

## CHAPTER 2

# Accountability in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy: Lessons from the Common Commercial Policy

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### Introduction

The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was introduced in the Maastricht Treaty in order to provide more coherence for the Community's external relations. As the CFSP institutions have developed over time, however, a tension has emerged between the Community method and intergovernmental instincts. While there has been a process of 'Brusselsisation' of the CFSP, this has not led to a greater role for the European Parliament (EP) in oversight and accountability (Barbé 2004). Indeed, the CFSP has been described as an example of 'collusive delegation' (Koenig-Archibugi 2002: 62) in which national executives have established an intergovernmental policy to escape national parliamentary scrutiny without re-establishing any oversight at the supranational level.

These institutional features of the CFSP have ignited a debate on the 'democratic deficit' inherent in the Community's foreign and security policy. While the EP does retain some formal powers in the CFSP, these are largely 'soft' powers – the EP must be 'kept informed' of policy developments and can issue reports – that have been left largely unchanged since the Maastricht Treaty (Diedrichs 2004). One area in which the EP has gained a foothold is the budgetary procedure; however, the rules heavily favour the Council (Scannell 2004) and it is therefore too early to conclude that the EP is the '*maître du jeu*' in this area of the CFSP (Laschet 2002).

Recent developments have raised further complications. The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) has elements that are both part of Pillar 1 and Pillar 3, with few clear lines of responsibility and therefore accountability (Born 2004). New concerns have sprung up over the challenge to the democratic deficit inherent in the proposals for the Rapid Reaction Force (Ioannides 2002) as well as the unique status of the new EU Foreign Minister (Gourlay and Kley Meyer 2003). Most frustratingly from the point of view of democratic accountability, the Draft Constitution has not focused on issues of accountability and consequently does not substantially alter the marginal role granted to the EP in CFSP matters (Stavridis and Vallianatou 2003).

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to this debate in light of the Community's experience in the field of external economic relations. At first sight, this may seem farfetched; after all, international economic relations are normally considered either 'low politics' or a highly specialized, technocratic field that should have little to offer to the study of 'high politics' such as security and defence. The reality is that the Common Commercial Policy (CCP) and the CFSP are more closely comparable than they originally appear.

This brief paper shows that the CCP has suffered from the principle challenge of accountability facing the CFSP – lack of EP involvement – and come out with a solution that has enhanced, not diminished, the role of Community institutions. The EC's experiences in foreign economic relations are not irrelevant and do in fact provide valuable lessons for the evolution and accountability of the CFSP institutions. The discussion will be focused on the role of the EP in the CCP. The Treaty of Rome denied the Parliament a formal role in the CCP; this situation persisted through the 1990s and despite the EP's efforts at both the 1996 and 2000 IGCs. It was only during the Convention that the Parliament was able to break through and establish itself as an official player in trade policy. The discussion address the following questions: In the absence of a formal role in the CCP, how did the EP influence trade policy? How did the EP finally establish a substantial formal role through the Convention negotiations? The answers to each will form the basis of lessons that can be applied to current debates about the CFSP.

## **Accountability and the Role of the EP**

In the realm of the CFSP, the Parliament has been described as having ‘powers of information but no real power of control’ (Stavridis and Vallianatou 2003: 4). The EP enjoys the right to be informed and consulted in several areas, and retains the independent right to debate foreign policy, issue reports, declarations and other rhetorical statements, as well as pass resolutions on foreign policy matters. However, these rights are ‘soft’ and do not bind the other European institutions to the Parliament’s wishes. Partial control over the budget offers another potential means to influence policy, but even here the Council retains a much stronger position than the Parliament (Diedrichs 2004: 39). The generally accepted view is that the Parliament has a marginal role in CFSP matters, and the Convention has been yet another ‘missed opportunity’ (Barbé 2004: 52) for the Parliament to expand this role.

