

Ten years later, what has changed? The EU has undoubtedly made progress in acquiring the diplomatic and military attributes of a true global actor. The treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam, combined with a lot of real-world experience, have given more substance to the CFSP. And the British-French agreement at St. Malo in December 1998, on the creation of an EU intervention force, promises the EU a military capacity it lacked in 1991. That said, there is an eerie familiarity about some trends. The US once more looks as if wishes to vacate the Balkans and turn leadership over to the EU, which once more seems eager to embrace it. To the extent that leadership means coordinating reconstruction and development and promoting integration, Brussels is better equipped to lead than it was ten years ago. But if it also requires the credible capacity to use force, it is not. The St. Malo project remains a work in progress, with some doubts expressed that it will meet its 2003 deadline with the needed capacity truly in place. That force would not, of course, be able to do what NATO did in Serbia in 1999, or even in the Bosnian end-game. But it will have to be visibly available for more modest tasks, lest Europe once more find itself handing off leadership in a future Balkan crisis because it is "not ready".

Third, the civilian side of its Balkan policy raises questions about the EU's sense of itself as the arbiter of Europe's destiny. The Bosnian and Kosovo protectorates, the SAA process and the Stability Pact are premised on asymmetries of economic power and on the capacity – legitimized by the international community – of the strong to persuade the weak through rewards and punishment and where necessary, to intervene and manage their internal affairs directly. This is the Balkan variant of a policy the EU has fashioned over the past decade for central and eastern Europe: sustaining the virtuous circle of free markets, democracy, human rights and regional security by liberalizing access to its markets, acting as the principal external patron of a Marshall-type investment and trade-liberalization plan, and promising admission to full EU membership for qualified candidates sooner rather than later.

This policy embodies the forthright assertion that Brussels is the destiny of the Balkan states, a proposition now endorsed by all the region's governments. The problem for most of them, however, is how to get there from where they are. An end to either of the international protectorates is nowhere in sight. A culture of dependency has become entrenched, especially in Bosnia. The SAA process, on the other hand, seems to be progressing with some states, although again Bosnia is the laggard. Here, as in its relations with some central and eastern European states, Brussels is discovering the limits of what it often takes to be an irresistible power to attract: alienation in the face of western arrogance and self-righteousness is hardly new to the Balkans. The Stability Pact shows some of the same defects. In addition, the approach it represents cuts two ways. On the one hand, it usefully anchors Bosnia in a regional framework providing some insurance against abandonment. On the other, it may result in EU resources being spread thinner or diverted from Bosnia, as already seems to be happening.

Finally, the question of interests – national and other. In the early 1990s, a consensus on the need to act, and on the importance of a "European" solution to the conflict, could not conceal real differences of national interest among the member states - principally Germany on one side and