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**The European Commission's quest for Political
Agency in Transatlantic Relations (1985-1991):
Towards a European Foreign Policy?**

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Introduction

The European Commission is a crucial institution within the European Union institutional framework. Considered the executive arm of the EU, the Commission is the most politically independent European body because, even if its commissioners are proposed by the member states, its officials do not represent the member states they come from, and its responsibility is to promote the general interests of the entire EU. The activities the Commission conducts to fulfil this duty concern mainly the internal functioning of the European integration project, ranging from proposing and enforcing legislation to managing EU policies and allocating the common funds. However, the Commission plays a significant role also in the international affairs. Indeed, it represents the EU in the world both before the heads of states and government and within the international organisation. Since its establishment in 1958 with the Treaties of Rome, its main task is to manage the commercial relations of the EU. It means that the Commission negotiates the trade agreements all over the world in the name of the EU playing a crucial role in international economic relations. Nevertheless, in the last three decades the Commission has been building a broader role within the European external action reaching also more political matters, and nowadays it has a meaningful say in political issues, well beyond the mere commercial and economic competences, which significantly helps in the difficult effort to shape a common European foreign policy.

The subject of this work is the Commission's evolution towards a more political role within the European external action. The purpose is to analyse when and how the European Commission started building a political agency. The historical period taken under examination goes from 1985 to 1991, and the context of the study is the transatlantic relationship involving the European Community and the United States of America. In this historical juncture the Commission was led by Jacques Delors, while the US were led by President Ronald Reagan between 1985 to 1988 and by George H.W. Bush between 1989 and 1991. The international scenario was characterised first by a process of détente between the two Cold War superpowers and later by the rapid and revolutionary events caused by the

crumbling of the USSR and the progressive independence of Eastern Europe. Therefore, the principal goal of this thesis is to analyse whether in the transatlantic talks to manage these changing times the Commission started emerging as a relevant European political player, well beyond its traditional and exclusive commercial competences. It means that the two general historical themes under examination are the transatlantic relations and the European reaction to the 1989 turn of global history. The idea is to focus on the institutional level of the European external action in the relationship with the US, without considering the single member states' behaviours, in order to understand whether the Commission was able to enhance its role towards a more political dimension during the revolutionary times of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The two broad historical themes of transatlantic relations and European 1989 challenges have both been vastly studied in the scientific literature. A significant number of volumes and articles has been produced about the two topics analysing them throughout the entire arch of the second half of the XX century, including the specific years under examination in this dissertation. The clear majority of the scientific literature regarding these two matters has adopted an approach strictly focused on the action of the governments of the European member states. The institutional dimension of the European Community's action in these two frameworks has been almost always simply mentioned without an in-depth analysis, or even not considered at all. As far as the transatlantic relations are concerned, Geir Lundestad is undoubtedly one of the most known and respected researchers in the scholarly community. In his two principal volumes about the historical evolution of the transatlantic relations since 1945¹, Lundestad analyses the events principally using a governmental lens. The books are focused on how the White House interacts with the most important European governments, and vice versa. The European Community is treated as a simple framework of coordination that the European states use to try to cooperate, especially to deal with European internal issues. The institutional level of the EC is just cited on some occasions, but its influence is hardly considered. In the books the

¹ G. Lundestad, *"Empire" by Integration – The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997*, Oxford University Press, 1998; and G. Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945*, Oxford University Press, 2003.

protagonists from the European side are almost always the heads of state or government of the key member states, and there is no place for the EC institutions. Throughout the decades the American Presidents deal only with, to make some examples, Charles De Gaulle, Margaret Thatcher, or Helmut Kohl, meaning the leaders of the member states that have the major influence on Western Europe and its project of integration. It does not mean that the EC level of analysis is completely absent, but it is clearly kept in the background and treated as a direct product of the member states' wills with no influence on them. This same approach to the transatlantic relations strictly linked to the governmental dimension is adopted by other authors in various historical works². In these different examples of scientific literature once again Washington maintains close relationships only with the European capitals, and almost never with Community Brussels. The institutional dimension is relegated to a meaningless framework in which the member states play their own cards and by which they are nearly not affected. A similar lens based predominantly on the European member states' action can be found also in the scientific literature regarding the other theme of this work: the European reaction to the revolutionary times started in 1989, and more in general, the building of a common European external action. Also in this case a significant number of scientific works³ pays low attention to the EC behaviour and concentrates almost exclusively on the European governments' decisions and moves. The study is conducted by examining the different attitudes and behaviours of the European member states and the consequent debate to reach a common position or, in the worst cases, the clash that can lead even to no agreements. The methodological choice is to focus the

² See for example J. M. Hanhimäki, B. Schoenborn and B. Zanchetta, *Transatlantic Relations since 1945 - an Introduction*, Routledge, 2012; and M. Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century – Europe and America, 1890-2010*, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

³ See for example D. Möckli, *European foreign policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the dream of political unity*, I.B. Tauris, 2008; and F. Bozo, *France, the United States, and NATO: Between Europeanization and Re-Atlanticization, 1990–1991*, in K. K. Patel and K. Weisbrode (eds.), *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s*, Cambridge University Press, September 2013, chapter 13, pp. 265-284; and R. L. Hutchings, *The US, German Unification and European Integration*, in F. Bozo, M. P. Rey, N. Piers Ludlow, L. Nuti (eds.), *Europe and the End of the Cold War A Reappraisal*, Routledge, July 2009, chapter 9, pp. 119-132; and M. Neri Gualdesi, *La nascita della PESC e il dibattito transatlantico sulla sicurezza europea. L'influenza delle relazioni anglo-americane e l'iniziativa diplomatica italo-britannica*, in *Rivista italiana di storia internazionale* (ISSN 2611-8602), Il Mulino, Bologna, fascicolo 1, gennaio-giugno 2020.

attention on the member states shaping the European external action, consequently giving less important to the efforts made by the common institutional bodies of the EC.

The approach of this dissertation tries to mark a difference with the intergovernmental lens characterising the literature just presented. Indeed, as mentioned above, in this work the analysis is performed by concentrating the attention exclusively on the institutional dimension of the European action towards the transatlantic relationship and the events of 1989. The EC is not treated as a simple inactive framework, and the relevance of the influence of its institutional apparatus is highlighted and examined. The single EC member states with their different behaviours are not taken into consideration in this thesis. The US contacts with the other side of the Atlantic analysed in this work are exclusively those with the EC institutions and their officials, especially the Commission, rather than the ones with European capitals and member states' direct representatives. Thus, the evolution of the Commission's political role within the European external action framework is studied only on the institutional level. The aim of this approach is to try to offer an original contribution to the scientific debate around the transatlantic relations and the development of a common European foreign policy based entirely on the EC institutional domain. The member states' positions are set aside to give space for analysis to the often-undermined institutional level. The claim is not to invent a totally new analytical approach, because some works⁴ already focus their attention more on the institutional aspects than exclusively on the member states' action. Rather, the idea is to adopt this institutional approach to analyse the specific topics and period taken into consideration in this dissertation in order to offer an original contribution regarding their study.

This scientific approach is supported by a clear-cut methodological choice. The methodological decision made for this work is to perform the analysis of the matters and the period taken into consideration on the basis of archival documents of the European Commission. Indeed, the archival

⁴ See for example M. E. Guasconi, *Prove di politica estera, La Cooperazione politica europea, l'Atto Unico Europeo e la fine della guerra fredda*, Mondadori, Collana di storia internazionale, 2020.

sources employed in this thesis are all part of Günter Burghardt's newly declassified fond, which is stored at the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence. Günter Burghardt has been a European Commission official from 1970 to 2005, and he held crucial roles related to the EC Commission external action and relations during the 1985-1991 period. From 1985 to 1988, he was Deputy Head of Cabinet to the Commission's President Jacques Delors, with particular responsibility for external and development policies, relations with the European Parliament and Staff management. Then, in 1988, he was appointed Director at the Secretariat-General as well as Political Director, under the direct authority of President Delors, a position he held until 1993. Occupying these positions Burghardt was deeply involved in the Commission's relations with the US and in its efforts to face the changing times of early 1990s. The institutional level is strongly at the centre of the analysis. Inevitably in Burghardt's charts and notes the member states' positions are sometimes mentioned, but the focus is clearly on the Commission's attitudes and behaviours.

Before moving to the argument of this work, it is crucial to underline three other methodological premises to explain the choices made regarding sources and matters of analysis. These points of clarification must be born in mind while reading the entire dissertation. First, it is important to illustrate why the transatlantic relationship has been chosen as context to study the development of the European Commission role in managing political international affairs. The alliance between the two sides of the Atlantic has been fundamental for the entire second half of the XX century. The US offered crucial support to the process of European integration since the late 1940s. There were no other alliances comparable to the transatlantic one neither for historical importance nor for actual volumes of economic and political exchanges. As a consequence, the framework of the transatlantic relationship is the most important one in which the European institutional bodies could test their international relevance. Analysing how Washington treated and judged the European Commission and its officials can significantly help in understanding whether the Commission truly enhanced its international political role. Given the position the US had in the world during those years, if the White

House attached importance to the Commission's external action, it meant that the latter certainly held a real value on the European and the global scene. Second, the methodological approach is not only exclusively institutional but also exclusively European. Since the archival documents come all from the European Commission, only the European viewpoint is taken under consideration. It means that the study of how the US looked at the EC goes beyond the scope of this work. In Burghardt's archival papers there is a significant number of minutes of multiple meetings and also various public speeches of US representatives, therefore it is still possible to trace the American attitudes and behaviours. However, when the American viewpoint is examined, from a methodological standpoint it is more precise to state that in reality the analysis is about how the Commission officials perceived the American attitude towards themselves. It is needless to say that it does not mean automatically mean that the reports were more positive or negative than the reality, but there is certainly a grade of personal perception to be taken into consideration. Third, the analysis stops in 1991 due to a limit of availability of the archival documents. Thus, the examination of the possible enhancement of the Commission's political role regards only the years of practical evolution leaving out the officialization of such changes. Indeed, the Maastricht Treaty, which was the first treaty establishing the first steps towards a common European foreign policy, was signed in 1992, therefore it remains out of the scope of this work. It means that this thesis deals only with the years in which the Commission may had enhanced its political role only in the practical level of day-to-day business and external relations, and it cannot examine the eventual institutional setting in of this evolution. The provisions of the Maastricht treaty and all the following evolutions are inevitably the results of the previous years; however, it is hard to evaluate how direct the effects of the eventual changes happened during the period taken under examination were to the following events without having the possibility to analyse the charts of those later years.

Against this methodological background, it is now possible to present the argument of this dissertation. According to the analysis performed in this work, the European Commission did

experience an evolution of its external role in the period taken into consideration passing from an exclusively commercial and economic player to a relevant political voice within the EC external policy. In the first four years, between 1985 and 1988, transatlantic relations were characterised mainly by deep commercial disputes and an economic debate about the financial stability of the world. The Reagan administration was pretty aggressive in its attitude towards the EC, and the Commission in particular, when dealing with such commercial and economic matters. The Delors Commission had to face the American decisiveness and had no occasion to develop any sort of political role. In this first period both the matters on the agenda of the transatlantic talks and the American attitude forced the Commission to remain focused exclusively on the commercial issues falling under its competences. In 1989 everything changed, and the period 1989-1991 was the one in which the Commission was able to enhance its political role. The unexpected and rapid changes started in 1989 completely changed both the priorities of the transatlantic relations and the American attitude. The new Bush administration understood that the priority of the talks with the European side of the Atlantic had to shift towards the political domain in order to effectively face the unpredictable and possibly dangerous consequence of the crumbling of the Eastern bloc with the progressive transformation in Central and Eastern Europe. This new scenario offered the Commission the occasion to foster its political dimension. The Commission found itself in a favourable position to become a relevant political voice of the European external action, without even excessively looking for it. Thus, the Commission enhanced its political role by following two trajectories. The first one was to build political strength starting from its economic expertise. Since the second half of 1988 the Commission started developing economic relations with the Eastern European states. This move was extremely useful. Indeed, at the beginning of 1989 the West decided to significantly support the economic transformation of those countries, and the Commission was the best institution fitting the role of coordinating this Western effort. Therefore, the July 1989 G-7 summit entrusted the Commission with the responsibility to lead the Western forces in supporting the economic and political transformation of Eastern Europe. It meant that the Commission was able to combine the economic

and the political domains, to even eliminate the distinction between the two, and, in this way, to build its political relevance. The Commission exploited the moment and became a key player in the Eastern European area. Even Washington could not make a move there without a previous consultation with the European Commission. The second trajectory the Commission followed to develop a political role regarded its relationship with the European Political Cooperation, the intergovernmental tool to coordinate the member states' foreign policies. The European Political Cooperation held the competences over the international political affairs, therefore by fostering its relationship with it the Commission could achieve a more relevant political role. In Burghardt's documents there are reports of meeting of the European Political Cooperation with American officials in which the European representatives clearly defined the Commission as a crucial partner for them. It meant that the Commission was able to make himself indispensable for the effectiveness of the European Political Cooperation and, consequently, was involved in the discussion of mere political issues, such as the debate around the new European architecture of the beginning of the 1990s.

To sum up, the argument of this dissertation is that the European Commission, by exploiting the revolutionary times started in 1989 and the new American approach, was able to become more than the commercial voice of the EC. It became a relevant political player in the European external action, especially in the context of the transformation of Eastern Europe. Both Washington and the other European players, from governments to institutions, recognised this new political relevance achieved by the Commission.

The structure of this work to sustain this argument is the following. The dissertation is divided in three chapters. The first one presents the birth and the evolution of the European Political Cooperation during the 1970s and the first half of 1980s. The attention is focused on the political competences attributed to this institution, its nature, and its relationship with the Commission. Through the analysis of the official documents and agreements building this intergovernmental tool of foreign policies coordination, the attempt to draw a rigid line between the commercial and economic competences

attributed to the Commission and the political ones attributed to the European Political Cooperation is pointed out. The crucial step was the Single European Act signed in 1986 which established that the Commission had to be fully associated with the activities of the European Political Cooperation and started to delete the line of distinction of competences. This first chapter is useful to understand two issues: first, the institutional situation regarding the European external policy Delors found when he was officially appointed as President of the European Commission; second, the nature of the relationship between the Commission and the European Political Cooperation, which later became the second trajectory for the enhancement of the Commission's political role. The second chapter deals with the years in which Reagan was still US President, from 1985 to 1988. It examines the American attitude towards the EC underlining its aggressivity when it came to deal with economic issues. Then, it focuses the attention on some of the many commercial disputes of the time between Washington and Community Brussels in order to show, on one hand, that the Commission was not a newcomer in that area of international relations, and on the other hand, that there was no space for the Commission to develop a political role because the commercial matters were serious and the international financial system was in crisis, therefore all the efforts had to be upon these issues. This second chapter ends with the first attempts by the Commission to exploit its economic relations with Eastern Europe as a political tool in 1988. Finally, the third chapter analyses the years between 1989 and 1991. The new international setting characterised by revolutionary events and the Bush administration's change of attitude are presented as the elements that opened the window of opportunity for the Commission to enhance its international political role. Then, the two trajectories mentioned above are explained in detail in order to demonstrate how the Commission not only found itself in a favourable position, but it was also significantly effective in exploiting it to gain political relevance within the European external action framework. At the end of 1991 the Commission held a new meaningful political role and was an important player in the new international scenario, especially in the European continent. The US recognised this evolution, consequently they wanted to

involve the Commission in all the political debate: the Commission became a relevant voice of the European Community.

Chapter I

The EPC evolution: nature, aims, and the relationship with the EC Commission

Given the plural and multilevel nature of the European Community (EC), it is not straightforward to study its foreign policy and the management of its international role throughout the past decades; therefore, for the purpose of this work, it is necessary to start by analysing the main tools the EC had at its disposal to shape the European external action when the Delors Commission took office in 1985. Consequently, the aim of this chapter is to present the principal instrument the EC and its member states developed starting from the 1970s to deal with the political challenges of world affairs: the European Political Cooperation (EPC). To be more precise, the goal of the next pages is not to meticulously retrace the history of the EPC, but it is to analyse the evolution, on one hand of the nature, and of the aims of the EPC, and on the other hand of the relationship between the EPC and the EC Commission. This examination is implemented mainly by analysing the official documents and declarations which implemented and reformed the EPC during the years. Through an attentive study of these documents, it is possible to demonstrate that the EC Commission obtained a more political role in conducting the European external action by deepening its relations with the EPC. In other words, this chapter shows how the path later taken by the Delors Commission in its effort to gain a political voice in the European foreign policy had already been traced during the evolution of the EPC-EC relations.

The chapter is divided in four sections. The first deals with the decades before the European Political Cooperation and analyses the space and the role given to foreign policy in the first treaties designing European integration. The second section examines the birth and the steps of the EPC evolution during the 1970s to highlight the main points of interest of this intergovernmental tool and its relationship with the EC. The third section takes into examination the reforms and the institutionalisation of the EPC during the 1980s to understand what type of instrument it had become when Jacques Delors was appointed as Commission president. Finally, the conclusion underlines the

fundamental takeaways of the chapter, which are useful for the understanding of the following chapters.

1. The European position in international affairs before the EPC

It is undeniable that the founding fathers of the European integration project dreamed of a Europe based on a solid political union that could guarantee peace and wealth internally, but that could also play a significant role in international affairs. Indeed, the first lines of the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950, the document which proposed the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), calls of a European effort towards integration because “the contribution which an organized and living Europe can bring to civilization is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations”⁵. This opening clearly shows how the idea was to build an organization capable of contributing decisively to the creation of a conciliatory international environment while, at the same time, safeguarding the national interests of its member states. Schuman was aware that “Europe will not be made all at once”⁶, therefore he proposed a pure economic organization with the apparently basic aim of pooling the coal and steel production of some European countries. However, his idea was already looking at the future because he hoped that “by pooling basic production and by instituting a new High Authority, whose decisions will bind France, Germany and other member countries, this proposal will lead to the realization of the first concrete foundation of a European federation indispensable to the preservation of peace”⁷. Consequently, the Schuman declaration demonstrates that the European integration had the realization of a true political unity and the achievement of a meaningful international role among its goals from the outset.

A common stance in international affairs was needed in order to gain this desired global role. Nevertheless, due to the practical necessity of reaching it step by step and to the opposition by member

⁵ Schuman Declaration, French Foreign minister Robert Schuman, 9 May 1950.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Ibidem.

states to concede their sovereignty, the building of a common foreign policy was not straightforward. The 1951 Treaty of Paris created the ECSC that, as mentioned before, focused only on internal economic cooperation. The European Defence Community, the proposal made by the French Prime minister René Pleven for creating a European supranational army, seemed to be institutionalised with a treaty in 1952, but it never came to life because of the non-ratification of the French National Assembly in 1954. In 1961 a similar failure was suffered by the Fouchet plan, an idea for an intergovernmental form of political union supported by the French President Charles De Gaulle.

The 1957 Treaties of Rome were the first successful step towards a European common international position. They significantly enhanced the European integration by creating the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) and the European Economic Community (EEC). As far as the external dimension is concerned, the EEC was crucial because it gave life to a common external trade policy, which was the first tool the European Community had to perform an external action. The third chapter of the Treaty establishing the EEC is the one regulating this new commercial policy. Following article 113⁸, the responsibility of conducting the external commercial policy was attributed to the Commission, in collaboration with the Council. Moreover, according to article 116, the European Community gained such an all-encompassing role in the commercial area that “les États membres ne mènent plus, à partir de la fin de la période de transition, qu'une action commune dans le cadre des organisations internationales de caractère économique”⁹, meaning that the member states renounced completely to their sovereignty in every aspect of action in this field. For the purpose of this research, it is interesting to underline two aspects of the provisions of this treaty. First, the Commission became the institution holding the first tool of European foreign policy. The path of the Commission towards developing into one of the crucial players in shaping the European external action started here: it became the main actor of the new-born Community's external action. Second, this instrument is clearly and severely limited to the economic and commercial area. The political

⁸ Treaties of Rome, *Traité instituant la Communauté Économique Européenne et documents annexes*, Rome, 1957.

⁹ *Ibidem*, art. 116.

issues of world affairs remained entirely in the hands of the member states. The distinction between economic competences, attributed to the Community, and political competences, attributed to the member states, that will characterise also the European Political Cooperation started here. The decision was that the political aspects of the European world role had to be kept out of the Community's control and had to be managed by the member states without any type of coordination. In these treaties the political union dreamt by Schuman was still far to be reached.

During the history of the European integration, it sometimes happens that the day-by-day practice moves faster than the official formalisation in treaties. However, during the 1960s this rigid division between economic affairs the Community had to deal with and political matters the Community could not face existed in the reality as well as in the treaties. The construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the Vietnam war in the second half of the 1960s are two examples which clearly show how the international political affairs were inaccessible to the Community. These two events were significantly different: the first was internal and threatened the equilibrium and the unity of Europe, the second was external but it was still relevant because it involved the United States, the main ally of Western Europe. In both cases the Community played no significant role, and the initiative was entirely in the hand of the member states. There was no common external action: the leading member states acted on their own following only their interests. It is significant that Hanhimäki, Schoenborn and Zanchetta write that "when the East Germans put up a barricade of barbed wire and steel across Berlin in the night of 13 August 1961, the three Western powers reacted rather mildly"¹⁰ referring only to the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and France. The Community had no tools to engage with such highly political challenges, therefore remained immobile. On the other hand, the Community, led by the Commission, conducted the common commercial policy without hesitation. Between 1950s and 1960s internally the EEC made great integration and economic progresses faster than imagined. The Six were able to eliminate all internal tariffs and to establish a Common External

¹⁰ J. M. Hanhimäki, B. Schoenborn and B. Zanchetta, *Transatlantic Relations since 1945 - an Introduction*, p. 66.

Tariff. This move had negative effects on the US exports, and some frictions between the two allies started to emerge. The US were disturbed by some protectionist tendencies held by the EEC, therefore in 1964 Washington initiated a new round of negotiations in the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). This so-called Kennedy Round (1964-1968) was the first occasion in which the EEC negotiated as one unit. It was time for the Commission, along with the other Community's institutions, to lead the European economic external action, meaning that "these negotiations entailed much more than just harmonizing different tariff systems. For the Europeans, the success of the EEC project was on the line"¹¹. The Community demonstrated its value¹², even by opposing the desires of its most valuable ally, demonstrating that "no longer could the United States dominate GATT negotiations in the way it had previously done"¹³.

These examples show how the economic side of the European global role had an effective start. However, the political affairs remained more incisive in those years. The political elements always prevailed over the economic problems. Indeed, in 1970 Washington was not too much worried by the commercial frictions, because "the possible economic price of a truly unified Europe is outweighed by the gain in the political vitality of the West as a whole"¹⁴. It means that the Community was playing a fair role in international economic affairs, but the meaningful and decisive arena to be engaged in was the political one. A new tool was needed to develop a European foreign action in the political domain.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 76.

¹² L. Coppolaro, *In Search of Power: The European Commission in the Kennedy Round Negotiations (1963–1967)*, in *Contemporary European History*, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 23. No. 1, January 2014, pp.23-41.

¹³ G. Lundestad, "Empire" by integration, *The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997*, p.96.

¹⁴ Richard Nixon, First Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy for the 1970's, February 18, 1970.

2. The birth and the evolution of the European Political Cooperation

The member states of the European Communities¹⁵ were aware of the centrality of the political field in world affairs. The 1960s had been a decade full of political turbulence within Europe, due to the undaunted behaviour of Charles De Gaulle as President of the French Republic. De Gaulle took strong decisions favouring, in his ideas, a strengthening of Europe and its international role¹⁶ but was never able to develop a political cooperation among the member states of the EC. In 1969 when De Gaulle left the scene the EC member states started to collaborate successfully towards the creation of a tool of cooperation to deal as a single organism with the political affairs in the international arena.

The first step of this process was the meeting of Heads of State or Government of the member states at The Hague, held on 1 and 2 December 1969. The meeting had the aim of revising the creation of the common market and its effects, but it resulted to be a topic deeply correlated with the project of a new cooperation leaning more towards political aspects; in fact, the feeling was that “entry upon the final stage of the Common Market not only means confirming the irreversible nature of the work accomplished by the Communities, but also means paving the way for a united Europe capable of assuming its responsibilities in the world of tomorrow and of making a contribution commensurate with its traditions and its mission”¹⁷. This spirit emerging from the final communiqué showed the will of the six member states (hereafter, the Six) to link the final realisation of the common market with the start of a new cooperation in the political domain. It seems that the Six were reasoning by stages of progression, consequently, when the economic and commercial pillar was solid enough, it was the moment to proceed with more political elements. The ideas about the aims of the Community’s political international role were broad, but clear, somewhat recalling the ones of the Schuman Plan examined before.

¹⁵ European Communities was the new official name since the 1967 merger of the EEC, the ECSC, and Euratom

¹⁶ Two examples of De Gaulle’s political action are the signing of the Élysée Treaty with West Germany on 22 January 1963 and the decision to withdraw France from NATO’s integrated military command in 1966.

¹⁷ Final communiqué of the Hague Summit, 2 December 1969 Point 3.

4. *The Heads of State or Government therefore wish to reaffirm their belief in the political objectives which give the Community its meaning and purport, their determination to carry their undertaking through to the end, and their confidence in the final success of their efforts. Indeed, they have a common conviction that a Europe composed of States which, in spite of their different national characteristics, are united in their essential interests, assured of its internal cohesion, true to its friendly relations with outside countries, conscious of the role it has to play in promoting the relaxation of international tension and the rapprochement among all peoples, and first and foremost among those of the entire European continent, is indispensable if a mainspring of development, progress and culture, world equilibrium and peace is to be preserved.*¹⁸

Indeed, this statement already revealed some basic starting considerations for the new project. In the first lines it was indicated that the main actors had to be the *states* which could be united in their *essential interests*. The EC and its institutions are not mentioned here: the cooperation had to be among the member states; therefore, the intergovernmental nature of the future organism was immediately anticipated. Moreover, the agreement had not to be total as a real common policy, such as the commercial one, it could be limited to some compelling interests regarding everybody. In the second part the attention moved to the goals of this collaboration. Here it is interesting to note that the Six declared a will to act for loosening the frictions of the Cold War towards *the relaxation of international tension and the rapprochement among all peoples*, also identifying as central aim *those of the entire European continent*. It means that the member states of the EC recognised international peace as the ultimate objective of their external action. This declaration, even if it could sound as simple rhetoric, assumed a meaning in those years of global confrontations between the two great powers. The alliance with the United States was not under discussion, but these declarations were a clear sign of manoeuvre towards a space of political independence. In addition, the Six demonstrated

¹⁸ Ibidem, Point 4.

to be aware that the future of the divided Europe had to be their top priority. So, even if this communiqué was just a first step, it already launched some meaningful messages for the international role of the EC and its member states in the years to come. On the basis of these premises, the heads of state and government of the EC agreed “to instruct the Ministers for Foreign Affairs to study the best way of achieving progress in the matter of political unification”¹⁹ leading to the next step of the process.

The occasion to move forward was the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Six held in Luxembourg on 27 October 1970. The aim of this summit was to enhance the political unification of the EC member states through a cooperation in managing foreign policy matters. The result was the adoption of the Davignon Report which officially created the European Political Cooperation.

The first part of the Davignon Report sets the spirit for the creation of the EPC. The ministers of the Six confirmed the idea of a European evolution by stages, indeed they talked about a “united Europe, conscious of the responsibilities incumbent on it by reason of its economic development, industrial power and standard of living”²⁰ which, due to these achieved levels of wealth, had now to turn towards international political matters “to bring nearer the day when Europe can speak with one voice”²¹. A solid link was established between the economic progress made in the previous decades through the common effort led by the Community and the political progress which needed to be built. This political enhancement had to be carried on by the member states, because “this united Europe remains the fundamental aim, to be attained as soon as possible, thanks to the political will of the peoples and the decisions of their Governments”²². This stress on the role of the peoples and their governments is a clear anticipation of the exclusive intergovernmental nature of the EPC. The final point of the first part efficaciously resumes the premises for the creation of the EPC.

