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The European Ambition

The Group of the European People's Party
and European Integration



Nomos

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Preface

This book presents the results of the research project “The European ambition – The Group of the European People’s Party and European integration”. With the aim of contributing not only to scholarly debate but also to the general public’s knowledge, it focuses on the impact of the Group of the European People’s Party (EPP) in the European Parliament on European integration following the first direct European elections in 1979. The book begins with an account of co-operation models of Christian Democrats in the Common Assembly, which had been established with the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951. It then covers four decades of the EPP Group’s input in the shaping of parliamentary debates, formulation of European policies and stimulation of the development of an institutional framework and a European party system. Interdisciplinary research on the Group’s impact on the democratic integration of Europe is long overdue given that it will enrich the current understanding of the European Parliament’s history. This book strives to close this gap and is the result of a series of initiatives launched with the EPP Group and the European University Institute working in partnership.

The EPP Group’s ambition for a united Europe was a decisive stimulus in the post-war history of European integration. Two founders of the European Communities and early members of the Group had been elected as President of the predecessor to the European Parliament: Alcide De Gasperi in 1952 and Robert Schuman in 1958. 70 years ago, on 9th May 1950, the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman gave impetus to the idea of a European Community with his ground-breaking declaration. After his election as President of the European Parliament on 19th March 1958, he presented to the plenary his view on the political role of the Parliament and his political group’s European ambition:

“...elle [l'Assemblée parlementaire dans l'Europe des Six] a été le banc d'essai d'une vie démocratique élargie à l'échelle européenne, ce qui lui a permis de renforcer constamment son influence politique en exerçant un contrôle parlementaire sur l'action de la Haute Autorité. Elle a rendu vaines les craintes souvent exprimées d'une prédominance technocratique dans les institutions économiques européennes. Certes, l'Assemblée consultative du Conseil de l'Europe avait ouvert l'histoire des assemblées internationales où l'opinion parlementaire ne s'inspire

pas de la seule défense des intérêts nationaux, mais relève essentiellement des options politiques fondamentales. Mais il faut souligner que c'est à l'Assemblée commune que la formation des groupes politiques a permis, dès ses premières sessions, de développer ce sentiment européen au-delà des particularismes nationaux ... Le fait d'avoir été le candidat unique des trois groupes politiques de cette Assemblée est pour moi un honneur inespéré et en même temps un engagement pour l'avenir. Mon appartenance au groupe politique le plus nombreux a pu justifier ce choix en vertu d'une tradition parlementaire et démocratique, mais je le déclare hautement, je ne serai, ici, ni le représentant d'un parti, ni celui d'un pays."¹

The research project was officially created on 12th July 2017, marking the EPP Group's call for a study on the Group's impact on European integration. The Alcide De Gasperi Research Centre on the History of European Integration, a joint undertaking of the History Department and the Historical Archives of the European Union at the European University Institute, responded to this call with a research proposal, which was carried out by an interdisciplinary and transnational team of scholars.

The Historical Archives of the EU and the Alcide De Gasperi Research Centre worked together closely in the past years with the former contributing its unique archival memory of European integration, which consists of the EU institutional archives, numerous private papers, and the archives of Federalist movements, European organisations and political groups in the European Parliament.

The EPP Group in the European Parliament and the Historical Archives have developed their fruitful co-operation over many years, starting with privileged electronic access to the Brussels-based EPP Group archives for researchers in Florence. This was followed by the introduction of an annual postgraduate grant programme on "Christian Democracy and European Integration", encouraging research which would make use of the Group's archival patrimony held in the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Sankt Augustin and in the Brussels office.

This book was achieved thanks to a number of key actors, partners and contributors. Thanks must therefore go firstly to the EPP Group in the European Parliament; its Secretary-General Martin Kamp, the Group's longest serving Secretary-General, who prompted and supported the project with an open mind and interest in academic research; former Di-

1 *Assemblée Parlementaire Européenne*, 1 (Mai 1958), Débats, Compte rendu in extenso des séances, Session constitutive mars 1958, 31.

rector of the EPP Group's Presidency Johan Ryngaert, who energised the project with questions and comments based on his deep insight into the Group's policies; Emma Petroni who has framed and managed the Group's archives with dedication for many years; and the various members of the Group, who participated in the series of interviews conducted for the project. Thanks must also go to the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for providing access to the EPP Group's archival deposit and supporting the consultation by digitising relevant documents.

