

Franco-British Council

What do we want from Europe?
French and British attitudes

Report of a seminar held in London

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What do we want from Europe?

David Goodhart

Introduction

What do we want from Europe? One might have expected rather different answers to this question from the French and British participants at this conference in the light of the two countries' very different experiences of the European Union.

There were, of course, plenty of disagreements - most notably over European defence and the desirability of creating a more overt European government - but these were just as much within as between the national groups.

But perhaps one should not have been surprised. Although Anglo-French history has been one of rivalry and conflict for much of the past 1,000 years - including in a more civilised manner inside the EU over the past 30 years - the conflicts of recent times have derived at least as much from our similarities as our differences.

Of the larger nation states in the EU it is Britain and France that have the longest and proudest histories. Unlike most other EU states they have within living memory ruled over significant territorial empires. Both states have been rule givers rather than rule takers, subjects of history rather than objects. For this reason both states were destined to have great difficulty adapting to a multi-national association like the EU.

France dealt with this problem by becoming the political leader of Europe in the first 40 years of European integration. This leadership role made it possible to sell a partly supra-national enterprise to a highly nationalistic country. The idea of Europe was sold as an extension of the French state.

Britain dealt with the problem by remaining semi-detached from the process of European integration. It remained psychologically and geo-politically aloof. Both the elite and the ordinary voter were inclined to see Europe as something outside, a club which one joined for purely instrumental and largely economic reasons.

The last ten years have rendered both countries' Europe strategies obsolete. The difficulty for France is that following its reunification Germany is no longer ready to take a politically subordinate role, (while Blair's Britain wants a seat at the high table too). The difficulty for Britain is that the events of the past 10 years - the completion of the single market, the arrival of the euro and enlargement - have made it clear that the EU is more than just an economic

club and that the basis on which it has been sold in Britain is false.

Both countries - the two most nationalistic of the larger EU states - thus suffer from a legitimacy problem in relation to their membership of the EU. This is particularly acute in Britain as it joined later and has benefited less than most of the other big EU states. But France's legitimacy gap is also widening, illustrated by the narrowness of the vote to support joining the euro in September 1992 and the strength of strongly anti-EU political movements and parties.

If the two countries share an EU legitimacy problem based on their respective commitments to the nation state it is no surprise that they also share a broadly similar approach to EU governance - namely 'inter-governmentalism - plus.' In other words a belief that the EU has a supra-national element represented by the Commission and related institutions but that it remains an association of nation states with its real core of legitimacy in the inter-governmental council of ministers.

A related area of agreement between Britain and France - reflected in the St Malo agreement of 1998 - is in the field of military and security thinking. Both countries see this as an area of comparative advantage for themselves in the EU - as both have highly effective, well trained and much admired armed forces. The idea of a European rapid reaction force appeals to the political elites of the two countries, both in itself and as a way of establishing a broader European legitimacy, through their status and authority in the field of defence and security.

However there is also a *divergence* here arising from the different interests and traditions of the two countries in relation to the US. Since Suez, Britain has been loath to challenge its special relationship with the US by taking action that may be opposed by America. In contrast, France has had a far more stormy and independent relationship with the US - reflected in its attitude towards NATO and the belief of large parts of the French elite that a French-led Europe should represent a friendly but *alternative* source of power and values to the US.

We heard rather little of this argument about European versus American values in the course of the conference, although it was raised at the end and then by the French Europe minister, Pierre Moscovici. Indeed, as has already been suggested, the combination of the individuals chosen to represent the two countries and the themes chosen for discussion seemed to conspire to produce a large amount of agreement at least along the national axis. There were two main themes of the conference: first, the growing gap between people and elites on European integration and what should be done about the legitimacy problem this is creating in both countries; second, the creation of a European defence and security dimension and the impact this will have on

global governance and relations with the US. The latter debate was partly overshadowed by the events of 11 September, which may account for the reluctance to tackle more vigorously the differences between Britain and France on relations with America.

Legitimacy and reform of European Institutions

The conference wasted little time considering whether there was a growing gap between the citizens and institutions of Europe. It was a widely shared premise of the participants that Europe was a jargon-ridden, self-obsessed, distant set of institutions, which needed to be brought closer to the citizens, made more relevant and (in many but not all eyes) more 'social' too. Much of the first day was then spent discussing what changes in both form and content of the EU could help to produce such outcomes.

But before moving on to discuss remedies we paused briefly for a more detailed examination of public attitudes towards the EU in Britain and France.

A French participant described a recent exercise that had taken place in France. This was a government-sponsored study of public expectations of Europe involving website questionnaires and regional debates. The report was due to be produced in November 2001 but early findings indicated that the general public in France was ill-informed and inclined to complain about Europe. There was however a hunger for more information, especially from younger people.

