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# The Changing Politics of the European Union: An Overview

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## Introduction

One of the challenges for students of European political integration – and the politics of the European Union (EU) – is that the subject does not stand still. Not only do the intellectual debates continue unabated about how this special arena of politics should best be understood, but the daily practice of the EU refuses to settle into a sufficiently regular pattern for its political processes to be clearly defined. In a tangible sense the EU is a system in transformation, as early theorists repeatedly pointed out (Webb, 1983), or – put another way – it is an experimental process (Laffan *et al.*, 2000; Wallace, 2000). The current state of the EU thus in some ways continues to baffle both the practitioners who make it operate and the outside observers who seek to characterize it. Small wonder then that neither the practitioners nor the observers can easily explain its core features to the citizens of the EU Member States or of the candidate countries, let alone to those in other countries who seek to get to grips with this evolving political system. It is particularly welcome, therefore, to be able to include in this issue the *JCMS* Annual Lecture for 2001 in which Lord Robertson, the Secretary General of Nato, examines a crucial element in the

EU's evolution – the creation of a European security and defence policy. His analysis both highlights the importance of Nato for students of European integration and provides a practitioner's view to complement and extend Howorth's analysis of the EU's defence ambitions.

The British Economic and Social Research Council is funding new work on European integration through its research programme 'One Europe or Several?: The Dynamics of Change across Europe' («[www.one-europe.ac.uk](http://www.one-europe.ac.uk)»). Each of the articles in this issue draws on projects financed through this programme. All were discussed at a workshop in March 2001 with both academic and practitioner colleagues. Their comments, questions and criticisms have greatly helped the authors to sharpen up their arguments and to clarify their evidence and explanations.

The timing of this issue of *JCMS* falls particularly opportunely in the light of both the debate on European governance and the proposals for further treaty reforms. During 2001 the European Commission has been engaged in taking forward its White Paper on European Governance, published in July. This sketches a variety of measures, both to improve the inherited EU process and to respond to new challenges. This exercise runs in parallel to efforts at 'non-treaty reform', notably in the Commission and the Council, to enhance the performance of EU institutions. On another track, one intergovernmental conference (IGC) is set to follow another, in a series of iterative phases of reformulating the basic institutional – some say constitutional – framework of the EU. The Treaty of Nice, outlined at the European Council of December 2000, is to be followed by another IGC in 2004, after an extensive debate on what is now grandiloquently labelled the 'future of Europe'. At the time of writing it is hard yet to see what the impact will be of the negative vote in the Irish referendum, held in June 2001 to ratify the Treaty of Nice. The range of efforts under way to alter the structures and performance of the EU suggests that we may be in the midst of a phase of radical redesign. But is this really so? Is what we observe a radical and extensive redesign, or is it rather that the EU process is more simply adapting in an evolutionary way to events and circumstances? Or are the most interesting changes under way those that involve new experiments in EU policy in domains hardly touched by the treaty reform agenda?

### **I. Evolutionary Adaptation**

A caustic commentator might argue that all political processes are in some senses in flux. Politics as such consists of processes that quite often do not settle into a fixed mould. Those who retain the notion of a political system as in essence organic – biology as the metaphor rather than mechanics – would

expect evidence of evolutionary adaptation to context, demands, and the feedback from experience. We might expect this to be particularly true of the EU, since its very fabric rests on a form of coexistence with established polities in the Member States and with the swirling movements of international relations and what we now call globalization. For the practitioners of the EU to find their place in this shifting competition between regimes and institutional arenas necessarily involves continuous adaptation. As Johan Olsen (2000) elegantly argues, gardening may provide us with the most helpful metaphor for understanding the politics of the EU: gardening in the face of climate change, the turns of the seasons, the predators and the diseases that invade, as well as the changing tastes and fashions that influence garden design.

Thus to focus on the 'changing politics of the EU', as does this special issue of the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, may simply be to acknowledge the typical realities of evolutionary adaptation and response. The same intellectual debates would then apply as before to our study of the EU, better informed by our empirical observations of its day-to-day practice. This special issue certainly aims to make a contribution on this dimension of analysis, partly in recognition that we have not at all exhausted the insights that can be brought to bear by close empirical investigation of EU politics.

