European Foreign Affairs Review **6**: 315–333, 2001.
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The EU's Capacity for Conflict Prevention*

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I. Introduction

Conflict prevention has become a binding concept in the discussion of the CFSP. It is seen by many as providing the common thread, in terms of values, objectives and instruments, which holds the system together and gives it purpose. What is more, it seems to have the quality essential in any successful political concept of showing how interests and ideals can be yoked to each other: no-one could contest that we should both save a great deal of resources and reduce the sum of human misery were we able to prevent conflicts such as those in Somalia or Bosnia from breaking out – or just manage to contain them.

Things are not, of course, as simple as this. There are philosophical problems attached to defining which conflicts are particularly undesirable, and, indeed, whether conflict might not sometimes be necessary. The perennial dilemmas of appeasement and ethnocentrism lurk just beneath the surface. I shall return to these difficulties at a later stage. The point for the moment is the way in which conflict prevention has become a central idea, and a prime hope, in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) set up by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1991. The coincidence of Europe's institutional *relance* with the dissolution of the old security order created a sense of opportunity, indeed responsibility, for the EU to make a major contribution to the remaking of the international system. The dismay when not only was this not forthcoming, but Europe's external role actually seemed enfeebled by the outbreaks of severely violent conflict in ex-Yugoslavia, Somalia, Algeria, Chechnya and Albania fostered the belief that the EU would have to reduce its exposure to security dangers and policy failures by preventing the very outbreak of serious conflicts. Accordingly conflict prevention has become the new operational code of European foreign policy, referred to frequently in the context of declarations on Africa and given the status of a Common Position in June

* In writing this article I have been helped in various ways by Gianni Bonvicini and the Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome; by Reinhardt Rummel and the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin; and by my LSE colleague Karen Smith. I am grateful to them all.

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1997.[1] The accession of three neutral states, Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995 further strengthened the emphasis on reducing the chances of having to face the dilemmas of actual war-fighting.[2]

What does the EU hope for from a strategy of conflict prevention? Any answer must be prefaced by the acknowledgement that the approach is still in the process of gestation. What is more, it has become a catch-all into which all Europe's desiderata in international affairs are poured – 'the stabilisation and pacification of all those states in which Europe perceives itself to have moral and practical concerns' might be a more accurate description of the huge range of activities subsumed beneath it. In particular, there is a tendency to lump together both conflict prevention *on the part of Europe* and conflict prevention *in Europe*. The latter relates only to preventing conflict in Europe, and the EU's particular responsibility for it. The former – the EU's own attempts at conflict prevention – may apply globally, if not comprehensively. It is of considerable importance for the effectiveness of European foreign policy to be able to decide what kinds of conflict, and where, the EU might be realistically able to stop. A scattershot approach will achieve little.

A counter-factual analysis gets us half-way to a plausible answer. If we ask the question, 'which conflicts would cause the EU serious problems?', few would dissent from the view that a war (international or civil) in any of the states of east and central Europe, including Russia and the Balkans, or in any of the states on the Mediterranean littoral has the potential to damage the EU and its Member States, whether through the movement of displaced persons, the spill-over of political instability or the disruption of trade. This is not to say that such conflicts cannot be successfully managed or contained; to some extent they have been, even in Bosnia and Algeria. But each of these examples also shows how divisions within the EU rapidly arise over how to deal with the momentous moral and practical dilemmas of a war in the neighbourhood; they eventually seep into the internal political fabric. Moral concerns can also hit home from almost any spot in the world, Vietnam and South Africa

[1] 'The Common Position 97/356/CFSP concerning conflict prevention and resolution in Africa' calls on the Union to 'use the various instruments available coherently to develop a pro-active, comprehensive and integrated approach'. Links must be made to African efforts and the commitment to restricting arms exports must be reaffirmed. Moreover '. . . where an initiative is undertaken to further the prevention or resolution of conflicts and where this has defence implications, the European Union is to request the Western European Union to elaborate and implement this initiative'. *EU Bulletin 6-1997*, 1.4.123, Position adopted 2 June 1997. Thus a general Position on conflict prevention arose out of, and is arguably too entwined with, a specific concern with the international politics of Africa.

[2] The neutral and the smaller Member States are understandably particularly enthusiastic about conflict prevention. See for example *Preventing Violent Conflict: A Study* (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Stockholm, Ds 1997:18), which stresses the possibilities for changing long-term attitudes among the parties to conflicts. But they are not alone; it is the new orthodoxy for European foreign policies.

being the most obvious cases in point. On the other hand in recent decades Europeans have not found it easy to mobilise the resources to attempt to influence events at long distance, which was why Henry Kissinger talked of Europe as only having 'regional' interests as long ago as 1973. Their main concern on the global stage remains that of 'minding' the United States – using a mixture of support and restraint to ensure that the world's greatest power, and Europe's security guarantor, does not get itself into conflicts which could escalate internationally, and with unpredictable consequences. This key objective is too general and too delicate to articulate properly, with the result that there are no clear criteria for assessing which conflicts need most concern Europe, outside the geopolitical logic of its own frontier zones. The EU is at the mercy of events, public pressure and its own lack of parsimony, with the result that policy is bound to be erratic and to be vulnerable to accusations of double standards.

II. The Record

During the years of European Political Cooperation (EPC) between 1970–1993, conflict prevention was not an explicit policy goal. Nonetheless it was, implicitly, the over-riding concern in almost all the particular contexts in which European diplomacy engaged. The philosophy of 'civilian power' was in itself an acknowledgement that the EC could not be a player once conflict entered a military phase and therefore for reasons of both principle and necessity EPC spent much energy on attempts to defuse some of the world's most dangerous disputes. Nor was the record in this Herculean task so poor as conventional wisdom supposes.

