

Explaining and Evaluating the Amsterdam Treaty: Some Concluding Remarks

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Introduction

The Amsterdam Treaty was yet another treaty in the history of European integration. It was not normal politics; it was constitutive politics (Pedersen 1998, 56). It was yet another big bargain among the EU's Member States, setting some new rules for their cooperation. If we use the categories suggested by John Peterson, the type of decision finalized in Amsterdam in June 1997 was "history-making" and it took place at the super-systemic level. It was not policy-setting or policy-shaping, the more normal day-to-day decisions that take place at the systemic and sub-systemic levels. In the case of a history-making decision, the dominant actors would be the national governments in an Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) and the Heads of State and Government in the European Council. The kind of rationality, according to Peterson, would be political and legalistic, not the kind of technocratic, administrative rationality found at lower levels of decision-making (Peterson 1995).

In this final chapter the editor will suggest some conclusions from the chapters included in this volume and move beyond questions of explanation to briefly discuss how we can evaluate the Treaty of Amsterdam. How significant was it?

Explaining the Amsterdam Results

Andrew Moravcsik has developed a model for studying the major decisions in European integration. He calls it "liberal intergovernmentalism." When he first developed his approach, he suggested a two-step analysis: first national preference formation and then interstate bargaining (Moravcsik 1993). Later he added a third step, institutional choice (Moravcsik 1998a). The framework is summarized in table 25.1.

The first stage is to try to explain national preferences. The central question asked by Moravcsik here is whether economic or geopolitical interests dominate when Member States form their preferences. The answer

based on major decisions in the European integration process was that economic interests have been the most important. Geopolitics and ideas play a secondary role (see also Moravcsik 1998b).

Table 25.1: International cooperation: A rationalist framework.

<i>Stages of Negotiation</i>	<i>National Preference Formation</i>	<i>Interstate Bargaining</i>	<i>Institutional Choice</i>
<i>Alternative independent variables underlying each stage</i>	What is the source of underlying national preferences?	Given national preferences, what explains the efficiency and distributional outcomes of interstate bargaining?	Given substantive agreement, what explains the transfer of sovereignty to international Institutions?
	Economic interests or Geopolitical interests?	Asymmetrical interdependence or Supranational entrepreneurship?	Federalist ideology or Centralized technocratic management or More credible commitment?
<i>Observed outcomes at each stage</i>	Underlying national preferences	Agreements on substance	Choice to delegate or pool decision-making in international institutions

Source: Moravcsik (1998a), p. 24.

The second stage, interstate bargaining, seeks to explain the efficiency and distributional outcomes from EU negotiations. Here two possible explanations of agreements on substance are contrasted: asymmetrical interdependence or supranational entrepreneurship. Moravcsik arrives at the answer that asymmetrical interdependence has the greatest explanatory power. Some Member States have more at stake than others and will work harder to influence outcomes. The role of the Commission or other Community actors is not considered very important. According to Moravcsik three factors are likely to determine the outcomes of interstate bargaining:

1. The value of unilateral policy alternatives, relative to the status quo which underlies credible threats to veto,
2. The value of alternative coalitions which underlies credible threats to exclude, and
3. The opportunities for issue linkage or side-payments which underlie “package deals” (Moravcsik 1998a, 63).

Summarizing the discussion of the first point, Moravcsik says: “those who more intensely desire the benefits of cooperation will concede more to get them.” Summarizing the discussion of the second point he says: “the credible threat of exclusion is likely to generate an even more powerful pressure on recalcitrant states than does the threat of nonagreement.” In respect to linkage strategies, Moravcsik observes that the major constraint lies in their domestic distributional implications. Concessions often create domestic losers. This will limit the use of package deals (Moravcsik 1998a, 63-67).

The third stage explores the reasons why states choose to delegate or pool decision-making in international institutions. Delegation in the EU refers to the powers given to the European Commission and the European Court of Justice (ECJ). Pooling of sovereignty refers to the application of majority decisions, in practice mostly qualified majority voting (QMV). To explain institutional choice, Moravcsik contrasts three possible explanations: Federalist ideology, centralized technocratic management or more credible commitment. The answer he gives is that states delegate and pool sovereignty to get more credible commitment. Pooling and delegation is a rational strategy adopted by the Member States to pre-commit governments to future decisions, to encourage future cooperation and to improve future implementation of agreements (Moravcsik 1998a, 73).

