

THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY AND THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL COOPERATION

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Abstract: *The author analyses the role of a primary institution of the European society in the development of the European Political Cooperation and in the following foreign policy action concertation. The case study looks into the institution of diplomacy as being constitutive and functional for the European order and its expansion. By checking the official documents, it underlines the development of European Political Cooperation. Additionally, the legacy of this foreign policy framework for the European Union is exemplified through the Common Foreign and Security Policy, as well as the revised enlargement methodology. Despite the marginal role of the International Society Theory in the study of the European Union, the author concludes that the role of overcoming the intergovernmentalism-federalism divide brings added value, as well as for understanding the processes of cooperation within the current European order.*

Keywords: *International Society, European Union, European Political Cooperation, diplomacy, European integration*

1. Bringing back the International Society Theory

The European Union remains a challenge for the International Society Theory of International Relations, despite the roots of this approach in the European international relations praxis.

Starting from the integration - disintegration evolution of the international society, the aim of this analysis is to explore the role of the English School institutions in the development of European Political Cooperation (EPC). This is done threefold. Firstly, we identify the main institution with theoretical relevance, and show how the institution of diplomacy has been constitutive to the European order. Secondly, based on official documents analysis, we look into the development of the European Political Cooperation in the 1970s and how it evolved and integrated other sovereigns, with the contribution of the above-mentioned institution. Afterwards, we look into the legacy of this integration for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and enlargement process.

Within the European post-1945 states system, the development of a solid international society is visible, with a new regional order. The management of international relations in Europe became more complex and *civilised*, with important solidarist emphasis. The sovereigns established new rules of interaction, new norms and even new identities. Both the collective identity and institutional framework are constructed

Despite its old foundations in the European history, Europe and the European identity has been built by actors and structures, resulted from important interactions between those, exemplifying with Charles de Gaulle's promotion of French nationalism and a Europe based on a thin morality, while the other actors were together guided not only by common interests and values, but also by a sense of belonging, common rules and common institutions.

The six universally recognised fundamental institutions in this tradition of enquiry are sovereignty, diplomacy, international law, balance of power, great power management and war [1]. In the discussion about the European Political Cooperation, the interests fall on the role of diplomacy. Indeed, sovereignty is already recognised, while diplomacy itself reinforces other institutions such as international law or great power management in this context [2]. However, it contributed through associated practices such as the development of the international organization, conference, meetings and other communication channels to the expansion of the society centered on the European project, contributing to the integration of new members.

2. European Political Cooperation: Diplomacy Building Essential Mechanisms

How the European Political Cooperation socialised new members into new institutions and a collective European identity? The role of primary institution, in this case of the diplomacy, is fundamental. Not only it established channels of communication, but it contributed to the development and consolidation of other institutions.

European Political Cooperation emerged from a diplomacy-associated practice: the high-level conference meetings. It was an additional layer of cooperation and coordination, particularly on foreign policy issues. "*The procedures of political cooperation were from the outset characterised by a pragmatic and flexible approach to the development of foreign policy coordination between the Nine*", note the former Irish Foreign Minister and future Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald in 1976 [3]. It covered foreign policy aspects not coordinated at Community level, bringing the intergovernmental direction in the EEC foreign policy.

This institutional framework was mandated by the 1969 Hague European Summit, a meeting that had on the

agenda the completion of the common market, the deepening of the Community, particularly in the area of economic and monetary cooperation, and political cooperation, and the agreement on the accession of four candidate countries. Guided by the common interests and the collective identity, The Hague Summit mandated the Foreign Ministers “*to study the best way of achieving progress in the matter of political unification, within the context of enlargement*” [4].

One year later, the Davignon Report was adopted. A system of meetings (ministerial and administrative) and an organizational setup is established for the Six. Rules are established for consultation on all major questions of foreign policy. The European Political Cooperation had two objectives: “*to ensure greater mutual understanding with respect to the major issues of international politics, by exchanging information and consulting regularly, and to increase their solidarity by working for a harmonization of views, concertation of attitudes and joint action when it appears feasible and desirable*” [5]. This secondary institution reinforces basic institutions as diplomacy, sovereignty, international law and others.

In relation to the socialisation of other states, it contained a proposal to associate the applicant countries with the works of European Political Cooperation. The possible club members were informed that the membership of the European Communities comes with the commitment to political unification, they were informed on the progress of the work of the Six through an established procedure at ministerial and Political Committee meetings.

Issues such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the situation in the Middle East, the Mediterranean and Asia, cooperation in the event of natural disasters, consultation on the situation in the Indian subcontinent, multilateral consultation were on the EPC agenda in the first years. This mechanism was further developed after a positive reception in Copenhagen in 1973 (correspondents, working parties, expert studies, involvement of embassies, presidency, interinstitutional cooperation) [6].

