

The Expectations-Capability Gap? Studying EU Diplomatic Cooperation in Third Countries

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Abstract

Research into the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is largely restricted to procedural studies of cooperation taking place at an intergovernmental level within Europe and/or to case studies involving intervention (or the lack of it!) in well-known global flashpoints. As a result, there remains a gap in our knowledge about the more mundane, but arguably just as significant, cooperation between EU states at the diplomatic level in third countries. This paper describes and presents findings from the first stage of a project which aims to study diplomatic cooperation in several countries of varying size. It attempts - using the results of a study in Canberra, Australia and Wellington, New Zealand, involving interviews with Heads of Mission and the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade - to portray and develop explanations of current progress. It explores, for example, whether enthusiasm for and the extent of cooperation varies a) according to member-state size and/or the holder of the presidency, b) with regard to particular issues, and c) according to the nature and preferences of the host country; it also looks at the role of the European Commission delegation. It concludes by looking at the obstacles to greater integration in this neglected but not necessarily insignificant dimension of the CFSP.

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In June 1998, the Indonesian occupied territory of East Timor was the subject of a fact-finding mission by the EU. The mission comprised the British, Austrian and Dutch ambassadors, constituting the then *Troika* (the Netherlands substituting for Luxembourg), the European Commission's Head of Delegation in Indonesia and a representative of the European Council Secretariat. In the same month, in Belarus in the former Soviet Union, ambassadors from several nations found themselves all but locked out of their residences on the orders of that country's increasingly autocratic and erratic President. The diplomatic objections of individual EU member states were conveyed on behalf of the EU as a whole by the UK representative in Minsk, who, living outside the compound, was not herself directly affected by the shenanigans. Just over a year before, following another diplomatic incident that provoked a recall of personnel, this time in Iran, the Council of EU foreign ministers announced that 'Member states [would] instruct their Ambassadors, after their return to Teheran, to contribute in a coordinated way to the continual appraisal by the Council of the relationship' between the EU and the government there.

Examples like these hint at increased diplomatic coordination and cooperation in third countries between member states and between member states and Community institutions. This paper explores the issue in more depth. It begins by providing a rationale for such an exploration and then moves on to discuss the work of those few scholars who have examined the topic previously. It goes on to lay out some of the findings from an initial case study in the light of hypotheses derived from that work. It concludes, in looking to the future, by stressing that while it may be true that developments in operational practice within Europe are helping to move 'the conduct of national foreign policy away from the old nation-state national sovereignty model towards a collective endeavour, a form of high-level networking with transformationalist effects and even more potential' (Hill and Wallace, 1996, p. 6), the same cannot really be said at present of operational practice outside the continent itself.

Rationale

Studies of European Political Cooperation (EPC) and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) tend to concentrate on procedural studies of cooperation taking place at an intergovernmental level within Europe and/or to case studies involving intervention (or the lack of it!) in well-known global flashpoints (eg. Regelsberger et al., 1997). However, they often hint that a great deal goes on underneath the process at the highest level that offsets - subtly and incrementally - its all-too-obvious shortcomings. Even if foreign ministers cannot always agree, it is suggested, their officials are gradually building up habits of cooperation whose eventual integrative affect will be significant. Such *engrenage* is, more often than not, portrayed as taking place in Brussels and the other EU capitals. Nevertheless, now and again, there is mention of it occurring in and as a result of activities in third countries. Hill and Wallace, for example, note that this 'process of *engrenage* on which habits of working together [may] have gradually upgraded perceptions of common interest' has as its root the 'taking as given the exchange of confidential information not only about third countries but about their own governments' intentions and domestic constraints, the sharing of tasks (and sometimes of facilities) in third countries, the acceptance of officials on secondments to their home ministry as no longer "foreign" but as colleagues' (Hill and Wallace, 1996, p.1, p.12).

That the '*engrenage* effect' would occur in an overseas as well as a European setting has clearly been the hope of many who have drafted Community declarations and legislation covering the foreign policy process, especially in the early years of political cooperation. It must be said, though, that anyone hoping to find mention of third country cooperation in the rather less supranational statements and Treaty revisions of recent years might be hard-pressed to come up with even a nod in that direction. In the 'Summary of Positions of the Member States' included in the White Paper on the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference, for instance, mention of the matter is confined to Spain (which referred to increased cooperation in third countries as a goal), to Portugal (which suggested that the CFSP 'should be dynamized via such actions as the opening of joint embassies in third countries') and more predictably, Belgium (which pointed out 'that the diplomatic networks, expertise, personnel and resources available in each of the member states should be fully utilised in a joint approach, with the commission acting as a catalyst and co-ordinator'). This lack of interest (or at least lack of interest in mentioning the possibility of advance) in the field was also reflected in the EU foreign ministers' so called Westerndorp Report of December 1995 and, unsurprisingly, in the Amsterdam Treaty itself. This is in marked contrast, however, to pre-Maastricht times when the risk of any nation actually feeling bound by commitments made on the common foreign policy front was so much smaller.

True the first priority for the fledgling EPC in the early seventies was to encourage links between member states' foreign ministries within European capitals. Consequently 'these links were only gradually extended to the embassies of the member states in third countries' and 'it was more or less left to the ambassadors themselves to convene a meeting or, alternatively, to ignore this new dimension in diplomacy' (Regelsberger, 1988, p. 11). However, as EPC developed this new dimension was slowly institutionalised. The London Report of 1981 provided for crisis procedures which, among other things, allowed for ambassadorial meetings within 48 hours at request of three member states. Acknowledging the role of ambassadors in actually delivering joint messages of support or disapproval in respect of third countries, the Report also promised (see Part II, 1) that 'when declarations are issued by Ministerial meetings and the European Council they should as a rule be accompanied by a list of posts in appropriate countries where the local representative of the Ten will draw the declaration to the attention of the host government.' It went on to state (Part II, 8 'Procedure for Political Co-operation in Third Countries') that

in view of the increasing activities of the Ten in third countries it is important that the Heads of Mission of the Ten maintain the practice of meeting regularly order to exchange information and co-ordinate views. In considering their response to significant developments in the country to which they are accredited their first instinct should be to co-ordinate with their colleagues of the Ten.

The Political Committee welcomes joint reports from Heads of Mission of the ten. These may be prepared on response to a request form the Political Committee, or, exceptionally on the Heads of Missions' own initiative, when the situation requires it. Recommendations for joint action are particularly valuable, Where reports are made on the Heads of Missions' own initiative, it is for them to decide whether to draft a joint report, or to report separately on the basis of their joint discussions. An equally

acceptable alternative is for the Presidency to draft an oral report on its own authority reflecting the views expressed.

