

REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE : THE EXAMPLE OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL (1974-1986)

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Regional Integration and Global Governance: the Example of the European Council (1974-1986)

Emmanuel MOURLON-DRUOL

The emergence of the European Council in the mid-1970s is an interesting case-study of the evolution of both the European Economic Community (EEC) polity and the international system. Very quickly, the European Council acquired a central role in the governance of the EEC polity; and very quickly too, the European Council had an impact in international relations. The two sentences constituting the uncodified constitution of the European Council, taken from the final communiqué of the Paris summit of December 1974, best summarise these interactions:

Recognizing the need for an overall approach to the internal problems involved in achieving European unity and the external problems facing Europe, the Heads of Government consider it essential to ensure progress and overall consistency in the activities of the Communities and in the work on political co-operation. The Heads of Government have therefore decided to meet, accompanied by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, three times a year and, whenever necessary, in the Council of the Communities and in the context of political co-operation.¹

Three key features are present in these sentences: the need for an approach encompassing globalisation *and* Europeanisation processes; the need to coordinate Community affairs and political cooperation; and finally the privileged capacity of heads of government to fulfil the two above-mentioned aims. This article explores these three central issues of the European Council's development, from its inception in 1974 until its constitutionalisation in 1986 – that is, when it first formally appeared in a European treaty, the Single European Act (SEA). In order illustrate these

¹ Final communiqué of the meeting of heads of government of the EEC in Paris, 9 and 10 December 1974. On the creation of the European Council, see: Emmanuel Murlon-Druol, "Filling the EEC leadership vacuum? The Creation of the European Council in 1974", *Cold War History*, vol. 10, n° 3, 2010, p. 315-339.

three features, it elaborates upon three case-studies: the European Monetary System (EMS), European Political Cooperation (EPC) and the socialisation of heads of government.

The smooth emergence of the European Council in the EEC's institutional set-up

Before turning to these three aspects however, it is first necessary to briefly analyse the key features of the emergence of the European Council during its first twelve years of existence. The European Council inserted itself in an already highly complex EEC institutional system. The European Commission, the Council of Ministers, the European Court of Justice, the European Parliament, the Comité des représentants permanents (COREPER) but also many non-governmental actors took part in the EEC decision-making process – at different degrees and with various modes of influence according to the policy areas at stake. In December 1974, the EEC heads of government gathered in Paris for an EEC *ad hoc* summit and officially created the European Council – that is, the regular meeting of these same heads of government three times a year and whenever necessary. The debate over the creation of the European Council revived quasi-theological quarrels over the right method to adopt for European cooperation, namely, intergovernmental or communautaire. Smaller states feared that their comparative weight in the decision-making process would diminish because of the reinforcement of intergovernmental negotiations. Bigger states wanted to be able to bypass, whenever necessary, the “Brussels bureaucracy”. A consensus was however reached during the summit, whereby the European Council was created while duly respecting the Treaties of Rome.

Yet given these initial stark divergences of opinion it is rather surprising to observe that the European Council afterwards evolved in a rather smooth fashion. One or two exceptions apart, the very existence of regular meetings of heads of government in the EEC has never been called into question after the inception of the European Council.² I

² One possible exception is in 1976, when some criticism against the European Council's role and functioning appeared following a meeting in Luxembourg in April 1976 which had been widely perceived as unproductive. But they quickly faded away: see Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money. The Emergence of the European Monetary System* (Ithaca/NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), p. 83-84.

