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SPAIN AND THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL COOPERATION:  
MAIN TASKS AND PROCEDURES

by

G. Bonvicini, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome  
E. Regelsberger, Institut für Europäische Politik, Bonn

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1. How to plan next semester for matters of EPC

Compared to the activities of the EC, where an already well-experimented procedure helps to fix an agenda for the incoming presidency, the task for those responsible for Epc issues is less easy and frequently the source of a sense of frustration. In fact, on 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 not to require the presidency in office to demonstrate that it has some ideas on how to manage Epc.

Usually those responsible for planning the next semester have two alternatives: the first is to concentrate on solving questions of detail, or those 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.

The second alternative is to deal with the major priorities and the sectors of potential growth in Epc. From these priorities, several concrete initiatives should then be made that contribute to indicating the direction to be followed. 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.

Following the "shopping list" criteria can be politically more comfortable. Avoiding a clear indication of issues considered to be of high priority for the chairing country eliminates possible objections from some other member countries and troubles at the domestic level as well. But, the extent to which this procedure can be fully applied is limited. First of all, international affairs can hardly respect a set order, given the unpredictability of world events and the rapidly changing patterns of today's international relations and balance of powers. Epc must be ready to react promptly to external challenges and, therefore, adopt a flexible attitude toward the tasks ahead. Secondly, as pointed out before, one semester is a very short period of time even if the full list of European interests in the world and open questions still on the table of Epc are only to be considered briefly.

The choice of some priorities can, nevertheless, help to concentrate the efforts on a few issues that are difficult to avoid and that are of crucial importance to the Twelve. At the same time, it can leave room for reacting to exceptional events. Of course, a choice among priority issues will prove to be more delicate politically because it gives a clearer indication of a government's international preferences and position. But, in terms of advantages, it can help to "mark" the role of the presidency more clearly and, by concentrating the efforts, lead toward some concrete results in the field of Epc (for example, the launching of fact-finding missions, use of Community economic tools to reinforce a European declaration, etc.). This second method of operating, then, is our preference.

## 2. The organizational burden for the Presidency and how to exploit existing procedures more effectively.

An aspect which is not usually taken into much consideration is the presidency's difficult task of providing the organizational impetus required to make the machinery of Epc work efficiently. The chairing country has to oversee some 80 meetings a semester, from the ministerial ones to those of the working groups. This latter level in particular requires strong leadership because of the variety of group structures and the number of issues involved. In addition, the presidency has to ensure coherence in the Third Countries (among the ambassadors) and at the International Organization. The task, especially for a country holding the presidency for the first time, seems rather impressive in that it involves a strong coordinating effort.

A precondition is that of reinforcing the national structure at the Foreign Affairs Ministry in order to help manage EPC affairs. Spain has already done a great deal in this area in the past two years by reforming the preexisting structures within the Ministry and by placing more emphasis on the coordinating role of the organs responsible for European affairs. From this point of view, Spain's bureaucratic structure, at least for the activities of the Epc, is similar to those of the main European partners. Its only limitation may be lack of experience. Spain can, however, draw on both the Troika system and on the newly established Secretariat for Epc.

The use of Troika, since its introduction into the Epc mechanism in 1981, has proved to be of great importance for the functioning of the presidency. Apart from giving a sense of continuity to those responsible for managing Epc affairs, the Troika, now enlarged to five countries, can help to give more visibility to the actions of the Twelve in the world: one possible means is that of repeating the Troika's fact-finding missions in some regions or countries of particular interest to Europe (at present, the Middle East); another one, not yet experimented, but possible, at least in principle, would be that of a kind of division of labour among Troika's members by giving certain tasks to some of the other four countries in order to carry out certain actions or missions under the strict control of the Presidency itself. Again, this would help to reinforce the image of a working Epc and the sense of continuity.