A couple of years later the so-called Stuttgart Declaration of 19 June 1983 (see 3.2 'Foreign Policy') also called for 'closer co-operation in diplomatic and administrative matters between the missions of the Ten in third countries.' Next the Single European act of 1986 (and specifically title III article 30 which put EPC on a treaty basis, though without making it part of the wider EC process), codified such calls, stressing the importance of the presidency in initiating, co-ordinating and representing a collective presence for member states abroad, and even going so far as to declare (see point 9) that 'The High Contracting Parties and the Commission, through mutual assistance and information, shall intensify co-operation between their representations accredited to third countries and to international organisations.' This vague and therefore potentially alarming declaration was, however, very quickly specified - and thereby limited - by the following decision adopted by member state foreign ministers on 28 February:

II Co-operation of Member States' Missions and Commission Delegations in third countries and international organisations.

1. Member States' missions and Commission delegations shall intensify their co-operation in third countries and international organisations in the following areas:

- a) exchange of political and economic information;
- b) pooling of information on administrative and practical problems'
- c) mutual assistance in the material and practical sphere;
- d) communications;
- e) exchange of information and drawing up of joint plans in case of local crises;
- f) security measures;
- g) consular matters;
- h) health, particularly in the field of health and medical facilities;
- i) educational matters (schooling);
- j) information;
- k) cultural affairs;
- l) development aid.

The Maastricht Treaty had little to add to this, simply stating in Title V, J6 that

The diplomatic and consular missions of the Member States and the Commission Delegations in third countries and international conferences, and their representations to international organizations, shall cooperate in ensuring that the common positions and common measures adopted by the Council are complied with and implemented. They shall step up cooperation by exchanging information, carrying out joint assessments and contributing to the implementation of the provisions referred to in Article 8c of the Treaty establishing the European Community.

These sorts of official statements - combined with the almost total neglect by academics of the question of their actuality - have given rise to what Martin Holland (who is one of the few scholars who have looked at it) calls 'a general assumption, though an untested one, that political co-operation between embassies has become a

systematised, institutional reflex, leading to new behavioural norms based on co-operation rather than competition' (Holland, 1991, p. 244).

The existence of a general but untested assumption in a rapidly expanding field of EU study such as foreign policy is perhaps justification enough for more empirical enquiry (see Holland, 1991, p.240). But there is also another reason why the question of diplomatic cooperation should merit the attention of those interested in European institutions, namely the putative increase in Commission competence in the area. As yet this has been as much a subject of speculation in the Brussels-based inside-dopester media as the occasion for serious academic study. However, it is hard not to see the latter following hard on the heels of the former, particularly when it reports, for instance, that the Heads of the 128 Commission Delegations located throughout the world are meeting in Brussels to discuss their future role at a time when, despite the antipathy among member states towards such an idea, so-called 'Euro-federalists' are suggesting that 'the obvious way ahead...would be for the Commission's foreign service gradually to assume primacy in foreign relations, while national embassies restrict themselves to promoting national companies and offering their citizens a friendly face' ('EU foreign service a step nearer' *European Voice*, 3 September 1998)!

However far-fetched such a suggestion may seem, it is tapping into some fundamental questions that those who seek either to enhance or to delay CFSP need to ask and answer. As Allen (1996, p. 303) notes, the lack of progress towards a Commission-based, encompassing foreign diplomacy is a crucial barrier to the CFSP's making p.303 'a fundamental integrative leap forwards. In truth, it is hard to imagine a genuine common foreign policy without a common diplomatic service and a means of identifying and operationalizing a notion of the European interest.' Since such a service is just as likely to come about by incremental default as by deliberate design, the involvement of EC Delegations in diplomatic co-operation in third countries gives us another good reason to take a closer look at the process on the ground - a process which has at least the potential to change the character of CFSP from, as it were, below. Delegation Heads, for example, attend meetings on an equal footing with their member state counterparts and are by implication associated with their reports and actions, and this inevitably blurs what in Europe is still a reasonably clear distinction between the intergovernmental and the supranational: consequently, as Simon Nuttall points out (1992, p. 68), '[t]he move towards interaction in third countries...raises some delicate questions which need to be handled carefully.'

Previous work

Much of the work already done on diplomatic cooperation in non-European capitals has involved case studies. The first appears to have been that conducted in the late seventies in Washington by Philip Taylor, who used structured, open ended interviews with embassy officials of the then nine member states (Taylor, 1980). 'Without having been directed from Europe' to do so, Taylor found (p. 35), member state missions had initiated a range of 'regular, routinely scheduled' meetings. These were not just at ambassadorial level but also between those responsible in each embassy for matters such as commercial and economic affairs, and press and information. This was in marked contrast, he suggested, to other capitals where 'meetings...range from two to six per year at most.' This relatively high level of

activity among the nine occurred despite the fact that, according to interviewees (p. 38), Washington was 'such an open city for information...that the openness somewhat negates the necessity for political co-operation and makes it relatively less important than elsewhere.' However, it tended to vary with the enthusiasm of the member state holding the presidency and was limited in scope: 'Most of the...participants,' Taylor noted, 'characterised their efforts in Washington as an exchange of information, rather than as co-ordination of action *per se*' (Taylor, 1980, p. 37,35). He also found that enthusiasm for such an exchange - and indeed for co-operation as a whole - varied according to the size of the state: larger states felt that the smaller states gained the most because they could 'obtain access to information that the larger states have by virtue of larger staffs or closer ties to the [host] Government'; larger states seemed to believe 'political co-operation in Washington has evolved as far as it ought to, and they would not welcome a push to increase the process'(Taylor, 1980, p. 38, p. 39).¹

Taylor's tightly-focused case study was followed by a more synoptic piece by Bot (1984), who was as concerned to point out the potential advantages of, and obstacles to, diplomatic co-operation as he was to address actual practice. Indeed with regard to the latter, Bot's views had much in common with Taylor's: the organisational talents and interest' of the ambassador holding the presidency was crucial; smaller partners profited most from co-operation, much of which amounted to occasional EPC get-togethers; discussion during these meetings (portions of which were often taken up by invited speakers from host countries) varied from 'the highly political to the more peripheral and even to outright mundane issues such as the sharing of translators, carpools and diplomatic bags'; meetings rarely resulted in drafted conclusions, let alone joint reports to the Political Committee in Brussels, whose understandable reluctance to be bombarded with relatively insignificant information from all round the globe was matched by the reluctance of those who might have filed such information to file it with anyone other than their respective foreign ministry, which for its part would have been alarmed by anything else (Bot, 1984, p. 154-156)! This concentration on the practical matters of diplomatic lifestyle, staff services, communications, security and consular issues, as well as 'joint information services and cultural events such as film weeks, concerts and exhibitions' in which embassies *could* (though not necessarily *did*) involve themselves was not, for Bot anyway, unimportant - true to the spirit of engrenage, it could be 'the glue that holds [member states] together' and contribute' in the long run, to the goal of a greater harmonisation' of policies. He did, however, however, insert a caveat: 'concentrating on such mundane questions as the diplomatic bag or joint health services', he warned, 'may very well become a sign of weakness' or 'a substitute [rather than a symptom] of political co-operation' (Bot, 1984, p. 158).