¹⁹ Ibidem, point 15.

²⁰ Davignon Report, Luxembourg, 27 October 1970, Part one, Point 4.

²¹ Ibidem, part one, point 8.

²² Ibidem, part one, point 5.

*10. Current developments in the European Communities make it necessary for the Member States to step up their political cooperation and, in the initial stage, to provide themselves with ways and means of harmonizing their views in the field of international politics. The Ministers therefore felt that foreign policy concertation should be the object of the first practical endeavours to demonstrate to all that Europe has a political vocation. The Ministers are, in fact, convinced that progress here would be calculated to promote the development of the Communities and give Europeans a keener awareness of their common responsibility.*²³

The effort by the Six *to step up their political cooperation* originated from the *current developments in the European Communities*, confirming both the connection and the distinction between the economic progress carried on by the Community and the political one entrusted with the member states. This attempt would be based on *foreign policy concertation* between the ministers, giving the central role exclusively to the Six. Finally, the endeavour aims *to demonstrate to all that Europe has a political vocation*, in order to build a Europe with a strong international role.

The second part of the Davignon report deals with the technical matters of how the EPC would work. These provisions established an EPC with a pure intergovernmental nature, completely outside from the EC framework. The aims of “harmonization of views, concertation of attitudes and joint action”²⁴ had to be fulfilled through a pragmatic and serviceable structure composed simply by the ministerial meetings to be held at least one every six months and by the political committee, an organ comprising the heads of the political departments. The complete absence of a secretariat is the evident sign of the Six’s will to keep the EPC as a simple tool without cumbersome bureaucracy. For the sake of this work, the most interesting point of this second part is the one about the relationship between the EPC and the European Commission. It shortly recites that “the Commission will be consulted if the

²³ Ibidem, Part one, Point 10.

²⁴ Ibidem, Part two, Point I. Objectives (b).

activities of the European Communities are affected by the work of the Ministers”²⁵. This formula was based on the simultaneous connection and distinction between economic and political matters of the premises, and it aimed at drawing a sharp line between the EPC’s competences of political nature and the Commission’s duties in the commercial field. This distinction derived from the strong desire of the EC member states to maintain the total control over their foreign policies reinforcing the intergovernmental nature of the EPC. The ministers of the Six wanted to create a forum where the EC could not have a too much meaningful right of intervention. The Commission had to be involved only when the EPC would have touched upon its competences. On the other hand, this article demonstrates that the EC member states were aware that imposing a total distinction between political and economic matters is difficult when setting an external action. At least, they had to mention the Commission and they also recognised its possible role in the work of the EPC. This is the link that the Commission would start exploiting to gain actorness and centrality in the EC external dimension. Indeed, immediately at the beginning it was evident that this distinction was too artificial to effectively work in the reality of making foreign policy. In November 1970 at the first meeting of the foreign ministers held in Munich the Commission was admitted only to the second part of the discussion when the economic aspects of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) were dealt with, while it was kept outside from the first part about the European political involvement with the Middle East. In 1972 this practice started to being softened by allowing the Commission to participate at least as auditor and observer to the working groups about the CSCE and especially to the ministerial meetings of the EPC. These were first steps towards a collaboration between the Six and the EC institutions; however, Christopher Audland, Deputy Secretary General of the European Commission from 1973 to 1981, in his memories defined the EPC as a club where the Commission was allowed but could not access to every door in it²⁶, because “the diplomats —

²⁵ Ibidem, Part two, Point V. Commission and the European Communities.

²⁶ See M. E. Guasconi, *Prove di politica estera, La Cooperazione politica europea, l’Atto Unico Europeo e la fine della guerra fredda*, pp. 16-17.

particularly the French — had been given instructions to prevent the possibility of its being involved in discussions on matters outside its sphere of competence”²⁷.

In the Davignon Report the ministers of the Six agreed “to pursue their work on the best way to achieve progress towards political unification” and “to submit a second report”²⁸. The occasion to fulfil this agreement was the meeting held in Copenhagen on 23 July 1973. The result was the second report on European political cooperation in foreign policy matters. The analysis of its content leads to further reflections about the three most interesting aspects of the EPC: its nature, its aims, and its relationship with the EC Commission.

Starting from the EPC nature, in the first part of the Copenhagen document the ministers of the nine²⁹ EC member states (hereafter, the Nine) consolidated the intergovernmental approach of the EPC by declaring that “the Member States have been able to consider and decide matters jointly so as to make common political action possible”³⁰ without mentioning the EC institutions. At the same time the Nine express appreciation for the straightforward organisation recognising “that the characteristically pragmatic mechanisms set up by the Luxembourg Report have shown their flexibility and effectiveness”³¹. While the intergovernmental nature remained a basic pillar, the pragmatic approach started facing some degrees of institutionalisation; indeed, in the second part the ministers agree to set up the Group of Correspondents, consisting of officials in the Foreign Ministry “entrusted with the task of following the implementation of political co-operation and of studying problems of organization and problems of a general nature.”³² This is the first step of a process that would lead the EPC to lose its flexible organization in favour of a more permanent structure.

²⁷ *The European Commission 1973-1986. History and Memories of an Institution*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014, Chapter 23, p. 425.

²⁸ Davignon Report, Part three, Point 1.

²⁹ In 1973 the EC member states passed from six to nine with the accession of Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom.

³⁰ Second report on European political cooperation in foreign policy matters, Copenhagen, 23 July 1973, Part I.

³¹ *Ibidem*, Part I.

³² *Ibidem*, Part II, Point 3. The Group of “Correspondants”.

Moving to the aims of the EPC, the most relevant element is that the general call for relaxation of international tensions made in the communiqué of the 1969 The Hague summit here was brought to another level. The ministers agreed that “Europe now needs to establish its position in the world as a distinct entity”³³, as if their goal was to make Europe a third pole in the Cold War. Once again, it did not mean that the transatlantic alliance was doubted, but it was a further sign of a European awareness of its political interests and will to bring an original contribution to world equilibrium. This new consciousness of the European political needs was confirmed by the agreement that “the subject dealt with must concern European interests whether in Europe itself or elsewhere”³⁴. This provision was an explicit declaration that Europe desires to be able to take care of herself alone within the international arena.

Finally, dealing with the EPC-Commission relationship, this second report did not change the approach of distinction between competences. In the first part the Nine judged positively the collaboration with the Commission when needed by expressing “satisfaction that these contacts have now become a reality and that a constructive and continuing dialogue is in course both at the level of experts and of the Political Committee, and at ministerial meetings”³⁵. In the second part the document briefly recites that “the Commission is invited to make known its views in accordance with current practice”³⁶ simply confirming the present framework. The line drawn between economic matters the Commission must manage and political issues the EPC had to look into remained the fundamental element to distinguish the member states’ collaboration from the EC action. The second report of Copenhagen did not solve this crucial point.

As mentioned before, this tension of competences created practical problems in everyday work. An example of the senseless attachment to this distinction is what happened in 1973. One day the

³³ Ibidem, Part I.

³⁴ Ibidem, Part II, Point 11. Priorities to be set in respect of the Matters to be dealt with within the framework of Political Cooperation.

³⁵ Ibidem, Part I.

³⁶ Ibidem, Part II, Point 12. Relationship between the Work of the Political Co-operation Machinery and that carried out within the framework of the European Communities.

ministers of foreign affairs of the Nine had a meeting in Brussels in the morning to discuss economic issues within the EC framework; later in the afternoon, having to deal with political matters regarding the EPC, they took an airplane to fly to Copenhagen to have the political meeting there³⁷. This surreal anecdote was the proof, on one hand of the unsustainability of this distinction of domains, but, on the other hand of the solid will of the member states to not concede anything to the EC on the political front. In addition, these tensions not only generated embarrassing episodes, but it could also damage the actual effectiveness of the EPC action. Indeed, the problem of consistency emerged. Often when dealing with international political problems the economic sanctions are needed to persuade or punish another actor; therefore, the EPC needed to cooperate with the EC, especially with the Commission, in order to have the economic weapon in its arsenal for political action. The first real case where the Nine could appreciate the role of consistency was the revolution in Portugal. Between 1974 and 1975 the new Portugal, freed from the dictatorship, asked for financial help to the EC. Here the EPC and the Commission were able to collaborate meaningfully, consequently they agreed the financial support to Portugal, but with the strict political conditionality that the new government would have promoted democratic reforms³⁸. This episode showed the power of consistency. It was the concrete proof that the distinction of competences made by the Nine could be counterproductive, and that a solution was needed.

Recognising the importance of consistency, the European member states believed in two tools to foster their sense of unity: identity and values. So, these elements were used also in order to build a more consistent and organic external action. On 14 December 1973, even before the Portuguese episode that showed the importance of consistency, the Nine issued the Declaration on European Identity in Copenhagen. The EC member states wanted to make this declaration because “this will enable them to achieve a better definition of their relations with other countries and of their

³⁷ See M. E. Guasconi, *Prove di politica estera, La Cooperazione politica europea, l'Atto Unico Europeo e la fine della guerra fredda*, p. 18.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p.19.

responsibilities and the place which they occupy in world affairs”³⁹. The basic idea was that defining the European identity keeping together the EC and its member states would have helped the cooperation to act in the international arena as one entity, because “Europe must unite and speak increasingly with one voice if it wants to make itself heard and play its proper rôle in the world”⁴⁰. The final point of the declaration clearly resumes the sense it held for the Nine.

*22. The European identity will evolve as a function of the dynamic construction of a United Europe. In their external relations, the Nine propose progressively to undertake the definition of their identity in relation to other countries or groups of countries. They believe that in so doing they will strengthen their own cohesion and contribute to the framing of a genuinely European foreign policy. They are convinced that building up this policy will help them to tackle with confidence and realism further stages in the construction of a United Europe thus making easier the proposed transformation of the whole complex of their relations into a European Union.*⁴¹

The hope of the EC member states was that affirming the European identity could *strengthen their own cohesion and contribute to the framing of a genuinely European foreign policy*. The consistency would have come from the awareness of acting from the same point of departure grounded on European identity. In addition, it is important to underline the international context in which the Nine issued this declaration. Indeed, in 1973 two facts destabilized the transatlantic relations pushing the EC to affirm their independent identity against Washington. First, on 23 April 1973 the US National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger delivered a speech before the Associated Press in New York launching the initiative of the Year of Europe, an attempt by the Nixon administration to redefine the transatlantic relations. The main problem was that Kissinger emphasized that “while the United States had global responsibilities, the Europeans only had more regional ones”⁴² leading the EC member

³⁹ Declaration on European Identity, Copenhagen, 14 December 1973, Introduction.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, point 6.

⁴¹ Ibidem, point 22.

⁴² G. Lundestad, “Empire” by integration, *The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997*, p. 106.

states to “stress the political equality of the EC and the US”⁴³. Second, in October 1973 the Yom Kippur war between Israel and the Arab states broke out, and “the transatlantic split encompassed three main issues: the military resupply of Israel, the American alert vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, and the Arab oil embargo against the West”⁴⁴. The Europeans independently chose their positions in these three crucial war issues demonstrating a solid common position. Thus, the declaration on European identity was drafted against this international background, and it was a way to further declare the European independent and strong will to deal with international affairs⁴⁵. This new common will was demonstrated by the European effort to lead the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) process that culminated with the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and its follow up meetings. It was the tool starting the so-called European détente⁴⁶.

A few years later, in 1978, the Nine held a European Council in Copenhagen on 7 and 8 April. In that occasion they issued the Declaration on Democracy which was another attempt to recognise their common ground by identifying democracy as a value they all shared. In this document the heads of state and government, recalling the Copenhagen Declaration on European identity, confirmed their will “to safeguard the principles of representative democracy, of the rule of law, of social justice and of respect for human rights”⁴⁷. The defence of democracy and its principle became the central legitimising strategy of European external action. Once again, the Nine wanted to codify a common set of value that could be the driving element for shaping the European foreign policy. So, in order to reach the consistency needed to conduct an external action, the EC member states tried to define their guiding principles but did not concretely discuss the distinction of competences. The goal was to identify elements that could bring together the EC and its member states rather than debating the

⁴³ Ibidem.

⁴⁴ G. Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945*, p. 162.

⁴⁵ See D. Möckli, *European foreign policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the dream of political unity*, I.B. Tauris, 2008.

⁴⁶ See A. Romano, *From Detente in Europe to European Detente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE*, P.I.E. Peter Lang: Bruxelles, 2009; and A. Romano, *Détente, entente, or linkage? The Helsinki conference on security and cooperation in Europe in U.S. relations with the Soviet Union*, in *Diplomatic History*, 33:4, 2009, pp. 703-722.

⁴⁷ Declaration on Democracy, annex D of final text of the European Council, Copenhagen, 7-8 April 1978.

concrete disagreements, indeed “a general political commitment to democracy as a fundamental value avoided any clashes that may have come from attempts to define what such adherence would look like in practice, while still providing a sense of belonging to a shared political community”⁴⁸.

Despite the positive efforts the EC member states carried on in order to build and improve the EPC, in 1979 the reality demonstrated that the EPC needed to be reformed. In fact, in 1979 two international crises asked for a European intervention that did not live up to the expectations: the Iranian revolution with the crisis of the American hostages and the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR. In both cases the EPC tools were not suitable to permit the EC and its member states to play the significant role they desired. Simple declarations were not enough to make a difference and economic sanctions risked being too damaging for the EC itself. The problems of coordination and the lack of effective tools to face such delicate and serious situations proved the EPC ineffective⁴⁹. Consequently, 1979 was the year calling for a significant reform of the EPC.

3. The reform of the EPC: from the London report to the Single European Act

Showing a positive understanding of the reality and of the shortcomings of the EPC, the foreign ministers of the EC member states had a meaningful debate about how reforming this tool of cooperation during 1980 and 1981. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, a systematic reconstruction of the entire history of this debate goes beyond the scope of this research, but it is nevertheless useful to analyse some core aspects of it⁵⁰.

The main problem was the ineffectiveness of the EPC action and management of the coordinated effort. The EPC lacked a functional bureaucratic apparatus; therefore, everything fell on the shoulders

⁴⁸ E. De Angelis and E. Karamouzi, *Enlargement and the Historical Origins of the European Community's Democratic Identity, 1961–1978*, in *Contemporary European History*, Cambridge University Press, 25, 3, 2016, p. 458.

⁴⁹ See M. E. Guasconi, *Prove di politica estera, La Cooperazione politica europea, l'Atto Unico Europeo e la fine della guerra fredda*, pp. 26-51.

⁵⁰ For further in-depth historical analysis of the debate, see M. E. Guasconi, *Prove di politica estera, La Cooperazione politica europea, l'Atto Unico Europeo e la fine della guerra fredda*, Chapter 2.

of the Presidency. The organization of the decision-making process depended entirely on the quality and interests of the officials of the member state holding the Presidency. This situation led to inaction in most of the cases. As the Belgian foreign minister Henri Simonet noted in April 1980 in a document he prepared to highlight the EPC weaknesses, the structure of the EPC forced the Nine to conduct only a declaratory diplomacy which was not followed by concrete actions. They could only react to international crises, as they had no tools to foresee or prevent them. Within the EPC framework the Nine limited themselves to acknowledge these challenges and to make an official declaration about the situation. There was no European strategic plan in foreign policy. In general, it was clear that the best solution would have been to create a secretariat. However, this proposal was deeply debated because it could change the entire nature of the EPC. The French foreign minister Jean François-Poncet strongly opposed the institutionalisation of the EPC, since it would have lost its crucial plain and pragmatic nature. Similarly, the British foreign minister Lord Peter Carrington was worried that a secretariat could alter the intergovernmental nature of the EPC. It was significant that also the EC Commission participated in the debate for an EPC reform through a document drafted in March 1981 by the General Secretary of the Commission Émile Noël. Since “the Commission was well aware of the primarily reactive nature of EPC to crises and conflicts all over the world”⁵¹, its first proposal was for the establishment of permanent political secretariat in Brussels. However, knowing that this idea could not be accepted by the Nine, which were jealous of the intergovernmental approach of the EPC, the Commission also made another proposal. This second suggestion recommended to organise all the meeting of the expert groups of the Political Committee in Brussels; in this way the Nine would have created a sort of infrastructure in Brussels that could have become a useful base to manage the international crises. By trying to accommodate the desires of the foreign ministers, the Commission demonstrated to think that “any collaboration between Member States was a good thing, even if it took place outside the Community framework” because “experience showed that many of the topics

⁵¹ *The European Commission 1973-1986. History and Memories of an Institution*, Chapter 23, p. 427.

addressed in EPC tended, once they had become tangible and technical, gradually to move on to Community forums”⁵². The Commission already foresaw that sooner or later granting it a more central role within the ECP would have become a necessity to shape a real common European external action.

After a long debate and various proposals, in May 1981 during a meeting at Venlo in the Netherlands the ten EC member states⁵³ (hereafter, the Ten) rejected all the ideas suggesting structural reforms, such as the institution of a secretariat, preferring once again more practical solutions. The United Kingdom took the Presidency, so Lord Carrington could lead the final stage of this process. Given the strong intergovernmental approach of the British foreign minister, the basic approach was to reform the EPC to achieve a more effective functioning, but without transforming it too much. Finally, the result was the so-called London Report approved by the Ten on 13 October 1981 in London.

In the preamble the foreign ministers acknowledged the difficulties the EPC had been experiencing noting that “the Ten are still far from playing a role in the world appropriate to their combined influence”⁵⁴. They also added that “the Ten should seek increasingly to shape events and not merely to react to them”⁵⁵ recognising the ineffectiveness of an exclusively declaratory diplomacy. Anticipating the possible solutions, they made immediately clear in the preamble that “agree to maintain the flexible and pragmatic approach”⁵⁶ of the EPC. So, the answer to the non-functional role of the Presidency had to respect these premises. Indeed, point 10 regarding the Presidency set a reform which did not go too much beyond the EPC nature.

10. As political cooperation has developed, the areas of agreement among the Ten have enlarged and the range of subjects handled has become more extensive. The workload of

⁵² Ibidem, p. 427.

⁵³ In 1981 The EC member states became ten with the accession of Greece.

⁵⁴ Report on European Political Cooperation, London, 13 October 1981, Preamble.

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

⁵⁶ Ibidem.

*the Presidency in its role as spokesman in the European Parliament, and in contacts with third countries, has also increased. These trends may be expected to continue, particularly in the light of the enlargement of the Community. As a result it has become desirable to strengthen the organization and assure the continuity of political cooperation and to provide operational support for the Presidency without, however, reducing the direct contact, pragmatism and economy which are among the chief virtues of the present arrangements. Henceforth the Presidency will be assisted by a small team of officials seconded from preceding and succeeding presidencies. These officials will remain in the employment of their national foreign ministries, and will be on the staff of their embassy in the presidency capital. They will be at the disposition of the Presidency and will work under its direction.*⁵⁷

After admitting the need *to provide operational support for the Presidency*, the reform consisted in the creation of a Troika composed of the outgoing President, the President in office and his future successor. In the eyes of the Ten, it was the perfect solution because it did guarantee help to the Presidency in order to shape a more effective decision-making process and, at the same time, it did not create any political secretariat keeping everything in the hand of the states' officials without *reducing the direct contact, pragmatism and economy which are among the chief virtues of the present arrangements*. Thus, a way to strengthen the EPC action was introduced and the intergovernmental nature of it was protected.

The other, and even more meaningful, aspect of the London Report referred to the relations between the activities of the EPC and those of the EC. Two provisions from the same point need to be analysed. The first one regarded the problem of consistency mentioned before. Indeed, the Ten agreed that “the Presidency will ensure that the discussion of the Community and political cooperation aspects of

⁵⁷ Ibidem, Point 10.

certain questions are coordinated if the subject-matter requires this”⁵⁸. This pledge for a coordination with the EC institutions was still limited by the domain of the subjects under discussion, but it was a clear anticipation of the centrality the principle of consistency would have had in future EC treaties. The Ten recognised that making sure their action was coordinated with the one of the EC was fundamental to build the European international role. The second provision referred to the relationship between the EPC and the EC Commission. It was revolutionary because it heightened the role of the Commission by stating that “within the framework of the established rules and procedures the Ten attach importance to the Commission of the European Communities being fully associated with political cooperation, at all levels”⁵⁹. The Commission was finally invited to collaborate with the EPC *at all levels*. The line of distinction of competences drawn since the Davignon Report which caused problems during the 1970s was almost cancelled. The division of domains was not completely overridden, but the Commission was asked to gain a more political role. This was the revolutionary approach the London Report offered. It was a significant step forward the enhancement of the role of the Commission. It was the beginning of the path the Delors Commission would have taken decisively to create a political actorness of the Commission in EC external action. Thus, even if the UK was the greatest promotor of the London Report, it resulted in a step forward towards a greater political role of the EC in the management of the European external action, especially the Commission. However, in 1981 some member states tried to further enhance the EC competences in dealing with international affairs by proposing a broader reform of the EPC. The main actors of this attempt were the German foreign minister Genscher and his Italian colleague Emilio Colombo. On 6 January 1981 Genscher delivered a speech in Stuttgart in which he proposed a European Political Union where the distinction between Community’s competences and EPC’s ones had to completely disappear. This new Union had to manage all the aspects of the European foreign policy. This starting position, after months of consultations with the Italian side which held a softer

⁵⁸ Ibidem, Point 12.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, Point 12.

position, became the so-called Genscher-Colombo plan, presented to the Council of minister of foreign affairs on 12 November 1981. This plan asked for a greater involvement of all EC institutions proposing a procedure of consultations between EPC and the EC bodies in order to shape the European external action. This plan immediately found the opposition of the member states, especially France and the United Kingdom. Finally, the plan resulted in a simple solemn Declaration on the European Union approved by the Stuttgart European Council on 19 June 1983, a non-legally binding document with general provisions lacking any real political meaning⁶⁰. The destiny of the Genscher-Colombo plan was the sign that at the beginning of the 1980s the London Report was the maximum possible progress of EPC reform the member states were willing to concede. In the next years the Commission had to demonstrate its value on the field in order to gain a broader political role in external action.

The reality, indeed, counted more than the reports and the declarations. As mentioned before, in 1979 two crises as Afghanistan and Teheran showed the need of an EPC reform. Similarly, in 1981 and 1982 two international challenges emerged to test the new EPC of the London Report: the crisis in Poland (1981) and the Falklands/Malvinas war (1982). The two events seem different, but they proved the same point: thanks to the reform of the London Report, the EPC could act faster and, more important, could coordinate effectively with the EC Commission in order to alternate the political and the economic pressure. The political declarations were finally followed by solid actions imposing economic sanctions. In both cases, the EPC and the EC applied the principle of consistency which was not yet enshrined in any treaty or report. In addition, in the Polish case Europe was able to resist the Reagan administration's pressures to impose harsher economic sanctions demonstrating to have that political independence to be a sort of third pole in the Cold War they claimed since the Davignon Report. On its side, "the Falklands War showed, in terms of both substance and procedure, the

⁶⁰ For further in-depth historical analysis of the Genscher-Colombo plan, see M. E. Guasconi, *Prove di politica estera, La Cooperazione politica europea, l'Atto Unico Europeo e la fine della guerra fredda*, Chapter 2, pp. 80-103.

increasing closeness between the Community and the EPC context”⁶¹ demonstrating that the London Report significantly enhanced the EC role when it came to international affairs. In other words, these two international challenges indicated once again that the distinction of political and economic competences was simply artificial, because what Europe needed to play a decisive international role was a coordinated and consistent EPC-EC action on the field.

In a decade the EPC made significant steps forward, but it was still far from being the tool allowing the EC and its member states to build a common European foreign policy. After the London Report, the next evolution of the EPC was constituted in the European Single Act finally approved in 1986. As clarified before, for the sake of this work it more important the analysis of the final result than the actual process of negotiations.⁶² However, in this case it is significant to underline that the EC Commission, led by Jacques Delors, acted as the main driving force to include the provisions about the EPC in the final text. Indeed, at the beginning the proposal for the document had as main goal the transformation of the Treaties of Rome for accommodating the realisation of the Common Market, and the member states did not foresee a single text dealing with both the internal market and the political cooperation for the foreign policy. It was the tireless action of the Delors Commission that allowed the achievement of a single treaty. Thus, the Single European Act included the dispositions reforming the ECSC treaty, the EEC and EURATOM treaties and the EPC reports.

The Commission led the negotiations about the specific part of the EPC, dealing with opposing views by central member states such as France and the United Kingdom, with the aim of declaring inseparable the link between the economic and social progress of the EC and the enhancement of a truly European external action. The result was the Title III of the treaty composed of the twelve paragraphs of article 30 which marked important progresses, especially in three domains.

⁶¹ *The European Commission 1973-1986. History and Memories of an Institution*, Chapter 23, p. 428.

⁶² For further in-depth historical analysis of the process of negotiation of the Single European Act, see M. E. Guasconi *Prove di politica estera, La Cooperazione politica europea, l'Atto Unico Europeo e la fine della guerra fredda*, Chapter 3, pp. 153-166.

The first one was the institutionalisation of the EPC. Indeed, paragraph 10 of article 30 created a secretariat for assisting the work of the Presidency. Given the strong opposition by the member states against such an institutionalisation in the previous years, this was a major achievement. It was the sign that the EPC had entered the logics of the EC. It stopped being the pragmatic and flexible tool entirely in the hands of the member states. Naturally it did not mean that the foreign ministers lost all their power, but it was a significant evolution.

The second provision to be noted is paragraph 3. It dealt with the relationship between the EPC action and the EC Commission. It established regular meetings between Commission officials and the EPC in order to foster the coordination. It also reiterated that “the Commission shall be fully associated with the proceedings of Political Co-operation”⁶³. This formula recalled the one of the London Report and restates that the EPC-Commission collaboration had to be *fully* implemented. The distinction of competences was once again denied, or at least softened, by official declarations. The Commission made another step towards a greater political role in managing the European position in global affairs.

Finally, the third crucial aspect was the official formulation of the principle of consistency.

*5. The external policies of the European Community and the policies agreed in European Political Co-operation must be consistent. The Presidency and the Commission, each within its own sphere of competence, shall have special responsibility for ensuring that such consistency is sought and maintained.*⁶⁴

It is the first time the term *consistency* appeared in an official treaty. The past practical experiences of the previous years, especially the crises of 1981 and 1982, taught the EC and its member states the importance of a consistent effort. Thus, The Single European Act attributed legal status to the principle of consistency. It was agreed that it was basic to build a common European external action.

⁶³ Single European Act, Official Journal of the European Communities, No L 169/1, 29 June 1987 article 30, paragraph 3 (b).

⁶⁴ Ibidem, paragraph 5.

Moreover, it is significant that the Commission was given the *responsibility for ensuring that such consistency is sought and maintained*. It was another sign of the enhancement of the actorness of the Commission within the domain of European external action. From now on it would be impossible for the EPC to build an external action without collaborating with the EC Commission.

4. Conclusion

After a brief analysis of the role of foreign policy at the origins of the European integration project, this chapter has described the evolution of the European Political Cooperation from the Davignon Report (1970) to the Single European Act (1986). The core aspects of this process regard the nature of the EPC, its aims, and its relationship with the EC Commission. Starting from the nature, in its developmental process the EPC has kept intact its intergovernmental approach, but it experienced a growth in terms of institutionalisation. The Davignon Report and the following Copenhagen Report (1973) strongly stressed the need to maintain the EPC as a pragmatic tool. The first discussions to change this approach occurred during the debate for reforms in 1980/1981, but at the end the London Report (1981) preserved the EPC flexibility, and the proposals for a stronger change disappeared in the inconsistent Stuttgart Declaration (1983). However, the EPC was finally institutionalised with the creation of a secretariat and its inclusion in the framework of the Single European Act (1986).

