

Wider but Weaker or the More the Merrier: Enlargement and Foreign
Policy Cooperation in the EC/EU

DAVID ALLEN

Department of European Studies
Loughborough University
Loughborough, Leics. LE11 3TU, UK.
tel:+44 1509 222983/1
fax:+44 1509 269395
e-mail:D.J.ALLEN@LUT.AC.UK

Presented at ECSA-US Conference, Charleston, May 1995

Panel: "EU Enlargements, Institutions and Decision-making: Past,
Present and Future " Chair Glenda G. Rosenthal

Uncorrected Draft - Not yet for citation or quotation

Wider but Weaker or the More the Merrier?: Enlargement and Foreign Policy Cooperation in the EC/EU

General Issues

In 1969 the six member states of the EC decided at the Hague to initiate both enlargement negotiations with the four applicants (UK, Ireland, Denmark and Norway) and the process of foreign policy cooperation known as European Political Cooperation (EPC). There has always been a certain ambiguity about this decision, which can be seen either as a determination to match enlargement - widening - with a parallel decision to deepen or as an intergovernmentalist challenge to the Community method along the lines initially proposed by De Gaulle and Fouchet in the early 1960s.

The idea that enlarging the EC might be accompanied by its deepening (including progress in the foreign policy sphere) has been regularly repeated over the years and many would see the establishment of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as part of the Twelve's preparation for the EFTAN enlargement. Similarly there are those who currently argue that one of the tasks of the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) will be to reform the CFSP procedures to prepare the European Union (EU) for the planned further enlargement to include the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEEC) as well as Cyprus, Malta, the Baltic States and the former Yugoslavian states (at present only Slovenia is in a position to apply for membership).

The relationship between widening and deepening has always been a contentious one that has divided, in particular, Britain, France and Germany. The British have always appeared to believe, most vociferously during Mrs Thatcher's premiership, that any enlargement is attractive because it will lead to a weakening of the Union's supranational elements and federal ambitions. The British calculation has always been a quantitative one, based on the erroneous assumption (to date at any rate) that the achievements of the Community - the *aquis communautaire* - could not be stretched to include new members without being watered down. On the other hand it would also seem to be the British belief that the achievements of EPC/CFSP - the

acquis politique - are infinitely stretchable to include as many member states as wish to participate.

The French, of course have always shared the British view of the relationship between widening and deepening but have usually come to the opposite conclusion, therefore, about the attractiveness of EC enlargement. Thus it was De Gaulle, for foreign policy reasons, who unilaterally terminated enlargement negotiations in 1963 and 1967, it was France that was most hesitant about both the Mediterranean and EFTAN enlargement and it is France that is least enthusiastic about bringing in the CEECs. Thus, despite their closeness on so much to do with the evolution of the EC/EU, France and Germany have always found themselves in disagreement over the question of enlargement. Germany has never accepted the notion that wider means weaker and has always perceived the processes of enlargement and deepening to be compatible indeed mutually reinforcing.

However as we argued above, even if the establishment of the EPC process can be said to demonstrate the view that EC/EU enlargement will encourage further integration, the nature of EPC might be said to move things in the opposite direction. From the outset EPC was to be an intergovernmental procedure, initially without a treaty base of any kind and designed for the exclusive participation of the member states with both the European Commission and the European Parliament firmly excluded. Thus whilst enlargement may well stimulate further cooperation in the foreign policy sphere, that very cooperation was originally inspired by a desire to undermine or at best restrict the development of the Community system and to replace it with something that seemed less threatening to the participant states' sovereignty.

Thus whilst the Maastricht Treaty CFSP provisions can be seen as an attempt, partly in that face of prospective enlargement, to develop procedures to further integration by enhancing the collective international effectiveness of the EU's member states, it can also be seen as a consolidation of intergovernmentalism and a rejection of further supranationality. If the Treaty was designed to deepen the EU before enlargement then it is clear that the member states remained undecided about how best to achieve this in the area of foreign policy. The maintenance of a separate pillar for the CFSP kept things much as they had been under EPC (with the addition of a defence dimension the major advance) but the linking of the three pillars in a 'common institutional framework' suggested some doubts about the efficacy of preserving the distinction between them. It is not that clear from the results that the twelve in fact gave much attention to enlargement considerations in reaching their agreement on the CFSP.