Business as usual or not? All of the authors in this collection take a prudent stance, at pains to ground their observations and interpretations in a careful expounding of empirical evidence and methodological approach. Yet, as we shall see, the collection reveals contrasting images: the one more 'evolutionary'; and the other more 'experimental'. Several of the articles that follow reveal evidence that was simply lacking in earlier accounts, not least, as Laura Cram comments, by stressing the day-to-day evidence of 'banal Europeanism', the societal routines of experience that relate (often indistinctly) the macro development of the EU to the micro experience of local praxis and experience.

However, three of the articles address examples of recently emerging policy regimes: the open method of co-ordination (for employment and economic measures); justice and home affairs; and the European defence initiative. The authors who comment on these new developments deliberately make no extravagant claims for the impact on the established patterns of EU politics of the new regimes which they describe. Yet each of the new regimes under development breaks important new ground, especially by touching areas of public policy that lie close to the core functions of the state. Moreover, each concerns issues where there are significant differences among EU countries in terms of not only explicit policy interests, but also societal norms, values and preferences.

## II. Changes in the Background Conditions

Prudence of judgement notwithstanding, there are *prima facie* reasons for speculating that the shifts in the politics of the EU may be more than evolutionary. Over the past decade a good deal has changed in the background conditions to European integration.

*Politically* the EU has faced the impact of post-cold war dislocation, which adds new tasks while at the same time weakening the adversarial ideological foundations on which the EU flourished. European security issues have acquired very different content and European military engagement has shifted from the old pattern of confrontation to efforts at peace-making within especially the former Yugoslavia. The political geography of Europe has thus been recast, with large implications for Germany and the generation of strong pressures for EU enlargement.

*Economically* EMU represents a huge new step for western Europe, testing both in itself and in terms of how much complementary policy co-operation it might require. Meanwhile global developments and competition have pushed additional issues about the 'new *e*-economy' on to the European agenda, reflected in the Lisbon-Stockholm process. Beyond the policy-makers' grasp lie differences of behaviour and of levels of affluence within and between countries, sectors and regions in western Europe, let alone *vis-à-vis* those in central and eastern Europe.

*Societally* inherited social models are under pressure in western Europe and being reinvented in central and eastern Europe. The former complementarity between the EU integration framework and the parallel existence of the welfare state can no longer be taken as given. Add to this the demographic deficit and skills shortages in the labour market – across eastern as well as western Europe – with attendant quandaries about how to deal with cross-border movements of people.

Overall therefore, several of what were thought to be core facilitators of EU integration have either eroded or altered in character. We might then enquire along two lines. First, we might ask whether the glue that the initial background conditions used to provide for integration has been replaced by the routinization of EU politics. Secondly, we might ask whether the new policy challenges now provide successor background conditions as replacement drivers for integration, perhaps with a different configuration for new forms of experimental EU politics.

## III. Contrasting Images: the Everyday Routines of Integration

Several articles in this collection attempt to explicate topics that have previously been insufficiently addressed in a rigorous way. The authors draw on new

and detailed evidence to make their arguments, and they draw on wider literatures and comparative methodologies to develop their analyses, deliberately venturing outside the regular terrain of traditional integration theories.

Commentators on the practice of the EU have often been tempted to observe that one of its distinctive features has been the empowerment of societal groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). European-level politics, so the argument goes, provides opportunity structures and points of access that are either denied in the national settings of politics or subordinated to the embedded power of the conventional political classes. Assertions abound that within the EU there are novel features that might either generate novel European-level politics or alter the patterns of affiliation and mobilization in domestic politics. Two of the articles in this collection probe – and shed some doubt on – these assertions.

Laura Cram reports on the preliminary findings of a research project that deliberately assesses an area of highly developed EU policy and jurisprudence – equal opportunities in the labour market for women – in order to discover more precisely how this has affected aspirations, behaviour and outcomes for the women's movements in three EU countries (Greece, Ireland and the UK). Cram stresses that day-to-day politics around the issues of the women's movements in the three countries that she examines have incorporated the quite radical impacts of European legislation and litigation into the familiar routines of local domestic politics. Each country has a different set of characteristics deriving from local political and judicial traditions. Although European rules do make an impact on practice in the labour market, the impact is interpreted and experienced mainly through the domestic vectors of societal and judicial practice. Moreover, the opportunity structures seem to depend at least as much on the local transmission system as on the explicit novelty of the EU process.