Moving to the EPC aims, they constitute the more solid element. The goals of the EPC, in fact, did not change much during the years. Since the Hague communiqué (1969) the stress was put upon the struggle for peace and relaxation of the international relations, calling for a sort of third pole role for Europe in the setting of the Cold War. The Declaration on European Identity (1973) and the Declaration on Democracy (1978) added as objectives the protection of the European way of being based on democracy and rule of law.

Finally, the most significant evolution occurred in the EPC-Commission relationship. In the Davignon Report a line of distinction between the Commission competences relegated to the

economic domain and the EPC competences referring to the political area was drawn. Thus, the Commission was involved in the EPC only when EC matters were touched upon. However, the crises on the field showed how this division was artificial and counterproductive; therefore, in the London Report and in the Single European Act the member states had to agree that the Commission had to be fully involved in the EPC activities. The rigid separation was softened, and the Commission gained a broader and stronger political role. In addition, the enhancement of this relationship brought to the emergence and the institutionalisation in the Single European Act of the principle of consistency, fundamental to shape an effective common European external action.

To sum up, this chapter showed that when, in 1985, the Delors Commission started the effort to strengthen the role of the Commission in the management of Community's external dimension, it found a path that had already been traced in that direction.

Chapter II

The Commission relations with the US in 1985-1988: not yet a political player

The 1980s are considered a difficult decade for the transatlantic relations⁶⁵. The United States of America and the European Community, together with its member states, had to deal with a significant number of disputes that opened “a serious divergence between Washington and most European capitals in both economic policy and approach to the Cold War”⁶⁶. Thus, when Jacques Delors officially took office as President of the European Commission on 6 January 1985, the challenges to face in the framework of the transatlantic relations were numerous ranging from commercial disputes to more political issues⁶⁷.

In this chapter Günter Burghardt’s archival papers dealing with the events from 1985 to 1988 are analysed in order to present an outlook of how these disagreements were managed by the EC Commission officials dealing with external relations. The methodological choice to select the four years between 1985 and 1988 is dictated by the end of the second Reagan administration in January 1989. Against this background, the aims of this chapter are three. The first is to examine the main themes of the relationship and the negotiating attitudes the Commission brought to the discussion table. This analysis demonstrates that between 1985 and 1988 the matters under discussion by the Commission and Washington were still mainly commercial, allowing a marginal space for political talks. It also shows how both the EC and the US knew they held a shared responsibility to support the world economic and trading system, but they held different negotiating attitudes. Given the prevalence of commercial matters in the transatlantic talks, the second goal is to study how the EC Commission managed some of these disputes. This investigation proves that the Commission was not

⁶⁵ See G. Lundestad, “*Empire*” by *Integration – The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997*, pp. 108-116.

⁶⁶ N. Piers Ludlow, *The Unnoticed Apogee of Atlanticism? U.S.–Western European Relations during the Early Reagan Era*, in Kiran Klaus Patel and Kenneth Weisbrode (ed.) *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s*, Cambridge University Press, September 2013, p. 18.

⁶⁷ See D. Basosi, *The European Community and International Reaganomics, 1981–1985*, in K. K. Patel and K. Weisbrode (eds.), *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s*, Cambridge University Press, September 2013, chapter 7, pp. 133-153.

a newcomer in trade relations, therefore it was competent in defending alone the EC interests. In other words, it proves that the Commission was able to effectively conduct its portion of external action regarding the common commercial policy. The third and final objective of the chapter is to demonstrate that during the four years under analysis even if the Commission still struggled to play a more political role, the economic relations Community Brussels was able to build, especially with Eastern Europe, enhanced its political relevance. This was a crucial step in the path towards gaining a broader role in the European external action.

As noted in the introductory chapter, it is important to bear in mind a methodological premise. This study is conducted on the exclusive basis of EC Commission documents, consequently the examination of the US behaviour is produced with a European lens. It means that it is more precise to state that, when dealing with the American positions, this work explains how the EC saw the American negotiating attitude rather than how Washington actually looked at Community Brussels.

The chapter is divided in four sections. The first one presents the major trade disputes on the table and describes the negotiating attitudes of the two actors. The second deals with three specific commercial matters, selected among many to describe the effective action of the EC Commission in managing them. The third section analyses the Commission's role in some crucial political events related to the East-West relations and its effort to build economic relations with Eastern Europe. Finally, the conclusion crystallizes the main points of the chapter to depict this first phase of the evolution of the EC Commission role in the framework of European external action.

1. EC Commission-United States: a pure commercial relationship approached with different attitudes

As mentioned above, the 1980s were years of significant disagreements between the two sides of the Atlantic. However, it is crucial to underline that “despite the periodic transatlantic disputes that punctuate the period, some of the underlying mechanics of the partnership between the United States

and its principal Western European allies continued to work surprisingly smoothly”⁶⁸. Among these *mechanics* that did not stop working it is important to mention the summits between the US and the EC Commission. The main official occasions to develop this relationship were the annual December ministerial meetings between the American officials led by the US Secretary of State and the Commission agents, a custom started in 1982⁶⁹. For the sake of this work the attention is concentrated upon these US-Commission relations, while taking into account that “by the 1980s cooperation between Western Europe and the United States was carried out through an unprecedentedly thick layer of multilateral structures”⁷⁰ where the EC various institutions and its member states all played their own role. Thus, the EC Commission’s dealings with the US were just one piece of a wider transatlantic relations framework.

1.1 The importance of the Transatlantic relationship and its main themes

Before examining the negotiating attitudes of the EC and the US, it is essential to analyse why the US-EC relations mattered and the main themes they covered in the second half of the 1980s. Delors took office on 6 January 1985, and on 7 January the head of the European Commission delegation in Washington, Sir Roy Denman, sent him a letter⁷¹. The aim of this document was to draw the framework of the US-EC trading relationship in 1985 and 1986. This letter presented the general commercial matters under discussion and explained why the EC-US significantly mattered.

The first aspect to mention is the trade centrality in the relationship between the two sides of the Atlantic. The title of the letter was: “Washington, Brussels and world trade the US-EC trading relationship in 1985 and 1986”. It clearly put the commercial dimension at the centre anticipating that

⁶⁸ Ibidem, p. 19.

⁶⁹ Historical Archives European Union (HAEU), Florence, Fond Günter Burghardt, GB-9, European Commission, Background document, *Le dialogue Communauté/États-Unis*, Brussels, 19 April 1985.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, p. 31.

⁷¹ HAEU, GB-9, European Commission, Letter, *Washington, Brussels and world trade the US-EC trading relationship in 1985 and 1986*, From Washington to Brussels, Roy Denman, Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities, 7 January 1985, Confidential.

the main area of the transatlantic relations the Commission had to manage was trade. It was not a surprise, given the Commission's exclusive commercial competences, but it was the confirmation that in 1985 the Commission still did not play a relevant political role in the European external action. Indeed, in order to explain the importance of the EC-US relations, Denman started with some purely commercial data underlining that "among their (of the US) export markets the European Community was in 1983 the biggest, taking 22 percent of all American export" and also that "we are now exchanging annually something like \$100 billion worth of goods between us"⁷². Thus, Denman clarified that, from the economic viewpoint, the relationship mattered because it was a flourish part of the trade of both the EC and the US. However, Denman also wrote that the EC-US "relationship is not simply a trading one. Fundamentally it is a political one"⁷³. This further consideration demonstrated that the Commission was aware of the strict link between the political and the economic realm that characterised transatlantic relations, but these political matters were out of the Commission's control. Regarding the main themes to be discussed in 1985 and in the coming years⁷⁴, the most important challenges would come from various trade disputes. In general, Denman called for particular attention on the protectionist sentiment of the US Congress that was manifest in the discussions for the 1984 Trade Bill and on the agricultural issues, in particular in relation to the agricultural subsidies. However, according to Denman, the most significant problem for trade relations was that "there is prevalent in Washington – and particularly on the Hill – a deep-rooted feeling that the international trading rules are stacked against the United States"⁷⁵. He wrote that there was nothing true in such ideas, but that the EC needed to manage cautiously this American feeling of

⁷² Ibidem, point 4.

⁷³ Ibidem, point 6.

⁷⁴ GB-9, European Commission, *Washington, Brussels and world trade the US-EC trading relationship in 1985 and 1986*, From Washington to Brussels, Roy Denman, Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities, 7 January 1985, Confidential.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, point 28.

“a tilted playing field”⁷⁶ because it could lead to dangerous decisions damaging the world trading system.

The second relevant element is the shared perception of the US and the EC that their commercial relationship had a broader meaning beyond the bilateral dimension. Denman clearly wrote that, since Washington and Community Brussels were the two most important players in terms of global trade, they held a shared responsibility to support international economic and trading system.

*The European Community and the United States are the major actors on the world trading stage accounting for one-fifth and 15 percent of world trade respectively (Japan accounts for only 7 percent). Thus a major responsibility for the preservation of the one world trading system is jointly held by the Community and the United States. If ever there were a trade dispute across the Atlantic which produced a major and intemperate escalation of trade restrictions on either side then the GATT trading system could be unravelled with alarming speed and with very dangerous consequences.*⁷⁷

This quotation shows the awareness of this shared responsibility towards the entire global trade which made the EC-US relationship a fundamental pillar of the stability of the entire global economy. According to this view, the collaboration had to go well beyond the bilateral interests of the two actors because they had to pay attention to the entire international trading system. Attributing such a significant duty to the EC-US economic relationship meant that the single commercial area could have meaningful political implications. If unsolved disagreements in a commercial dispute between the two sides of the Atlantic could lead to the fall of the entire General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (hereafter GATT) system, then it could mean also catastrophic political consequences all around the world. Indeed, in 1987 the same Denman in a steering brief for a visit by the US Vice-President (VP) George H. W. Bush suggested to be “conscious of the political implications of the

⁷⁶ Expression by the US Chairman of the Trade Subcommittee on the House Ways and Means Committee Sam Gibbons, *ibidem*.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, point 5.

transatlantic relationship”⁷⁸. Moreover, holding this shared responsibility meant also that sometimes the two had to give priority to the stability of the global trading system rather than to their interests, Thus, such a powerful relationship could sometimes translate in reciprocal disadvantages because “there needs to be give and take and a realisation of problems on both side”⁷⁹. This view of the common responsibility held by the EC and the US was shared also by the American standpoint. For example, in June 1985 during his first visit to the Delors Commission in Brussels the VP Bush talked openly of a “free world’s burden”⁸⁰ the EC and the US had to shoulder together through their political and economic relationship.

1.2 The EC Commission negotiating attitude

The Commission was so aware of the importance and the ongoing challenges of the EC-US relationship that in April 1985, only three months after the formation of the Delors Commission, an official visit by Delors to the US was organised. During this visit the President of the Commission and his officials made explicit the negotiating attitude they held towards their American partner. The Commission felt the need to remind Washington the equality on which the relationship was built and the consequent fact that “Europe should not be written off”⁸¹.

The irony of our relationship is that it is an unequal relationship which can only survive if it is equal. And equality implies frankness. Sometimes we shall perceive our interests differently. We shall have our quarrels. But our friendship sprung from democracy,

⁷⁸ HAEU, GB-21, European Commission, Steering brief, Telegram, *Tel No 214, Visit of Vice-President Bush to the Commission on 2 October*, From Washington to Brussels, Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities, 29 September 1987, Confidential.

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

⁸⁰ GB-21, European Commission, Telegram, *Tel No 321, Visit of Vice President Bush: 27 June 1985 – citrus*, From Brussels to Washington, Brussels, 26 June 1985, Confidential.

⁸¹ HAEU, GB-7, European Commission, “*Europe should not be written off*”, address by Jacques Delors President of the Commission of the European Communities to the National Press Club, Washington, 23 April 1985.

forged in war, tempered in the hard years of peace, will not fail. We have no other choice.

*For while we march divided, we fight for the liberty and the prosperity of the free world.*⁸²

Jacque Delors pronounced these words to conclude his speech before the National press club in Washington on 23 April 1985, his second day of the visit. He explicitly made three points which clarified how the EC saw their position in the relations with the US. The first put *equality* at the centre, from which *frankness* had to be implied. Delors called Washington to not disregard its European partner and to discuss openly the plans and the disagreements, showing the fear to be left behind. The second point was that the partnership was not meant to be perfect because the different interests could lead to *quarrels*, but these disagreements could never end the historical friendship built throughout the decades. The idea was to protect the different interests but at the same time to remind Washington the ultimate origin of the relationship. The third and final point regarded the shared responsibility of the EC and the US that had to collaborate for the *liberty*, which meant the political side of the international system, and the *prosperity*, which meant the economic side of the world trading market.

Thus, it was clear that the EC perceived to be dealing “with an erratic giant, with all the attributes of a distant imperial power”⁸³; therefore, the Commission needed to often remind the US the equality of the relationship, the possibility of different interests⁸⁴, and the need of coordination⁸⁵. Against this framework of perception of the US, the EC built its negotiation attitude on three combined elements: constant reminder of the shared responsibility, cautious but decisive pressure on Washington, and strong defence of its own interests. The shared responsibility towards the global trading system was exploited by the Commission to force Washington to accept some sectorial economic losses in order

⁸² Ibidem.

⁸³ GB-9, European Commission, *Washington, Brussels and world trade the US-EC trading relationship in 1985 and 1986*, From Washington to Brussels, Roy Denman, Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities, 7 January 1985, Confidential, point 10.

⁸⁴ See HAEU, GB-11, European Commission, Steering brief for CE/US Reunion ministeriell, Bruxelles, 13 décembre 1985, *Note Générale Introductive*, Brussels, 9 December 1985.

⁸⁵ See GB-9, European Commission, Brussels, Speaking brief for President Delors’s visit to the USA, April 1985, *The need for policy coordination*, 16 April 1985.

to get greater systematic advantages. The pressure had to be expressed in a smart way to avoid resulting arrogant because “if Americans think that foreigners are lecturing them their temperature is apt rapidly to rise to boiling point”⁸⁶; at the same time this prudence had to be complemented by firmness in order to “make it clear to the Americans that if they want to take unilateral action to change the world trading rules then we shall not hesitate to retaliate”⁸⁷. In other words, the Commission should not be aggressive against the US, but contemporarily it should not allow everything to Washington. Finally, concerning the strong defence of European interests, Delors conducted, among many, a significant battle for the European common agricultural policy from which descended a specific European social model⁸⁸.

1.3 The US negotiating attitude: the Commission’s view

As noted above, also Washington was well aware of the crucial importance of the transatlantic relations in both the political and the economic field. However, the US, due to various historical and political reasons, had no fear in behaving more straightforwardly. Before deepening this analysis of the American negotiating attitude towards the EC in the second half of the 1980s, it is important to remind again the methodological premise made above: this study is conducted only on EC Commission documents, therefore the perspective is exclusively a European one.

When dealing with the US the EC perceived a hostile position from the American side, which the Commission officials labelled as “aggressive ambivalence”⁸⁹. This concept meant that from the

⁸⁶ GB-9, European Commission, Telegram, *Tel No 96, Briefing for visit of President Delors*, From Washington to Brussels, Washington, 12 April 1985, Confidential, *Priorité absolue*.

⁸⁷ GB-9, European Commission, *Washington, Brussels and world trade the US-EC trading relationship in 1985 and 1986*, From Washington to Brussels, Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities, 7 January 1985, Confidential, point 32.

⁸⁸ See A. Bitumi, “An uplifting tale of Europe”. *Jacques Delors and the contradictory quest for a European social model in the Age of Reagan*, in *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Routledge, 16:3, 2018, pp. 203-221.

⁸⁹ GB-11, European Commission, Background note for the EC/US ministerial meeting, Brussels, 13 December 1985, *Principles governing EC/US trade relations over the last twenty years*, Brussels, 6 December 1985; and GB-19, European Commission, Background note for the EC/US ministerial meeting, Brussels, 12 December 1986, *Principles governing EC/US trade relations over the last twenty years* Brussels, 2 December 1986.

political standpoint Washington seemed to support the initiatives for strengthening the European integration, while from the economic viewpoint the US “vigorously attacked many Community policies”⁹⁰. Thus, the Commission had to face an aggressive counterpart keen on putting pressure without neither hesitation nor prudence. This belligerent American attitude was explained by Washington’s problematic relationship with economic interdependence.

The development of the European Community has coincided with the growing dependence of the United States on international trade for its economic well-being. These two phenomena, of the postwar international economy, go a long way towards explaining the basic ambiguity of US attitude to the European integration process and of the EC/US trading relationship in particular. The more the American depended for his livelihood on trade with other countries, the more he disliked the threat to his economic well-being from the other side of the Atlantic.⁹¹

The US were aware that their economic power and prosperity did not depend anymore only on themselves, and it was a source of preoccupation and aggressiveness. This attitude led Washington towards “a kind of push/pull psychology”⁹² in relation to comparative economic performance, meaning that “if the American economy (in terms of GNP) is doing better than the rest of the world then the tendency here is to beat one’s chest”⁹³, while “if things are going badly (in terms of increasing trade deficit) the tendency is to conclude that the trading rules must be tilted against the US”⁹⁴. Here laid the main difference between the European and the American negotiating attitude. Both were aware of the economic interdependence and the consequent need to cooperate, but the EC Commission was cautious in making its points, while the US were frustrated by the situation, therefore they acted more aggressively blaming the EC for their economic difficulties of the period.

⁹⁰ Ibidem in both.

⁹¹ Ibidem in GB-11

⁹² GB-9, European Commission, Letter, *The second Reagan administration the road ahead*, From Washington to Brussels, Roy Denman, Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities, 11 March 1985, Confidential.

⁹³ Ibidem.

⁹⁴ Ibidem.

The Commission officials perceived this acrimony so strongly that were convinced that from the American viewpoint “Europe is seen as not much more than incidentally important – a useful place to park missiles and a pleasant place for a holiday”⁹⁵. The US perceived the EC as “égoïste, non fiable et introvertie”⁹⁶, therefore accused it in all these economic areas without using the caution the EC cared to use. However, it is interesting to underline another characteristic of the American attitude: the political issues trumped the economic ones. A clear example is offered by a 1987 telegram where EC officials recognised that “the U.S. tone of voice towards the Community has become friendlier”⁹⁷ and the reason was that “reflecting an understandable feeling that with Irangate and other disasters the administration was more in need of friends than enemies in Western Europe”⁹⁸. The ambivalence was clear in this case: the aggressive attitude on economic matters was substituted by a friendlier behaviour for gaining political support.

In order to conclude the study of the American attitude, it is necessary to briefly analyse the position of the US Congress towards the international trading system. Indeed, in the American political system the Congress played a pivotal role in determining the US international stance. The Commission was so aware of the centrality of the Congress that Denman suggested his colleagues that when dealing with the US about trade issues “above all given its decisive influence we need to aim our message to the Congress”⁹⁹. Consequently, it was fundamental to know the perspective of the Congress. The US Congress was the major source of the American aggressiveness against the other trading partners. Indeed, “there is a very strong belief in the U.S. Congress, among Republicans as well as Democrats

⁹⁵ GB-9, European Commission, Telegram, *Tel No 97*, Steering brief, *Visit of President Delors to the United States, April 21-28*, From Washington to Brussels, Washington, 12 April 1985, Confidential, Priorité absolue.

⁹⁶ GB-9, European Commission, Background for visit of President Delors to US, 21-27 April 1985, *Relations commerciales CEE/USA*, Secretariat General, Brussels, 19 April 1985.

⁹⁷ HAEU, GB-22, European Commission, Telegram, *Tel No 256*, Suggested steering brief, *EC/US ministerial meeting 12 December 1987*, From Washington to Brussels, Washington, 1 December 1987, Confidential, Priorité 1.

⁹⁸ Ibidem.

⁹⁹ GB-9, European Commission, *Washington, Brussels and world trade the US-EC trading relationship in 1985 and 1986*, From Washington to Brussels, Roy Denman, Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities, 7 January 1985, Confidential, point 34.

that the Administration had no trade policy”¹⁰⁰ that led the American representatives to think that the Reagan administration was too soft in this area. Therefore, the Congress challenged the administration policies and “seems to be wanting to take over trade from the President and calls for protectionism get stronger”¹⁰¹. The best example to demonstrate this desire for more protectionism was the proposal for an import surcharge made in 1985, a measure opposed by all the other international actors and even by some American crucial sectors, such as the technological one¹⁰². In addition, the Congress disagreed with the President also on the solution to adjust the perceived tilted playing field of the world trading system. Reagan, in fact, called for a new round of trade negotiations within the GATT context¹⁰³, while “many members of Congress are cynical of more multilateral negotiations”¹⁰⁴ believing that “GATT is useless and anti U.S.”¹⁰⁵. Thus, the Congress had no faith neither in the American trading partners, in particular the EC, nor in the global trading system itself. The Congress was an actor pushing the administration for more firmness against the EC, because, according to the American representatives, the international economic system was designed to damage the US economy.

2. The Commission managing commercial disputes: an experienced and solid player

Bearing in mind the centrality of trade in the Commission-US relationship and the negotiating attitudes of the two actors, it is now possible to examine the behaviour of the Commission in managing some specific trade disputes with Washington. In the 1980s the Commission was a solid leader in the trade negotiations field; therefore, the EC was able to have its voice heard. The challenges and disagreements of those years were numerous and touched many different areas. In the

¹⁰⁰ GB-9, European Commission, *Congressional overview*, from Washington to Brussels, Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities, 17 April 1985.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem.

¹⁰² See ibidem.

¹⁰³ In 1982 the Reagan administration proposed a new round of negotiations at GATT’s ministerial meeting.

¹⁰⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem.

following, three specific themes are analysed: the 1985 EC enlargement to Portugal and Spain with its commercial consequences, the launch and the first years of the Uruguay round of GATT negotiations, and the issue of agricultural subsidies. The investigation of these matters demonstrates the strength and decision of the Commission in managing the commercial relations with the US. Since the disputes were of mere commercial nature, the Commission conducted its action without the need to coordinate with the EPC or other EC institutions. This was the Commission's sector of the European external policy. The analysis also shows how the different aspects of the negotiating attitudes mentioned above translated in real actions.

2.1 The Commission relying on the shared responsibility: the case of the 1985 enlargement

In 1985 the EC and its member states finalised the agreement with Spain and Portugal for the entry of the two countries in the European Community. The accession treaties were signed, and 1 January 1986 was established as official date for the accession. The EC enlargement had significant internal and external consequences in both the political and economic field. Consequently, it led to debates and negotiations internally and externally between the EC and its allies and economic partners. The matter unavoidably also touched the American interests. In order to conduct a clear analysis, it is useful to distinguish the political field from the economic one.

Politically, the EC was extremely satisfied because the “enlargement is evidence of its pull and its vitality”¹⁰⁶. The officials working on the enlargement underlined that “the whole Europe will be the gainer by the greater stability enlargement will bring and by the greater contribution it will be able to make to world peace”¹⁰⁷. Thus, the EC believed that this enlargement was a tool for stabilization and peace for both Europe and the entire international system. The US shared these European ideas; therefore, they politically supported without hesitation the 1985 enlargement, as they had always

¹⁰⁶ GB-9, European Commission, Speaking brief for President Delors' visit to US, 21-27 April 1985, *Enlargement*, Enlargement delegation, Brussels, 15 April 1985, for official use only.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*.

supported the previous EC enlargements¹⁰⁸. However, Washington assumed a different and more hostile posture towards the economic part of the enlargement, embodying almost perfectly the concept of aggressive ambivalence.

Economically, indeed, the US complained significantly of the disadvantages and losses the enlargement would have caused them, in particular in the agricultural market. It was reported that during the EC-US ministerial meeting on 13 December 1985 the US Trade Representative Clayton Yeutter decisively posed the problem by stating that “his people were concerned about the estimated 50% loss of their agricultural markets in Spain and Portugal, out of a market of about \$1 billion”¹⁰⁹. The US underlined the hit against their commercial policy disregarding all the other possible advantages. It did not mean that Washington did not care of the other political and economic effects, but it was a clear sign that the US were not willing to accept any single economic damage, even in front of various other benefits. Thus, the EC prepared two different sets of answers to face this rigid and aggressive American position. The first one was specific regarding the economic loss the American feared. The Commission officials suggested Delors to underline that, even if some losses would have been inevitable in some sectors, in some other fields it would have become easier and more profitable for the US trading with both Portugal and Spain. For example, Washington was particularly concerned for its soya exports to Spain, and the Commission officials asked Delors to make clear that in reality the American access to that segment of the market was likely to significantly improve¹¹⁰. The Commission defended itself with its technical expertise and the plain force of numbers. The second set of answers is more interesting because it recalled the shared responsibility the US and the EC held towards the world trading system.

¹⁰⁸ GB-11, European Commission, Background note for the EC/US ministerial meeting Brussels, 13 December 1985, *Community enlargement – external implications*, Brussels, 6 December 1985.

¹⁰⁹ GB-11, European Commission, *Minutes of the EC-US Ministerial Meeting 13 December 1985*, Directorate-general for external relations, Brussels, 9 January 1986.

¹¹⁰ GB-9, European Commission, Speaking note for Mr. Delors’ visit to Washington, 21 April 1985, *Community Enlargement – external implications*, Brussels, 15 April 1985.

*We need to find an approach to these matters based upon a spirit of co-operation – finding solutions together – rather than of confrontation as it has sometimes been in the past. The fact is that there must be reasonable give and take in this affair. We are not asking you to pay the bill for enlargement. But at the same time you cannot simply pocket, without so much as an acknowledgement, the liberalisations and then expect to be fully compensated for each and every case where your exports to Spain or Portugal will be affected.*¹¹¹

This speaking suggestion for Delors stressed the importance of collaboration and the significance of the shared responsibility the two sides of the Atlantic had in terms of trade. Basically, the Commission officials underlined that trade liberalisation did not come at no cost. There was a price to pay for both the actors, but it was worth for the greater achievement of a more liberalised and prosperous global market. The EC did not want to put the burden of the enlargement on the American shoulders, but forcefully reminded that an effort from both sides was needed in order to build a better and better world trading system. This solid attitude was kept also during the December 1985 ministerial meeting to answer to Yeutter's preoccupation. Indeed, the Commission Vice-President and Commissioner for agriculture Frans Andriessen invited his counterpart to remember that "on enlargement, we should consider the overall trade and geopolitical advantages"¹¹² adding also that "if there was a negative impact on certain US trade interests, there was an even greater one on present Community's interests"¹¹³. Once again, the goal of the Commission was to push Washington to look at the bigger picture of *trade and geopolitical advantages*, since both parts would have suffered sectorial drawbacks in this process, but the general rewards would have been greater.

This brief analysis of the conflict over the 1985 EC enlargement demonstrates the practical realisation of the two different attitudes of negotiation. On one hand, the aggressive ambivalence of the US

¹¹¹ Ibidem.

¹¹² GB-11, European Commission, *Minutes of the EC-US Ministerial Meeting 13 December 1985*, Directorate-general for external relations, Brussels, 9 January 1986.

¹¹³ Ibidem.

resulted clear. They supported the political side of the enlargement but, at the same time, decisively exposed their annoyance for their economic losses. On the other hand, it proved the ability of the Commission to defend its moves cautiously but solidly relying on the first element of its strategy: the reminder of the shared responsibility. Indeed, the Commission officials exploited the shared responsibility Washington and Community Brussels felt to hold towards the world trading system in order to induce the US to accept some losses on their side for the benefit of the entire world trading system.