Although it would be naïve to argue that EPC was a decisive factor in any of the conflicts in which it attempted mediation, it can be plausibly argued that it made a constructive and enduring contribution in the Arab-Israeli dispute, in the Central American crisis of the 1980s, and in the end-game of South African Apartheid.[3] Without the persistent European attempts to demythologise the Palestinians while at the same time recognising Israel's security dilemma, the United States would have found it very difficult to move its own position on a Palestinian homeland. Similarly, without the European willingness to take a different line from Washington on the leftist movements in Nicaragua and El Salvador, the United States might well have become

[3] See Panayiotis Ifestos, *European Political Cooperation* (Avebury, Aldershot, 1987), pp. 371–574; Hazel Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy in Central America* (Macmillan, London, 1995); 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, No. 4, 1995.

embroiled in an even more serious military conflict than, through the Contras in El Salvador, it actually did. Finally, the miracle of a peaceful transition to democratic majority rule in South Africa is largely due to the efforts of the ANC and the people of South Africa. But the European Community also played its part, by the stick of sanctions (from 1985) and the carrots of aid, electoral monitoring and accession to the Lomé Convention.

Not everything EPC did was in the direction of de facto conflict prevention, partly because it was unsuccessful and partly because at times it was conflict-producing. The shoals of human rights declarations for example, criticising the behaviour of this or that government might have been designed in the long run to build more legitimate and stable societies but in the short run they inevitably worsened relations between Europe and the governments concerned, and by the same token could also sharpen the contradictions between the forces of repression and reform. An example of the former is the Rushdie affair and Euro-Iranian relations, while the latter can be represented by the (somewhat belated) pressure on Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe over his suspension of the rule of law. In the short run at least this has heightened Mugabe's seige mentality. The general point worth making is that even a pacifically-inclined actor like the EU cannot help but contribute to conflict at some level whenever it stands up to some perceived outrage, or protects its own interests against adversaries who do not share the 'negotiation ethos' of diplomacy as compromise. This is not necessarily a bad thing, or rather, it may be a necessary evil in the pursuit of a higher good than the avoidance of conflict at all costs.

In recent years, the EU has attempted a more explicit strategy of conflict prevention and has had to apply it in some very testing circumstances. In the Balkans it made its most determined and sustained effort to prevent a bad situation from worsening, after the initial failure to keep the Yugoslav state intact. If it would invite ridicule to say that the EU succeeded, given the successful depredations of Bosnia's neighbours, it is clear that EU monitoring and tireless efforts at mediation made a contribution to the eventual Dayton settlement, and to insulating Kosovo from the main conflict. Individual Member States, particularly Britain and France, have also been an important part of the I-FOR and S-FOR barrier forces. On Albania, however, the CFSP failed to act when the situation might have seemed ideal for it to engage its multiple, but limited resources. Only the Italian initiative in the context of UN and OSCE support managed to prevent Albania from sliding into the same kind of chaos that gripped had Somalia a few years before – another case where the EU stood by helplessly, as it did in the other great African tragedies of the 1990s, first with the genocide of the Great Lakes region, and then the sad deterioration of West African polities, in Nigeria and Sierra Leone. In most of these sub-Saharan cases the EU lacked the power, as well as

the instruments and the will to make much of a difference. Some believe, however, that the case of Rwanda was more of a technical failure of prediction and the ability to act quickly and cohesively. It has certainly given a great impetus to the attempt to reform the CFSP so as to intervene preventively in the future.

For success and failure in the area of foreign policy generally are very much tied to judgement. If we had been able to foresee the likelihood of an Iraqi attack on Kuwait, would we have been so willing to arm Saddam Hussein? If France had realised the extent of Hutu hatred of the Tutsis, would it have exerted controls over arming and training the former? If the EU states had been able to foresee even a fraction of the bloodshed that has occurred in Algeria over the last ten years, would they have been so complacent about the way the Islamic Salvation Front's election victory of 1991 was set aside? These examples show that conflict prevention cannot be treated as a technical problem with 'solutions'. It is a process, whereby the chances of making poor judgements can be reduced by good practices across a whole range of dimensions – institutional, political, diplomatic and cultural. Fortunately the EU disposes of many resources which it has the potential to deploy more effectively than most international actors.

III. The EU/WEU System

The most obvious potential resource when confronting an international conflict, and one which still ultimately defines an actor's status, is that of military power. This is an area that the EU has only just entered upon, and where its capabilities are in flux. Nonetheless over the last fifteen years considerable progress has been made, first through a revived WEU, which enabled the Europeans to distinguish their security interests from those of NATO as a whole. The WEU became a bridge, or buckle between NATO and the EU, and the concept of Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) which the two alliances agreed in 1996 provided the theoretical capability for the EU/WEU to use military force as an instrument of conflict prevention. There was then the 'possibility of the integration of the WEU into the Union, should the European Council so decide', as the Treaty of Amsterdam put it (J.7.1). Despite the apparent lack of interest in making such a decision at Amsterdam, the new Blair government in the United Kingdom did a volte-face in 1998, producing the Anglo-French Declaration at St. Malo on 4 December. This represented a green light for the absorption of the WEU into the EU and the Fifteen accordingly made formal decisions at Cologne and Helsinki in 1999 to set up a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in parallel with the CFSP, to take over most of the WEU's functions in due course and – most

spectacularly – to provide the EU with a Rapid Reaction Force of 60,000 men by 2003. As the Cologne Council concluded, 'the Council should have the ability to take decisions on the full range of conflict prevention and crisis management tasks defined in the Treaty on European Union, the "Petersberg tasks"'.[4]