The brief overview given here cannot do justice to the richness of the analysis of European integration in *The Choice for Europe*. Using theories of decision-making, negotiations and international political economy in general in an elegant combination has allowed Moravcsik to construct a parsimonious framework for the study of international cooperation including international integration.

The question could be asked: Could we use liberal intergovernmentalism to explain Amsterdam? Moravcsik did so together with Nicolaidis (Moravcsik & Nicolaidis 1999). The answer they gave was affirmative.

Although the Moravcsik scheme was mentioned during our discussions, we did not impose it on the contributors. We can therefore in no way claim to have tested it. But some comments can be made.

Preference Formation

Concerning preferences, the question can be asked whether the primacy of economic factors still holds for the process of European integration after the end of the Cold War. As long as we analyse the original European Economic Community (EEC), the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the European Monetary System (EMS), the Internal Market or Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) as the most important part of the Maastricht Treaty, it should not come as a surprise that economic factors were rather decisive. Also, European integration during the Cold War took place under the security overlay of bipolarity, and NATO largely handled Western European security and defence issues. However, matters started changing after the end of the Cold War, and Maastricht was more than EMU. It included the second pillar on Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the third pillar on Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) cooperation (Laursen & Vanhoonacker 1992). Thus, the new Union was explicitly concerned with external and internal security issues, including emerging ethnic conflicts in the new “near abroad,” new migration flows, international crime, etc.

Amsterdam was also about giving the EU a more human face, bringing it closer to its citizens as well as making improvements in the second pillar and in JHA. Looking at the first pillar some of the changes took place as especially Social-Democrat-led governments wanted a more “progressive” EU in respect to employment (which has, of course, very much to do with economic conditions), environment and social policy (which are also partly economic policy areas). However, second and third pillar issues were about security in a broad sense. Although second pillar changes were not radical they were not insignificant and JHA changes were rather important, with the creation of the new Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (AFSJ) under the first pillar, and the incorporation of the Schengen *acquis* into the Treaty. The latter constituted some of the most important changes brought about by Amsterdam. These changes suggest that a deepening of integration is taking place at least partly for security reasons.

We do, of course, note the point made by Simon Duke in his contribution on CFSP to this volume, namely that external events, from the Dayton Accords in 1995 to the Albania crisis during the IGC, “had little measurable impact upon the deliberations.” On the other

hand, Monica den Boer mentions “contextual crisis events, such as the arrival of Albanian and Iraqi refugees at the Italian coast” as events providing a momentum which facilitated sluggish decision-making. So the jury may still be out on this question, but it could also be that decision makers perceived internal security issues as more important than external security issues.

If demands for integration, according to liberal intergovernmentalism, are expected to come mainly from economic and business circles it is not clear how important such demands were in the case of Amsterdam. Alexander Stubb, in his contribution on flexibility, explicitly disagrees with scholars emphasizing the role of interests groups in the IGC process. However, this does not rule out the possibility that interest groups influenced the process of preference formation in the Member States. Karl Magnus Johansson and Anna-Carin Svensson, for instance, in their contribution on Sweden, emphasise the two-level bargaining process, with demands and expectations from interest groups and civil society. No doubt, similar mechanisms played an important role in other Member States, probably more so during the agenda-setting phase than during later stages of the negotiations, and more so in some countries than in others. Esko Antola says about the Finnish case: “A very comprehensive organisation was set up involving not only different ministries and interest groups but also the civil society and the Parliament. In the end, however, the drafting of the national positions was in the hands of a very small group of diplomats and civil servants.”