2.2 The Commission pressuring Washington: the case of the parallel progress for the Uruguay round

The Uruguay round was the eighth round of multilateral trade negotiations conducted within the framework of the GATT. It was launched in Punta del Este, a Uruguayan city, on 20 September 1986 and was officially concluded in Marrakesh, in Morocco, on 15 April 1995. At the end it included 125 contracting parties. It was a crucial step marking some important evolutions for the world trading system¹¹⁴. Needless to say, it is not possible to analyse the entire Uruguay round in all its themes and steps. Thus, the attention is focused on a condition the EC wanted to impose for the start of the round, in order to prove the capacity of the Commission to put pressure on Washington.

The need of a new GATT round of negotiations was felt because “in the early 1980s, the multilateral trading system came under great pressure due to the various protectionist and unilateral measures implemented by the industrialized countries to counteract recessions and competition from the newly industrialized countries”¹¹⁵. Consequently, in 1982 the United States officially asked for a new round at the GATT’s ministerial meeting. The Reagan administration believed that to overcome the economic crisis of those years it was necessary to relaunch the ideas of free trade and free market by

¹¹⁴ See L. Coppolaro, *Globalizing GATT: The EC/EU and the Trade Regime in the 1980s-1990s*, in *Journal of European Integration History*, 24:2, 2019, pp. 335-352.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 337.

reducing trade barriers. However, “on the other side of the Atlantic, the EC member states were concerned, above all, with overcoming the economic recession”¹¹⁶, therefore the EC declared not to be ready to accept the American proposal in 1983. Two years later, in 1985, Delors as newly appointed President of the European Commission put liberalization at the centre of the internal programme of the EC¹¹⁷ leading to a support also for the new round of GATT negotiations. Indeed, “it was only in March 1985 that the Council of Ministers of the EC adopted a statement on a new round”¹¹⁸. One of the most interesting sections of the declaration was point B of the second paragraph which established a strong link between the trade matters and the monetary and financial problems.

*(b) solutions to imbalance whose origin lies in the monetary and financial areas cannot be found in trade negotiations. Determine concerted action is required to improve the functioning of the international monetary system and the flow of financial and other resources to developing countries. Results in the monetary and financial areas should be sought in parallel with results in the trade field.*¹¹⁹

This point established the parallel progress approach. The EC declared that the new GATT round was needed, but it would have been useless if there were no progresses also in the monetary and financial areas. It was an innovative approach that looked at the entire picture of the global economy in crisis and wanted to exploit the GATT forum to look for holistic solutions, not simply trade adjustments. This position was immediately not welcomed by the Americans. Indeed, the Commission officials informed Delors before his first visit to the US in April 1985 that regarding the EC declaration for

¹¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 338.

¹¹⁷ In January 1985 the Commission published a White Paper on internal market reform to eliminate all internal barriers. It was endorsed by the June 1985 Milan summit leading to a shift towards a more market-led thinking. Finally, it led also to the adoption of the 1992 programme, which called for a total liberalization of trade, investment, and capital at the EC internal level in order to complete the single internal market by 1992.

¹¹⁸ F. Laursen, *The EC, GATT, and the Uruguay Round*, in L. Hurwitz and C. Lequesne (eds.), *The State of the European Community – Policies, Institutions and Debates in the Transition Years*, sponsored by the European Community Studies Association, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991, chapter 26, pp. 373-386.

¹¹⁹ GB-9, European Commission, Background for visit of President Delors to Washington, 21 April 1985, *Declaration on a new round of trade negotiations (text adopted by EEC Council of Ministers, 19 March 1985)*, Brussels, 16 April 1985.

the new round of trade negotiations in Washington there was concern on “the link established with other dossiers”¹²⁰.

Even if they foresaw the American opposition, in the preparatory documents for the April 1985 discussion in Washington the Commission officials kept underlining the importance of insisting on the parallel approach with the Reagan administration. Their suggestions demonstrate that the aim of the Commission was to be cautious and reasonable but also decisive and solid. In a speaking note the Commission officials suggested Delors to clearly declare that the EC “hopes that results in monetary and financial fields will be pursued in parallel with results in the trade field”¹²¹, but at the same time to acknowledge that “the GATT is not directly competent for monetary and financial matters”¹²². Another speaking note from the Commission delegation in Washington insisted on the need of parallel progress, because the monetary and financial framework could not be ignored¹²³. It also asked Delors to clarify that the Europeans “are not making these points as tricky preconditions or excuses for inaction”¹²⁴ but because they considered them fundamental to enhance the entire world economic system. The Commission was not requesting Washington an impossible effort of changing the monetary global system through a GATT declaration. The idea was to have the US recognising the interconnection between the fields in order to put pressure on them for some policy changing in their financial action.

During his visit in Washington Delors followed these suggestions holding the cautious but decisive behaviour the Commission needed. On 24 April 1985 during his meeting with Schultz, the Americans expressed concerns because the EC member states had not proposed a specific date for the start of the negotiations, and Delors exploited the occasion to explain that “if the US agreed to discussing

¹²⁰ Ibidem.

¹²¹ GB-9, European Commission, Speaking note for visit of President Delors to Washington, 21 April 1985, *New round of trade negotiations*, Brussels, 15 April 1985.

¹²² Ibidem.

¹²³ GB-9, European Commission, Telegram, *Tel No 99, Visit of President Delors, A new trade round: speaking note*, From Washington to Brussels, Washington, 12 April 1985, Confidential, *Priorité absolue*.

¹²⁴ Ibidem.

monetary and financial requirements of world growth, the Commission would be in a better position to convince the member states to be more precise on the starting of a new multilateral trade round”¹²⁵. Delors made clear that the parallel progress was a fundamental condition that the US could not avoid without being aggressive. He was more aggressive the day before during his speech before the US Senate Finance Committee. In that occasion he harshly criticised the American policy-mix in the monetary and financial framework. He directly called the US in front of their responsibilities in order to put pressure on them to accept the approach of parallel progress¹²⁶.

This brief examination of the Commission’s effort to impose its approach of parallel progress for the start of the Uruguay Round demonstrates the fulfilment of the second element of the EC negotiation attitude: the cautious but decisive pressure on Washington. The Commission had no hesitation in indicating the American responsibilities for the situation of the world economy and in putting pressure on the Reagan administration to accept a discussion of monetary and financial issues. The Commission never looked for an aggressive behaviour but wanted to effectively play its role by criticising Washington.

2.3 The Commission defending its own interests: the case of agricultural subsidies

As mentioned above, the 1980s were a decade characterised by a significant number of trade disputes between the two sides of the Atlantic. However, there was one sector which was by far the most controversial: agriculture. Agriculture was a broad sector including a lot of products and an incredible number of regulations. For this reason, a complete analysis of all the agricultural matters of those years is beyond the scope of this work. The examination includes only the disagreements over the agricultural subsidies in the second half of the 1980s. In this case the behaviour of the Commission

¹²⁵ GB-7, European Commission, *Summary record of meeting between President Delors and Secretary of State Schultz, Washington, 24 April 1985*, State Department, Brussels, 29 April 1985.

¹²⁶ GB-7, European Commission, *Brief summary of the statement by Mr. Jacques Delors, President of the Commission of the European Communities, before the US Senate Finance Committee, Washington, 23 April 1985*.

demonstrates its strength and effectiveness in defending the European interests, even beyond the specific economic area.

During his first visit to the newly appointed Delors Commission in June 1985, the VP Bush stated that agriculture was “the high-light of bilateral trade tension with the Community, more important than steel, and it was hotting up”¹²⁷. The theme was not new, and the Commission officials were already aware that during the last years “the main US attack has been against the use of subsidies (emphasis in the original text), in particular in the context of the common agricultural policy”¹²⁸. The principal problem was that in 1985 agriculture became the most contested area in the US Congress. The Congress used the theme of agriculture and the subsidies related to that sector to highlight how the international level playing field was tilted against the American interests. The VP Bush recognised that “the agricultural pressures now constituted in the US a new political phenomenon”¹²⁹. Also, the Commission officials perceived this Congress hostility and they alerted Delors before his first visit Washington in April 1985 that the US representatives “attempt, incorrectly, to put the blame on the shoulders of foreign countries, especially the EEC; thus, a danger of inappropriate remedies being advocated”¹³⁰. The *inappropriate remedy* was not late to arrive. During the discussion of the 1985 Trade Bill the Congress proposed as solution, in agreement with the administration¹³¹, the complete elimination of the agricultural subsidies. In 1987 this proposal was presented also in the framework of the Uruguay round and a ten-year deadline was established. In November 1987 in a letter directed to the Vice-President of the EC Commission Andriessen, the US Secretary of Agriculture Richard E. Lyng wrote clearly that the Americans “are seeking the elimination of all trade distorting agricultural

¹²⁷ HAEU, GB-20, European Commission, Telegram, *Tel No 320, Visit of Vice President Bush*, From Brussels to Washington, Brussels, 27 June 1985, Confidential.

¹²⁸ HAEU, GB-19, European Commission, Background note for the EC/US ministerial meeting, Brussels, 12 December 1986, *Principles governing EC/US trade relations over the last twenty years*, Brussels, 2 December 1986.

¹²⁹ GB-20, European Commission, Telegram, *Tel No 320, Visit of Vice President Bush*, From Brussels to Washington, Brussels, 27 June 1985, Confidential.

¹³⁰ GB-10, European Commission, Speaking brief for Mr. Delors’ meeting in Washington, 22.4.1985, *EC-US Agricultural Issues*, Brussels, 15 April 1985.

¹³¹ *Ibidem*.

subsidies and import barriers”¹³². Lyng added that they “realize the U.S. proposal is bold – but we are convinced a bold approach is necessary to overcome the current trade problems in agriculture and to create a market-oriented trading environment”¹³³.

Thus, the Commission had to face a strong challenge coming from its American partner. It is crucial to underline that the EC was not rigid on a position supporting no reforms in agriculture. The Delors Commission aimed at liberalising also the agricultural sector. Indeed, during their first meeting in London on 15 April 1985 Andriessen and Block “poursuivent tous les deux l’objectif de rendre les politiques de prix et de marchés plus market oriented”¹³⁴. The differences laid in the proposals for a solution and in the context the two worked in. Regarding the solution offered by Washington, the Commission officials repeated in different occasions that “US proposals for a progressive phasing out of all non-tariff import restrictions and a prohibition of all export subsidies (except for food aid) are non-starters for the Community”¹³⁵ or also that “the US proposals for agriculture in GATT to do away with all support in a period of 10 years are not realistic (emphasis in the original text)”¹³⁶. As far as the context is concerned, the problem was that “le rôle de l’agriculture dans la société est perçu de manière différents des deux côtés de l’Atlantique”¹³⁷. Here the issue of the European social model emerged. Delors thought that “an effort had to be undertaken to modernise agriculture, by reducing its cost while reasserting the centrality of rural advancement for the European Society”¹³⁸. Farming had a different historical and social role in the European society. The Delors Commission could not and did not want to destroy the entire social layer of small farmers in order to make the sector more

¹³² GB-22, European Commission, *Letter to Mr. Frans Andriessen Vice-President of the Commission of the European Communities*, United States mission to the European Communities, 17 November 1987.

¹³³ Ibidem.

¹³⁴ GB-10, European Commission, Note de dossier, *Recontre entre le Vice-Président Andriessen et le Secretary Block, le 15 avril 1985, à Londres*, Helmut Von Verschuer, Brussels, 17 April 1985.

¹³⁵ GB-10, European Commission, Speaking brief for Mr. Delors’ meeting in Washington, 22.4.1985, *EC-US Agricultural Issues*, Brussels, 15 April 1985.

¹³⁶ GB-21, European Commission, Speaking note for visit of Vice President Bush to the Commission 2 October 1987, *Main agricultural issues with the US in the Uruguay round*, Brussels, 25 September 1987.

¹³⁷ GB-10, European Commission, Note de dossier, *Recontre entre le Vice-Président Andriessen et le Secretary Block, le 15 avril 1985, à Londres*, Helmut Von Verschuer, Brussels, 17 April 1985.

¹³⁸ A. Bitumi, “An uplifting tale of Europe”. *Jacques Delors and the contradictory quest for a European social model in the Age of Reagan*, in *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Routledge, 2018, p.208.

market oriented. The obstacle towards the elimination of all agricultural subsidies was not just economic, but also social.

*The problem we are trying to cope with, e.g. in agriculture and in our rust belt industries, are essentially similar problems, even though our respective political approaches to them may be different. We can surely admit here together in private that neither of us is without sin in this respect. What we must do is exercise mutual restraint; and, when one or other of us judges that steps are politically unavoidable, to work constructively together on solutions which can limit the damage.*¹³⁹

This passage of a speaking note the Commission officials wrote for Delors for the ministerial meeting of December 1985 resumed the EC approach. Both Community Brussels and Washington were facing similar problems, but the starting points to solve them were different; therefore, a cooperation had to be built exercising *mutual restraint* on the political level, meaning to accept the necessity of the other. The Commission was not willing to change the European social model to accommodate the economic requests of the Americans.

At the end, during the GATT trade ministers meeting in Montreal in December 1988 “the US and the EC did not succeed in resolving their dispute over agricultural export subsidies and the mid-term review resulted in a suspension”¹⁴⁰. Thus, the Commission behaviour demonstrated the implementation of the third element of its negotiating attitude: the strong defence of its own interests. Indeed, the EC put in danger the destiny of the entire Uruguay round to defend its economic and social interests related to the agricultural sector.

¹³⁹ GB-11, European Commission, Speaking note for EC/US ministerial meeting in Brussels, 13 December 1985, *Developments in trade and agricultural policy*, Brussels, 13 December 1985.

¹⁴⁰ L. Coppolaro, *Globalizing GATT: The EC/EU and the Trade Regime in the 1980s-1990s*, p. 343.

3. The Commission political role: either marginal or built on economic relations

As explained above, the Commission could deal mainly with the commercial side of the transatlantic relationship. However, it does not mean that the political domain was irrelevant. The second half of the 1980s saw a significant acceleration in the process of détente between East and West that ultimately led to the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the USSR. In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and his behaviour played a crucial role in the unfolding of the events. Therefore, the US and the EC had to collaborate in order to face various challenges of the détente, in particular the situation in Eastern Europe was a source of hope and concern for the EC and its member states. The Commission was aware of the importance of the political side of the EC-US relations. For the first ministerial meeting of the Delors Commission in December 1985 a speaking note was elaborated suggesting Delors to state that “*compte tenu de l’importance politique de nos relations, je voudrais suggérer que notre réunion à Bruxelles soit complétementée par une visite annuelle de ma part à Washington au milieu de l’année*”¹⁴¹. This proposal for a second annual meeting aimed at enhancing the political collaboration between the Commission and the US administration.

In this section an examination of some crucial political moments demonstrates that, despite these meaningful intentions by the Commission, the East-West détente process was led by Washington, and the Commission was simply informed of the results. Nevertheless, it is also demonstrated that the Commission was able to build deep economic relations with Eastern Europe that would have resulted politically fundamental in the coming years.

¹⁴¹ GB-11, European Commission, Speaking note for CE/US réunion ministérielle in Brussels 13 December 1985, *Renforcement du dialogue Commission//États-Unis*, Brussels, 5 December 1985.

3.1 The minor role of the EC Commission in the East-West détente process

The appointment of Gorbachev as Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985 moved the USSR to a more open attitude. Reagan and Gorbachev built a solid relationship, which seemed even friendly. This connection between the leaders of the two superpowers in constant confrontation led to various talks, summits and treaties that forged years of political détente. Here, it is not important to deeply analyse the contents of all these meetings and agreements, but it is crucial to understand the role the EC Commission played in the creation of this period of détente. Consequently, the way and the extent these major political events were discussed by the Commission and American officials during their meetings are examined. Three episodes are taken into consideration: the Geneva summit, the Reykjavik summit, and the signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

The Geneva summit was held on 11 and 12 November 1985. It was the first meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev. It was an occasion for general talks and, from the American side, to understand the attitude of the new Soviet leader. One month after this summit, the American secretary of State Schultz was in Brussels for the first ministerial meeting with the Delors Commission. Delors directly asked Schultz about the Geneva summit demonstrating the interest of the Commission for the political matters, but the answer was highly general. In his summary Burghardt wrote that Schultz simply stated that “the Reagan/Gorbachev meeting had been a good one”¹⁴² and that “US/Soviet relations had taken a fresh start but one had to be realistic about the nature of the soviet society”¹⁴³. Thus, there was not a significant involvement of the Commission about the specific contents of the summit. Beyond the general perceptions, Schultz did not share further information. It is important to underline that Schultz’s behaviour was not dictated by a hostility towards the Commission, but by the fact that the ministerial meeting with the Commission was mainly considered a forum for economic

¹⁴² GB-11, European Commission, Telegram, *Tel No. 574, EC/US Ministerial meeting 13 December 1985, Brussels*, From Burghardt to Washington, Brussels, 17 December 1985, Confidential.

¹⁴³ *Ibidem*.

consultations by the Americans. In 1985 the Commission still had to strengthen the political side of its role.

The situation was very similar in 1986 for the second summit between Reagan and Gorbachev held in Reykjavik on 11 and 12 October. The Commission was simply informed of the progress of the American-Soviet dialogue. The annual meeting with the Commission was still regarded as a sort of economic forum. The Commission officials were aware of this American perception. Indeed, the Commission representative in Washington sent a steering brief for the 1986 ministerial meeting in which he underlined this aspect. Denman wrote that in that period Washington was showing a great attachment to the EC-US relations, due to “a desire particularly after Reykjavik not to complicate the arms control situation by having an unnecessary row with the Community on the economic front”¹⁴⁴. The American attitude that Denman could perceive was a clear confirmation of the fact that Washington looked at the Commission as an economic partner. The Reagan administration did not involve the Commission in the détente political process because it lacked formal competences in this field. In 1986 the relationship with the EC Commission was only concerning US’s foreign economic questions.

The last step of the East-West détente process to be examined is the INF Treaty, officially signed on 8 December 1987. It was a significant step in the field of arms control. A few days after the signing, the annual EC/US ministerial meeting took place in Brussels. Delors asked the American secretary of State to open the debate with his views on the US/USSR dialogue, and “Mr. Schultz presented the INF treaty as the result of the determined and cohesive NATO position (he used the term *Alliance deal*)”¹⁴⁵. In this case Schultz recognised the contribution of the European allies, but in the framework of NATO. The Commission was once again simply informed. In addition, also in the INF treaty

¹⁴⁴ GB-20, European Commission, Telegram, *Tel No. 266, EC/US Ministerial meeting 12 December 1986, Brussels, steering brief*, From Washington to Brussels, Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities, 5 December 1986, Confidential, priorité absolue.

¹⁴⁵ GB-22, European Commission, Telegram, *Tel No. 403, EC/US Ministerial meeting 12 December 1987, From Brussels to Washington, Brussels, 15 December 1987, Confidential*.

occasion Schultz underlined the economic role of the Commission. Indeed, on 30 November 1987, a few days before the signing of the INF treaty, a meeting between American officials and the European Political Cooperation Troika took place in Washington. There Schultz stated that he was looking forward to the ministerial meeting with the Commission because “financial and economic issues were as important as arms control”¹⁴⁶. It was a further signal that still in 1987 the Reagan administration considered the Commission an exclusively economic player.

The brief analysis of these three meaningful political events in the East-West détente process of the 1980s demonstrates that the Commission still had a long path to go for gaining a more political role in the framework of the transatlantic relations, because Washington considered it only an economic partner. However, it could be argued that it was natural that the Commission played no role in those exclusively political matters that, even if had consequences for the whole world, regarded only the US and the USSR. This argument would be right because the Commission’s first and real area of interest was Europe. Following this reasoning, it is interesting to make a note about another step towards the global détente: Gorbachev’s speech at the General Assembly of the United Nations on 7 December 1988. This speech was historical because, in brief, Gorbachev announced a more defensive Soviet posture in international relations and, in particular, in Eastern Europe basically declaring that the Eastern European nations could decide for their own destiny without fearing a Soviet military intervention. Thus, these declaration clearly touched upon fully European matters. However, in a note commenting Gorbachev’s speech the head of the Commission delegation to the United Nations J. P. Derisbourd wrote that when talking of the international dialogue “Mr. Gorbatchev a cité la Chine, le Japon, l’Inde et le Brésil et s’est félicité d’une compréhension mutuelle accrue avec les États-Unis (il n’a à aucun moment cite l’Europe, la Communauté Européenne, la France, le Royaume-Uni ou

¹⁴⁶ GB-22, European Commission, Note for the record, *Troika meeting with the United States, Washington, 30 November 1987*, Secretariat General, 1 December 1987, Confidential, limited distribution.

l'Allemagne)''¹⁴⁷. This comment underlined that the EC and its member states struggled to play a significant political role even in Europe.

3.2 The commercial relations as tool to gain political relevance

“The coming to power of Mr. Gorbachov has brought a new style to Soviet leadership, even if there is unlikely to be any basic change in Soviet policies in the near future’’¹⁴⁸. This was the first suggestion in a speaking note for Delors for his first visit to the US as President of the European Commission. The Commission officials were cautious about the possible real change of the USSR due to the change of leadership. However, in a few months they experienced a significant change of attitude by the Soviets and their institutions in the domain they were more interested in: trade relations.

In that field a Soviet organisation called Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON or CMEA) operated since 1949. The relationship between the EC and the COMECON was difficult, because the latter aimed at designing a framework agreement with the EC in which all the guidelines for trade and cooperation should have been fallen, but the EC opposed this idea preferring to find agreements bilaterally with each COMECON member state¹⁴⁹. In 1986 everything changed, since “with Gorbachev’s coming to power, in the general context of a new détente between Est and West, and because of economic imperatives asking for some opening up, the COMECON has gradually dropped its requirements’’¹⁵⁰. The Commission immediately shared the progress with Washington. In a speaking note for the 1986 EC/US ministerial the Commission officials suggested Delors to explain this Soviet change of attitude and the new strategy the EC could finally adopt. Now that the Soviets

¹⁴⁷ HAEU, GB-23 European Commission, Telecopy No. 87, *Nations Unies; Visite de Mr. Gorbachev*, Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities to the United Nations, Head of Delegation, New York, 7 December 1988.

¹⁴⁸ GB-9, European Commission, Speaking note for Visit of President Delors to Washington 21 April 1985, *EAST-WEST*, Brussels, 17 April 1985.

¹⁴⁹ See A. Romano, *Untying Cold War knots: The EEC and Eastern Europe in the long 1970s*, in *Cold War History*, 14:2, 2014, pp. 153-173.

¹⁵⁰ F. de La Serre, *The EC and Central and Eastern Europe*, in L. Hurwitz and C. Lequesne (eds.), *The State of the European Community – Policies, Institutions and Debates in the Transition Years*, sponsored by the European Community Studies Association, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991, chapter 21, pp. 303.

“accept that individual countries (including the USSR) can deal bilaterally on trade and cooperation with the Community”¹⁵¹, the EC could use its economic and commercial technical tools to start a European Ostpolitik. Indeed, the Commission officials declared that “the main aim of our policy is normalisation (emphasis in the original document)”¹⁵². The EC was aware that it could not dream of an immediate complete liberalization of Eastern Europe, but the normalisation was a first crucial step. The Commission had a clear method to conduct its diplomatic action.

*The method we have chosen to achieve our goal of normalisation is the “parallel approach” (emphasis in the original document). This means establishing relations bilaterally with the European Eastern Bloc countries and, in parallel, with the Comecon itself. But our priority (emphasis in the original document) continues to be given to bilateral relations: matters of substance will be settled between the Community and individual countries. Official relations, too, should in our view be established first with the countries, afterwards with the organisation they belong to.*¹⁵³

This diplomatic technique proved the political side of the Commission effort of economic diplomacy. The dialogue on trade and cooperation needed to focus on the bilateral level in order to build normal and solid relationships with the single country of Eastern Europe. The commercial tool was exploited to obtain political results in terms of *official relations* with each single state. In other words, the Commission found a way to turn its significant economic and commercial power into a political tool to gain a broader role in the European external action.

This diplomatic approach of the Commission produced its results in a restricted span of time with both the single states and the Comecon itself. From the viewpoint of the relations with the state, 1987 was a year full of a great deal of technical work to find commercial agreements with three countries:

¹⁵¹ GB-19, European Commission, Speaking note for EC/US ministerial meeting in Brussels on 12 December 1986, Community relations with Eastern Europe and the CEA (Comecon), Brussels, 28 November 1986.

¹⁵² Ibidem.

¹⁵³ Ibidem.

Hungary, Romania, and Czechoslovakia¹⁵⁴. This effort was then extended to the other Eastern European countries, and it achieved the awaited result, because in 1988 Delors could inform Washington that “all the Eastern European members of the CMEA, except Romania, have now established diplomatic relations with the Community”¹⁵⁵. It was a crucial political step towards the normalisation of the European relations, and it was accomplished through the commercial tools of the Commission. On the other hand, also the EC-Comecon relationship was enhanced. In 1988 the EC-COMECON Joint Declaration on the Setting Up of Official Relationships was issued. It was undoubtedly another progress, but the Europeans cared only about the bilateral dimension underlining to the American allies that “for us, the value of this mutual declaration lies in the fact that it has opened the way to normal bilateral relations between the Community and the individual East European countries”¹⁵⁶.

These economic and political progresses in the EC relationship with Eastern Europe led the Commission to start explicitly reflecting on the possibility of pushing for a reform of the Soviet political system in the countries of that area.

*Des changements importants sont en cours dans les pays de l'Europe de l'Est. Nous ne savons pas, pour le moment jusqu' où ils iront ni quelles seront toutes leurs conséquences. Une réforme économique profonde est-elle possible sans remettre en question le système politique? Je pense que ces changements peuvent, en tout cas, rapprocher nos systèmes respectifs et apporter des bienfaits aux populations. Ils peuvent atténuer la division du continent. Nous pouvons donc leur réserver un préjugé favorable.*¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ See GB-22, European Commission, Speaking points for EC/US ministerial meeting 12 December 1987, *EC relations with the Comecon and Eastern Europe*, Brussels, 9 December 1987.

¹⁵⁵ GB-23, European Commission, Speaking points for EC/US ministerial meeting 9 December 1988, *Community relations with Eastern Europe*, Brussels, 7 December 1988.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁷ GB-23, European Commission, Speaking points for EC/US ministerial meeting 9 December 1988, *Relations with Eastern Europe*, Brussels, 7 December 1988.

The Commission officials suggested Delors to share this reflection with Washington. These words showed that the Commission started recognising the possible political effects of its commercial action that could even *atténuer la division du continent*. Even if the Commission remained cautious in its evaluation of possible political evolutions in the Eastern bloc¹⁵⁸, it is interesting to understand why this reasoning was immediately shared with the US. On one hand, the Commission had to communicate Washington this evolution because the two were major allies and they both knew that a transformation of the Eastern bloc could be achieved only via a strict cooperation. On the other hand, by sharing its progresses with Eastern Europe the Commission established itself as a crucial player in the area. The Commission was announcing the US that nothing could be moved in that area without consulting the Commission. In other words, the Commission was claiming its political role in Eastern Europe, also by moving towards a stricter relationship with the EPC.

4. Conclusion

After having proved that between 1985 and 1988 the Commission-US relations were still characterised mainly by commercial disputes and having presented an examination of the EC and US negotiating attitudes, this chapter has demonstrated the validity of two features of the Commission external action during the first four years under the guidance of Jacques Delors: its solid capacity to deal with the commercial disputes with the US and its ability to use the economic relations as political tool.