Alex Warleigh reports on an empirical survey of many NGOs active in the EU arena, commenting on both the limits to their impact and the gap between activists and the membership in terms of their engagement with the EU. Warleigh addresses the thesis that the political actors with real potential to change the politics of the EU are those that belong to civil society. In particular, NGOs might be thought to constitute particularly promising channels of democratization for an embryonic EU polity that has to contend with the surviving and conventional politics of EU member countries. Not so in practice, or so Warleigh argues. On the basis of a rather extensive series of empirical investigations of a wide range of NGOs active in EU policy domains, he concludes that NGOs may be activist and even influential on specific policy issues. However, they appear in practice to be mainly activist-led and activist-predominant organizations or groups, with rather little engagement on the part

of their own membership, and scant evidence of their role as channels for the Europeanization of civil society.

Chris Lord's concern is somewhat different. His line of reasoning starts from a kind of irritation at the frequent criticism of the EU as in various ways undemocratic and unaccountable. Often such criticism leads to poorly specified and ill thought-out proposals for remedies that are not anchored in a convincing diagnosis of the problems. Lord discusses how the methodology of democratic audit, developed for the comparative examination of political institutions, might help us more productively to focus on the democratic performance of the EU. In search of a more rigorous comparative methodology, Lord draws on the techniques of democratic audit which have been developed for testing the democratic performance of polities and processes in many other contexts. By applying this portmanteau approach, Lord aims to produce a more measured critique – not criticism – of EU politics, from which it might be possible to define appropriate remedies. Moreover his aim is to develop the audit methodology in such a way as to capture new features of EU regime-building as well as the longer established arrangements. This is a deliberate dedramatization of the argument, which seeks nonetheless to generate prescriptive conclusions in the best traditions of audit.

As one might expect from the work of Simon Hix, with his epigraph of EU politics as 'politics like any other', EU parliamentary politics is, he argues, shifting away from polarization around a more/less Europe axis towards a programmatic 'what kind of Europe?' axis. Hix presents the early results of his detailed statistical analysis of actual voting behaviour by members of the European Parliament (MEPs), drawing on the 'Nominate' model that has been developed for analysing voting behaviour in the US Congress. In the European Parliament elected in 1999, members' voting behaviour, at least on explicit roll-call votes, is correlated with party preferences and backed by quite high discipline, in particular in the competition between the centre-right and the centre-left (Hix, 2000). Given the arithmetic of voting strengths this also means that well-organized and alert third parties – the European Liberal Democrats most obviously – then have the opportunity to determine voting outcomes as the pivotal players on closely contested issues. Here indeed is a pattern of parliamentary politics familiar from national arenas. To the extent that legislative choices in the EP mobilize preferences on this left–right spectrum, this pattern looks robust. Where legislative choices are less programmatically framed, national cohesion may make a difference, as seems to be the case for German MEPs, given the relatively high domestic consensus in Germany on European policy issues. In this context the bigger number (99) of seats for Germany than for other 'large' countries agreed in Nice in December 2000 provides another channel for a potentially consolidated German impact.

Critical to the patterns of evolution within the EU is the way in which the politics of individual Member States are reoriented and reshaped. Germany presents the most pertinent example, given both its weight within the EU family and the shift from the Bonn Republic to the Berlin Republic over the past decade. Adrian Hyde-Price and Charlie Jeffery draw on constructivist thinking to provide an interpretation of the interactions between German and EU politics. Given the economic and political weight of Germany in the EU, one would expect any changes in German behaviour to have a significant impact across the EU and other Member States. Hyde-Price and Jeffery interpret the shift from the Bonn Republic to the Berlin Republic as resting, on the one hand, on a reassuringly continuous line of policies and preferences from German politicians and policy-makers but, on the other hand, also moulded by active political entrepreneurship in responding to change. Indeed the post-cold war generation has, they argue, settled down into a normal mode of articulating aims and objectives in the EU, liberated now from the pressures to be singularly and more vocally integrationist than their counterparts in other Member States. Despite the added dynamics of the 1968-ers in government (Joschka Fischer being the member of this cohort best known abroad), German politics also seems to be strikingly consensual. What the explanation for this might be lends itself to competing analyses. Hyde-Price and Jeffery are at pains to demonstrate that much here rests on the way that the norms and tenets of German policy are constructed, framed and transmitted within the German polity. Here they give examples of issues concerning the Franco–German relationship, European security policy, and the role of the *Länder*. It could also be argued that the new context of Europe frees German politicians rationally to define domestic preferences and interests on much the same basis as in other Member States.