Although British opinion is predictably unenthusiastic about Europe - with only just over half saying they would vote in favour of staying in if there was a referendum tomorrow - the opposition to the EU is also rather 'soft.' Britain turns out to be the 'don't know' capital of Europe with as many as 30 per cent of those polled saying they have no opinion about whether the EU has been good or bad for Britain. One reason for this - which came up in discussion later - is that the EU still has surprisingly little relevance to the areas that are the meat and drink of national politics: health, education, fiscal policy, redistribution, crime. Europe may be beginning to encroach on the outer edges of some of these areas but in daily life it can still seem pretty irrelevant unless you are a businessman or a farmer or a public official.

On the positive side, 53 per cent of Britons think that Europe is more important than the US to Britain's future compared to 36 per cent the other way round. (It is interesting to think what that figure might have been in 1950.) Also, and rather oddly, although only just over half support staying in the EU, as many as 66 per cent support the idea of being 'at the heart' of Europe. Such figures give some cheer to supporters of the euro who point out that although there is still a large majority against joining the euro, only 30 per cent believe that they could not be persuaded to change their mind.

A brief discussion followed on the reasons for the lack of enthusiasm for the European enterprise in both countries, before moving on to what to do about it. One participant pointed out how duplicitous national governments are in their dealings with the EU: whenever good things come from Europe national politicians claim the credit themselves and whenever bad or unpopular things come from Europe they are disowned. Such behaviour means that Europe is rarely seen or reported in a mature way.

Others pointed to the lack of a historical consciousness, especially in Britain where history in schools is only compulsory up to the age of 14; to the fact that the peace, prosperity and democracy cemented by the EU are now taken for granted; to the fact that the EU is poking its nose into too many nooks and crannies of national life (from lead pipes to animal welfare) that it should leave alone; and, finally, to the fact that the EU has been too closely associated with neo-liberal economics, too associated with efficiency and not enough with security. (One more optimistic voice pointed out that while many of the above points were true it is also the case that a casual form of European cultural integration is now well established - it is estimated that 10 per cent of all 15 to 17 year olds in the EU have had a relationship with someone from another EU country.)

Is there an institutional remedy to the problem of popular alienation from the process of European integration? Discussion now focussed in on two aspects of institutional reform: the creation of something resembling a European government structure, and the creation of a second chamber of the European Parliament to function as a link between EU-urope and the nation state. The dilemma hovering behind the discussion was this. The EU needs to become more effective to solve the problems its citizens have set it. To become more effective it needs to create new institutions that draw upon the democratic legitimacy of the nation state. But in creating these new supra-national institutions it risks undermining the nation state from which the new institutions ultimately derive their legitimacy.

On this theme, at least, our two national 'teams' conformed to national stereotype - the French seemed far more interested in new institution building and the British worried away at the legitimacy problem.

A European government? It already exists in the uneasy co-existence of the inter-governmental institutions of the council of ministers and the purely EU institutions of the Commission, the Parliament, the European Court of Justice and now the European central bank. Those who want to see a cleaner and more effective European government advocate the following reforms:

- A merger of the council of ministers and the Commission, with (in some versions) an elected president of the Commission sitting atop this

combined body. The Commission would be streamlined with at most one representative per country. National European ministers would replace the existing system of civil servant 'permanent representatives' who organise the council of ministers business behind the scenes.

- A further reduction in the national veto and an increase in Qualified Majority Voting (QMV).
- Alongside these rather technical changes would come a European constitution and a new court to decide on issues of subsidiarity (whether an issue should be dealt with at a European or a national level).
- Finally, it was generally agreed that these new institutions would need a great deal more openness and transparency if they were ever to win the trust of the European public.

There was a limited amount of common ground in all of this. For example, there was a wide agreement on a new legal function to decide on subsidiarity. But should this be in the existing Commission or the European Court of Justice (ECJ) or did it require a new court? The consensus seemed to be that the Commission and the ECJ would be too committed to European integration and that a new body was required something along the lines of the German constitutional court. Similarly, some people argued that QMV had already been extended as far as it could be with unanimity now limited to the admission of new members, treaty changes and tax issues.

However, underlying these technical differences were two much more fundamental disagreements. Several British participants argued that the attempt to create a more effective European government was misconceived - there *is* no European demos and it is therefore misconceived to use the language of the state for the EU. Moreover, while the EU frames some of the macro rules within which economic and geopolitical life now takes place it still has surprisingly little direct impact on the lives of the citizens. The things that interest domestic electorates - health, social security, tax, education, street crime, distributional policy - are all overwhelmingly national policy areas. On this account the issue is not so much tackling the democratic deficit - as if Europe was a state with a restricted franchise - but increasing legitimacy by being more effective at the limited things that Europe does.