Concerning the managing of the commercial relations with Washington, three specific cases have been presented to show how the EC fulfilled its three main aims. First, the American complaints for the economic losses they would have suffered due to the 1985 EC enlargement were explained by the Commission through the reminder of the shared responsibility the two sides of the Atlantic held

¹⁵⁸ See GB-23, European Commission, Background note for EC/US ministerial meeting 9 December 1988, *New credits to the Soviet Union*, Brussels, 7 December 1988.

towards the world trading system. Second, in the case of the start of the Uruguay round the Commission was able to put a cautious but decisive pressure on Washington by insisting on the need of parallel progress in both the commercial and the monetary and financial area. Third, the Commission proved its strength in defending its own economic and social interests by contrasting the American proposal to cut all the agricultural subsidies.

Dealing with the use of the economic relations, this chapter showed that the Commission played a marginal role in shaping the East-West détente of that period. In addition, it could have only commercial relations with the Eastern bloc. However, through the insistence on bilateral relations with the single states of Eastern Europe, it was able to build solid relations that touched also political aspects. The Commission imposed itself as key player in Eastern Europe. In conclusion, even if the EC-Eastern Europe relations were mainly economical, it was exactly the relational capacity the EC could build through this EC-Comecon relationship and the progresses it achieved that demonstrated the ability of the Commission to deal with Eastern Europe. This was the starting point that launched the Commission towards a broader political role in the European external action, as analysed in the next chapter.

Chapter III

The revolutionary times of 1989-1991: the Commission gains political relevance

In 1989 “the pace of events was simply incredible”¹⁵⁹. The progressive liberation of Eastern Europe, the fall of the Berlin wall and the consequent German reunification, and the crumbling of the USSR were the main episodes that completely changed Europe and the international relations in 1989 and the following years. The United States, led by President George H. W. Bush, and the European Community and its member states were not the protagonists of these changes, but they had a significant influence¹⁶⁰. Thus, these years full of revolutionary changes happened to be a great occasion for the EC Commission to enhance its political role within the European external action.

In this chapter Günter Burghardt’s archival papers dealing with the events from 1989 to 1991 are analysed in order to explain how the Commission tried to exploit the historical circumstances to develop its external action beyond mere commercial matters, helping the EC in its effort to play a meaningful political role throughout these turbulent years. The methodological choice of dealing with these three years is dictated by the current availability of the archival documents. Against this background, the main goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that the Commission gained a relevant political role in the framework of the European external action. The chapter starts by describing the circumstances that allowed the Commission’s political progresses. The revolutionary times of that period led to a change of the American attitude towards the EC brought by the Bush administration. Indeed, “while Reagan had tended to get personally involved in the economic disputes between the two sides of the Atlantic, Bush was more focused on the overall political relationship.”¹⁶¹ The political dimension of the transatlantic relationship became the most relevant overcoming the commercial one. In this framework the Commission enhanced its international political role by following two

¹⁵⁹ G. Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945*, p. 233.

¹⁶⁰ See *ibidem*.

¹⁶¹ G. Lundestad, *“Empire” by Integration – The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997*, p. 112.

trajectories. First, the Commission continued to exploit its economic relations with Eastern Europe to impose itself as indispensable player in the area. Indeed, in July 1989 at the G-7 summit in Paris the Commission was entrusted with the task of coordinating the relations with Eastern Europe, demonstrating that its expertise in the assistance field and its economic links with the area could lead to a more political role. Second, the Commission significantly fostered its ties with the European Political Cooperation. This stronger and stronger relationship led the Commission to gain a more decisive voice in the political affairs managed by the EPC. In fact, the Commission, through its position at the EPC's side, was involved in the transatlantic debate about the new European architecture. The two trajectories shared a path to delete the distinction between economic and political competences, a crucial step to build a truly common European external policy.

The chapter is divided in four sections. The first one describes the importance in offering the Commission the opportunity to enhance its political relevance of the changing nature of the years taken into consideration and of the change of American attitude Bush inspired. The second deals with the Commission effort to coordinate the relations with Eastern Europe and its political meaning. The third section examines the relationship between the Commission and the EPC in order to study how the former exploited it to gain a political role. Finally, the conclusion recapitulates the crucial points of the chapter to portray how the Delors Commission was able to capitalize on these revolutionary years to build its political role within the European external action framework.

1. The Bush administration's attitude towards the transatlantic relations

As mentioned above, the years between 1989 and 1991 were a period of transition characterised by a sudden and revolutionary series of events that were mostly unexpected. The fall of the USSR and the emancipation of Eastern Europe were historical events that pushed the Western powers to react in order to manage the situation and its unpredictable consequences. During a ministerial meeting with the American on 15 December 1989 Mr. Andriessen, the Vice President of the EC Commission,

“emphasized that we are at the beginning of a new era in international relations”¹⁶². Community Brussels and Washington understood they were living a decisive time in history. Thus, these years offered a particular historical framework that was the occasion for the EC to enhance its political and international role. Since the most meaningful events were happening in Europe, the EC stood in a favourable position for action. Moreover, this transformative period also pushed the US to change their attitude towards the EC, fearing the possible consequences of the different revolutions occurring all at the same time. Therefore, “these events – if only because of their unnervingly unpredictable and potentially dangerous nature – also served to promote the strengthening of transatlantic ties and dependencies”¹⁶³. It meant that the EC, especially the Commission, found itself in a promising framework to strengthen its international role. The events created a window of opportunity making EC initiative strongly needed and also supported by Washington, its major ally. In this section the change of the American attitude brought by the Bush administration is taken under examination in order to understand how it was developed and how it was perceived by the EC Commission.

1.1 President Bush’s speech at Boston University

In January 1989 the Bush administration officially took power. Bush, coming from eight years as Vice President under Ronald Reagan, was already familiar with the EC and its functioning. As mentioned in the previous chapter, he visited Brussels multiple times in the previous years and had meaningful conversations with Commission officials who were still in office in 1989. As President, during his very first months, Bush immediately adopted a positive attitude towards the EC looking for more cooperation, especially in the political field. The first decision demonstrating the new American intentions was the appointment as US ambassador to the EC of Thomas T. Miles, a career foreign service officer that had represented the US in Canada. He undoubtedly was a figure with

¹⁶² HAEU, GB-25, European Commission, Minutes of the EC/US Ministerial Meeting, Brussels, 15 December 1989, Directorate-General for external relations, Brussels, 18 December 1989.

¹⁶³ J. M. Hanhimäki, B. Schoenborn and B. Zanchetta, *Transatlantic Relations since 1945 - an Introduction*, p. 122.

power and prestige, therefore this decision was a clear signal of “a serious commitment by the new US administration to professionally upgrade its relationship with the EC”¹⁶⁴. The second step Bush took to show the new positive American behaviour towards the EC was delivering a meaningful speech at Boston University on 21 May 1989. The speech was held by Bush with French President Mitterrand at his side, and it was the starting point for strengthening the transatlantic relationship.

Even if the speech was not too long, it clearly set the new American tone inspired by the new administration. Bush started by defining the specificity of the transatlantic relations. He recognised the revolutionary period they had before them where “the postwar order that began in 1945 is transforming into something very different”¹⁶⁵, but he underlined that “certain essentials remain, because our Alliance with Western Europe is utterly unlike the cynical power alliances of the past”¹⁶⁶, since “it is a tie of culture, kinship and shared values”¹⁶⁷. The American President attributed a significant grade of uniqueness to the transatlantic relationship in order to communicate the EC that in these difficult times Washington and Community Brussels had to cooperate to defend their vital and deep common interests. However, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, also the Reagan administration acknowledged the profundity of the relations between the two sides of the Atlantic. Bush imprinted the real change of attitude with his words regarding how the US had to behave with a more and more united Europe.

Now a century holds the promise of a united Europe. As you know, the nations of Western Europe are already moving toward greater economic integration, with the ambitious goal of a single European market in 1992. The United States has often declared it seeks a healing of old enmities, an integration of Europe. At the same time, there has been an

¹⁶⁴ R. H. Ginsberg, *EC-US Political/Institutional Relations*, in L. Hurwitz and C. Lequesne (eds.), *The State of the European Community – Policies, Institutions and Debates in the Transition Years*, sponsored by the European Community Studies Association, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991, p. 394.

¹⁶⁵ GB-25, European Commission, USA text, *Bush address to Boston University, 21 May 1989*, United States Mission to the European Communities, Public Affairs Office, Brussels, 21 May 1989.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

*historical ambivalence on the part of some Americans toward a more united Europe. To this ambivalence has been added apprehension at the prospect of 1992. But whatever others may think, this Administration is of one mind. We believe a strong, united Europe means a strong America.*¹⁶⁸

In this passage Bush cancelled the aggressive ambivalence that, as explained in the previous chapter, was the characterising element of the American attitude during the Reagan administration. He strongly endorsed the 1992 project of the Delors Commission recognising that it would have made a stronger Europe in both the economic and political fields. The Bush administration was willing to support the EC in all forms of its integration, also the economic one eliminating the *apprehension at the prospect of 1992* of the previous years. The economic disputes could not vanish, but Bush made clear that his interest leaned more towards *the promise of a united Europe*, meaning towards the political consequences of a more solid Europe. The ideas against the tilted playing field of the world trading system disappeared from the administration's public rhetoric, because in that politically transformative time the economic realm lost a relevant portion of its importance. In Congress this new view was not shared by everybody, indeed some congressmen "became more convinced that the EC was taking a leaf from Japan's book and was intent on constructing a fortress Europe that would discriminate against U.S. firms"¹⁶⁹. However, Bush's new approach did not mean that the economic relations with the EC were completely out of the new administration's interests, but it did mean that for Bush the political domain of the transatlantic talks was the priority, significantly more than the economic one. In other words, Bush "wanted to emphasize the political cooperation between the United States and the European Community and to play down the more or less inevitable economic disputes"¹⁷⁰. This message was reinforced when Bush declared "what a tragedy – what an absurdity

¹⁶⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁹ M. Gilbert, *A Shift in Mood: The 1992 Initiative and Changing U.S. Perceptions of the European Community, 1988–1989*, in K. K. Patel and K. Weisbrode (eds.), *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s*, Cambridge University Press, September 2013, p. 257.

¹⁷⁰ G. Lundestad, "Empire" by Integration – *The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997*, p. 10.

– it would be if future historians attribute the demise of the Alliance to disputes over beef hormones, and wars over pasta”¹⁷¹. This quote crystallized Bush’s idea: the transatlantic relationship had to primarily deal with the political transformations of the period by strongly cooperating, and the economic disputes had to be faced with less aggressivity because they were of minor importance. It was a significant change of attitude by Washington. As it will be demonstrated in the next sections, this change of approach helped the Commission fostering its political role in the European external relations. Indeed, since Washington started to be so interested in political issues, also the ministerial meetings with the Commission assumed a more political nature.

This clear change of attitude leaning more towards the political domain was backed by a decisive will to improve the forms of consultation and cooperation with the EC.

*The United States welcomes the emergence of Europe as a partner in world leadership. We are ready to develop – with the European Community and its member states – new mechanisms of consultation and cooperation on political and global issues, from strengthening the forces of democracy in the Third World, to managing regional tensions, to putting an end to the division of Europe. A resurgent Western Europe is an economic magnet, drawing Eastern Europe closer, toward the commonwealth of free nations.*¹⁷²

Bush defined the EC as *a partner in world leadership* to underline that Washington did not want to present itself as superior. Therefore, new forms of consultation were proposed in order to manage the *political and global issues*. Bush once again highlighted his interest in the political domain: the revolutionary period asked for a strong transatlantic alliance equipped with effective tools of cooperation and able to play a role of global leadership. The Commission officials understood Bush’s will and reported that “il pose fondamentalement la question du fonctionnement d'un système de

¹⁷¹ Ibidem.

¹⁷² Ibidem.

consultation dans une phase historique marquée par la double transition européenne et atlantique (emphasis in the original text)¹⁷³.

The new American approach was clear, but the Commission officials at the delegation in Washington commented Bush's speech by expressing concern for the too little attention the President dedicated to the specific role of the European Community. Indeed, in a telegram for Brussels Denman wrote that "one must regret that the President's speech makes no reference to the Community as such, and only one to the European Community and its member states, which is clearly too little and too late after the Single European Act."¹⁷⁴ The preoccupation was that this new more positive American approach was directed only towards the member states, as if Washington had not understood the role the EC had the right to play in external relations due to the Single European Act. Consequently, Denman continued by proposing Community Brussels that "we shall have, therefore, to build on what is the key sentence for us, i.e. U.S. readiness to develop *new mechanisms of consultation and cooperation on political and global issues*"¹⁷⁵. The Commission was aware that it had to rely on this American will to reform the forms of consultation in order to gain, through that channel, a more significant political role in the relations with Washington.

1.2 Secretary of State Baker's speech in Berlin

On 12 December 1989 Bush's speech for the new American approach towards Europe was backed by another public speech delivered by the Secretary of State James Baker in Berlin. Baker proceeded in the new American reflection about the transatlantic relations proposing the concept of New Atlanticism. This element was considered the basis on which the new European architecture had to

¹⁷³ HAEU, GB-24, European Commission, Note pour monsieur Pascal Lamy, *Relations avec les États-Unis, Le problème des consultations*, Secretariat general, Direction F, Brussels, 25 May 1989.

¹⁷⁴ GB-25, European Commission, Telegram, *Tel. No. 125, President Bush's speech at Boston University and joint press conference with President Mitterand*, From Washington to Brussels, Washington, 23 May 1989, Confidential.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

be built. The idea of New Atlanticism was grounded on two pillars: a European security guaranteed by Washington through NATO, and a strong American support to European internal integration.

In his speech Baker repeatedly insisted on the centrality of NATO as an institution that had to evolve and expand its goals in order to play its role in the evolutions occurring in Europe. In his view “NATO will become the forum where Western nations cooperate; where Western nations cooperate to negotiate, to implement, to verify and to extend agreements between East and West”¹⁷⁶. Moreover, Baker thought that NATO “offers the nations of Eastern Europe an appealing model of international relations”¹⁷⁷. These declarations clearly supported the permanence of a strong American role in the European affairs after the end of the 1989 revolutionary period. Baker was aware that if the Eastern bloc ceased to be an enemy, NATO could have lost its meaning; therefore, he proposed a new broader role for the transatlantic organization that could go beyond the mere security issues in order to guarantee Washington a solid position in Europe. This first element of New Atlanticism was in contradiction with what had seemed the new American approach of leaving more space to Europe proposed by Bush. Indeed, it received various criticisms from the Europeans, for example Delors “saw in it an attempt to rob the European project of a foreign and defense policy role and to suborn the EC to the United States”¹⁷⁸. The EC and its member states wanted to exploit the opportunity of those transition years to create its security system, thus this aspect of the New Atlanticism “increasingly collided with European efforts to build a more cohesive and assertive European Union within a post-Yalta economic and political community”¹⁷⁹. Baker’s insistence on the American position in Europe through NATO demonstrated that the Bush administration’s new approach towards Europe did not mean that Washington was willing to leave everything in the hands of the

¹⁷⁶ GB-25, European Commission, USA text, *A New Europe, A New Atlanticism, Architecture for a New Era*, addressed by Secretary of State James A. Baker III to the Berlin Press Club, Steinberg Hotel, Berlin, United States Mission to the European Communities, Public Affairs Office, Brussels, 12 December 1989.

¹⁷⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁷⁸ M. Gilbert, *A Shift in Mood: The 1992 Initiative and Changing U.S. Perceptions of the European Community, 1988–1989*, p. 261.

¹⁷⁹ R. L. Hutchings, *The US, German Unification and European Integration*, in F. Bozo, M. P. Rey, N. Piers Ludlow, L. Nuti (eds.), *Europe and the End of the Cold War A Reappraisal*, Routledge, July 2009, p. 127.

Europeans. The US wanted to support the European integration not with the aim of making it a third force, but rather to have a stronger ally well contained within the wider Atlantic framework led by Washington¹⁸⁰. Linked to this point, it is interesting to note that in the American newspapers the attention towards Europe and its integration significantly rose in the last years of the 1980s, and the common fear was that a united Europe could become a significant challenge for the US. For example, in 1989 Samuel Huntington wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that Europe was the most probable challenge to the American supremacy¹⁸¹.

On the other hand, the second pillar of the New Atlanticism decisively went in the same direction of the new American approach proposed by Bush. Indeed, Baker expressed a strong support for European integration, especially for the 1992 project, and linked it to the necessity of strengthening the transatlantic forms of consultations.

As Europe moves toward its goal of a common internal market, and as its institutions for political and security cooperation evolve, the link between the United States and the European Community will become even more important. We want our transatlantic cooperation to keep pace with European integration and institutional reform. To this end, we propose that the United States and the European Community work together to achieve, whether in treaty or some other form, a significantly strengthened set of institutional and consultative links. Working from shared ideals and common values, we face a set of mutual challenges--in economics, foreign policy, the environment, science, and a host of other fields. So it makes sense for us to seek to fashion our responses together as a matter of common course. We suggest that our discussions about this idea proceed in parallel

¹⁸⁰ See G. Lundestad, "Empire" by Integration – *The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997*, especially p.4, for an in-depth analysis of the concept of Transatlantic framework.

¹⁸¹ See M. Gilbert, *A Shift in Mood: The 1992 Initiative and Changing U.S. Perceptions of the European Community, 1988–1989*, pp. 253-256.

*with Europe's efforts to achieve by 1992 a common internal market so that plans for U.S.-
EC interaction would evolve with changes in the Community.*¹⁸²

In this passage Baker recognised the importance of the evolution of the EC and given these European progresses, the need for Washington and Community Brussels to find new forms of consultation. Basically “the 1992 project had made the EC count again in US strategic thinking”¹⁸³, therefore Washington needed to strengthen the transatlantic talks. As Bush had done in his speech, Baker reminded the *shared ideals and common values* the two sides of the Atlantic held in order to justify this need to always work together. In addition, following this reasoning, Baker recognised that “the European Community is already an economic pillar of the transatlantic relationship”¹⁸⁴ and that “it will also take on, perhaps in concert with other European institutions, increasingly important political roles”¹⁸⁵. Since the EC was clearly evolving and getting stronger, Baker made clear why the Americans wanted more solid links and forms of cooperation; while for the EC, and especially for the Commission, these last quotes were the signal that Washington was ready to leave some space for the political external relations of the Community. Commenting on Baker’s speech, Delors underlined that “les développements en Europe se poursuivront mais il y aura des risques, raison de plus pour assurer une meilleure concertation et coopération entre Bruxelles et Washington”¹⁸⁶ agreeing that the path towards a change of the forms of the transatlantic talks was desirable.

¹⁸² GB-25, European Commission, USA text, *A New Europe, A New Atlanticism, Architecture for a New Era*, addressed by Secretary of State James A. Baker III to the Berlin Press Club, Steinberg Hotel, Berlin, United States Mission to the European Communities, Public Affairs Office, Brussels, 12 December 1989.

¹⁸³ M. Gilbert, *A Shift in Mood: The 1992 Initiative and Changing U.S. Perceptions of the European Community, 1988–1989*, p. 261.

¹⁸⁴ GB-25, European Commission, USA text, *A New Europe, A New Atlanticism, Architecture for a New Era*, addressed by Secretary of State James A. Baker III to the Berlin Press Club, Steinberg Hotel, Berlin, United States Mission to the European Communities, Public Affairs Office, Brussels, 12 December 1989.

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁸⁶ GB-25, European Commission, *Reunion ministerielle CE/États-Unis*, Brussels, 15 December 1989.

1.3 The institutionalisation of the new nature of the transatlantic relationship

On 23 November 1990 the EC and the US adopted the Transatlantic Declaration on EC-US Relations. The document expressed some common principles of action and some common goals the two sides of the Atlantic shared, and the aim was “to endow their relationship with long-term perspectives”¹⁸⁷. Concerning the principles, it is interesting to note that Washington and Community Brussels agreed to “inform and consult each other on important matters of common interest, both political and economic, with a view of bringing their position as close as possible, without prejudice to their respective independence”¹⁸⁸. This point highlighted two fundamental features of the new course of transatlantic relations. First, the matters of discussion had to touch both the political and the economic domain. These two fields could not be separated anymore, and as explained above, the Bush administration’s approach privileged the political issues; therefore, the EC Commission could exploit this agreement to develop its political relevance. Second, the respective independence was recognised as crucial in order to conduct equal relations. Washington did not renounce to play a role in Europe, but it officially acknowledged that the EC was a peer partner. Moreover, the Transatlantic Declaration set up a new framework with a significant number of new formal meetings and occasions for ad hoc consultations¹⁸⁹. For the sake of this work, it is important to note the formalisation of “bi-annual consultations to be arranged in the United States and in Europe between, on the one side, the President of the European Council and the President of the Commission, and on the other side, the President of the United States”¹⁹⁰. It meant that in these meetings the two sides of the EC were represented: the institutions by the Commission, and the member states by the President of the European Council. Consequently, all the discussions of economic or political nature were dealt with by both souls of the EC. It was another way for the Commission to enhance its political role. Indeed, in 1991 in a document for the press regarding the evolution of the EC-US cooperation the Commission officials

¹⁸⁷ HAEU, GB-28, European Commission, *Transatlantic Declaration on EC-US Relations*, Directorate General for External Relations, Unit for Relations with the United States, Brussels, 23 November 1990.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

wrote that “the Transatlantic Declaration accords particular importance to the dialogue on political matters (emphasis in the original text)”¹⁹¹ demonstrating that for the Commission the new forms of consultations were an occasion of political development.

In conclusion, especially in 1989 and 1990 the transatlantic relationship was strengthened. Given the international tensions of those years and the evolution of the EC, the Bush administration needed to change the American attitude towards the EC which, as a consequence, found itself in a favourable situation to enhance its political role within the transatlantic relationship framework. Therefore, “a much more symmetric relationship emerged as the United States began to accept and support the EC as a partner and as the EC accepted and appreciated that recognition”¹⁹².

2. The first trajectory: the Commission’s economic expertise becomes political leverage

As mentioned before, the transition period started in 1989 and the new American attitude inspired by the Bush administration opened a window of opportunity for the EC to enhance its international role. In particular, the Commission tried to gain political relevance in the field of external relations. Given the territorial proximity, the Commission dealt especially with the Eastern Europe situation where the countries were liberating themselves from the constraints of the Eastern bloc. As explained in the previous chapter, the Commission had started building economic relations with Eastern Europe states already since 1988, and that effort had also political consequences. Indeed, in this section, after a brief examination of the Commission’s reaction to the new American approach towards the EC, an analysis of the Commission’s role in managing relations with Eastern Europe is performed. The aim is to demonstrate that the first way to gain political relevance in international relations the

¹⁹¹ HAEU, GB-30, European Commission, For information: Background Briefing to be issued to journalists, *European Community/United States Cooperation in 1991*, Brussels, 18 December 1991.

¹⁹² R. H. Ginsberg, *EC-US Political/Institutional Relations*, p. 400.

Commission had was playing alone through the development of its economic expertise that assumed a significant political nature.

2.1 Delors's positive reaction to the new American attitude

On 15 June 1989, a few weeks after Bush's speech at Boston university where the American President explained the new friendlier and more political approach Washington had towards the EC, the President of the Commission Delors delivered a speech in Washington. It seemed like a sort of immediate answer to the new American attitude, and it was a positive answer. Delors's speech was entirely based on the explanation of the consequences of the 1992 project both economically and politically. Thus, Delors exploited immediately the new American support for the European integration. He made clear that the Commission had seriously taken Bush's words and was willing to share its hopes for the future of the European integration.

Delors started by stating that "it is time to reassess the relationship between the U.S. and the European Community"¹⁹³. He was aware of the revolutionary times the EC and the US had before them, therefore he agreed with Bush that the transatlantic relationship had to be enhanced. Indeed, Delors also acknowledged that "this partnership means much more than good trading relations, however important they are"¹⁹⁴, consequently "both partners now have to think about a wider political dialogue, leading if possible to joint action over issues of mutual interest"¹⁹⁵. Delors immediately caught the opportunity offered by Bush to significantly extend the US-Commission dialogue towards the political domain. He clearly reacted positively to the American openness to build a relationship based more on the political pillar than the economic one. The fact that the leader of the institution which held the exclusive competence of dealing with the common commercial policy talked so

¹⁹³ GB-25, European Commission, *European American Partnership in a Changing World*, address by Jacques Delors President of the Commission of the European Communities, Washington, Thursday, 15 June 1989.

¹⁹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁹⁵ Ibidem.

enthusiastically of a more political transatlantic relationship was one of the first signals of the will of the Delors Commission to gain a broader role also touching the political domain. This desire was demonstrated along the speech in which Delors defined the 1992 project a “full political commitment”¹⁹⁶ explaining that “a full, visible and solemn political commitment is a vital condition for the process of structural change”¹⁹⁷. He clearly thought that the progresses in the European integration could make the EC a relevant political player, even more than economical. In insisting on this political commitment, Delors cited the Single European Act as fundamental pillar for the current effort of “blending together twelve old and proud nations into a political union Europe”¹⁹⁸; he also added that “through political co-operation between the twelve member states, we take a common line on many foreign policy issues”¹⁹⁹. In this passage Delors made two relevant institutional clarifications. First, he reminded the Americans of the centrality of the Single European Act. As mentioned before, Denman was worried that Bush rarely referred to the EC in his speech, therefore this Delors’ allusion assumed a relevant meaning. Second, Delors clearly stated that the political coordination was managed by the EPC, thus he acknowledged that the Commission at that time had still to gain an official political power. Then, Delors concluded his speech by expressing the certainty that a united Europe could be decisive in the changing world, since “a strong and dynamic European Community will inevitably play a useful role in any reassessment of the relationship between the major powers”²⁰⁰.

This speech made clear that the Commission adopted a positive reply to the new American approach agreeing that a stronger political dialogue was needed to enhance the transatlantic partnership. Delors’s positive reaction was reiterated on many other occasions, especially two. The first was a meeting between Bush and Delors in Brussels on 4 December 1989. The Berlin wall had just fallen,

¹⁹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰⁰ Ibidem.

and the European revolutions were accelerating. In that occasion Delors emphasized to Bush that “a Community without a political flesh and will was no support for the Atlantic Alliance. A strong Community with a political will was indirectly a pillar of the Atlantic Alliance”²⁰¹. It was another signal of the importance that Delors attached to the political dimension of the EC. It is interesting to note that after this same meeting Bush made a public intervention in which he underlined the new political foundation of NATO saying that it was “a foundation on which I expect NATO will increasingly build in this new age of Europe”²⁰². This declaration anticipated the insistence that Baker would have put eight days later in his speech in Berlin, that insistence which, as explained before, showed Washington wanted to maintain Community Brussels within the transatlantic framework without allowing it to become a third pole. The second occasion in which Delors reiterated his attachment to a more political transatlantic relationship was a speech he delivered to the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 17 January 1990. Delors told the European representatives that EC-US relations were in a new phase where “while trade relations will remain an important item on the Community-USA agenda, the two parties recognize that it should no longer predominate and that the emphasis should be placed on greater cooperation in their mutual interest”²⁰³. Once again Delors supported the new need to enhance the political cooperation with the US, given the transformative times they were living in.

Delors’s reaction to the new American attitude was positive. The enhancement of the political dimension of the transatlantic relationship was needed. In order to do so, the EC had to strengthen its integration and its international role. Therefore, Delors had to guide the Commission in its effort to gain a more significant political role. The first occasion was the management of the relations with the Eastern Europe experiencing a phase of liberation at that time.

²⁰¹ GB-25, European Commission, *Summary record of meeting between Presidents Bush and Delors*, Brussels, 4 December 1989, Secretariat General, Brussels, 5 December 1989.

²⁰² GB-25, European Commission, *President’s afternoon intervention on the future of Europe*, Brussels, 4 December 1989

²⁰³ *The Commission’s programme for 1990*, Address by Jacques Delors President of the Commission, to the European Parliament and his reply to the debate, Strasbourg, 17 January and 13 February 1990, Bulletin of the European Communities, Supplement 1/90.