The EU and WEU made up a loose kind of foreign policy system, in that their policy-making capacity and their operational mechanisms were linked but hardly compatible, given different histories, functions and memberships. A merger is logical and should in principle create more effective capabilities at the levels of both the military instrument and the decision-making system behind it. Still, neither the merger nor the new capabilities are yet achieved. Evolution is still taking place, but the Union continues to talk boldly of conflict prevention as a priority. Indeed, the Swedish presidency of 2001 chose the theme of conflict prevention for the first televised debate from the General Affairs Council, as part of its commitment to transparency.[5] What other resources and instruments then does the EU dispose of, that might enhance efforts towards conflict prevention now and in the future?

Article J.7 of the Treaty of Amsterdam, with its associated Protocol and Declaration, is a development of Article J.4 (and its associated Declarations) of the Treaty of European Union of 1993, and indeed the Western European Union's Petersberg Declaration of 1992 and the Hague Platform of 1987. It provides for the 'progressive' framing of a common defence policy (Maastricht referred only to the 'eventual' framing), which if achieved would certainly give the EU the capability of military intervention in the vicinity of its borders, if not beyond. Such a capability might in turn have a certain deterrent effect on parties vulnerable to European intervention, so long as they were convinced that the will existed to use it. There is also a provision for cooperation, 'as Member States consider appropriate. . . in the field of armaments', but this is so vaguely worded as to make common policies on arms exports or procurement, important capabilities in terms of leverage over third parties, only a distant prospect – particularly given the Treaty's continued genuflections before NATO and national defence policies. On the other hand there can be no doubt that controlling the arms trade would make a significant contribution to a more stable international system, and the EU states are much more likely to be able to do that by operating together than singly. Recent moves towards common policies, including the Joint Action on land-mines in 1996 and the Franco–British initiative which led to an EU Code of Conduct on arms sales in 1998, are encouraging developments, even if there is still a wide gap between talk and achievement.

[4] Christopher Hill and Karen E. Smith (eds), *Documents on European Foreign Policy* (Routledge, London, 2000), p. 250.

[5] Swedish Presidency, Background to General Affairs Council, 22–23 January 2001. <http://eu2001.se/eu2001/news/>.

The only clear way in which to structure third countries' external environments is to provide security guarantees, and these in the nature of things can only be offered on a highly selective basis. What is more, at present the EU in itself cannot furnish such guarantees since it has no means of backing them up. It is true that from the mid-1990s new EU members had the expectation that they could join the WEU and avail themselves of the cast-iron protection provided by Article V, but in fact their only *right* was to be Observers, being able to accede to the WEU only on conditions to be agreed. Of course it can be argued that the EU does indirectly provide the kind of guarantee that represents serious deterrence to an external aggressor in the sense that it would be virtually impossible for the EU not to regard an attack on one of its members as a casus belli. But ultimately the WEU represented a form of black letter law not present in the CFSP, and (since Maastricht) no state can enter the WEU fortress if it has not previously joined the EU. The situation is inherently difficult, given the arrival of the ESDP in 1999, and the replacement of a complex but clear relationship between EU and WEU, by the evolving and ambiguous tie between the CFSP and the ESDP.

Insofar as a security guarantee is the best way of avoiding attack or involvement in an unwanted conflict, membership of NATO must seem the better option for the vulnerable outsider. Yet Turkey is still furious at the arrival of the ESDP, which means its de facto exclusion from the European security caucus. Nor is this simply because of its perpetual problem with Greece; Turkey understandably fears that current developments represent a quantum leap towards an EU on its borders with a powerful foreign and defence policy in which it would not be able to participate for the foreseeable future.

For its part, the United States has been quick to emphasise the importance of EU enlargement, and evidently recognises the more subtle and wide-ranging contribution that the civilian power can make to the prevention of conflict on the old continent. In one respect EU enlargement has been a useful instrument of contemporary American foreign policy, particularly since the insistence on offering NATO membership and the security guarantees which go with it to eastern European countries for a time actually provoked conflict with Russia. Without EU enlargement alongside it, the expansion of NATO might pose some stark and threatening choices to those smaller countries excluded from the Alliance.

Insofar as security guarantees, collective or bilateral, are an important part of conflict prevention, the EU has for the time being no choice but to work with NATO in deciding the perimeter of the region which will be defended against any outside attack and within which a democratic peace is expected. It must also accept the graduated nature of individual Member State commitments on the security front. Opt-outs, both for particular countries

and for the whole system on conflicts like that between Greece and Turkey, are likely to continue for the foreseeable future. A central challenge for EU conflict prevention policy will be to handle the grey area which exists between the 'hard' security guarantees of NATO, the 'soft' security assured by EU membership or its prospect, and the possibly alienated states in the exclusion zone beyond the Schengen frontier. In this zone fall many Balkan states, some Baltics, Belarus, the Ukraine and Russia, the Maghreb, Cyprus (given its anomalous situation) and even the Levant.

