CONVERGENCE OF NATIONAL FOREIGN POLICIES?
THE EFFECTS OF CFSP ON THE NATIONAL FOREIGN POLICIES
OF THE EU MEMBER STATES

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Comments and suggestions most welcome!

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1 Introduction: The concept of policy convergence and foreign policy

The concept of policy convergence has received considerable attention within EU studies in recent years. Policy convergence is usually defined as an increase in similarity between the national policies of several states over time. “Policy convergence thus constitutes the result of a process; it implies a movement from diverse positions towards some common point” (Holzinger/Knill 2005: 2). However, so far the foreign policies of EU member states have hardly been examined for indications of convergence;¹ this can largely be attributed to the fact that many observers argue that the EU member states are not willing to concede sovereignty over foreign policy and that thus there will be no far-reaching, substantial rapprochement of their national foreign policies.² Following a similar line of reasoning, it is often assumed that the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the EU does not have deep effects on the national foreign policies of the EU member states.

However, this paper will show that there has been a significant development since European Political Cooperation (EPC) – the forerunner of CFSP – was created by the member states of the then EC in 1970 and that some remarkable indications of convergence of member states’ foreign policies can be observed, both as to foreign policy-making and positions (section 2). In section 3 it is examined what the possible causes and conditions for this convergence might be. In particular, this paper will try to clarify to what extent this convergence might be a result of the impact of CFSP on the national foreign policies of EU member states. Thus, this paper will draw upon the concept of Europeanisation, and it will discuss whether the elements of convergence can be explained by rational calculations or a convergence of values among the political elites of the member states, and whether there might also be other possible driving forces and influential factors. In section 4 some conclusions will be presented as to an evaluation of the described indications of foreign policy convergence and as to a possible further convergence of the foreign policy trajectories of the EU member states.

¹ For an exception especially see Hill (1997).
² In general, a selection bias can be observed in the research on policy convergence since usually policy fields are examined in which a convergence can be expected. In contrast, there are virtually no studies on divergence.
2 Evidence of convergence of the foreign policies of EU member states

When assessing EU foreign policy the focus is often on the divisions among the member states and on specific issues on which the member states do not agree – such as occurred during the conflict on Iraq in 2003. However, it is argued here that concerning many other issues a convergence of foreign policy outlooks has gradually emerged among the member states and that emphasis should rather be put on looking for more general trends over the past 35 years. Thus, in this paper convergence is not so much used as a synonym for uniformity but rather as a process of becoming more alike (Bennett 1991: 219).

2.1 Convergence as to foreign policy-making

Observers as well as practitioners have noted that due to participation in EPC/CFSP the working procedures and processes of the foreign ministries of EC/EU member states have considerably changed over time. While at the beginning EPC was merely a “vague forum for discussions about foreign policy” (Smith 2004a: 104), a transgovernmental EPC/CFSP communications network was gradually developed and the whole policy-making system has become increasingly institutionalised. Thus, “[f]rom the perspective of a diplomat in the foreign ministry of a member state, styles of operating and communication have been transformed” (Hill/Wallace 1996: 6).

Coordination below the highest levels was primarily achieved through the designation of a Political Committee (PC) composed of the Political Directors of the foreign ministries of the member states, and through a system of European Correspondents of the foreign ministries which was set up to manage EPC on a daily basis. Furthermore, in order to deepen consultations on specific questions, EPC/CFSP working groups were established which are composed of experts from the member states’ foreign ministries and structured according to geographical or functional areas. At the moment, there are about 30 CFSP working groups and during the second half of 2002, for example, altogether 419 working group meetings took place. Over the years, the intensity of contacts within the EPC/CFSP network has increased

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3 As the range of duties of the PC increased steadily and overburdened the Political Directors, in 2000 the PC was transformed into the Political and Security Committee (PSC), which consists of national representatives of the permanent representations of the member states to the EU. However, there is also still the possibility of convening the PSC at Political Director level.

4 This number is based on the agenda of the Danish EU Presidency in 2002 which was accessed at: http://www.eu2002.dk/calendar/.
on all levels and it meanwhile often exceeds the frequency of meetings with colleagues from national cabinets or other national bureaucracies (Forster/Wallace 2000: 466).