3. Has Epc lost its impetus since the relaunching of the EEC's economic process?

This is a question sometimes raised in the Epc's circles, where people have some nostalgia for the long period during which the only dynamic element in the process of European integration was the activity in the field of foreign policy. Objectively, the interest in the completion of the internal market and the target of '92 has helped to focus attention on the economic matters of EEC again. Nevertheless, Epc still remains an element of fundamental importance to the Twelve's role in the world in connection with '92: just think of the concept of "Europe Fortress" and, consequently, of the need to reassure Third Countries with both political and economic actions that the entire process of European integration is an open one. In addition, Epc has three main tasks to fulfill in the near future:

a) to promote consistency, as stated in art. 30 of the Single European Act (SEA), between the fields of activities of the Epc and EEC. The example of 1992 is clear in this regard. What the presidency has to ensure is a strict association between those who deal with foreign policy issues and those who are responsible for EEC matters at all levels, ministerial, diplomatic, working groups, etc.

b) to enlarge the discussion of the political and economic aspects of European security at all levels, again a clear provision of the SEA, and to convince those reluctant to fulfill this task of the need to do so. Possibly the presidency also has to operate informally by maintaining coordination and consistency between discussion and decisions taken inside different institutions on security questions (Epc, EEC, WEU, Eurogroup, Iepg, etc). The entry of Spain into the WEU can help to lead this function.

c) to reinforce the relations between Epc and the Third Countries (like Efta and Turkey) by trying to move from a purely informative activity to some form of consultation with the neighbouring countries.

4. A task of vital importance: to start to redefine West-West relations and pass from a Gymnich formula to a more balanced transatlantic dialogue.

The only other time that the Europeans felt such an urgent need to clarify the interatlantic linkages was probably in the early seventies, just after the breakdown of the Bretton Woods System, the failure of the policy of partnership within NATO, and the explosion of the energy crisis. The difference between that situation and the present one is that pressure to revise the terms of the alliance then 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 within 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 stems from the consideration that the difficulties among the allies at the beginning of the 70s did not constitute an occasional episode due to a particular contingency, but, rather, the starting point of a long-lasting diverging trend in the

Atlantic relationship. The "Troubled Partnership" of Kissinger has become "A Widening Atlantic?" of Dahrendorf and Sorenson, the latter label being somewhat mitigated by the question mark. An analysis of the causes underlying this trend is beyond the scope of the present discussion. It is self-evident that the Gynnich Formula cannot play the role of a pre-consultation mechanism in cases of international crises. Quite frankly, there are no miraculous solutions for the bilateral dialogue, simply because 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 its number and scope and also including an emergency meeting between the two. But, the most important sign would be to reintroduce the practice of a third European Council meeting (meetings now reduced to two according to the provisions of the Single Act) at the end of the 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 State Department 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 new impetus. The increased information exchange can help to avoid the use of political rhetoric, so damaging in crises.

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

##### 5. Major topics on the EPC agenda during the Spanish Presidency

As foreign policy-making at both the national and European levels is largely determined by sudden and unpredictable events throughout the globe, it is difficult to indicate the issues that will be of main concern and priority for the Twelve during the next six months. Despite such uncertainties, the subjects chosen for this working group will continue to be of top priority for EPC as they have been in the past.

While Central America is a "newcomer" in the Twelve's deliberations and policy in the 1980s, the debate on East-West relations and on developments in the Middle East, particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict, is as old as the EPC itself. In all three issues areas, the EC governments have been able to "speak with one voice" and, furthermore, to "shape" events. At the same time, and to the extent that the common "acquis politique" (i.e. the views and policies shared by all) progressed, the limits of collective diplomacy became obvious. The more the Twelve managed to go beyond "informing" and "consulting" one another on any foreign policy matter of general interest ("communauté

d'information"), the more laborious it became to reconcile sometimes very specific and also controversial national foreign policies. Particularly in those cases when the Twelve wish to make their views known to the international public, their performance may appear to be weak and sometimes even nonexistent. Moving from "purely" formulating a common stance toward implementing a "European foreign policy" (Title III, Art. 30, 1 Single European Act) turned out, not surprisingly, to be the most difficult thing to do.

Spain is taking over responsibility at a time when the European Community is witnessing an enormous internal dynamic (keyword: "1992") while in EPC much is going along the lines of "business as usual". Those who were inclined to interpret the inclusion of EPC within the legal framework of the Single European Act (SEA) as something more than a symbolic gesture may be disappointed with the results attained so far: "moral pressure" for greater cohesion coming from a treaty-based cooperation has not manifested itself. It seems as though the provisions of the SEA, particularly those in which the Twelve declare their willingness to refrain from impeding a consensus "as much as possible", take only second place in the daily life of EPC. European policy towards South Africa serves best to illustrate this discrepancy between "solemnly" agreed principles and the EPC practice. European posture in the US-Libya affair in 1986 can be mentioned as another setback in the Twelve's attempt to develop a genuine "European" profile in international politics.