The one genuinely innovative aspect of the Treaty of Amsterdam in terms of the CFSP, and one which promises more immediate pay-offs in terms of conflict prevention than either deterrence or security guarantees, was the incorporation of the 'Petersberg tasks' (not explicitly referred to as such, but clearly with a lineage deriving from the WEU Petersberg declaration of 1992[6]). In fact, on close inspection these tasks are less to do with prevention than with crisis management and conflict resolution, as J.7.2 implicitly acknowledges, by making no mention of conflict prevention – in fact the concept is still nowhere referred to in the revised Title V even after the Treaty of Nice.[7] It is true that by relieving humanitarian problems, acting as barrier forces and in particular by 'peacemaking', European forces would be preventing escalation and laying down some of the conditions for a more permanent peace in the post bellum, where that applies. But strictly speaking this is not the same as the kind of early-warning, nipping in the bud kind of activity which conflict prevention requires and which the Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit of CFSP is supposed to facilitate. Indeed there has to be some question as to whether the military part of the new EU nexus is appropriate for this kind of intervention-prevention at all. The theory, insofar as it has been worked out, is evidently that of some form of division of labour, with the CFSP having the purpose of (and some capacity for) longer-term prevention, and the ESDP serving the needs of intervention when prevention fails. But this is to perpetuate the former division between the EU and the WEU without harnessing the means of suasion and coercion in the integrated foreign and defence policy which a well-organised state aspires to. If the latter is achieved by the EU, at both conceptual and operational levels, then it will genuinely possess a rapid response capability which could be deployed to stop crises from boiling over. At present however, the problem is rather more prosaic: how to bring military and diplomatic means into the same broad system, and

[6] The Petersberg Declaration of 19 June 1992 by the Foreign and Defence Ministers of WEU Member States listed the crisis prevention and management missions that WEU forces could conduct: 'humanitarian and rescue tasks; peacekeeping tasks; tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking'.

[7] There is a passing reference in the associated 'Inter-Institutional Agreement' on the financing of the CFSP, but interestingly none in the 'Declaration on the Establishment of a Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit'.

how to find the resources to make European defence cooperation more than an exercise in wishful thinking.

IV. The EU's Wider Instruments of Conflict Prevention

Despite the military ambiguities, the EU taken as a whole already has some attributes of a preventive capability, especially for the longer term. Indeed, it can be argued that its very historical identity is fundamentally that of a conflict prevention system.[8] The most basic EU instrument is therefore that of what Gabriel Munuera has called 'the power of attraction'.[9] Munuera shows that the lure of membership can help to prevent conflicts outside the EU's borders by suggesting the advantages of good behaviour to eager candidates (as with the Copenhagen Council's membership conditions) and by giving the EU leverage where they do not take the hint. He cites the case of Slovakian-Hungarian detente as an example. Munuera also rightly notes, however, that this effect wears off if countries become disillusioned with the pace of their accession, and if geography makes them less than plausible candidates. For some states indeed, membership is not an option at all, and for them the attraction factor is weaker, working only in terms of wanting to be associated with EU positions (e.g. through the CFSP). They are the EU's new semi-periphery, a group with fewer incentives to follow EU prescriptions. If the EU is serious about using enlargement as an instrument of conflict prevention – and there are of course many other motives for the policy, not all mutually compatible – than it will need to be very careful not to mislead potential candidates, and to combine the carrot of accession with other strategies which might work in the interim. This has been sharply evident given the twin developments of recent years, whereby the EU has both engaged in accession negotiations with a larger group of (twelve) and persistently hedged on actual dates, even for states at the head of the queue such as Poland.

The creation of the structured dialogues and the 'WEU family' in the 1990s was a strategy deliberately designed to blur sharp dividing lines between the 'potential ins' and the 'always outs' – it was indeed a part of EU enlargement policy not perhaps pursued with sufficient resolve, bearing in mind the relatively uncritical approach to the difficulties involved in moving to an EU of 20 states, perhaps 25, within a decade. Those receiving contradictory

[8] John Pinder, 'Community against Conflict: The European Community's Contribution to Ethno-national Peace in Europe', in Abram Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes (eds), *Preventing Conflict in the Post-Communist World: Mobilizing International and Regional Organizations*, (The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1996), pp. 147–196.

[9] Gabriel Munuera, *Preventing Armed Conflict in Europe: Lessons from Recent Experience*, Chaillot Papers 15/16, Paris, Western European Union Institute for Security Studies, June 1994, p. 91.

signals about accession should have been anchored in some form of reassuring relationship with the EU, which might even in the end prove an acceptable substitute for membership. This is particularly the case in relation to foreign policy cooperation, which need not be treated as an exclusive EU good. Guido Lenzi pointed out that the WEU had developed 'a comprehensive and multilateral process of conceptual exchanges, political consultation and some operational cooperation between more than thirty countries of Europe and the Mediterranean, a process [*however*] that has somewhat blunted the military alliance implications of the Brussels Treaty'.[10] Insofar as it created a sense of partnership and feelings of being sheltered by an umbrella of common security, this might have damped down incipient conflict both within the 'family' (a wish-fulfilment metaphor if ever there was one) and between members and outsiders. The Slovenian–Italian example cuts one way on this, with the dispute of 1994 having been contained by the existence of the EU and WEU; Greece–Turkey cuts the other way, given that even common NATO membership has not been able to prevent simmering mutual hostility. Such an approach is based on an institutionalist logic which assumes that participation in common organisations and networks has a socialising effect, in this case spreading the values of the rule of law. The best that can be said for this theory is that it might be true, so long as the organisation does not grow too large and is not undermined by what goes in inside its member states. The Organisation of American States and the Organisation of African Unity have not been enough by themselves to foster civil relations between and within the states of their respective continents. On the other hand, the EU itself has so far had an excellent record of domesticating antagonisms both inside and between its Member States. Ultimately it is a reasonable but unprovable hypothesis which could be helped to come true by the determined application of a number of instruments simultaneously.

