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Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy

The European Union:  
A New Type of International Actor

RICHARD ROSECRANCE

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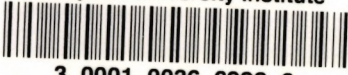
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**Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy**

**The European Union:  
A New Type of International Actor**

**RICHARD ROSECRANCE**

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**BADIA FIESOLANA, SAN DOMENICO (FI)**

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European University Institute  
Badia Fiesolana  
I - 50016 San Domenico (FI)  
Italy**

In this paper I seek to make three fundamental points: (1) that there has not been and probably will not be a common European foreign or defence policy; (2) that Europe nonetheless has unique and unparalleled foreign policy strengths; (3) that these strengths are in the process of helping to reshape the contours of the wider international system.

### **The Failure of EU to Develop a Common Foreign and Defence Policy**

The European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is a misnomer. Europe does not speak with one voice on either foreign policy or defence problems. CFSP is an acronym without empirical content. As any student of the integration of Europe knows, there remain important foreign policy differences among France, Britain, and Germany, to say nothing of other member countries. The European Commission's view does not accord with national policies. Greece has a uniquely hostile view of Turkey. Germany has an especially friendly view of Croatia. Britain and France disagree about the American role in Europe. When European states reach a tentative accord, as they have done from time to time on the Middle East, it is a least-common-denominator agreement that has little influence on world politics. There is no prospect of a single European foreign policy. It is even more unlikely that there will be a common defence policy with a single finger on the European (in this case British and French) nuclear trigger.

With the end of the Cold War, it is even less probable that a common foreign policy consensus will be forged. There is no major foe to the East which forces European states to concert and reach agreement. The United States is not the substitute enemy which might cause Europe to do so, nor is Japan or China.

### **European's Continuing Economic and Political Problems**

Other problems continue to reverberate within the European Union. The Maastricht Treaty and the movement toward European Monetary Union have not solved economic problems. As long as unemployment remains high, there will be agitation for welfare solutions that may be beyond the capabilities of either Member States or of the EU to provide. In one sense, the creation of a common currency (the Euro) in 1999 will make these problems harder, not easier to solve. It will demand greater fiscal discipline and monetary stringency (by the European Central Bank) to launch the Euro at a time when Member States will want fiscal leniency. The Stability Pact will keep the pressure on member governments to hold their deficits down. Some outside observers

believe that Europe is too narrowly focused on monetary unity - which imposes great fiscal discipline - when it should be solving domestic problems of unemployment through greater economic growth.

### **Foreign Policy Strengths of EU: Reversing the Balance of Power**

At the same time, if EU does not have a common foreign policy, it has an extremely felicitous influence upon the external world. It represents a magnetic force in world politics, attracting in disparate countries that otherwise might remain apart. Typically, any growing locus of confederal or federal power might have been expected to cause Balance of Power effects directed against it. When such conditions emerge, historians and analysts expect the formation of opposing alliances and the rearmament of excluded powers. Opposition should have been expressed toward the uniting centre. Peripheral parties should have been forced away.

In Europe's case, however, neither of these has occurred. In very surprising fashion, Europe has reversed the Balance of Power and drawn other nations into its web of economic and political associations. Countries want to join or to be linked with Europe, not to oppose it. Peripheral countries have been centripetally attracted to the European centre, not driven away from it.

Some Europeans speculate that the United States is not pleased with European unity and that America is likely to respond negatively to further integration. The United States, it is said, prefers to deal with individual states, not with the cumbersome European apparatus. Some also claim that the United States is worried that Brussels will emerge as a rival in the Far East, manipulating relationships with China and Japan to the disadvantage of North America. If this were true, NATO would be in ruins, and there would be few trade successes under the auspices of GATT-WTO, both of which depend upon close European-American cooperation. In fact, as Europe draws together, the United States is also drawn closer to Europe in both economic and political terms. The success of EMU and the common currency will require an American response. The Trans-Atlantic Free Trade Area (TAFTA) project is just one such possibility for new relationships.

Historically the reaction to the uniting of Europe is virtually unparalleled. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the joining of British colonies-states into what became the United States of America did not make friends with the French, British-Canadian, or Spanish territories located next to them. As the United States strengthened and territorially moved westward - to achieve its so-called



'manifest destiny' - Balance of Power effects led to war with Canada in 1812 and tension in the 1840s. It produced the war with Mexico in 1846. The centralisation of the Northern states of the Union also caused a reaction in the South. The victory of the high-tariff, anti-slavery Republican Party<sup>1</sup> in 1860 evoked Southern secession and produced the American Civil War. Nearly half the country wanted to leave the union, a dispute that almost resulted in the break-up of the United States in the Civil War, 1861-1865.