2.2 The Commission gains a key role in Eastern Europe

At the beginning of 1989, months before the fall of the Berlin wall, the situation of Eastern Europe was already significantly intense. After Gorbachev's speech at the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Eastern European countries were confident to be able to achieve complete liberation in their struggle against the repression of the USSR. Inevitably the attention of both the Americans and the Europeans was extremely high upon the circumstances. On 16 May 1989 the EPC had a meeting with some American representatives in Madrid. The EC was represented by the troika of political directors of the EPC which in that moment was composed by Fernando Perpiña, the Spanish ambassador holding the presidency, the Greek Mr. Petropoulos, the French Bertrand Dufourcq, and Günter Burghardt as representative of the Commission. In that occasion the main topic was Eastern Europe because, as noted by Rozanne L. Ridgway, the American assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian affairs, "it had become increasingly difficult to speak of an Eastern bloc"²⁰⁴ and "there were different developments, going on at an accelerated pace, notably in Poland and Hungary"²⁰⁵. In a summary note of the meeting Burghardt wrote that "the basic question for US was how to keep tension between the political and economic reform processes. How to accompany the political process with economic policies"²⁰⁶. It was clear that the Eastern European countries needed economic assistance, but Washington and Community Brussels wanted to attach a path of political reforms to the granting of this economic help. The economic and political realms were strongly intertwined in this situation. In other words, "the general concern of the USA was, in conclusion, not to throw billions of US or IMF money in supporting unefficient economies, but rather to sustain meaningful economic and political reforms"²⁰⁷. Therefore, an institution able to effectively manage

²⁰⁴ HAEU, GB-26, European Commission, Coreu for the EC embassies, *Troika meeting with the United States*, EC embassy in Madrid, 18 May 1989, Confidential.

²⁰⁵ Ibidem.

²⁰⁶ GB-26, European Commission, *European Political Cooperation, EC/US Political Directors Troika Consultations, Madrid, 16 May 1989*, Günter Burghardt, Secretariat General, Directorate F, Brussels, 17 May 1989, Confidential, Limited distribution.

²⁰⁷ GB-26, European Commission, Coreu for the EC embassies, *Troika meeting with the United States*, EC embassy in Madrid, 18 May 1989, Confidential.

the economic assistance without disregarding the political dimension of the reforms was needed. The EC Commission seemed to perfectly fit the role. Indeed, it already had economic relations with the area, and, through them, it was aware of the different specificities of each Eastern European state²⁰⁸.

It did not take too much time for the Commission to be officially recognised as the more suitable institution to face these matters. Indeed, between 14 and 16 July 1989 a G-7 was held in Paris. In that occasion the seven most industrialized countries of the world evaluated the situation in Eastern Europe and decided to “ask the Commission of the European Communities to take the necessary initiatives in agreement with the other Member States of the Community, and to associate, besides the Summit participants, all interested countries”²⁰⁹. Thus, the Commission was entrusted with the responsibility to conduct the Western effort to assist the Eastern European countries, in that moment especially Poland and Hungary, with the economic and political reforms. A group of 24 countries was created (hereafter, G-24), and the Commission was put at the top of it. The Commission established the PHARE programme (Poland and Hungary Assistance for the Restructuring of the Economy) to lead the endeavour. This G-7 decision to assign such a significant task to the Commission had a double meaning. From the economic and technical viewpoint, it meant that the other industrialized nations “recognized the expertise of the EC in the field of aid policy”²¹⁰. It was a signal of the good work the Commission had performed up to that moment. From the political standpoint, “the significance is that the United States, which used to play the role of undisputed leader of the West, now concedes the EC’s central role in Eastern Europe”²¹¹. Washington valued so highly the contribute the Commission could offer that it renounced to its centrality on the area. It was a move dictated by the new American attitude: the Bush administration was willing to not be the leader if that could help achieving the common interests. Therefore, thanks to its activism in the previous months in building economic relations with Eastern Europe, the Commission gained a meaningful position

²⁰⁸ See *Ibidem*.

²⁰⁹ Declaration on East-West Relations, G-7, Paris, 15 July 1989, point 6.

²¹⁰ F. de La Serre, *The EC and Central and Eastern Europe*, p. 310.

²¹¹ R. H. Ginsberg, *EC-US Political/Institutional Relations*, p. 391.

which could significantly enhance its international political role. It was the first official occasion for the EC to impose itself as a both economic and political player in the field of external relations.

The role was secured; thus, it was time for the Commission to live up to it and exploit the momentum to take itself and the entire EC to another level in international politics. The most important judgment was inevitably the American one. The first occasion to understand Washington's assessment of the Commission's leadership of the G-24 for assisting Eastern Europe was a meeting of the Troika political directors with the Bush administration held in Washington on 25 and 26 October 1989. The Commission representative in the EPC delegation was Burghardt. He reported in a note for Delors that the new assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian affairs Raymond Seitz "a salué le rôle de coordination de l'action à l'égard de la Pologne et de la Hongrie, assume avec beaucoup de succès par la Commission de la CEE"²¹². It was an extremely positive comment coming from a key figure for the European affairs in the Bush's administration. In addition, the fact that it was expressed during an EPC meeting highlighted the political dimension of the role the Commission was playing. The American evaluation remained positive also a few months later during the EC/US ministerial meeting held in Brussels on 15 December 1989. Indeed, in his remarks at the opening session, Baker declared that "the EC has played, and will continue to play, a valuable coordinating role in our Group of 24 effort to assist the political and economic reformers in Eastern Europe"²¹³. Such a positive judgement made by the US Secretary of State in a public document was the certification that the Commission work was being truly appreciated and effective. Baker also directly underlined the political goal of this effort. During the meeting Baker highlighted again the "valuable task"²¹⁴ the Commission was conducting, and he also complimented Andriessen for how he chaired the recent

²¹² GB-26, European Commission, Note à l'attention du Président Delors, *Réunion de la Troika des Directeurs Politiques avec l'Administration des Etats-Unis, Washington, 25 et 26 octobre 1989*, Günter Burghardt, Secretariat General, Directorate F, Brussels, 27 October 1989, Confidential.

²¹³ GB-25, European Commission, Press document, *Remarks by Secretary of State James A. Baker III at the opening session of the EC ministerial, EC Commission headquarters, Brussels, Belgium, 15 December 1989*, Press Department of State, Brussels, 15 December 1989, For immediate release.

²¹⁴ GB-25, European Commission, *Minutes of the EC/US Ministerial Meeting, Brussels, 15 December 1989*, Directorate General for External Relations, Brussels, 18 December 1989.

“very successful G24 meeting”²¹⁵. It was evident that Washington was completely satisfied by how the Commission was dealing with its mission. Also, the Commission itself was happy with the business. In the same ministerial meeting Andriessen defined the last G-24 meeting as “very constructive”²¹⁶ stating that “the participants had reaffirmed their commitment to helping Poland and Hungary and had also given a positive political signal to the other countries of Eastern Europe”²¹⁷. He understood the political value of the Commission’s action in that area, and he was already convinced that it could be helpful to all the other Eastern European countries.

The Commission was acquiring trust and respect in the international arena. The situation also increased the self-confidence of the Commission and its officials. They were experiencing that it was possible for the Commission playing an international role beyond the trade agreements. It seemed perfectly logical to have the Commission assuming a more political role. This new confidence by the Commission was evident in a 1990 internal document Delors and Andriessen wrote about the strengthening of EC/US dialogue for the Commission officials. In the document, regarding the Commission’s coordination of the G-24, they wrote that “both the Member States and the United States have been broadly satisfied with how this role has been accomplished and the prestige of both the Commission and the Community in the area of external policy has risen”²¹⁸. They were strongly feeling that they were enhancing the international role of the Commission. All the other actors were complimenting the Commission for its ability to work in a situation where the economic and political domains were strictly intertwined. It led Delors and Andriessen to start a crucial reasoning about the value of the approach that imposed the distinction between the two domains.

A series of development over recent months, elements of what has come to be described as the “acceleration of history”, suggest, however, that a more radical rethinking of this

²¹⁵ Ibidem.

²¹⁶ Ibidem.

²¹⁷ Ibidem.

²¹⁸ GB-28, European Commission, Communication from President Delors and Vice-President Andriessen to the Commission, *Strengthening EC/US dialogue in a changing international situation*, Brussels, 1 February 1990.

*cautious approach may now be appropriate. In particular the implicit distinction between economic and political subject matter, with only the former being dealt with by the Community, is coming to seem obsolete, in view of the impossibility of separating the Community's economic role from its political one.*²¹⁹

As explained in the first chapter, the distinction between the political and the economic dimension of the EC external action was hard to be traced since the beginning. In this moment the leaders of the Commission realised, by experiencing it on the ground, that it was indeed *coming to seem obsolete*. The EC could not manage anymore only the economic domain of the European external action. The new reality of that period of transition was the occasion to understand the need of an EC's political competence. These words were a clear signal of the politicization of the Commission, because they indirectly indicated the Commission itself as the best trade-union of the two domains. The Commission was demonstrating with its leadership in assisting Eastern Europe that it could manage a broader role also touching the political matters of the European external action. The Commission alone was understanding that a strong political toll could be built on its economic expertise. This new self-awareness was strongly confirmed by the fact that Delors did not limit himself to express the centrality of the Commission only to his colleagues. Indeed, during a meeting at the White House on 24 April 1990 before President Bush Delors “a expliqué pourquoi et comment l'action que la Communauté développait en Europe en faisait l'instrument irremplaçable de la stabilité et de la paix”²²⁰. It was another signal of the trust Delors had in the Commission's work in Eastern Europe.

This meeting at the White House took place the day after a ministerial meeting where the Commission further enhanced its assistance to Eastern Europe. Indeed, on 23 April 1990 during the meeting Andriessen “announced the Commission's intention to propose an extension of the PHARE operation to the other countries concerned, including Yugoslavia, to which the US side responded

²¹⁹ Ibidem.

²²⁰ GB-28, European Commission, Note de dossier, *Réunion à la Maison Blanche 24 avril 1990*, Le Chef de Cabinet du Président, Brussels, 25 April 1990, Confidentiel.

favourably”²²¹. It was the official certification of the good work of the Commission with the PHARE programme. After less than one year the assistance was expanded to all the Central and Eastern European countries that were part of the Eastern bloc. The Commission reinforced its position and its work continued effectively. In 1991 also the first concrete political results were achieved. On 16 December 1991 the EC signed the so-called Europe agreements with Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. The Europe agreements were association agreements that “cover not only economic and commercial matters, but also political and cultural ones”²²². They were the tool the Commission created to link the economic and political domains. Through these agreements, a path towards economic liberalisation strictly connected to regular political dialogue between the EC and those states was established. The Commission officials suggested Delors to highlight to Bush that “the overriding political importance of the agreements is obvious: in bringing these three countries close to the European Community, and in giving tangible form to their will to take part in the process of European integration, the agreements can offer a perspective to their populations”²²³. These Europe agreements were the first elements that showed to the Eastern European countries and their people that it was possible to even enter the EC. They offered economic and political assistance to achieve the European prosperity. The Commission was able to melt the economic and the political dimensions in a tool showing the world its political value and ability in international relations.

As final proof of the new self-awareness the Commission was gaining through its international political role, it is interesting to note that Burghardt expressed the same ideas mentioned above also in a public context. In occasion of a conference titled “Towards a global Partnership (a new Assessment on Burdensharing)” organised by the America-European Community Association and held from 20 to 22 September 1991 at the Westfield International Conference Centre in Virginia,

²²¹ GB-28, European Commission, Telegram, *Tel No. 043, US/EC ministerial meeting, 23 April 1990, brief report on the plenary meeting*, From Washington to Brussels, Washington, 23 April 1990, Confidential, *Priorité absolue*.

²²² GB-30, European Commission, Speaking note for a Commission/United States ministerial meeting, Brussels, 18 December 1991, *Europe agreements*, Brussels, 12 December 1991.

²²³ *Ibidem*.

Burghardt sent a paper whose title was “The EC and its Eastern neighbours: prospects and problems”. He started this work by writing that “one of the most distinctive recent features of world politics has been the steadily growing influence of the European Community as an actor on the international stage”²²⁴ and by specifying that one of the reason of this political growth was the fact that “it has taken the lead in coordinating economic assistance to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe”²²⁵. On the same line of argument, he added that “the Community is the centrepiece of European architecture”²²⁶. Moreover, he clearly wrote that “there is now a growing desire for the Community to play a political role commensurate with its economic strength”²²⁷. In the rest of the brief paper, he underlined how the PHARE programme was helping Eastern Europe both economically and politically making the Commission the key player of the area²²⁸. The confidence that Burghardt showed in public by sending this paper for the conference was another signal of the moment the Commission and its officials were experiencing. They were significantly transforming the Commission and the whole EC by providing it a more relevant international political standing. Through the PHARE programme and the Europe agreements, the Commission was able to build its own political role within the European external policy area.

3. The second trajectory: the Commission gains political relevance through the relationship with the EPC

As explained in the first chapter, since the first establishment of the European Political Cooperation a sort of competition between the EPC and the EC Commission emerged. The main problem was the rigidity of the distinction between the political competences assigned to the EPC and the commercial and economic ones entrusted with the Commission. During the 1970s and 1980s it became clear that

²²⁴ HAEU, GB-29, Dr Günter Burghardt, *The EC and its Eastern neighbours: prospects and problems*, manuscript completed by 30 August 1991, p. 1.

²²⁵ Ibidem, p. 1.

²²⁶ Ibidem, p. 1.

²²⁷ Ibidem, p. 2.

²²⁸ See Ibidem, pp. 3-5.

this line of division damaged the effectiveness of the European external action, therefore it was hardly tenable. In 1986 the Single European Act seemed to solve the matter by institutionalising the principle of consistency asking the EPC and the Commission to cooperate on every level. It was difficult to translate into reality this provision of the Single European Act, but in 1989, due to the revolutionary time and the new American attitude, the EPC-Commission relationship started to develop in that direction. In this section the internal debate of the Commission on how to deal with the EPC and the evolution of its role at the side of the EPC are analysed. The aim is to demonstrate that the EPC-Commission relationship was the second trajectory the Commission tried to exploit in order to achieve a more relevant political role in the European external action.

3.1 The Commission's internal debate

As noted above, at the beginning of 1989 the Commission was already demonstrating that it was able to play a crucial role throughout the changing times of the period, especially in the relationship with Eastern Europe. This Commission's activism brought again at the centre of the EC interests the debate around the EPC-Commission relationship. An effective coordination was needed to face those difficult times and to show credibility to the allies, especially the US. On 13 March 1989 in a note for the new head of the Commission delegation in Washington Andreas van Agt, Burghardt demonstrated to have clear ideas about the EPC-Commission relationship and about how the two institutions had to present themselves to Washington.

Coordination of EPC and Community aspects is the responsibility of both (emphasis in the original text) the Presidency of EPC and the Commission under art. 30 para 5 of the SEA. It would be wrong for us to contribute to the false impression of our US interlocutors that there is something like a "hierarchical" order in favour of EPC. It is true that such

an impression is a regrettable result of the usual way member-states present themselves (e.g. as “Presidency of the Community”, a term which does not exist institutionally).²²⁹

Burghardt was concerned with the American impression that the EPC had more power than the Commission in EC external relations matters. He underlined the parity and the common responsibilities of the relationship between the two institutions, even by citing the Single European Act. He also added that “the presence of the Commission in EPC is of course not an argument in favour of the Council Presidency attending Community events which fall under the sole responsibility of the Commission under the EC Treaties”²³⁰. Thus, Burghardt clarified that the Commission had the competence of dealing with EPC matters, while the EPC could not interfere with the Commission’s exclusive competence. It meant that the political dimension of the EC external relations fell within the range of competences of both institutions, while the commercial one did not.

This communication by Burghardt was the first element of an internal debate the Commission had over how to deal with the EPC. Everybody agreed that transatlantic talks had to be enhanced because the period required a more solid political cooperation, but the role of the Commission in the EPC framework was discussed. On 11 May 1989 the Commission officials of the DG External Relations transmitted to the Vice President Andriessen a long note with the evaluation of a series of proposal to reform the EC-US framework of dialogue. Some suggestions simply proposed to consider new agreements to add some areas of discussion. However, one proposal was truly revolutionary. The idea was to “consider an agreement going beyond the Commission’s traditional competences into areas such as political cooperation and security (emphasis in the original text) and covering all aspects of EC/US relations”²³¹. It was a plan that aimed to significantly enhanced the role of the Commission by attributing it competences in political cooperation and security. The EPC was not even mentioned

²²⁹ GB-24, European Commission, Telecopy, *EC/US Relations*, From Burghardt to Mr. van Agt Head of Delegation in Washington, Brussels, 13 March 1989.

²³⁰ Ibidem.

²³¹ GB-24, European Commission, Note for Mr. Andriessen, *A framework for EC/US relations*, Direction Générale Relations extérieures, Le directeur general, Brussels, 11 May 1989.

in this proposal, as if the Commission could completely take over it in this way. In the same document the assessment of this plan pointed out three possible problematic consequences of the institutionalisation of political links. The first regarded the possible reaction of Washington. The concern was that “such links would allow the USA to use political (e.g. defence) arguments in order to extract trade concessions, as they did with Japan”²³². It was possible that Washington could exploit the Commission’s lack of experience in those fields in order to gain concessions in trade matters, consequently damaging the European interests. The second preoccupation regarded the countermove of the EC member states.

*The possibility exists that Member States could seize this opportunity to seek to balance closer Commission involvement in EPC with reciprocal involvement of the Council (perhaps through the Troika or the Presidency) in matters where the Commission has until now been sole official spokesman. The danger of such a development could be the multiplication of voices speaking for the Community and thereby a reduction of its capacity to negotiate effectively.*²³³

In this case the concern was that the member states could ask for reciprocity. As Burghardt underlined in the document cited above, on a treaty level there was no space for such a right. However, the member states could exploit the institutionalisation of an enhancement of the Commission’s competences in order to gain similar advantages on their side. This scenario had to be avoided because the effectiveness of the capacity to negotiate of the entire EC could be in danger. The Commission officials feared that the perspective of losing power could lead the member states to endanger the EC position in the eyes of the US. The third and last preoccupation regarded the actual role the Commission could have after such a reform. The concern was that “it would be difficult to avoid political, rather than commercial, relations taking centre-stage and the Commission’s role in the

²³² Ibidem.

²³³ Ibidem.

dialogue could therefore be relegated to a secondary one”²³⁴. Once again, the Commission’s lack of experience in the new fields was a risk. It could lead to a significant loss of power, instead of an enhancement of its centrality. The result could be the opposite of the starting intentions and hopes.

Against this background, the assessment of this plan ended by advising against the adoption of it. The Commission officials recognised that “there is certainly room for the Commission to use the Single Act to enhance its role”²³⁵, therefore “at some stage in the future the role of the Commission may well have altered to such an extent that this opinion becomes more attractive, but this is not currently the case”²³⁶. It is interesting to note that this conclusion foresees a possible alteration of the Commission role that could make the plan more desirable. It meant that at the time the Commission was not willing to make an official change, but it could try in the day-to-day business to slowly enhance its role in the relationship with the EPC. It was not time for institutionalising a reform, but it was the moment to build a Commission’s experience in mere political matters in order to allow such a transformation in the future. As Burghardt suggested in a note for Delors’ head of cabinet Pascal Lamy regarding this debate, it was the time of history “de prendre nous-mêmes l’initiative”²³⁷ in the relationship with the EPC. The Commission had to build its political role through showing its validity in action and in the official meetings with Washington. The aim was to practically demonstrate it could play a useful role also in the pure political domain, hoping for an official acknowledgment of its political role in the future.

3.2 The Commission becomes the Fourth Musketeer

As explained above, at the beginning of 1989 there was a tension between the EPC and the EC, especially the Commission. However, it is important to underline that it was not a conflict in which

²³⁴ Ibidem.

²³⁵ Ibidem.

²³⁶ Ibidem.

²³⁷ GB-24, European Commission, Note pour Pascal Lamy, Relations avec les États-Unis, Le problème des consultations, Secretariat General, Direction F, Brussels, 25 May 1989.

one actor wanted to eliminate the other. The EPC was not the Commission's enemy in a battle for political power. It was a relationship characterised by some disagreements, but also by the awareness that collaboration was strongly needed in order to build an effective European external policy. The two institutions recognised each other's value. Indeed, on 16 May 1989 during a meeting between the American officials and the Troika political directors of the EPC Fernando Perpiña, the Spanish official holding the Presidency, "described the evolution of the EPC from a diplomacy of declarations to a diplomacy of action stressing the growing interlinkage and coherence with Community policies"²³⁸. The EPC was aware that its positive development was due also to the Commission's work towards consistency. Thus, the Commission could start its effort towards a greater political role within the EPC framework already having fair working relations with it.

During 1989 the Commission demonstrated its capacity to play a more political role through its leadership in assisting Eastern Europe. Its work convinced not only Washington, as explained above, but also the EC member states. As a result, the EPC itself started to underline its full association and complementarity with the Commission. This extremely positive attitude by the EPC towards the Commission was made public and clear during a visit of the Troika of political directors to Washington between 25 and 26 October 1989. The Troika was composed by the French Bertrand Dufourcq holding the Presidency, the Spanish Perpiña, and the Irish Patrick Murphy. It was accompanied by Burghardt as Commission representative. In that occasion the European delegation was invited to hold a meeting with the US House foreign affairs committee and the US Senate foreign relations committee. The aim of this audition was to discuss the purpose and the functioning of the EPC to the American representatives. At the House Dufourcq was asked to present the delegation, and his answer significantly emphasized the role of the Commission within the EPC framework.

²³⁸ GB-26, European Commission, *European Political Cooperation, EC/US Political Directors Troika Consultations, Madrid, 16 May 1989*, Günter Burghardt, Secretariat General, Directorate F, Brussels, 17 May 1989, Confidential, Limited distribution.

*The President introduced the members of the delegation with an important comment that while the group was called, “the Troika”, it was in fact more like the “Three Musketeers” in which there was a fourth and most important Musketeer. In this case in addition to the three Member States representatives, the fourth Musketeer was the Commission.*²³⁹

The same presentation defining the Commission as *fourth Musketeer* was repeated by Dufourcq also before the US Senate²⁴⁰. It was a meaningful signal of the position the Commission was gaining within the EPC. It was not an official change of the treaties, but it remained a significant note of esteem by the EPC for the Commission’s work. It was exactly that kind of little practical steps the Commission was looking for to enhance its political relevance in the European external action. Dufourcq also added that “the Commission’s responsibility was to keep EPC policy initiatives in harmony with Community policies. The Commission is therefore fully associated with all of the activities of the EPC”²⁴¹. It was another consideration that highlighted the importance the EPC attached to the role of the Commission which was considered *fully associated*. It is important to also underline the context in which these affirmations were made. Defining the Commission in this way before the US Congress was an act that strongly supported the Commission’s political role in the eyes of the American. Indeed, in his summary note of the two days Burghardt wrote that Washington “reconnait la complémentarité entre Communauté et CPE”²⁴². This American interest in the participation of the Commission to the political talks was reiterated a few months later. On 12 March 1990 during a meeting with the officials of the Commission delegation in Washington the Americans

²³⁹ GB-26, European Commission, Annex II of a note a l’attention du President Delors, *Report of meeting between Congress and the Troika 26 October 1989*, Bob Whiteman, Brussels, 27 October 1989.

²⁴⁰ See Ibidem.

²⁴¹ Ibidem.

²⁴² GB-26, European Commission, Note a l’attention du President Delors, *Réunion de la Troika des Directeurs Politique avec l’Administration des États-Unis, Washington, 25 et 26 octobre, 1989*, Secretariat General, Direction F, Günter Burghardt, Brussels, 27 October 1989, Confidential.

were “signalling strongly US preference for Commission participation in EPC Ministerials”²⁴³. Thus, the Commission gained political credibility at the eyes of both the EPC and the Bush’s administration. As explained above, this new American attitude positively evaluating the EC international role led in November 1990 to the Transatlantic Declaration. It is interesting to note that the process guiding to that document was another step in the elimination of the rigid distinction between the political and the economic domain, an element of division between the EPC and the Commission. Indeed, already in July 1990 the Commission officials in a note commenting a first draft of the Transatlantic Declaration wrote that the American behaviour towards the EC “reflect the fact that the distinction between the Community and EPC matters in foreign relations is becoming increasingly untenable”²⁴⁴. It was one of the signals that indicated that “by the end of 1990, the supposed official gap between EC and EPC competences had become more implausible than ever”²⁴⁵. This feeling was clear for Washington, and it was becoming evident also for Community Brussels. Indeed, “in its 1989 *General Report*, for instance, the Commission devoted nearly eighty pages to the Community’s external relations, and only ten pages to EPC”²⁴⁶.

The practical example of the overcoming of this distinction and, most importantly, of the relevant political role the Commission was gaining was the fact that it was involved in the consultations regarding the new European architecture. While a few years before during the Reagan administration the Commission was not involved or simply informed of the political talks, at that time the Bush administration had no problems in facing the extremely sensitive political arguments at the presence of the Commission. On 24 April 1990 there was a meeting at the White House between Bush and Delors in which the American President openly talked about the new European architecture from a

²⁴³ GB-24, European Commission, *Telecopy No. 2131, E.C.-U.S. relations, From Washington to Brussels*, European Commission Washington Delegation, 12 March 1990.

²⁴⁴ GB-28, European Commission, Note for Vice-President Andriessen, *Transatlantic Declaration*, Directorate General External Relations, Brussels, 30 July 1990.

²⁴⁵ D. Dinan, *European Political Cooperation*, in L. Hurwitz and C. Lequesne (eds.), *The State of the European Community – Policies, Institutions and Debates in the Transition Years*, sponsored by the European Community Studies Association, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991, p. 404.

²⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

political and security viewpoint, underlining the crucial role NATO had for Washington²⁴⁷. However, the most significant example of the political involvement of the Commission was the visit by Delors and Jacques Santer, holding the Presidency of the European Council at that time, on 11 April 1991. As mentioned above, it was a consultation form introduced by the Atlantic Declaration, and it was the first meeting in which the President of the European Commission and the President of the European Council were side by side. The themes discussed were highly political, from the situation in Europe to the Gulf conflict²⁴⁸. Therefore, this occasion was the symbolic representation of the political role the Commission was able to earn throughout the crucial years between 1989-1991, because Washington, the major ally, wanted to listen to the opinion of both the member states and the Commission.

The Commission's awareness of being on the right path towards a more significant political role within the European external action was confirmed once again by its public diplomacy. Indeed, Burghardt was invited to another conference organised by the America-European Community Association whose title was "US/EC Relations and Europe's new Architecture" and that was held in Annapolis from 21 to 23 September 1990. The Commission's perspective on the new European architecture was considered interesting because the institution led by Delors was involved in the debate around it. Burghardt's speech acknowledged the role the Commission was playing in that transitional period. He mentioned the effort in assisting Eastern Europe, but he also underlined the importance of the collaboration with the EPC. Looking at the future he stated that "the external relations of the European Community and the coordination of Member States' foreign policies are the two sources of the future common foreign policy, the essential constituent element of a European

²⁴⁷ See GB-28, European Commission, Note de dossier, *Réunion à la Maison Blanche 24 avril 1990*, Le Chef de Cabinet du Président, Brussels, 25 April 1990, Confidentiel.

²⁴⁸ See HAEU, GB-31, European Commission, *Rapport succinct des entretiens Santer-Delors avec le Président Bush, Washington le 11 avril 1991*, Brussels, 12 April 1991; and GB-31, European Commission, *Remarks by the President, President of the European Council Jacques Santer, and President of the European Commission Jacques Delors upon departure*, The White House Office of the Press Secretary, Washington, 11 April 1991.