Bot's other main point was that the location of the host country could be an important determinant of the extent of diplomatic co-operation among member states. For him this was mainly because he saw third country co-operation at any substantive level as

¹ The idea that smaller states have most to gain from diplomatic cooperation in third countries is of course a theme in studies of the wider EC/EU foreign policy process: Weiler and Wessels, for instance, noted a decade ago (1988, p. 252) that '[t]he smaller member states have an obvious stake in EPC as a platform and a forum which in normal circumstances would necessitate a huge diplomatic effort and would not guarantee the same level of success', though they also suggested - both tentatively and tantalisingly - that common foreign policy 'may be able to mitigate [in the case of France and the UK] or accelerate [Germany and Italy] the changing lot of certain European "powers".'

both driven and limited by the enthusiasm of member states and the geographical focus of Community institutions back in Europe (Bot, 1984, p. 151, 155). For the next person to address diplomatic co-operation in print, former British Diplomat Roger Tomkys, it was the nature as much as the location of the state that mattered: working in the relatively hostile environment of Syria tended to pull representatives of EC member states together and encourage 'a certain solidarity and sense of purpose' - so much so in his case that he emphasises the 'contrast between the close bonds of European Political Co-operation as felt by those engaged at a working level and the doubts about its usefulness on terms of high...policy' (Tomkys, 1987, p. 435, 425). Despite this, and despite noting (p. 434) that circulation between foreign, domestic and European postings often means diplomats in third countries already exhibit a 'co-ordination reflex' and exploit friendships formed previously, he warned that

The limits on this community of interest should not, however, be ignored. The governments of the EC remain competitors for commercial sales and sometimes for political influence. Some governments and administrations, and the French are a case in point, may be more reserved about sharing information than others.

It was clearly the limits to diplomatic cooperation in a third country that most forcefully struck Martin Holland when he conducted in apartheid South Africa what remains the fullest case study of the phenomenon to date (Holland, 1991). True he observed that, as a result of regular meetings at the ambassadorial and attaché level, 'a new diplomatic "norm" of consultation [had] become prevalent' and that 'diplomats attitudes, if not concrete procedures, had changed' (p. 251). But he concluded (p.244) that 'political co-operation as practised in South Africa [between June 1986 and December 1987] remained rudimentary and variable.' Interestingly, though, Holland's explanations for such variation differed from previous writers on the subject in a number of ways.

For a start, he found (p. 248) that the hostile character of the relationship between the member states and South Africa impeded rather than (as Tomkys argued) encouraged diplomatic cooperation between Community Heads of Mission. And, unlike Bot, he argued, not just that 'there seems to be no necessary link between intensified political co-operation and the "relative importance" of a third country' (p. 250), but also (p. 251) that

it may well be that political co-operation at the third country level operates most cohesively where the political stakes are low...[and where Member States are not] too internally divided behind the façade of common démarches for a sharing of information and collegiate action at a practical level to prosper. In third countries where EC concerns are more commonly focused, where diplomatic resources are more equal and where they have economic rather than political objectives, diplomatic co-operation ought to be more easily facilitated.

Cooperation, then, depends partly on just what is being dealt with: since 'the content of diplomatic activity runs parallel to, rather than in unison with, political co-operation', the 'specific issue involved will dictate whether a state adopts a bilateral or EPC posture' (Holland, 1991, p. 251). Behaviour and general attitudes towards co-operation are also dictated not just by the relative size of the member state and its representation but also by its traditional links with the country in question (the UK obviously being particularly important in former colonial possessions, for example) -

and both clearly override the importance of presidency in determining the extent of co-operative activity (p. 244, 249). Equally important, Holland stresses (p. 249), is the diplomatic attitude of the host country and its foreign ministry: if, like South Africa's, the strategy of the latter is one of 'divide and rule', then bilateralism is likely to be the order of the day whether missions like it or it - and, presumably, *vice versa*.

The latest work which discusses diplomatic cooperation on the ground in any detail is a more journalistic piece by Buchan (1993), which concentrates on the supposedly ambivalent relationship between national diplomats and those of the European Commission - particularly in Washington, Tokyo and Moscow. Some of his findings echo familiar themes. He is told, for instance (p. 63), that unlike Washington, where apparently amongst the EU ambassadors "you tend to find...only princes and little kings, who are not easily disposed to co-ordinate their activities", in Tokyo, the feeling of fighting "an uphill battle against an unfair competitor...makes for considerable cohesion." According to Buchan, however (p.62), it is Moscow "which at present provides a model of close co-operation between the ambassadors of [the member states] and the Commission' not least because at their weekly meetings the former have much to learn from the EC Head of Mission whose role in co-ordinating food and technical aid gives him possibly unrivalled access and contact with the Russian bureaucracy.² This is a big contrast with Washington, Buchan points out, where there is clear separation between trade matters and what EC Head of Delegation there, who pursues a self-denying ordinance on such matters, calls "the classic confines of foreign policy".

This tension between the separation and blurring of the economic and the political, symbolised by the seemingly ambivalent role of the Commission and its delegations in the EU's external relations, is of course the subject of many academic contributions on EPC and CFSP more generally. Consequently, it is not only a feature of diplomatic co-operation in third countries, but yet another feature that renders it worthy of academic attention. Simon, who has written as much as anyone on EC and EU foreign policy, mentions it explicitly when he argues (Nuttall, 1992, p. 69) for the importance of the Commission attending ambassadorial meetings. According to him, anyway,

The agenda for [such] meetings covers both EPC and Community topics without any separation between the two: indeed the distinction is barely perceived. Practical cooperation is possible in a more relaxed way than in the formal EPC and Community bodies, particularly in the smaller countries in which not all the member states are represented....

Whether this is in fact the case is something we shall now, among other things, explore.

