Alternative CSCE in the Making?

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1. French Proposal for New Pan-European Arrangement
One of the most remarkable developments in the recent period concerns the French proposal to convene a pan-European conference on stability in Europe. France presented its proposal at the EC summit in Copenhagen on 21 and 22 June this year. The proposal, often referred to as the 'Balladur-proposal' after the name of the French Prime Minister, is based on the principles of a common European foreign and security policy, as laid down in the Maastricht Treaty. The aim of the 'conference on stability in Europe' would be to intervene in conflicts at an early stage, in particular in conflicts such as in the former Yugoslavia. In addition, it might be granted powers to arbitrate in cases of internal conflict or civil war. The new conference would be open to 35 states: in addition to the twelve EC states, the United States and Canada, all Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland), the Central and East European States (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania) and the neighbouring former Soviet republics (the three Baltic states, the Ukraine, Belorus, Moldova, Russia) and finally Austria, Switzerland and Turkey. The former Yugoslav republics (Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Serbia-Montenegro and Macedonia) should be associated with the conference. In principle it concerns all those states with which the EC has a special relationship which might result in a future membership. The French proposal would result in the first instance of joint action in the framework of the European Union.

In an interview, the French Minister for European Affairs, M. Lamas-soure, denied the fact that Balladur's proposal would aim at the creation of a new security organization. The French minister stated that the proposal aimed to create a 'process' which would enable the first concrete, practical exercise of the foreign and security policy of the Twelve.¹

According to reports of a press conference given by Mr. Balladur in Brussels on 10 June, the conditions for joining the conference would be the protection of the rights of minorities and of national frontiers. Failure to do so would put at risk the privileged economic relations of the former socialist

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states with the Community and their prospect of EC membership.\textsuperscript{2}

The French proposal is said to have been induced by the fact that the CSCE has become too cumbersome to handle the increasing number of violent conflicts in the European area, partly due to its geographical expansion beyond Europe. The participation of the Central Asian and Caucasian republics in the CSCE, therefore, seems to be the problem, according to French eyes. However, the French plan remains unclear about the relation between the proposed pact and the CSCE. The ‘Balladur-plan’ is reminiscent of a former proposal by the French President, Mitterrand, for a European Confederation. This was one of the many wild proposals which were ventilated in the euphoric year after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Surprisingly, the EC Summit in Copenhagen has not rejected the French idea. On the contrary, it decided to investigate the proposal further, although the wording chosen is very cautious. The relevant text of the ‘Conclusions of the Presidency’ of the European Council reads as follows:

"The European Council discussed the French proposal for an initiative to be taken by the European Union in favour of a Pact on stability in Europe. This initiative is directed towards assuring in practice the application of the principles agreed by European countries with regard to respect for borders and rights of minorities. The European Council agreed that recent events in Europe have shown that action in these areas is timely and appropriate. It welcomed the idea of using the instrument of ‘Joint Action’ in accordance with the procedures provided for in the Common Foreign and Security Policy. The European Council invited the Council (General Affairs) to examine the proposal and report to its meeting in December 1993 with a view to convening a preparatory conference on the pact."\textsuperscript{3}

This decision is highly remarkable. In this way a development, which might lead to the creation of another security institution in Europe has been set in motion. One may really doubt whether Europe at present needs another security pact or institution and whether it would not be wiser to make the already existing organizations work more effectively. The institutional proliferation in post-Cold War Europe has already achieved ‘impressive’ results with the transformation of the CSCE, the operationalization of the WEU, the planned reorganization of the NATO, the establishment of the NACC, and an increasing number of sub-regional groupings. Moreover, disagreement among the present CSCE states about the French proposal may be expected as well. It can hardly be assumed, for instance, that the North Americans will be enthusiastic about the plan, let alone the Central Asian republics. Moreover, the Central and Eastern European states will certainly not be positive about the suggestion that


\textsuperscript{3} Full text of the ‘Conclusions of the Presidency’ in Agence Europe, 24 June 1993.