In other cases, Balance of Power effects also emerged in response to the rise of an amalgamating centre. Napoleon's continental system and the Berlin Decrees of 1807 held out the possibility of a single tariff and trading zone for Western Europe. It protected continental industries and allowed them to strengthen themselves against powerful British competitors. This prospective result, however, did not encourage either Russia or Great Britain to join. Instead they acted to oppose the federalising centre directed by the French Emperor, and this in turn led to the final battles of the Napoleonic Wars. In the 20th century, neither the Japanese nor the German trading blocs of the 1930s inspired outsiders to seek to join. Instead, where they could, they opposed the extension of the two different 'co-prosperity spheres,' and the result was the Second World War.

Of course, an alert reader of these last two paragraphs will already have offered a solution to the problems presented. She will claim that Balance of Power effects only emerged against a single decision-making centre, and not in response to economic integration of a more decentralised kind. It was Hitler's or Tojo's prospective autocratic rule of Europe or East Asia that caused a negative response from outsiders, not economic integration, per se. It was Napoleon's imperium that evoked resistance, not his economic policies. In the American context, US military and political expansion in North and Central America generated opposition, not economic unity as such. This reader, continuing the argument, will then assert that since the European Union does not have a single leader or decision-maker, its policies pose no threat to others, and one would not, in those circumstances, expect Balance of Power effects to emerge.

There is unquestionably something in this point of view, but it overlooks important exceptions to its application. As we know, the United States did not oppose European unification after World War II; it surprisingly endorsed and fostered it. The Marshall Plan would only succeed if the trade barriers dividing Europe were lowered or abolished. It would work even better if there were political unity in Europe. Dimly, as Max Beloff tells us, the United States was aware that it was possibly acting to create a third bloc in world politics independent of the other two, but it still proceeded.<sup>2</sup> Later, President Kennedy's

'dumbbell theory' was predicated on a fully independent, integrated, and sovereign Europe. More recently and even more significantly, Soviet policy should have been expected to follow Balance of Power policies against the uniting and increasingly powerful Europe. The USSR should have opposed the reunification of an independent Germany located within the Western alliance, but it did not. It acquiesced in a single decision-making centre for a reunited, strong, and potentially hegemonic Germany, its hated opponent in the Second World War.

In addition, there seems to be no correlation between Europe's integrative quality and the willingness of others to join (or not to oppose) it. Outsiders did not merely want to become members of the Community when it favoured 'enlargement' over 'deepening.' As the integrative quality proposed or achieved was increased, so too was the desire of outsiders to be included. There were no balance of power reactions directed at a Europe which (after the Maastricht Treaty) aimed at a much higher degree of both economic and political union. Outsiders did not balk at a European Court with the power of judicial review, or at monetary union directed by a single Central Bank.

There is nonetheless, something in the view that economic and political unity have different external effects. In economic terms, an established core of centralised and open markets--in trade and finance--draws others in. They want to participate in and benefit from the growing market. Despite what is said about the impact of economic globalisation, there are still propinquity effects. The countries that are near a high income economy benefit more (in terms of per capita income) than those further away.<sup>3</sup> As income grows, others are attracted to join. Hence as the Canadian-American Free Trade Area succeeded, NAFTA became possible. As NAFTA and EU both succeed, a Trans-Atlantic Free Trade Area becomes more feasible and desirable. Centralised wealth leads others to seek to market and finance their goods in the centre. It has centripetal effects in economic terms. This is why the Third World, distant from the centre of the world economy, has benefited so little from participation in it. In financial and market terms the Third World has also had little to offer. It lacks buying power, and this is what attracts capital and goods from other nations.

In politics and international relations a reverse result has been typically observed. Rather than seeking a further centralisation, power seeks to fill a vacuum. It also tends to oppose strong and concentrated strength. The Balance of Power seeks to distribute power centrifugally, to diffuse it more or less evenly throughout the system.

In the European case, the magnetic force of economics has dominated the divisive force of politics. This in itself is tribute to the greater degree of European economic integration than political unity. It may also be a signal that political unity is not needed for the European Union to have a major effect upon international relations, both within Europe and outside it.

### **EU's Effects on the World-wide Balance**

Thus, we have a reversal of the Balance of Power on the periphery of Europe,<sup>4</sup> with outsiders increasingly drawn in. But let us, for the sake of argument, concede that the integration of the European Union could produce a Balance of Power reaction directed against the enlarging centre. What then would occur?