Taken as a group these articles portray an EU marked more by the familiar routines of politics than by novel features. Indeed between them the authors have a good deal of material and evidence with which to debunk some of the more extravagant claims of those who see the EU as an unsettling incursion into the familiar patterns of domestic politics. Moreover, one important underlying message is that both the framing and the practice of politics in and around the EU arena are strongly differentiated by country, in that variations between countries are enduringly influential in the way that EU processes and policies are domesticated and owned. What may be less clear from these pieces is whether or not these political routines have so far co-opted the EU process and moulded it through domestic agents that the EU system is as such securely and persistently anchored.

#### IV. Contrasting Images: Laboratories for New Regimes

Alongside these day-to-day experiences of politics within the EU, we can, however, observe an extraordinary proliferation of new policy regimes emerging. There may once have been a single main and predominant EU policy model, but nowadays the EU is fast becoming marked by variations between – perhaps competition between – different models and approaches. This collection of articles takes one of these new models – economic and monetary union (EMU) – as a given of the new EU, albeit a model with consequences that can as yet not be fully specified. In addition to EMU, itself a venture that reaches to the heart of economic policy-making in the Member States, we can observe three other new policy regimes in embryo. One of these flanks EMU with soft policy co-operation through the ‘open method of co-ordination’. The other two strike at other areas of high sensitivity in terms of traditional state politics, namely in justice and home affairs and in foreign, security and defence policy.

Dermot Hodson and Imelda Maher sketch the emerging ‘open method of co-ordination’, a form of ‘soft’ policy co-operation for the employment and economic policies being pursued in the EU, alongside the ‘hard’ regime of economic and monetary union.<sup>1</sup> Jörg Monar sets out some of the core features of the emerging regime for managing justice and home affairs (JHA), which is building through the EU institutions a wide range of ambitious policy instruments, many of which had been tested first in other European frameworks. Jolyon Howorth describes the still tentative efforts currently underway to underpin the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) by adding a defence dimension through a common European security *and defence* policy (CESDP) and a European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF).

For each of these regimes it is too early to reach definitive judgements on the emerging patterns of politics and policy. In terms of policy substance we can see plenty of evidence of ambitions and aspirations, but as yet rather little that is solid in terms of ‘deliverables’. Indeed many of the instruments chosen for developing policy in all three areas are explicitly ‘soft’ – recommendations, declarations and communications. By definition such instruments do not lend themselves to easy identification of substantive outputs, but rather are geared towards changes of attitude and behaviour – implicit convergence rather than explicit, co-ordination rather than common templates. Such outcomes are very much more difficult for the social scientist to assess than the ‘hard’ legislative

<sup>1</sup> Two other projects in the ‘One Europe?’ Programme address aspects of the open method of co-ordination, those led by Paul Marginson on collective bargaining and by Colin Hay on aspects of the ‘European social model’, details of which are on the programme website. On benchmarking as a technique, see Sisson and Marginson (2001).

and judicial outputs that characterize the traditional Community model. In the areas of JHA and CFSP/CESDP<sup>2</sup> attention is beginning to turn to possible 'hard' outputs, directives to deal with asylum and immigration procedures, for example, or solid commitments of troops and equipment to the European Rapid Reaction Force. But it will be at least two or three years before we can discern how far these proposals can deliver on intention and shift the locus of policy delivery from the national to the collective European arena.

Here then are three experimental processes in addition to EMU, each still located in a political laboratory, and each being tested against both the more traditional forms of EU politics and the policy demands and events that have prompted their emergence. At face value these experiments are paradoxical and surprising. Each of the three issue areas touches core political concerns of the state, hence not easy candidates for collective EU regimes. Yet, at least at the level of political rhetoric, all three have been highlighted for priority attention through the collective fora of the EU. Hence we need to establish some criteria for assessing the substance of what is emerging.

*Index of activity.* One preliminary criterion might be the extent to which these new processes are being inserted on the EU agenda. At face value, together they seem to be occupying a staggering amount of the political attention of EU politicians and top policy-makers within the collective fora of the EU. One European Council session a year is in principle devoted to pursuing the Lisbon–Stockholm process, built around the 'open method of co-ordination'. The General Affairs Council (ministers of foreign affairs) now spends most of its monthly or so meetings dealing with CFSP and CESDP, to the neglect of general EU policy co-ordination, and a Council of Defence Ministers is in prospect. On some estimates, somewhere between 30 and 40 per cent of the paper passing through the Council of the EU deals with the burgeoning JHA agenda. On a crude quantitative criterion, activism and activity thus characterize each of these experiments. At a minimum this represents a displacement or diversion of attention from other EU issues. But perhaps there is more to it, perhaps the activism represents a significant phase of policy-shaping. We should recall here that central bankers and senior finance officials over many years (starting in the early 1970s) developed a shared deliberative forum, long before the EMU project acquired operational plausibility.