The results of the research were presented in a conference held at the EUI on 14th-15th November 2019. Thanks go to the discussants, who contributed their respective knowledge to the research, namely Sandro Guerrieri, Alfredo De Feo, Lorenzo Cicchi, Angela Romano, Martin Bull and Carlos Closa. Our gratitude must also go to the former Members of European Parliament, who enriched the debate with their personal testimonies, namely President Hans-Gert Pöttering and MEPs Jo Leinen and Andrew Duff.

At the Alcide De Gasperi Research Centre of the EUI, special thanks go to Prof. Luciano Bardi, Jacopo Cellini, Johannes Karremans and Silvia Sassano, who laid the project's foundations, co-ordinated the research team and liaised with the EPP Group. Finally, thanks go to the authors who contributed their knowledge and insight to the book, namely Wojciech Gagatsek, Carine Germond, Karl Magnus Johansson and Wolfram Kaiser.

Florence, 30th April 2020

Dieter Schlenker
Director
Historical Archives of the European Union
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Introduction

Luciano Bardi and Silvia Sassano

This book is a study on the Group of the European People's Party (EPP). It traces the Group's origins in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) Assembly and concentrates on its evolution throughout the four decades following the first universal suffrage elections of the European Parliament (EP), held in 1979. The stimulus for an academic research study investigating the EPP Group's objectives, strategies, actions, achievements and failures was provided by the Group itself. In response, this book aims to trace the Group's institutional, organisational and political trajectory in pursuit of what prominent exponents of the Group itself defined as its 'European ambition': the step-by-step achievement of levels of European awareness, commonality of values and co-operation, capable of enabling once arch-inimical nation states to live in peace and speak with one authoritative voice with the rest of the world. The expression 'European ambition' echoed the one used by EPP Group Chair Wilfried Martens when he referred to European political union in his speech at the XIII EPP Congress, held in Brussels in 1999.¹

This volume uses a dynamic approach to deepen the public's knowledge of the impact of the EPP Group's actions on European integration and on the EP. It also intends to provide an original contribution to the study of all political groups in the EP with a multidisciplinary perspective that does not currently exist in the literature. As the book aims to engage practitioners and the wider public as well as the scientific community, it presents descriptive and qualitative narratives besides quantitative analyses and hermeneutical outputs. It is divided into five chapters, which trace and assess the elements of the 'European ambition'. At the same time, it focuses on the political and organisational evolution of the EPP Group and its strategic view of Europe from 1979 onwards, within the framework of international Christian democratic co-operation since the end of World War II. The methodology used in this book follows a multidisciplinary approach based on history, political science, European law and political sociology.

1 EPP Group Archives (1994-1999), President EPP – Group – Martens – Speeches.

Each chapter discusses the relevant literature within the legal framework regulating the European Union (EU) and the EP as well as European political parties. Each makes use of multiple archival sources, drawing upon the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU), the EPP Group's archives, the Archive for Christian-Democratic Policy (ACDP) and EU official documentation and data. All chapters rely on selected interviews with relevant actors (current and past EPP members and the EPP Group's support staff as well as other informed observers and experts).

The first chapter, authored by Wolfram Kaiser, discusses the history of the EPP Group in the European Parliament from its origins to the Maastricht Treaty, beginning with Christian Democracy's (CD) transnational co-operation after the end of the Second World War. Next, the author focuses on the Group's composition and internal governance from 1958 to 1992 as well as its evolving relationships with the EPP's central party organisation and other political groups in the EP. The chapter's final sections are devoted to the Group's 'European ambitions' of shaping two crucial functions of the EP: system-building and policy-making.

The second chapter, written by Karl Magnus Johansson, explores the role of the EPP Group in regards to EU treaty and institutional reform through an overview of six significant cases: the Single European Act and the Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice, Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties.

In the third chapter, Carine Germond sets out to explore the EPP Group's contribution to and role in shaping the development of the internal policies of the European Union. She focuses on four internal policy areas of strategic importance: agricultural, economic and monetary, social, and environmental policy.

The fourth chapter, authored by Wojciech Gagatsek, encompasses a broad area of the EU's external policies, including foreign policy, security and defence policy, development policy, commercial policy (external trade) and EU enlargement.

The fifth and final chapter, written by Luciano Bardi, concentrates on the Group's role as a crucial component in the EP party system and its core. Through an analysis of quantitative data, it also assesses the Group's institutional impact and positioning within the EPP party's wider organisation. Finally, it explores the Group's role in the relationship between the EP and other EU institutions, namely the Commission and the Council(s).