Furthermore, a telex communication network was established between the foreign ministries of the member states (as well as the European Commission and the General Secretariat of the Council) in order to facilitate consultations and the sharing of information. Through this network enciphered messages, the so-called ‘correspondance européenne’ or ‘COREUs’, can be exchanged. While in the mid-1970s about 4,800 COREUs were sent per year (Wessels 1982: 2), between 1995 and 2002 about 11,000 to 13,000 COREUs were exchanged per year.

Smith (1998: 315) notes that “[g]overnment actors at all levels gradually adapted to each other and oriented themselves toward ‘Europe’ when considering problems”. Some observers also write about a ‘coordination reflex’, which has developed among EC/EU member states over time (e.g. Regelsberger 1989; Glarbo 1999): In an increasing number of cases the member states habitually contacted the foreign ministries of the other member states before forming their own opinion, in order to exchange views and get to converging positions if possible. This means that the automatic reaction was not to simply form the national position based on national interests, but to also consider what would be acceptable to the other member states. As early as in 1980, Ambassador Philippe de Schoutheete de Tervarent (1980: 160), former Permanent Representative of Belgium to the EU, wrote:

A force de se réunir, de se consulter, d’échanger des informations, de rechercher des positions communes qui concilient leurs préoccupations respectives les responsables nationaux ont acquis un réflexe européen qui les amène, lorsqu’un problème se pose, à envisager aussi sa dimension collective, l’intérêt qu’il peut présenter pour les autres partenaires, et à adapter éventuellement leur position initiale.

On the whole, it seems that the sharing of information and common practices have lead to habits of working together in foreign policy issues and that thus a convergence in the way foreign policy is made has occurred in the states which are members of the EU. This is not only true for member states which are generally viewed to be on a convergence trajectory as to their foreign policies, such as Belgium, but also for member states, which are usually regarded as comparatively insistent on their independence (Hill 1997: 2f.); thus, for example, the former British foreign minister Douglas Hurd (1981: 383) acknowledged in 1981:

Since I first joined the Foreign Office in 1952 the biggest change of diplomatic method stems from European Political Co-operation. In 1952 it was broadly speaking with the Americans only that we shared information and assessments; policy-making was a national preserve. Now in some areas of diplomacy our policy is formed wholly within a European context; and in no area is the European influence completely absent. The flow of information between the Foreign Ministries [...] is formidable.
This convergence as to foreign policy-making has also been confirmed by a former European Correspondent and Political Director of the British foreign ministry, Pauline Neville-Jones, in 1996:

… the foreign policy process has become Europeanised, in the sense that on every international issue, there is an exchange of information and an attempt to arrive at a common understanding and a common approach – compared to how things were in the past, where most issues were looked at in isolation without addressing the attitudes of other member states or a European dimension.” (quoted from Aggestam 1999)

It is also significant in this respect that although at first EPC was restricted to a few foreign policy issues, more and more areas have been opened up to EPC/CFSP. In addition, while in the beginning the most common instruments of EPC were diplomatic declarations and demarches, since then EPC/CFSP has acquired a considerable range of instruments which are used intensively: in 2004 22 joint actions and 23 common positions were adopted, 144 CFSP declarations and 463 demarches were published, 299 reports of EU Heads of Mission in third countries were issued, and 123 political dialogue meetings with third countries/groups of states were held (at different levels) (Council of the European Union 2005a, b).

Thus, it shows that there has not only been a convergence of the national foreign policies of the EU member states in the sense that they have come to habitually coordinate their foreign policies in many cases, but there have also been elements of convergence with regard to the fact that the EU member states have been willing to adopt common positions and take joint actions. According to Smith (2004a: 113), „these activities reflect the tendency for all EU states to adapt their foreign policies on a wide range of issues in accordance with common EU norms”.

Nevertheless, there have been instances when individual member states did not obey the rule of consultation and coordination or even disregarded agreed common positions, thus sometimes sacrificing a painfully achieved consensus, as was the case when Germany recognised Croatia and Slovenia in December 1991. However, the crucial point here seems to be that such commonality and even common action are now expected from the member states; they might still fail to live up to these expectations in specific cases, but nowadays this will usually result in political problems inside and outside the EU (Hill 1997: 7).
2.2 Convergence of foreign policy positions

In order to illustrate the extent to which national positions have converged since the creation of EPC in 1970, data on the voting behaviour of the member states in the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) will be used. Although it has to be kept in mind that the UN General Assembly can not pass legally binding texts, but only recommendations, the voting behaviour in the UN General Assembly can serve as a valuable basis for analysing long-term tendencies of convergence between the foreign policies of the EU member states as a broad range of issues in international relations are regularly discussed in this setting. There usually is a vote on 20-30% of the resolutions, while most of the resolutions are passed by consensus.