It would be too easy and incorrect to see Greece - as is sometimes the case - as the maverick of EPC. Other EC member states would have to be mentioned as well. Be it Irish neutrality that massively blocks the evolution of the European security pillar in EPC, be it the United Kingdom's "special relationship" with the United States that sometimes leads to the deviation of a common line, or be it Spain, a "new" dissenter among the Twelve, whose genuine interest in the Maghreb prevents the twelve governments from voting in unison at the United Nations, each of the participating countries very carefully draws a cost-benefit analysis between the joint and individual steps.

The Spanish Presidency will have to do a lot in terms of tabling the right proposals at the right moment to reach consensus and in terms of mediating conflicting interests among the Twelve. Contrary to what happened in 1983, when Greece took over the EPC chair for the first time, in 1988, the "old" EC member states are by no means worried about accepting the "newcomer" Spain as their spokesperson for the next six months. In fact, the expectations are high that the Spanish Presidency will be a success. This attitude applies not only to the other European countries, but also to third countries, particularly in Central and Latin America and also in the Middle East region. The challenges the Madrid government is to face, however, do not necessarily coincide. The burden of the EPC and EC Presidency is a heavy one, both with regard to internal EPC/EC concertation and consensus-building, and external representation on behalf of the Twelve. The priority areas outlined below will give proof of this general assessment.

(a) East-West relations - defining the Twelve's role on the eve of a new round of negotiations.

The view is generally and rightly held that the conference diplomacy of the EC member states in the framework of the CSCE-process has had a history of

success. During the 1970s, it was mainly the Six, and then the Nine who set the tone in defining the Western positions towards the three "baskets" (referring to security, economic cooperation, and human rights issues). With the deterioration of the international climate in the early 1980s (Afghanistan, Poland), considerable time and energy was devoted to West-West consultations in order to harmonize views between the Europeans and the Americans on whether to continue or interrupt the dialogue with the East. In the end, the Ten's arguments turned out to be convincing enough to influence US policy. The CSCE-process continued and deepened after the Madrid follow-up conference which could be concluded after long negotiations, not at least due to the engagement of the host country, Spain.

Since the mid-1980s, the EC governments have found themselves in a somewhat new situation. The less strained relations of the superpowers permit them to play an active role. Through numerous proposals, the Twelve work towards keeping the new dynamism in East-West relations alive.

At the same time, however, Soviet policy under Gorbachev is demanding in terms of both intra-European cohesion and European-American relations. Federal Germany, "assisted" by France, wishes to give as much support as possible to the Soviet leader while others among the Twelve, and particularly the United Kingdom, want to see Gorbachev's words followed by visible deeds. To underline the importance Paris and Bonn attach to East-West relations and the progress to be made, the Franco-German tandem of foreign ministers took the floor several times at the CSCE-meetings in Stockholm and Vienna parallel to the activities of the EPC Presidency.

While these two countries, together with their EPC partners (the British being the last to joining the line) also favour a human-rights expert meeting to be held in Moscow in 1991 as a concrete follow-up step to the Vienna conference, the US government only very recently gave up its resistance.

Given the spectre of views between the "progressive" majority among the Twelve and the moderates, it is no surprise that it took the Twelve considerable time and debate to come up with some concrete answers to Gorbachev's admittedly vague proposal to build up the "Common European House". The principles enumerated in point five of the European Council's declaration on the international role of the European Community passed at the Rhodes summit earlier this month are to be understood as the fundamentals upon which the European "Ostpolitik" will be built in the future. Heads of State and government stressed the importance of promoting the Western values and principles when the architecture of the "Common European House" is designed and implemented. According to the Twelve, cooperation in an all-European context has to be based on the full respect for the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. In the field of security, it aims at the "establishment of a secure and stable balance of conventional forces in Europe at a lower level, the strengthening of mutual confidence, and military transparency and the conclusion of a global and verifiable ban on chemical weapons." As for economic relations, the Twelve are willing to give a positive answer to the CMEA countries' openness to close links with the EC. Based on the Joint Declaration of 25 June 1988 on mutual recognition, the Twelve wish to see the Hungary-EC agreement followed by others "taking into account each country's specific situation." The Human Dimension of the CSCE-process will continue to rank highest in the Twelve's "Ostpolitik". They particularly stress the respect for

human rights and fundamental freedoms to be secured in all countries participating in the CSCE and will strive for progress in the "establishment of more open societies" including greater human and cultural exchanges between East and West.

