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The European Foreign and Security Policy: Common policy or aggregation of national diplomacies?

Abstract :

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In spite of the launch of a foreign policy and then a common defence policy the European Union has not really overcome the Westphalian stage in the way it approaches its international relations. More often than not it is divided over major issues and crises. It does not want to go to war. The solution to stalemate can only be pragmatic: by working more together, by formulating European interests and by developing common tools. 2014 will be a year of change for the institutions – possibly an opportunity for revival.

Foreign Policy is the flip-side of State sovereignty. According to General de Gaulle it results from the three levers of sovereignty: the diplomacy it expresses, the army it supports and the police which covers it. It articulates the inside and outside. It is the area of political choice and will, of verb and also action. Diplomacy and war are by excellence the affair of the State, the heart of sovereignty, the expression of “Westphalian” international relations.

As shown by France’s military interventions in Africa, the vicissitudes of Ukraine’s foreign policy between Europe and Russia and the development in Iranian policy, the Westphalian analytical grid has not lost any of its pertinence. And so what room is there for a European foreign policy, whose identity has been sought for the last forty years (the beginnings of European political cooperation) and which has constantly developed new means of action?

HAS EUROPE REALLY INVESTED THE FIELDS OF DIPLOMACY AND WAR?

The obvious limit to the European Union’s “foreign policy” is that the Union is not a united political entity. Political union has of course been on the agenda since the beginning of European integration but in spite of the name “European Union” adopted in Maastricht,

that political union does not exist in reality: there is no Federal European State above the European States (comparable to those in Germany, the USA, Russia or even in the Helvetic Confederation), and the unanimous vote has never been challenged in the common foreign and security policy (would the majority vote be the right way to define an effective common foreign policy? Even in the Federal States, foreign policy is a prerogative of the federal executive power and the control exercised by the federated States is limited).

The fact that there are no borders fosters the unity of a European political entity: the Union remains an unidentified entity and there is no agreement between its members on which new countries should be integrated.

In terms of foreign policy especially the European Union has an external policy that derives from “community” competences: trade policy, development policy, fisheries agreements, agreements on the liberalisation of air traffic, visa agreements, technical agreements for the regulation of the technical aspects of globalisation, and in a more global, political approach, cooperation and association agreements. In this there is a form of European power – “civilian power”, “power via the standard”, “structural power”, according to concepts defined by political experts – but which, it has to be admitted, are geopolitically limited as illustrated by the recent failure, in the face of Russian power, of the

1. In this article the author expresses his personal opinion ; it does not reflect the position of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs

association agreements planned for with Armenia and Ukraine.

In the diplomatic field the coordination phase, established by "European Political Cooperation" (EPC) launched in 1970, has never been surmounted. Of course the EPC, which then became the CFSP with the Maastricht treaty, has gathered pace and content – it has even been extended to a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) which since 2003 has allowed the Union to launch around thirty civilian and military operations across the European continent and elsewhere in the world. We have considered the limits of the CSDP in all lucidity: its almost total subordination to NATO (delegation of the "territorial defence" function to NATO, refusal to duplicate the Alliance's powerful military structures); its mainly civilian nature (only 6 real military operations have been launched, two of which are still on-going – in Bosnia-Herzegovina and to counter piracy off the coasts of Somalia); refusal to go to war although "combat force operations for crisis management" feature on the CSDP's agenda.

This does not mean that the European Union does not accomplish anything useful (stabilisation of the Balkans, negotiations with Iran, humanitarian assistance, support to the African Union etc ...) but this does not give us a real foreign policy and even less one of power. The recurrent accent placed on "the values" defended by the European Union rather than on its "interests" is revealing in this respect.

