

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF EUROPEAN  
POLITICAL COOPERATION

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From the very beginning, in 1970, when the results of the task given by the Den Haag '69 Summit Meeting to the EC's foreign ministers (and by them to Viscount Davignon) were made known and the Six decided, with the agreement of the then candidate countries, to create a new mechanism of coordination in the field of foreign policy, one of the questions which troubled political scientists had been that regarding the nature of European Political Cooperation (EPC).

Subordinate to this first curiosity was also the open question of the effectiveness of the new political process and of its additional impact on the already existing European role in world affairs (1).

A first way of trying to give an answer to both questions was to analyse and judge the content and substance of EPC, measuring the results of common actions in world affairs in terms of credibility and importance for the solution of international problems. Methods used were mainly the careful interpretation of the texts of common declarations, the analysis of the European presence in various areas and events, the consideration of the enlargement of European interests in the world and, more generally, the study of the European capacity of speaking with one voice. Above all, some American academics tried to understand the nature/effectiveness of the EPC through quantitative analyses on the number of declarations agreed in relation to the number of meetings held and the issues discussed; on the deviations of some member states from common decisions; on the concrete actions and fact-finding missions conducted on the basis of a common declaration; and finally, on the extension of the issues dealt with and on the "degree of success" achieved by the Europeans. All interesting methods of analysis, but highly arguable, given the difficulty of quantifying political factors.

A second way was, on the contrary, more concerned with the analysis of the EPC decision-making process rather than with the substance. In this case, basic questions were the specificity, if any, of the new decisional structure in comparison with both the already-existing EC system and those of other international fora, its capacity to work together with the instruments and tools provided by the EC and, finally, the interrelations between national apparatus and policies and those offered at EPC level (3).

Before discussing this second way, some preliminary considerations are needed in order to clarify the theoretical and political framework in which EPC was generated and presently operates.

A first point concerns the ultimate aim of EPC. In all EPC reports and declarations, including those for example of the heads of government and state in Paris '72 and in Stuttgart '83, it is clearly stated that European cooperation in the foreign policy field is meant to contribute to the creation of the so-called European Union. The formula which is usually used is that of

considering the "whole complex" of the relations of the member states (and therefore both the activities conducted within the EC and those conducted in the context of the EPC) as the framework on which to base the transformation of the current decisional process into a "European Union". The use of a political way, in addition to the existing cooperation in the economic field can - it is stated - usually help to obtain the declared goal. The weakness of this reasoning is that the final goal, i.e. European Union, lacks a clear definition in terms of both content and, especially, structure and procedures. This indefinite goal, in effect, immediately undermines the feasibility and value of a strategy - in principle of a positive nature - which can be defined, as Lindberg did, as "political determinism" (4). In fact, even if a step-by-step strategy is adopted, instead of that "qualitative leap forward" vocally requested by the federalists, it becomes very difficult to follow a coherent line of successive enlargements of the integration process without having a clear final goal. Functionalism, in other words, also if applied to the political field (in addition or parallel to the economic one), cannot correctly work in the absence of an overall project of final union: a process (of integration) without a project (of integration) is doomed to failure (5).

The second consideration is that the method used to reach European Union in the field of foreign policy has in itself evident elements of intergovernmentalism and its existence has constituted a challenge to the parallel decision-making process in the economic field, as the history of their difficult confrontation has shown. This competition, without having provided a clarification between the two traditional souls of Europeanism, has also contributed very little to the advancement of the process of European integration. It has certainly helped to enlarge Europe's range of activities, but has not increased its efficacy and credibility either inside or outside the Community's frontiers (6).

Finally, EPC is more the outcome of an experimental praxis than of a legal agreement among member states. This special "status", which had reversed the premises on which the Europeans had started their attempts towards continental integration - agreeing first on a Treaty and only successively on a policy - has given a high degree of flexibility to EPC. So that, from a very light initial "protocol" in 1970 establishing the minimum procedures needed, a step-by-step strategy has had, on the basis of experience, to adjust EPC decision-making mechanisms and procedures to political circumstances and agreed perceptions on the progress to be made in the common foreign policy field. More than the EC decision-making structure, EPC represented a political process of a dynamic character, strictly bound, for that reason, to the precarious willingness of member states to proceed towards more advanced stages of integration. But, at the same time, it could be adapted - at least in principle - with a greater flexibility to the needs and goals of European integration, as has been shown on various occasions. It was only with the signing of the Single European Act (SEA) in February 1986 that it was possible finally to achieve the formalization in a legal act (to be ratified by all the member states) of European Political Cooperation. Art. 30 of the new Treaty is in fact entirely devoted to the definition of the tasks and procedures of EPC. An interesting debate has therefore opened on the impact the codification of EPC in the Single European Act will have on the development of EPC and on its essentially pragmatic and flexible nature. The question, therefore, is whether the SEA represents a codification of the current rules, preventing new pragmatic

progress, or whether it can be considered the first step towards a new foreign policy régime (7).