It will fall to the Spanish Presidency both to stimulate and direct the debate among the Twelve on how to promote those principles and translate them into common steps and to present these findings to the other partners of the CSCE-process. The Spanish foreign Minister will have the honour and duty of speaking on behalf of the Twelve at the official closing of the Vienna CSCE follow-up conference. Soon afterwards, the Spanish Presidency will have to present the Twelve's views again at the new round of Confidence Building Measures to be started under the "roof" of the 35 CSCE countries. Spain will also be in charge of opening the "political dialogue" with the Eastern European countries agreed upon now (Rhodes European Council), after lengthy and controversial discussions in EPC on whether and how to establish regular links with Moscow and the other European CMEA members.

Given the nature of the issues in the forthcoming negotiations on conventional disarmament and confidence building in Europe and the complicated procedural arrangements (Conventional Stability Talks between the Warsaw Pact and NATO/CSCE framework) on the one hand, and the limited scope of competences of EPC in matters related to security on the other hand, the Spanish chair will have a lot to do in intra-European and Western coordination and mediation. Spain's accession to WEU may help in this very important "bridge building" between the various fora.

(b) The Middle East - the Twelve's limited room to manoeuvre

Hundreds of pages have already been written about the successes or failures, depending on the observer's perspective of the European policy towards the Middle East. We will limit ourselves here to recall the basic principles of the Twelve's approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict and raise the most topical question at the moment, that is, what the EC member states can do to make the proposal of the convention of an international peace conference a reality.

Given the very distinct national Middle East policies of the EC countries in the early 1970s, EPC somewhat surprisingly produced a common ground of views rather quickly. The basic principles of the Twelve's acquis, particularly the right of all states in the region, including Israel, to exist within secure borders, and the Palestinian People's right of self-determination are laid down in the Venice Declaration of the European Council (June 1980). Since then, the Ten/Twelve have repeatedly reaffirmed these elements of their "charter" of a European Middle East policy. Attempts to define the common positions in greater detail and translate them into concrete joint actions have not always been successful. The more consultations focussed on the question of whether or not the right to self-determination implies the creation of an independent state, or the more they focussed on the question of how to react to Israel's policy towards the Occupied Territories, the greater the obstacles to consensus became. The heterogeneity of views between the protagonists of the "Arabs'

cause" and the moderates among the Twelve, traditionally more open towards Israeli concerns, seem to be insurmountable.

Given this constellation of divergent interests, it will not be easy for the Spanish Presidency to launch new proposals on how the Twelve can promote the beginning of negotiations between the parties concerned. Discussions during the Greek term-of-office have clearly demonstrated how small the acquis is when it comes to deciding on concrete steps like the Twelve's presence at the UN debate on Palestine to be held in Geneva at this very moment, or the Twelve's contacts with the PLO. While Greece and several other partners (Spain included) would probably not be against an invitation to PLO leader Arafat to meet the Foreign Ministers or even the President of the European Council, a minority of governments (including the Federal Republic of Germany, Denmark, The Netherlands) would be against such a spectacular up-grading of relations between the Twelve and the PLO. So far, such a gesture has only been granted once, in February 1988, to King Hussein of Jordan as the spokesman of the Arab League's Summit. In order to emphasize the Twelve's favourable position towards the latest decisions of the Palestinian National Council, the Spanish Presidency should, therefore, look for other ways to meet PLO leader Arafat. The most modest approach would be a fact-finding mission of the President-in-Office to the Middle East to see and talk to the representatives of the conflicting parties. The application of the Troika formula (i.e. the acting President being assisted by his predecessor and his successor) could also be taken into consideration. So far, this formula has only been used once, in 1985, with respect to South Africa, to underline the EC governments' deep concerns over the situation in that country and to calm down the European and international public somewhat. It is more likely than not that the proposal of a Troika ministerial meeting with Arafat will be rejected by several governments. Given the sensitivity of such an issue, as well as the heavy organizational burden such high-level contacts imply, one could imagine a kind of intermediate solution between the Troika ministerial mission and a "simple" fact-finding tour of the Presidency: a so-called "light" Troika meeting between the Twelve and the PLO leader, in which the European side would be represented by the acting President, the Spanish Foreign Minister, and two high-ranking diplomats from the outgoing and incoming Presidencies.