EUROPE AT THE MERCY OF ITS DIVISIONS

Although Europe often succeeds in speaking with one voice on the most consensual issues, although mechanisms and institutions (like the European External Action Service) have led to true European diplomatic socialisation and a tradition to consult with one another, it is a fact that divisions re-appear as soon as issues progress to a more political level. We simply have to detail the emblematic issues of European division which are not trifling: divisions over the American intervention in Iraq in 2003; in the face of Russia; about using force in Libya (2011), in Mali (2013); over Kosovo (which five Union States still fail to acknowledge as a State); over Palestine's entry into UNESCO (2011) then as an observer State in the UN (2012); not forgetting the enlargement policy which we have already mentioned.

In order to address the common foreign and security policy from the right angle we should look at European divisions and the plurality of nations which comprise the Union, integrate them into a strategic calculation, instead of hiding our heads in the sand as if they did not exist. Nations have interests, traditions, reflexes, which increase the possibility of divergence. France and the UK, both members of the UN's Security Council and both equipped with the nuclear arm, have a tradition of power and military intervention, but do not have the same approach to Europe. In principle, France which is pro-European claims its independence, in line with the "logic of honour" and status (Philippe d'Iribarne) which is one of its fundamental principles in terms of social organisation. The UK is Atlanticist, opportunist and insular, therefore it is difficult for it to commit to Europe. Germany, the third major country in Europe, rejects military power (a consequence of its past) and projects "an identity amalgamation" onto Europe (according to Vivien Schmidt), geopolitical trajectories (the tradition of a continental power towards the East) and international ambitions via the economy.

"Old Europe" (Western Europe) is hooked up to the Franco-German motor and has for a long time privileged its Mediterranean coast, which concerns many Member States (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and also Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia and Croatia). The eastern border has been of increasing importance, firstly with the enlargement towards the Nordic countries in 1995 (Sweden and Finland), then with the entry of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 2004 and 2007. All of these new Member States do not match the exaggerated image of ultra-liberal, pro-American, anti-Russian States: their positions are much more subtle, and a large country like Poland has developed under Donald Tusk's government (since 2007) moving towards a rapprochement with Germany (and France via the Weimar Triangle) and appeasement with Russia.

The "small" countries also provide their original contribution to the definition of the European external policy: Austria is oriented towards the Balkans, Belgium and Portugal – former colonial powers in Africa, Greece and Cyprus in relation to Turkey, the extremely Atlanticist Denmark, many States in the East regarding their relations with Russia etc ...

Because it did not formulate a stronger, more integrated foreign policy enlarged Europe (28 members now

in contrast to the 47 of geographic Europe embodied by the Council of Europe) has become more complex, more cumbersome and more geopolitical. Although the Mediterranean remains (what relations should Europe entertain with the Arab world, and what about Israel?) the Eastern question is now of utmost importance (where do the borders of the Union stop? What strategy should we have towards Russia – cooperation or confrontation?), and all of this undoubtedly explains the lack of energy in investing elsewhere (Africa, Asia, Latin America).

THE DILEMMA OF A GRAND/SMALL EUROPE

Simply with the planned enlargements (Western Balkans, Turkey) the European Union could total 35 Member States – but it is true that Turkey's entry is far from becoming a reality, and can only be part of the distant future. The opening of a European perspective for the countries in the "Eastern Partnership" (Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Southern Caucasus) is not favoured by a majority of Member States (France and Germany are notably against it). Whatever the future borders of the Union, it seems difficult for Europe to become more integrated now that it is already quite extensive and undermined by its heterogeneity, which could gradually lead it towards impotence.

Hence the ideas (which are not new) to form a "hard core" and to integrate a "small Europe". But what should it entail and how can it be achieved? The most logical approach would be to take the euro zone, which is not all that small (18 members, over 320 million inhabitants, i.e. more than the US). The euro zone, on the basis of the single currency, has integrated more, from the institutional (Eurogroup, euro zone summits) and financial points of view (role of the ECB and the introduction of specific mechanisms to overcome the debt crisis). If it extended to countries like Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, the euro zone would achieve a certain cohesion in terms of "civilisation": it would approximately cover the former Latin West Christianity (the maximum limit of Gothic art; with the anomaly of Greece and Cyprus and without England and Scandinavia) which has been typified in history by the rule of law, the separation of power, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and which stands out from Orthodox Europe (under Russian influence) as well as from "Turkish" Europe (the Balkans).

