

## DISCUSSION PAPER

## THE MAJOR CHALLENGES OF POLITICAL COOPERATION

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1. The task of indicating the priorities for the Presidency in Office of the Community is usually a source of frustration, both for those who propose them and for those who have to carry them out. In fact, on the one hand, six months is too short a period to solve the very complex problems such as those linked to Europe's international role, and on the other, too long to not oblige the Presidency in Office to demonstrate that it has some ideas on how to manage European Political Cooperation (EPC).

Usually those responsible for planning the next semester have two alternatives; the first one is to concentrate on solving questions of detail, or that are still on the shelf, by formulating a kind of shopping list on the basis of the topics dealt with during the previous presidency in the context of the Troika procedures. Some of the dossiers that are still open or of traditional interest for the EPC (CSCE, Central America, South Africa, etc.) will obviously be on the table of the presidency. But it is probably more difficult for the EPC than it is for the EC to fix a precise agenda. In fact, essentially, the EPC has to react to the uprising of situations of international crises (hence the rule provided by the 1981 London report regarding emergency meetings), and prepare itself to participate more actively in the great problems of the moment.

Consequently, the second alternative is to deal with the major priorities and the sectors of potential growth in EPC. Within these priorities several concrete initiatives should then be taken that contribute towards indicating the direction to be taken. It is clear, in fact, that during a period of six months the most that can be done is to give the major problems an initial outline so as to mark out their future course. For a slow and complex mechanism like the EPC even this limited objective can be valued positively.

2. We therefore prefer the second strategy, especially following the approval of the Single European Act and EPC's insertion in it. Although the importance of the decisions made in Luxembourg should not be overvalued, there is no doubt that it is important now to give new impulse to EPC, with the very aim of showing that the small reforms introduced (mainly the role of the secretariat and the interpretation to be given to the "political and economic aspects of security") are a strategic element of growth in EPC.

A request in this direction arises clearly from the European Parliament, whose debates, questions and resolutions are to a great extent addressed to the exploitation of the future theoretical potentialities of EPC, on its own or in connection with the EC's competencies. So that in recent months we have heard in Strasbourg's hemicycle, talk about arms production, new technological

policies in the field of armaments, a correct use of the instrument of economic sanctions, a demand to define the contents of a security policy, although strictly limited to the economic and political aspects. Compared to the past, the freedom with which the European Parliament talks about these issues is in itself a sign of a largely perceived feeling that security policy will become a decisive issue in the near future for the development of the role of EPC, in the larger context of a more autonomous and self-determined process of European integration. This perception is not just a sentiment, but an objective factor of political analysis when we start to think in terms of EPC main priorities in the present days.

3. Among the priorities on the table of EPC, three major issues today constitute the general framework of the numerous discussions, challenges and (few) actions - declarations of the Twelve. We can call them "the priorities of the priorities":

- a) an urgent need to rethink and redefine the West-West relations;
- b) a direct or indirect involvement of the EPC in the East-West negotiations and dialogue;
- c) a growing prioritarian regional interest of Europe in the Mediterranean area.

It is self-evident that all these three issue-areas have an important security aspect, which in certain periods and contingencies can even prevail over the other political or economic factors. We can continue to play with definitions or words, but the tendency unavoidably leads us towards an increasing security role of Europe, in a strict sense.

#### 4. The redefinition of the West-West relationship

Probably it was only at the beginning of the 70s that the Europeans felt such an urgent need to clarify the interatlantic linkages, just after the breakdown of the Bretton Woods System, the failure of the policy of partnership inside NATO and the explosion of the energy crisis. The difference was that, at that time, the pressure to revise the terms of the alliance came from the US (the year of Europe, launched by Secretary of State Kissinger); and in the end the result was a reaffirmation of the American leadership inside NATO (the Ottawa Declaration), a low profile consultation between Americans and Europeans throughout the Gymnich Formula and, finally, a contested Agency to protect western oil consumers.

Today the need to rethink the bilateral tasks springs from the consideration that the difficulties between the allies at the beginning of the 70s were not an occasional episode due to a particular contingency, but the starting point of a longlasting diverging trend in the Atlantic relationship. The troubled partnership of Kissinger has changed into A Widening Atlantic? of Dahrendorf and Sorenson, even though moderated by a question mark. It is not the case here to analysis the reasons and causes of this trend. We limit ourselves to noting that the latest events, from the American strike on Libya to the Iranian affair, have contributed to stressing the need for a deep reorganisation of the mechanism of bilateral consultations. It is self-evident that the Gymnich Formula cannot play the role of a pre-consultation mechanism in cases of international crises. Quite frankly, there are no miraculous solutions to the bilateral dialogue, for the simple reason that Europe does not

constitute a real independent entity or unitarian pole. Nevertheless, the only way to improve transatlantic consultation is to reinforce the European voice. Intervention could be started on different levels.