1. The growing complexity of the EPC procedural system. Potentials and limits.

Following the indications of praxis, EPC has added - like a Chinese box - to the very thin and limited initial procedures, a series of organs and rules with the clear aim of either spreading around the consensus-building process in the forming of a European foreign policy or of improving the capabilities of better answering the external challenges. This has lead, naturally, towards a more complex and sophisticated institutional mechanism, which has both increased the importance of EPC inside and outside the Community, and contributed to the definition of the "ad hoc" character of a method of coopertion that, at the very beginning, did not distinguish itself from the well-known loose intergovernmental coordination, typical of the greater part of International Organizations, (and even more informal and less binding than that, for example, experimented in the NATO or UN frameworks).

The three successive reports of Luxembourg (1970); Copenhagen (1973), London (1981), plus some European Council declarations like that of Stuttgart in 1983 have been analysed in detail several times (8). To those "protocols" and declarations one has to add today the new Treaty, the Single European Act of February 1986 which, as mentioned above, has fixed in an article (n. 30) the rules of EPC procedures. We will therefore limit ourselves to a description of the main changes brought about and to the tendencies which have emerged in terms of procedures and decision-making mechanisms.

a) The increasing burden of EPC's functioning process.

Among the most evident tendencies which have emerged inside EPC, one of the first regards the growing number of meetings both in the preparatory and the decisional phase. They have been multiplied throughout the years and presently it has been calculated that the presidency-in-office has the task of providing for the organisation, during a semester, of about 60 to 80 meetings, from those already scheduled by rules of the Foreign Affairs Ministers and the Political Committee, to the more frequent meetings of various working groups (9). In addition, one must add the frequent gatherings of the Twelve ambassadors, together with the EC Commission's officials in Third Countries or at International Organisations and Conferences.

This natural growth of meetings and discussion activities has clearly implied a greater effort of coordination and a better elaboration of the information. The recourse to technical help, a network of telexes (called Coreu, which permits an exchange of about 5000 telegrams a year), and a growing propensity to intensify the exchange of information in all possible seats, including those external to the Community, have partially matched this need and filled up the absence of a stable center of coordination and diffusion of information.

As we will see later on, the growth in the number of meetings to be organised and the connected need of a more sophisticated treatment of the

information, have placed a greater weight on the member country who has the task of chairing the EPC semester. This has created several problems for the smallest countries and those lacking sufficient bureaucratic-technical resources.

However, apart from these particular difficulties for the smallest countries, the problem which an organisational structure, based on a rotating system among the member countries, has ended up by creating is the problem of the continuity of work and tasks from one chairmanship to the next. A partial remedy has been found to this difficulty, as we shall see in the following paragraphs, by strengthening the presidency in office with the so-called troika system (in 1981, London Report), and with the creation of a technical secretariat, as provided for by the Single European Act.

The question of whether the ever-growing amount of work and the technical and functional improvements also represent a qualitative improvement of EPC remains open. An attempt will be made to answer this question after a detailed examination of the functioning of the decision-making process in the context of EPC.

b) A new actor: the European Council.

An important innovation has affected the dynamic process which marks EPC: a progressive evolution of the role of old and new actors in the decision-making system. Apart from the greater frequency of the ministerial and political committee's meetings, some organs, like the Group of Correspondants and the European Council, have played an increasingly important role in improving the internal EPC procedures and extending the consensus-building function.

The creation of the European Council at the end of 1974 has produced a rather important effect on EPC. The fact that some declarations and EPC policies have received the "imprimatur" of the agreement of the Heads of Government and State has clearly contributed towards upgrading the importance and the international echoes of European initiatives; the most well known example is that of the Venice Declaration of 1980 on the Middle East, a declaration which even today, plays a more or less important role in the international relations of the Twelve. Nevertheless, as it has partially happened in the parallel EC structure, the presence of the European Council has raised two kinds of problems.

First, the elaboration of EPC common positions has objectively become more complex, mainly for the reason that Heads of Government want to maintain for themselves a certain freedom of judgement until the day of their meeting.

Secondly, also in the EPC context the same kind of phenomenon has appeared which falls under the name of "deresponsibilization" of the role of foreign affairs ministers, who on the most crucial issues, show a certain tendency to leave to their more important political colleagues the task of reaching an agreement. This has sometimes delayed or even paralyzed the possibility of reaching a common position.