The assumptions behind this kind of approach, whereby states are gradually drawn into civil or 'constitutional' relations even if not into a single political enterprise, derive from two variants of liberalism.[11] One is the familiar 'moralism-legalism' of the Wilsonian era; here law and institutions help to bind states in an observance of common rules which increasingly mimic the principles of domestic (democratic) society. Membership of the United Nations is still an important, if today very diluted example of this outlook. The second is the paradigm which has become dominant in western foreign policy thought since the end of the Cold War, namely the 'democratic peace', or the notion that since democratic states appear not to wish to fight each

[10] Guido Lenzi, 'Defining the European Security Policy', in Jan Zielonka (ed.), *Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy* (Kluwer, Amsterdam, 1998), p. 111.

[11] For the notion of 'constitutional' relations see Roy Jones, *The Principles of Foreign Policy: the Civil State in its World Setting* (Martin Robertson, Oxford, 1979).

other, the best way to pacify the anarchical society of international relations is to promote the spread of democracy.[12] Further, the emergence of international groupings of democratic states such as the European Union will in itself create islands of peace and help to create a bandwagon effect.

The difficulty with the democratic path to conflict prevention is that even if states can be brought into a condition of rudimentary democracy sufficient to justify their entry into the EU, there can be no certainty that they will stay that way or indeed that they will not dilute that very stability which made the EU so attractive in the first place. If the democratic peace hypothesis holds, it does so on the basis of relations among states whose liberal institutions and close collaboration were reinforced if not created by the Cold War;[13] to extrapolate this solidarity to a much larger group of states in a wholly new geo-politics would be to divorce political science completely from history.

It is true that democracy in at least Greece and Spain might have proved vulnerable without membership of the EC, and that Greek and Italian foreign policy (also perhaps British fishing policy) might have been rendered less militant by their collective responsibilities. Governments have always been able to resist their own nationalists by citing the constraints of EU membership. But the credit could just as well go to NATO, and the effect might simply wear off in an EU which became more of a framework organisation, like OSCE, than the action organisation which even the anti-federalist Member States wish it to be.

None of this is to imply that bringing, say, the states of the old Soviet bloc into the net of organisations like OSCE, the Council of Europe, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), the Partnership for Peace (PfP), or into the orbit of the EU/WEU was a waste of time. On the contrary, as we have already seen, this kind of overlapping institutionalism fosters communication, the spread of common values and the acceptance of some shared obligations. The instinct for a politics of inclusion over exclusion is generally correct, especially where liberal democracy is a condition of entry into the club. The point is rather that both democracy and the membership of the IGOs created by democracies are a necessary but not sufficient means of preventing conflict. New, brittle democracies herded together into regional organisations which may become quickly overloaded by their very accession will not be any the less prone to involvement in conflict – indeed it is possible that they will be more prone to internal upheavals if the new dispensations fail to meet the soaring expectations they have engendered. Conversely, it has been

[12] For an excellent survey of the ramifications of this view, see Miles Kahler (ed.), *Liberalization and Foreign Policy* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1997).

[13] Nils Petter Gleditsch, 'Democracy and the Future of European Peace', in Nils Petter Gleditsch and Thomas Risse-Kappen (eds), *Democracy and Peace*, Special Issue of the *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 1, No. 4, December 1995, pp. 539–571.

rightly observed that inter-locking institutions can become inter-blocking if care is not taken to ensure that new members are capable of living up to the obligations entailed in membership. It also partly depends on the time-frame being worked to, and the assumptions being made about the permanence of any 'solution'.

Thus far in its history the EC/EU area itself has proved remarkably free of conflict; Northern Ireland and the Basque country have been savage exceptions, but compared to Bosnia or Algeria they have been sideshows and they have barely spilled over into inter-state tension. It is not, however, clear what is the chicken and what the egg: did the EC cause peace or did peace make possible the EC? The answer is, as usual, that the egg is inseparably bound up with the chicken. The EC has engineered unusually civilised relations among its member-states, to the point where they have come close to choosing integration on some of the most crucial attributes of statehood. But it has only been able to do so because of the security stockade provided by NATO. Moreover solidarity has been fostered over nearly half a century, not an insignificant elapse of time.

The challenge of trying to stabilise the old Warsaw Pact area means that this process is hardly finished yet. Neither a long time-frame, nor a structured security environment are available for the new Europe, where around twenty states have been searching urgently to come in from the cold. Current decision-makers are acutely aware that if too many states are granted entry to the EU too soon, it will endanger not only 'deepening' but such capacity for action as the CFSP has painfully acquired. For the time being new members (and candidate-members) will follow the lead in foreign policy given by the established states; in the longer run it may prove even more difficult to establish consensus on delicate questions of external conflict management when the constituency has doubled in size and become infinitely more varied. Inner groups, particularly of the more powerful, will be the inevitable consequence.

If the EU does represent a working peace system in its internal relations, and may be expected to continue as such, its capacity to prevent conflict outside its borders – themselves in flux – remains much more dubious. Nor is the mere existence of democracy a guarantee of a successful or even morally consistent foreign policy outside Europe, whether on behalf of a single state or the EU as a whole. Various contributors to the democratic peace debate have pointed out that democracies have often behaved in a bellicose, exploitative and authoritarian manner towards other kinds of state, while too much presumption in an 'ethical foreign policy' based on human rights concerns can incite conflict rather than prevent it – as we have seen

over relations with Malaysia and Indonesia.[14] Nor is this simply a matter of inevitable clashes with anachronistic tyrants. The European narrative of democracy is just not always so convincing elsewhere as we care to imagine. If we wish to proselytise our values, therefore, we must expect resistance and conflict.