distinguish five main periods in the evolution of the European Council until its constitutionalisation in 1986: its creation, its institutionalisation, its maturity, its consolidation and its constitutionalisation. The first period covers its very creation, from The Hague summit in 1969 until the first European Council in Dublin in March 1975. This period witnessed a move from irregular, *ad hoc* summits to institutionalised summitry. It also witnessed the devising of various projects aimed at creating some form of regular meetings of the EEC heads of government, only one of which, in December 1974, bore fruit.³ A period of proper “institutionalisation” of the European Council then followed, from 1975 until 1977. This phase witnessed the clarification of the organisation of the meetings (attendants, record of conclusions). It also shed light on the role that the European Council could play in European negotiations. In 1977, EEC heads of government took stock of the functioning and evolution of the European Council. This discussion mainly centred around the type of discussion which were to be held in a meeting (informal discussions or discussions aimed at reaching a decision) and the record of the conclusions. Crucially, this stocktaking exercise acknowledged that the European Council had now become an accepted institution of the EEC polity.⁴ Following this definitive recognition, the period stretching from 1977 to 1979 represented the “maturity” for the institution created in 1974. After a few years of operation, most of the actors involved in the EEC decision-making process were by then comfortable with the new tool that the European Council was. The new president of the European Commission, Roy Jenkins, was early on well aware of the significance the European Council could have in European negotiations. The creation of the EMS, as I will explain below, was a good example showing how the European Council could help in reaching an EEC-wide agreement. Numerous changes in the European political personnel marked the fourth period, that of consolidation, going from 1979 until 1982. Margaret Thatcher replaced Jim Callaghan as British Prime Minister in 1979, François Mitterrand was elected French

³ On earlier projects, see for instance: John Young, “The Summit is Dead. Long Live the European Council: Britain and the Question of Regular Leaders’ Meetings in the European Community, 1973-1975”, *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, n° 4, 2009, p. 319-338 and Daniel Möckli, *European foreign policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the dream of political unity* (London: IB Tauris, 2009), p. 209-213.

⁴ See for instance Archiv der sozialen Demokratie (AdsD), Bonn, Helmut-Schmidt-Archiv (HSA), 1/HSAA006591, Callaghan to Schmidt, 18 February 1977, van der Stoel to Crosland, 16 December 1976, and Schmidt to Callaghan, 16 March 1977; das politische Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PAAA), Belin, Zwischenarchiv, 121819, van der Stoel to Genscher, with attached memorandum entitled “Organization of the European Council”, 15 December 1976.

President in 1981, Helmut Kohl became West German Chancellor in 1982 – to name but the three main political changes. *L'alternance* highlights one of the main functions of the European Council which I will explore in more detail below, namely, socialisation. The European Council, by allowing heads of government to regularly meet in an EEC forum, contributed to “educating” them to European and international issues. It also crucially re-confirmed the acceptance of the European Council in the EEC institutional landscape, since by 1982, the political leaders in charge were no longer those who had created the institution. Regardless of the political orientation of the heads of government meeting in such a summit, the European Council was *de facto* definitely accepted as a proper EEC institution. The fifth and last period goes until the formal “constitutionalisation” of the European Council in 1986. Its centrality had been reaffirmed in previous years, both in practice and in theory, through the various projects calling for more integration. The SEA represented its formal apparition in an EEC treaty, though in only very few sentences.

Within a dozen of years, the European Council developed two main functions: orientation and arbitration.⁵ The first function refers to the European Council’s ability to guide the future development of the EEC. The heads of government regularly indicated policy areas (economic, monetary, political) that could be further explored. To that end, the European Council could issue broad guidelines, as it did in the case of the EMS. The guidelines were then worked out in the specialised committees. After these technical discussions, the result of the negotiations came back to the European Council, which then exercised its second major function: arbitration. In a case where specialised committees or the Council of Ministers had been unable to reach an agreement, the European Council could try to take a decision between the remaining competing options. In the case of the EMS, this concerned, for instance, the role of the divergence indicator. The European Council’s potential ability to orient the future endeavours of the EEC, as well as its arbitration function, does not of course mean that it would necessarily be able to achieve these roles. The orientation function could often limit

