

positions, which imposed a general obligation on member states to ensure that their policies conform to any common position adopted, and joint actions, which require member states to act in agreed ways in support of common positions. Whereas EPC led to few joint actions other than the imposition of sanctions in a number of cases (which, of course, invoked Community rules and procedures and the Commission), the scope of joint actions has widened somewhat under the CFSP. These have ranged from commitments to the European Stability Pact to measures to promote nuclear non-proliferation. Overall, though, the chief impact of EPC/CFSP has been on the development of transgovernmental consultation on foreign policy and the resulting formulation of what may be termed collective interests.

Arguably, it is this aspect of the CFSP that has had greater consequence for third parties than the substance of such common policies as have been agreed. This emphasis on consultation and institution building has meant that the CFSP has had an introspective character; more political energy has been spent on trying to reach consensus than on projecting that consensus externally once it has been reached. This, to say the least, has frequently been a source of frustration to non-members. In many cases it is not the substance of the CFSP that causes concern, but the process itself, which makes it very difficult for outsiders to gain a hearing on matters that affect them. Moreover, the process of reaching common positions is much easier when the Union can determine the timing and content of the foreign policy agenda; when, however, members of the Union must respond to the agenda of others, then the CFSP frequently breaks down. For outsiders, it is often difficult to engage in a productive way the members of the Union collectively, thus requiring a fall back to bilateral representations which frequently are less than satisfactory.

The consultative process is an elaborate one. Beyond ministerial meetings and their preparation by the Political Committee, the work of the Group of Correspondents, and now the involvement of COREPER, there has grown up a dense network of day-to-day contacts between foreign ministries. Officials and ministers involved in CFSP come to know one another well though constant interaction and communication. This is fostered by a whole range of relatively informal consultations. At the senior political level there are the so-called "Gymnich" type meetings. These take their name from Schloss Gymnich near Bonn where the first such meeting was held in 1974. They occur once during each presidency, and foreign ministers meet without officials in an informal atmosphere in a suitable country house and without a formal agenda. These informal consultations are paralleled at lower levels; thus, at meetings of the Political Committee, Political Directors lunch and dine together on first name terms as do the Group of Correspondents. In short, a rather "club-like" atmosphere is cultivated from which third parties are excluded. These formal and informal consultations are further supplemented by the practice of secondment of officials from one foreign ministry to another, and by an integrated and dedicated communications network (COREU).

Early on in the EPC process, the principle emerged that whenever possible the member states would attempt to construct a common position with respect to third parties. The "Document on the European Identity", adopted in Copenhagen in December 1973, called for negotiations with other countries that involved members of the Community collectively to take