² This is confirmed elsewhere. Christopher Piening, in a passing comment on the November 1993 joint action sending observers to the parliamentary elections in Russia (1997: 41-2), calls it 'a good example of the genuinely "Union" dimension of a foreign policy activity': the Commission Delegation played a central role in coordinating not just the EC but also the member states' contributions, 'working with various member state's embassies to ensure that national teams were integrated into the overall Union effort'; and the embassy of Belgium (the presidency holder) 'cooperated with its troika partners in arranging political briefings for all the incoming teams of observers.'

What actually happens in Wellington and Canberra

As in many third countries, diplomatic cooperation among member state embassies in New Zealand and Australia has as its formal expression a monthly meeting of Heads of Mission - a meeting organised and hosted by the holder of the six-month presidency.³ The meeting normally takes the form of a roundtable discussion, lasting around an hour and a half, on a customary (and therefore unwritten) agenda consisting of the domestic political situation, the domestic economic situation, and Australia or New Zealand/EU affairs. Discussion on the latter in Wellington will normally be led by the presidency-holder or, on the two or three occasions per year he makes it across the Tasman, by the Head of the Commission Delegation, who traditionally leads on that subject in Canberra. Discussion on the economy is very much limited to the Australian or New Zealand macro-outlook rather than, say, taking in issues like trade promotion, which are still very much national concerns. Discussion on political matters - by general (although not complete) agreement - can touch on foreign policy (particularly in Canberra, where there is a great deal of interest in the affairs of the wider region and matters such as East Timor and Polynesia) but almost never on defence matters. Outside the latter, there are few issues considered taboo - although it would seem that Heads of Mission (quite understandably) try to avoid topics that provoke predictable responses (be they positive or negative) from one or more of their colleagues. Discussion is often followed by lunch, to which, after consultation, an outside speaker is sometimes invited.⁴ Although they may do a little homework on the EU position on relevant issues, there is no attempt at preconcertation or the presentation of a united front on the part of member states' ambassadors when it comes to questions to the speaker.

Meetings are, then, fairly informal affairs: indeed in New Zealand unless the Head of Mission holding the presidency makes it his practice to do otherwise, the meetings go unminuted. Rarely in either country are they the subject of formal feedback to Europe (say, to the capital of the presidency) - indeed this, in the opinion of some, would be both pointless and inhibiting to the free flow of discussion. The stress is very much on what one Head of Mission called 'an exchange of views, a comparing of notes' and another 'a sharing of feelings and perceptions' - an exercise, many pointed out, whose usefulness, although particularly marked when they were new in their posts, continued well beyond that point.

The value of such an exercise does not lie so much in the gleaning of new intelligence - in informal and media-saturated political and bureaucratic cultures like Australia and

³ Since not all member states are physically represented in Wellington, this meeting therefore includes only the ambassadors of Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK, the Consul-General of Greece, and any other EU ambassadors resident in Canberra who happen to be visiting New Zealand (including the Head of the EC Delegation to Australia and New Zealand who is resident in the capital of the former rather than the latter). Clearly, if the presidency holder is not resident in New Zealand then the nation that substitutes for it in Wellington will take on all such functions. Note, though, that there are standard procedures in place to avoid one nation having to form on its own the entire *Troika* in Wellington! For example, in the eighteen month period in 1998-1999, Germany, as substitute for Austria and Finland and also - in the middle - the holder of the office in its own right, was theoretically in this position, but in practice was accompanied by the UK and Belgium. Interestingly, Germany's substitution for Austria is was currently coordinated not between the German ambassador in Wellington and his Austrian counterpart in Canberra but via Bonn.

⁴ 'Typical invitees' would include top public servants, cabinet ministers and central bankers.

New Zealand there is little that even comparatively small embassies (traditionally the main beneficiaries of and therefore enthusiasts for such sharing), cannot get on 'the open market', so to speak. Instead it lies in grasp rather than reach, in the chance to get different 'takes' or 'reality checks' on familiar material - wider perspectives which, as Bot (1984, p. 149, 150,152) hoped, do indeed feed into individual ambassadors assessments prepared for their respective reports home.⁵ On the other hand, as a number of Heads of Mission (particularly from states that had recently joined the EU) noted, one can go too far in discounting the informational value of such meetings. This is true when it comes to matters and issues picked up on during ambassador's trips outside the 'political villages' of Canberra and Wellington: one Head of Mission from the latter, for instance, mentioned in this respect a visit, occasioned by an invitation to share in the celebrations of a public holiday, to a *Marae*, where Maori perspectives on a range of issues did provide something fresh, firstly to the ambassador himself and then to his EU colleagues.

In the case of Australia, both a continent and a country, additional information and perspectives are also provided by those larger missions that have outposts in federal states - information which when shared with EU colleagues helps them in their efforts to, as one ambassador put it, 'build up the mosaic' or 'put the great Australian jigsaw together.' These efforts were also assisted, a number of Canberra Heads of Missions noted, by the contributions of ambassadors from member-states which, although small in size (and representation), were able to tap into their ethnic links within the Australian population (at both the grassroots and the governmental levels), the Irish being the most obvious example.

The other function of such meetings is clearly their role in contributing to the sense - shared even by those countries that, due to their global power or historical relationships, would appear in several circles of any diplomatic Venn diagram - of being a definite club or caucus within the wider diplomatic corps in Canberra and Wellington.⁶ Adding to this, of course, is the chance it gives ambassadors to consult on other, practical and protocol issues. Often the latter involves ensuring that everybody is singing from the same hymn-sheet: would it, for instance, be appropriate to accept an invitation to a particular event hosted by an embassy whose relations with Europe have at times been less than cordial?

⁵ Bot suggested that, owing to cooperation providing them with both access to new information and 'the equally important process of cross-fertilisation', embassies could supply 'the "raw materials" for [EPC's] final product, the coordinated line of conduct, by informing their own authorities...about significant developments at their respective posts' and suggested that since 'these frequent, almost institutionalized exchanges of information' were 'increasingly influencing the nature and contents of the reporting to the respective capitals', they 'should not be belittled'.

⁶ Other countries' Heads of Mission, it should be said, do caucus - the Latin Americans and the ASEAN countries are examples - but these are (or are at least perceived to be) looser arrangements based as much on social and cultural than on substantive ties. It should also be said that, in a world where contacts are everything, it is not the interests of any Mission to be seen to operate as part of some kind of exclusive group within a group; in any case, diplomacy - especially in small countries - depends so much on personal relationships that the chances of such friendships being confined to one regional grouping or another are pretty small. In some cases as well, member states may also be part of another caucus that includes non EU countries - the Commonwealth and Nordic countries, for instance, interact quite closely on occasion. In addition, notwithstanding EU cooperation, there are clearly many opportunities for bilateral contacts between member states' missions.