In addition to that, there is also a kind of psychological factor which should be taken into consideration. EPC is considered by the Heads of Government (especially by some of them) a typical intergovernmental machinery, so that they want to maintain in this sector that margin of informality and confidentiality which is objectively more difficult to follow in the communitarian field, where rules are more complex and rigid. It has so happened that since the European Council of Stuttgart of 1983 the Heads of government have failed to approve any common declaration, due particularly to the French President Mitterand's refusal to prepare those declarations in advance. Therefore, the preparatory work done by the Political Committee and by Foreign Ministers has proved useless, due to the Heads of Governments' preference to exchange points of view and information instead of adopting common declarations (10).

The apparent irony lies in the fact that it was the declaration of Stuttgart which assigned to the European Council the task of solemnly expressing the common position in questions concerning external relations. The significance of this recent stand taken by the European Council confirms many analysts' doubts regarding the wisdom of over-burdening this organism which, above all, after the ratification of the SEA, meets only twice a year and no longer three times as was the case in the past.

However, there is no doubt that the European Council continues to play a role of a certain importance in taking the initiative of extending EPC to new sectors of cooperation. Thus, in 1975 collaboration between Ministers of the Interior was introduced, in 1977 the European judicial area was discussed, in 1983, in Stuttgart, the topic of cultural cooperation was mentioned (11).

#### c) The Council of Ministers and The Political Committee

In spite of a certain weakening of their role due, as it has been seen, to the creation of the European Council, the foreign ministers continue to be the central organism of the EPC. All the preparatory activity of the subordinate organisms is headed up to them and their principal task remains that of deciding the Twelve's position in the major international questions.

There have also been changes in the decisional procedures of the Council of Ministers since the early days of the EPC.

First of all, the artificial separation between the activities carried out by the foreign ministers in the context of the EPC and those carried out in the context of the EC has lessened to the point almost of disappearing. The historical precedents regarding the rigidity with which some of the member states attempted to maintain a certain distance between the two different functions are well known (12). Today, the SEA not only recognises definitively that the ministers meet with a representative of the Brussels Commission, but also that, over and above the four meetings stipulated in Art. 30, 3a of the SEA, they can deal with foreign policy problems on the occasion of the Sessions of the Council of the European Communities. This means that each month the foreign ministers have the chance to meet. This fact helps give the proceedings of the EPC a greater degree of continuity and can enable the ministers better to respond to the widening of the international interests of the Twelve and to the growing number of crisis situations throughout the world.

The second innovation regards the practice of holding two informal restricted week-end meetings each year, without the participation of the collaborators. The aim of these meetings is to discuss general political themes, which do not concern only the field of European foreign policy but also community questions (13). This is also a way of dealing in a confidential manner with burning questions like security, or with wider questions, like European Union.

The principal collaborator of the Council of Ministers is the Political Committee, which is composed by the Directors General for political affairs of the national foreign ministries. Its role has remained unchanged over time with regard to both working methods and to its centrality with respect to the decisional process of the EPC. It is perhaps the organism where the reflex of coordination, which is one of the features most peculiar to the EPC, works at its best. The addition of the possibility, already provided for by the London Report of 1981, of holding urgent meetings on the request of three member states, has given a greater emphasis to the desire for coordination and exchanges of views and information of this organism. A representative of the Commission is always associated with the proceedings of the Political Committee, except in the case of some luncheon meetings, particularly confidential

#### d) The Group of Correspondants

As far as the organisational aspects of the EPC work is concerned, the body which can be considered to have most contributed to their improvement is the Group of Correspondants, composed of national officials, who permanently follow EPC business from their own Foreign Affairs Ministries. They are not only responsible for the management of the Coreu network, but also help to coordinate EPC activities both at a European level and at a national one, between various sections of Foreign Affairs Ministries. It is around the figure of the correspondent, often a young functionary of a not high bureaucratic rank, that the whole information and elaboration of decisions activity rotates. This special figure is also the one which best underlines the flexibility and peculiar character of the EPC decision-making structure; paradoxically, the presence of the Group of Correspondants has proved to be one of the major obstacles in the setting-up of a permanent secretariat, with the inherent risk of a further bureaucratization of a mechanism which wants to maintain its light profile.

#### f) The Working Groups

To face successfully both the multiplication of meetings and the enlargement of the fields of interest and actions of the Twelve in world affairs, a great, positive contribution came from the working groups, definitely recognised in the II Report on EPC. These are made up of the heads of sections/departments of the foreign ministries competent for certain issues: in fact, the working groups have been divided either by geographical areas, Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East, the countries of the East (there is no group for North America, since this issue is considered to be of global

importance), or by major international themes and conferences. A representative of the Commission always takes part in the meetings. These have grown in number parallel with the multiplication of the areas covered by the EPC. It has been calculated that, under the direction of the Political Committee, the working groups meet about 50 times a year.