The second fundamental critique of the European government idea centres on the current failure of democratic accountability - the so-called 'democratic deficit.' This argument implicitly accepts that there is or at least can be a European demos but its voice is currently too muffled. So the issue here is not so much the balance of power between Commission, council of ministers and Parliament, it is the draining away of popular

support for EU-ropé. The figures are well known but still rather shocking. The average turn-out in elections to the European Parliament has fallen from 63 per cent in 1979 to 49 per cent in 1999. (France is slightly under the average at 47 per cent, Britain more dramatically so at 24 per cent with parts of Liverpool as low as 8 per cent.)

Why is this? Because the European Parliament does not - unlike most national assemblies - choose a government nor does it determine the allocation of sufficient sums to impact on the lives of most European citizens nor does it seem to scrutinise the legislation that matters. Of course it does some of all those things: it is starting to have a role in endorsing the president of the Commission and can sack the whole Commission (as it memorably did the Santer Commission); it does scrutinise legislation and allocate budgets but not on a scale that has much impact on the average EU citizen - the EU's total budget of Euro 89billion (c£53billion) remains a fraction of the state spending of Britain (£400billion) or France (FF4867billion).

The affairs of the European Parliament indeed of EU-ropé in general remain necessarily rather remote and technical and are not extensively covered in the national press of most EU countries. Also because the EU is a mixture of supra-national power (the Commission, ECJ etc) and delegated national power (the councils of ministers) its power is wielded by a hybrid mix of officials and elected representatives. Most national democracies distinguish very strictly between officials and elected representatives.

Many enthusiasts for European integration (including in France) see the solution to the democratic deficit in more direct election of European representatives, starting with the president of the Commission, and then moving on to the development of proper Europe-wide political parties. But to those who worry more about legitimacy than the democratic deficit (including most elite opinion in Britain) this answer presupposes the European consciousness or demos that it hopes to evoke.

The discussion then led on to one widely canvassed solution to the problem of EU-ropéan remoteness - the establishment of a European second chamber made up of national Parliamentarians. This provides an answer of a kind to both the legitimacy problem and, to a lesser extent, the democratic deficit problem - although in a manner that is friendlier to inter-governmentalists than to federalists. There seemed to be relatively few true federalists in either the British or French groups which perhaps explains why the second chamber idea found a resoundingly positive echo, at least once some fears about its structure had been shown to be groundless.

A French participant spelt out the argument for the second chamber most comprehensively. The attraction of the second chamber - as endorsed by Joschka Fischer, Jacques Chirac, Tony Blair and Lionel Jospin among many others - is that it is a means of reconnecting European democratic procedures to national ones. It is not just a national supplement to the European Parliament, which can often seem very remote, it is also a way of introducing some more national scrutiny to the inter-governmental pillars two and three of the EU (home affairs and defence) which currently fall outside the remit of the European Parliament and therefore attract very little scrutiny at all.

In brief summary here is a list of reasons for the second chamber. First, to anchor EU-rope better in each country. A second chamber would restore the link between national Parliaments and the EU institutions which was weakened by the direct election to the European Parliament which began in 1979. Second, because member states would be represented equally in the second chamber (as in the US senate) it would help to create more harmony between big and small states in the EU especially at a time when the big states have been demanding more power. Third, the present institutions of the EU tend towards centralisation, and a second chamber composed of national Parliamentarians would counteract that tendency.

What powers should the second chamber have? Above all it would apply the principle of subsidiarity to European legislation in co-ordination with whatever new legal institution is given the task. It should have a debating and consultative function in the field of foreign and security policy as well as justice and home affairs. It should also hold general 'state of the union' debates and take over some of the functions of the WEU assembly and the Conference of European Affairs Committee (Cosac). Members of the second chamber should be prominent members of their national Parliament. The second chamber should meet about six times a year.

The anxieties of some participants that a second chamber would further complicate the already complex power structure of the EU was partly answered by the strong commitment to a predominantly *consultative* second chamber from its proponents. A French participant said that the experience of the convention in France to discuss the drafting of a European constitution had been surprisingly successful and had converted him to the idea of a European second chamber. There were some reservations expressed: one participant said that he worried about the further reduction in power and authority of the Commission, another expressed doubt about the compatibility of the second chamber's subsidiarity function with that of the courts; subsidiarity in other words should remain a matter for judges. Nonetheless, most participants from both Britain and France seemed to take a broadly positive view of the second chamber.

Europe's global role?

Britain and France have an odd mixture of agreement and disagreement over the question of Europe's global role. As the two EU countries with the greatest ability to project power they are keen to do so, when appropriate, through the EU. Their armed forces work well together, they co-ordinate their activities happily as permanent members of the UN Security Council, and so on. Disagreement emerges over the extent to which the EU should be seen as an independent or alternative centre of power from the US and NATO.