This study is justified due to the interest it can elicit in a wider pool of potential readers and due to the significance of the scientific contribution it can provide. Its relevance for anyone interested in European political phenomena as regards the EPP Group, especially in comparison with other political groups, is evident. For more than four decades, the EPP Group

has played an important role in shaping the EP and the EU's institutional and democratic development. European elections have no doubt enhanced the strength and legitimacy of the political groups in the EP and have fostered the development of a party system at European level, at least in the parliamentary arena, defined as consisting of the political groups it includes, their relative strength and their structured interactions. At European level, a structured party system only exists in the parliamentary arena, whilst it is fragmented into 27 different national ones in the electoral arena and has yet to develop in the governmental arena (Bardi, Katz and Mair 2015). This explains the importance of political groups in the EP. Moreover, genuine European political parties, with complex parliamentary and extra-parliamentary organisations, have developed as well.

The EPP and its Group have long been at the centre of this process (Hix and Lord 1997; Kreppel 2002). In particular, the EPP, along with the Liberal (ALDE, now Renew Europe) and the Socialist (S&D) Groups, forms what is referred to as the European party system's core (see Bardi in Chapter 5 of this book). The core shares a common imperative mission: to strengthen the EP vis-à-vis the other EU institutions and enhance the supranational dimension of the EU in the process. This common objective has led the three groups to collaborate on institutional and constitutional matters, no doubt accelerating the EP's acquisition of significant powers (see Johansson in Chapter 2 and Bardi in Chapter 5 of this book).

Thus, the political groups of the EP continue to have a fundamental role in the institutional development of the EP and the EU. This is particularly true of the EPP Group due to several factors, not least the numerical primacy that the Group has enjoyed for the last five EP terms. However, as the analysis in the rest of this volume reveals, the long-standing Europeanist and institutionalist legacy inherited from the Christian Democratic Group and the commitment and competence of EPP MEPs are equally important. The Group has had a strong institutional presence throughout its history, which, in turn, has always allowed it to be a protagonist in the drafting and approval of the norms that regulate the functioning of the EP. This does not necessarily result in any direct advantages being gained but certainly ensures that the EP's institutional evolution follows a path which is consistent with the Group's objectives.

For a long time, the EP's political groups were, politically and organisationally, the most relevant component of European political parties and instrumental in the latter's growth. European political parties are indeed strong within the European Parliament where the groups have exhibited high levels of cohesiveness and inclusiveness (the ability to incorporate new national party delegations). Conversely, they are weak outside the EP,

as demonstrated by the comparative irrelevance of their extra-parliamentary organisational structures, which consisted of loose federations of national parties with very few resources (Bardi 1994; Hix and Lord 1997; Kreppel 2002; Hix and Roland 2007).

This brief discussion has highlighted the objective centrality of the EPP Group and the system of political groups in which it operates: Both appear to be relevant foci of scientific research as well. Indeed, European political parties, as named and defined in Regulation EU 1141/2014, have been the object of keen interest in academic literature. They are, after all, important actors in the development of the European Communities (EC) and subsequently the EU. This has been true at least since Ernst Haas' suggestion (in 1958) that European political parties' growth provides an essential analytical focus for the assessment of the EU's political system. Since the EP's first universal suffrage elections, scholarly interest in the development and potential role of EU-specific political parties has grown considerably. The political groups in the European Parliament have not been the object of comparable attention. Moreover, even the most relevant study of a single EP political group (Fontaine 2009), which was an impressively informative and detailed account of the EPP Group, did not provide a systematic analysis of its intra-party and interinstitutional relations.

The few years leading up to the first elections of the European Parliament saw a revamping of the Europeanist drive that gave European integration a solid start in the early 1950s after the failure of a more ambitious project in the late 1940s. That success, often attributed to the pragmatism and realism of Jean Monnet's gradualist intuition, was also massively idealistic, as the project was shared and owned by other important European leaders, most of them Christian Democrats. Monnet broke the stalemate caused by the scepticism surrounding the federalist idea of the United States of Europe as a supranational institutional entity to be formed in one step with a single treaty. He conceived of a gradualist approach that would lead to a European federation in successive constitutional steps, starting with the creation of institutions for the integration of one crucial economic sector (the coal and steel industry). This method, which was termed neo-functionalist because of its sectoral nature (Haas 1958), was accepted by Schuman and the other 'founding fathers' and applied through the approval of a succession of treaties. During the 1970s, the EPP and its Group embraced the institutionalist and supranationalist traditions respectively embedded in Jean Monnet's and Robert Schuman's approaches (for the latter see Schlenker in the Preface of this book).