Cooperation beyond the monthly meeting - at least at the diplomatic as opposed to the consular level - is the responsibility of the holder of the rotating presidency. If that presidency so chooses, tasks can include the distribution of relevant COREU telegrams on CFSP made in Europe in order to keep them informed of political cooperation 'back home'. It can also be active, for example, in organising various cultural events and other activities which seek to boost the presence of the EU - and not entirely coincidentally - that of member states: the UK for example obtained Commission funds to help lay on a European film week in Wellington.

The presidency is also involved at a more formal political level in leading so-called *Troika démarches*, cooperation on which can often be a useful way of spreading (and thereby minimising) the discomfort felt by diplomats at having to bring to the attention of their hosts the sometimes unwelcome positions or requests of their governments back home (see Bot, 1984: 156).⁷ These, of course, are rather rare in both Australia and New Zealand because of the friendly relations that (with the occasional tiff over agricultural matters) normally exist between it and the EU: the most recent example of a *démarche* in New Zealand, and one made only at Counsellor level, was a request that it sign and ratify a UN narcotics convention. Even if the occasion for such joint action were not so rare, however, it is clear that it would not be pursued on all matters. A decision by member state missions in Wellington, for example, to act bilaterally or multilaterally (and for that matter publicly or privately) depends not so much on the type of issue as on its substance. Effort, in other words, is directed at that point in the New Zealand government or media that seems to offer to that state, on the particular issue at hand, the most leverage or the most cover.⁸

Another arena of cooperation beyond the monthly meeting concerns the visits of member state ministers and European Commissioners to Australia and New Zealand.⁹ In 1998, for example, the Commissioner for External Relations (and Commission Vice President) Sir Leon Brittan visited the countries to publicly announce the signing of a potentially ground-breaking type of mutual recognition agreement covering a limited number of medical, electrical, telecoms and pharmaceutical products.¹⁰ In

⁷ Clearly, if the presidency holder is not resident in New Zealand then the nation that substitutes for it in Wellington will take on all such functions. Note, though, that there are standard procedures in place to avoid one nation having to form on its own the entire *Troika* in Wellington! For example, in the eighteen month period in 1998-1999, Germany, as substitute for Austria and Finland and also - in the middle - the holder of the office in its own right, would theoretically be in this position, but instead it will be accompanied by the UK and Belgium. Interestingly, Germany's substitution for Austria is currently coordinated not between the German ambassador in Wellington and his Austrian counterpart in Canberra but via Bonn.

⁸ In an interview with a Wellington based national newspaper given soon after he assumed his post, Britain's new High Commissioner in New Zealand, after insisting judiciously that 'the relationship between Britain and New Zealand has not been downgraded...in response to the government's wish to improve Britain's standing within Europe, to operate from the centre of Europe rather than a position that was somewhere outside', stressed that 'the dairy issue' - a reference to the recent spats over spreadable butter and alleged infractions of butter quotas more generally - 'was a European Union matter and ultimately had to be resolved on a European basis by a European institution' (see *The Dominion*, 18 May 1998).

⁹ Tomkys considers coordination in this area as a real boon in logistical terms for ambassadors and visitors (who are of course saved from making endless calls) alike (see Tomkys, 1987, p. 435).

¹⁰ These MRAs will facilitate trade by allowing conformity assessment (testing, inspection and certification) of products traded between Europe and New Zealand and Australia to be undertaken in the exporting country rather than have to be carried out at destination. This means compliance with the requirements of the relevant EC Directives (or regulations) can be established in New Zealand and

Wellington, to take just one of the capitals, Brittan met with member state Heads of Mission to brief them on his meetings with New Zealand ministers and a note was prepared by the Delegation for their next regular meeting which outlined Brittan's trip and reported on the talks he had with Prime Minister Jenny Shipley the day after he met them.

Visits by Commissioners naturally raise the question of the role that the Commission Delegation (which organises such visits) plays in diplomatic cooperation in New Zealand and Australia. As regards the former, the answer, it would seem, is, as yet at least, not especially significant. This is partly because the delegation is located in Canberra, but also because member state heads of mission see the Delegation as standing on one side of a still clearly demarcated division of labour. Relations between ambassadors and the Delegation Head are good - not least because the latter is held in high personal esteem by the former. There is also little sense of his being in any way a competitor - indeed member state heads of mission in Wellington, it seems, would actually welcome a more substantive (as opposed to part-time and peripatetic) Commission presence in New Zealand. Instead he is a partner with responsibility for one side of the business, namely EU trade matters (and possibly, as in the case of spreadable butter, disputes) - things in which he, rather than member state ambassadors, is clearly the significant interlocutor.¹¹ Michael Bruter, in his recent stimulating article on Commission delegations (Bruter, 1999: 193) divides their activities into two main areas: 'their autonomous actions, and their actions as part of the European diplomatic "team" in the host country.' In Wellington, certainly, the latter depend on the former: the Delegation is part of the team because it plays in a particular position.

In Canberra, the division of labour and competency is similarly clear and only occasionally blurred: the Commission Delegation, according to one Head of Mission (speaking figuratively), 'fights the EU battles' (most often on agriculture) and, though it had a hand in the production of the wide-ranging 'Joint Declaration on Relations' of June 1997, is 'overwhelmingly involved in the negotiation of bilateral trading agreements between the EU and Australia and New Zealand.'¹² It also, however, contains a useful range of expertise, particularly on the economy, trade regulations and science and technology (see Bruter, 1999: 193). The Commission Delegation's expertise in these areas is generally recognised as a resource by member state missions: economic counsellors are happy to receive its monthly report on the Australian economy and trade and Heads of Mission seem comfortable with the Head of Delegation leading discussion on such matters during their monthly meetings. It seems clear also that during those meetings the Head of Delegation, who has high

Australia and the CE marking applied to the product prior to export. In this way, the product can be placed on the EU market with no further intervention by EC authorities. Note that the initiative was very much Brussels-driven, with a facilitative and liaison role for the Canberra delegation's Science and Technology adviser

¹¹ For the record, the EU is clearly more important a market for Australia and New Zealand than vice versa. As the largest single trading partner of both nations, it accounts for almost 20% of the latter's foreign trade, though rather less of the former's. Looked at the other way around, things are very different. In 1995, for instance, Australia (which has a deficit with the EU) accounted for under 1.5% of EU trade, New Zealand (which is roughly in balance) for 0.3% (Piening, 1997: 163-4).