Their activity has made it possible to deal with certain issues in a more homogeneous and lasting way than would have been requested by the contingent interest. Following this line, in 1983, under the German Presidency, it was decided to set up a kind of planning group with two main tasks. The first, as the name indicates, is to project in the long run the elaboration of certain topical interests of the Twelve. The second, to deal unofficially with matters outside present EPC competence, like, for example, security problems, even if limited to the political and economic aspects. This has been in fact to touch on subjects which are usually still "out of bounds" at other EPC levels. For the time being, however, in the face of resistance by some of the member states, this possibility has not been exploited as far as it could be and the planning group has dealt with fairly general aspects of EPC.

g) A new organ: The Secretariat

The decision to include in Art. 30, 10 of the SEA an ad hoc unit with the task of "preparing and implementing the Activities of European Political Cooperation" and of dealing with "administrative matters" represents the final phase of a long story which has its roots in the experience of the integration process. The question of the secretariat is in fact closely linked to the attempts to create an intergovernmental Europe, parallel with, or as an alternative to, the Community one. The idea of a secretariat had already begun to circulate at the beginning of the 1960's, with the discussions on the Fouchet Plan, inspired by De Gaulle. No mention was made of this problem at the birth of EPC in 1970, but it cropped up again in the Copenhagen Report of 1973, when it was understood that the tasks of the Presidency-in-Office were too heavy and that it was necessary to form an administrative unit within this body. However, even after this decision, the problem of the secretariat has never been a simple organisational factor, but during the years has retained the features of a political problem. The alternatives have always been a "heavy" secretariat (and therefore one with a political role) and a "light" one; in the end it has been the latter tendency which has predominated, one of the reasons being to avoid re-opening the question of the connection between EPC and EC structures and upsetting too much the internal balance of the EPC itself.

While Art. 30 of the SEA merely mentions the role of the secretariat, the decision taken by the foreign ministers on 28th February 1986 (after the signing of the SEA) was more precise; in it are listed the tasks of the secretariat:

- a) to assist the Presidency-in-Office in organizing EPC meetings and documents;
- b) to cooperate with the Correspondants Group;
- c) to assist the Chairmen of the EPC working groups;
- d) to assist the Presidency in preparing EPC texts for publication, including answers to parliamentary questions;
- e) to maintain the EPC archives;

- f) to keep up-to-date the working practices of EPC;
- g) to assist, when requested, the Presidency in contacts with Third Countries.

A more complex role is played by the Head of the Secretariat, whose period in this office is two and a half years and coincides with the completion of an entire cycle of the Troika system, which was extended as from 1st January 1987 to five members (see below). The role of the Head of the Secretariat is a particularly delicate one for two reasons: the first is that of working with a new organism which has to carry out efficiently certain important bureaucratic tasks; the second is having to mark out an area of action among the other bodies already in existence without overlapping with their tasks.

### 3. The "core" role of the Presidency in office

The growing complexity of EPC machinery and its intergovernmental character have shown the need to attribute an increasingly central role to the Presidency -in-office. In fact, the vital rule for functioning in an acceptable way for a decision-making structure deprived of a well established bureaucratic base is that of identifying a center capable of ensuring the coordination of its activity and the impulse for new initiatives.

There is also another element which can contribute, paradoxically, to the reinforcement of the role of the Presidency: the absence of an EPC common budget. This leaves to each member state, depending on its financial capacity, the decision on how to utilize its semester of EPC presidency, giving more or less emphasis to the management of common affairs during its term.

More generally, if on the one hand it can be said that the reinforcement of the EPC Presidency reflects a tendency towards a "summitry" decision-making system, common both in the European Community (with, for example, the creation of the European Council) and in other international contexts (the Summits of the Seven, etc.), on the other hand it has, for the above mentioned reasons, a more accentuated character. The central role played by the Presidency, being a typical outcome of the praxis, has been gradually fixed in various documents: in the 1974 Paris Summit conclusions, in the London Report of 1981 (with particular reference to the tasks of external representation) and in the Solemn Declaration of Stuttgart in 1983 (14).

In the London Report, particularly, it was decided to create a new procedure of fundamental importance for the life of EPC and for the reinforcement of the Presidency: the so-called Troika system, which links the previous and succeeding Presidency to that-in-office, has tried to solve two different problems. First, to permit a better coordination of the Twelve's activities; second, to give a certain character of continuity and homogeneity to an EPC initiative when moving from one Presidency to another. This decision was reinforced later in the SEA both by the extension of the Troika system to five participants and by the establishment of the Secretariat.