After the acceptance of the applicant states as members in 1972, participated fully in the meetings of European Political Cooperation, at every level. It can be noted that the participation in EPC is guided by the adherence to the goal and objectives of this mechanism, noteworthy the political unification. Nowadays, the EPC is visible through the Foreign Affairs Council; however similar structures have been developed in other areas where the sovereigns are engaged in closer coordination and concerted action.

This intergovernmental diplomatic system is part of a web of relations and interrelations contributing to a specific relational identity within Europe. In retrospective, it has been a constitutive, functional and issue-specific institution of the order within the European project. In time, new members followed a similar path, firstly being

informed and socialised to these practices; afterwards, becoming members, sharing interests and values, and using the institutions already developed, in some cases bringing necessary changes as treaty amendments, new institutions, new practices.

3. Legacy on CFSP and the accession procedure revision

We find an important role of new institutions in a complex international society represented by the European Union or, rather saying, the European project. Various scholars discussed the expansion of the international society, particularly the European one, and the interactions between sovereigns and other entities [7].

The London Report (1981) and the Single European Act (1986) rasterized the functioning of the European Political Cooperation. It survived the Union treaty. With the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), EPC became the second pillar of the European Union, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The Treaty of Lisbon brought additional changes to the foreign policy, including a High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy and the European External Action Service. The annual reports of the CFSP shows extensive areas of action on EU’s external action, as well as Common Security and Defence operations.

The role of the Common Foreign and Security Policy is extensive: “*The Union's competence in matters of common foreign and security policy shall cover all areas of foreign policy and all questions relating to the Union's security, including the progressive framing of a common defence policy that might lead to a common defence*” [8]. EPC was aimed at political unification, CFSP is focused on ‘enhancing and developing mutual political solidarity’. Political unification in contemporary affairs has had multiple political implications. Nevertheless, the focus on mutual political solidarity on foreign affairs is less politically sensitive.

In this matter, the applicants follow a procedure that can be described as being a ‘socialisation’ to the CFSP. The negotiation of the *acquis* is part of this process, including alignment with the EU.

Furthermore, in relation to applicant countries, Chapter 31 of the *acquis* is dedicated to the foreign, security and defense policy. The applicants whose negotiations started are expected to align with the European Union not only on the international agreements, but also on political documents and the EU concerted measures (e.g. sanctions).

For example, the declaration by the High Representative of the European Union on behalf of the EU on the presidential elections in Belarus was supported by four of the five candidate countries (North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania), as well as by a potential applicant (Bosnia and Herzegovina), the EFTA partner countries and an associated country (Ukraine) [9].

The most recent methodology on enlargement negotiations proposed by the European Commission, designed to enhance the accession perspective for Western Balkans countries, provides an additional example of how additional members of the international society are engaged and integrated in the EU society. The process is centered on 'fundamentals', covering the fundamental reforms. It emerged from the challenges imposed by backsliding on the fundamental criteria for EU accession once a country negotiation chapters have been already opened, on one side, and encouraging the integration processes within the European Union, on the other side. The debate over 'fundamentals' is a debate over EU's collective identity and the basis of an European society.

The negotiations on fundamentals are planned to be opened first and closed last, determining the overall pace of negotiations. The 'fundamentals' contain the requirements for rule of law and democratic institutions, basis of EU identity.

The reform of the accession process introduces also 'positive and negative conditionality'. It allows for countries recording progress to follow a closer integration path, and to benefit from increased funding and investments. The closer integration enables the applicant to accelerate the integration and to 'phase-in' into individual EU policies, the EU market and the EU programmes on a level playing field [10]. The flexibility over the conditionality on 'fundamentals', based on the applicant performances, contains all the other clusters, including external action and CFSP negotiations over accession.

4. Concluding remarks

The International Society Theory remains marginal in the study of the processes of European integration. An important input is provided by this approach, especially on overcoming the traditional European or largely regional integration debates between intergovernmentalism and federalism, when sovereignty is disputed. The institutions of international society provide a framework to systematically understand the processes of cooperation within the current European order.

This discussion introduced the institution of diplomacy and how it generated a set of secondary institutions and associated practices, through the European Political Cooperation, that deepened the cooperation, reinforced the basic premises of the European project and contributed to extensive cooperation within the European society, particularly on issue-specific matters and socialisation of applicants/new members.

It also generated new questions, since there are inconsistencies that have not been studied to an in-depth level. This area of study calls for additional exploration, since the European order has never been based on an absolute understanding of sovereignty, even in the post-1945 and post-1989 contexts, and the EU international society remains under-explored.

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