This situation is strikingly similar to the one that characterised the CCP for decades. The CCP was instituted by the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Treaty Article 113 (now Article 113) establishing the Common Commercial Policy made no mention of the Parliament and granted powers only to the Council and the Commission. Until the ratification of the Draft Constitution, the Parliament remains without a formal role – denied even the powers of consent or consultation – in external economic affairs.<sup>1</sup> This does not mean, however, that the Parliament made no effort to influence the course of the Community’s external trade policy. On the contrary, the Parliament tried several informal methods similar to those available in the CFSP in order to make its own views and preferences known. These efforts met with only marginal success for reasons that will be discussed below.

### **Informal Powers and Policy Influence**

As in the CFSP, the Parliament retains the right to issue ‘own-initiative’ reports, debate CCP matters, and submit questions and accept testimony from DG Trade officials. In terms of reports, the number of ‘own-initiative’ reports issued by the Parliamentary committee charged with international trade issues

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<sup>1</sup> The Parliament does have a role to play in the conclusion of association agreements with third countries, but these agreements are specifically exempted from the rules governing the Common Commercial Policy.

has historically been relatively high (Corbett *et al* 2000: 116). The Parliament has also held a number of hearings on trade issues, especially in the aftermath of the establishment of the WTO. These various channels have established a two-way flow of information between the Parliament and the Commission, keeping each apprised of the positions and preferences of the other.

The 'own-initiative' reports issued by the committee on international trade offer the Parliament the opportunity to make its views on trade policy known. These reports generally reflect a grudging approval of the WTO system and have been described as a position of 'yes, but...' (Bender 2002: 198-200). While the EP is supportive of the WTO, its enthusiasm is tempered by the perceived failure of the WTO to satisfy certain particular interests: these include the environment<sup>2</sup>, agriculture<sup>3</sup>, and culture.<sup>4</sup> Some *rapporteurs* go even farther than these piecemeal critiques and call for the inclusion of a 'social clause' in the WTO Agreements and for giving a strong role for social partners such as trade unions.<sup>5</sup> Another consistent feature of these reports is the demand for greater Parliamentary involvement in the negotiation and conclusion of international trade agreements. The issues mentioned in these reports also figured largely in the content of a series of public hearings organised by the Parliament in 1999 (Bender 2002: 202-205); significantly, these hearings made a point of including 'civil society' and therefore incorporated testimony by the social partners that were traditionally left out of the trade policy-making process. These reports and hearings, while directed at the Commission, reflected a growing alignment of Parliamentary opinion with NGO and civil society critiques of the WTO system.

Parliamentary questions and testimony are another informal way for the Parliament to influence the Commission. Very often, questions are brought by MEPs who either have started to become concerned about certain aspects of

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<sup>2</sup> European Parliament, *Report on negotiations in the trade and environment committee (WTO)*, A4-0156/96 FINAL, 8 May 1996 (Rapporteur: Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler).

<sup>3</sup> European Parliament, *Report on Parliament's recommendations to the Commission on the negotiations in the WTO framework on the built-in agenda*, A5-0076/2001 FINAL, 28 February 2001 (Rapporteur: Konrad Schwaiger)

<sup>4</sup> European Parliament, *Report on recommendations to the EC with a view to the OECD negotiations on a multilateral agreement on investment*, A4-0073/98 FINAL, 26 February 1998 (Rapporteur: Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler).

<sup>5</sup> European Parliament, *Report on the trading system and internationally recognized labour standards*, A4-0423 FINAL, 11 November 1998 (Rapporteur: André Sainjon); European Parliament, *Report on the introduction of a social clause in the unilateral and multilateral trading system*, A3-007/94 FINAL, February 1994 (Rapporteur: André Sainjon).

the international trade regime or are reflecting the concerns of their constituency. Either way, these questions act as a sort of informal barometer for the Commission to understand what the public's current policy concerns are.<sup>6</sup> Testimony by DG Trade officials is another important channel for exchanging information; however, these committee meetings were rather sparsely attended during the 4<sup>th</sup> parliament and the MEPs who attended were often so ideologically diverse as to prevent the Commission officials from facing a united Parliamentary front.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, the scope for effective influence was limited because these meetings are not constitutionally mandated oversight hearings; rather, the meetings are agreed to by the Commission to keep the Parliament informed. As a result, the Parliament is not as effective at pressing the Commission as the US Congress or the British House of Commons is to their national officials.