“In general, most studies show a clear increase in unified voting among EU states after EPC was established in 1970” (Smith 2004a: 115f.). According to Lindemann (1978: 143) the percentage of unified voting grew from 46.8% in 1973 to 62.8% in 1977. Furthermore, in his long-term analysis of the voting behaviour of the EC/EU member states in the UN General Assembly, Luif (2003: 27) shows that on the whole (i.e. concerning all recorded votes), the member states have voted identically on a growing percentage of votes: After the EC member states had voted identically in almost 60% of all recorded votes in 1979, the percentage decreased in the 1980s (lowest point: 27.1% in 1983) and increased again since the early 1990s, reaching its highest point so far in 1998 with 82.1 % (see graph 1).

However, it should also be noted that on a number of votes it was only one state (often France and especially in the 1980s also Greece) which deviated from the others, so that the EU sometimes might appear more divided than it really was (Smith 2004a: 115). Furthermore, it is hard to tell whether it is for tactical reasons or because of basic disagreements over policy if a state does not to vote uniformly. In general, these data only allow for a fairly limited qualitative assessment of the voting behaviour of EU member states.

Furthermore, the degree of convergence varies considerably between different issue areas (see graph 1): While there is a high degree of convergence of the voting behaviour of the member states as far as Middle East questions dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are concerned, there is clearly less convergence on strategic and international security-related issues, although concerning the latter there has generally also been a development towards more convergence since the early 1990s (Luif 2003: 3f.).

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5 Also see Hurwitz (1975); Lindemann (1978); Luif (2002, 2003); Stadler (1993).
6 According to Art. 19 TEU, the member states shall coordinate their actions and keep each other informed as far as international organisations and conferences are concerned.
Graph 1

Percentage of recorded votes in the UN General Assembly with consensus among EC/EU member states


In addition to the data on the convergence of the voting behaviour of all EC/EU member states, the cases where there was no consensus but a majority within the EC/EU for a specific position can be examined and the distance of individual member states from this EC/EU majority can be analysed. For example, the data in graph 2 show that as far as Austria’s voting behaviour in the UN General Assembly is concerned, after Austria had deviated considerably from the majority of the EC member states in the 1980s, there has been a significant adaptation towards convergence with the positions of the majority of the other EC/EU member states from 1991 onwards (as to security-related issues from 1992 onwards). This conforms to the general trends towards convergence in the voting behaviour of all EC/EU member states since the early 1990s (see above).

**Graph 2: Austria’s voting behaviour in the UN General Assembly 1989-2000**

Distance from the EC/EU majority (maximum distance = 100, minimum = 0)

1996: EU without Greece.
Source: Own graph with data from Luif (2002: 17, 26).

Furthermore, even France and Great Britain in general have gradually adjusted their positions towards the EU mainstream in the past decade – although they sometimes still diverge on some specific issues such as decolonisation and nuclear weapons (Johansson-Nogués 2004: 73f.). As far as the new member states which entered the EU on 1 May 2004 are concerned, a general tendency of convergence between these states and the EU could also be observed since the early 1990s – notwithstanding the fact that this tendency towards aligning

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7 There was an EC/EU majority if in the EC-9 at least 5 member states voted identically, in the EC-10 at least 6 member states were required for a majority, in the EC/EU-12 at least 7 member states and in the EU-15 at least 8 member states. More information on the data basis and on how this distance was calculated can be found in the Annex.
themselves with the EU’s majority voting pattern was not equally strong in all of these states and in all issue areas (Johansson-Nogués 2004: 76ff.). Thus, at this time the pessimistic prediction by some observers that the most recent enlargement would cause greater difficulties in acting coherently in the framework of the UN General Assembly can not be corroborated.