It will be one of the contentions of this paper that the difficulties that the EU has experienced in the foreign policy area in recent years can not be explained by the impact of recent enlargements on a process that was designed from the beginning with ten states in mind. Enlargement from ten to twelve to fifteen states may have served to highlight some of the problems with the EPC/CFSP process but increased numbers alone can not account for its failure to produce progress towards a coherent foreign policy for the Union. Similarly whilst the prospect of further enlargement to include the CEEC has already led for calls to reform the CFSP process at the forthcoming IGC in preparation for a significant increase in participants it is argued here that the problems are more fundamental and apply to the present membership regardless of any future enlargement.

In any case many people would argue that the present calls for reform are somewhat premature as it is less than two years since the Maastricht Treaty was finally ratified and the CFSP arrangements came into effect. Although the EU has indeed enlarged since then and although recent developments (most notably at Essen) would seem to suggest that further enlargement is imminent this is not in fact likely to prove the case. At most, perhaps four or five states will join the Union over the next ten years and whilst this may well require major changes to a number of aspects of the EC pillar (most obviously the CAP and the Structural Funds) it is argued here that the CFSP pillar, as it is presently constituted, could probably easily accommodate a few more members without seriously affecting the apparently limited aspirations of its members. If on the other hand some or all of the present member states were to seek to move beyond the present, essentially diplomatic, arrangements towards a serious attempt at creating a common foreign and security policy with the central institutions, then the prospect of future enlargement to include the CEEC would indeed be significant.

If the member states decide that they do wish to make a major federal leap in this area then an enlarged EU may well face problems in reconciling the foreign policy interests of a growing number of small states with those of an essentially static number of large states particularly if one of the ways forward is seen to be the extension of majority voting to all aspects of the CFSP. It should be recognised that the successful trick of the old EPC process was a flexibility and an informality which enabled states with varying foreign policy experience and ambition to attempt to jointly exploit their collective strength at a time when their ability to exert influence unilaterally was either waning or non-existent.

Within the EC/EU decisions about enlargement have always been 'high political' decisions. By and large foreign policy considerations, expressed and developed in the EPC/CFSP framework, have dominated the enlargement agenda whilst questions relating to the impact on the internal development of the EC/EU have been seen as secondary. In other words enlargement is, and always has been, an EPC/CFSP matter. The decision to reject Britain's initial application was linked to De Gaulle's foreign policy ambitions for the EC, as was his pursuit of linked and countervailing arrangements with Germany. The decision to eventually admit Britain was clearly linked with a desire by the Six to make the EC more outward looking despite the fact that Britain was unenthusiastic about many of the internal integration objectives.

The enthusiastic endorsement of the Greek, Spanish and Portuguese applications were foreign policy decisions imposed by the EC's foreign ministers on a reluctant Commission. The argument was that EC membership would support the foreign policy interests of the West by underpinning liberal democracy and a market economy in three states that had only recently emerged from right wing authoritarianism and which might otherwise be vulnerable to the attentions of the Soviet Union. Whilst the EC member states were capable of agreeing about the primacy of foreign policy considerations they did not prove that politically adept at then implementing the enlargement decision. Thus Greece was allowed to join before Spain and Portugal and therefore was able to exploit its position to both delay their accession and to extract financial concessions from the rest of the EC.

The admission of the five East German Länder, as part of a reunified Germany, in 1990 was also clearly the product of foreign policy considerations. Quite simply the international situation demanded that economic and social criteria be overlooked. The neutral states of EFTA had been in a position to participate in the EC pillar for some time but the international situation meant that the EPC arrangements presented an impossible hurdle. The EFTA neutrals could not consider accepting the obligations of full membership and the member states could not have accepted their non participation in EPC/CFSP. Once the international situation allowed a more relaxed view of neutrality and foreign policy commitment then the way was clear for the applications that followed.