¹² So far efforts to sign a similar agreement with New Zealand have come to nothing. This fits a general pattern: Australia and the Commission, for example, have a high level annual dialogue in Brussels or Canberra (see <http://www.ecdel.org.au/documents/nocategory/communique.htm>).

level experience in Europe and elsewhere and is charged with sending regular political reports back to DG1A, is accepted and involved as a full participant in political discussions, not least because it is widely recognised that the divide between 'high' and 'low' politics is increasingly blurred.¹³

Outside of the meeting, however, the Delegation tries hard to avoid the misconception - common in many parts of the world (see Bruter, 1999:186) held by some in the host country that it speaks for the EU on matters beyond its brief as strictly defined. This is not always easy, of course, because a large part of its role is informational and promotional, not least in order to improve the sometimes negative image of the EU (and indeed 'Europe') as a whole that arises from its supposed support for subsidies and protection.¹⁴ Still, there is little evidence Australia or New Zealand, of the kind of 'proliferation of areas of tension, competition and redundancy among representatives' suggested by Bruter (ibid). This is almost certainly because, where it is proactive, the Commission Delegation concentrates (like others discussed by Bruter) on areas which complement rather than conflict with member state missions' activities. In other areas - though not because, as Bruter seems to suggest (1999: 195), of any lack of CFSP cooperation between embassies - the Delegation is more reactive: the suggestion that (beyond participating in meetings, sharing information and, say, sponsoring cultural events) there is much it 'can *actually* do to reinforce, energize and develop political cooperation between European embassies' (ibid.) has little resonance. Certainly the idea that 'to gain more weight in the European context, [the] delegation [could] take upon itself the task of representing the interests...of smaller member countries with no local embassy' (Bruter, 1999: 196) would be completely out of the question.¹⁵

No research into such matters is of course complete without consideration of the role that the host country's government plays in enhancing or inhibiting diplomatic cooperation among the EU member states. The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)'s European effort in Wellington is divided within one division into trade policy (the bulk of which concerns the EU) and political issues, where the predominant task is to ensure that the international environment in which New Zealand trades is as benign as possible.¹⁶ Within the NZ/EU context, it clearly

¹³ In the meeting, traditionally, the current troika sit together and the Head of the Commission Delegation sits opposite them.

¹⁴ The Commission Delegation tries not just to eliminate the negative but also to accentuate the positive, particularly on matters such as the single currency and market, and also (in view of Australia and New Zealand's need to diversify exports) on the possibilities open to host country firms wishing to take advantage of the EU's stress on SMEs and mutual recognition. As a result there is certainly some blurring between this 'defensive-cum-promotional' role and what Bruter, in his fascinating article (1999: 197), labels as the delegations' 'consumer-oriented diplomacy.' If one were to have any caveats with his argument, one could argue that he seems to include (ibid: 201) within the purview of the latter interaction with commercial concerns that many embassies, distinguishing between (their) trade promotion functions and (the delegations') trade policy advice functions, would in fact consider their territory

¹⁵ Bruter suggests (1999: 196) that this may occur when a country that is part of the Troika is not present in-country: as we have seen, however, in a previous note, the member states make arrangements among themselves to cover this eventuality.

¹⁶ MFAT's post-election briefing to the incoming government after the 1996 election (see <http://www.mft.govt.nz/Guide/part2.html#2-6>) reveals that it devotes some 20% of its resources to its relationship with Europe and noted that 'The EU is our second largest market after Australia, and takes some 16% of our total exports valued at \$3.2 billion. It is our largest, highest value and in many cases our fastest growing market for key products like butter, sheepmeat, apples, kiwifruit and wine.' It went

considers bilateral relationships are of at least equal standing with multilateral diplomacy and feels that some of those bilateral relationships are more important than others.¹⁷ The quality of such relationships varies with events, and of course trade flows, but more often than not is based on long-lasting (and not necessarily always obvious) historic links. In terms of what those links actually mean in practice in Wellington itself, it has to be said that, from MFAT's perspective, the most significant contact it has in Wellington with member state ambassadors concerns overseas visits by their heads of state/government or cabinet ministers (of which there are one or two per year and five or six per year respectively) on fact-finding and commercially-linked visits. Some lobbying by ambassadors does take place but a fair amount of this will be done (some times after consultation with MFAT) with the Ministry most concerned. It is also - almost without exception - done bilaterally. The exception is of course provided by official *Troika démarches*, but there is little to indicate that such things are taken any more seriously than bilateral statements, requests and protests: generally it is the intrinsic significance to New Zealand of the issue - rather than the way in which MFAT's attention is drawn to it - that determines its importance.

It is during the visits of foreign politicians to Wellington (or New Zealand politicians to European capitals) that MFAT will press the case (not always directly) for its commercial interests and trade and agricultural liberalisation. If the case is to be made via standard diplomatic channels it is (at least at a formal level) normally made - as was the case with spreadable butter and chilled lamb - via New Zealand's own mission in Brussels and other EU capitals rather than in Wellington, or as part of the Dialogue between the EU and New Zealand (see Monar, 1997) in which, it would appear, ambassadors are not involved. There is an evolving relationship with the EC delegation in Canberra, but its location there - even given the recent improvements generated by the appointment of a former assistant to the former Prime Minister to oversee the relationship - does rather constrain the pace of that evolution. On the other hand, and despite the fact that the Head of Delegation is regarded as equal in rank to his Ambassadorial colleagues (and a visiting Commissioner such as Leon Brittan regarded as a cabinet minister), that distance means that there is little likelihood of the Delegation - even if wanted to - being able to take on political as well as more narrowly-defined economic diplomacy.

Hill and Wallace (1996, p. 13) talk of third countries being left to 'puzzle over...the duplication of national embassies by Community representations which see themselves as playing an increasingly political role' (see also Bruter, 1999: 186). New Zealand does not, however, have a problem distinguishing competence in this area and neither does it envisage (any more perhaps than does the Delegation itself)

on to note that 'the EU's common foreign and security policy is still in an early state of development, but it is a key player in many international issues of interest to New Zealand' not least because it 'is one of the heavyweights of the global economy with significant influence on international trade rules.' The liberalisation of these - and reform of the CAP are seen as MFAT's main goals when it came to Europe.