Complementary to these vote data, there is also considerable evidence in the literature which shows that individual EC/EU states have come to moderate their views on specific issues since the beginning of EPC. For example, regarding Palestine and the Euro-Arab Dialogue, Smith traces how the Danish and the German government, which had traditionally supported Israel, changed their positions and became more sensitive to Arab views due to their participation in EPC (Smith 2004a: 117), and regarding South Africa and the anti-apartheid campaign, despite initial reservations, it is shown how France, Germany and particularly Great Britain were gradually convinced to impose stronger measures and increase the pressure against the South African government as a result of deliberations within EPC (Smith 2004a: 119). As far as Austria as an example of a neutral/non-aligned state is concerned, it seems particularly noteworthy that due to its EU membership and participation in CFSP, Austria considerably adapted its foreign and security policy in so far as it significantly modified its concept of neutrality (this was reduced to a military core) and even changed its constitution twice in order to be able to take part in economic sanctions in the framework of CFSP and in the Petersberg tasks (which also refer to “tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking”).

In general, Nuttall (1992: 12) asserts that – despite the prevailing principle of unanimity for decision-making in this field – rather than being based on the lowest common denominator, positions adopted within EPC often converged around a point of view, which represented an intermediate position between the positions of the individual member states.

This is not to neglect the fact that there are likely to be different degrees of convergence among the EU member states and that the convergence of national foreign policies will vary between issue areas. Nor shall the instances be ignored when the national foreign policies of the EU member states diverged or failed to hold together, which in recent years particularly occurred in crises which received a lot of media attention. However, it is argued here that these cases should not be overestimated. According to Hill (1997: 9), “Europeans are gradually coming to view an increasing number of international problems in the same way, and the degree of divergence between Member State positions has narrowed”.
3 Causes and conditions for foreign policy convergence

From the above elaborations it seems that to a considerable extent these elements of convergence are a result of the impact of EPC/CFSP on the national foreign policies of the member states. Thus this section will first introduce the concept of Europeanisation and relate it to the concept of convergence. In the second part this section will discuss whether these elements of convergence might rather be explained by rational calculations or by a convergence of norms and values among the political elites of the member states. In addition, it will be pointed out that convergence might not necessarily be a result of Europeanisation, but that other parallel processes, such as domestic change and other developments in the international sphere, might also be important factors.

3.1 Europeanisation and policy convergence

The research on the concept of Europeanisation is concerned with the question how the EU institutions and the growing communitarisation and coordination of policies within the EU (re-)influence member states’ policy-making, politics and interests. However, the content and scope of the concept have still not been completely clarified. In the literature the term ‘Europeanisation’ is used with different meanings (see e.g. Ladrech 1994; Radaelli 2000; Risse/Cowles/Caporaso 2001). Most often Europeanisation is used to describe changes in EU member states’ policies, politics and politics which are caused by membership in the EU. In the context of this paper it is also especially noteworthy that it is often argued that sustained participation in the EU leads to a convergence of both the style and the content of national policy-making (Wong forthcoming).

In order to explore the circumstances under which such processes of change may take place, in many studies on Europeanisation it is assumed that there is a certain ‘goodness of fit’ between the EU level and the member state level, which describes the compatibility between these two levels (see esp. Risse/Cowles/Caporaso 2001: 6f.). This ‘goodness of fit’ manifests itself in a certain ‘fit’ or ‘misfit’; if there is a ‘misfit’ it is assumed that there will be adaptational pressures for the national level.

Moreover, the concept of Europeanisation can be used both within a rationalist approach to theory and according to a logic of consequentialism and also within a constructivist approach to theory and following a logic of appropriateness (see esp. March/Olsen 1998: 949ff.; also
see e.g. Börzel/Risse 2000). Thus, in principle, Europeanisation can occur through two mechanisms which entail different expectations about the effects of Europeanisation.

From a rationalist perspective, the EU can be seen as an arrangement in which the costs of cooperation are reduced and which offers new opportunities but also involves new constraints for the member states. Here the fact that the member states have to implement EU policy templates and adapt their national policies, processes and institutions in compliance with the requirements of the EU is stressed. However, the preferences of the member states are regarded as stable. In this view, it seems plausible that the member states adapt if they expect the benefits to outweigh the costs.

In contrast, from a constructivist perspective, the EU can also be viewed as a social construction which represents shared norms, ideas and understandings. From this perspective, it is assumed that the preferences of the member states are not given, but that processes of socialisation and collective learning may occur and new identities may be developed in the framework of the EU, which may also have an influence on how the actors determine their preferences and thus lead to a ‘deeper’ adaptation of the member states.

However, although Europeanisation and convergence are closely related, it is important to distinguish these two concepts. Thus, Radaelli (2000: 6) notes:

> Europeanization is not convergence. The latter can be a consequence of Europeanization. Convergence is not Europeanization because there is a difference between a process and its consequences.