⁵ Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, “The victory of the intergovernmental method? The emergence of the European Council in the EEC’s institutional set-up, 1974-1977”, in Daniela Preda, Daniele Pasquinucci, eds, *The Road Europe Travelled Along. The Evolution of the EEC/EU Institutions and Policies*, (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 27-40. See also Béatrice Taulègne, *Le Conseil européen*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993).

itself to pious diplomatic declarations; while the arbitration could not happen, and instead the European Council would witness a deadlock. From the 1970s up until today, the European Council issued numerous calls for economic convergence in the EEC, most of which remained unanswered. And during the EMS negotiations, another issue arrived on the table of the European Council for an arbitration, albeit this time with less success: the concurrent studies. Yet these two key features, orientation and arbitration, however imperfectly implemented they could be, did surface over the period 1974-1986, and constituted some of the central new elements which characterise the emergence of the European Council in the EEC institutional set-up.

Another important aspect that came to light in the early years of the European Council in terms of European governance was its situation at the crossroads of the intergovernmental and supranational methods. This will be further highlighted with the examples of the EMS and political cooperation developed below. The Paris Summit communiqué of 1974 made it plain: the European Council's creation aspired to create an institution able to give coherence to the development of Community matters *and* political cooperation. These two features had been so far compartmentalised. Put differently, this meant no less than trying to reconcile intergovernmentalism with the *méthode communautaire*. True, the European Council was in essence an intergovernmental institution, in that it functioned by unanimity and consensus. But its implications went far beyond intergovernmental matters, and the topics it tackled were both communautaire (EEC affairs) and intergovernmental (political cooperation). The two following sections will develop further these two aspects.

The interaction of global issues and European integration: the example of the EMS

The creation of the EMS is an excellent case-study of the functioning of the EEC after the inception of the European Council, and one that highlights the interaction between European integration and global processes.⁶ The significance of the European Council in the overall EMS negotiations lay in the political impetus it gave to the Franco-German

⁶ Peter Ludlow, *The Making of the European Monetary System. A case study of the politics of the European Community*, (London: Butterworth Scientific, 1982); E. Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money...*, *op. cit.*

proposal for monetary reform. This impetus helped reaching an agreement on a proposal that might have otherwise got stuck in the technical committees. In addition, the European Council contributed to give more political weight and symbolism to a monetary scheme which was in fact rather close to the snake. The European Council being the EEC institution where the economic and the political could meet, it helped to reconcile technical considerations (the search for a zone of monetary stability) and identity-based concerns (the debate over the creation of a European monetary identity).

It is also important to place the emergence of the EMS in the wider context of the evolution and reform of the international monetary system. Following the breakdown of Bretton Woods and the advent of generalised floating, the question of monetary stability in Europe became much more acute. Some policymakers – Roy Jenkins, president of the European Commission, or Giscard, for instance – considered the creation of the EMS a first step towards the formation of a more stable international monetary system, while other policymakers – the British Prime Minister Jim Callaghan, for example – did not.⁷ Whether a regional scheme could advance global stability was therefore a matter for debate.

And at a global level, 1978 was indeed an important year for economic and monetary negotiations. Brainstorming about international monetary reform was ongoing with discussions over the creation of a substitution account.⁸ If the EMS was at the EEC agenda (and could potentially have important global consequences), economic and monetary cooperation was at the G7 agenda too. The existence of two parallel agendas is interesting since it underscores the importance of the European Council's frequency, and also underlines its stronger institutional nature compared to the G7. The economic and monetary topics tackled by the G7 in 1978 centred around the issue of economic deflation. To summarise, the United States and Britain wanted surplus countries (chiefly West Germany) to reflate their economy so as to induce a better balance in global economic relations – and thereby improve monetary stability. The West German government was rather reluctant to act as a “locomotive” for Western economic development,

⁷ Mourlon-Druol, *A Europe Made of Money...*, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

⁸ See for instance Joanne Gowan, “Hegemons, IOs, and Markets: The Case of the Substitution Account”, *International Organization*, vol. 38, n° 4, automne 1984, p. 661-683.