If the EFTA enlargement eventually presented few problems for either the EC or the CFSP the prospective eastern enlargement revives our interest in the conflict between long term political objectives as developed in the CFSP and the shorter term economic interests that dominate the EC process. The European Council and the EU's Foreign Ministers have clearly decided, or have been persuaded, that, in time, a quite

extensive enlargement to the East is both desirable and unavoidable. However so weak are the foreign policy arrangements that the Union has effectively lost control of this agenda and has been forced to respond hastily to accusations of duplicity by the potential applicants for promising cooperation in principle but failing to deliver in practice. Thus at Copenhagen in 1993 the Union was forced by CEECs to accept that Europe Agreements were designed to lead to full membership and at Essen in 1994 to appear to speed up the enlargement arrangement in such a way that the 1996 IGC seems likely to be greatly confused by the looming presence of enlargement considerations - this is not to say that the IGC outcome is particularly likely to be designed to prepare the Union for enlargement!.

Many people would go further and argue that the whole process of enlargement of all the surviving European organisations represents some sort of failure of collective decision making by the original members. Whilst it is reasonably easy to understand how all the former Soviet states, including the five Asian Republics became members of the CSCE/OSCE it is difficult to understand how they became members of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. Similarly it could be argued that discussions about enlargement both within the EU and NATO have resulted in a potential dangerous new division of Europe whose implications have never been properly thought out because of the weakness of the current foreign policy consultation apparatus. The EU member states, presumably within the EPC/CFSP framework, would appear to have decided that some (those who have been given or promised Europe Agreements) states will eventually join the Union whilst others will not. This most certainly meets the aspirations of the would be members who are all anxious to have access to EU markets and to seek security within a body that excludes Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus. The EU on the other hand seems reluctant to face up to the implications of its decisions or the actual aspirations of the applicants. Instead, having created an effective divide the EU seeks to blur it by offering in the near future to go beyond the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements recently signed with Russia and the Ukraine and discuss the possibility of a free trade area with these states. Similarly NATO, having hinted that the CEECs can expect to eventually become members of an Alliance that Russia can not, then also sought to blur things by developing the overlapping concept of a Partnership for Peace.

The EU would appear to have a problem with its enlargement policy which is itself a reflection of the weakness, regardless of any enlargement, of the CFSP procedures. The EU clearly accepts the long term inevitability of enlargement but is not collectively strong enough or confident enough to be clear about the nature of the obligation that it is prepared to accept, partly because it does not feel in a position to

either agree or deliver the sort of commitment that the CEECs want and partly because it is concerned about further alienating Russia or undermining President Yeltsin's delicate internal position. For their part the CEECs would seem to want to join the EU for market access and for the security commitment that they think it entails. Whether it likes it or not, and despite the fact that it is unable to accept the associated responsibilities, the EU is already regarded by a number of its member states as effectively being a security community. The Eastern applicants believe that the EU is the answer to their security dilemmas and, it is contended here, so do Austria, Finland and Sweden. Regardless of whether they or the CEECs eventually join NATO with its ambiguous security guarantee or the WEU with its more specific promise of support these states feel that membership of the EU alone gives them security. After all what sort of a Union would it be if member states failed to give assistance to one of their number either under attack or the threat of attack from outside (or within?)

Institutional Issues

Until recently the impact of the successive enlargements on the institutions and procedures of EPC/CFSP has been only slight; indeed the major changes would seem to have been in the Foreign Offices of the acceding states. Ireland, Spain and Portugal certainly had to restructure their Foreign Offices in order to comply with EPC arrangements although Austria, Sweden and Finland have clearly profited from a close association with the CFSP mechanisms prior to entry. However whilst all the previous new members could draw on a certain experience of co-operative participation in other western organisations the next round of applicants will be drawing on a quite different historical experience. Partly for this reason, and partly because the EU is anxious to respond to CEEC pressure for a closer involvement with the EU even before accession, quite complex arrangements have been set in motion, particularly since Essen, to establish a "structured relationship" that covers both EC and CFSP matters.