Another part of the "flanking" policy that the Twelve could undertake to promote the peace process in the Middle East refers to their relations with Israel and the United States. Provided the crisis situation remains, Spain will have to continue the series of demarchés already undertaken during 1988 towards the Israeli authorities to protest against the Israeli repression in the Occupied Territories. Given the present political situation in Israel following the recent election, the influence the Twelve can exert will only be marginal. It seems all the more important to seek close contact with the incoming American Administration, and perhaps also with the Congress and the Jewish Community in the US, to work for a common strategy to overcome the present deadlock situation. On various occasions, the Arab-Israeli conflict has been a source of controversy in European-American relations. The Twelve's disapproval of not granting PLO leader Arafat a visa for the United States is but the latest event in a series of divergencies of views between Washington and the EC member states. The Spanish Presidency should use the more sophisticated network of consultations established between the Twelve and the US government to work towards a better understanding of the mutual viewpoints. It will not be an easy task to achieve progress toward a common Western strategy with regard to a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but it is worth trying.



(c) Central America - new incentives for the political dialogue with the EC/Twelve?

Of the three issue-areas selected here, the Twelve's policy toward Central America will surely be of the utmost importance for the Spanish Presidency. It is precisely this topic for which Spain's entry into EPC brought about the most fruitful results. Spain's privileged partnership with the countries in Central America have enriched the Twelve's internal consultations considerably, and have helped to broaden the links between Europe and the countries of this region. The importance that the former Ten attached to Spain, the "bridge" between the two continents, became obvious in the participation of Spain (and Portugal) in the opening of the political dialogue and the economic cooperation between the two sides in 1984, that is, long before the country officially entered the EC and the EPC. Since this first ministerial conference in San José, there have been annual gatherings which have taken place in Europe and Central America on an alternating basis. Spain will be heading the European delegation at "San José V" scheduled for early 1989 in Honduras.

As experiences with the previous sessions of the EC/Twelve's dialogue with the Central American states and the Contadora Group have shown, the preparation of this event requires a lot of time and energy. On the European side, consistency between the political consultations which are the responsibility of the EPC staff, and those parts of the ministerial conference devoted to economic cooperation which belong to the area of the EC's external relations need careful consideration. But the Presidency will also have to manage the bulk of problems at the "interregional" level until the ministerial meeting can finally take place. Unlike the management of other group-to-group relations (e.g. with ASEAN), cooperation with the Central American states turned out to be "demanding". The EC/Twelve's partners not only lack a solid institutional set-up "at home" or in Brussels, which would facilitate the coordination efforts, but also a homogeneity of views and political strategy which does not favour an agreement on the substance of European-Central American relations.

The Spanish Presidency may be best prepared to try and narrow the gap which arose from the Central American states' unrealistic expectations of the political, economic, and financial potential of their new "patron" in Europe on the one hand, and, on the other, the very modest offer the EC/Twelve are able to give with regard to budgetary restraints, obligations to other partners in the world, and a certain consideration for US interests. Towards its European partners, the Spanish chair should advertise for a full presence of the foreign ministers at "San José V". Imbalances in representation as they occurred during the 1987 conference (venue: Guatemala) are detrimental to the relationship. They give the dialogue partners the feeling of not being taken seriously enough, and obviously contradict the Twelve's affirmation as expressed in many declarations of the importance they attach to the region. Towards the Central American States, the Spanish Presidency may advocate a more realistic approach to their European partners. It should be made clear that the Twelve wholeheartedly support all steps toward furthering the peace process in Central America and are willing to contribute to it actively. In contacts with representatives from the region, the EPC spokesperson should not, however, dare to point at the divergencies of views inside Europe, which would make the

Central American partners better aware of the multitude of actors at the other end who do not necessarily share identical views on all concrete policy decisions.

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