### **Indirect Powers and Policy Influence**

In addition to these informal powers, the Parliament also has several indirect means of influence at its disposal. These indirect powers refer to instances in which external trade matters are a component of another, larger institutional process in which the Parliament has some formal role. The first of these is the budgetary procedure, in which the Parliament has the right to approve part of the Community budget, including items relating to the CCP. While the Parliament can use this power to influence elements of the CCP, it is unclear to what extent MEPs avail themselves of this opportunity. Neither MEPs nor Commission officials and EP staff members pointed to the budgetary procedure as a sustained means of Parliamentary influence over the CCP. This is not to say categorically that the EP has never succeeded in using the budget to affect the CCP, but rather to indicate that whatever influence the EP has had has been marginal and not an effective mechanism for leveraging further expansion in EP powers.

A second indirect power includes association agreements with third countries. These association agreements are specifically exempted from coverage under the Common Commercial Policy, but are nevertheless relevant because they often include sections dedicated to bilateral trade relations. In the context of association agreements, the Single European Act endowed the Parliament with the right of assent over agreements signed with

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<sup>6</sup> Confidential interviews, 31 January 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Confidential interview, 7 February 2005.

third countries, including association agreements. Flavia Zanon, in this volume, demonstrates how the Parliament has used its right of assent over these agreements to hold up passage as a symbolic condemnation of perceived human rights abuses in Turkey. There is also evidence that an analogous agreement with Georgia was delayed for substantially similar reasons.<sup>8</sup>

What effect has this had on the agreements? The agreements themselves were not defeated, just delayed for symbolic purposes. The changes to the agreement with Turkey as a result of Parliamentary obstruction have been described only as ‘cosmetic’ (See chapter 6 in this volume: 125). The most tangible result of these actions has been to further cement the Parliament’s reputation as the guardian of European values and as a strong supporter of human rights issues. While these developments may doubtless contribute to the creation of a unique Parliamentary identity in foreign affairs, the policy consequences have been largely symbolic and rhetorical. As such, this indirect power complemented the Parliament’s alliance with civil society and human rights groups described above but did not represent a fundamental shift in Parliamentary influence over external economic policy.

These informal and indirect means of monitoring and exchanging information with the Commission are important, because they ensure an active role for the Parliament as well as keeping the lines of communication open between the Commission and Parliament. Unfortunately, many of these strategies are symbolic only and have had a negligible policy impact. Looking at the Community’s official negotiating position in the run-up to either the Seattle WTO ministerial meeting in 1999 or the launch of the Doha Round in 2002, the major concerns of the Parliament – labour rights, environmental issues, inclusion of social partners, ‘solidarity’ with the developing world – have been largely ignored. To the extent that the Parliament was able use these means to bring new items to the agenda, raise the visibility of a particular policy concern, or press human rights issues, there is scant evidence that the EP has met with any success in shifting policy content.

### **Why No Success?**

This dispiriting recap of the Parliament’s attempts at influencing CCP matters begs the question: why have they not been successful? A combination of

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<sup>8</sup> Confidential Interview, 31 January 2005.

practical and ideological problems contributed to the exclusion of the Parliament from any influential role in the CCP.