¹⁷ Countries singled out for attention in the post election briefing are the UK, France and Germany. 'Productive bilateral relationships with the[se] three key member states...can support our political and economic objectives in Europe. All are actual or potential sources of direct inward investment and transfer of technology. They are each important trading partners and provide customers for our service industries. The positions they adopt on matters of importance to New Zealand in Europe are crucial to our interests there.'

an expanding political role for the EC Delegation in the near future. Nor - despite seeing obvious advantages in terms of time saved - does it see much likelihood of an umbrella EU embassy. Indeed it sees little substantial evidence of a trend toward EU Heads of Mission in Wellington behaving as a bloc - not least because trade promotion and investment links, now such an important part of diplomacy, are still pursued on a national rather than an EU wide basis. In any case, New Zealand would currently see no advantage in substituting its own predominantly bilateral diplomacy with EU states and/or the Commission in Brussels for some kind of multilateral approach. This is primarily because it sees that almost all the issues that most concern it (agriculture and foreign policy more generally, to name but two) are still decided on an intergovernmental rather than a supranational level. While the perception remains that the EU whole is as yet little more than the (not altogether cohesive sum) of its component parts, then relationships with those component parts - both at home and abroad - still make most sense. In short, it is clear to MFAT, first, that there are significant differences on a range of issues between Member States and, second, that the defences of *Fortress Europe* - if such a thing exists - are better breached by using existing bilateral relationships to tease out those differences and then take advantage of them.

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in Canberra comprises three sections. One deals exclusively with the EU, concentrating mainly on economic issues, but including political consultations with the Presidency and the Commission). The second deals with the major west European bilateral relationships and the third with Russia, and the other parts of Europe. Like MFAT in New Zealand, DFAT regards its own efforts as Europe as the most important means of pursuing Australia's interests on that continent. European diplomatic missions in Canberra, however, are seen as a useful second communication channel to European governments, not least because they are involved in visits to Australia by ministers and senior public servants for the sort of high-level intergovernmental consultations which are a significant means of pursuing policy. The Commission Delegation clearly plays a similar role if visits are by Commission staff, but when it comes to DFAT's effort to keep abreast of EU affairs, its own mission in Brussels is seen as very much the key player. Finally, Canberra, like Wellington, has no problem in distinguishing the relative responsibilities of the Commission Delegation and member state missions. And, while it would guess that the level of cooperation between those missions (including the delegation) has increased over time - measured, for instance by requests for joint briefings¹⁸ - it affirms that independent bilateral action is still far and away the most common *modus operandi*.

What Canberra and Wellington tell us

The more open and friendly the host country, the less need there is for EU Heads of Mission to pull together in the way that some ambassadors in Canberra and Wellington had clearly experienced in postings in rather more hostile host countries. In addition, in friendly countries - and especially where the Commission delegation is non-resident - there is little impetus for it to become involved in political matters;

¹⁸ Joint DFAT briefings are sometimes requested by the EU member states and the Commission. Their value, however, would seem to be as symbolic as substantial, giving the Europeans an occasion on which to demonstrate a degree of solidarity. Bilateral briefing is still the most common course, not least because it allows for more individual interaction and tailored information sharing.

instead, it will stick to a narrower trade and aid brief. Cooperation on - and even discussion of - foreign policy and security matters among ambassadors, in any case, varies with the extent to which the third country is in these areas a matter of concern for Brussels. With regard to friendly third countries, policy is characterised by its absence, as it were, so there is little emanating from Brussels for ambassadors to talk about; hence they will share views but feel no need to develop a common view.

Cooperation in friendly countries is, then, limited because there is no need - or externally imposed obligation - for it to be anything other than limited. It is true, though, that, because cooperation need only be what its participants want it to be, the more enthusiasm shown by the presidency holder, the greater the scope (though not necessarily the intensity) of cooperation in private and public diplomacy. However, as Heads of Mission themselves continually stressed, that enthusiasm does not necessarily vary with size or with the relationship that exists between a member state and the host country, or with that member state's general attitude to CFSP. More important, according to participants, than any of these was the personal enthusiasm of individual ambassadors. Possibly such enthusiasm is correlated with youth and, more significantly, with experience of working either in Brussels (for example in COREPER) or in missions located in European member states. But there were plenty of individual examples volunteered of Heads of Mission who were older and/or had little EU experience, yet who were nonetheless very pro-cooperation.

Concern that one plays - and is seen to play - the presidential role seriously and effectively also seems to be important. Just as in Europe itself, performing well may be clearly a matter of pride and principle to all member states, big or small, and may in any case serve many purposes. In Australia and New Zealand, for instance, the UK High Commissions took their private and public roles seriously, seeing in them the opportunity - particularly given the thrust of the British Labour government's Foreign Office Mission Statement - to emphasise at all levels of opinion that it was very much a European nation rather than the semi-detached 'awkward partner' it is sometimes portrayed as in the media.

Of course, the temporary prominence in PR terms afforded by holding the presidency is by no means detrimental to boosting the profile of the individual country concerned either; but that illustrates once again that the choice between multilateral and bilateral action is not a zero-sum game. The two approaches are more likely to be mutually reinforcing and pursued simultaneously than they are to be black and white alternatives; the choice of one or the other, or both, depends largely on the issue at hand, but is also dictated by the host country's preferences.

The future

When we think of integration in the field of diplomacy in third countries, it may be useful to think of four, not necessarily evolutionary, stages, as follows: *bilateral-independent* where member state missions may go through the motions of meeting etc. but think and act very much according to their own lights, *sensible-collective*, where the co-ordination reflex is present in at least some areas and a *communauté* somewhere between *information* and *vues*, if not action, exists as members realise that cooperation can be a positive-sum game; *multilateral*, best summed up by Ruggie's more general definition of 'an institutional form which coordinates relations...on the

basis of “generalized” principles of conduct’¹⁹, and, finally, *full-blown merger*. In Canberra and Wellington, at least, it is clear that things are at the second stage. There is little need at present to advance beyond it. The capability to do more is probably there; the low expectations of member states back in Europe, however, means that it is not.

There is little evidence, then, at least from this pilot study, that would lead us at the moment to challenge Bot’s conclusion - made some fifteen years ago (Bot, 1984, p. 151-152) - that foreign policy co-ordination in Europe remains at the level of ‘a pragmatic form of collective diplomacy’ which in turn encourages amongst missions in third countries ‘a mainly pragmatic form of cooperation with a clear accent on regular exchanges of information rather than on joint action or a common approach to the problems facing them.’ What of the future, however?

As Bot pointed out, ‘[i]f one draws the concept of diplomatic cooperation to its logical conclusion, individual embassies are bound to disappear’ (Bot, 1984, p. 168). Clearly, however, as Bot (*ibid.*) also stressed, theory does not necessarily translate into practice. States have resisted and are predicted to continue to resist such a move, even if that resistance ironically leads to the increased sharing - organised intergovernmentally - of facilities and co-location with other member (see Allen, 1996, p. 295).²⁰ Some commentators see this - not unjustifiably - as one facet of a wider refusal to relinquish command of foreign policy on the grounds that it represents the last bastion of sovereignty (see Whitman, 1998, p. 204) - an argument which some Heads of Mission, not always without regret, point to as significant. But concentrating on continued attachment to ‘the symbols of sovereignty’ as an explanation can lead us to ignore the rather more practical arguments against joint representation and in support of the logic of diversity.