Talking about Sweden and Finland – and we could add Austria here – it was of course the geopolitical changes in and after 1989 that had made it possible for these former EFTA members to join the EU in 1995. But, apart from the Finnish-Swedish proposal to integrate the Petersberg tasks into the EU’s defence policy, these new Member States put the greatest emphasis on employment, environment, openness, etc. The older Member State Denmark also belonged to this group of states concentrating on low politics issues, issues expected to provide the EU with more legitimacy.

The Benelux countries had concerns about environment and employment, too. But they were much more explicit in their concerns about institutional changes prior to enlargement, and thus issues of efficiency. Being among the original EC members they had a stronger attachment to the Community method, even to federalist ideology, although we learn about a certain amount of pragmatism sneaking into Benelux policies, especially in the case of the Netherlands. The need

to confront the geopolitics of the New Europe was strong, but the costs of reform made these countries look closely at the specifics. The question of re-weighting of votes in the Council in the end led to a major conflict between the Dutch and the Belgians. According to Kerremans' contribution to this volume, there was an element of misunderstanding between the two traditional EU partners. The Belgians misread the Dutch steps as tactical, whereas the Dutch sincerely felt they should have more votes than the Belgians, given the larger Dutch population.

If we look at the preferences of some of the big Member States, Rita Beuter mentions the changing geopolitical situation after the end of the Cold War and German unification. "For Germany enlargement to the East was top priority, whereas France was concerned about the EU's balance of power tilting to the North and East." She goes on to say that Germany was preoccupied with EMU and stability, "whereas France was haunted by having to cope with unemployment." On the latter point, which of course concerns economic interests, we could add that there was an internal split in France with the Gaullists being more geopolitical – and even ideological – in their approach to the issues, and the Socialists being more concerned about economic aspects of the situation. The election of the Jospin government on 1 June therefore contributed to a situation where France occasionally spoke with two voices in Amsterdam. In a wider sense, according to Florence Deloche-Gaudez's contribution: "The French seemed to be torn between, on the one hand, the desire to promote a continuation of the European construction and, on the other hand, their determination to preserve the "sovereignty" of France."

In the British case, despite the differences in the approach of the Major government during most of the IGC 96-97 and the Blair government during the end game, Edward Best concludes that "There are clear "structural realities" shaping UK positions, most notably (and probably immutably, the Channel Tunnel notwithstanding) the "island logic" behind the UK's exceptionalism over border controls, as well as limits on governmental action arising from popular perceptions." In connection with the latter point, Best talks about "a broad feeling of non-identification with the European project." So, a mix of geopolitics and questions of identity need to be considered if we want to understand the British position.

The so-called cohesion states, Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland, had an economic interest connected with enlargement. Would less money be available for them through structural and regional policies after enlargement? The Mediterranean cohesion states also had a

geopolitical orientation towards North Africa and the Middle East, including concerns about instability and migratory flows from a southern “near abroad.” Italy, of course, had a similar concern. Clearly, this added up to a mix of economic and security issues that affected the positions of these countries.

In the Irish case there was an element of geopolitics in its relationship with the UK. According to Ben Tonra, “a key function of the Irish Presidency was to ensure that Britain was kept on board.” Even if the Irish wanted “to maintain a position at the core of the integrative project” they were, because of the Common Travel Area with the UK, forced to accept an opt-out when it was decided to incorporate the Schengen *acquis* into the Treaty. Historical relations with the UK also continue to affect the Irish position on defence policy. Interestingly enough, in this area, the Irish “were more than happy to sail in the wake of British objections to an EU/WEU merger.”

As a relatively big EU Member State Spain had, as we have seen in Felipe Basabe’s contribution, special problems with institutional changes, and financial repercussions affected its attitude towards enlargement. “The access of Spanish economic actors to [the new CEEC] markets is limited and unlikely to result in greater expansion, and historical and cultural links with [these] countries are not very close either.” On the other hand, Spain’s cultural and historic ties with Latin America and the Islamic countries influenced Spanish positions in Second and Third Pillar issues. Spain’s geographic situation made the country both a “bridge” and a “gatekeeper” with regard to migratory movements from Northern Africa and Latin America.