On the practical side, the Parliament had developed very little expertise in the area of external economic policy. This lack of expertise put the EP at an acute institutional disadvantage because of the highly technical, highly specialised nature of trade policy. One chief cause for this problem is the Parliament's high level of turnover on the external economic relations committee. Fewer than three or four MEPs remained on the committee from one Parliament to another, virtually eliminating all institutional memory and continuity of links with the Commission. Part of this phenomenon stems from the lack of legislative content in trade policy; unlike other policy areas in which an MEP can sponsor a bill and claim credit for its passage, there is no legislating that goes on in trade policy. Therefore, MEPs interested in building a portfolio of laws for which they can take credit generally shy away from trade.<sup>9</sup>

As a result, there were virtually no specialists on trade issues sitting on the committee during the 1990s.<sup>10</sup> Largely, the committee members active in trade issues were rather 'trade and...' figures, whose interest in trade stemmed from the intersection of their particular interest –environment, labour, culture– with the trade regime. Their attempts at influencing the Commission were therefore rooted not in terms familiar to trade specialists, but rather in the language and discourse of their sectoral field of interest. Consequently, the EP's reports were all political non-starters because they bore no resemblance to what was diplomatically possible in the context of the WTO at the time. This disjuncture contributed to the Commission's belief that the Parliament had no real understanding of trade policy. Indeed, committee meetings taking Commission testimony were a 'dialogue of the deaf' in which MEPs and trade officials would talk past each other, with the former speaking in techno-jargon while the latter making impossible demands for WTO reform.<sup>11</sup> In short, the reports and other initiatives emanating from the Parliament were not taken seriously by the Commission because they were not speaking the same language and the Parliament's proposals were considered the product of political 'dinosaurs'.<sup>12</sup> The Commission's disdain not only marginalised the EP

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<sup>9</sup> Confidential interview, 31 January 2005.

<sup>10</sup> There are, of course, several notable exceptions to this rule.

<sup>11</sup> Confidential interview, 7 February 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Confidential interview, 25 January 2005.

in policy terms, but also denied the EP a valuable institutional ally against the hostility of the Member States in the Council.

The second problem for the Parliament was ideological. In trade as in security and defence policy, there is a strong ideological resistance on the part of the Member States to allow legislative ‘interference’ in the conduct and implementation of policy. Generally speaking, national executives even in their domestic settings are very reluctant to allow legislators to have too much influence over the conduct of foreign economic policy: they are hostile to the idea of letting a painstaking negotiated international agreement be undone by the opposition of narrow, partisan interests in a legislature (Vernon, Spar and Tobin 1991). Therefore, the Member States wanted the CCP to remain a Council-Commission policy and used their representatives on the Council’s 113 Committee to keep the Commission on a short leash. This hostility extended to proposals for CCP reform. These general tendencies were amplified by ideological hostility among two key Member States –the UK and France– to any moves that would strengthen the Parliament at the expense of the Council.<sup>13</sup> Even though the Parliament was able to send delegates to both the 1996 and 2000 intergovernmental conferences, their proposals for including the EP in the CCP were never seriously considered by the Member States.<sup>14</sup>

## **The Convention and the CCP**

With this history of EP weakness, it would be tempting to think that the Convention results would be as disappointing in the foreign economic policy as in the assessment of changes to the CFSP/ESDP. However, the Parliament was able to extend its powers in the CCP substantially. Whereas there was no mention of the Parliament at all in earlier versions of the CCP, the Parliament gained two important functions: first, the right to remain informed of the status and progress of international trade negotiations and secondly, a formal role in the conclusion of all international trade agreements. These reforms were hard-won. Although the Working Group on External Action report

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<sup>13</sup> Confidential interview, 3 February 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Confidential interview, 30 September 2004.



mentioned a desire for greater Parliamentary involvement in the CCP<sup>15</sup>, the Praesidium's official drafts did not embrace this approach, setting up a tug-of-war between proponents of an increased role for the EP and Member State opposition (Interview;<sup>16</sup> Krajewski 2005: 102-105). Thanks to the tireless efforts and innovative strategies of a small band of committed MEPs, the final Draft Constitution granted the EP substantial powers in the CCP.<sup>17</sup> These changes were not as ambitious as a number of MEPs' proposals would have wanted –for example, some were asking for the right for co-decision on the Commission's negotiating mandate<sup>18</sup> but they marked the first time that the Parliament was able to enhance its role in the CCP.