but eventually agreed to reflate by 1 % of its GNP.⁹ The timetable of these negotiations was one of their most important features, as it gave an advantage to European discussions, and further stressed the role which the European Council could play in global governance. The G7 meeting in Bonn took place on 16 and 17 July 1978, while three European Councils took place in that same year, in Copenhagen (7 and 8 April 1978), Bremen (6 and 7 July 1978) and Brussels (4 and 5 December 1978). Having already suggested that some kind of European monetary reform should take place during the Copenhagen summit, and having officially launched the negotiations over a new European Monetary System in Bremen, Giscard and Schmidt arrived a few days later at the G7 meeting in Bonn with some sort of *fait accompli* to present their US partner. Conversely, it instigated Schmidt to adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards the US position in Bonn, so as not to take the risk of creating transatlantic tensions over the EMS creation. The creation of the EMS therefore emphasises the importance of the European Council both in European and global governance. The attempt to coordinate Community affairs and political cooperation is another such example.

The coordination of intergovernmental and Community issues: the example of political cooperation

If the European Council was the EEC forum where the economic and the political could meet, it was also the EEC forum where political cooperation and Community affairs met. Improving the “overall consistency” of political cooperation and Community affairs was indeed another goal set for the European Council in the 1974 Paris summit final *communiqué*. The relationship between the European Council and EPC was a complex one, that cannot be dealt with here extensively.¹⁰ What this section can do, however, is highlight three important dimensions

⁹ Harold James, *International Monetary Cooperation since Bretton Woods* (Washington, DC/New York: Oxford University Press), p.294-296; Johannes von Karczewski, “Weltwirtschaft ist unser Schicksal” Helmut Schmidt und die Schaffung der Weltwirtschaftsgipfel (Bonn: Dietz Verlag, 2008), chap. 5.

¹⁰ E. Mourlon-Druol, “More than a prestigious spokesperson: the role of summits/the European Council in European Political Cooperation (EPC), 1969-1981” in François Foret and Yann-Sven Rittelmeyer, eds, *The Commanding Heights of the European Union. The European Council: Institution, Actors, Resources*, forthcoming. On EPC, see Davide Zampoli, “I primi passi della Cooperazione politica europea: problematiche ed evoluzione istituzionale,” in Antonio Varsori, *Alle origini del presente. L'Europa occidentale nella crisi degli anni Settanta* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2007) and Simon Nuttall, *European Political Cooperation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

which relate to European governance and globalisation: the European Council's role as spokesperson of the EEC's (timid) foreign policy; its attempt at providing some form of EEC collective leadership; and its effort to bridge Community affairs and political cooperation.

The 1974 Paris final *communiqué* stated that "The President-in-Office will be the spokesman for the Nine and will set out their views in international diplomacy."¹¹ This not only gave more weight to the few EEC common foreign policy stances, but it also helped the EEC develop a coherent (albeit vague) corpus of ideas: the defence of pluralist democracy, human rights and the fight against terrorism.¹² It is also telling to see that the European Commission very consciously used the European Council "to add political significance to the new relationship with China," started by the EEC in 1975.¹³

A second important feature is the European Council's attempt at filling the EEC leadership vacuum. The debates surrounding its creation in 1974 clearly highlighted the perceived lack of leadership in the EEC polity: neither the Commission nor the Council of Ministers were able to provide it.¹⁴ The question of the presidency of the European Council is a good example highlighting this issue.¹⁵ During the negotiations over its creation, the question of the presidency of the European Council was not really tackled. Probably as much as for the question of the secretariat of the meetings, the issue was too sensitive, as it was arising the question of the understanding of the European Council as a proper new, independent institution – a move that countries reluctant to have regular heads of government meetings were not ready to make. The role of the presidency of the European Council however quickly and steadily developed. From June 1981 onwards, the president of the European Council started presenting the results of the meeting to the European Parliament.¹⁶ Multiple institutional brainstormings in the 1970s also

¹¹ *Communiqué* of the meeting of heads of Government of the Community (Paris, 10 December 1974).

