/94, Bonn, IEP, p6.

<sup>36</sup> Monar, 'Political Dialogue with Third States and Regional Political Groupings' (1997), pp267-69.

it has hardly disappeared. Indeed, the risk of over-commitment and under-fulfilment seems almost as high as five years ago. It is true that the EU has not rushed into Algeria or the Great Lakes - but it would probably always have considered them bridges too far. It is, however, now even more engaged in Latin America, in Asia and in Africa, and it also faces exponentially growing demands in its own continent, from the east. Is the EU, then, moving towards fulfilling more of the six 'conceivable future functions' which I identified in 1992?

### **New Functions in the International Political System?**

Most of the discussion of the future of European foreign policy focuses on the federal question and the degree of convergence of national foreign policies. This means that the place of the EU in the international system tends to be neglected - and yet this is what is being determined by the sum of the various particular decisions made on aid, human rights or peace-keeping, and what, in the long run, will matter most to non-Europeans. One way of approaching the problem is that taken by Johan Galtung in the early 1970s, to ask whether the European Community (sic) is ' a superpower in the making'.<sup>37</sup> This is an important question, too infrequently asked. But it is a very general, and highly politicised issue. Although we all need to think whether the world would be improved by having Europe as a superpower, and whether it is feasible to create one, it is not within the scope of this paper. Few inside or outside the Union are yet showing signs of perceiving the EU as a superpower in being, except in a compartmentalised, economic sense.

More useful is to identify the specific functions which the Union either seems to be taking on itself or which seem to be expected of it by other actors. These were discussed in the original CEG article, and are worth reproducing here. The EU was seen as potentially:

- a replacement for the USSR in the world balance of power.
- a regional pacifier.
- a global intervenor.
- a mediator of conflicts.
- a bridge between the rich and the poor.
- a joint supervisor of the world economy.

It is too early after only five years to be sure as to whether any of these functions are being persistently fulfilled. Patrick Keatinge, in his case-study of Somalia, saw three of them as relevant to

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<sup>37</sup> Johan Galtung, The European Community: A Superpower in the Making, London, George Allen & Unwin 1973.

assessing the EU's role in global security, but concluded that only the 'bridge between rich and poor' was being performed with any real effectiveness. Still, he saw the Member-States as possibly on a more realistic learning-curve than at the start of the 1990s.<sup>38</sup> The function of conflict mediator is only being performed by the EU in conjunction with the UN, OSCE and particularly the United States, as events in various parts of the Balkans have made clear. That of global intervenor, along the lines which many called for in Bosnia, is still far out of reach.

Of the remaining roles, the EU is no equivalent to the USSR globally, but it is beginning to be the major presence in the old Warsaw Pact area, through the net of Europe Agreements and the positive encouragement it has given to the accession of the central European states. The one caveat here is that since 1992, far from fading quietly from the scene, as seemed possible, NATO has strengthened its position in the politics of European security, and through the lead which its enlargement process has on the EU (indeed, it is helping to shape EU enlargement) it is drawing the United States back into a geo-political relationship with both Russia and the mass of European states. Because the EU has so far failed to develop a defence policy independent of NATO, and because the major European states are still anxious to retain both American guarantees and the use of US facilities, it is unlikely that the West will end up divided down the Atlantic fault-line in the foreseeable future. There will, of course, be continued tensions and disputes between Europe and the United States, especially on non-military issues, because of different interests, perceptions and even different principles, but it is rather clearer now than it was five years ago that the CFSP is no embryonic rival to the US in power politics.<sup>39</sup>

This does not mean that the EU has no regional role independent of the United States. Notwithstanding the many failures of the Yugoslav crisis, the Union made great efforts to contain the conflict, to ensure humanitarian assistance and to bring the warring parties to the negotiation table. That it was finally exhaustion plus Washington which achieved that aim does not devalue the European efforts before the end-game. The visibility of the EU's Special Representative, the WEU operations to enforce sanctions and the administration of Mostar all demonstrate that the EU, particularly in its own region, is still more an action organisation with the capacity to decide for itself, than a framework organisation like the OSCE or the UN, in which the members are the principal actors. What is more,

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<sup>38</sup> Patrick Keatinge, 'The Twelve, the United Nations and Somalia' (1997), especially pp 275-6, & 293-5.

<sup>39</sup> John Peterson, Europe and America: the Prospects for Partnership, London, Routledge, 2nd Ed., 1996. Peterson stresses the voluntarist elements in the US-European relationship, and its interdependence.

because it is an action organisation without the capacity for force, insecure states like Russia find it much more easy to live with than a military organisation like NATO. In the expectation of relative benevolence at least, the reality of EU behaviour is not so far out of line.

As for the last function, helping to manage the world economy, the last five years have seen the EU consolidate its position as a key player in the making of international trade agreements, with the conclusion of the Uruguay Round and the setting up of the World Trade Organisation. The 'Quad group' of the EU, USA, Japan and Canada was critical to the finalisation of the detailed agreements. After some wrangling about the tenor of 'European leadership', the EU also succeeded in getting its own candidate, Renato Ruggiero, appointed as the first Secretary-General of the WTO. Allen and Smith have argued that 'in many areas of the world trading system, and also in many bilateral or interregional forums, the Community has an increasingly well-defined presence'.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand European industry is finding it increasingly difficult to withstand competition from Asia and the United States, which may ultimately reduce the influence exerted by the EU in fora like the WTO and G7. A lot will depend on whether the single currency comes about, and whether by doing so it strengthens the European economy. If so, then the Euro will give the EU a key role in the management of interdependence.