Why was it only at the Convention that the Parliament was able to make this breakthrough? The first, and most obvious, factor is the setting. The Convention on the Future of Europe was unlike previous intergovernmental conferences: not only were there Member State delegations, but MEPs were equal players in the deliberations for the first time; indeed, the use of delegates and debates lent the Convention a rather parliamentary atmosphere. The inclusion of MEPs in a context with which they were very familiar made it much more difficult for the Member States to ignore their concerns. Additionally, the overriding goal of the Convention – to provide a foundation for a democratic EU – dovetailed nicely with the demands for further powers for the EP in external affairs. These reasons, while they doubtless influenced the outcome, would apply equally to the CFSP. Yet, as we know, the changes to the CFSP were not nearly as profound as in the CCP. The real explanation can be found in a mix of the Parliament's own capacity-building, an institutional alliance with the Commission, and the unity of the MEPs on CCP issues during the Convention.

Part of the answer has to do with the Parliament itself. The Parliament was considered 'immature' for most of the 1990s and could not be relied upon to act responsibly in trade policy.<sup>19</sup> As outlined above, this reputation was built on a lack of expertise in trade policy. By the end of the 1990s, the

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<sup>15</sup> Convention on the Future of Europe, *Working Group VII on External Action, Final Report*. CONV 459/02, 16 December 2002, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Confidential interview, 3 February 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Confidential interview, 7 February 2005.

<sup>18</sup> For a summary of reform proposals, see Convention on the Future of Europe, *Summary sheet of proposals for amendments concerning external action*. CONV 707/03, 9 May 2003, pp. 103-110.

<sup>19</sup> Confidential interview, 7 February 2005.

Parliament began focusing more on ‘capacity building’ by developing knowledge and expertise in the field of trade policy. MEPs had always had the possibility to accompany the Commission to WTO Ministerial meetings; with the prospective launch of a new trade round in 1999, there was a conscious effort made in the new 5<sup>th</sup> legislature to play a constructive role. This newfound desire to become more familiar with the actual functioning of the WTO was rewarded: by the time of the Doha meeting in 2001, the Commission worked closely with the Parliamentary delegation and started giving the Parliament very detailed information on the status of negotiations (Bender 2002: 196). Similarly, one can see during this time a shift in emphasis in the own-initiative reports issued by the Parliament; the Parliament’s demands are more securely couched in the context of WTO practice and focuses on tweaking a few areas rather than calling for reforms that would upend the entire international trade regime.

The Parliament’s move to develop more trade expertise coincided precisely with the events of the WTO’s disastrous 1999 summit meeting in Seattle. The massive street protests against the WTO agenda created a paradigm shift in public perceptions of trade policy: international economics became ‘high politics’ overnight.<sup>20</sup> Trade officials were acutely aware of the danger inherent in allowing international trade policy to remain the preserve of technocrats (Lamy 2002). The Commission knew that they needed to attract more popular support for the WTO, and one way of doing that was to involve the Parliament in a greater capacity. Because of the Parliament’s pre-existing links to civil society groups and social partners, deepening the involvement of the Parliament in trade policy seemed an ideal way to address this new challenge. The Commission then needed the Parliament more than ever at the exact moment that the Parliament made a conscious effort to play a more substantive role in trade policy. The Parliament quickly moved to take up a position as an intermediary between the ‘civil society’ groups protesting the WTO meetings and the national trade delegations by establishing meetings of parliamentarians to monitor the developments of each WTO Ministerial. While this did not meet with the overwhelming approval of the Commission, the Parliament created a badly needed institutional link between the WTO and civil society that had not existed before.

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<sup>20</sup> Confidential Interview, 7 February 2005.