The debate was introduced by a fascinating paper from a British participant on the dangers of adding too overt a defence role to the EU. NATO works well because it functions by unanimity but also has a hegemon (the US) to knock heads together and force rapid decisions when necessary. An EU defence force would not have such a structural advantage and, especially at a time when smaller states are feeling rather trampled upon, might find it hard to reach decisions. It would also be hard to raise the money for a new military force without running down forces dedicated to NATO, which could then create a serious crisis for Europe's defence.

It was another British participant who was most hostile to this reading. He saw the paper as misunderstanding the role of Europe's planned rapid reaction force of 60,000 soldiers. It would not be taking over from NATO in the territorial defence of Europe but would be dedicated to the so-called Petersburg tasks of intervention in trouble spots in and around Europe.

There are evidently big defence and security issues facing Europe: the Balkans, Russia, the Middle East, and terrorism. NATO and the US obviously have a dominant voice in the way that the western world approaches these issues. Europe too has a voice and a view that is sometimes different from that of the US and both French and British participants agreed that voice should grow louder. Europe, indeed, should have a more equal partnership with the US.

There was an eagerness on both sides to transcend stereotypes - the belief that the French think that a Europe policy is not worth the name unless it aggravates the Americans, and the belief that the British are simply poodles of the Americans. A French participant said that a choice does *not* have to be made between the US and Europe and pointed to the great enthusiasm for American things amongst ordinary French people, a fact which does not always reach the outside world. A British participant echoed this view pointing out how Tony Blair is closer to his fellow European leaders than previous British leaders while also strengthening the relationship with America; the 'bridge' role that Britain can sometimes

play between America and Europe is a valuable one.

So how *can* Europe become more influential? On this there were rather few suggestions beyond support for the current drive to create a rapid reaction force and to promote a more co-ordinated security policy. One insider said there were simply too many actors in this field in the EU. The relationship between Chris Patten, External Relations Commissioner and Xavier Solana, the European Union's Foreign Policy Representative is working surprisingly well but it is easy to imagine other pairings working far less well. Another participant pointed to the case of the EU deciding to reward Serbia financially for its decision to hand over Milosevic but then finding that the Ecofin committee was reluctant to make the corresponding funds available having not been informed of the decision. There is also the issue of defence budgets. Britain's is increasing slightly but in most other EU countries, including France, the budgets are falling.

Some participants did express the view that better co-ordination and more money are not the real issues here; that there are real differences over relations with the US and profoundly different views over Iraq, the question of a missile shield and so on. One French participant recalled being berated by Dick Cheney when he was defence minister in Washington in the early 1990s about how France was always undermining the alliance. The same participant wondered whether the new closeness forged between Britain and America since 11 September would not subtly undermine the Franco-British accord at St Malo. It was also pointed out that the Franco-British frigate project seemed to have run into the sand.

At the press conference Pierre Moscovici in a more guarded way also spoke of the importance of Europe being 'a power in globalisation' and how Europe needs to assert itself to prevent the world being dominated by a single power. When asked what if anything separated American values from European ones he raised the familiar point of the death penalty. (As roughly the same proportion of people in Europe and America support the death penalty, all this reveals is that elite opinion can, on some issues, over-ride the democratic will in Europe.)

Conclusion

There was a distinct feeling towards the end of the conference of punches being pulled over the America issue, perhaps partly in deference to the events of 11 September. Nonetheless on most of the other major issues, from a Europe of nation states, via the usefulness of a second chamber, to the importance of projecting European influence in the world, it was seldom possible to read off a participant's nationality from the views he or she expressed. Evidence, perhaps, of another small step towards the creation of a European civil society?

The Future of Europe

Pierre Moscovici, Ministre délégué chargé des Affaires Européennes, 31 October 2001

It is naturally a great pleasure for me to speak to you today at the end of this seminar devoted to the future of Europe and to the points of view on it in France and Britain. I particularly want to express my deepest gratitude to the two Co-presidents, Sir Peter Petrie and Ambassador Jacques Viot, for having taken the initiative of holding the seminar, and for having invited me, together with my colleague Peter Hain.

You know the role which we both play, in our respective countries, in the conduct of the great debate called for by the EU Heads of State and Heads of Government at the European Council at Nice. For my part, since July I have participated in more than fifteen of the forums organised in each French region. I know that, for his part, on 26 October in Cardiff Peter Hain began a tour of the major cities of the UK to discuss Europe with the British people.