*Key actors.* The three areas of experiment all involve members of the core executives of the member governments as their primary participants. Prime ministers' offices are crucially involved in most Member States, laying out the guidelines for how their other colleagues are to become involved. Especially

<sup>2</sup> See the *One Europe? Briefing Notes*: Howorth and Forster (2000); Howorth *et al.* (2001); and Monar (1999), all available at <[www.one-europe.ac.uk](http://www.one-europe.ac.uk)>.

in the fields of CESDP and JHA, those colleagues are drawn from parts of the member governments that were previously pretty much disconnected from EU politics. Defence ministries and military personnel had a different set of fora for European deliberations, essentially for most of them through Nato and the Western European Union (WEU). The EU is a new game for them, with the interesting consequence, for example, that a joint military staff – officers in uniform – is now present in the Justus Lipsius seat of the EU Council in Brussels. Similarly home offices, ministries of the interior and of justice have become extensively involved in a plethora of EU committees and working groups, internationalizing parts of the member governments that had previously been predominantly domestically focused. Such prior European experience as these ministries shared was until recently through much looser international fora.

Not surprisingly, therefore, these newly involved domestic actors bring to their EU fora quite different habits, routines and assumptions from those that are to be found in traditional areas of EU policy development. Alongside this phenomenon we can also observe that the European Commission has as yet a relatively light involvement in each of these three areas. The details vary across the three areas. In the case of the ‘open method of co-ordination’ there is some scope for the Commission to play a catalytic and enabling role, different in character from the entrepreneurship that has been present in other areas. On this point it should be noted that the preparation of the White Paper on European Governance has led to some tricky internal discussions within the Commission, although this debate seems likely to come down on the side of endorsing the open method of co-ordination as a core new development to be encouraged. In the area of CESDP the scope for Commission involvement is heavily circumscribed, with – in some ways – the more interesting discussion being around the issue of how far the new EU process should involve direct collaboration with the secretariat and operational resources of Nato. In the field of JHA there is a more mixed picture, the Commission being actively involved in developing some parts of the agenda and at a distance from other parts.

*Absent actors.* As yet the rest of the EU institutional system is hardly engaged in any of these three new areas of policy. The European Parliament has only the weakest of roles of debate and light consultation. The European Courts have no clear authority and there are few footholds for new jurisprudence to be established. In the absence of legislative instruments or collective resourcing, neither of these institutions has much scope for influence. To the extent that the CFSP and CESDP might draw on EU budget lines – a hotly contested issue, there may be some scope for the EP to gain a bit of leverage on what happens. To the extent that the JHA regime involves legal commit-

ments, there is a toehold for the judicial system, but this too is a contested domain.

Significantly, the shift of location of policy discussion broadly to the EU arena also takes these policy issues further away from national political channels of debate. Thus national parliaments seem to be little involved, and indeed it might be argued that this distancing from domestic debate is one of the reasons for core executives to welcome the use of the EU arena. This dimension has been an issue in some Member States; thus, for example, Dutch parliamentarians have complained about the field of JHA slipping away from national parliamentary accountability. The Irish referendum on the Treaty of Nice revealed some electoral unease especially with the European defence initiative. Similarly, these three areas of policy are not easily accessible to other socio-economic or socio-political actors and to non-executive influences, again in contrast to the traditional Community process.

A couple of qualifications should be noted here. One is the role played by business in pressing EU policy-makers to adopt the benchmarking techniques that are one of the underpinnings of the open method of co-ordination. A showcase presentation was made to the Commission by the European Roundtable of Industrialists in 1995, designed to explain its potential utility as an instrument of European public policy (Richardson, 2000). The second comment needed is that around the area of JHA we can observe activism on the part of NGOs, especially those concerned with the human rights' dimension to asylum, immigration and so forth. How far activism also breeds influence is an issue that awaits careful empirical testing.

*Process characteristics.* Each of these three areas is experimenting with different policy methodologies and techniques. The open method of co-ordination is predicated on forms of comparative method: benchmarking, targets and scorecards, policy audit, and the potential for policy transfers. To express this in institutional shorthand, a kind of OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) technique is being imported into the EU arena. Elements of this methodology are also to be found in the JHA area, where forms of peer review and mutual inspection are being developed both among the existing EU membership and engaging the candidate countries. We should note here that experts on the subject stress that this is a process that is itself about process, that is to say a technique which aims to improve national processes of policy-making and especially policy application through the examination of alternative ways and means. This approach is thus a deliberate alternative to uniform templates, taking account of both objective and subjective differences of situation and of practice or culture in individual Member States. Hence we can also see efforts being made to adopt the principle of mutual recognition of national regimes for dealing with aspects of JHA.