From a scientific perspective, a dedicated study of the EPP Group is therefore necessary, not only because it will fill an obvious gap in the liter-

ature, but also because it is an opportunity to investigate the impact on the elected Parliament of the very same Europeanist and federalist tradition that was a driving force in the establishment of the European Communities. The 1976 Manifesto of European Christian Democracy envisaged “a personalist, communitarian society, rooted in Christian values and founded on the dignity of the human being” whilst also stating “its commitment to the political integration of the [European] continent, with the goal of setting up a European government with independent powers and a parliament resulting from general and direct elections” (Cellini 2018: 86). Although the values and ideals at the Manifesto’s core were universalistic, the concern for the creation of instruments for their affirmation in Europe was explicit. The European People’s Party was founded mere months after the Manifesto was approved. European Christian Democrats felt that the implementation of their idea of Europe required effective institutional and political means, such as those provided by an integrated party at European level. This organisation would potentially overcome the limitations and shortcomings of both the European Union of Christian Democrats (EU-CD) and CD Group in the European Parliament.

Promoting European Christian values and European political integration were therefore one and the same. One could even surmise that the pursuit by the EPP, as a Party and a Group, of more secular/political objectives, including the EU’s institutionalisation, was tantamount to claiming the relevance of European Christian roots. As was consistently the case with these principles and their very *raison d'être*, the CD Group, followed by its EPP successor, took positions that clearly aimed to strengthen an institutional approach to European integration, as recommended by various reports on the state of EU institutions over the course of the 1970s. Moreover, the Group took strong stances in favour of the conferral of budgetary powers to the EP and, prominently, the completion of the operational process that would lead to the first universal suffrage election of the EP. In some of these cases, the CD and EPP Groups acted as veritable driving forces, whereas they limited themselves to taking favourable positions in other cases.

Be that as it may, the analysis in this volume demonstrates that the Group, as is consistent with the foremost objective of its ‘European ambition’, contributed strongly to the breaking of the institutional stalemate afflicting the EC in the 1970s. In the decades that followed, this legacy allowed the Group to pursue an integrationist strategy towards a supranational Union, despite the progressive, albeit relative, erosion of its Christian democratic identity. This was determined by the crisis faced by many traditional Christian democratic parties in Western Europe and the mo-

mentous historical events following the fall of the Berlin Wall as well as the subsequent expansion of the EU to East-Central and South-Eastern Europe. The ultimate, yet still very remote, objective of the ‘ambition’ could be the creation of a common European identity based on personalistic and universalistic values rooted in the notion of human dignity. Such values are part of the Christian tradition. However, as they are also present in secular visions, they are compatible with many of the parties that were more recently incorporated into the Group.

The study will therefore analyse how the EPP Group has pursued its ‘European ambition’. Analytically but also conceptually, the ‘European ambition’ is much more than a simple idea about European integration. It consists of the following different but connected values/ideals, objectives and means/instruments.

Values – Christian values, principles and ideals as understood in a universalistic manner (based on human dignity) and, more specifically, in a supranational way.

Institutional objective – European federal state through a gradual approach. Intermediate institutional objective which is also a means of achieving the primary one – institutional strengthening and empowerment of the EP.

Political means/strategy – achievement of hegemony in the EP through a strong institutional presence/activism and political alliances (creation of a core group with S&D and ALDE; selective collaboration with the Greens).

Organisational means – achievement and maintenance of numerical prevalence in the EP and a presence in all Member States, mainly via its ability to attract sister (or at least ‘cousin’) parties across successive EU enlargements.