¹² E. Mourlon-Druol, "More than a prestigious spokesperson." For a detailed analysis of the European Council's foreign policy stances, see B. Taulègne, *Le Conseil européen...*, *op. cit.*, p. 347-380.

¹³ Marie-Julie Chenard, "Seeking détente and deepening integration: the case of China, 1975-1978", *Journal of European Integration History*, forthcoming 2012, p. 22.

¹⁴ E. Mourlon-Druol, "Filling the EEC leadership vacuum?," *art. cit.*, p. 318.

¹⁵ For a longer-term overview, see: Yann-Sven Rittelmeyer, "L'institutionnalisation de la présidence du Conseil européen: entre dépendance institutionnelle et inflexions franco-allemandes", *Politique européenne*, n° 3, 2011, p. 55-82.

¹⁶ Y.-S., Rittelmeyer, "L'institutionnalisation...", *art. cit.*, p. 63.

envisaged reinforcing this presidency. The question of a longer, more stable presidency than the then six-month rotating one came to be suggested by the Tindemans Report in 1975 and discussed by the Three Wise Men in 1979 (though their report on European institutions did not endorse it).¹⁷ It is also noticeable that these two reports, providing a prospective analysis of the future of the EEC, had been commissioned by the European Council, respectively in 1974 and in 1978 – thereby underlining its role of trying to orient the future endeavours of the EEC.

Finally, the European Council contributed to bridging Community affairs and political cooperation. A European Council meeting could indeed be the occasion to tackle Community and non-Community affairs. To take but one concrete example, judicial cooperation was initiated after a discussion at the European Council in Rome in December 1975.¹⁸ It then became the so-called Trevi Group, composed of officials from the EEC ministers of the Interior and Justice – itself being a forerunner of the Maastricht Treaty's third pillar, Justice and Home Affairs.¹⁹ As Taulègne put it, the European Council had thus been able to become "l'initiateur de l'extension de la coopération politique."²⁰ This was an important move beyond the consensus reached in 1970 in the Luxembourg report, whereby EEC member states had agreed to circumscribe political cooperation to foreign affairs.²¹ The European Council proved here instrumental in broadening the horizon of EEC political cooperation.²²

The socialisation function: the education of leaders to European/international issues

A last key function of the European Council, that of socialisation, helps better map the place of this institution in global and European governance. As in the case of the G7, the European Council is an

¹⁷ Tindemans Report, *Bulletin of the European Communities*, January 1976, p. 31; Edmund Dell, "The Report of the Three Wise Men", *Contemporary European History*, vol. 2, n° 1, 1993, p. 35-68.

¹⁸ The National Archives (TNA), PREM 16/399, Meeting of the European Council, Rome, 1/2 Dec. 1975, record of discussion, 9 December 1975.

¹⁹ John D. Occipinti, *The Politics of EU Police Cooperation. Towards a European FBI?* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003, p. 31.

²⁰ B. Taulègne, *Le Conseil européen...*, *op. cit.*, p. 381.

²¹ D. Zampoli, "I primi passi...", *art. cit.*, p. 175.

²² E. Mourlon-Druol, "More than a prestigious spokesperson...", *art. cit.*

instrument for the socialisation of heads of government. It is the forum where they regularly and frequently gather. This was not the case previously. In sixteen years, from 1958 to 1974, EEC heads of government only met six times: in 1961 in Paris and Bonn, in 1967 in Rome, in 1969 in The Hague, in 1972 in Paris, and in 1973 in Copenhagen. From 1975 onwards, they met three times a year. If this did not automatically bring tangible results, this induced a stronger sense of belonging to the same polity, the EEC, and encouraged coordination in an EEC forum at a time when national options could have prevailed.

