

The European Union: *Quo Vadis?*

By Dr. Wendelin Ettmayer

In paper I will try to give a realistic view of the European Integration-process: Its successes and shortcomings. The paper is divided into four parts:

1. The diplomatic revolution in Europe
2. Achievements and crises
3. The European Defense and Security Policy
4. Repercussions upon transatlantic relations

The Diplomatic Revolution in Europe

During the last two generations the legitimacy, the goals and the means of the diplomatic relations among European States have totally changed. Also changed have their attitudes towards War and Sovereignty. The legitimacy of foreign policy, throughout the centuries, was based on the increase of the power of the state and the glory of the monarch. Foreign policy was power-politics. The history of diplomacy was the history of wars, of peace-negotiations, followed by other wars.

In this field a revolution has taken place. In today's Europe the legitimacy of foreign policy is the promotion of the welfare of the people: Improving living standards, Human Rights; the promotion of commerce and culture; the creation of jobs and the protection of the environment. The Welfare state has got an international dimension, and this is especially true in Europe. The welfare of the people, not the increase of the power of the state, legitimizes foreign policy in today's Europe.

The traditional goals of foreign policy – the increase of the power of the state – are still taught in our schools; Metternich, Bismarck and Kissinger are still presented as the great heroes of diplomacy. This corresponds to the traditional way diplomacy was conducted: after the peace of Westphalia, 1648, a system of states emerged in Europe, where mutual relations were upheld by the principles of the sovereignty of the state and territorial integrity. States were not subject to superior authority and the national interest was the driving force of foreign policy. Diplomacy concentrated on the maintenance of the Balance of Power. The soldier and the diplomat constituted a unified whole. Diplomacy reflected the 'Art of the Possible;' war was seen as the continuation of politics; albeit by other means.

Why did all that change? After the horrible sufferings during the Second World War, European countries started the process of integration; based on economic cooperation and the establishment of supranational institutions. The promotion of the welfare of the people became a component of foreign policy world-wide. In the frame of the United Nations, special Agencies were established, like the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD); the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; the United Nations Development Program or the World Food Program.

However, in Western Europe some countries went much further: With the establishment of the Council of Europe, the protection of Human Rights, pluralistic democracy and the rule of law became generally recognized principles, monitored by an international organization, the Council of Europe; and with the foundation of the European Community for Coal and Steel, the supranational management of central parts of a national economy should prevent all wars in the future. The thinking behind those initiatives was that economic integration should push back national interest and promote political cooperation and integration.

The result was that in Europe we not only established a new legitimacy for foreign policy and new goals for diplomacy, but also new means to safeguard peace and security. The traditional means of foreign policy were *realpolitik*, *raison d'Etat*, and war. That meant that a state was allowed to do everything to increase its power; a state was entitled to practice a behavior forbidden to private individuals: to kill, to destroy, to wage war. Contrary to those traditional means, the new means that should safeguard peace and security in Europe are cooperation and integration. Today we follow a new logic: The logic of war has been replaced by a logic of values: democracy, Human Rights, the rule of law. It has become unthinkable for European countries to wage war against one another. In Europe, war is not anymore considered an extension of politics by other means. The logic of maintaining peace by a balance of power, established on the basis of confrontation, has been replaced by the concept of cooperation. That is how we have achieved sixty years of peace in Western Europe.

The sovereignty of the state, which used to be absolute, has been drastically diminished in many fields. The traditional way to guarantee peace was the respect of national sovereignty, combined with the principle of none-interference into internal affairs of a sovereign country. This approach has also totally changed: Today peace is built on the respect of basic values like Human Rights, Democracy and rule of law. And the implementation of those values is subject to international monitoring by organizations like the Council of Europe, the European Union or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Those Organizations have the right to interfere into internal affairs of all member states to safeguard the implementation of those values.

I would like to demonstrate the changes that have taken place on one example. Who has been regarded 'great' in history: Rulers like Alexander the Great; Caesar, Charlemagne, Peter the Great, and many others went down in history as great heroic figures, because they succeeded in establishing empires, increased the power of their kingdoms regardless the sacrifices and human casualties. Today, such policies would not be considered as 'great,' but such approaches would make the ruler a candidate for a war crimes tribunal.

Achievements and Crises

The achievements of European integration since the Second World War are remarkable: Western Europe enjoyed two generations of peace and prosperity – that has never been the case in 2,000 years of European history. Old, hereditary enemies have become friends, like France and Germany; centuries of confrontation were replaced by cooperation. Why would then all of a sudden such difficulties as the Euro-crisis arise? The basic failure here is easy to understand. European nations gave up exclusive sovereignty in several fields: Some countries gave up their national currencies, many countries opened their borders, they have given up

national border control. The problem is this: Countries gave up essential parts of their national sovereignty, but no European sovereignty has been established instead.

When the Euro was introduced as a common currency in 1999, it brought many advantages: For travelers it was not necessary anymore to exchange money; all member countries got low interest rates, which stimulated borrowing and business growth, but also allowed the countries like Greece to accumulate enormous debts. An optimistic language was supposed to pave the way for a better reality. In this sense we talked and still talk about the 'Economic and Monetary Union' (EMU) as the basis for the common currency, but in reality the European Economic Union was never created – the creation of a monetary union (the introduction of Euro) has not been accompanied by an economic union. It is not clear if such economic union could ever be organized – differences among the political and economic cultures of the Euro zone members are too great. There are a plenty of examples to demonstrate this: Whereas Austria cuts the number of civil servants, 60,000 new teachers are hired in France; the retirement age is raised in Germany, but lowered in France; in times of economic crisis, the political parties in Finland were competing to impose more austerity, whereas in Greece most political parties have campaigned opposed to austerity policies.