The relevance of the components of the EPP Group’s European ambition can be traced through this volume’s five chapters. As the previous discussion has revealed, Christian values are the foundation of the Group’s Europeanist vocation. Although this is a separate theme, analytically, it is closely intertwined with the Group’s primary institutional objective: the gradual creation of a European federal state. The connection between the two emerges clearly in Chapter 1 as Wolfram Kaiser’s historical analysis focuses on the role played by the Christian Democrats in the debate on the future progress of European integration since the early post-war period. Although the analysis concentrates specifically on the ECSC and the European Eco-

conomic Community (EEC), it goes as far as to include Altiero Spinelli's acceptance of the relevance of Christian Democracy's European roots during the debate on the Draft Treaty on the European Union (1984). This compatibility of values is also demonstrated by the EPP Group's decision to support Spinelli's initiative despite the fact that he belonged to the Communist Group (see Bardi in Chapter 5 of this book). Similarly, the Christian tradition appears in subsequent discussions on treaty reform (see Johansson in Chapter 2 of this book). Specifically, proposals for including references to the Christian heritage of Europe were part of the debate on the Constitutional Treaty (see Gagatsek in Chapter 4 of this book).

In her chapter, Carine Germond outlines, amongst various successful proposals for inclusion in the text of the Maastricht Treaty by the EPP Group, the subsidiarity principle and describes it as "an integral part of a Christian vision of Europe". Germond also focuses on the Christian notion of solidarity, responsibility, respect and social justice in the context of social policy. This is not surprising as these chime perfectly with traditional Christian values. Conversely, the relevance of Christian views in shaping the EPP Group's position on environmental policy and even EU financial and budgetary governance is less expected, even if it is limited to its social dimension.

Likewise, Wojciech Gagatsek repeatedly refers to values or ethical attitudes that can cement or break apart positions on key external policies in his analysis. For example, values such as freedom, democracy and human rights are discussed as foundations of a possible convergence between the United States and the EU in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). As regards development policy, however, the discussion juxtaposes issues such as abortion and freedom of religion with policy actions, such as the effort to ensure access to drinking water. In other words, the EPP Group considers a free trade area as an opportunity rather than a danger given its ideological orientation in favour of the defence of human dignity and peace and against poverty and war. Finally, Christian values also emerge as important elements in the analysis of the evolving EPP Group's cohesiveness and identity (see Bardi in Chapter 5 of this book), as successive EU enlargements have required the incorporation of parties coming from traditions that are not explicitly Christian.

The EPP Group's primary institutional objective, the achievement of a European federal state, is a theme running through all five chapters. In Chapter 1, Wolfram Kaiser juxtaposes the EPP Group's outstanding role in promoting EC/EU constitutionalisation with the lack of unity on this matter on the part of the PES. In Chapter 2, Karl Magnus Johansson illustrates how the EPP Group's statement that the Draft Treaty should be used as a

basis for further EU integration and constitutionalisation found a concrete application in successive treaty reforms, beginning with the Single European Act. The gradualist nature of the EPP's approach to EU constitutionalisation is thus confirmed by the Group's role in promoting successive treaty reforms. After the Nice Treaty (2001), the EPP Group played a crucial role in establishing the Convention for the elaboration of a Constitutional Treaty (2004) and its outcomes. After this initiative's failure, the Group continued to encourage the adoption of a new treaty, an effort which came to fruition with the 2007 Lisbon Treaty.

The Group's position on the 'deepening vs. widening' dilemma, which animated the debate at European level after the collapse of Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, was that the latter is not possible without the former, as is well argued by Wojciech Gagatsek in his discussion of enlargement policy. As expected, institutional deepening is not the main focus of Carine Germond's dissection of treaty reform. Given her chapter's focus on policy, she highlights, amongst other things, the timetable set for the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the creation of an independent European Central Bank (ECB) whilst discussing the Maastricht Treaty.

Luciano Bardi concentrates on the EPP Group's role in promoting the parliamentarisation and democratisation of the EU through non-constitutional means. In particular, he discusses the Group's changing positions on its assessment of the potential impact of electoral reform, especially as concerns the creation of transnational lists in EP elections, the Europeanisation of political parties and representation at EU level. In his analysis, this assessment is partially connected to a discussion of the *Spitzenkandidaten* initiative as a means of modifying the political balance between supranational and intergovernmental institutions in favour of the former.

The main intermediate objective of the EPP Group's 'European ambition' is the empowerment and institutional strengthening of the EP, yet it is not only a goal but also an instrument by which the Group may exert influence in the EU. Indeed, in this book's analysis, the EPP Group's commitment to EU constitutionalisation and institutional deepening goes hand in hand with a commitment to a more powerful EP. In Wolfram Kaiser's chapter, the CD/EPP Group's idea that the empowerment of the EP is a "*conditio sine qua non*" for a federal Europe is clearly spelled out. At the same time, Kaiser demonstrates that the CD Group was convinced that a more powerful Parliament would pave the way for a more active and influential role of political parties in EC/EU integration.