Another major factor in the Commission's change of heart was the arrival of Pascal Lamy as Trade Commissioner. The previous Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, was respected but not particularly well-liked. Furthermore, he preferred to spend his political capital on enhancing the Commission's power vis-à-vis the Council rather than propping up the Parliament. Lamy took a different approach, and was a strong supporter of giving a greater role in trade policy to the EP. He pushed strongly for this during the 2000 IGC, but was unable to overcome Member State resistance. Nevertheless, he continued to believe that the Parliament had a valuable role to play in legitimising the Community's trade policy. His public support for the Parliament was based on two calculations. First, Lamy's hand would be strengthened in WTO negotiations if he could show that he had the support of a popularly elected body. Secondly, EP support would strengthen DG Trade's position within the Commission itself when disputes arose with sectoral DGs such as agriculture. Lamy's support gave the Parliament a badly needed ally in its struggle for greater representation.

The final, and perhaps most important, factor explaining the EP's success during the Convention was their ability to work together as a bloc. There was wide-spread cross-party agreement about the need to expand the role of the EP in trade policy; according to one participant, Member State delegations to the Convention were 'all over the place' on this issue and the EP delegation was able to exploit the disarray of the Member States to their own advantage.<sup>21</sup> One key argument they used was the precedent of the Uruguay Round. Because of the Parliament's right to approve any international agreement with substantial budgetary implications, the WTO Agreement in 1995 was submitted for Parliamentary approval. MEPs convincingly argued that it would be illegitimate to deny the Parliament similar authority at the end of the new round of trade negotiations.<sup>22</sup> This was part of a conscious strategy of the EP delegation: they chose their high-priority goals for the Convention and worked tirelessly to obtain them. Member State disunity gave the EP the opening they needed to press vigorously for enhancing their role in trade policy.

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<sup>21</sup> Confidential interview, 3 February 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Confidential interview, 7 February 2004.

## Lessons for the CFSP

Several lessons can be drawn from the Parliament's experience in CCP matters. The first lesson stems from the shared legislative status in external affairs; just as in the CCP, the CFSP/ESDP does not lend itself to concrete legislative output in the same way that a regulatory sector does. Such a diminished legislative arsenal means that the 'informal' means of influencing policy will have no binding effect, and will therefore not be sufficient to have a major policy impact. Certainly, budgetary controls and the ability to raise the salience of a particular issue will carry some weight, but to change the substance of the EU's position requires more. Therefore, studies of the CFSP that celebrate the Parliament's informal or indirect powers may be giving false hope. The road to greater influence comes from more than just releasing reports and haggling over budgetary line items.

This 'something more' can take the guise of greater policy expertise on the part of the Parliament. The crucial element that held back the Parliament's credibility with DG Trade was its lack of interest and understanding of the trade regime and treating trade as an extension of other policy areas. As soon as the Parliament began to take a more active role and sought to develop greater knowledge and understanding of the trade processes, the Commission began to take them much more seriously. This 'expertise' is not the same as giving in to the Commission's preferences. Furthermore, 'expertise' does not imply that MEPs need to become as well-informed on the minutiae of trade issues as Commission technocrats; it seems neither likely nor desirable for MEPs to debate percentage points and decimals with DG Trade. Rather, 'expertise' in this context means that the Parliament and the Commission share a common policy reference. The Parliament has realised its interest in developing this type of capacity and expertise in CFSP matters<sup>23</sup> and the establishment of a specific committee to address foreign and security policy issues is further proof that the Parliament takes this exercise seriously.

The Parliament's enhanced credibility will more than likely have a knock-on effect with other Community institutions, principally the Commission. The Commission understands the value of having public support for its initiatives and how that support can strengthen the Commission's position vis-à-vis external actors or even the Council. The

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<sup>23</sup> Confidential interview, 3 February 2005.

public support of the Commission – through the statements of Pascal Lamy – for the extension of the Parliament’s power is at once the logical outcome of the Parliament’s greater credibility as well as the key shift that gave the Parliament’s claims much greater resonance during the Convention. In terms of the CFSP, the ‘double-hatted’ Foreign Minister that is both part of the Commission and the Council provides both greater risk and greater opportunity for the Parliament. It poses a greater risk because the new Foreign Minister is dependent on the Council and may be very unwilling to challenge its authority; on the other hand, should the Foreign Minister become convinced of the need for greater Parliamentary powers, his position may well reduce the ability of the Council to frustrate his plans. In the end, the Parliament will need the support of the Commission in its claims for greater powers; the question is how they can best go about doing that.