It seems to me particularly important to set the initiatives of both our countries within the context of the joint deliberations of all Europeans, which aim eventually to answer the fundamental question of what we want to do together. We would certainly not achieve our objective if were to limit ourselves to a purely national perspective, which inevitably would be inadequate for what is at stake in such a debate. The merit of your seminar is that it allows our two countries to have a dialogue on subjects affecting their future.

Within the framework of three round table discussions you have been able to reflect on the aspirations of citizens, the future institutional structure of the Union and the place of Europe in the world. I offer the following comments on those three topics, which cover the field as a whole very well.

1. I am convinced that Europeans want more from Europe.

Through its barbarity the tragedy of September 11 made Europeans more conscious of the values which unite them; this reaches beyond their diversity, which must be respected. It also strengthened their awareness of the specific nature of their social model, and of their common destiny. It validated the action of joining forces to preserve, consolidate and enrich what we have built up together, in the face of the global terrorist threat.

Our fellow citizens consider that this Europe of shared values has already become a reality. However, it is the result of deliberate action on the part of the founding fathers, based on human rights and democracy, and aimed at establishing peace on our continent through the development of real solidarity. As we prepare for the historic work of the reunification of Europe thanks to enlargement, the time seems ripe to give to the main source of European construction the importance it deserves. This is what we began in Nice by proclaiming the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Now we should take this further by giving the text its due place as the preamble to our treaties. I am deeply convinced of this.

Let us also acknowledge the full extent of the dynamic towards integration which constitutes both the driving force and the original feature of European construction. Thus the creation of the single market led to the setting up of monetary union. Then, because Europe refuses to dissociate economic prosperity from social progress, this led to the emergence of a social and employment policy. Since the European Council at Göteborg, an environmental dimension has been added within the framework of a strategy of sustainable development, on which our future depends.

Our fellow citizens have no wish to challenge these advances. On the contrary, they expect to see Europe prove itself through the concrete benefits of this progress in their daily lives. Bearing this in mind, we should follow the process through to its logical conclusion by strengthening economic and social co-ordination and developing a sort of 'European social contract', as advocated by Lionel Jospin last Monday in Rennes. Incidentally, since the events of September 11, scarcely any voice has been raised to contest the legitimacy of government action, including in the economic field.

Finally, more than ever before, Europeans expect their governments to guarantee their security. In the face of the multinational nature of terrorism no country can claim to act alone. So it is not surprising that the construction of an EU-wide area of liberty, security and justice has made unexpected progress in a few weeks. Of course I have in mind the replacing of long extradition procedures – and the French and the British are well placed to know what 'long' means in this instance - by a new procedure of a European arrest warrant, according to the principle decided by the European Council. Our two countries are completely in favour of it. So political will can allow hitherto insurmountable obstacles to be overcome when the vital interests of Europeans are at stake.

All these points show a need for Europe to which we must respond.

2. We must also take account of the fact that our fellow citizens aspire to better things from Europe

European construction is sometimes dreaded on account of the excess rigours of EU legislation, sometimes criticised for its lack of ambition. Between fear of a 'super state' and the weariness of a Europe on automatic pilot, there is a lack of coherence in European construction. But it is therefore also necessary to promote throughout the Community the emergence of an area of democracy and citizenship, the more so in an enlarged EU which will of necessity be more diverse.

First of all the Union needs better governance, in the double dimension which this subject involves. From the outset we must consider how to put in place an effective system, facilitating decision-making and ensuring transparency and accountability in a Europe in which the different levels of decision-making - EU, national and local - must work together. In addition we should resolve the difficult equation of political representation, which is intimately linked to the organisation of our European institutions.

In this quest for governance, which is at the heart of the great debate on the future of Europe, I would particularly like to make you aware of some aspects of the approach which I consider essential:

- transparency and effectiveness are not ends in themselves, and do not exclude the possibility of a permanent struggle between institutions or the break-up of the instruments of government action. Good practice in this matter will not necessarily lead to good policies.
- it is precisely for this reason that one must not consider only governance and the institutional framework, but also think about what kind of institutions can take the European project forward in the most effective way. But let us be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water. In simplifying and clarifying the treaties, let us take special care, in accordance with the mandate given to us in Nice, not to call into question the competences that are shared out between the Union and the Member States. Common policies must be preserved. They can even be developed and, when necessary, considerably reformed. *Al contrario*, there must be no turning back.
- finally let us beware of the temptation to add on ready-made institutional models when designing the Europe of the future. I do not think that the unique and subtle interplay of the Member States and the common institutions on which the famous Community approach is based has exhausted all of its potential.

French and British, we are ready to engage in the debate on institutions on a pragmatic basis. Speaking in favour of a Federation of nation states, Lionel Jospin referred to the elemental tension of the EU. We are agreed in

recognising that this tension results from combining nations that are strongly attached to their identity and from commitment to a common enterprise, from which each emerges stronger.

