



Executive Summary

Nicholas Kitchen, Editor, IDEAS Reports

Europe, the conventional wisdom has it, is in crisis. The EU's signature achievement, the single currency, now threatens to undermine the very cohesion of Europe itself, driving wedges between member-states and fuelling social unrest within them. Where once common monetary policy held within it the promise of geographic expansion, a common foreign and security policy, and even the creation of Union-wide European identity in international affairs; now the politics of fiscal rupture foretell an EU that looks inward, shorn of its most indebted members and divided between the remaining Eurozone countries and the rest.

It was in this context that the Dahrendorf Symposium met a year ago. Paradoxically, the narrative of crisis has been simultaneously allied with vibrant public and policy discussion. Charged with 'changing the debate on Europe', the Symposium reflected the energy of that public discourse, providing evidence that among academics and policymakers at least, the idea of Europe remains real and relevant.

This report is composed in part from the papers presented on the 'Global Europe' panel at the inaugural Dahrendorf Symposium, and foreshadows the continuation of the debate at the second Dahrendorf Symposium in 2013. It considers the world which Europe inhabits, and decisively rejects the premise that a Europe experiencing economic crisis is doomed to think smaller, or be less strategic in the world. Instead, as John Stevens convincingly argues, the Eurozone crisis represents a strategic opportunity to rethink how Europe sees itself and the world, and the contributions here together comprise a first cut at a new strategic assessment for Europe.

The world which Europe inhabits today exhibits marked differences from the world Europe faced when the single currency was born at Maastricht in 1991. The management of transitions from communism to capitalism has given way to a global economy in which the most salient feature is the diffusion of economic output, the result of the rapid growth of emerging markets around the world over the last two decades. China now looms large in Europe's recovery from the crisis, and as Arne Westad points out, China itself is increasingly interested in Europe's future for both bilateral economic and wider strategic reasons. Michael Cox, whilst taking a contrary view of the nature of contemporary power shifts, argues that the United States' increasing focus on Asia impels Europe to carve a role for itself beyond the old certainties of the transatlantic relationship. In their analysis then, Europe has a pivotal strategic opportunity, through its relationships with China and the United States, to decisively influence the character of the emerging multipolar international system.

How Europe may grasp that opportunity is the question that links the following contributions. Mary Kaldor analyses Europe's distinctive approach to international security; Richard Youngs evaluates the evolution of Europe's geoeconomic policies; and Thomas Risse assesses how divergent national identities may be reconciled for Europe to act coherently in the world. For Europe to take advantage of its opportunity to become a third pole in a multipolar system, it will require, as Risse notes, three 'P's: power, purpose and practice. The authors here agree that Europe has the power, both in economic and security terms; the question they all pose is whether Europe can generate sufficient unity of purpose to enable it to put its vision of global order into practice. The crisis places strains on this task – as Youngs' concerns about Europe's descent into mercantilism makes clear – but as Stevens suggests it also creates incentives to impel further supranationalism that may make its completion inevitable.

However, Europe is unlikely to be able to complete the task of developing foreign policy practice, and thereby lay claim to the same strategic status as China and the United States, if the United Kingdom continues to block moves to develop supranationalised powers for European foreign policy. Yet such obstructionism, as Colin Budd forcefully argues, is both bad for Europe and even worse for the UK. Whilst most expect Berlin to decide the fate of the Eurozone, it may be that London holds the key to the fate of Europe in an Asian Century. ■