



EP 03 - on the Single Foreign And Defence Policy

Following the new provisions made by the draft Constitution, the Young European Federalists believe that a thorough assessment of the policy and its future implications is needed.

1. An economic giant with no real political clout

Creating a politically unified Europe after the successful economic integration, emphasizing especially the introduction of the Euro seems to be the next logical step. The need for a functioning Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) has become ever clearer after the disarray European states were left in as a result of the Iraq crisis. Europe will be unable to make its voice heard on a global stage if it is to remain divided on the home front. What Europe needs is a comprehensive and clear Single Foreign and Defence Policy (SFDP) that would merge the current CFSP and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

The time has come for member-states to give up the traditionally national nature of their foreign policy, and make a move towards a genuinely European foreign and defence policy. The notion that the ability to conduct foreign policy is something intimately linked with national identity can be viewed as outdated in a world where most security risks do not follow the lines of national borders any more. Taken individually most EU member-states fall short of weight to have direct impact on a global stage, thus pooling their resources for a unified stance will enable them to exert their vision of the world more effectively.

Only a truly unified SFDP can meet the needs of Europeans in the twenty first century. Clearly, this is something European citizens seem to anticipate. In a Euro Barometer poll, conducted between January and mid-February 2004, over 70 per cent of EU citizens supported the Union's efforts towards creating a more effective Common Security and Foreign Policy.

2. Institutional setting

2.1. European Foreign Policy

There remains a definitive intergovernmental touch in the draft Constitution when it comes to matters of CFSP. Disappointingly, the European Council is to be the body to draw the broad guidelines of the CFSP. The Commission's political role remains limited, its executive role somewhat vague in the light of the dual nature of the proposed foreign minister. Enhancements of the European Parliament's powers in CFSP, contrary to many other policy fields, can be viewed as disappointingly limited.

2.2. Foreign Minister, European Commission

The Foreign Minister proposed by the draft Constitution, can be regarded as a step towards a more coherent foreign policy of the Union. The double-hatted foreign minister could bridge the gap between the administrative resources of the Commission and the politically more able post of High Commissioner. The current High Representative lacks the financial and administrative resources of the Commission to implement its policies, but clearly has the political mandate and authority to negotiate. The new post of Foreign Minister might also establish a senior 'easy-to-understand'

figure to represent the Union externally and also lead to a more efficient deployment of Unions resources internally.

On the other hand, the synergy effects of this new double hat post should not be taken for granted. It remains to be seen if, and to what extent, new loyalties between the Commission and Council will emerge, as to enable the smooth cooperation of the two bureaucratic systems under the proposed post of Foreign Minister. The need to 'communitarise' the CFSP and a gradual shift of the foreign minister away from its intergovernmental duality towards the Commission should be aimed for in the long run. Only such an institutional placement would provide space for a Single Foreign and Defence Policy.

The relationship to Presidency is another issue throwing confusion to the external representation of the Union. (see below 'Rotating presidency') Thus, more clarity in its triangular responsibility to the Council, Presidency and Commission, would be necessary to the efficient working of the Unions foreign policy

2.3. Presidency

Rotating presidency in CFSP matters is clearly stemming the coherence of CFSP. The present system with 6 months rotating presidency, where every Member State introduces a new working plan with its own national interest, does not offer the right institutional solution for a strong CFSP. Thus, handing the tasks over to the proposed Foreign minister would be a logical step in ensuring the continuity of the Unions foreign policy.

2.4. Majority voting as a rule, not exception

Especially, smaller countries must be ensured that their bigger counterparts pursuing their national interest under the European flag do not easily take hostage the CFSP. On the other hand, no member-state should be able to block the effective working of the Union in case of clear majority. It is essential for EU member states, big and small, to develop a sense of European responsibility to make CFSP work.

The rather ambiguous rule of the draft Constitution that the Council of Ministers can take majority vote on a proposal in the framework of CFSP only when it had unanimously asked the foreign minister to make such a proposal means, that in essence the Union is still bound to unanimity decision-making. With the number of Member States increasing to 25, it will be very likely that CFSP decision will be very vague, reactive and will come at a very late stage. On the contrary, what the EU clearly needs is well-defined decision-making rules to enable a swift action in cases of crises.

2.5. European Parliament

The only consultative role confined to the European Parliament (EP) by the draft Constitution is disappointingly little. The EP's powers in matters of CFSP should be substantially strengthened to give it an active role in formulating and supervising the Union's foreign policy. In the long run the EP should become the primary force behind drawing the guidelines for CFSP, since in the light of citizens wishes and expectations, the consent of a body with a strong democratic mandate such as the EP is needed for legitimising foreign policy decisions. This is also one of the pillars of democratic societies.

The EP should have co-decision right in the process of adopting international agreements. The EP should be consulted before signing any international agreements. External policy decisions with implications on budget, such as economic sanctions or foreign aid, should require close parliamentary involvement.

Conclusion

Institutional settings cannot compensate for the lack of political will but can create a framework in which common will is more likely to rise. Thus, for EU to have credible representation in the world an efficient institutional setting is of great importance. When Union speaks with one voice, as it does in international trade matters, its views are widely respected and they carry global weight.

3. European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)

The nature of security has dramatically changed over the past decade. A drift away from post-cold war world into the age of international terrorism sets new requirements for security and defence policy of the Union. The Union clearly needs now more than ever to establish its own military capabilities to back up its foreign policy goals.

In order to remove the large scale inefficiencies in military spending Member States should aim at sharing their military and intelligence assets more effectively in the future and consequently make European defence more effective and coherent.

3.1. Grand strategy of ESDP and Solana doctrine

The Solana doctrine provides the Union the first time with a much-needed grand strategy in field of security and defence. Only by working together can the Member States deal with the challenges of the 21st Century world security environment: terrorism, WMD, failed states and environmental issues. The EU should lay its emphasis on pre-emptive action only in extreme case and only under multilateral institutions. The Charter of the United Nations should figure as the main pillar of the international legal order. All actions of the Union should be in compliance with the international law.

3.2. Structured Cooperation

Defence being a field where political will and capabilities vary enormously, the provisions made on structured cooperation by the draft Constitution should be seen as a political tool moving towards a creation of Single European Army.

It should provide the legal framework to operate for countries with a desire for closer cooperation on defence matters, but should remain open for all who wish to join it in later stages, and should not create any new exclusive institutions and parallel decision-making procedures.