Concerning Italy, Laura Corrado wrote: “It is obvious that a country like Italy, with its 8,000 kilometres of maritime frontiers, and thus highly exposed to illegal immigration, tended to favour a common European approach and responsibility on [JHA] issues.”

In the case of Greece, security considerations, both traditional ones and the newer ones of post-Cold War Europe, played a rather decisive role. Papadopoulos said in his contribution: “At the most macroscopic level, Greece’s positions were, and are, influenced by its geostrategic position in southern Europe. In this sense, Greece occupies a unique position among the Union’s fifteen Member States, being not only the sole Member State without a common border with any other Member State, but also located in the most turbulent corner of the continent.” Greece has become “a frequent destination of illegal immigrants.” As regards the new Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, Greece therefore “has a strong vested interest in an effective coordination of

policies at the EU-level.” Partly because of the conflict with Turkey, Greece also wanted to include territorial defence commitments in the EU’s defence policy, not just the Petersberg tasks which were incorporated in the CFSP.

The argument then is that we cannot fully explain Amsterdam without reference to geopolitical factors. This does not mean that economic interest were unimportant. Even special interest groups had an impact, especially during the last part of the negotiations. It was special interests which produced what has been called the “Christmas tree” effect, with a number of protocols and declarations attached to the Treaty, concerning public broadcasting, public services, overseas territories, animal welfare, etc. (Dehousse 1999, 17).

It appears from this overview that a mix of different factors affected the preferences, interests and positions of the Member States during the 1996-97 IGC. Clearly, security questions in a wide sense were not unimportant. For some countries they seem to have been very important. The economic contents of the Amsterdam Treaty were more limited to some improvements in the first pillar. The most important economic issue during the years of the Amsterdam Treaty reform process, EMU, was not a direct part of the 1996-97 IGC. But it conditioned positions of many Member States, with some being very concerned about meeting the convergence criteria for participation in the third phase of EMU, the creation of the single currency, the euro. Needless to say, economic interdependence in a wider sense was still an important parameter of the whole process. It is this factor that makes the costs of exit so high that exit is not really a rational option for the Member States. In that sense, economic factors remain the glue of the Union. It helps us understand that the threat of marginalisation remains an important factor in the EU. It entered into the Member States thinking on “flexibility” and explains the strict conditions put on future use of the Treaty’s enabling clauses. No one wants to become a second-class member.

What the Amsterdam preferences also suggest is an increased importance of questions of legitimacy. This problem clearly emerged with the Maastricht Treaty because of the Danish “no” in June 1992 and *le petit oui* in France in September the same year (Laursen 1994). The lesson drawn was the need of a Union closer to its citizens (Laursen 1997). Many of the preferences with which the Member States went into the 1996-97 IGC fit in with this preoccupation.

Interstate Bargaining

If we look at the bargaining process during the IGC an important question is whether liberal intergovernmentalism makes the process appear neater than it was. Monica den Boer, for instance, talks about “garbage-can-decisionmaking during the final session in Amsterdam.” Alexander Stubb had this to say about the process:

Positions in IGCs swing for many reasons, but rational choice and calculation are rarely among them. IGC negotiations are a messy and often confusing learning process, where the basic positions of the Member States show some continuity, but the specific positions of the negotiators fluctuate in line with the dynamics of the negotiations.

So a messy learning process is one possible verdict. Several contributors to this volume mentioned the changing positions of the actors during the conference. “Some national positions shifted from one end to the other in the course of only one year,” said Monica den Boer. Others see a certain amount of continuity in national preferences during the negotiations.

The question of the relationship between preferences and positions in the actual negotiations is a tricky one. Declared positions are not necessarily the real ones. There is a tactical dimension involved here. States may send trial balloons and be hesitant to reveal their bottom lines in negotiations. This creates uncertainty and the negotiation process may not always be as information-rich as liberal intergovernmentalism claims.

Another question concerning the negotiation process concerns the relative roles of the big versus small Member States. In his studies Andrew Moravcsik mainly studied the bigger member states, Germany, France and the UK (see also Moravcsik 1991). However, it emerges from Jonas Tallberg’s contribution on the first pillar that the small states, in particular the Nordic ones, were rather successful in leaving imprints in the Treaty of Amsterdam. Even in the second pillar, the Swedish-Finnish proposal on integrating the Petersberg tasks into the treaty was rather important.