This process of socialisation is twofold, as it not only concerns the process by which a diplomatic practise is acquired, but also the consequences of this acquisition.²³ I will now scrutinise these two dimensions in turn. The first dimension of this socialisation is the process by which new participants become full members. This process can be observed by the learning of a new diplomatic practice, namely summitry. Jacques Attali, Mitterrand's sherpa, tellingly writes about the first European Council he attended in June 1981 in Luxembourg: "Je découvre le cérémonial des Conseils européens."²⁴ The new participants must adapt themselves to an institutional practice. It is also the occasion, for the new participants, to discover international issues as well as meet their counterparts. To this end, the institutionalised summits (G7 and European Council) were instrumental during the period 1979-1982 when, as mentioned earlier, Britain, France, the United States and West Germany all had new governments, within less than three years.

The second dimension of this socialisation is the outcome, that is, the acquisition of pre-existing codes and rules. Four elements stand out: trust, cooperation without trust, solidarity and the restricted participation to the summit. The question of trust was probably the most visible issue.²⁵ Fostering trust among leaders had been one of the central motivations behind the creation of the European Council (as well as the

²³ See for instance Jan Beyers, "Problèmes conceptuels et méthodologiques dans la recherche sur la socialisation internationale", in Hélène Michel, Cécile Robert, *La fabrique des "Européens". Processus de socialisation et construction européenne* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2010), p. 42.

²⁴ Jacques Attali, *Verbatim*, Paris, Fayard, 1993, p. 48.

²⁵ For a more comprehensive discussion of the issue of trust and regular summitry, see: Noël Bonhomme, Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, "Institutionalising trust? Regular summitry from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s" in Reinhild Kreis, Martin Klimke, Christian Ostermann, *"Trust, but Verify": The Politics of Uncertainty and the Transformation of the Cold War Order, 1969-1991*, forthcoming.

G7). Amidst the economic crises of the mid-1970s, many policymakers feared a reproduction of what had happened in the 1930s, that is, a simultaneous collapse of the international political system and the international economic system. Though it could not guarantee solutions, the holding of regular and frequent summits could at least provide the forum which did not exist in the 1930s. And all future participants renewed this aspiration. But perhaps even more important than fostering trust, regular summitry allowed cooperation *without* trust. This was indeed the key, particularly as compared to the 1930s: the European Council (this holds true for the G7 as well) provided a permanent forum in which EEC heads of government had to try and cooperate. Whether good working relationships existed or not, heads of government carried on meeting in the European Council. If Giscard and Schmidt could make full use of the European Council partly thanks to their good entente, there still existed a forum to attempt cooperation when one of the participants, Margaret Thatcher for instance, was not on the same line.

Stemming from the two previous points is a third feature, namely, the regular calls for European solidarity. Confronted with an economic and monetary crisis, EEC heads of government repeatedly called for concerted action, rather than national individual measures. Numerous discussions and final *communiqués* have recorded this. "Together we are strong, individually much weaker," declared, for instance, Roy Jenkins during the press conference after the European Council held in Strasbourg in June 1979.²⁶ While this of course did not prejudice of the eventual outcome of discussions, nor of the actual impact of potential decisions taken during a meeting, it did show that all participants acquired a similar discourse based on the need to preserve EEC solidarity, especially in times of turmoil.

Finally, the new participants fully endorsed the codes of the institution's functioning. In particular, the idea that the attendance of European Councils should be as limited as possible (and at least limited to heads of government and foreign ministers only) was widely shared. Strikingly, new participants talked about this in a language very similar to that used by the first participants (and founders) of the European Council, like Giscard, Schmidt or the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson. New participants also largely endorsed the role and functions that the European Council had progressively developed. Giscard, Schmidt and Wilson, for instance, used to consider that the European

²⁶ EC Bulletin, 6-1979, p. 13.