To evaluate this question historically, one must remember that no aggressor in the past (with the possible exception of Rome) ever possessed as much as one-half of the power in the then civilised world. Napoleon did not achieve an overbalance. Powers on the wings, Russia and Great Britain, had more than enough strength to bring him (as they eventually did) to heel. Wilhelmine Germany did not acquire it. The Triple Entente of Russia, France, and Britain was stronger than the Dual Alliance at the beginning of World War I.<sup>5</sup> When in 1917, the Triple Entente lost Russian support with the beginning of the Revolution, it more than made up for the deficiency by recruiting the United States to the alliance. Even the British Empire at its height (in 1897) had accumulated no more than one quarter of the world's land area and about one seventh of its population. Earlier in the century when England was the first and only industrial nation, London never possessed more than about one quarter of world gross domestic product.<sup>6</sup> Hitler's territorial conquests never even matched the scope enjoyed by the British Empire. And in terms of GDP, Nazi Germany was less strong than Soviet Russia or the United States individually. Japan's alliance did not tip the balance in favour of Hitler. After the war, Stalin ruled the largest country in the world and presided over Eastern Europe; his territorial reach extended into China. Even then, his power did not come close to rivalling that of the United States by itself. Thus in the past (again with the Roman exception) a potential aggressor could always be opposed by 60-75 per cent of world power if the other countries united against him.

In the future, however, this may no longer be the case. Under these novel conditions, even political and military power might begin to attract, rather than to repel others. Suppose we hypothesise that a core of cooperators is formed to include the United States and the European Union, and that Japan is brought into the group (no doubt for economic as well as political reasons.) This core

coalition would then constitute about half of world gross domestic product. What then would be the policy of Russia, a nation with a far smaller GDP and small and ineffective armed forces? If for reasons of access to capital, technology, and markets it seeks to join the core group, what will be the impact upon China? There is a point at which the central core accumulates more than 50-60% of world economic and political power. At that point, others need to be associated with the strong central coalition. If China joins, India would also need to participate. Brazil and even Iran would not have viable alternatives. In this way, centralised economic power could have the long term effect of creating centralised political power. And at the centre would be Europe, a new type of international actor.

### **Stability, International Theory, and Europe**

In the past, two different methods have been used to create stability in world politics. The first of these stresses deterrence or punishment mechanisms directed at countries which violate established boundaries or customary usages among nations.<sup>7</sup> The second emphasises reward or reinforcement techniques.<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Boulding believed that the threat to punish another actor if it crossed a particular deterrent line in world politics could lead to threat-counterthreat responses and to the gradual escalation of conflict between sides.<sup>9</sup> Michael Howard contended that in Europe, deterrence of the Soviet Union was not enough. The adversary should also be reassured of the pacific intentions of the Western alliance.<sup>10</sup> Where psychological attitudes play a role in the leader's policy, analysts believe that the graduated reduction of international tensions (GRIT), will come to depend upon reciprocal concessions, not just on threat.<sup>11</sup>

It is well known that stability cannot be provided by reinforcement and reward alone. Neville Chamberlain's failure to appease Adolf Hitler makes that point amply clear. The 'norm of reciprocity'<sup>12</sup> probably applies in relations among international leaders. To be successful, however, it cannot be unconditional reciprocity.<sup>13</sup> In particular conditions, specific reciprocity may be required in preference to diffuse reciprocity.<sup>14</sup> Countries are sometimes asked to respond in particular ways to the concessions made by others. In addition, the system needs to apply some form of sanction if violations of accepted codes of behaviour occur.

The question remains, however, how this can be done in a disinterested manner. National punishment of unilateral violations of established frontiers and norms has not been uniformly successful in the past, to say the least. For some observers, it was national attempts to enforce a Balance of Power which

led directly to World Wars I and II.<sup>15</sup> International balancing efforts, and the theory of collective security have also been remarkably unsuccessful.<sup>16</sup> National efforts are hard to distinguish from ex parte action, and international efforts are vulnerable to collective goods and free rider problems. Parties on the sidelines are initially tempted to placate the aggressor, not to balance against him.<sup>17</sup> Countries do not generally believe in the collective security maxim: 'peace is indivisible.'

If universal and also national sanctions are ineffective, is there something in between? It is precisely this intermediate realm that is occupied by a variety of more or less exclusive international clubs, headed by the European Union. Such organisations enjoy a legitimacy that universal organisations do not fully possess. In the future, I believe that stability in world politics will increasingly be provided by the existence and operation of overlapping clubs in various regions of the world. Of course, for these to be successful, there must also be a background level of military disincentives to dissuade hostile action. National forces, NATO, and the possibility of UN intervention must remain both as symbol and fact.