We should, of course, remember in this connection that Moravcsik looks at asymmetrical interdependence when he explains influence. This concept does allow for the influence of small Member States because of the unanimity requirement of IGCs (see also Derek Beach’s contribution to this volume).

Looking at the Franco-German duo, it seems that the traditional close cooperation between France and Germany worked less well in the Amsterdam negotiations. Simon Duke said:

Kohl's and Chirac's relations grew less cordial with both leaders' weakening of power. In France, Chirac's disastrously mistimed call for early parliamentary elections witnessed the defeat of Alain Juppé's right-wing government and the election of Lionel Jospin's left-wing government. Jospin's election significantly impaired Chirac's ability to take any further initiatives. Within Germany, Kohl's position was weakened by the Bavarian Premier of the CSU, Edmund Stoiber – a well-known Eurosceptic who had been calling for the “controlled delay” of EMU. Kohl's governing coalition depended upon the support of the Bavarian CSU.

These factors seem to have weakened the influence of these traditionally very influential actors.

A third question concerns the role of the Community actors. We included chapters on the European Commission and the European Parliament in this study. As mentioned earlier liberal intergovernmentalism does not attribute a great role to these Community actors. However, some of the contributors to this volume were clearly not convinced. Alexander Stubb said: “It is ... important to note that all of the early flexibility articles were drafted by the Council Legal Service, which serves as a reminder of the multitude of players which influence an IGC process: Member States, EU institutions and the presidency.” Monica den Boer mentions the Commission proposal on JHA of 18 September 1996 as evidence of Commission influence. “This proposal already bears the traces which are still visible in the text of the Amsterdam Treaty.”

Similarly Mark Gray, in his contribution on the Commission, disagrees with the liberal intergovernmentalist position. After looking at some of the evidence he said that it is “difficult to agree with Moravcsik and Nicolaïdis that the Commission only follows rather than shapes events.” One of the points made was that “if the Commission opinion of 28 February 1996 is compared to the final outcome, there is a rather substantial correlation between the two documents.” He goes on to say, however, that this does not prove influence, but at least it shows “that the Commission position was broadly accepted on the majority of issues.”

Also Andreas Maurer in his contribution on the European Parliament disagrees with liberal intergovernmentalism. But he too makes an important methodological point: "... it seems nearly impossible to measure the concrete influence of the EP in the institutional evolution of the European Union." As an alternative to liberal intergovernmentalism he suggests a historical institutionalist approach (see for instance Pierson 1996). According to this view, governments are no longer in full control of the integration process, not even in IGCs. Yesterday's decisions condition tomorrow's decisions. Things happen between IGCs that contribute to institutional change, for instance inter-institutional agreements (IIAs). It was through such an IIA that the Parliament gained more influence on budget issues related to CFSP. However, Maurer goes beyond that point, arguing for instance "Neither the new policy areas, for example consumer protection, education and culture, nor the co-decision procedure would have come into force without the permanent pressure of the EP."

What then could explain such influence? Contrary to the Commission that took part in the IGC, the EP only took part in the preceding Reflection Group. But the Parliament could use a linkage strategy, threatening to veto enlargement, where the treaty gives it the right of assent. Further, the Belgian and Italian Parliaments had stated that they would not authorize the ratification of the new treaty if the European Parliament did not accept the treaty. Thus indirectly the Parliament did have a credible threat of non-agreement. The governments, therefore, could not ignore its views.

Related questions concern the role of the presidency and the Council secretariat. Although not explored in specific chapters, some of the contributors mention the roles played by the Presidency and the Council secretariat. The Dutch presidency, it seems, played an important role in not including a specific flexibility clause in the second pillar. The Dutch were also influential in getting the Schengen *acquis* incorporated into the Treaty. The Dutch president of the group of representatives, Michiel Patijn, is mentioned a number of times as being especially influential.