The Presidency, then, plays an extremely important role, implementing several tasks and functions. It fixes the issues to be put on the agenda; tries to coordinate various initiatives; gives impulse to new ones; controls the respect of the "acquis politique"; contributes to the final drafting of common declarations; finally and most important, it plays the role of mediator among governments and fills the crucial consensus building function.



This last function is probably the most difficult and time-consuming to carry out: it implies a great bargaining attitude and a strong effort both in terms of time and of money, due to frequent travel of bureaucratic and political representatives to the capitals which put obstacles in the way of an agreement

#### 4. The coordination of the Twelve in the world

Parallel to those of the Presidency is the strengthening of the instruments of "external representation" of EPC. This "external" projection, which also represents the European attempt to extend the consultation procedure towards Third Countries, is the consequence of an already well-established capacity of reaching common positions inside EPC beforehand. In fact, an improved role of EPC in Third Countries and in international organizations can be analysed under two different points of view. On the one side it regards the procedures and mechanisms which allow the Twelve to reach homogeneous positions among themselves, and on the other it deals with the Twelve's capacity to extend the agreements also towards the Third Countries. Both functions have been satisfactorily accomplished by EPC, in that it contributes to the spreading of a more concrete image of Europe in the world (15).

Typical, under this point of view, have been the good initial results of the European participation in the CSCE, where some rather effective techniques of consultation among Europeans and other Western countries had been experimented: they have given a rather good example to be followed for other similar initiatives. At the same time, Europeans have reached a good degree of cohesion at the UN (even though, for some years, statistics on voting behaviour do not give signs of further improvement and, on the contrary, they have shown a certain degree of inversion in tendency) (16). But, more than that, what really has improved its functioning is the network of coordination and exchange of information among European embassies in Third countries, often, where it exists, with the contribution of the Commission's representative. The high importance of this external activity has been recognized by the II EPC Report, which has stressed the extension of the role of the member states' embassies.

The second function, concerning the consultation procedure with Third countries, has also developed considerably. Besides the ad hoc contacts that every President-in-office has with Third Countries wishing to get in touch with the EPC, especially during the period and in the capital of the country of the Presidency, a whole network of institutionalized contacts has been established, both with groups of countries inside and outside international organisations and conferences and with individual Third countries. Among the latter are the United States (with its "Gymnich Formula" procedure), Norway (which, after having decided against entry to the EC, has gone out of its way to keep close ties), Japan and other countries.

From this point of view, the economic and commercial agreements negotiated by the EC form a good framework and are of great assistance in establishing institutionalized relations between EPC and Third Countries (such as the EC-Asean agreements or those with the Andean Group). In general, it can be said that the formalizing of relations between EPC and Third Countries is one of the most important and least known novelties in recent years and without a doubt

constitutes a positive element in the affirmation of Europe's role in the world.

#### 5. The crisis management procedure.

Another line of development of EPC regards crisis management. Given the slowness of European reactions to international crises (just think of the time it took for the Nine to react to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979), and in order to be able to respond more promptly to Third Countries' requests for more immediate expression of a European opinion on important political events (such as, for example, the political crisis in South Africa), a rule has been introduced in EPC procedure, making it possible to have EPC bodies and foreign ministers meet within 48 hours, on the request of three member states.

At the insistence of the British, this procedure was set down in the London Report in 1981. Strangely enough, only a few months later, the new rule was used to Great Britain's advantage at the beginning of the Falkland conflict. This has also played a part in enhancing Europeans' image abroad and spurring EPC decisional mechanisms to function beyond the normal routine.

Besides these positive effects, however, crisis management mechanisms have two important drawbacks in common with the rest of EPC procedure. The first is that the only result of a crisis management consultation can be a common declaration in as little time as possible. It is, on the contrary, difficult to imagine, (and there are in any case no examples of this type) that a consultation of this nature can result in any action whatsoever. In fact, the second weakness, related to the first, is that "management" lacks traditional instruments of persuasion, both military and for direct intervention. The term "management" is, therefore, excessive and does not reflect Europe's almost total impotence in the face of crisis events.