The positive task of reshaping international behaviour, however, could then be undertaken by one or more 'clubs' of nations. The nice thing about clubs (as everyone recognises) is that one has to meet the admission requirements to become a member. To succeed, clubs must be exclusive.<sup>18</sup> Everybody cannot join. Some nations do not reside in the appropriate geographic area. Others do not meet economic or political criteria. The American comedian, Groucho Marx, understood this. He was dubious about joining any club that was willing to extend membership to him: for then it would not be exclusive enough!

As we have already seen, nations react unsympathetically when one national actor tells them to change their behaviour. Unilateral conditionality tends to be resisted. But when conditionality is demanded by a multilateral organisation - as the price of membership in a favoured group which provides technology or capital--there is much less resistance.<sup>19</sup> Even a weak Italian Government may be able to pass a 'Europe tax', but it has difficulty cutting spending and adopting new taxes for purely domestic programs. Italians generally recognise that being one of the charter members of the European Monetary Union is a great political prize, and they may be willing to sacrifice to achieve it.

Such mechanisms have little impact, however, unless they can be generalised. It is possible that they will not be. Russia and China may stand

aloof from world coalitions or may act to oppose a central group. Russia is likely to be excluded from NATO and from membership in the European Union. China may find difficulties in entering the World Trade Organisation on favourable terms. A dissatisfied group of Russia, China and Iran could emerge in time.<sup>20</sup>

If such a coalition were opposed to economic globalisation, the free flow of capital, enforcement of contracts, and the transfer of technology, however, it would become a self-defeating organisation. The generally recognised lesson of the Soviet experience was that isolation from the world economy was a disaster. After the stage of heavy industrialisation in which Russia did achieve rapid growth rates, the Soviet economy greatly slowed down, largely because it was isolated from new technological developments and sources of foreign capital. It was saddled with inefficient government ownership and control of industry. Closed to the outside world, it succeeded in exporting nothing but raw materials and minerals.

China appears resolved not to follow the Soviet course and allow its own economy to become isolated. The reintegration of Hong Kong, if managed properly, will further open up the Chinese economic system to the rest of the world. China will benefit from joining the WTO and gaining dependable most favoured nation treatment. Russia will also need to participate in international economic clubs to have access to capital supplies on a world-wide basis. Both countries will have to attain new standards of economic transparency to join.

It is therefore somewhat more likely that an 'encompassing coalition' (generated by common economic interests) will be formed and maintained in world politics than that there will be divisions among Great Powers and the creation of new opposing alliance systems. There has not been such an encompassing coalition since the breakdown of the Concert of Europe after 1848. Despite the ratification of the League Covenant and the establishment of the League of Nations Council, that encompassing coalition could not be put back together after 1918. The United States did not join. Britain and France disagreed with each other over the treatment of Germany. Newly Communist Russia went its own isolated and hostile way.

After the Second World War, the Big Five of the United Nations Security Council did not continue to work together, owing to the outbreak of the Cold War. It was not until the 1990s that the division of the world into two hostile and competing camps was overcome. As a result, there is the possibility of creating a new encompassing coalition in world politics for the first time in 150 years.

It still appears, moreover, that Russia and China want to become members of the top club. Prestige and economic access are important to them equally with traditional political goals. Chinese territorial expansion in the South China Sea would jeopardise those objectives, as would the use of force to recapture Taiwan. A Russian attempt to force members of the present Commonwealth of Independent States to rejoin the old Soviet Union would also set back the reintegration of Russia into the world economy and block her membership into the top group of nations.

How can an encompassing coalition of the future be held together? Along with background military deterrence directed against hostile action, there are important positive incentives to improve national behaviour. These can be offered through a consolidation of overlapping clubs. The world cannot simply tell China what to do. But the world can note that the requirements of joining the WTO as a developed country involve much greater economic transparency, together with full convertibility of the national currency. Chinese control of inflation must be much greater than has been achieved in recent years. Nor can nations tell Russia what to do. But the International Monetary Fund does not have to provide loans to a country which cannot collect the bulk of its own taxes. Observers can point out that all present members of the Group of Seven have democratic, stable governments, low inflation, valued currencies, and relatively low government indebtedness relative to GDP. If Russia wants to become a member, it will have to achieve these or similar standards of economic and political performance.

### **The Centrality of Europe**

Europe occupies the pivotal role in the structure of overlapping clubs. The requirements for joining the European Monetary Union are the most arduous admission standards for any international organisation. Thus, in establishing EMU, member nations have created the most exclusive international club. Its standards set the highest benchmark for economic achievement of all countries, not just for those in Europe. They have set the conditions by which the economic success of all other nations and regions will be judged. In this way Europe has become the most economically attractive region in world politics.