Concerning the Legal Service of the Council, Alexander Stubb says that its "influence in IGCs is a much neglected issue in the literature on European integration. Given the fact that it provided over 90% of the draft articles which were used as the basis for negotiation in the 1996-7 IGC, its role should not be underestimated."

Derek Beach's theoretical contribution to this volume explores these aspects of the interstate bargaining further. On the basis of

Moravcsik's contribution, he mainly looks at two questions: the factors determining actor power and the roles played by supranational actors. After discussing the relative influence of the Franco-German core and the reluctant states, the UK and Denmark, he found a certain amount of support for interpretations based on asymmetric inter-dependence, but he also found "several instances where outcomes not only reflect patterns of preferences and relative power, but also reflect bargaining dynamics." In his discussion of the role of supranational actors, he looks at the Commission and the ECJ. On the role of the Commission his conclusion is carefully drafted:

The conditions for supranational entrepreneurship were relatively poor in the 1996-97 IGC given that: much of the agenda was already set by the TEU [Maastricht Treaty], there was a relatively information-rich environment, and the external environment was not as labile as in the 1990-91 IGC. Despite this, there is some evidence that the Commission did have some impact on the agenda-setting phase of the IGC, influencing the content of the debates in certain issue-areas.

During the negotiations "the Commission did provide "solutions" (proposals) to several problems faced by Member States." Some of these were "unique" and "successful." Others fared poorly. Concerning the ECJ, Derek Beach argues that certain rulings of the Court provided "focal points" for the IGC, such as rulings on public broadcasting, the WTO case and the *Kalanke* ruling. So, without playing a formal role in the IGC, the ECJ did play an autonomous role influencing the IGC deliberations.

Institutional Choice

Institutional choice in the Moravcsik scheme refers to pooling and delegation of sovereignty, i.e. introduction of QMV and delegation of authority to Community institutions, especially the European Commission and the ECJ.

Amsterdam involved some pooling of sovereignty by transferring certain policies under the first pillar from unanimity to QMV. However, as we saw in the chapter on Institutions and Procedures, the final list adopted was shorter than expected, partly because of the German pullback in Amsterdam. In the end, QMV was extended to 11 new treaty provisions, including employment, and five existing treaty provisions, including research framework pro-grammes. It did not

include any very heavy areas. This issue, extended use of QMV, therefore went into the IGC 2000 as one of the so-called Amsterdam “leftovers.”

The decision to transfer some issues from the third pillar to the first pillar involves both pooling and delegation of sovereignty – with some delays because of the five-year transition period. Further, the introduction of QMV after the transition period will only take place after a unanimous vote. So it is with some hesitation that this “communitarization” took or takes place. But, eventually we should expect a full use of the Community method in the new Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. This will also increase the roles of the Commission and the ECJ. Further, the role of the ECJ is increased somewhat in the remaining third pillar, Police and Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters, in the Amsterdam Treaty.

In the second pillar we saw the introduction of Common Strategies coupled with the idea that Joint Actions and Common Positions can be adopted by a special QMV. This chance, however, was even more half-hearted, because of the two safeguards of unanimity in the European Council and the possibility of constructive abstention. The need for QMV is felt, but the issues remain too sensitive for a full-blown pooling of sovereignty.

How do we explain these institutional changes? We recall that Moravcsik contrasted three possible explanations: Federalist ideology, centralized technocratic management or more credible commitment.

It seems that “more credible commitment” survives the studies in this volume as a very plausible explanation. Due to migratory and other pressures, the Member States concluded that improved cooperation in matters of JHA was needed; thus, the introduction of a “communitarized” Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

In the case of the first pillar, the IGC discussions took place because of the enlargement perspective, but when it was concluded that re-weighting of votes in the Council and the final decision about the composition of the Commission could be postponed, this created two other Amsterdam “left-overs” for the IGC 2000.