Political Union”²⁴⁹. This passage made publicly clear the aim of the Commission’s quest for a political agency in the framework of the European external action. The Commission gaining a more relevant political role was a way to build a common European foreign policy.

In conclusion, it is important to underline that from the practical viewpoint the main role in the crucial questions of the new European architecture, such as the German reunification and the security matters, was still played by the EC member states²⁵⁰. However, it does not undermine the significance of the Commission’s involvement to the debate. Just a few years before it was unthinkable for the Commission to have a say in such highly political matters, but in 1991, thanks to the relationship built with the EPC, it was involved in the discussion. Fostering this relationship with the EPC was the second trajectory the Commission followed between 1989 and 1991 to gain a more significant political role in the European external action.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how between 1989 and 1991 the European Commission was able to build a more political role for itself in the framework of the European external action. This enhancement of the Commission’s political international standing was possible thanks to two historical circumstances. The first was that the 1989-1991 period was a time of revolutions and significant changes for the international relations. The liberation of Eastern Europe and the crumbling of the USSR were challenges that needed to be faced also by the EC. The second framework factor helping the Commission was the change of the American attitude towards the EC brought by the Bush administration. President Bush in his public speech at Boston University on 21 May 1989 clearly

²⁴⁹ HAEU, GB-27, European Commission, *Europe 1993 Evolving transatlantic ties: what future lies ahead?*, speech by Günter Burghardt, Annapolis 21 September 1990.

²⁵⁰ See for instance F. Bozo, *France, the United States, and NATO: Between Europeanization and Re-Atlanticization, 1990–1991*, in K. K. Patel and K. Weisbrode (eds.), *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s*, Cambridge University Press, September 2013, chapter 13, pp. 265-284; and R. L. Hutchings, *The US, German Unification and European Integration*.

stated that Washington was willing to concentrate more on the political dimension of the transatlantic relationship rather than on the commercial disputes. Given the changing times they were living, Bush wanted more political cooperation with the EC in order to face the challenges of the time. Bush's new approach was confirmed by his Secretary of State Baker with a speech in Berlin on 12 December 1989. In this case the message was the same: the Americans were looking for a highly political relationship with the Europeans; however, Baker also emphasized the role of NATO to clarify that the White House wanted to keep the EC within the Atlantic framework led by Washington.

Exploiting these favourable circumstances, the Commission was able to enhance its political relevance by following two trajectories. The first was to deepen the economic relations with Eastern Europe. It led to the G-7 appointment of the Commission as leader of the G-24 group for assisting both economically and politically the Eastern European countries. In this effort the Commission, through the PHARE programme and the Europe agreements, demonstrated that it was able to also manage the political dimension. Its work was effective, and it granted the Commission international recognition of its new political position. The second trajectory was to foster the relationship with the EPC in order to have a say also in the political affairs of the European external action. This result was achieved as demonstrated by the consideration both the EPC and Washington had of the Commission as a fundamental player to involve in the debate over the new European architecture. The two trajectories had in common the progressive elimination of the distinction between the economic and political competences. This line of division became more and more untenable, consequently the Commission could make its part in building a common European foreign policy by achieving a more relevant political role.

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was to analyse whether in the period between 1985 and 1991 the European Commission achieved a relevant political role going beyond its exclusive commercial competences. The choice to focus on the period between late 1980s and early 1990s was dictated by the revolutionary nature of those years that made them an interesting case for studying the institutional evolution of the EC Commission.

The first chapter has analysed the central tool the EC and its member states had been developing during the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s to coordinate the European effort in order to manage the international political challenges: the European Political Cooperation. The aim of the chapter was to present the institutional scenario concerning the European external action Delors found when he took office in 1985. The chapter focused on the evolution of the EPC and on its relationship with the Commission in order to understand the tool for European external action the Delors Commission had to deal with at the beginning of its journey. This examination has been performed through the analysis of the official documents and treaties the EC member states agreed on to shape the EPC. The chapter has started with a general and brief overview of how the European external action evolved in the very first decades of the project of European integration. The Schuman Declaration of 1950 clearly set the dream of a Europe as single political entity able to guarantee peace and wealth internationally by playing a relevant global role in all political and economic scenarios. However, the path was long and had to be progressive. Indeed, after some failed attempts of fostering the security integration, such as the Pleven plan, in 1957 the Treaties of Rome created the first dimension of common European external action. It was exclusively commercial and completely entrusted with the European Commission. It meant that the Commission became the main actor of the new-born Community's external action, but also that the political matters of world affairs remained entirely in the hands of the member states excluding an autonomous EC action. In the 1960s the Commission demonstrated to be an effective leader in the commercial and economic international affairs, for example with its

role in the Kennedy Round of trade negotiations within the GATT framework; but those years also showed that the political matters always prevailed over the economic issues. This awareness led the EC member states to start a debate around a new tool for coordinating their foreign policies during a summit in the Hague in December 1969. The first result was the Davignon Report, the document that officially created the European Political Cooperation, adopted at a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the six EC member states held in Luxembourg on 27 October 1970. The EPC was forged as an extremely pragmatic and flexible tool in support to the simple coordination of the foreign policies of the member states. Most importantly, a line of distinction between the economic and the political matters was drawn. As a consequence, the EPC had to deal with all the political issues, while the Commission had to remain focused only on the economic ones. The relationship was intended as decisively separated, because the EC member states were not willing to cede their sovereignty in the field of foreign policy. The political crises of those years, such as the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan, demonstrated that this distinction harmed the effectiveness of the European external action. The importance of the principle of consistency started to be recognised, because that distinction could not be held in reality. Therefore, the London Report, approved on 13 October 1981, declared that the Commission had to be fully associated with the activities of the EPC. The latter remained a flexible tool, but for the former the step was significant because it allowed the Commission to start gaining political relevance. Finally, in 1986 the Single European Act reiterated the need to have a Commission fully associated with the EPC work and it also institutionalised the principle of consistency. In almost two decades the Commission was given a sort of path to strengthen its political role. This first chapter has demonstrated that the relationship between the EPC and the Commission could be a way for the latter to gain political relevance within the framework of the European external action.

The second chapter examined the main themes that characterised the transatlantic talks between 1985 and 1988 and, at the same time, the negotiating attitudes the US and the EC adopted to face these matters. The second half of 1980s were characterised by a significant number of commercial disputes

between the two sides of the Atlantic. The disagreements of economic nature were various, therefore Burghardt's archival papers have been used to understand how Washington and Community Brussels managed them. The chapter starts by demonstrating how, since the matter under discussions were still mainly commercial ones, there was not much space of manoeuvre for the Commission to develop its political role. In addition, in facing the commercial disputes, the US and the EC held two different approaches. Both were aware that they shared a common responsibility towards the functioning of the global trade and economic system. However, Washington felt as the senior partner of the alliance, therefore its attitude was characterised by a behaviour defined by the Commission officials as aggressive ambivalence. The ambivalence lied in the different approaches the Americans had towards the European integration when political or economic affairs were discussed. In political issues Washington was always supportive of the European effort to enhance the integration in order to reach a political unity, while in economic issues the US were more and more worried of the possible bad consequences of a too strong and prosperous EC. This attitude translated into a significantly aggressive attitude towards the EC in the management of the commercial disputes of the second half of the 1980s. On the other hand, the EC tried to hold an attitude both open and decisive. Community Brussels wanted to reassure Washington on the fact that a more prosperous EC could only benefit the US, but it did not mean that the EC never criticised the Americans. The EC decisively exposed its critics and always underlined the shared responsibility in order to push Washington to act for the wealth of the two sides of the Atlantic and the entire world. After having clarified the themes and the attitudes characterising the transatlantic relations in those years, the second chapter has demonstrated how the Commission effectively managed the commercial disputes of that time. Three examples have been selected to show that the Commission was not a newcomer in the international trade negotiations: the 1985 EC enlargement economic issues, the GATT Uruguay round, and the debate over the agricultural subsidies. The Uruguay round, with the specific battle around the agricultural subsidies, was the principal example of how the Commission was able to adopt the open but decisive attitude to effectively face Washington. In its branch of competence, the Commission was a truly

relevant player in the European external action. The US respected it and were not able to dictate any guidelines or policies as if the EC was a minor ally. In commercial and economic disputes, the Commission defended the European interests and could change Washington's standpoints. Finally, the second chapter has pointed out that during those years the Commission played no role in the process of East-West détente. Many events, such as the Reykjavik summit in 1985, were political progresses towards a better relationship between the two blocs, but the Commission was not able to have a say in these issues. However, already at the end of 1988 the Commission started building meaningful economic relations with Eastern Europe, a move which anticipated one of the ways to gain a political role. Indeed, the Commission started becoming a key player in the Eastern European area. Thus, the second chapter has demonstrated that between 1985 and 1988, since the main disputes were of commercial and economic nature, the Commission could not strengthen its political role, but it clearly was an effective player in its domain of European external relations. The Commission's political relevance was still to be built.

The third and final chapter has examined the period between 1989 and 1991 to understand whether the Commission actually gained a more meaningful political role throughout those years. The has started by explaining two fundamental changes in the international framework. The first one was the rapid and revolutionary events characterising that time span due to the crumbling of the USSR and the progressive liberation of Central and Eastern Europe from the constraints of the Soviet bloc. These episodes gave to the period a changing and unpredictable nature. The US and the EC were not the protagonists of those happenings, but they were concerned of the possible negative evolutions of the situation. It clearly became a time of important political decisions. The second change of circumstances was the new American attitude brought by the Bush's administration. As a consequence of the revolutionary period, the White House passed from an aggressive behaviour strongly interested in the economic affairs to a more cooperative attitude way more focused on the political dimension of the relationship with the other side of the Atlantic. President Bush held a speech

at Boston University in May 1989 in which he eliminated the aggressive ambivalence of Ragan's times declaring that the political matters had a significant priority over the ongoing commercial and economic disputes. It did not mean that the economic disagreements disappeared, but it certainly meant that the Americans were more interested in having a solid and effective political dialogue with the EC than in discussing about technical commercial matters. In addition, Bush expressed a support for the EC political integration, because Washington needed a strong political ally to manage the changing times of that period. This new American attitude was confirmed by a speech held by the Secretary of State James Baker in Berlin in December 1989. The US openly asked the EC to strengthen the political dimension of the dialogue within the transatlantic relations. This new American attitude and desires were also institutionalised by the signing of the Transatlantic Declaration in November 1990. This document from a practical standpoint introduced new forms of dialogue to enhance the political cooperation, while from an attitude point of view it clearly put the political side of the transatlantic talks at the centre moving the commercial disputes to the background. Thanks to these new circumstances, a window of opportunity opened for the Commission to enhance its political relevance. The rest of the chapter demonstrated that the Delors Commission was indeed able to exploit the situation to effectively gain political agency. This effort was conducted by following two trajectories. The first one was the one started in late 1988: fostering the economic relations with Eastern Europe to build a political voice over the situation in the area. During a G-7 summit in Paris in July 1989 the Commission was entrusted with the leadership of the Western effort to support the economic and political reform of Eastern Europe, especially of Poland and Hungary. It was a clear signal that the international powers were recognising the Commission as an institution with expertise in the area; in particular, the fact that Washington gave the Commission such a role meant that the Americans were willing to stay in the background because they trusted the European institution. The Commission established the PHARE programme which aimed at liberalising the economies of Poland and Hungary and, at the same time, their political systems. The Commission effectively fulfilled its task receiving compliments by the American ally. At the

beginning of 1990 the PHARE programme was extended to the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In 1991 the mere political results arrived. The EC signed the so-called Europe agreements with some of the Eastern European countries. These were association agreements combining economic and political reforms. Thus, the Commission became a fundamental player in Eastern Europe. It gained a significant political role within the European external action framework by building its political relevance on its economic expertise. The second trajectory was the one of the relationship with the European Political Cooperation. Against the institutional background guaranteed by the Single European Act, the Commission was able to become an indispensable element for the good functioning of the European Political Cooperation. The representatives of the EPC Troika defined the Commission as the fundamental fourth player to produce an effective European action in the international scenario. This new status was recognised also by the US. Indeed, Washington insisted on inviting the Commission also to all the political meetings. Reagan's times in which the Commission was involved only for managing harsh commercial disputes were far. At the beginning of the 1990s the Commission was fully invited to the debate around the new European architecture. The EC's final practical contribution was not really significant, because the member states still played the crucial role in the security area. However, the simple fact that the Commission could have a voice was a novelty reflecting the political relevance the institution led by Delors had gained. The EPC-Commission relations truly enhanced the political agency of the latter.

Thus, the dissertation supports the argument made at the beginning in the introduction. The Delors Commission did gain political agency between the end of 1980s and the start of 1990s. During the Reagan administration, the Commission fully respected its competences and dealt only with commercial matters. Then, in 1989 it was able to exploit the window of opportunity offered by the revolutionary times and by the new American attitude in order to enhance its political role within the European external action. In 1991 the Commission was not the same institution it was in 1985. It grew political agency through day-by-day activism, especially in the key area of Eastern Europe. It

is interesting to note that the Commission did not even too much forcefully search for this new political dimension, but it found itself in a favourable period and was able to exploit it. As often happens in the history of the European integration, the new political agency of the Commission was not first established by treaty and later applied in reality. It emerged in the daily business through the effective effort of the Delors Commission and was first recognised by the European member states and the other international powers, in this case the major ally the US. Therefore, the analysis of Burghardt's archival documents of the period leads to the conclusion that between 1985 and 1991 the Commission did experience a transformation of its competences on the ground: the commercial ones established by treaty remained firmly in its hands and the political agency was built taking advantage of the international framework. It means that the Commission actually gained a new political relevance which can be considered an important step towards the construction of a real common foreign policy shaped also by the EC institutions without leaving everything in the hands of the member states.

The dissertation has tried to offer an original contribution to the scientific literature regarding the transatlantic relations and the EC/EU external relations. As mentioned in the introduction, the usual approach to these topics adopted in the literature is the governmental one in which the European member states are the main protagonists, and the institutional level is undermined or disregarded. Instead, drawing on European Commission sources, it was possible to study how Washington interacted with the officials of a European institution who did not directly represent any member state. It was shown how the Americans during the period under analysis acknowledged the European Commission's role in determining the European international moves. It proved wrong the sometimes-popular idea that in the international arena only the member states could play a meaningful role because the European institutions were not considered. Washington was aware of the influence of the Commission, especially in the commercial area. On the other hand, it has been demonstrated that also in the European reaction to the revolutionary times of 1989 the EC institutional level played a role.

The European external action was not simply the sum of the member states' will with the prevalence of the desires of the most important European governments, but it was the result of a complex multi-level process in which the institutional bodies exerted their own influence. Thus, this thesis has tried to offer an original contribution to the historical debate by employing the already existent institutional approach to a period and some themes to which, for various reasons, it has been applied only in a significantly limited way.

In conclusion, it is interesting to look at the following progresses in the EC/EU external policy in light of the analysis of this dissertation. Indeed, as mentioned in the introduction, the examination of this work had to stop at 1991 due to the availability of the archival sources. However, the official evolution of the Commission's institutional role in external relations in later years can be understood according to the conclusions of this thesis.

On 7 February 1992 the Maastricht Treaty was signed. It marked significant progresses in all the areas of the European integration project officially launching the European Union. Regarding the European external action, the Maastricht Treaty introduced as second pillar of the new European Union the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). It was a meaningful official step towards a common European foreign policy. The CFSP remained of strictly intergovernmental nature, but the Commission played a role. It kept the fundamental responsibility of guarantying the consistency by managing the economic tools employed in foreign policy. As demonstrated in this dissertation, it was an effective way to also hold a political relevance. In addition, the Commission had the right of referring matters to the Council of the EU, therefore it had to pay attention to the international political affairs. Indeed, the Commission evolved also internally. In 1993 a new DG was created, the External Political Relations DG (DG IA). It was a clear signal of the Commission's interest in the political matters of the international arena in order to effectively support the CFSP. It is extremely interesting to note that as first Director General of this newly born DG was Günter Burghardt under the authority

of President Jacques Delors and Commissioner Hans van den Broek. The Commission continued its effort to develop a relevant political role.

Remaining on the institutional level, on 13 December 2007 the Lisbon Treaty was signed. Among the various reforms it introduced, the establishment of the European External Action Service and of the figure of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policies were two of the most significant for the area of the EU external action. The remarkable aspect of the High Representative position is that it holds also at the same time the Vice-Presidency of the European Commission. It is defined as double-hatted, and it was created in that way in order to enhance the overall coherence on external action. It means that nowadays the Vice-President of the Commission is also one of the most important voices representing the EU and its external action all over the world. Consequently, the Commission is fully involved in the process to shape the European external action without distinction of political or economic matters.

Beyond the mere institutional domain, in the current era the Commission is considered a valuable political player for the EU external action also in the strategic documents. Two significant examples are the 2016 Global Strategy and the 2022 Strategic Compass²⁵¹. Both are strategic documents produced by the European Union External Action Service aimed at presenting the challenges and the tools of the European external action. In both official papers the Commission is mentioned, together with the other relevant EU institutions and the member states, as a crucial element of the institutional framework shaping the EU foreign policy. Once again, the structure is strongly multi-level, but the Commission keeps holding its legitimacy in having a say in the international political affairs the EU is involved with.

²⁵¹ *A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, European Union External Action Service, presented to the Council of the EU on 14 November 2016.
A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security, European Union External Action Service, 21 March 2022.

As final reflections, it is interesting to note that in times of crisis, as it was the 1989 period or the recent covid-19 pandemic, the EC/EU member states consider the European Commission a crucial actor due to its technical competences and its neutrality. The 1989 PHARE programme and the 2020 plan to purchase covid-19 vaccines are two examples of the technical competence the Commission holds which guarantees it power and influence. Moreover, on both occasions the Commission demonstrated to be a neutral player able to silently mediate among the different member states' positions in order to serve the European common interest. The Commission is a sort of European internal diplomatic actor that proposes common technical solutions in order to avoid public clashes between the member states. Accordingly, the Commission can be defined even as a sort of European institutional "think tank" which formulates the Community strategies to solve the member states' disagreements. In the post-1989 years the solutions were the Europe association agreements that resulted to be an effective strategy, and during the 2020 pandemic crisis the plan of centralised purchase of vaccines turned out to be truly effective too.

Thus, today it is possible to affirm that the Von Der Leyen Commission could define itself as a geopolitical body²⁵² also thanks to the role played by the Delors Commission between 1980s and 1990s in starting the enhancement of a Commission's political agency. It was the first step of an ongoing travel towards a European Commission able to fully make its part towards shaping a common European foreign policy.

²⁵² See *Opening Statement in the European Parliament Plenary Session by Ursula von der Leyen, Candidate for President of the European Commission*, Ursula Von Der Leyen, Strasbourg, 16 July 2019.

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HAEU, Fond Günter Burghardt, GB-31, First presidential consultations between Jacques Santer, Jacques Delors and George H. W. Bush in the framework of the Transatlantic Declaration held from 10 -12/04/1991 in Washington.

Appendix: primary sources

In the following pages four key extracts of Günter Burghardt's archival papers employed in this dissertation are reported. They all referred to the period taken into consideration in the final chapter in which the European Commission's political evolution is analysed.

The first extract is President George Bush's speech held at Boston University on 21 May 1989 in which the new American approach towards the European Community was first expressed. It is part of the following archival fond: HAEU, Fond Günter Burghardt, GB-25, Political dialogue between the European Communities and the United States.

The second is the report of the EC/US ministerial meeting held in Brussels on 15 December 1989 in which the Commission's leadership of the G-24 group was openly appreciated. It is part of the following archival fond: HAEU, Fond Günter Burghardt, GB-25, Political dialogue between the European Communities and the United States.

The third is a note about the meeting between President George Bush and President Jacques Delors held at the White House on 24 April 1990 in which the dialogue was highly political. It is part of the following archival fond: HAEU, Fond Günter Burghardt, GB-28, The European Communities and the United States: consultations 1990.

The fourth and final extract is the report of the meeting between the US Congress and the Troika of the European Political Cooperation held in Washington on 26 October 1989 in which the Commission was defined as Fourth Musketeer. It is part of the following archival fond: HAEU, Fond Günter Burghardt, GB-26, Political Directors' Troika consultations: 1987 - 1989.



USA Text

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Office

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USAT PL 3

May 21, 1989

BUSH ADDRESS TO BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Boston, Massachusetts -- President Bush, with French President Mitterand at his side, told Boston University graduates May 21 that the United States "welcomes the emergence of Europe as a partner in world leadership" and stands ready to develop with it "new mechanisms of consultation and cooperation on political and global issues."

Bush described those issues as stretching from "strengthening the forces of democracy in the Third World, to managing regional tensions, to putting an end to the division of Europe."

In his address, the President said he was "grateful" for the steps taken by Soviet leader Gorbachev to reform Soviet society and advance plans for peace, but reaffirmed that the United States must stay vigilant to protect the Western Alliance.

Following is a text of the President's address

As B.U. grads, you take with you a degree from a great institution, and something more -- knowledge of the past, and responsibility for the future. Look at our world. Nations are undergoing change so radical, that the international system you will know in the next century will be as different from today's, as today's world is from the time of Woodrow Wilson. How will America prepare for the challenges ahead?

It is with your future in mind that, after deliberation and review, that we are adapting our foreign policies to meet this time of extraordinary change and opportunity. I have outlined how this Administration will promote reform in Eastern Europe; and how we will work with our friends in Latin America. In Texas, I spoke to another group of graduates of our new approach to the Soviet Union, one of moving beyond containment, to seek to integrate the Soviets into the community of nations, to help them share the rewards of international cooperation.

But today, I want to discuss the future of Europe, that mother of nations and ideas that is so much a part of America. It is fitting that I share this forum with a special friend of America -- President Mitterand, you have the

warm affection and high regard of the American people. I well remember when I joined you in Yorktown in 1981, to celebrate the bicentennial of that first Franco-American fight for freedom. Soon, I will join you in Paris to observe the 200th anniversary of the French struggle for liberty and equality.

This is just one example of a special bond between two continents. But consider this city. From the Old North Church, to Paul Revere's home nestled in the warm heart of the Italian North-End, to your famous song-filled Irish pubs -- the Old and New Worlds are inseparable in Boston. But as we look back to Old World tradition, we must look ahead to a new Europe. Historic changes will shape your careers and your very lives.

The changes that are occurring in Western Europe are less dramatic than those taking place in the East, but they are no less fundamental. The postwar order that began in 1945 is transforming into something very different. Yet certain essentials remain, because our Alliance with Western Europe is utterly unlike the cynical power alliances of the past. It is based on far more than the perception of a common enemy. It is a tie of culture, kinship and shared values. As we look toward the 21st century, Americans and Europeans alike should remember the words of Raymond Aron, who called the Alliance a "moral and spiritual community." Our ideals are those of the American Bill of Rights and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. And it is precisely because the ideals of this community are universal, that the world is in ferment today.

Now a new century holds the promise of a united Europe. As you know, the nations of Western Europe are already moving toward greater economic integration, with the ambitious goal of a single European market in 1992. The United States has often declared it seeks a healing of old enmities, an integration of Europe. At the same time, there has been an historical ambivalence on the part of some Americans toward a more united Europe. To this ambivalence has been added apprehension at the prospect of 1992. But whatever others may think, this Administration is of one mind. We believe a strong, united Europe means a strong America.

Western Europe has a gross domestic product that is roughly equal to our own and a population that exceeds ours. European science leads the world in many fields, and European workers are highly educated and highly skilled.

The United States welcomes the emergence of Europe as a partner in world leadership. We are ready to develop -- with the European Community and its member states -- new mechanisms of consultation and cooperation on political and global issues, from strengthening the forces of democracy in the Third World, to managing regional tensions, to putting an end to the division of Europe. A resurgent Western Europe is an economic magnet, drawing Eastern Europe closer, toward the commonwealth of free nations.

A more mature partnership with Western Europe will pose new challenges. There are certain to be clashes and controversies over economic issues. America will, of course, defend its interests. But it is important to distinguish adversaries from allies, and allies from adversaries. What a tragedy -- what an absurdity -- it would be if future historians attribute the demise of the Alliance to disputes over beef hormones, and wars over pasta. We must all work hard to insure that the Europe of 1992 will adopt the lower barriers of the modern international economy, not the high walls and moats of medieval commerce.

But our hopes for the future rest ultimately on keeping the peace in Europe. Forty-two years ago, just across the Charles River, Secretary of State George Marshall gave a commencement address that outlined a plan to help Europe recover. Western Europe responded heroically, and later joined with us in a partnership for the common defense -- a shield we call NATO. This Alliance has always been driven by a spirited debate over the best way to achieve peaceful change. But the deeper truth is that the Alliance has achieved an historic peace because it is united by a fundamental purpose. Behind the NATO shield, Europe has now enjoyed forty years free of conflict, the longest period of peace the continent has ever known. Behind this shield, the nations of Western Europe have risen from privation to prosperity -- all because of the strength and resolve of free peoples.

With a Western Europe that is now coming together, we recognize that new forms of cooperation must be developed. We applaud the defense cooperation developing in the revitalized Western European Union, whose members worked with us to keep open the sea lanes of the Persian Gulf. We applaud the growing military cooperation between West Germany and France. We welcome British and French programs to modernize their deterrent capability, and their moves toward cooperation in this era. It is perfectly right and proper that Europeans increasingly see their defense cooperation as an investment in a secure future. But we do have a major concern of a different order -- a growing complacency throughout the West.

Of course, your generation can hardly be expected to share the grip of past anxieties. With such a long peace, it is hard to imagine how it could be otherwise. But our expectations in this rapidly changing world cannot race so far ahead that we forget what is at stake. There is a great irony here. While an ideological earthquake is shaking asunder the very foundation of Communist societies, the West is being tested by complacency.

We must never forget that twice in this century, American blood has been shed over conflicts that began in Europe. We share the fervent desire of Europeans to relegate war forever to the province of distant memory. But that is why the Atlantic Alliance is so central to our foreign policy. That is why America remains committed to the Alliance and the strategy which has preserved freedom in Europe. We must never forget that to keep the peace in Europe is to keep the peace for America.

NATO's policy of flexible response keeps the United States linked to Europe and lets any would-be aggressors know that they will be met with any level of force needed to repel their attack and frustrate their designs. Our short-range deterrent forces based in Europe, and kept up-to-date, demonstrate that America's vital interests are bound inextricably to Western Europe, and that an attacker can never gamble on a test of strength with just our conventional forces. Though hope is now running high for a more peaceful continent, the history of this century teaches Americans and Europeans to remain prepared.

As we search for a peace that is enduring, I am grateful for the steps that Mr. Gorbachev is taking. If the Soviets advance solid and constructive plans for peace, then we should give credit where credit is due. We are seeing sweeping changes in the Soviet Union that show promise of enduring, of becoming ingrained. At the same time, in an era of extraordinary change, we have an obligation to temper optimism with prudence.

For example, the Soviet Foreign Minister informed the world last week that his nation's commitment to destroy SS-23 missiles under the INF Treaty may be reversible. The Soviets must surely know the results of failure to comply with this solemn agreement. Perhaps their purpose was to divide the West on other issues. Regardless, it is clear that Soviet "New thinking" has not yet totally overcome the old.

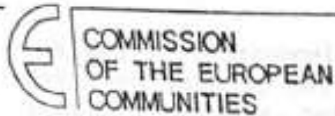
I believe in a deliberate, step-by-step approach to East-West relations, because recurring signs show that while change in the Soviet Union is dramatic, it is not yet complete. The Warsaw Pact retains a nearly 12-to-1 advantage over the Atlantic Alliance in short-range missile and rocket launchers capable of delivering nuclear weapons; and more than a 2-to-1 advantage in main battle tanks. For that reason, we will also maintain, in cooperation with our allies, ground and air forces in Europe as long as they are wanted and needed to preserve the peace in Europe. At the same time, my Administration will place a high and continuing priority on negotiating a less militarized Europe, one with a secure conventional balance at lower levels of forces. Our highest aspiration is a peace of shared optimism, not of armed camps.