Whilst respecting this framework, together we can encourage ambitious reforms which strengthen each of the three elements of the triangle of institutions, and, in particular increase their democratic legitimacy. In this spirit, Lionel Jospin proposed that the President of the Commission should come from whichever political grouping obtained a majority in the European elections, and that a right of dissolution of the European Parliament should be introduced. With the same aim in mind, he advocated the setting up of a new Council of Ministers for European Affairs. These Ministers would be permanently responsible for co-ordinating these matters, which increasingly do not come within the remit of foreign affairs, within their own government and at Brussels.

As we approach the next Intergovernmental Conference we ought constantly to bear in mind the following guidelines:

- remain true to the particular character of European construction
- pay attention to the contents of the European project
- show pragmatism and ambition in the reform of common institutions.

Thus Europeans themselves will take charge of European construction, and we will finally build a political Europe.

3. This Europe, sure of itself and of the European project, will spontaneously find its rightful place on the international scene.

In fact the European Union has established its place in the world not so much from some thirst for power or competitiveness as from the natural extension of its own development outside its borders.

It is because Europe is based on a model of society founded on solidarity that it is now responsible for more than half of government development aid in the world, and it remains more committed to reducing inequality than any other international player.

It is because peace is at the very heart of the European project that the EU has made the promotion of peace one of the main ambitions of its foreign policy. In order to achieve this ambition, we have, since the Franco-British summit at St Malo, been building a European defence capability. Its objective – let us not forget – is to carry out peacekeeping missions, and not to take on collective defence, which is a NATO matter. This is confirmed by the unanimous decision to have recourse to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Charter as a reaction to the attacks on our American ally.

Lastly it is because Europe now represents the main commercial power in the world that it can and must work for a better control of globalisation, in accordance with the requirements we have imposed on ourselves, and in the interest of the whole planet. For example, what would be the use of our strategy of sustainable development if we did not ensure that the environmental dimension was fully taken account of in world trade?

All these elements of European identity on the international scene have taken on a new significance since September 11. Although terrorism cannot be explained – much less justified – by any world disorder, it seems more urgent than ever to encourage the emergence of a new, more equitable world order. We must engage, as Gerhard Schröder so rightly said, not in a fight between civilisations but in a fight for civilisation.

From this perspective, it is important for us to listen to the desire for Europe which is apparent in many parts of the world. Of course, I am thinking of the Near East where Xavier Solana is doing remarkable work in close liaison with the Foreign Ministers of the Member States, providing the important diplomatic role of intermediary. I also have in mind, of course, the area around Afghanistan where we are already providing considerable humanitarian aid. In the long term we will have the task of putting in place a more active policy there. In general, in order that our efforts might bear fruit, we will have to shift into a higher gear within the framework of a true common foreign policy.

translated by Jane Craine

A New Europe

Rt Hon Peter Hain MP, Minister for Europe, 31 October 2001

We have lost our way in explaining to the people of Europe what it is we are doing in Europe – even what we are trying to achieve.

The very low turnout in the 1999 European elections showed the big gap between the EU and its citizens. The Irish referendum – to ratify the Nice Treaty on enlarging the EU - showed it too: turnout low, answer no. And the message of the anti-campaign – ‘if you don’t know, vote No’ – should be a salutary warning to everyone.

This doesn’t mean British or French people are anti-European. On the contrary, many are instinctively pro-European (French perhaps more than British) – especially our young. They travel to Paris just as easily as to London. They get by with the language and drink the lager or the Beaujolais Nouveau. But ask them about the Council or the Commission or the Parliament and they don’t want to know. They are not necessarily hostile, more not engaged.

So, in talking about Europe, we need plain language, not Eurobabble, understood only by an elite, and virtually unintelligible to the average voter. In short, we need to make Europe easier to understand through its *practical* effects on everyday life. We should not be fanatical Europeans or sceptical Europeans, but *practical* Europeans

Look at what co-operation on the EU level has achieved since 11 September atrocities:

- A common definition of terrorism. No more hiding from justice through legal loopholes.
- A European arrest warrant. No more hiding places for terrorists in Europe and no more hope of avoiding justice through extradition problems.
- The freezing of assets. No more hiding of funds to pay for murder and no more hiding the evidence that might convict terrorists
- Intelligence sharing. No more hiding their activities away.

We have also agreed a package of enhanced airline safety measures to protect travellers.

All of these measures taken together will strike at the heart of the terrorists’ ability to operate in Europe. It has:

- ensured a united and effective boost to the general fight against terrorism in Europe
- ensured that we can better help tackle the immediate challenge of shutting down Al-Qaeda's ability to murder and maim
- united EU Member States in cutting the supply routes, command chains and financing of terrorists.