The final lesson to be drawn from this experience is the value of unity among MEPs when pressing for greater powers. On trade policy, the MEPs at the Convention were entirely unanimous in pushing for greater Parliamentary involvement. They had internal disagreements, but on the basic issues other Convention actors found it difficult to divide and weaken the Parliament’s representatives. Indeed, the Convention indicates how a united Parliamentary front can turn the tables on scattered Member State positions. There is little evidence for such a breakthrough in the CFSP, which begs the following question: were the MEPs united on CFSP demands? If the answer to this question is no, then the challenge for greater Parliamentary involvement in the CFSP will be to establish a wide, cross-party consensus on a greater role for the Parliament.

If the answer to the first question is yes, then we must investigate why their unity was restricted to such seemingly small, incremental steps. This may require a reassessment of the EP’s success on CFSP matters during the Convention. One MEP who was a delegate to the Convention claimed that the Parliament in fact ‘really scored’ with the Convention results. Partly this had to do with the changes targeted as high priorities by the EP delegation: the establishment of an EU Foreign Minister, the need for consultation prior to any joint external action, and enhanced and structured cooperation in both the CFSP and the ESDP. Furthermore, the MEPs were able to defeat a British plan for a ‘third chamber’ of national parliamentarians tasked with oversight of the CFSP. Having achieved those high-priority goals and defeated challenges to the EP’s authority, it may be possible to claim that the

Parliament *was* successful in CFSP matters at the Convention. If the Parliament did achieve its goals during the Convention, such a conclusion implies that there was either a lack of cross-party support for greater changes to the CFSP or a widespread belief among the MEPs that the EP should remain less engaged in foreign and security policy.

## Conclusion

This contribution has sought to shed some light on the problems of accountability and institutional evolution in CFSP/ESDP matters by looking at the EC's common commercial policy. Of course, the prospects of greater EP involvement in the CFSP will necessarily be different than in the CCP: the EP has to contend with the competing roles WEU Assembly and national parliaments as well as with the claim that sovereignty on CFSP matters remains with the Member States rather than the Community.<sup>24</sup> One can therefore reasonably expect the eventual formal role of the EP in CFSP matters to be more complicated and perhaps less substantial than what has been achieved in the CCP. Indeed, MEPs themselves seem to realise this: a substantial portion of MEPs at the Convention did not believe that the Parliament should extend its role too far in the CFSP. Even so, most observers have characterised the outcome of the Convention as a disappointment in terms of democratic accountability and the CFSP. The EP is now faced with two questions: What are the proper limits to its powers in the CFSP, taking into consideration concerns about both accountability and efficiency? And secondly, what strategies can it use to achieve these desired reforms?

This article has sought to provide the beginnings of an answer to the second question through an assessment of the successful EP strategy to enhance its formal role in the CCP. Despite the instinctive belief that the CCP and the CFSP are completely different, they have both been characterised by strikingly similar institutional and developmental problems. In the sphere of accountability, the experience of the CCP indicates that the Parliament should not expect too much from its current informal and indirect

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<sup>24</sup> The author thanks participants at the FORNET conference for asserting these points of difference between the CFSP and the CCP.

powers. Change will only come via the development of expertise and the concomitant increase in credibility that this will bring. In this context, proposals for a new committee to deal exclusively with CFSP matters are to be encouraged. If the CCP is any guide, then the EP's increase in credibility can be leveraged by a united Parliamentary front during future reformulations of the Constitution.

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