Nineteen-ninety-two is the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the New World. So we have five centuries to celebrate, nothing less than our very civilization -- the American Bill of Rights and the French Rights of Man, the ancient and unwritten Constitution of Great Britain, and the democratic vision of Konrad Adenauer and Alcide de Gasperi.

And in all our celebrations, we observe one fact -- this truly is a moral and spiritual community. It is our inheritance. Let us protect it. Let us promote it. Let us treasure it for our children, for Americans and Europeans yet unborn.

x X x

Extract 2



DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR
EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Brussels 18 December 1989
AP/JI

Minutes of the EC/US Ministerial Meeting Brussels, 15 December 1989

Opening statements

1. President Delors welcomed the US delegation. He referred to the rapidly changing international circumstances and emphasized the importance attached by the Commission to EC-US relations. He added that he looked forward to this meeting which would provide an opportunity for a joint review of the following issues:
 - East-West Relations
 - European Integration
 - Uruguay Round
 - Management of EC-US Relations
 - Environmental Cooperation
 - Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.
2. Secretary Baker, in turn, made his opening remarks which, he said, echoed some of the points he had already made to President Delors in their tête-à-tête meeting. He too pointed to the extraordinary developments taking place in the world, particularly in Europe, where it seemed that President Bush's objective of a "Europe whole and free" was now within reach. The successful progress of European integration continued to provide a model of prosperity to the people and governments of Eastern Europe. The EC had an important role to play in the world today and derived the necessary strength to live up to this role from the success of its integration effort.
3. The US supported fully the process of integration, without presuming to influence this process. A strong Europe meant a strong United States. Secretary Baker added that EC had always proved ready to cooperate with others and to face problems with its partners head on. He appreciated the role being played by the Community in international economic affairs, a role equivalent to that of the United States. It was important, he emphasized, for the two to work together, among other things to ensure the success of the Uruguay Round. The EC was performing the valuable task of coordinating aid to Poland and Hungary. Vice-President Andriessen had just chaired the very successful G24 meeting. Further cooperation between the EC and the US with respect to the countries of Eastern Europe was necessary, Secretary Baker added, in order to examine ways of drawing their economies into the Western economic system.
5. Secretary Baker then went on to say that "richer EC-US linkages" were needed. While he had no preconceived model of cooperation, it was clear that the US had to work more closely with the European institutions and to have a political dialogue on a "multilateral" basis. The Political Cooperation mechanism of the EC was mentioned by Secretary Baker in this context.

6. The degree of economic interdependence between the EC and the US was such that it was imperative to deal with trade and economic problems speedily, before they developed into a political problem. He cited standards and high technology as areas where cooperation was required in order to avoid possible future difficulties. He was at pains to emphasize that this should not be construed as interference, it was not the business of the US to suggest to the Community how to broaden and deepen European integration.
7. Secretary Baker rounded up his opening remarks by saying that the EC-US Ministerial meetings should be "free-standing", not linked to other events like the NATO Ministerial, and he proposed that the next meeting should be held in Washington.

East-West Relations

1. Secretary Baker then took up the first agenda point with an account of the Malta Summit. This had, he said, been a very successful meeting, in the eyes of both the US and the USSR. A further Summit was being planned to take place in Washington in the latter half of June. The Malta talks had led to progress on arms control, including control of conventional forces (a draft agreement text had just been tabled by the US at the NATO Ministerial), strategic weapons (although sea and air launched missiles remained a problem) and chemical weapons. The talks had also served to convince the USSR that the United States was genuinely prepared to assist Mr Gorbachev and his reform programme. There should, however, Secretary Baker said, be no illusions about the difficulties which lay ahead before the success of Perestroika could be assured. The recently announced economic measures in the USSR, which constituted a backward step, illustrated that the conservatives in the Soviet Union remained a force to be reckoned with. The ethnic problems in the USSR would also continue to plague Mr Gorbachev. The autonomy measures envisaged by the Soviet authorities were unlikely to contain the situation. Nevertheless, Secretary Baker said that he was hopeful that the reform process would not be reversed. However, continued support of the West for the process remained indispensable.
2. The major point of difference between the US and the USSR which emerged at Malta was, Secretary Baker stated, Central America. The US side had made it clear that it would be difficult for it to maintain its present support for Mr Gorbachev if the "hot war" in El Salvador were to continue. Disagreement had also been registered over Afghanistan and Cambodia. It was, further, established that there was no major disagreement over the Middle East, while there was complete convergence of opinions with respect to the Lebanon.
3. Secretary Baker also referred to developments elsewhere in Eastern Europe. He expressed optimism regarding the irreversible nature of the reform process in the GDR, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. He justified his recent meeting at Pankow with Mr Modrow by saying that Mr Modrow had to be supported since he was at the moment the only credible leader in the GDR.

4. Vice President Andriessen responded for the Commission side. He too emphasized that we are at the beginning of a new era in international relations. Referring to Secretary Baker's Berlin speech, Mr Andriessen said that it contained many ideas worthy of serious consideration. It was true, he added, that the political significance of the EC had been enhanced by recent developments and this should be reflected in the international role of the EC and in the nature of EC-US contacts. The positive attitude adopted by the US towards the EC was encouraging and the ways in which cooperation could be intensified needed to be examined carefully. While it was for President Delors to respond officially to the US suggestion that the next Ministerial should be held in Washington, he personally considered it a good idea.
5. Mr Andriessen then gave his views on the G24 meeting which, he said, had been very constructive. The objectives of the meeting had been fully met. The participants had reaffirmed their commitment to helping Poland and Hungary and had also given a positive political signal to the other countries of Eastern Europe. Even though the needs of each of these countries differed, they all required some form of assistance and, even more importantly perhaps, the moral support of the West. The stabilisation fund established by the G24 Ministerial constituted a clear gesture of support. The Commission would continue to exert every effort in order to ensure the continued success and effectiveness of its coordinating role.
6. Mr Andriessen subsequently reviewed briefly the Community's relations with individual Eastern European countries, the form of which, he said, varied from case to case. The EC had a simple trade agreement with Czechoslovakia. It now seemed likely that the latter would ask for a broadening of the Agreement. The EC had already received a Memorandum from the GDR seeking a trade and cooperation agreement, while Bulgaria had requested that the ongoing negotiations with the EC be accelerated and had at the same time invited President Delors to Sofia. The negotiations with the USSR had, meanwhile, been successfully concluded and the Agreement would be signed on 18 December. Mr Andriessen also added that the Strasbourg Summit had raised the possibility of negotiating Association Agreements with the Eastern European countries. The EC was also developing new institutions, like the European Development Bank, in order to meet the demands of the new situation.
7. Finally, Mr Andriessen mentioned the EC's relations with EFTA saying that the Strasbourg Summit had given the green light for formal negotiations with the EFTA countries, the other pillar of the architecture of the new Europe to which Secretary Baker had referred. Europe, he pointed out, was already moving in a direction which fitted in with the Secretary's ideas.
8. Mr Matutes also intervened at this point to give an account of the EC's policy towards Central America. The EC, he said, encouraged cooperation among the countries of the region and sought to contribute to the peace process. EC aid to Nicaragua was conditional on the continuation of the peace process and the holding of free elections. Secretary Baker expressed his appreciation of this helpful EC attitude.

Extract 3



le 25 avril 1990

Le Chef de Cabinet du Président

Confidentiel

PL/ah

NOTE DE DOSSIER

Objet : réunion à la Maison Blanche 24 avril 1990
du côté US : G. Bush, Quale, Baker, Brady, Sununu,
Scowcroft, Niles, Zoellick
côté CE : J. Delors, F. Andriessen, HGK, Van Agt, PL

La réunion a duré, comme prévu, une demi-heure et s'est déroulée dans un climat chaleureux et dense. Elle a porté, pour l'essentiel, sur les relations US-Europe-Communauté : du côté US, G. Bush a souhaité rappeler son intérêt pour une construction européenne à concilier avec le maintien de l'OTAN. Du côté de la Commission, le Président Delors a expliqué pourquoi et comment l'action que la Communauté développait en Europe en faisait l'instrument irremplaçable de la stabilité et de la paix, et comment les progrès de l'intégration politique coïncidaient avec les intérêts US en Europe.

G. Bush a rappelé qu'à ses yeux une Communauté forte, comme une OTAN vigoureuse, était dans l'intérêt des US. Les progrès de la CE ne devraient ni pousser au protectionnisme ni remettre en cause l'OTAN. Les deux organisations sont complémentaires et les US peuvent discuter les questions politiques avec l'une et l'autre parallèlement. L'implantation militaire US sur le continent, qui est dans l'intérêt de l'Europe, suppose que les questions économiques et politiques ne soient pas découplées des questions de défense : le contraire reviendrait à transformer les troupes US en Europe en mercenaires, ce que l'opinion politique prendrait mal.

Il est donc essentiel de renforcer la coopération et de globaliser les relations EC-US et d'étendre le dialogue à de nouveaux sujets comme l'environnement comme nous l'avons fait pour le G 24. On pourrait d'ailleurs étendre cette formule à l'Amérique centrale.

Sur l'Uruguay round, le Président des Etats-Unis a rappelé que le succès du round était essentiel et que l'agriculture

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était une clef essentielle. S'il ne sait pas exactement où l'on en est, un échec serait catastrophique.

Le Président de la Commission, après avoir remercié J. Baker pour avoir organisé cette nouvelle formule de ministérielle, a indiqué que la Communauté était favorable à une OTAN vigoureuse et que ceci impliquait une préparation soignée du Sommet à venir de la CSCE qui n'avait pas vocation à devenir la matrice de la Grande Europe. Notre objectif est ce créer un réseau de relations serrées en intégrant l'Allemagne de l'Est dans la CE, en créant un espace économique avec l'AELE, en aidant multilatéralement (G 24) et bilatéralement (accords d'association) les pays de l'Europe centrale et de l'Est avec lesquels nous tissons des liens spéciaux puisque leur adhésion est aujourd'hui impossible.

Notre objectif est de contribuer à la création d'une large zone de liberté et de stabilité ce qui est aussi dans l'intérêt des US et de l'Alliance atlantique.


Il est vrai que le Chancelier et le Président de la République française, en lançant une initiative dans la direction de l'union politique, ont mentionné les questions de sécurité. Pourquoi ont-ils pris cette initiative ? en raison du décalage croissant entre l'intégration économique et la coopération politique d'abord, en raison de l'unité allemande ensuite. Il est normal qu'une nouvelle dimension politique de la construction européenne inclue la sécurité; c'est ainsi que prendra forme le pilier européen de l'Alliance. C'est le meilleur antidote contre le neutralisme. Voilà pourquoi des pas supplémentaires dans l'intégration européenne servent aussi les intérêts US.

Nous sommes aussi partisans d'une relation globale Europe-US, même si nous avons des difficultés institutionnelles à la mettre en forme, mais des réformes sur ce terrain sont peut-être à venir, et la prochaine visite avec la présidence italienne pourrait être conjointe.

Le Vice-Président Andriessen a développé la position communautaire sur l'Uruguay round dont le succès est aussi essentiel pour nous compte tenu de notre ouverture sur l'extérieur. Sans doute US et EC jouent-ils les premiers rôles; mais d'autres doivent aussi trouver leur compte dans le round. Les récentes réunions ont permis d'améliorer le climat y compris celles de la veille qui ont été plus productives que prévu. Lors de la réunion au Mexique, les Ministres ont souhaité que les grandes lignes des accords pouvant être réalisés dans les différents groupes de négociation soient définies au plus tard pour la réunion du Comité de négociation fin juillet, accompagnées d'une appréciation politique de la part du Directeur général du GATT. Au fond, le problème réside davantage dans les modalités que dans les objectifs.

In fine, ont été évoqué rapidement la Lithuanie (satisfaction pour la concordance des positions) et la préparation du Sommet de Houston (environnement, drogue et money laundering).

En sortant de la Maison Blanche, le Président a brièvement répondu aux questions de la presse (voir annexe).



Pascal LAMY

le Président
F. Andriessen
D. Williamson
H.G. Krenzler
A. Van Agt

Extract 4

The Troika described the development of European unification beginning from the Treaty of Rome acknowledging that in fact at that point a unified European foreign policy was not envisaged by the Treaty. It was not until 1988 that the original six members of the Community felt it was necessary to begin developing foreign policy. The present commitment is one of pragmatic cooperation based on common interests. There was a joint emphasis on foreign policy coherence by the Troika. Both

Annex II

Subject : Report of meeting between Congress and the Troika 26 October 1989

Representatives of the current Presidency, the immediate past Spanish Presidency and the upcoming Irish Presidency plus the Commission representative met with members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee for brief discussions on the role, purpose and function of the EPC in developing European foreign policy.

HOUSE

The meeting with the House Foreign Affairs Committee was chaired by Mr. Lee Hamilton (D.-Ind.), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East. He was joined by Congressman Ben Gilman (R.-NY), Minority Leader of the Subcommittee. Joining them was Representative Sam Gejdenson (D.-Conn.), Chairman of the Subcommittee on International Economic Policy and Trade. Mr. Hamilton opened the meeting by stressing the importance of European unification, economic and political, and admitted that the meeting would be more of a learning lesson for the American Congressmen. He asked the Presidency to explain a little bit about how the EPC works and then after those remarks a question and answer format could be followed.

The President introduced the members of the delegation with an important comment that while the group was called, "the Troika", it was in fact more like the "Three Musketeers" in which there was a fourth and most important Musketeer. In this case in addition to the three Member States representatives, the fourth Musketeer was the Commission.

The Troika described the development of European unification beginning from the Treaty of Rome emphasising that in fact at that point a united European foreign policy was not envisioned by the Treaty. It was not until 1969 that the original six members of the Community felt it was necessary to begin coordinating foreign policy reactions. The current arrangement is one of pragmatic cooperation based on consensus. There was a great emphasis on foreign policy coherence by the Twelve. Main foreign policy objectives of the Twelve were to

- (i) promote democracy,
- (ii) ensure human rights, and
- (iii) respond or contribute to the easing of regional conflicts.

The current situation is one of increasing responsibility and increasing numbers of issues which the EPC handles. These now include issues such as drugs, terrorism.

The Commission's responsibility was to keep EPC policy initiatives in harmony with Community policies. The Commission is therefore fully associated with all of the activities of the EPC.

Congressman Gejdenson strongly supported the European united front on China and then asked for clarification on how the EPC process had worked in that particular event. He asked if his impression was correct that the Community policy was only put into place during the Arch Summit of July and if that was the case why did it take so long to develop a reaction.

The Troika informed him that in fact the Community's policy was established as the events in China were happening, that a high-level meeting with the Chinese Foreign Relations Minister was cancelled on the Monday morning after the massacre. At the level of the Foreign Relations Ministers a consensus was quickly reached that there would be no new credits for China, cultural and artistic exchanges would be terminated, there would be embargos on trade with China in the military area, and no new economic cooperation development projects. There would be extensions of visas for all Chinese students in Europe who wanted to remain in Europe, and Europeans would support the postponement of new credits for China from the World Bank.

All of these measures were strongly supported at the highest level of European Community policymakers at the European Council of Ministers Summit in Madrid in June of this year. It was in fact the European response that formed the core of the Western response based on the Arch Summit in July. All the above conditions are currently being enforced by the Twelve.

Gejdenson responded that he thought that if they had to use consensus in the United States Congress, it would mean nothing would happen, but he was glad to see that in this case consensus seemed to bring a relatively strong and quick reaction, which he was glad to see because Congress often hears the argument that the United States is the only power willing to sacrifice economic gain through the use of embargos to achieve objectives. He was glad to see that Europeans were willing to use this tool as well.

Hamilton asked what the EPC view on the so-called German question was. He asked what was happening there and how did one analyse what is happening there and how would German unification affect the functioning of the EPC and the Community.

The Troika responded that the situation was being watched very closely and that events were happening so quickly that it was almost impossible to tell what was going to happen in this situation.

Hamilton asked if the Germans discussed their moves with the EPC.

The Troika responded yes, that the Germans were in constant daily discussion with the EPC mechanism and in more informal ways. Things were happening so fast that it was impossible to determine what the future reactions could be.

Mr. Gilman, returning to a theme on which he has been working for five or six years with the European Parliament, urged the EPC to develop a strong cooperative initiative to combat the sophistication of drug traffickers in Europe.

The Troika responded that the EPC was very much aware of the need for extensive cooperation in Europe to halt drug trafficking. The Bush plan to fight drugs was a strategy supported by EPC. President Mitterand had in fact proposed a coordination group on drugs that should fully develop a strategy as well as the ways and means for implementation of that strategy. The December Council of Ministers meeting in Strasbourg will take up this issue. Decisions will be made on how to begin cooperation for the interdiction of drugs, to work with countries producing drugs and to cooperate with producers and transit countries to introduce efforts for substitute crops such as coffee.

Mr. Gilman urged them not to delay too long and wished them good luck in the effort.

Mr. Hamilton ended the meeting by asking how involved the EPC got in the discussions of military issues and strategic missiles.

The Troika responded that the responsibilities of EPC concentrated on the economic and political aspects of Security.

SENATE

Senator Lugar made a brief opening statement saying that these were exciting times for change in Europe, times for great opportunities. He cited a visit by Prime Minister Gonzalez of Spain last week to the Committee and made comments about his frequent visits to Europe in connection with the observer status at the arms reduction talks in Vienna. He then asked if this was the first visit outside of the Community that the Troika had made.

He was informed that in fact it was not, that among other places the Troika had visited recently were Angola, several countries in the Middle East and Japan.

The Presidency introduced the old and new members of the Commission saying once again that the Troika was akin to the Three Musketeers and their fourth partner.

Mr. Lugar made reference to receiving a delegation of recently-elected members of the Supreme Soviet in the morning. He then asked how the members of the EPC developed an EC point of view, but operated as officials of Member States at the same time. He asked how was it possible to divide the time between the national and the European responsibilities.

The Troika replied that the decisions of the EPC were purely political and the economic issues were basically dealt with in the Community framework. It was becoming easier to coordinate national and European foreign policy views as the economy and the market unified.

The functioning of EPC (meetings at political and officials level, COREU network) was described in detail.

Heads of government and foreign ministers were less and less aware of separate responsibilities.

Lugar described the situation as a massive and fascinating realignment of sovereignty. He said he found it sometimes difficult in his own situation of trying to balance competing interests. He described his responsibilities on the Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Agriculture Committee as too often being in conflict, saying it was easy to be world-minded in the Foreign Relations Committee, but in the Agriculture Committee the focus was much more parochial. There people were concerned not with third world development but with questions of domestic sugar and tobacco production. He said sometimes there are overlaps, but the gaps between security on the one hand and overseeing protection of agricultural subsidies on the other was a difficult balancing act. Then he asked how the Prime Ministers of the Member States handle this type of conflict.

The Troika responded that agriculture fell to the Agriculture Ministers and that these people were well-practised in the art of agreement by exhaustion.

Lugar asked what progress was being made in the area of currency and monetary union, to which the Troika responded that deepening and quickening of the integration of the Community through economic and monetary union would be on the agenda of the next European Council.

Senator Lugar described a recent discussion he had with four newspaper editors from Colombia who were in the United States to speak out for freedom of the press. He described how these people's offices had been bombed by the so-called narco-terrorists and how their families were in danger while they were on this trip in the United States. His discussions with them had left him with the impression that the value of drug shipments now going to Europe is three or four times that of shipments going to the United States. He said his conclusion is that the free market oriented economies of the drug traffic indicated that the US market is virtually saturated, although there probably were some areas where demand could be stimulated. Europe with its very rich population was very likely to be the next battleground for the drug wars. The narco-industrialists have in fact targetted Europe as the next area of market penetration.

The Troika responded that Europe was well aware of this situation and how dangerous it was.

Lugar responded that he thought a multilateral agreement on coffee could help because it would help restore Colombia's traditional agricultural products. In his view, however, the multilateral coffee agreement broke down because the Colombians insisted on charging one price to free market consumers and giving a greatly discounted price to Eastern European customers.

At that point the Senator urged close cooperation on the drug issue in Europe and expressed hope that perhaps a multilateral agreement could be developed which would help Colombia.

A brief discussion followed on the EPC response to Poland and Hungary and Eastern Europe. When staff asked about the role of EPC in burden-sharing the Troika said that the notion of burdensharing should be looked in broader terms. The transfer of EC resources from the rich

countries of Europe to the poorer ones was a very important element of stability which the US should take into account in its equations. The EC also was the world's largest donor to the third world and that the transfer of EC resources around the world was very often underestimated.

Bob Whiteman
(Washington Delegation)

Final summary

Nowadays the European Commission is considered one of the key players within the European Union multi-level structure shaping the common external action. However, the Commission has not been in this relevant position concerning the European external action since the beginning of the European integration process. For multiple decades it has managed only European commercial relations, and it had to enhance its political relevance throughout the years. The purpose of this dissertation is to assess the evolution of the Commission's political agency between 1985-1991, a crucial historical juncture marked as it was by the Single Market project, the end of the Cold War in Europe and the negotiations on the Maastricht Treaty which established the European Union. In this work, the evolution of the Commission's role in external relations is analysed through the prism of transatlantic relations. Transatlantic relations have been selected as context because the US were the major political and economic partner of the EC member states and the Community itself, therefore Washington's consideration of the Commission was significantly important to understand the Commission's international agency. From a methodological viewpoint, this study is entirely based on the newly declassified archival sources from the fond of the Commission official Günter Burghardt which are now stored at the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence. Günter Burghardt has been a European Commission official from 1970 to 2005, and he held crucial roles related to the EC Commission external action and relations during the 1985-1991 period. From 1985 to 1988, he was Deputy Head of Cabinet to the Commission's President Jacques Delors, with particular responsibility for external and development policies, relations with the European Parliament and Staff management. Then, in 1988, he was appointed Director at the Secretariat-General as well as Political Director, under the direct authority of President Delors, a position he held until 1993. Occupying these positions Burghardt was deeply involved in the Commission's relations with the US and in its efforts to face the changing times of early 1990s. According to the nature of the archival sources, transatlantic relationship between 1985 and 1991 are analysed from a European institutional perspective in order

to understand whether in those years the European Commission led by Jacques Delors started the process of building its own political agency within the framework of EC external relations.

The first chapter analyses the birth and the evolution of the first tool the European member states created to coordinate their foreign policies: the European Political Cooperation. The goal of the chapter is to understand the institutional scenario Delors found when he was officially appointed as President of the European Commission in 1985. Therefore, the evolution of the European Political Cooperation and its relationship with the Commission are the two main elements taken under examination. The study is performed through the analysis of the main official documents and agreements shaping the European Political Cooperation. This tool was officially created on 27 October 1970 through the adoption of the Davignon Report as result of a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the six EC member states held in Luxembourg. The EPC was established as a considerably flexible and pragmatic tool. Its aim was simply to support the coordination of the foreign policies of the European member states. The most important note to be made is that a rigid line of distinction between the economic and the political matters was drawn. The EPC had to manage the political issues, while the Commission had to focus on commercial and economic matters. The two institutions were separated, because the member states were jealous of their sovereignty in the foreign policy field. However, in practice this distinction damaged the effectiveness of EC's external relations. Therefore, in 1981 the London Report was approved to correct this problem. Its most significant provision was that, when needed, the Commission had to be fully associated with the EPC activities. The economic side of external relations had to go hand in hand with the political one. It was the first appeal to the principle of consistency. In 1986 the Single European Act was approved, and it institutionalised the principle of consistency. It was also reiterated that the Commission had to be fully associated with the EPC. Thus, the first chapter demonstrates that the relationship with the EPC became for the Commission a possibility to enhance its political dimension in external relations.

The second chapter takes under examination the period between 1985 and 1988 in which Ronald Reagan was the American President and Jacques Delors experienced its first years as President of the European Commission. The chapter aims at analysing the reciprocal attitudes Washington and Community Brussels had towards one another and the main themes of the transatlantic talks during those years. The second half of the 1980s was characterised by a significant number of commercial disputes between the two sides of the Atlantic which limited the space for political matters. As a consequence, in this period the Commission struggled to build its political agency. This chapter first presents the US and EC negotiating attitudes. Washington held an aggressive behaviour thinking that the international trade playing field was tilted against the American interests. On the other hand, the EC held an open but decisive attitude trying to reassure the Americans but also to push them to make internal changes. Then, three examples of commercial disputes are presented to analyse the Commission's behaviour: the 1985 EC enlargement economic issues, the GATT Uruguay round, and the debate over the agricultural subsidies. These three examples demonstrate that the Commission was not a newcomer in the international trade negotiations. It was able to effectively defend European interests, and Washington gave it significant credit and respect for its action. In its branch of competence, the Commission was a truly relevant player in the external relations domain. Finally, the chapter ends by showing that at the end of 1988 the Commission started building economic relations with Eastern Europe. In this way the Commission started becoming a key player in the Eastern European area and, consequently, gaining significant political relevance.

Lastly, the third chapter analyses the period between 1989 and 1991. The chapter starts by describing two crucial changes of international circumstances. First, in 1989 the crumbling of the USSR and its consequences, such as the progressive liberation of Eastern Europe, were rapid and unpredictable events that brought the political matters again at the centre of the transatlantic talks. Second, as a consequence of this international scenario, the Bush administration changed the American attitude towards the EC downplaying the importance of the commercial disputes and fostering the political

dimension of the transatlantic talks. This new American approach was presented in two key public speeches: one by Bush at Boston University in May 1989 and the other by the Secretary of States James Baker in Berlin in December 1989. In addition, it was institutionalised by the signing of the Transatlantic Declaration in November 1990 in which a more solid framework of mere political dialogue was agreed. As a consequence of the revolutionary period and of the new American attitude, a window of opportunity opened for the Commission. It was a favourable time to enhance its political voice. The Commission was able to effectively exploit this occasion, and it gained political agency by following two trajectories. The first one consisted in fostering the economic relations with Eastern European countries in order to turn them into tools of political leverage. This effort was successful also because in July 1989 during a G-7 meeting in Paris the Commission was entrusted with the role of leading the Western effort of supporting Central and Eastern Europe in the economic and political liberalisation process. The Commission established the PHARE programme, and in 1991 signed the so-called “Europe” association agreements with some states of the area. Thanks to its economic expertise, the Commission was internationally pushed to manage also political matters. The Delors Commission found itself in a favourable position and was extremely effective in exploiting it to gain political agency. The second trajectory was the relationship with the European Political Cooperation. Against the institutional background guaranteed by the Single European Act, the Commission was able to become an indispensable element for the good functioning of this Cooperation. The Commission earned respect as a political player by both the EPC and American representatives. Indeed, the EPC defined the Commission as an indispensable partner and Washington fully involved it in the debate around the new European architecture. Eventually, the EC was not able to play a decisive role in this theme, but the simple fact that the Commission was involved by the other EC institutions and by its major ally was a clear signal of the new political role it had gained.

In conclusion, this dissertation demonstrates that the European Commission did start building its own political agency between the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. The Commission

experienced an evolution from being a mere commercial and economic player during the final Reagan years to being a relevant political player during the Bush's administration years, especially in the European area. The Delors Commission was able to exploit its expertise and the external circumstances in the day-by-day work to start the process towards a meaningful political agency. If today the European Commission is a key player within the multi-level institutional architecture of the European external action, it is also due to the Delors Commission's effort and abilities to put the basis for a political agency at the beginning of the 1990s.