A different version of this applies in the sphere of CESDP. Here there is a hard set of objectives in the form of the Helsinki 'headline goals' and the plans for the ERRF. The key principle of action is to achieve operational complementarity by joint planning and persuasion. The ERRF has little chance of either existing or being effective without tight-knit joint planning, shared doctrines, common routines and sustained funding commitments for equipment and personnel. The delivery routes depend on national actions in the governments and military forces of the Member States, but national actions premised on mutual trust and pooled information. Here we can see the new EU methodology borrowing from long-established Nato techniques.

Across all three areas – the open method, JHA and defence – we can observe reliance on both soft instruments and soft institutions. As has already been commented, there is little present in any of the areas that involves hard rules, though in JHA there are proposals for hard rules. Instruments are soft, partly in order to develop persuasive co-operation, but also because – it appears – soft instruments seem to follow a logic of appropriateness, by fitting the functions that are addressed. Institutions and procedures are also soft, based more on a consortium model than on a collegiate model, hence the reluctance of many member governments to tie themselves down to carefully prescribed procedures in advance of testing more informally the emerging ways of doing business. To the extent that there are hard institutions in place, the pattern seems to be emerging of opting for function-specific and functionally delimited agencies: Europol, Eurojust, the Schengen Information System; the new planning and analysis unit for CFSP, the new military staff and so forth.

*Delegation.* Because the experimental policy regimes being developed in these areas look so different from traditional Community methods, they are often described in shorthand as 'intergovernmental'. This label risks freezing the analysis into both a particular intellectual debate and a particular political camp if the label 'intergovernmental' is intended as a direct contrast with 'supranational'. It also suggests that the methodologies of co-ordination and consortia are second best to common policies, and that 'soft' instruments and institutions are weak alternatives to hard rules and binding commitments. Elsewhere I have used the clumsy phrase 'intensive transgovernmentalism' to suggest that the process is more than 'intergovernmental' and that it has a vigour and intensity that seems significant, or potentially so (Wallace, 2000).

To put it another way – in each of the three experimental areas covered here, forms of delegation are being made from the member governments to the EU arena, but only partial delegation. Governments are so far mostly relying on each other to act as mutually supporting agents, rather than handing over policy-shaping powers to an independent institution, although more extensive delegation is being made of some technical and operational tasks. It remains

to be seen how far these versions of partial delegation deliver on stated goals and ambitions. If they deliver, then partial delegation may continue to be the preferred approach. Failure to deliver could go either way in terms of its impact, either by generating pressure for more complete delegation, or by retracting the partial delegation.

Insofar as these are experiments in regime-building which fall outside the traditional institutional processes, the iteration of IGCs seems to have little connection to the way they operate. Formal reforms of rules and procedures seem more likely to be relevant if, and only if, the new regimes generate pressures for harder instruments and harder institutions. On the other hand, the discussion of informal adjustments to the EU processes and institutions addressed both in the White Paper on European Governance and by 'non-treaty reform' are highly pertinent to the conditions that affect the durability and effectiveness of partial delegation.

The informality of these experiments (albeit in areas of 'high' policy (CFSP, CESDP and JHA) or areas that touch domestic economic governance and national electoral credibility (the employment and economic subjects addressed by the open method of co-ordination)) makes them – paradoxically – easier to extend to the candidate countries, both pre- and post-accession. Open co-ordination as a methodology is well suited to the needs of the central and east European countries and their quest for effective economic performance. The soft methodologies raise fewer hurdles to participation by the candidates and eventual new members than the very hard character of the *acquis communautaire* in more established and more formalized EU policy areas.

## V. The Balance Sheet

We can draw two main conclusions about the changing politics of the EU. The first is that in the long-established policy areas and institutional processes of the EU the main line of change is towards a more routinized pattern of politics, and a pattern in which EU developments are subject to domestication within national processes and to familiar channels of political management. The second is that, in the newer areas of policy, interesting experiments are under way using methodologies that contrast with more traditional EU regimes, although the outputs remain to be tested. In both categories the adaptations of behaviour and the outcomes of policy need to be read against significant and persistent diversity between Member States.

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