At the highest level we could upgrade the already-existing practice of the traditional meeting at the beginning of the semester between the Secretary of State and the President in Office of the Council, extending their number and scope and including also an emergency consultation procedure between the two. But the most important sign would be to reintroduce the practice of a third European Council meeting (today reduced to two according to the provisions of the Single Act) at the end of Spring, with the sole and specific task of agreeing on a common European position for the yearly Summit of the Seven.

At the diplomatic level, the exchange of information should be increased through the creation of comparable units at the Department of State and in the EPC, the latter possibly through a coordination of the newly established Secretariat. The example of antiterrorist task forces working at the same time in Washington and in the European foreign affairs ministries has to receive a new impulse. The broadening of the exchange of information can help to avoid the use of political rhetoric, so damaging in cases of crises.

More generally, the aim of these limited proposals is to give a sign of the European willingness to seriously meet the present need of the Atlantic dialogue and, at the same time, spread a more reliable image of a common contribution to the management of world affairs.

#### 5. A European Involvement in the East-West negotiations

This represents a field in which the overall situation is very unsatisfactory for the Europeans; the dialogue between the two superpowers has started again, but for the moment it has not lead to a new period of détente. Europeans thus find themselves in an uncomfortable position without clear points of reference since they are not, fortunately, back in the time of the cold war but, at the same time, nor are they living again in a time of constructive relations with the East.

In addition, we are witnessing a polarisation in the process of arms control, with the two superpowers playing a primary and exclusive role, without any real consideration for the requests by the Europeans to be consulted. The way in which Reykjavik was prepared (in a few days and with the allies receiving purely formal information of it on the eve of the meeting) and especially the unexpected contents of the possible agreement during the summit, are all signs of that polarisation.

The after-Reykjavik, then, has shown that Europeans were unprepared to accept even what for them is an official position, the zero option. The ambiguity which has accompanied governments' declarations on the possible withdrawals of INF gives the impression that Europeans did little elaboration on the concept of the zero option and on its practical consequences in terms of the overall strategic balance. It would be sad to see the process of disarmament become as troublesome as the request for rearming.

To avoid this risk, some specific actions are required of the Europeans.

The first one is to better elaborate our negotiating strategy. On the basis of the EPC's participation to the CSCE conference and to that of Stockholm, the process of consultation among the Twelve has to be extended also to other fora in which a direct European involvement is not required, but which nevertheless constitutes a vital interest for Europe. We cannot in fact really deny that MBFR and even INF negotiations represent not only a primary concern for Europeans but also that they are logically linked with the Vienna conferences. This linkage has to be better examined, with the aim of fixing a global negotiating strategy. This again, is a task for EPC, required by the past European experience in the field and not excluded by the Single Act. A draft group for disarmament has to follow this prescription, the final outcome of which could be a joint meeting of the foreign ministers together with their defence colleagues; this initiative could represent a striking innovation for Europe, even though limited to the aspect of disarmament negotiations.

More difficult would be the implementation of a second requirement, that is the definition of a proper European doctrine of security. At the beginning, probably, this task should be transferred to the WEU, now competent in discussing this issue. But even that should represent an opportunity for the Europeans to start thinking about a mechanism of connection between EPC and WEU, in the perspective of a better cooperation between the two institutions on issues that can sometimes overlap. Again, here we can suggest the creation of a task force formed of officials from the two organisations, with the duty of examining together the overlapping issues.

A final action should be to examine the technological aspects of arms production in the conventional field. As the European Parliament proposed, the Commission should be given the task of preparing a report on the aspects of industrial and economic policy. And an ad hoc group of EPC should be charged with the analysis of the political consequences of a more precise European engagement in the same field. Also, in practice, this issue is strictly connected with that of forming a global European position in the process of arms control.

## 6. The Mediterranean

There is little doubt that this area will remain a crucial arena for European foreign interests for a long time. Recent events have stressed the fact that we cannot leave the Americans with the sole responsibility of dealing with it and that a better European coordination is required.

Apart from many other reasons, Spain's entry into EPC will bring a new dimension to the list of European interests in the Mediterranean region. One can think, for example, of Spain's prioritarian interest in the Maghreb. From a political and strategic point of view, the entry of Spain into the Community will nevertheless produce a greater involvement on the part of Europe in the region; directly or indirectly, EPC and single member states will be involved in potential local crises, which could arise from the existing Spanish contentions with Morocco or other states.