It is probably fair to say that federalist ideology did not play a major role (see also Sverdrup 2000). There is still federalist rhetoric in some of the original EC Member States, especially the Benelux countries, Germany and Italy. However, according to some of the contributions to this volume, we also note a certain movement towards pragmatism in some of these countries, especially the Netherlands. On the other hand, there seems to be a certain strengthening and consolidation of pro-integration attitudes in some Member States, such as Finland,

Greece and Portugal. All in all the Community method seems to have wide support, even if the Member States remain unwilling to extend it to CFSP. Nothing came of efforts to weaken the Commission during the Amsterdam process.

It is a little unclear how the European Parliament fits into the Moravcsik scheme. But we should note that the role of the EP was once again increased in this treaty reform. The increased use of co-decision made the EP an institutional winner in the process. Co-decision was chosen for eight new treaty provisions, including employment and new provisions relating to social policy and public health. Co-decision was introduced in fifteen existing treaty provisions (replacing consultation or co-operation procedures, and in one case the assent procedure). Co-decision now includes transport policy, aspects of social policy and environment as well as development cooperation. With all the talk about legitimacy – and democratic deficit – these increases in the use of the co-decision procedure come as no surprise to us.

Evaluating Amsterdam

Did it all matter? This, of course, calls for political judgements which depend on value premises. On such value premises scholars can and do of course disagree.

The Amsterdam debate was cast in terms of efficiency and legitimacy. If we accept the premises that the EU needs to increase both efficiency and legitimacy, especially because of future enlargements, what can we say about Amsterdam?

Institutions and procedures are of course important for efficiency. QMV should be more efficient than unanimity. Community institutions like the Commission should also be able to advance decisions by exercising supra-national leadership. At least that is a point advanced by some authors (e.g. Lindberg & Scheingold 1970; Sandholtz & Zysman 1989; Laursen 1990). The most important decision from the point of view of efficiency may therefore turn out to be the transfer of asylum, immigration and external border control from the Third Pillar to the First Pillar. This area has even been compared with the role played by the internal market during the latter part of the 1980s (Wallace & Den Boer 2000).

The concept of legitimacy may be more difficult. Andreas Maurer mentions, with references to some German literature, that there is both input and output legitimacy. Input legitimacy has to do with the way

decisions are made. Moves towards greater transparency can be seen as a factor which may potentially increase the EU's legitimacy. For some, the increased role of the European Parliament in the form of more co-decision may also lead to more legitimate policies and decisions. To the extent that the weights of votes in the Council became an issue during the Amsterdam (and later Nice), process it had to do with a feeling in the big Member States that their relative under-representation was getting too big a problem in connection with successive enlargements.

The question of output legitimacy has to do with what is actually decided. Do EU policies and decisions meet the needs of EU citizens and groups, including farmers, industrialists, workers, consumers, etc.? The efforts in Amsterdam to strengthen the EU's role in respect to employment, environment, consumer protection and other policy areas can be seen as a potential contribution to the EU's output legitimacy.

Looking back on Amsterdam, the verdict will have to be mixed. From the perspectives of increasing efficiency and legitimacy there was some "progress." But the mood in 1997 was not for giant steps. But small steps, as long as they are in the "right" direction, can also be important.

So, Amsterdam was not a huge reform, but it was yet another reform on a trajectory that, with ups and downs, has taken the EC/EU towards both a deepening and a widening of integration in Europe since the process started in 1950. It was yet another step in what can be seen as a federalizing process (Laursen 1992b; Sbragia 1992), even if the word has bad press and a lot of actors are busy distancing themselves from it. During the post-Amsterdam period, prior to the agreement on the next treaty reform in Nice in December 2000, Europe started a new "constitutional" debate, with especially the German political leaders not hesitating to talk about a federal core in the future European institutional system (Laursen 2001b). On the agenda of the next IGC in 2004 are topics such as the incorporation of fundamental rights in a "constitutional" treaty and the working out of a catalogue of competences. These kinds of issues are well known to students of federal systems.

No one can make safe predictions about the future of European integration. But, if explaining the past helps us predict the future, we should not rule out further deepening and widening of the process. But too much widening can still produce system overload and thus contribute to disintegration (Wessels 1996). Finding the right balance

between deepening and widening remains the challenge for our political leaders.

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