#### 6. The relationship between EPC and Community Institutions

Throughout the years, relations with Community institutions have also been refined. Much has been said and written about the improvement of relations between two decision-making bodies that were competitive in the beginning. Later we shall come back to the problem of the effectiveness of measures mutually agreed upon by the two European structures. Here, it suffices to point out some fundamental tendencies in terms of improvement and consultation procedures between EPC and the EC. The first, obviously deals with an improvement in relations with the Commission which have, from the very start, and mainly due to political and symbolic reasons, constituted the point of greatest friction between the two systems. In this case, the role played by routine procedure was of decisive importance. The Commission's ability to contribute, by means of its services and its independent information network, to the achievement of common positions in the EPC field, has been an extremely important element from the very beginning. Proof of this collaboration within the CSCE and, more generally, the advantage of being able to evaluate the economic results of a foreign policy decision have, throughout the years, helped to eliminate ideological and political differences between EPC and the Commission. In fact, in the London Report, the small margin of discretionary

power that still existed, giving the president-in-office the right to decide whether or not the Commission may participate in certain EPC activities, was done away with. The Commission's participation in the European Council and at the tables of the Seven Summit, without the former rigid distinction between political and economic discussion that characterised the first times, also contributed to solving this problem. Today, the SEA has legally reconfirmed the London decision and the Commission takes full part, without any other discretionary clause, in the working of EPC both at ministerial and official level. It gives advice mainly on the economic aspects of a European foreign policy, without neglecting a political interpretation of them. The full participation of the Commission in the game also permits the implementation of the task that art. 30, 5 of SEA gives to EPC and Community institutions to ensure "consistency" between EPC activities and the economic external relations of the Community.

The second point concerns relations between EPC and the European Parliament. Here too, contacts between the bodies of EPC and the Assembly in Strasbourg have travelled along the same lines, expanding and developing. It is now practice that the European Council's president-in-office reports on the results of the meetings of the Heads of Government (therefore including possible decisions in the EPC field) to the EP, that foreign ministers present annual reports on EPC and respond to questions in parliament etc. Nevertheless, the powers of the European Parliament are limited to consultations and it is difficult to imagine that they can go beyond that. In fact, art. 30, 4 of the SEA formally recognises that EP should be "closely associated" with EPC, but this formula can be implemented in an active way only by the Presidency. The possibility of transforming these consultation procedures into political events of importance, leaving space and a certain role to the indications of the European Parliament, depends largely on the political will of the Presidency.

What is, perhaps, more interesting to note, is that the EP plays an ever greater role in foreign affairs using all instruments at its disposal and often preparing the ground for future EPC actions. Relations with the parliaments of Third Countries or groups of Third Countries (such as those with Latin America which, after the Falkland crisis, reopened communication channels between Europe and Latin America), invitations to foreign leaders to speak at Strasbourg (the memory of Sadat is still very much alive) and the tendency to approve resolutions regarding all major international political events (such as the support given to the deployment of Euro-missiles) are all factors which put pressure on the EPC to orient its choices and actions. More than any weak institutional links, this is probably the greatest novelty concerning EP and EPC relations.

#### 7. Beyond EPC: how to work together in the security and external relations field

The importance of working together between EPC and EC institutional structures is particularly emphasised by the need to match some challenges in the security field (clearly not in the strict sense of military security but in the broader one of political and economic aspects). The mechanism of crisis management and the reconfirmation in the SEA, art. 30, 6a, of the importance of the political and economic aspects of security, lead necessarily towards a greater cooperation among the various instruments and institutions through

which Europeans cooperate. In fact, due to the lack of ad hoc instruments at EPC's disposal, we had in the past evidence of the use of economic means of EC's competence to better underline a common European position or declaration. As far as security is concerned, in prospect cooperation could be extended also to other contexts beyond those of EPC and the EC: for example, the relations between EPC and WEU or other European defence organizations (Eurogroup or IEPG). Since the latter are only possible future projects, here analysis will be limited to the potential for interpenetration between EPC and the EC.

We have already mentioned the difficulties and mistrust involved in having officials from the two structures work together. Nevertheless, once this theological-political standstill was overcome, the problem of closer cooperation between the two systems was dealt with quite concretely. There are now numerous cases of cooperation in which EC procedures have functioned as a support to EPC procedures, from aid to Poland to sanctions against the Soviet Union, Iran and against Argentina during the Falkland crisis.

The latter is most illuminating with regard to both economic instruments to use in support of political actions and the validity of cooperation among different methods of integration.

In the first place, during the sudden and unexpected Falkland incident on April 1, 1982, the crisis management procedure worked perfectly well. On the day after the Argentinian invasion, the Political Committee was already gathered to work out a common condemnation of the act and to prepare for the foreign ministers' meeting a few hours later. Political support of a member state hit by crisis was unanimous and complete (at least in the first days). Initiatives succeeded each other rapidly and necessary information was quickly communicated. The Belgian president at the time moved very effectively and carried out the job of consensus-building very well.

In fact, the first measure adopted, the arms embargo on Argentina, was the upshot of a proposal by the president and was taken on a national multilateral basis, the only context in which such an action could be taken. All member states agreed to this proposal.