The EU has already been working to prevent organised criminals and terrorists taking advantage of the opportunities presented by information technology and the openness of global finance. But we must go further. We need to be able to block suspicious capital movements through improved co-operation between our financial authorities. The Commission, the EU's anti-crime bodies Europol and Eurojust and our national authorities must work more closely together.

All this is a practical outcome of being in the European Union. Without the frameworks for co-operation and mechanisms for action which the EU provides, we would not have been able to achieve such effective action with so many countries in such a short time.

The days when countries forged single alliances and axes are gone. It is perfectly possible – and we are proving it – to maintain strong bonds with old friends like the US, while participating fully on the European stage. Both are in our long term interests.

The UK and France have a certain amount of enmity in our long history as neighbours. That does not stop us acting together with France bilaterally and within EU on whole range of issues. And not just the EU. Britain and France also work together in the UN Security Council, the G8, and NATO.

We were part of the unanimous agreement by the European Council to back tough action against those who struck in New York and Washington. It was a clear signal that the European Common Foreign and Security policy had taken a major step forward. So was the agreement to co-operate on new European security measures.

All this, coupled with the visits by Louis Michel for the Belgian Presidency and the EU Special Representative Xavier Solana to Pakistan and the Middle East, reveals the EU moving out from the era of foreign policy by passing motions at Council meetings, to foreign policy by the projection of EU power. Much the same is evident in the enhanced negotiating role which Solana has been able to secure in the Middle East Peace Process. And in the EU's contribution to preserving stability in the Balkans - a region in our own back yard where we may be asked to do more in future.

The determination and unity shown by Member States has meant that the EU is now taken much more seriously in Washington. So the horror of the terrorist attacks may turn out to be both an imperative and an opportunity for Europe to assume a greater role on the world stage.

It will also enable a closer alliance between the US and Europe in the future which need not be just one way. The solidarity Europe has shown to the US in its hour of need was given unconditionally and automatically. But it could encourage a greater willingness in Washington – and especially on Capitol Hill - to listen to Europeans on key global issues like the Kyoto Protocol on the environment or the Biological Weapons Convention.

But it is not just on security issues where co-operation in the EU is producing a new, effective response.

Next month, we aim to launch a new trade round through the WTO. Our common history shows the importance of international trade to economic performance. Yes, we want to see progress on investment and competition, and on support for environmental objectives. But we will also push for better market access for developing countries, following the example of the EU's 'Everything but arms' package, as well as offering technical assistance for capacity-building in developing countries. It is striking that agricultural subsidies in the rich world are equivalent to the entire GDP of Sub-Saharan Africa. That is both indefensible and unsustainable.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell said on 20 September :

'A strong, united Europe is good, indeed essential for the United States, for Europe and for the world'.

I agree.

But if there is a greater need than ever for a 'strong Europe', what does this mean?

The European Union of today *is* a success. It has helped bring unparalleled peace and prosperity to our countries. It has allowed Europeans to work together to address the common challenges that we all face.

The challenges of the 1950s and 1960s were different. The post-war imperatives of binding European nations together are now unchallenged. The 1970s and 1980s saw the EEC move into the broader economic sphere, taking advantage of unity, building up toward the completion of the most impressive Single Market ever seen. In the 1990s we addressed new challenges and formed the European Union, with its distinctive pillar structure.

But what kind of EU do we want for the 21st Century? If we are to sustain the EU's success, we need to be sure that it is in a position to adapt to suit changing circumstances and changing needs. That is why the debate that is underway on the future of Europe is so important.

We should not start this debate with an abstract discussion of philosophy or institutional change. We should go back to basics and ask some fundamental questions. What is the EU for? What do we want it to do? Where can our aims be more effectively achieved by Europe? And where by nation states?

I talk a lot to voters. And I can tell you that the voters of South Wales – and, I suspect, the voters of Franche-Comté - are not much interested in the ins and outs of Qualified Majority Voting, the Community method versus intergovernmental approach or a debate about a European constitution.

What they want is a better life. More jobs. Growing prosperity. A clean environment. An end to crime, drug trafficking and illegal immigration. Improved food safety. The practical benefits of being in the EU. There are many issues like this where working together we Europeans can do far more than if we worked apart.

But there are also areas where people doubt whether action at the EU level is the right response to a problem. We need to take a long hard look at who does what in the EU and where the most effective response on each issue is going to come from. Integration has brought us the huge advantages of the Single Market. But there may be areas where 'less is more'. This should not be a debate guided by emotion or dogma. It should be a debate around a hard-headed assessment of the advantages to my voters, to Pierre's voters – to ordinary European citizens.

