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## ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERSPECTIVES OF EPC

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A first step for attempting an evaluation of the achievements in the field of European Political Cooperation (Epc) and of the value of the so called "acquis politique" is that of comparing it with the content and meaning of the older brother-concept of "acquis communautaire". The latter concerns the global set of rules and directives which came into force on the basis of the procedures provided by the Treaty of Rome; it enters directly into the negotiation process in case of enlargement of the Community and it must be applied in its integrity in the new acceding Countries. The former, by contrast, is composed by a set of Common Declarations based on flexible, intergovernmental procedures fixed on some Reports (or diplomatic protocols); they do not have the force of a common law and do not enter officially into a process of negotiation with candidate countries. This flexible character of Epc is well reflected by the definition of "Communauté de vue", which is commonly applied to the set of activities and results in the context of Epc.

1. The need for an European Political Cooperation mechanism.

Nevertheless presently Epc represents one of the most relevant activity of the Ten and will become more complex and crucial with the entry of Spain and Portugal into the process. To evaluate in depth the importance of Epc for Europe one has to bear in mind that its birth was forced, around fifteen years ago, by two basic, parallel needs:

- add a political dimension to the already existing and well working network of external economic relations of the Community both with industrialised and developing Countries (based on the provisions of the Treaty of Rome);
- "pave the way for a united Europe capable of assuming its responsibilities in the world of tomorrow and of making a contribution commesurate with its traditions and its mission", which behind any rethoric indicates the willingness to reach throughout "unknown" means the final target of an European Union.

With the emergence, in '73, of a major international crisis the Epc was added with a new task: that of answering the external challenges. And in fact the energy crisis and the situation in the Middle East have constituted the "baptism of fire" of Epc.

2. Towards a "European Foreign Policy"?

To judge whether Epc constitutes today an embryonic element of an European foreign policy or it remains a vague mechanism of multilateral diplomatic activities we should evaluate the results of fifteen years of Epc activities both in terms of content and of institutional progress.

2.1. Epc in terms of contents.

a) positive outcomes:

- we are today in presence of a whole of common positions which concretely provide the substance of an "european identity" in world affairs;
- some geopolitical priorities have been clearly established throughout the intense activity of Epc organs (a policy at concentrical circles);
- common positions have increasingly played the useful role of "coverage function" with regards to national foreign policies;

b) some persisting limits:

- Epc doesn't sufficiently cover some of the new crucial area of the european presence in the world: more particularly it doesn't provide a useful framework for elaborating common positions in the field of security, in the out of area actions and in the arms control negotiations;
- common positions are often of a precarious nature: they are not binding for a member government and they are not enough rapidly uptodate with the changing of the international situation;
- it mainly remains a policy of a reactive nature;
- it hasn't defined clearly the vital relations with the Usa neither under the procedural nor substantial point of view;
- we assist to a lesser active role in some crucial areas of traditional interest for Europe, namely the Middle East, Southern Africa, Cyprus; some issues continues to remain exluded from the activities of Epc (Northern Ireland, for example);
- the external perception from the part of third countries is becoming less convinced due to the slowness of the european answers;

## 2.2 Epc in terms of institutional progress

a) positive outcomes;

- a clear tendency to coordinate national positions has appeared (reflex of coordination);
- a large diplomatic network acting both in Europe and in the Third Countries has developed (socialisation effect);
- the European presence in the international Organisations and Conferences has grown;
- the functional cooperation with the preexisting Ec institutions has clearly improved: the effort of rationalising and connecting the activities either in the communitarian and Epc field has largely succeeded;
- the Report of London of october '81 has addeed also a dimension of "crisis management" to the Epc activities;

b) some limits;

- in spite of the continous institutional improvements, Epc remains a precarious mechanism of consultation. Some recent signs of crises appear for example inside the more prominent body which deals with Epc, namely the European Council: since several meetings it is incapable of taking any new initiative in the Epc field, even if the subordinates organs have reached a common position;
- bilateral relations among member states are playing an increasingly important role in the definition of foreign "european" actions;
- Epc still lacks of common tools (apart from those provided by the Community's activities): it has nor an army nor a budget;
- it remains a method of integration competitive to the communitarian (or supranational) one; any attempt of istitutionalising or merging Epc organs and

procedures with the Community's ones has failed (for example the Tindemanns Report or the Genscher-Colombo initiative).

#### Conclusive Remarks

Epc still remains one of the separate elements which presently constitute the concept of an European foreign policy, the remaining being some part of the national foreign policies bilaterally and multilaterally coordinated among them and the great variety of Ec external economic policies.

Due mainly to this reason the "acquis politique" maintains an ambiguous and vague character.

To transform Epc into an effective political and institutional mechanism we need a global project under which to connect together the various elements of a common foreign policy.

A step by step strategy towards an improved coordination of the present (political and economical) tools and the future ones (security) can be accepted at the condition that this strategy will answer a common final target of a global process towards the European Union.

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