One such argument is noted - though very much in passing - by Whitman himself, namely that it may be constitutionally illegal in some member states, France being the best known example after its constitutional court ruled that the French president could only be represented by a French citizen. Another - and one echoed by all those interviewed - was the ever-increasing fusion of public diplomacy and trade promotion. The job of the diplomat, particularly in liberal capitalist, friendly host countries, is increasingly one of maintaining and projecting, through holding and attending functions, monitoring and feeding the local press, etc., a national cultural presence - a role that, while going much further than salesmanship, is ultimately perhaps not divorceable from it. Collective representation might make sense in terms,

¹⁹ That is, principles which specify appropriate conduct for a class of actions without regard to the particularistic interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence’ (quoted in Holland, 1997, p. 197).

²⁰ There is perhaps a tendency to read too much into such arrangements. It is still relatively uncommon, often driven by little more - especially perhaps in the UK’s case - than the need to make a little go a longer way at a time when the end of the cold war has created so many new states, and in any case is not always as far advanced as hinted at. For example, of the list Whitman seems to have culled from an old press cutting (1998, p. 204), this author’s brief enquiries revealed that, while the British (and in fact the French) sub-let from the Germans in Kazakhstan, the two states do not ‘share’ in Azerbaijan, and, while they are indeed co-located in a purpose built embassy in Iceland and will share offices in Ecuador next year, the joint facility in Tanzania planned for the two along with the Commission and the Dutch (who do not, by the way, share with the British in Bulgaria) is still very much at the planning stage.

say, of cost, narrowly defined. But these costs are ultimately far outweighed by the benefits that accrue from having personnel on the ground or 'in-country' who - metaphorically at least - fly their own nation's flag. Substantive differences between individual products - goods or services - are now so small that purchase decisions are made on largely symbolic grounds, on a company's brand image. Each brand continues to be associated (and to associate itself) with a particular country and its image (be it tradition, romance, sophistication, efficiency etc.), making it all the more important for each brand owner that the brand's country of origin (even if the product in question is in fact manufactured elsewhere) is represented abroad.²¹

All this means that the limits on supranational development are as bottom-line as they are blimpish. And that bottom line is not simply commercial; it is to do with high as well as low politics. Member states are fully aware that their unique historical and ethnic ties with certain third countries are a precious resource that needs to be husbanded as well as exploited for political as well as economic gain. The prospect of some kind of unified representation that would loosen these ties is consequently less than attractive. Concrete losses would be myriad, but to take just one example, an Irish-Australian politician, would find it even harder than his brethren back home to think of himself as 'European' and therefore be less enthusiastic about interacting with a 'European' rather than an Irish diplomat.

It is also true to say that member state missions, though they may be happy on occasions to use their EU status as 'cover' (see above), often feel the need to, if not disown it, then downplay it, when talk turns to topics on which the Union has a particularly poor image - which, in New Zealand and, particularly, Australia, can often seem to begin with agricultural protection and then radiate rapidly outward. Clearly this would be impossible if individual missions were to be subsumed by a unified foreign service. And to all this one is obliged to point out that diplomats - as the tenacious rearguard action fought by the British FCO against Treasury attempts to scale down its scope - are no different from any other group in the public or private sector in wanting to maintain their current position: what vested interests they do have do not lie, it seems safe to assume, in working to squeeze the quart of individual member state representation into the pint-pot of a putative European diplomatic service. Even if this were not the case, one would still be faced with the fact that, as a number of respondents pointed out, diplomats are conditioned and constrained by their representative function not to push anything further than their national governments require.

This points to the fact that the hard-headed logic of diversity is ultimately rooted in the 'fact' that progress abroad is to a large extent a dependent variable of progress in Europe itself. Bot, for instance, suggests that

cooperation between diplomatic missions (and the Commission) can only be a reflection of the degree of harmonisation reached between the [member states] "at home", and...it can never develop into a *sui generis* form of cooperation. Ambassadors..., being representatives of sovereign states, have only so much

²¹ There are of course exceptions to this rule: certain products, whilst actually manufactured abroad, continue to be associated in the Australian or New Zealand mind with traditional homegrown brands (eg Holden cars which are built by GM in Europe and elsewhere); it would not therefore be in the interests of a member state to promote itself as the country of origin.

political leeway as their respective ministries are willing to grant them. Their opinions and evaluations will therefore, perforce, first and foremost reflect national policies and intentions.

There can, then, be no European foreign policy until there is an identifiable European interest, and without the latter there can be no unified Foreign Service. But just as problematic as the continued commitment among member states to intergovernmentalism in the field of foreign policy is their perceived continuation of intergovernmental decision-making in fields (like agriculture for example) which have a more indirect bearing on such policy. In short, while third countries continue to believe that it is the case that the issues they care most about are still ultimately decided - albeit by way of some collective process - by individual governments, then those third countries will continue to focus their own diplomatic efforts on the bilateral plane. Rummel (1988, p. 126) has noted that for member states it makes sense to pursue as many avenues and use as many channels as possible when negotiating with third parties since '[t]he high degree of redundancy in the multiplicity of duplicated relationships seems more an asset than an impediment.' But what is sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander. Hence, even if there is some movement towards integration in CFSP it will be insufficient to shift the preferences of the EU's interlocutors for bilateralism unless there is at the same time a similar and simultaneous leap forward in other key areas. Given that 'multi-level governance', like foreign policy cooperation, can be 'comfortably accommodated as a terminal condition' rather than seen as 'the embryo of a supranational state', the chances of movement are surely slight.

On the other hand, and rather ironically, there are developments outside CFSP that may do much more than it can do to encourage cooperation in third countries. The most significant of these is the move - given extra impetus by the Schengen Agreement's incorporation into the Amsterdam Treaty - toward the creation of a common visa policy for the EU. In Canberra and Wellington at least, consultation on the processing of visa applications - which now involves regular meetings between consular attachés - is evidently a growth area when it comes to cooperation between the various member state missions. It could be, then, that such cooperation - at least in the near future - will tend towards the *consular* rather than the *diplomatic*. Whether this will lead to the sort of spillover still much beloved by neo-functionalists remains of course a moot point. It would not necessarily be the first or the last time, however, that an issue supposedly dealt with under one pillar of the European Union ends up strengthening - or, if one takes a sceptical line, undermining - the other two.

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