A comparative view of the EU's immanent international functions shows that expectations in the field of global security (intervenor, mediator) are largely misplaced, but by the same token probably diminishing. In European geo-politics, by contrast (filling the vacuum left by the USSR, regional pacifier), there are both internal aspirations and external hopes, some of which are being partially met, which still show a marked tendency to run ahead of capabilities. On the economic front (bridge between rich and poor, supervising the world economy) the EU continues to be a major player, even if it can never wholly satisfy the poor, and its success in trade or money will merely bring new responsibilities. The capability-expectations relationship varies according to function, but it helps to explain outcomes in all of them.

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<sup>40</sup> David Allen and Michael Smith, 'External Policy Developments', The European Union 1995: Annual Review of Activities, p70.

## Conclusions

The notion of the capability-expectations gap represented a warning of future difficulties for the CFSP. This warning has been vindicated. But prediction is a relatively trivial matter compared to understanding. It is more important to know whether the two sides of the equation are still out of balance, and whether the EU's presence or reputation have been severely damaged as a result.

To the first question, this paper answers in the affirmative, with the proviso that many expectations, particularly those inside the EU, have been lowered since 1992, (even if capabilities have not significantly advanced) and that accordingly the CEG is now narrower than it was before. Decision-makers conversant with the way the EU works are beginning to realise the limitations of the CFSP in world affairs, both in the present and perhaps for the future. If European foreign policy is to transcend its current multi-level character it is going to be a long haul and will involve major political change within the Union. The external cannot be divorced from the internal. It is awareness of this fact, and of what may now be more of a 'credibility gap'<sup>41</sup> that continues to lead serious political forces, particularly in Germany, Italy and Benelux to push for a genuinely supranational foreign policy integrated with the Community institutions proper.

To the second question, as to whether the EU's presence and reputation have been seriously damaged by the existence of the CEG, we can answer 'no' to the first part and 'yes, but' to the second. Presence begins at the material level, consisting of membership of international organisations, delegations in third countries, election monitors and the like. In that sense it has not been diminished and indeed shows signs of steadily growing, as the steady rise in numbers of ACP states, from 46 in 1974 to 70 now, indicates. But presence is also felt in the psychological environments of other actors, and here there is a link with reputation. Self-fulfilling prophecies, anticipated reactions, emulation and fear and a host of other intangibles follow from a reputation for power and efficacy. Conversely, if a player does not live up to its reputation, or expectations of it, then the fall can be a hard one - perhaps disproportionate. To some extent this may have happened with the CFSP in recent years. The hopes generated by Maastricht were all too soon dashed and a certain scathing contempt for the CFSP

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<sup>41</sup> The term used by Regelsberger, de Schoutheete de Tervarent, and Wessels, in 'From EPC to CFSP: Does Maastricht push the EU towards a role as a global power', Foreign Policy of the European Union (1997), p10.



could soon be discerned in American attitudes, epitomised by Ambassador Holbrooke's remark about Europe 'sleeping through the night' during the 1996 Aegean crisis. European foreign policy positions have consequently been taken somewhat less seriously, NATO has been reasserted and national foreign policies are more prominent on behalf of Europe than they have been for years. Europe's public image has deteriorated. One press commentary can stand for many. Under the headline 'Humbled Europe learns its lowly place in the world', Mark Frankland wrote that 'the humbling of Europe has proceeded so fast and in so many areas that it is hard to know where to begin'.<sup>42</sup>

This is to go too far. The imagined need not dominate the real. Europe certainly no longer holds much of the initiative in international politics, and its own enlargement policy is a supine example of allowing outsiders to dictate your own agenda, policy and pace of implementation.<sup>43</sup> But the EU is still an important part of the overlapping institutionalism which increasingly characterises modern international relations, and which is helping to stabilise and pacify them. What is more, its quality as an action organisation (albeit with a patchy record of action) helps to provide direction, and agency, in an environment overloaded with framework organisations - NACC, PFP, and the WEU 'family', however much concerned with military issues, are definitely at the 'framework' end of the spectrum. Variable geometry in foreign policy is inevitable and desirable, but there are limits to the number of contact groups which will prove useful, and no permanent directoire, whether inside the EU or based on the UN Security Council will be tolerated for long in modern international relations. The EU, for all its faults, at least represents a definable constituency and identifiable set of principles.

The CEG has not gone away; it will probably never do so, even if it is highly desirable that European foreign policy-makers should realise the dangers of hubris and scale down their ambitions to remake international relations - the besetting and tragic flaw of American policy, after all. But at least a CEG is not a uniquely European phenomenon. It can also be found in the UN, in the OSCE, in

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<sup>42</sup> The Observer 23 July 1995.

<sup>43</sup> William Wallace does not go so far, in his excellent Opening the Door: the Enlargement of NATO and the European Union, London, Centre for European reform, 1996. He does, however, point out (p4) that 'the characteristic style [of EU decision-making] has been one of disjointed incrementalism, shuffling from one half-commitment to another without spelling out to a wider audience the direction in which commitments are leading'.

trilateralism, in Saddam's Iraq and in every American Presidential election.

The divergence of expectations from capabilities is a human tendency which occurs more easily in a massive regional organisation which struggle to act as an effective unit. European foreign policy suffers from a structural tendency to divergence because (i) the EU employs a discourse which is global, liberal-meliorist and teleological, while suffering simultaneously from political and resource-generating systems which are largely 'stuck'; (ii) the external environment continues to generate huge demands from states whose perception of vulnerability leads them to rush towards any 'safe harbour' which may be open to them. In these circumstances the EU is not good at saying 'no', or at being honest with itself and its citizens. Perhaps we should not say 'no' too often, but if not, then at least let us know what we are letting ourselves in for.