In the literature on policy convergence a great number of possible causes and conditions of convergence have been identified. In general, while some studies concentrate on the effects of political pressure by other states or international organisations and the imposition of policies, another strand in the literature on policy convergence emphasises processes of harmonization through international cooperation and other more voluntary mechanisms of convergence, such as policy learning and emulation, have recently received attention as well. Similar to the research on Europeanisation, the underlying theoretical focus has often been either rationalist or constructivist. Therefore, it also seems appropriate to discuss what each of these two perspectives has to offer when it comes to explaining the elements of convergence of the national foreign policies of EU member states.
3.2 Rational calculations or convergence of values?

Unlike in many other policy fields, in foreign policy the EU member states can not be coerced into following a common line or to adopt positions which are imposed upon them by other states or international organisations. There are no clearly identifiable ‘convergence criteria’ for the foreign policies of EU member states. Although it can be argued that an ‘acquis politique’ has evolved which provides the direction for further cooperation of the member states and that the CFSP is legally binding on EU member states, there is no formal possibility of sanctions for non-compliant behaviour. As the European Court of Justice has no competences at all in the area of foreign policy, it is left to the discretion of the member states to determine the intensity of coordination and how possible breaches of the rules are dealt with. In foreign policy there exists no “clear, vertical, chain-of-command, in which EU policy descends from Brussels into the member states” (Bulmer/Radaelli 2004: 9). Furthermore, this gives rise to the presumption that the ‘goodness of fit’-explanation of Europeanisation will not be as suitable for the field of foreign policy as for other policy fields.

However, the described elements of convergence might still be explained by rationalist assumptions. It could be argued that through the interactions with their partners in CFSP the member states will learn in a strategic manner. On the basis of strategic calculations the member states might develop certain expectations about the preferences of the other member states and strive to adapt their own behaviour in order to make their preferred outcomes in the policy areas, which are most important to them, more likely to happen. Thus, changes of national foreign policy which lead to convergence with the foreign policies of other EU member states might also entail considerable advantages. In general, if the foreign policies of the EU member states converge and follow a common line, this can be an opportunity, especially for ‘smaller’ member states, to amplify their voice in international politics and enjoy the advantages of the politics of scale (Hill 1997: 4). Thus, it seems that there might also be other mechanisms of Europeanisation, which are not as obvious as the vertical ‘downloading’ of EU policy templates by the EU member states but which rather operate in a horizontal direction and through the interaction of the member states.

On the whole, rational calculations could lead to a convergence of national foreign policies – albeit it can be asked how far-reaching and enduring this would be. As Hill (1997: 4) notes: “a

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8 The fact that each new member state entering the EU has to take over the ‘acquis politique’ of the CFSP and – if there is a policy misfit – adjust its foreign policy to it, as the acceptance of the ‘acquis politique’ has become a precondition for EC/EU membership since the accession of Greece to the EC in 1981 (Smith 1998: 324), could be seen as an exception here.
coalition could fall apart through loss of common purpose or under the impact of some disruptive event, if a sense of common identity has not also been forged”. Furthermore, such strategic action is often associated with issue linkages, trade-offs or side payments and a bargaining style of decision-making. However, in CFSP outcomes have hardly involved such mechanisms of tactical manoeuvring among the member states (Smith 2000: 615).

There is also considerable evidence in the literature that the elements of convergence of the national foreign policies of EU member states have been caused by other mechanisms which are rather based on social factors and of a more voluntary nature.

Particular emphasis is put on the fact that the EPC/CFSP provided a forum within which national officials have regular contact with their counterparts from the other member states. Through this transgovernmental network foreign policy-making in the member states might not only be linked but also be harmonised (Smith 1998: 306). Furthermore, several observers note that EPC/CFSP fostered close cohesion, improved mutual understanding and even personal friendships among the participants and thus facilitated considerable elite socialisation (Smith 1998: 314; Tonra 1997: 186). This on-going process of ‘engrenage’ has led to an ‘esprit de corps’ and possibly even to a common identity among these officials in the sense that there is a shared basic commitment to and belief in joint policy-making. Smith notes that EPC encouraged the development of a set of common viewpoints and of a distinct ‘communauté de vue’, to which officials feel committed (Smith 1998: 315). Such a set of norms and common principles is also seen as a basis for common action (communauté d’action) (de Schoutheete 1980: 49).