Another remarkable element was European cohesion at the United Nations and towards Third Countries (especially Latin America and the United States) directly interested in one way or another in the conflict. European embassies reacted in a rather compact way and asserted the European position as opposed to that of Argentinian policy. At the United Nations, European countries voted together in the Security Council.

The most important fact, however, was the EC Council's decision to adopt economic sanctions on the basis of Art. 113 of the Treaty (although there was, at Denmark's urging, indirect reference to Art. 224). The Commission played a decisive role, in that it convinced European countries to adopt a common procedure on the basis of Art. 113, to make the sanctions more rapid and politically significant, rather than resort to Art. 224 which made adoption of identical measures a national responsibility. Use of a common economic instrument for the exertion of concrete pressure following a political declaration enhanced EPC's image and effectiveness.

The role of the European Parliament was interesting. Since the measures adopted were of a common character (recourse to Art. 113) having to do with common commercial policy, the EP was entitled to express its opinion. But besides that, it also gave strong political backing to the decision of the Council of Ministers, with a large vote in favour of sanctions, thus partially facilitating, at least at first, explanation of the measures adopted to national parliaments and public opinion. Even after Italy and Ireland withdrew from the common action, the EP continued to back the majority position in order to continue with the sanctions (even if then on the basis of Art. 224).

Finally, it can be argued that EPC dealt with and publicly supported measures having to do with collective security policy, in an area which, moreover, was really beyond the competence of military alliances. Even if this does not mean that security policy falls into EPC's province, there is no doubt that at least on this occasion it was discussed.

In conclusion, this case-study confirms the importance of coordinating EPC and EC activity. This can allow EPC to cross the threshold of common declarations and provide the means of intervention which the EC is lacking. Thus, it is possible to use articles from the Rome Treaty in support of EPC policies. This has led to a more effective relation between Community institutions and EPC and has opened the way to a more extensive use of the articles of the Rome Treaty by EPC. It has led to the prospect of using not only commercial clauses, but also association agreements and financial policy in the Third World, for common foreign policy. Even if the link is, as yet, shaky, the potential is doubtlessly there (17).

#### 8. Tendencies of EPC in the light of results obtained and weaknesses emerged.

Analysis of the decision-making procedures and mechanisms of EPC leads to some conclusive remarks about the nature of this method of cooperation among Europeans.

It is evident that the decision-making system is rather sophisticated even if only slightly bureaucratized. This gives it the ability to adapt relatively easily to the needs of the moment and to live alongside other decisional structures, such as those of the Community which, if well used, can strengthen its role. This flexibility and adaptability depends, however, to a large extent, on the consensus of member states. Therefore, the main function permitting the working of EPC is the construction of consensus whenever necessary. This leads to some obvious considerations:

- a) consensus can be withdrawn at any time;
- b) consensus can be obtained more easily on the basis of declarations than of actions, due to lack of common instruments;
- c) consensus does not have a binding effect on national policies.

This leads us to believe that in the absence of clearer and more binding procedures for construction of consensus, organizational improvements of EPC are possible but cannot change the essence of the problem which is that of making the decision-making process binding and giving it pre-eminence over the national process.

In this light, the entry into the Community of Spain and Portugal had not a very significant effect on the modality of EPC decision-making processes, in one way or another. That is, while EPC substantial policies could be considerably affected by the entry of the two countries, procedures will not be greatly impacted. In fact, for a mechanism like EPC which, in spite of the improvements it has undergone in the last few years, is still basically an intergovernmental decision-making process, the increase in the number of members could lead to a slowing down in the rhythm of this process, but not to a change in the nature of the decisions taken. On the contrary, as we have seen in the case of Greece, basic divergences on the priority or interpretation of the issues can be an unsurmountable obstacle to arriving at a common decision. The enlargement of EPC, in other words, can only contribute to highlighting the precariousness of a decision-making mechanism which was already weak in its starting premises (18). At the most, there will be a growing tendency to look for agreement among a smaller number and more homogeneous groups of countries, leaving to EPC the task of solving secondary problems or of adapting itself, later, to policies decided upon multilaterally by groups of nations.

From this perspective, equally, the creation of a light secretariat, innovative as it may be, will not substantially change the EPC's present operating capabilities. It may slightly improve organization of work, but not its overall effect on national foreign policies or on Community policies. A secretariat, seen as a driving and coordinating center, can only have meaning as part of a whole institutional plan giving EPC those characteristics mentioned above that can transform it into a decision-making system capable of producing European foreign policy.

