

It has also presupposed superpowers in opposition to each other, which create the conditions for middle-power leadership in the world organization. The postwar world first saw an explosion of its component members as the process of decolonization took hold and national sovereignty flashed like a contagion across the globe.

Yet, while it is still flashing in the Balkans, powerful counterforces have been at work. In the continent that gave us the nation-state, the fatigue of a 100-year European civil war triggered a vision of a larger community in which sovereign powers are pooled and exercised by central organizations. Slowly, over 40 years, we have witnessed the greatest voluntary transfer of sovereignty in history.

The Community of 12 members will soon be expanded, in its economic dimension, into the 19-member European Economic Area. This new grouping, the EEA, will encompass 46 per cent of world trade. With 10 countries that desire to become full members waiting in the anteroom or holding pen of the Community, it is poised to become a Community of 22 or more, embracing Scandinavia and the key East European nations. Historically neutral countries such as Sweden and Austria have lined up to transfer their sovereignty – and their foreign policy – to the new super state. If, in time, the Baltic and some other former Soviet states adhere – and this is likely – we will see a new international union of some 25 to 30 states and some half-billion people or more, all transferring sovereign powers to the new regional superstructure.

This structure supports far more than a preferential trading bloc or single market. The historic Maastricht Summit deliberates as we meet here. In my view, it is beyond doubt that Europe will evolve into a full-fledged economic and monetary union. Political union, and a common foreign policy, is only a matter of time.

The European union is a new phenomenon in international organization and international law. It is not just a regional organization, albeit one likely to dominate the Euro-Asian land mass. It is a legal community, organized around supranational central organizations that exercise the most important sovereign powers. Adherence is a matter of accepting the obligations of the legal union, and this is why it is non-exclusive and its capacity for growth is so great. Let's not be misled by the outbreak of ethno-