There is already a high degree of structured contact between the CEEC states and the CFSP and this will be presumably extended to include the Baltic States and Slovenia as their Europe Agreements are concluded. During the German Presidency, for example, the EU/CEEC Heads of State and Government met on the margins of the Essen European Council, the Foreign Ministers all met twice with the CEECs and the Foreign Ministers' Troika met with the Baltics. More significantly, at official level the EU/CEEC Political Directors met once and the European Correspondents twice and to prepare for these deliberations there were no less than 11 meetings of experts

(covering Disarmament, Nuclear Non-Proliferation, Human Rights, Security, the CSCE, the CIS, Planning, Conventional arms export, Ex-Yugoslavia, Terrorism and the UN) mainly at the Troika level. If this degree of contact is maintained throughout the 1990s then the socialisation effect of the CFSP should have begun to have some impact long before the formal accession of these states.

The greatest challenge for a new EU member and possibly for the EPC/CFSP system has centred on the institution of the Presidency. Because EPC and the CFSP were and remain 'under institutionalised' the burden and responsibility of the Presidency is enormous such that some would argue it is too much for the smaller member states. However with the singular exception of Greece it is difficult to find examples of new members who have been embarrassed or proved embarrassing when their turn first came to take over the Presidency. The fact that Greece assumed the Presidency very soon after accession, combined with a certain apprehension about the policies it might wish to pursue, can be said to have had a major impact on the rapid development of the troika system. This enables the preceding and succeeding Presidency states to ensure that ongoing business is not neglected and that the EU representational and negotiating role is not abused. Indeed during the last Greek Presidency the German representatives were able to use their involvement in the troika to ensure that consultations relating to both Turkey and the FYROM were maintained.

Enlargement has had one major impact on the Presidency in that the rotation, following the accession of the EFTANs, has been adjusted so that a sensible mix of large and small states is preserved. As a consequence of this change the initiation of Austria has been put off until 1998, Finland until 1999 and Sweden until 2001 by which time all three states should be well versed in the mysteries of the CFSP.

Nevertheless the continuous enlargement that the EU has experienced along with the prospects for future enlargement does raise the question of the balance between the large and small states in a system that retains an insistence on consensus. Even if one accepts the arguments of participants that in practice the 'club atmosphere' (can this be preserved as the numbers grow?) means that consensus forms around the median rather than the lowest common denominator there remains a danger that the larger states will become frustrated by the ability of the smaller states to prevent the achievement of consensus. The most spectacular example of this recently, which informs much of the debate about the need to reform the CFSP to prepare for future enlargement, concerns the refusal of the Greek Government to permit the other member states to collectively (they have all done it individually) recognise the

ε

FYROM. Many would argue that it is this and other frustrations that has led to Britain, France and Germany participating in the Contact Group (with the US and Russia) in a bid (as unsuccessful as all other bids so far) to find a solution to the conflict in Ex-Yugoslavia. It could be argued that further enlargement and the problems of reaching consensus will force the major players to increasingly seek ad hoc solutions to international problems away from the restrictive forum of the CFSP and its unpredictable Presidency system. However it should be also noted that the larger states too, perceive great benefit both in the solidity and cover functions that the CFSP provides.

It may well be that all the member states are driven by the numerical complexities of enlargement to consider other ways of organising themselves in the foreign policy sphere. Whilst it seems unlikely that a consensus will develop around the idea of creating a central foreign policy institution around the European Commission the member states might just be attracted by the notion of giving more authority and tasks to the recently expanded CFSP Secretariat, which is now a part of the Council Secretariat, and which has responsibility for supporting both EC external relations and the CFSP. Although the quantitative impact of enlargement on the CFSP is often given too much attention whilst the qualitative aspects are neglected (i.e. many of the recent new members are themselves anxious to participate constructively in the CFSP and are therefore more prepared than some long established members to make the necessary adjustments in order to achieve consensus) the lack of CFSP central institutions (such as a Planning Staff or more ambitiously a European Foreign Office Service) is a problem that is considerably exacerbated by an increase in participants.