By pooling our clout on world trade or enhancing Europe's foreign and defence policy capability, we are not diluting the status of the nation states which make up the EU. On the contrary, a stronger and more influential Europe means Britain and France are stronger and more influential individually and collectively. For example, neither of us have lost control over our military activities since Britain and France launched the grand plan for a common European defence and security at St Malo in October 1998.

Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair speaks of a 'Europe of independent nation states', while France's Prime Minister Lionel Jospin speaks of a 'federation of independent states'. The language may be slightly different, but the concepts are very similar. The EU has more than proved its worth. But we are not in the business of writing the obituary of the nation state. Both the visions of the future of the EU outlined by Lionel Jospin and Tony Blair have nation states at the centre.

And it is not just Lionel Jospin and Tony Blair that think this. The leaders of the 12 Eastern European countries currently negotiating to become Members have also said so.

So, nation states will not disappear. On the contrary, membership of Europe gives them a new – albeit different – lease of life.

For us, Europe is part of the solution not part of the problem. We don't think Europe is perfect – any more than Westminster, or the Scottish Parliament, or the Welsh Assembly, or local councils are perfect. But we believe in Europe just as we believe in our other democratic tiers of government.

And we believe Europe could be improved.

- That is why the Prime Minister has proposed an annual agenda for Europe. What more visible demonstration of accountability than Europe's elected leaders agreeing together on the issues which the EU should be addressing and prioritising.
- That is also why we have proposed a Statement of Principles as one of the possibilities of clarifying and explaining to the people who in the EU is responsible for doing what – EU or Member State.
- And that is why we have also suggested looking at the idea of national parliamentarians sitting in a second chamber of the European Parliament. It could, with the benefit of their voters' concerns in their minds, review the EU's work to ensure that the EU focuses on what really matters to Europe's citizens.

The French idea of a parliamentary congress for joint meetings between European and national parliaments is not identical. But we certainly share the objective of better national scrutiny of European legislation, more accountability to our citizens and respect for subsidiarity.

Britain and France also agree that the European Council should take the lead more resolutely. Heads of State and Government are the most visible democratic representatives we have. So they, through the European Council, should be determine the agenda for Europe, agreeing our overall strategic objectives for each year.

Both our countries are proudly independent and patriotic. Both of us will continue to be. But by pooling some of our sovereignty economically in the single market, we have both benefited from enhanced prosperity and more jobs. By joining together in a common defence and security policy, we benefit from greater strength and influence in the world.

France and Britain do not have to agree on every detail of EU policy to happily agree on the objective of greater prosperity and security for all our people.

The Future of Europe debate must be about recognising where there is common advantage in working together and adapting to meet the challenges. Evolution on the basis of necessity and common consent.

And evolution recognising the huge political achievements of the European Union? Back in 1957, the founding fathers, Monnet and Schuman, would never have dreamt that today we have a Union of 15, already uniting most of Western, Northern and Southern Europe. Still less would they have imagined that this Union is on the threshold of embracing the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, reuniting the Continent after the bitter divisions of the Second World War and the Cold War.

The events of 11 September have shown us that there is a need for Europe to meet new challenges. Britain and France are ready to work together to do what is necessary; with each other, with our partners and with the rest of the world to deliver a stronger, richer, safer Europe. A Europe which looks outward rather than inward. Which promotes peace, security and justice the world over.

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SEMINAR PROGRAMME

TUESDAY 30 OCTOBER

- 14:30 **Introduction** by Sir Peter Petrie and Ambassador Jacques Viot
- 14:45 **Session I: *Expectations and concerns***
Analysis of recent opinion surveys introduced by Guy Braibant and Simon Atkinson
- 15:05 **Discussion: *What does the public expect Europe to do, or not to do, particularly in respect of:***
- economic policy
 - social policy
 - judicial cooperation etc.
- 17:00 **Session II: *How can Europe best deliver what is wanted?***
introduced by Jean-Louis Quermonne
- institutions
 - division of responsibilities
 - accountability
- 17:10 **Discussion**
- 18:00 **Close**

WEDNESDAY 31 OCTOBER

- 09:00 **Session II** (continued) introduced by Vernon Bogdanor
- 09:10 Further discussion
- 11:30 **Session III: *Europe's global role - foreign and defence policy***
introduced by Dr Anand Menon and André Fontaine
- expectations
 - objectives
 - means
- 11:50 **Discussion**
- 15:00 **Concluding session** (with larger audience including the media)
Summary from the three round tables with reports by Simon Atkinson, David Goodhart and André Fontaine
- 15:15 **Speeches** by M. Pierre Moscovici, Ministre délégué chargé des affaires européennes and the Rt. Hon. Peter Hain MP, Minister for Europe
- 15:45 **Questions and further discussion**