



Discussion: THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE WORLD

"We recognise our interdependence and realise that our success can be secured only by the success of the entire world system." *Quaker Vision of Europe*

The role of the European Union in the world is one of the key issues to be addressed by the Convention on the Future of Europe. Historically, the EU was set up to foster co-operation between formerly hostile states in order to prevent war between them. Today it is a unique multi-lateral organisation, working on European policy for European issues. While the EU is currently one of the world's major economic powers, this is not matched by its political weight. Before looking to the future and to the various options open to the EU, it is necessary to understand where the EU is in terms of external relations today.

EU External Policy at Present

Since the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty (1993), 'foreign policy' on a European level has had two dimensions:

a) External Trade and Development

These policies fall under the 'first pillar' of the EU (*see briefing paper 2: EU Institutions*). This is the EU dimension in which the 'community method' is used; central decision-making and executive powers lie with European bodies and not with national governments.

Both international trade policy and development co-operation are initiated and implemented by the European Commission. The EU is the world's largest provider of development assistance as well as one of the biggest trading blocs. There are Commissioners for both trade and

development, as well as a Commissioner with overall responsibility for External Relations (currently Chris Patten).

Trade and development assistance can be used as tools of foreign policy. For example, both the *Barcelona Process* (1995), a partnership with Mediterranean countries, and the *Cotonou Agreement*, the EU's economic co-operation treaty with African, Caribbean and Pacific states, feature political provisions. These link financial support and trading agreements to the improvement of human rights, good governance and conflict prevention.

b) Common Foreign & Security Policy (CFSP)

The Maastricht Treaty established the *Common Foreign & Security Policy* (CFSP) as the second pillar of the European Union in 1993. It aims:

- To safeguard the Union's common values, interests and integrity;
- To strengthen peace and security both within the Union and on an international stage;
- To promote international co-operation, democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Unlike external trade and development, the CFSP is not shaped by the Commission and the Parliament, but by the representatives of national governments meeting in the European Council. While decision-making remains strictly inter-governmental, attempts have been made to provide a more unified 'voice' for the EU through the introduction of the position of High Representative for CFSP.

In 1999 it was agreed to establish a *European Security and Defence Policy* within the CFSP's framework: this led to the adoption of the *Rapid Reaction Force*,

aiming at the establishment of a military force for crisis intervention. On the other hand, the EU has also made attempts to strengthen its role in conflict prevention: the *EU Programme on Conflict Prevention* focuses on the strengthening of civil society in vulnerable countries and on increased support for democratic institutions.

Problems with the Status Quo

The current situation thus splits the EU's external role into two, with some aspects deemed to be suitable for 'Community' level policy and with member states holding onto power in other areas, in particular those related to security and defence. This has raised criticism, in particular of the ineffectiveness of the CFSP. It has often been difficult for European governments to adopt a common standpoint in crisis situations, leading to inaction as decisions in CFSP must be based on unanimity.

One suggestion to make CFSP more effective is to give the Parliament and the Commission a greater role in order to encourage states to move beyond national self-interest. A step towards this 'communitisation' of CFSP could be to merge the functions of the High Representative and the External Relations Commissioner.

The split between the trade/development and security dimensions of external relations also raises questions about the implementation of European values:

- Considering that member states are likely to keep control over their own armed forces, a common European approach might lead to a greater focus on civilian rather than military crisis management. On the other hand, developing the military capacity of the EU could mean that civilian aspects of external relations (development, long-term conflict prevention) are sidelined.

- Decision-making under the community method is more transparent than intergovernmental decision-making. If CFSP were brought under the community method would citizens have a better chance of holding the decision-makers to account?
- There are currently problems of coherence between the different areas of external policy. Trade can impact negatively on development, as can security concerns. There is a need for more co-ordination across the different policy areas; is this co-ordination hampered by the current split in methods of decision-making?

Looking to the Future

For Quakers the issues of most relevance are about how the EU can best apply its internal values externally.

The prevention of conflict between the member states was one of the EU's founding aims: how can this internal objective be translated into a commitment to conflict prevention in the EU's external relations?

The EU aims to increase prosperity within its borders: can this be reconciled with the aim of encouraging global sustainable development?

As the only institution of its kind in the world, can the EU provide an example of how to tackle globalisation through multi-lateral agreement and co-operation?

"You cannot foster harmony by the apparatus of discord, nor cherish goodwill by the equipment of hate. But it is by harmony and goodwill that human security can be obtained. Armaments aim at a security in isolation; but such would be utterly precarious and is, as a matter of fact, illusory."

All Friends Conference, 1920, BYM QF&P, 24.40