There are further instruments of soft power which the EU has at its disposal, and which it associates with its civilian and civilising role. Indeed the whole ethos and rationale of EPC/CFSP since 1970 have been about conflict prevention and conflict resolution, even if it has only been expressed in these terms in the last five years or so (although Reinhardt Rummel considers, per contra, that EPC/CFSP has largely been about conflict *management*).[15] The well-established and doggedly pursued policy lines in the Middle East and Central America are cases in point. In the 1990s, however, potential conflicts have proliferated closer to home and some of the EU's instruments have moved towards the hard end of the power-influence continuum.[16] For example:

– Economic sanctions have been easier to impose given Article 228a, introduced by the Maastricht Treaty, which gives them a specific legal basis and clarifies their link to the political process of CFSP. Insofar as they are a useful substitute for war this adds to the repertoire of conflict prevention tools, although it should also be noted that the history of economic sanctions points to their frequent use as cover for an inability to influence events.[17] The sanctions imposed on Serbia from 1991 on are a classic case in point.
– Conditionality has become a regular part of the EU's foreign policy actions, whereby there is now no embarrassment about creating linkages between the granting of aid or privileges and the expectation of better behaviour.[18] This was bluntly evident in 1997 in *Agenda 2000*'s judgement that Slovakia did not satisfy the political side of the Copenhagen criteria, and indeed it

[14] The unpredictable behaviour of democracies towards outsiders is treated in Robert Latham, 'Democracy and war-making: Locating the International Liberal Context', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Summer 1993. For a rather more positive account of democracies 'peaceful' nature, see John MacMillan, 'Democracies don't Fight: A Case of the Wrong Research Agenda?' *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3, July 1996.

[15] Reinhardt Rummel, contribution to a discussion on 'Conflict Prevention: the Need for a CFSP Strategy' in *Conflict Prevention: A Challenge for the European Union* (London: Oxfam and Saferworld, Conference Proceedings, February 1996), p. 24.

[16] Karen E. Smith, 'The Instruments of European Union Foreign Policy', in Jan Zielonka (ed), *Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy* (Kluwer, Amsterdam, 1998).

[17] G.C. Hufbauer and J.J. Schott, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered: History and Current Policy*, (Washington D.C., Institute for International Economics, 1990).

[18] Karen E. Smith, 'The Use of Political Conditionality in the EU's Relations with Third Countries: How Effective?' (1998) 2 EFA Rev, pp. 253–274.

had been clear from 1992, when it was established that all new cooperation and association agreements should contain a clause providing for their suspension in the event of human rights violations. In the Third World from 1990–1998 there were fifteen cases of the EU suspending aid because of coups d'état or other setbacks to democratisation.[19] These instances are only relevant to conflict prevention because of the assumption discussed above that spreading democracy diminishes conflict ipso facto, but conditionality has also begun to be a factor in peace-building in the Balkans. Although the EU, 'the provider *par excellence* of "carrots" in all countries of the region', was unable to prevent the outbreak of war in Kosovo in 1999, it has become abundantly clear to all parties that aid, association agreements and trade concessions all depend on cooperation with the EU, and indeed NATO.[20] The decision of the Yugoslav government in June 2001 to hand over Slobodan Milosevic to the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague in return for promised financial assistance is only the most dramatic instance. The EU is also using its leverage to encourage regional cooperation amongst the states of the region of themselves, so far with limited success. The quarrel between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Greece, although constrained largely by the presence of American troops in the UNPREDEP barrier force, was to some degree defused by the need of both sides for EU economic assistance.[21] On the other hand, the increasingly dangerous tensions between Macedonians and ethnic Albanians have proved more resistant to such pressure, not least because of the presence of non-governmental actors.

– The arrival of Joint Actions, Common Positions and now Common Strategies in the CFSP has spawned new initiatives such as the Stability Process in South-East Europe, while the new post of High Representative, together with the right for the Presidency to negotiate agreements, has heightened the element of diplomatic personality.[22] While conflict prevention is a general strategy of the most comprehensive and long-term kind, it also has limitless particular applications, all of which are likely to be delicate and difficult. Both levels require, as a necessary condition of success, a well-coordinated decision-making system and the capacity for diplomatic finesse. The structural limits of the CFSP as it stands are

[19] Ibid, Table 1, p. 267.

[20] Sophia Clément, *Conflict Prevention in the Balkans: Case Studies of Kosovo and the FYR of Macedonia*, WEU Institute for Security Studies, (Paris, Chaillot Paper No. 30, 1997), p. 76.

[21] David Allen and Michael Smith, 'External Policy Developments', in Neill Nugent (ed), *The European Union 1996: Annual Review of Activities* (Blackwell, Oxford, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 1997), pp. 85–86.

[22] Maximilian H. Schröder, 'CFSP in the Amsterdam Treaty: Handle with Care!', *CFSP Forum*, 2/97 (Institut für Europäische Politik, Bonn, 1997).

well-known: a diversity of specific national concerns; dependency on the Presidency for initiatives and information; confinement in Title V; the lack of an effective defence dimension. Nonetheless, the CFSP system is now more integrated and flexible than its predecessor, and the strategy pursued towards eastern Europe after 1989 shows that economic and political instruments can be used effectively together, even in conjunction with outsiders, where (i) a sense of urgency and priority exists on the merits of an issue, and (ii) the nature of the problem is not itself seriously in dispute – as it was, in the crucial years 1991–1992, in Yugoslavia. It is still, after the limited changes of the Treaties of Amsterdam and Nice, going to be difficult for a conflict prevention strategy to be mounted by the EU using the CFSP and Community instruments, but it is not inherently impossible. The informal elasticity of EPC has been lost since Maastricht, but there have been gains in terms of a clearer intellectual and political structure to the policies undertaken.[23] Decisions on what is to be done, on what are the EU's external priorities, should now seem more concrete both for decision-makers themselves and for outsiders. Yet if the functions of the High Representative and the new Political and Security Committee are genuinely to be developed the elements of ambiguity and confusion will need to be reduced further.