A qualitative jump of this kind is unlikely in the near future. Experience to date, however, allows us to contemplate an intermediate solution, and that is, the differentiation of the roles of governments in EPC activity. Without setting up a multi-speed system, the participation of the member states could be modulated at the stage of action (the most qualifying factor of any foreign policy): that is, the use of common instruments. Thus, two levels are called for: a political level for adoption of common policies within the EPC with the participation of all member states and an operational level, using economic and financial instruments (those of the EC included) and even military means which for now would be national, in view of a revitalization of the WEU or other defence agencies. These tools would be used only by the member states able to shoulder responsibility for actions taken (while the others would be exonerated). Thus, the EPC would function as a political cover for the actions of some member states in particularly delicate areas of European foreign policy (Middle East, South Africa, etc.), with EPC maintaining continuous political control of all such actions. A dream? An answer, albeit not explicit, has already been provided a number of times by reality. This occurred, for example, in the Sinai and in Lebanon when a number of European countries intervened under the partial cover of EPC. Procedures should be generalized and political control extended, but the road is there.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1) David Allen and William Wallace, Political Cooperation procedure as a substitute for policy, in H. Wallace, W. Wallace and C. Webb (eds.), Policy-making in the European Community, Wiley, West Sussex, England, 1983, second edition.
- 2) Basic references are: Philippe de Schoutheete, La Coopération Politique Européenne, second edition, Labor, Bruxelles, 1986 and D. Allen, R. Rummel, W. Wessels (eds.), European Political Cooperation, Butterworth, London, 1982. As far as the american academicians are concerned see: C. Cioffi-Revilla, The Reliability of European Political Cooperation: A stochastic Model, paper prepared for presentation at the 23rd Annual Convention of International Studies Association, Cincinnati, Ohio, 24-27 March 1982; R. Howard Ginsberg, Political economy of Cooperation: European Foreign Policy in the Making, paper prepared for presentation at the Third International Conference of Europeanists, The Council for European Studies, Washington D.C, May 1, 1982.
- 3) These points are also analysed in an essay of Philippe de Schoutheete, External Relations of European Political Cooperation, in E.U.I. Working Paper, No. 85/172, Florence, May 1985.
- 4) For this concept, see the classic book by L.M. Lindberg and S.A. Scheingold, Europe's Would-Be Polity, Patterns of Change in the European Community, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1970, p. 4.
- 5) The ambiguity of the terminology used by the Heads of State is well illustrated in a recent book: R. Pryce (ed.), The Dynamics of European Union, Croom Helm, London, 1987.
- 6) See Paul Taylor, The Limits of European Integration, Croom Helm, London, 1983, chapter three: Intergovernmentalism in the European Communities, pp 60 - 92.
- 7) On this point see: E. Regelsberger, W. Wessels, The Belgian Presidency and its management of European Political Cooperation: or the way to implement act 30 of the Single European Act, paper for the Tepsa Conference on the Priorities of Community Action and Political Cooperation in 1987, Val Duchesse, Nov. 20-22, 1986
- 8) A short essential bibliography on EPC is included in the preparatory introduction to the Bonn Conference 15/16 November 1985, for which this paper was produced.
- 9) Helen Wallace, The Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the European Council: Tasks and Evolution in Colm O'Neillain (ed.), The European Council of Ministers, Croom Helm, London 1984.
- 10) On the role of European Council and EPC, see G. Borvicini and E. Regelsberger, The Organisational and Political Implications of the Establishment of the European Council on both EC and EPC Decision-Making, Paper, presented at the EIPA Annual Conference, Erstein Castle, 1984.

- 11) See Ph. de Schoutheete, op.cit., pp 38-39.
- 12) See G. Bonvicini, The Dual Structure of EPC and Community Activities: Problems of Coordination, in Allen, Rummel, Wessels, European Political Cooperation, op.cit.
- 13) See PH. de Schoutheete, la Coopération Politique, op. cit., pp 39-40.
- 14) H. Wallace, The Presidency....., op.cit.
- 15) See Elfride Regelsberger, European Political Cooperation Contacts with Third Countries: Past and Present, in E.U.I. Working Paper, No. 85/172, Florence, May 1985.
- 16) Source: Department of Public Information, UN Press Release, New York, 1980-84.
- 17) See Simon Nuttall, The Future of External Relations of EPC, in E.U.I. Working Paper, No. 85/172, Florence, May 1985.
- 18) On EPC/Spain and Portugal a broad study has been carried out by the Istituto Affari Internazionali of Rome and the Institut fur Europäische Politik of Bonn with the support of the VW foundation. A version in Spanish of the study is going to appear soon. On the peculiar aspect of the impact of the enlargement on EPC see one of the contributions to the study: E. Regelsberger, From Ten to Twelve - a New Dimension for EPC, The International Spectator, 4-5, 1985, pp 34-44.



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