Similarly the more member states there are under the current Presidency arrangements and the more Commissioners there are with external responsibilities (there are four in the present Commission) the more confusing the Union appears to its external interlocutors. If a large group of states with varying diplomatic competencies wish to make a collective and coherent impact on the outside world they will be forced to reconsider their fundamental opposition to the creation of effective central institutions. This point is made the more powerful when one considers the enormous extra burden that the Union's collection of 'Political Dialogues' imposes on the Presidency country. At the last count either the Presidency alone or the Presidency Troika are required to have CFSP related 'dialogues with the following; Albania, Australia, Canada, China, Cyprus, South Korea, the Baltic States, the US, India, Japan, Malta, Morocco, New Zealand, Pakistan, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the CEECs, the Council of Europe,

the Gulf Cooperation Council, the San Jose group, the central American group, the Andean pact, the Rio group, the Non-Aligned movement, ASEAN and the ACP states. this represents a considerable burden for Britain, France and Germany and some would say a near impossible task (if the dialogues are to have any meaning) for Luxembourg, Malta or the Republic of Slovakia. Enlargement will reduce the number of dialogues by bringing some of them into the Union but it will increase the number of those who have to try and manage these dialogues which are a central part of the current CFSP.

The institutions of the CFSP make the practice of collective diplomacy, based on common positions a realistic ambition but they are not sufficient to provide the basis for a common foreign and security policy for the Union. Further enlargement will make even the task of collective diplomacy that much more difficult but the fundamental problems of the CFSP have little to do the need to adjust to an increased membership. The CFSP represents an attempt to continue and expand the successful European Political Cooperation procedures. The problem is that EPC developed in a European system structured by the Cold War, in which it could be argued that there was a degree of convergence imposed on the foreign policies of the member states by their common predicament. We are only just beginning to appreciate that like all the other post 1945 institutions the arrangements that underpin EU and its CFSP may no longer be appropriate for the changed international situation that the member states find themselves in. In other words the CFSP has one set of problems that are enlargement related but a more fundamental set of problems that would exist even if further enlargement was not on the cards.

Substantive Issues

All the enlargements of the EC/EU have at one time or another been regarded as creating potential new 'bridges' between the EU and the outside world. In 1973 Britain was regarded as a bridge to the outside world in general but to its Commonwealth in particular although the subsequent treatment of Commonwealth countries by the EC did not bode well for a profitable relationship. Denmark was seen as a bridge to the rest of Scandinavia and has indeed proved just that because it was always assumed within EPC that Denmark would keep the Scandinavian non members informed about developments that might either affect them or for which their support might be sought. Currently it is clear that Norway's self imposed isolation from the developing CFSP has been softened by the information that is passed on by Denmark and Finland within the Nordic context.

10

Similarly when Spain and Portugal joined in 1986 much was made of the bridge that would now be established between the EC and Latin America and it was indeed the case that aid to that area increased as a result of Iberian efforts. More recently the arrival of the two Scandinavian states has given rise to the notion of a bridge to the Baltics (but not Russia!) whilst Austria would appear to be performing the same service for Hungary that Denmark provides for Norway.

One consequence of all this bridge building by the new members is that it becomes that much harder to identify the priority of the EU's foreign policy interests especially now that the potential EU external agenda is so much freer in the changed international environment. Whilst the prospect of further enlargement has made relations with both the CEECs and Russia and the Ukraine a recent foreign policy priority (with the new members also keen to push the case of the Baltics) the Mediterranean states within the EU have recently begun to question this eastern focus for the Union. Obviously member states like Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland have good cause to fear the financial costs to them of enlargement to the east. It is generally accepted that neither the CAP nor the Structural Funds can be offered to the eastern applicants on the same terms that the Cohesion States currently enjoy and therefore eastern enlargement is associated in their minds with a probable change in the current arrangements that will leave them worse off than at present. These states therefore have a considerable incentive to push the case for a renewed foreign policy focus on the Mediterranean area. Such an approach has also found favour with both France and Italy (the present presidency sequence is France, Spain then Italy!)