Looking at the EU's conflict prevention instruments as a whole, the picture is not so gloomy. As Michael Smith has said, 'the EU has the economic capacity to reward and to punish; it has the technical and administrative capacity to support and stabilise; and it has the capacity to negotiate in ways unknown to many of the other participants in European order'.[24] It is true that budgetary constraints, national sensitivities and difficulties over translating resources into instruments all serve to inhibit the use of EU capabilities, and sometimes to bring the idea of European foreign policy into disrepute. Nonetheless, the EU has an honourable record of having used its diplomacy to address the root causes of international conflict long before this became a fashionable discourse, and it still has some comparative advantages in the Sisyphean task over other IGOs, and particularly over individual states. Although only the long-term can tell whether conflict prevention in this sense is successful, that is no reason for not attempting it in carefully chosen cases. The key to success, indeed, is in the choice of where to act and where to leave judiciously alone.

[23] Roy Ginsberg, 'The EU's CFSP: The Politics of Procedure', in Martin Holland (ed.), *Common Foreign and Security Policy: the Record and Reforms*, (Cassell, London, 1997) p. 12–33. For a more sceptical view see Simon J. Nuttall, *European Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000), pp. 270–75.

[24] Michael Smith, 'Doing unto Others..? The European Union and Concepts of Negotiated Order in Europe', Inaugural Lecture at the University of Loughborough, 19 February 1997.

V. Conclusions

The study of conflict and how to prevent it has been an academic preoccupation for at least three decades. Now,

> . . . as mainstream scholarly attention has switched from issues of threat manipulation, deterrence and military security and the intellectual problems presented by a loosely bipolar global political system. . . the language and concepts of the discipline [*of conflict analysis*], if not their exact original meaning, are [thus] becoming increasingly familiar in the mouths of media pundits, political leaders and policy advisers.[25]

There is nothing to regret if for once the hard-headed policy community has lifted ideas from academic International Relations – although if a discourse is simply to be appropriated to provide cosmetic disguise for the old banalities of power, or to generate new clichés of togetherness, it will deserve critical exposure. As it happens, the current preoccupation with conflict prevention tends more to enthusiastic extrapolations from the basic concepts of conflict analysis than to cynical exploitation, while it is liberal rationalism which lurks behind the new language, not immutable realism.

A theoretical approach to conflict leads us to identify three dimensions, which can also be expressed as chronological phases: *conflict prevention* looks to prevent violent trials of strength from even breaking out, and is necessarily a long-term project, although it may require urgent interventions at the last minute; *conflict* (and/or *crisis*) *management* is directed towards preventing escalation once conflict has begun, and has been a familiar part of conventional strategic thought since 1962 – it is a short-term, fire-fighting operation; *conflict resolution* is concerned with trying to re-establish peace, preferably on a permanent basis, after the failure of prevention and management strategies. It is largely a matter of the medium term.[26]

We have established that the EU has limited intervention and crisis management capabilities in the short term. The mediation over Yugoslavia in 1991–1992 was no more successful than that over Afghanistan in 1980. Its comparative advantage lies more in the medium term of conflict resolution and (particularly) in the long term of conflict prevention. In the 1990s, the WEU helped out with the implementation of sanctions and by providing non-EU states with a common forum for discussion and socialisation which was more intimate than those of the OSCE and UN. The EU itself has now

[25] Christopher Mitchell, 'Conflict Research' in A.J.R. Groom and Margot Light (eds), *Contemporary International Relations: A Guide to Theory*, (Pinter, London, 1994), pp. 128–141.

[26] The distinction between long-term and short-term prevention, at least, now has an operational assumption. See *Communication from the Commission on Conflict Prevention* (Brussels, European Commission, COM [2001] 211 Final, 11 April 2001.

taken over most of these functions. In principle it has an even wider range of capabilities for working on the rebuilding of shattered relationships and the provision of new structures for a future European order, but it remains to be seen whether it will be able to use them in a way which is at once effective and non-exclusive.

The EU's successful involvement in eastern Europe is a case which holds out hope for the future, although it is to be hoped that 'the power of attraction' does not prove to be two-edged, with the enlargement policy both creating new problems for the EU and alienating those who will, inevitably, be left outside. There is no doubt that, at many different levels and with a range of partners, the EU has engaged fundamentally with the project of stabilising central and eastern Europe.[27] The Commission, individual Member States, CFSP, the WEU, the European Parliament have all taken detailed and concrete measures to help promote the twin conditions of democratisation and development, seen as central to peace-building in the region. And so far, even if they have not always pulled in the same direction, these units of the European 'system' have had a remarkable degree of success, ex-Yugoslavia apart. NATO, the OSCE and the Council of Europe are also key elements of the new mosaic which has emerged in Europe since the Cold War, and some comfort can be taken from the fact that all the major actors, including Russia, seem now to share the same basic assumption, namely that there is no need for the shadow of inter-state conflict to hang over the continent as it did for four decades.