Although there are no ‘robust’ compliance mechanisms it can be argued that there are ‘softer’ mechanisms which are based on social rewards or threats. One such possible mechanism could be provided by peer pressure from the other member states. Thus, the fact that EU member states which act unilaterally on key foreign policy issues or do not consult the other member states beforehand are usually criticised as defectors (Smith 2004a: 123) could be seen as an indicator that there is a social rule for convergent foreign policy behaviour. Smith notes that there has been a convergence of norms and rules of behaviour, which “encourage a more accommodating approach to foreign policy among EU member states” (Smith 2000: 615).

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9 Thus, the recent tendencies by some member states to establish smaller circles to deal with some foreign policy questions and to take foreign policy actions single-handedly, e.g. in reaction to the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, increasingly met the criticism of the member states which were not involved.
Furthermore, these norms and values do not only refer to the procedures but also to the substance of foreign policy. The lower-level policy-makers in the EPC/CFSP network rather make common analyses of problems than bargain on behalf of their governments (Smith 1998: 314) and they pursue shared ideas and understandings. This, in turn, also had effects on the issues and options that are considered by the governments at high level, and in some cases caused member states to change their positions and even preferences in terms of collectively determined values and goals (Smith 1998: 309). Shared sets of policy understanding have emerged in specific areas, e.g. over the Palestinian issue (Bulmer/Radaelli 2004: 7).

Given the growing and norm-driven interactions among foreign ministry participants within the framework of EPC/CFSP, some observers expect that common perceptions and identities in the area of foreign policy might have emerged (Wagner/Hellmann 2003: 585f.). These findings also suggest that a Europeanisation of the national foreign policies of EU member states may take place on a horizontal (rather than a vertical) basis.

3.3 Other possible driving forces and influential factors

So far Europeanisation has been described as the main source for the elements of convergence of the national foreign policies of the EU member states. However, other developments which may affect foreign policy at the same time as Europeanisation can be identified and the explanatory power of Europeanisation needs to be tested against these other possible driving forces. In general, the foreign policy of a nation-state is influenced by several factors in the international or the domestic environment of this state, which can act in similar directions as Europeanisation, but they may also act in opposite directions (Vaquerí Fanés 2001).

In particular, as a further alternative explanation for changes of the national foreign policies of EU member states, the fact that the conditions for these national foreign policies have fundamentally been changed by the end of bipolarity has to be discussed. For example, as far as the changes of Austria’s voting behaviour in the UN General Assembly in the early 1990s are concerned (see section 2.2), it can be asked whether this can be attributed to the Europeanisation of Austrian national foreign policy or whether this was a result of the end of the Cold War. It is argued here that this development can rather be seen as an indicator of Europeanisation (although the end of the Cold War might has certainly been a further facilitating factor) as it can be traced that Austria did not adapt its voting behaviour right after the end of the Cold War but only in 1991, after the European Commission had reproached the
Austrian government concerning the relatively low degree of convergence of its positions in the UN General Assembly with those of the EC majority.

Just as Europeanisation has emerged as a popular explanation for elements of policy convergence, so domestic factors are frequently portrayed as a leading source of elements of non-convergence. Although the EU member states are subject to the same pressures or incentives for convergence stemming from EPC/CFSP, their foreign policies might also be affected by factors which belong to the domestic sphere of these states and which might differ between the member states. The historical experiences and national cultures of these states in some regards differ considerably. The idea is that each country possesses a unique set of policy styles, structures and experiences that also define how foreign policy issues are approached and dealt with. Furthermore, processes of political change and transition, as well as party politics, political events or public opinion pressures can have considerable influence (Vaquer i Fanés 2001). Thus, it has been noted, for example, that the voting behaviour of Greece diverged considerably from the majority of the other EC member states in the 1980s because the foreign policy agenda of the new Pasok government in Greece differed from the mainstream of the EU and was only slowly adjusted (Luif 2003: 27).

4 Conclusions: Towards the emergence of shared European interests?

It was shown in this paper that there are remarkable elements of convergence of the national foreign policies of the EU member states. A significant convergence of foreign policy-making processes and outlooks has occurred in the states which are members of the EU and national positions have converged on a broad range of issues since the creation of EPC in 1970.