Future enlargement and pressure for a new foreign policy focus on the Mediterranean are therefore inextricably intertwined with one another. Proposals by Britain for a stability pact for the Mediterranean similar to that which is now the subject of a joint action towards the CEECs are designed to try and ensure that the southern focus is developed within the political remit of the CFSP rather than the potentially expensive area of EC external relations. The case for the EU balancing its eastern concerns with policies for the south has been made all the more convincing by recent events in Algeria but in this area the EU faces a different sort of problem because whilst it has a clear interest in political stability and economic prosperity in the region - as it does in eastern Europe - it can not use the prospect of membership as an incentive. In all other cases where the EC/EU has sought a relationship with its immediate neighbour the prospect of enlargement has been the major foreign policy tool. This is not an option for the North African states, despite Morocco's standing order application and so the EU is going to have to devise a policy

within the CFSP that does not rely on the prospect of EU membership. It will be interesting to see what the EU comes up with in what could be its next major CFSP challenge.

We said earlier that EPC and the CFSP to date can be seen as essentially concerned with the narrow field of diplomacy rather than foreign policy proper. To the extent that much of European foreign policy cooperation is based on the production of common statements which collected together form the *acquis politique* then applicant states seem to have had little trouble in accepting this *acquis* on accession. Whilst this may well say something about the minimalist nature of many EU declarations it also suggests that to date new members have shared a very similar foreign policy outlook to the original members. There was some concern at the start of the EFTAN negotiations that Sweden, Finland and Austria might have problems squaring their neutrality and their distinctive views on development policy with the EU *acquis politique* but in the event this did not prove to be the case. Only Austria felt the need, (perhaps because it applied earlier than the rest) to specifically mention its neutrality - which is in any case based on legal provisions unlike that of Finland and Sweden. However not only is the definition of neutrality changing in line with changes in the European system of international politics but the EU at present does not seem either willing or capable to undertake the sort of foreign policy activity (the unilateral and independent use or threat of force) that might cause the neutral states any difficulty.

If some of the present members of the EU were to seek to make significant progress, perhaps within the IGC, in the defence area then the recent enlargement might give Denmark and Ireland some allies in reluctance but as long as the EU only dares to use force under the provisions of UN Security Council resolutions then the neutral states will have no problem. Sweden participated in UNPROFOR in both Macedonia and Bosnia and Austria had little problem in agreeing to allow Allied forces to overfly Austrian airspace and use Austrian roads on their way to the Gulf. Most of the CEEC applicants would of course be delighted if the EU sought to successfully turn itself into a formal security community. They would have no problem in signing up to an effective WEU and they would be keen advocates of any developments in the wider security area. The problem here is not with possible enlargement but with the reluctance divisions and uncertainties amongst the present members along with the obvious hostility of those like Russia who can not aspire to membership. Thus in the security area further enlargement is a problem because the prospective members would probably want to go further than the present members.

Conclusions

One of the difficulties in trying to write a paper like this is the realisation that the fundamental problems faced by the CFSP have little to do with either the current or future enlargements but a great deal to do with the changed situation after the Cold War and the reluctance of most member states to contemplate any fundamental change in the mechanisms that appeared to serve their interests in the 1970s and 1980s. The EPC/CFSP procedures and policies are so limited that they have had little difficulty in absorbing a succession of new members - only Greece and then only intermittently has proved to be a difficult partner. It may well be the fact that the CEECs, the Baltics and the Ex-Yugoslav states will bring with them fundamentally different foreign policy traditions and practices that present the CFSP with more severe problems of adaptation but it seems likely that these will not prove insurmountable as long as the CFSP remains fundamentally unambitious.