All in all one can say that the European project was too optimistic: The protagonists were convinced that Monetary Union would lead to an economic, and eventually a political union. Certainly, some common rules were established – it has been decided that national budget deficits should not be higher than 3 % of the GDP, and the national debts should not exceed 60 %. In all member countries the inflation should be kept low. Other rules show impracticality of the Euro project: It was stipulated, for instance, that no assistance should be granted to countries in need; and states which would not obey the rules should be punished. How useless these rules have been, if we consider the billions of dollars given in subsidies to the Euro-zone members, which have ran into major financial difficulties.

Considering all these developments, the fundamental difficulty with the EU is the following: The basic question, whether the European Union should become a real political Union or remain a confederation of nation states remains unresolved. It is not clear how much political sovereignty the member states want to keep, and how much they are willing to give up. This question not only concerns the currency, but also other fields, for example, should there be an European army or should Europe rely on NATO for its defense? There is certainly a Strategic Partnership between EU and NATO as far as crisis-management is concerned (the so called Berlin-plus-agreements), but the basic question, to what extent Europe should have unified armed forces under a unified European command has not been addressed.

The European Defense and Security Policy (EDSP)

According to the EU treaty, the military matters and national defense remains within the competence of the nation state; to at in these matters, the EU could only act in these fields with a unanimous support of all members. On the other hand, Europe should be active towards the outside world, spread its values and participate in crisis management. In this sense, the European Defense and Security Policy, a foundational structure for the European military union, is not about great armies and great wars, but about the participation in conflict management. The Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force on December 1, 2009, established

the post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Political and military solidarity among EU member states was also stipulated in the treaty by a mutual assistance clause, and a solidarity clause.

The European Security Strategy (ESS) is a doctrine, which should provide a framework for its actions abroad. It was adopted in December 2003 in order to implement EU-values and objectives in the field of Foreign and Security Policy. The ESS contains an analysis of global threats and challenges to European security like: terrorism, proliferations of weapons of mass-destructions, regional conflicts with international impacts, and failing states and organized crime. The ESS sets three instruments for maintaining security and promoting EU values:

- Conducting a policy of conflict prevention (by civilian and military capabilities)
- Building security in the neighborhood
- Promoting multilateralism through international law and the United Nations.

The main activities in the frame of the ESS are the so-called Petersberg tasks (a list of military and security priorities under the European Security and Defense Policy), and crisis management. The Petersberg tasks concentrate on humanitarian and rescue operations, on peacekeeping, on crisis management, and peace-making. Police activities should also contribute to assure the rule of law in an area of crisis, strengthen the civil administration or protect civilians. Some examples of European Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) operations are the following: Among the military operations EUFOR Concordia in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), deployed in 2003 in order to enforce stability for the implementation of the Ochrid Agreement. In 2003-2006, the EUFOR Operation Artemis was deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Its mandate was to secure refugees centers in its area of operation, the airports, and to provide safety for NGO's. In December 2004, EUFOR Operation Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina replaced NATO's SFOR as a guarantor of the 1995 Dayton Agreement.

As far as civilian cooperation is concerned, the EU Police mission in Bosnia- Herzegovina of 2003 could be mentioned, as well as the Police Mission in the FYROM (Macedonia) of the same year. A mission in Georgia had the goal of improving the rule of law in that country; the same goal was shared by the police mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo. All in all, CSDP operations are aimed at conflict management, preventing crises from unfolding, and stabilizing post conflict situations.

To a considerable extent, the notion of the common European Defense and Security Policy remains wishful thinking, and does not correspond to reality. Defense matters stay within the exclusive competence of the member states. Actually, it is quite evident that the great powers continue to follow their own security interests: Great Britain, for example, joined the US in the Iraq War of 2003, whereas Germany and France strongly opposed the war. The great powers followed their own policies concerning Moscow and Beijing; there are different approaches regarding Kosovo or a Palestinian state, and different attitudes were taken when a 'no fly zone' was imposed upon Libya. However, some of the European protagonists hope that notions used in this policy document, and the objectives outlined in it, could create a new state of mind, and eventually, a new reality.

Repercussions upon Transatlantic Relations

The ESS stipulates that the transatlantic relationship with the United States is irreplaceable: “Acting together, the EU and the United States can be a formidable force for the good in the world Our aim should be an effective and balanced partnership with the USA.” The cooperation with the US is certainly an essential reason for the EU to build up its defense capabilities and to increase its coherence.

At the same time, we should not forget that quite significant differences have developed between the European and American states of mind: We have developed different attitudes towards war as a policy instrument, and toward the outside world in general. The use of military force in order to implement policy goals among the European countries has become unthinkable. At the same time, the visions of using military force towards the outside world have also changed. Within Europe, as a rule, the military is not anymore deployed in support of national diplomacy. No matter how great the discrepancies are over the Greece debt in Brussels, no European country would rely on its army to back its cause.

At the same time, echoing an 18th century sentiment ascribed to Friedrich the Great, an American scholar recently stated that “a Foreign Policy without the backing of the military is like a baseball game without the baseball bat.” This way of thinking does not exist in Europe anymore. Further, the Europeans have developed different attitudes concerning essential challenges of our time: How to cope with the environment (agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol), the importance and the role of the International Criminal Court, the role of the UN in a multipolar world, and state sovereignty in general.

All in all, we could say that the European project has achieved fantastic goals in only two generations: peace and security, and the new European diplomacy that does not rely on war, and a foreign policy that concentrates on the well-being of the people. However, some fundamental questions remain unsolved, the most important among them: should Europe become a federal state or remain a confederation of national states?

About the author: Dr. Wendelin Ettmayer is a retired Austrian diplomat, and a former member of the Austrian Parliament.