What does this mean in practical terms? It does not mean that Europe's economies have solved problems of rigidities in the labour market or that reform of Europe's social programs is not desirable. It does not suggest that the problem of chronic unemployment has been resolved. European technology still lags behind the achievements of American and Japanese technology.

Europe's attainment is normative rather than empirical. Its attractive force is very great, and others will seek to be associated with it. Of course Russia cannot become a full member of the European Union. It cannot even be an Associate Member. But does this rule out the extension of a single European market beyond the Urals? If we speak of developments in the 21st century, the answer cannot be a negative one. Of course, the United States cannot join. But a TAFTA linking Europe and North America cannot be ruled out as the European economy and market become both more exclusive and attractive. Of course, China become a member of the EU. But the standards imposed upon the central members of EMU (the inner core of Europe) may well be the standards that will, directly or indirectly, ultimately come to be imposed upon China. Will China resent the imposition? Perhaps. But it may also come to recognise that such standards are unavoidable if one wants to be a member of the Top Club in world politics.

It is perhaps a paradox to note that the continent which once ruled the world through the physical impositions of imperialism is now coming to set world standards in normative terms. There is perhaps a new form of European symbolic and institutional dominance even though the political form has entirely vanished.



## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Strictly, of course, the Republican Party was not anti-slavery, but it was against the extension of slavery to new territories-states.

<sup>2</sup> See Max Beloff, *The United States and the Unity of Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1963).

<sup>3</sup> This is the reflection of the operation of the 'gravity model' observed in the work of Edward Leamer. See among others, E Leamer, 'U.S. Manufacturing and an Emerging Mexico,' *North American Journal of Economics and Finance* 4:1 (1993): 54-62.

<sup>4</sup> An important distinction has to be made here between the impact of a federalizing EU and the effect of NATO. NATO, a military alliance, may well, at least in principle, evoke Balance of Power effects. Thus, the admission of Poland or even the Baltic countries to EU presents no problems for Russia. Their admission to NATO, however, raises questions and causes opposition in Moscow.

<sup>5</sup> See Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987).

<sup>6</sup> See Paul Bairoch, 'Europe's Gross National Product: 1800-1975,' *Journal of European Economic History* 5 (1976).

<sup>7</sup> For a recent reinteraction of this view see Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 1995). Ludwig Dehio offers similar views in *The Precarious Balance* (London: Chatto & Windus 1963).

<sup>8</sup> See Kenneth Boulding, *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory* (New York: Harper, 1962), and the critique of deterrence offered by Karl W. Deutsch, *The Analysis of International Relations* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1978). See also N. Lebow and Janice Stein, 'Deterrence and the Cold War,' *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer, 1995). A further application of this point is provided by Deborah Larson in *Anatomy of Mistrust: US-Soviet Relations during the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> See Kenneth Boulding, 'The Weapon as an Element in the Social System' in *The Future of the International Strategic System*, ed. Richard Rosecrance (Chandler: San Francisco, 1972).

<sup>10</sup> See Michael Howard, 'Reassurance and Deterrence: Western Defense in the 1980s' *Foreign Affairs* 61 (Winter, 1982/83).

<sup>11</sup> See particularly, Deborah Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust*.

<sup>12</sup> See George Homans, *The Human Group* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950) and J.K. Chadwick Jones *Social Exchange Theory: Its Structure and Influence in Social Psychology* (London: Academic Press, 1976).

<sup>13</sup> See Alexander George, *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> See Stephen Krasner, 'Assymetries in Japanese-American Trade: The Case for Specific Reciprocity' Policy Paper No. 32, Institute of International Studies (University of California, Berkeley.), 1987.

<sup>15</sup> See Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein, 'Beyond Realism: the Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy' in *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* eds. R. Rosecrance and A. Stein (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> For contrasting views see Inis Claude, *Swords into Ploughshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization* (New York: Random House, 1971) (and Kupchan and Kupchan article in *IS*. See also R. Rosecrance and C. Low, 'Balancing, Stability, and War: The Mysterious Case of the Napoleonic International System' *International Studies Quarterly*, (December, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> See the work of Paul Schroeder, particularly 'Historical Reality vs Neo-Realist Theory,' *International Security* Summer, 1994.

<sup>18</sup> As the Grand Inquisitor laments in *The Gondoliers*: 'When everybody's somebody, nobody's anybody.'

<sup>19</sup> See Karen Smith's essay in this volume.

<sup>20</sup> See Samuel Huntington *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

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