In general the conditionality which has emerged as a result of this process has worked towards pulling together the external relations of the Community and the CFSP despite the two pillars structure. Although it too can backfire through accusations of neo-imperialism, it has the potential when combined with 'positive sanctions' to help shape the attitudes and bargaining positions of the weaker states in the EU's orbit. And here we come to the rub. If the EU is to pursue some form of conflict prevention strategy coherently – and it has little option given its lack of serious military power – then it has to discriminate between where it can add value and where it will simply be wasting resources and inviting a loss of credibility. Moreover geo-politics must be one criterion for choice. The EU has much more scope for preventing and resolving conflicts on its own continent than elsewhere. Difficult as the challenges in Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia have been, they have been more accessible than those in Somalia, Rwanda or even Chechnya.

This is not to say that we should not or cannot intervene in far-away places. Morality is not measured in kilometres. But the EU should be duly cautious about claiming a primary role in regions where its knowledge and instruments

[27] See Karen E. Smith's chapter on 'Conflict Prevention' in her *The Making of European Union Foreign Policy: the Case of Eastern Europe* (Macmillan, London, 1998).

are thinly stretched. It will also need to distinguish between the kind of conflicts which it might be able to damp down, and those which it might be safer to leave well alone, wherever they might be located. The attempt in recent years to move on the inter-communal Cyprus dispute, for example, by linking it to enlargement, is admirable in principle. But it is a high-risk strategy which could make the conflict worse as well as damaging relations with Turkey and stalling the whole enlargement process. Conversely, sometimes one simple ill-considered move can have serious consequences and prove difficult to undo. The willingness to accept the suspension of the Algerian election result in 1991, for example, was not a matter of resources or decision-making but of political judgement. It was intimately connected to issues of conflict prevention, a dimension that was insufficiently appreciated at the time.

The EU's concern with long-term prevention is to some extent *faute de mieux*, and we might question – along the lines of Charles Lindblom's critique of rationality – the liberal planning approach implied in the notion of 'addressing the long-term causes of conflict'. Perhaps disjointed incrementalism would have a better chance of success, and we are just deluding ourselves that the EU's combination of aid, sanctions, diplomatic links and the promise of brotherhood can really prevent conflict breaking out in the face of the atavistic nationalism and geopolitical contradictions that exist in the Balkans, in Cyprus or in Northern Ireland. The alternatives to conflict prevention/resolution may seem worse, but that does not mean that the expenditure of scarce resources on such policies is always justifiable. It is difficult to agree with Oxfam's argument, for example, that 'Lomé has potentially a key role to play in conflict prevention'.[28] Given the very limited resources available for transfers to the ACP countries, and the deep-rooted problems from which many of them suffer, this sounds too much like stretching a cobweb across the mouth of a cannon. It is understandable that the EU should have reacted against 'the high incidence of political, military and humanitarian crisis in ACP countries, which has frustrated much of the development effort made under the previous Lomé Convention.[29] Thus the Cotonou Agreement of 2000 which succeeded Lomé provided for political dialogue between the parties expressly 'to promote peace and to prevent, manage and resolve violent conflict' (Articles 8[5] and 11).[30] Nonetheless it is not inherently constructive to load the tasks of conflict prevention onto every aspect of the EU's external relations, especially those which are already functioning with difficulty. Much valuable work can be done at the

[28] Oxfam, *Partnership 2000: The Future of EU-ACP Relations and Conflict-Prevention* (London, Oxfam & Saferworld, September 1997) p. 1.

[29] Bernd Martenczuk, 'From Lomé to Cotonou: the ACP–EC Partnership Agreement in a Legal Perspective', (2000) 4 EFA Rev, p. 466.

[30] Quoted in Martenczuk, op.cit. p. 468.

micro level, as with restrictions on small arms sales or police training.[31] But approaches to the prevention of conflict always need contextualising, and we should distinguish between what can seriously be expected of the EU and what cannot. Conversely, where we decide that a conflict cannot be prevented or halted, as in Algeria, it may still have significant consequences for Europe's foreign policy and its moral identity. As so often in politics, it is the ability to discriminate which matters.

In the end, the best form of conflict prevention is the spread of the belief that violent conflict is counter-productive and that other priorities and values are more important. The EU can legitimately hope to help promote this belief in the long term, and by a variety of means, many indirect.[32] In the short and medium term, the issues are more pressing and the dilemmas much sharper. If, however, the EU and its Member States maintain a sense of priorities, and do not allow themselves to be carried away by their own rhetoric, then they possess an unusual capacity to 'make a difference'.

[31] See Malcolm Chalmers, 'External Actors and Security Sector Reform in the Perspective of ACP–EU Relations', in Michael Lund and Guenola Rasamoelina (eds), *The Impact of Conflict Prevention Policy: Cases, Measures, Assessments. SWP-CPN Yearbook 1999–2000* (Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2000) pp. 129–155.

[32] The High Representative, Javier Solana, called at the General Affairs Council on 22 January 2001 for 'an active and comprehensive policy on conflict prevention' <http://ue.eu.int/newsroom> and indeed the Goteborg Council of the following 16 June did endorse the 'EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts', prepared by the Swedish Presidency (Conclusions of the European Council, 16 June 2001, <http://ue.eu.int/>) which is on the face of it a detailed and serious catalogue of measures to be taken by Council, Commission and Member States – and one intended to be followed up regularly. It is to be hoped that these admirable intentions prove capable of realisation given the mass of issues and procedures being taken on. They amount to perhaps the most sustained and practical attempt to eradicate the causes of war yet made, after a century of irenic idealism.