It particularly seems that to a considerable extent these elements of convergence are a result of the impact of EPC/CFSP and thus of the Europeanisation of the national foreign policies of the member states. However, it was also noted that a convergence of national foreign policies might not be very far-reaching and enduring if it is merely based on rational calculations. Yet there is evidence that EPC/CFSP facilitated elite socialisation and that possibly even a sense of common identity might have evolved. EPC/CFSP encouraged the development of a set of common norms and social rules, which are now deeply embedded in the national practices of EU member states. Shared sets of policy understanding have emerged in specific areas, which in some cases even caused member states to change their attitudes and preferences.
However, this might still not be sufficient for a successful common European foreign policy. Convergence regarding the assessment of problematic issues is only a first step; in addition, appropriate decision-making structures, which especially in the case of a crisis swiftly allow for adequate action to really engage in crisis management, and the capacity to implement policy in an efficient and coordinated manner are also needed (Luif 2002: 34).

Besides, the described elements of convergence of the national foreign policies of the EU member states are not irreversible and they do not suggest that there is a complete convergence of foreign policies, as was clearly shown in 2003 when the member states could not reach an agreement on how to deal with the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. National interests, as defined by the decision makers in the member states, still also play an important role and a convergence of foreign policy actions also crucially depends on the political will of the member states. This was particularly illustrated when Germany – which is generally supposed to come closest to having a European identity – recognised Croatia and Slovenia in 1991, thus clearly prioritising national interests over agreed EU policy (Wong forthcoming). However, it can still be argued that “[d]ivergence […] exists within limits and coordination is accepted as an obligation and unquestioned benefit” (Hill 1997: 3).

Nevertheless, although we cannot know which trend the national foreign policies of EU member states will display in the future, it seems that there is good reason to expect that a tendency towards convergence will dominate over a ‘logic of diversity’\textsuperscript{10} in the long term. In particular, external demands and developments of the international system have already involved strong incentives for a convergence of the foreign policies of the EU member states and this can be expected to continue in the future. For example, according to Hill (1997: 4f.), “[t]he need to deal with powerful and problematic countries such as the United States or Israel has to some extent already imposed discipline and caution on the European group”.

Finally, even if the member states continue to insist on pursuing their own national interests, this paper has tried to show that the described socialisation processes and convergence of norms and values might very well lead to an incremental adaptation of the way actors define their preferences in the first place and thus to a “reappraisal of national interests in a new European context” (Tonra 2001: preface).

\textsuperscript{10} Hoffmann (1966: 882) described this so-called “logic of diversity” which suggests that “in areas of key importance to the national interest, nations prefer the certainty, or the self-controlled uncertainty, of national self-reliance, to the uncontrolled uncertainty of the untested blender”.

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References


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Annex. Data basis and calculation of the index concerning the distance of Austria’s voting behaviour from the EC/EU majority in the UN General Assembly

The index is based on a set of data which includes all recorded votes in the UN General Assembly, i.e. in addition to the votes on whole resolutions also votes on parts of resolutions and votes on decisions (which have less political weight than resolutions) as well as votes on motions in the General Assembly (Luif 2002: 3f.). Thus, this set of data which was compiled by Luif (2002) differs from most other empirical studies which usually only take into account the votes on resolutions which are eventually passed.

The index concerning the distance of Austria’s voting behaviour from the EC/EU majority in the UN General Assembly was calculated by Luif (2002) as follows (see Luif 2002: 15f.):

If Austria was in full agreement with the EC/EU majority a value of 1 was given. If Austria abstained while the EC/EU majority voted “Yes” or “No” a value of 0.5 was given. Accordingly, a value of 0.5 was also allocated if Austria voted “Yes” or “No” while the EC/EU majority abstained. Full disagreement (i.e. Austria voted “Yes” while the EC/EU majority voted “No”, or vice versa) was allocated a value of 0.

In the next step, the values for all recorded votes within one session of the General Assembly where there was an EC/EU majority were added. Furthermore, in order to be able to compare the resulting sums over time, the possible maximum disagreement for each year was calculated, i.e. the value which would have resulted if Austria and the EC/EU majority would have voted as differently as possible in each recorded vote. The actual value calculated was then compared with this maximum value, i.e. the percentages given describe how high the actual value is in comparison with the maximum value possible. This means that, irrespective of the number of votes in one session of the General Assembly, the maximum distance Austria could have from the EC/EU majority is always 100 and the minimum distance is always 0.