Providing this monetary union with its own political dimension would hardly be easy. Would it make sense for the euro zone (22 countries in the end?) to duplicate existing institutional structures (Commission, Parliament, Court of Justice) with a Union that would stabilise with between 28 and 35 members? The Union's external policy hinges on its internal competences (customs union/trade policy, external aid of the European budget, Schengen Area/visa and asylum policy etc ...) what would an external policy specific to the euro zone look like? Moreover from a diplomatic and military point of view, many think that it would not be advisable to do this without Britain.

It is difficult to see clearly how the future Union and euro zone would work. If the UK was to leave the Union, differentiation would not be as necessary since the UK would no longer prevent the deepening of the EU's defence policy (planning structures, budget devoted to defence). If the UK decided to remain and if the Union enlarged to other major partners (Turkey, Ukraine?) differentiation (including from a foreign and defence policy point of view) might become an option to be considered more seriously.

TOWARDS PRAGMATIC PROGRESS

A major federal leap does not seem likely either within the European Union or within a more restricted configuration. We have to relativize the present crisis experienced by the European project, because after all, the Union is already extremely integrated (no other region in the world has reached such a degree of integration) and recent events, with the euro zone crisis, confirm the scenario of consolidation rather more than that of collapse. But we shall have to manage "a federation of Nation States" in which nations take a tougher stance than some might have imagined – particularly in the political domains par excellence i.e. diplomatic and military affairs. In this context the European project must continue: building interdependence and solidarity, articulating with globalisation to make it more "civilised", contributing to a better management of world problems: effective governance via multilateralism and also the knock-on effect of more powerful, more voluntary States.

We therefore have to move forward pragmatically en-

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deavouring to overcome the stalemates in European diplomacy.

- this firstly means forging a common will in view of which the three major Member States (France, Germany and the UK) have a central role to play, working together with the US and with the institutions in Brussels, which would legitimise joint action and serve as a communication channel. In the context of British and American withdrawal it would be appropriate to take up the path of a deep Franco-German partnership – open to others, and oriented towards action in view of working with the new teams which take over the leadership of the European institutions in 2014.

- We also have to draw up a common strategy based on common interests. The European Security Strategy 2003, which was slightly updated in 2008, deserves to be reviewed entirely, in line with the development of doctrines in the Member States (French Whitepaper 2013 on national defence and security), and extended to defence (the idea of a European Whitepaper on security and defence). Basically the major principles defined in 2003 are still valid: if Europe can make a difference and have influence in the world, it is by using its civilian and military tools, giving priority to multilateralism and privileging its geographic neighbourhood which would have to be extended to Africa and the Middle East. However common interests would have to be drawn up more precisely and more politically, in relation to the values which comprise the European project (democracy, Human Rights), and by trying to rise beyond national interests as Jean Monnet wanted

it to happen: "the important thing is not to balance national interests but to merge them."

- Pooling is another path to explore, in the ilk of the European Council over the CSDP. In a context of declining national defence budgets it is all the more important to share and pool capabilities. Major joint industrial projects like Galileo, the A400M transport plane, the joint manufacture of drones are useful and necessary. The neighbourhood policy deserves to be given more means for it to be more effective. A budget, as requested by France, to finance common military operations is necessary. Progress regarding all of these issues will be slow and difficult because there are great numbers of political and operational obstacles.

CONCLUSION

In the area of foreign policy pragmatism should not be seen as the enemy of ambition, but rather its condition. It will only be crowned with success if it is placed at the service of a shared will and vision. The changes that are about to occur in the European institutions in 2014 offer an opportunity for revival.

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