More generally, Europe has to put some order in the various kinds of initiatives taken to match the challenges to its own security.

The first requirement would be to relaunch the dormant Euro-Arab dialogue by means of a more clear and shared political strategy, with two main objectives: first of all to provide the means to reinforce the "regional pillars", like Egypt or Saudi Arabia; secondly, to organise a common energy policy with the Arab partners in order to avoid what already today appears to be a tendency towards a new period of political stress in the oil field.

The second initiative should be to reinforce cooperation in the struggle against international terrorism. The exchange of information has to be better organised, also through the use of advanced technology. But what is more important, measures for preventing terroristic action should be made homogeneous and diffused among the member countries. The two ad hoc groups, the Trevi and the EPC ones, have to work together frequently in order to better link the internal actions with the external initiatives. And, finally, the mechanism of the use of economic sanctions should be clarified, deciding when it is suitable to make recourse to Art. 113 instead of Art. 235, with the aim of better underlining the direct communitarian involvement in that policy.

More challenging and far reaching is the issue concerning the way in which Europeans have to gain control of local crises in the Mediterranean region. This is an issue on which new conceptual instruments about the functioning of EPC and practical means for intervening are required. The starting conceptual point is that EPC should move away from the principle of unanimity under all the circumstances and, also, that not all member states are required to act together.

It is clear that we live in an area in which formal provisions do not exist. In the past, however, the EPC has dealt, albeit in a pragmatic way, with situations that had a direct link with security problems, as when it decided to support Great Britain during the first phase of the Falklands affair, or when it took economic sanctions against Iran during the imprisonment of the American diplomats. What must be determined now is to what extent the European Community is able to make use of the few instruments at its disposal. Obviously, the natural vocation of present collaboration within the EPC is to deal with the political aspects of international crises. This is also due to the reluctance on the part of a few member countries, for various reasons, to adhere to actions that imply a recourse to "security" instruments, from sanctions to military tools.

Nevertheless, even just working out a common political declaration could be of great importance at the international level. The support and "blessing" given to the British, French, Italian and Dutch troops during their participation in the Sinai peacekeeping force was very important both in making it easier for the governments involved to reach a decision in that sense, and in distinguishing between European participation "as such" and that of the other countries. On the contrary, the lack of a similar "blessing" during the Italian, French and British intervention in Lebanon represented an objective element of weakness, highlighting the fact that the decision was taken by a single member country and was not the fruit of a solid and unanimous agreement between the Seven.

Despite this and given that a greater level of involvement on the part of the EPC in crisis management is unthinkable, the only practicable way is the intermediate one dictated by experience, i. e. to differentiate the role of the governments in the EPC's activities with relation to managing out of area crises. The idea is to give groups of countries the concrete responsibility, from time to time, to intervene in determined situations and regions. What is more, Spain's entry into the EPC makes the definition of a overall policy towards the Mediterranean even more urgent and probably the constitution of a group of Communitarian countries which can agree on the line of action to be taken in eventual crises in the area even more necessary.

Thus, without creating a decision-making system at two or more speeds, one could think of modulating the participation of the member states on what is the qualifying factor of a foreign policy action: the use of direct instruments. There should therefore be two levels: a political one which adopts the common positions within the EPC, on which all the member countries could participate; and an operative level, involving the use of economic, financial and military instruments (for the moment national but which could also be common in case the WEU's tasks were redefined) which would be used only by some member states able to take on the responsibility of the action (whereas the others would be exempted).

The EPC would therefore act as a political cover for the action of a few states in sectors and areas that are particularly delicate for the Twelve's foreign policy. In this case there must be a precise communitarian devolution for those member states intending to take on the weight and responsibility of such initiatives. The EPC's political cover must also be total and "a priori" and, above all, continuous in time, demonstrating effective control over the actions carried out by some of its members.

Finally, it is necessary to think of a possible financial cover and of an "ad hoc" fund in order to support those initiatives (participation in peace corps; negotiations, etc.) to be shared by the entire Community. This financing should not directly regard the military operations conducted by the delegated member states but rather act parallelly through the use of common financial instruments and economic policies (food aid, finance for development, etc.). In this way this would give a stronger image of a desire on the part of the entire Community to sustain the direct actions undertaken by a few of its members.

In our modest opinion, only by following from the start, this gradualist, but global strategy can the conceptual and practical bases for direct responsibility of the Community in the field of defence be predetermined and thereby contribute towards crisis management outside the area in a coordinated and effective way.

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