Council would be the origin of any future important step in European integration.²⁷ Giscard even more explicitly thought that:

with the European Council we have more at our disposal the adequate instrument to have an appropriate overview, to give to the existing institutions, to our ministers, [...] in conjunction and in harmony with the Commission from which we expect much, the necessary impulse. [...] We must more and more act together as a government, the government of Europe.²⁸

This interpretation was fully endorsed by Margaret Thatcher when she first attended a European Council, in June 1979, in Strasbourg:

I am very glad to attend, for the first time, the highest political forum of the Community, where final responsibility for the Community's affairs is exercised. If I had any feeling of unfamiliarity, it has been dispelled by the warmth of your welcoming remarks, Mr. President.²⁹

True, the new British Prime Minister would certainly not have declared that she was attending an unimportant meeting and that she had been rudely welcomed. But however tainted by diplomacy this statement might have been, it did stress that the new participant now felt a full member of the club, and was aware of its role.

This socialisation of heads of governments is therefore a crucial dimension of the interaction between European governance and globalisation. A relatively large elite³⁰ familiarised itself to European and global issues, and their interconnectedness, thanks to the fact that European summits had now become routine. And importantly it offered a continuum of top-level cooperation, going beyond the political majorities of the time.

²⁷ Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BAK), B136/17144, Note of Schmidt, EG-institutionelle Ergebnisse meiner Vier-Augen-Gespräche mit Premierminister Wilson und Staatspräsident Giscard d'Estaing am 24. Juli bzw. 26. Juli 1975, 27 July 1975.

²⁸ Archives nationales (AN), site de Paris, 5AG3/911, Projet d'intervention du président au Conseil européen de La Haye, 29-30 November 1976.

²⁹ TNA, PREM 19/51, Draft opening remarks at the European Council (first session) at Strasbourg on 21 June 1979.

³⁰ This elite includes also the advisers and wider administration involved in the preparation of the European Council, which could not be dealt here in detail for reasons of space.

Conclusions: the birth of the “Union method”

If the fact that summits have become regular is certainly a wider phenomenon, including also the G7, its specific European dimension alone, the European Council, shows well why these summits becoming routine was important: they created a new way of life in European politics.³¹ European Council meetings attracted considerable media attention, they became important political events beyond the EEC itself, and they became one of the privileged fora where the interconnectedness between globalisation and Europeanisation was apparent. This article is of course only a brief survey of three of the central themes that highlight the interaction between global governance and European integration. The EMS example highlights the links between European discussions and global developments. The case of political cooperation stresses the influence of the European Council on European governance, and specifically on the distinction between Community affairs and political cooperation. Finally the question of socialisation underscores the personal processes at stake in worldwide and European discussions. The European Council constitutes a privileged interface where to observe the interaction between global and regional developments, intergovernmental and communautaire ones.

This analysis of the role of the European Council is, however, only a sketch: it is charting a potential which remained often unfulfilled. As I have underlined above, it is not because the European Council had specific functions or attributes that they would necessarily be fully used. The inception of the EMS was one example where these were fully worked out. But many other policy failures can pinpoint at the limits of the institution created in 1974. However sophisticated it could be, European governance could not make up for the shortcomings of the other actors and processes involved in European cooperations.

Yet one of the central features of the European Council which is prominent in this period, namely, being spread over both the communautaire and the intergovernmental systems, interestingly foreshadows Angela Merkel’s description of a “Union Method.”³² This

³¹ On this wider process, see E. Mourlon-Druol, “Managing from the Top’: Globalisation and the Rise of Summitry, mid-1970s/early 1980s”, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, December 2012.

³² Speech by Angela Merkel, 2 November 2010.

Online: <http://www.coleurope.eu/template.asp?pagename=speeches> [accessed 28 April 2012].

method, according to the German Chancellor, meant “a combination of the community method and coordinated action by member states,” that is, an intergovernmental method. A longer term view on the European Council’s evolution therefore highlights that our current predicament has roots in this institution’s early emergence in the 1970s and 1980s.