This aspect is addressed in each chapter. According to Karl Magnus Johansson, the extension of the EP's powers of co-decision through various

treaties and growing tendencies toward EU parliamentarism strengthen the partisan dimension of EU politics. In Chapter 3, Carine Germond connects the political groups' ability to influence legislation with the legislative empowerment of the EP in those internal policy areas in which it gained new competences after 1979. Conversely, Wojciech Gagatsek's chapter discusses how the relative lack of EP powers in some specific policy fields can make membership of the corresponding EP committees less attractive to MEPs. In a counter-intuitive way, this confirms the importance of the connection between EP empowerment and partisan activism at EU level. In Chapter 5, Luciano Bardi stresses the role of EP party groups, and that of the EPP Group in particular, in the EP's empowerment through their initiatives and support for treaty reforms and other, less direct methods. An important case in point is the use by political groups of the EP's budgetary powers to exercise parliamentary political control over the executive during the Santer Commission resignation, even if the EPP Group was more of a bystander than a protagonist.

The pursuit of the intermediate and primary objectives of the EPP Group's 'European ambition' requires a vision and strategy for the acquisition of the necessary political resources. The diversity of political opinions across Europe ensures that no political group can obtain an absolute majority in EP elections. This can be compensated for with adequate institutional strategies, political alliances and networking within the EP and beyond. Luciano Bardi discusses the relationship between the political groups' electoral strength and their ability to obtain relevant institutional positions in the EP at length. He also presents original data to demonstrate that this relationship is far from being a linear one. In fact, it is connected with a group's ability to form solid alliances, such as the one that includes the parties belonging to the EU party system's core.

Furthermore, transnational party networks, informal channels and personal relations are important resources for groups in the context of negotiations and policy discussions. Wolfram Kaiser pays particular attention to this matter and points out how the EPP Group tried in the past to compensate for the lack of EP formal powers through informal networking mechanisms. Moreover, he describes the transnational Christian democratic networks' impact on the EPP Group's internal constitution as well as on its ideological orientation and programmatic commitments. Likewise, Johansson draws attention to the ways in which the EPP Group promotes initiatives outside the EP by involving parties and civil society representatives at national level as well as how it uses party networks within and around the European Council to influence treaty reforms. Luciano Bardi addresses another aspect of this strategy: the constitutionalisation, through

the approval of a specific statute, of political parties at European level and the strengthening of their links with civil society through the establishment of corresponding political foundations.

The relevance of networks also emerges in policy-making. Carine Germond stresses the EPP Group's reliance on contact between its members and fellow Christian Democrats holding office in the governments or parliaments of the Member States for the purpose of shaping internal policies. Germond also highlights their role in articulating, mediating and promoting civil society's interests in the EP and other institutional contexts. This analysis continues with a description of EPP MEPs' actions to influence discussions within the EP committees and in plenary sessions as far as key economic, social and environmental issues are concerned. Finally, Gagatsek uses his chapter to describe the role of formal and informal mechanisms and committee members, especially Chairs, Rapporteurs or shadow Rapporteurs, in the promotion of the Group's positions.

This study shows how the EPP Group's 'European ambition' has influenced EU integration. At the same time, EU development, via institutional deepening and successive enlargements, has changed the Group's own organisation and political features. The Group's ability to influence the EP and EU politics is closely linked to its internal structures and dynamics. Adequate organisational characteristics are essential resources for reaching objectives. The impact of the entry of new parties and other factors on the EPP Group's cohesion and balance of power between national delegations is analysed in this study as an element of the EPP Group's organisational strength or weakness. Wolfram Kaiser looks at how direct elections, the progressive strengthening of the EP's legislative powers and the Group's activism in EC reform impacted upon its own voting cohesiveness in the EP.

The impact of incoming parties following several EU enlargements on the Group's organisational structure is addressed in various chapters of this volume. Kaiser examines how the Northern and Southern enlargements affected the EPP Group's internal composition and cohesion as well as its influence in the European Parliament. Gagatsek's analysis concentrates on the effect of new members in the EP after the 2004/2007 enlargement on the voting cohesiveness of the main EP political groups. Bardi looks at the impact of all EU enlargements on the Group's identity and composition in terms of its history, ideology and values. He also analyses changes in the Group's own institutional balance and political orientation as well as its capacity to maintain unity and easily reach common positions on crucial questions.

Throughout this book, the EPP Party and Group's converging tradition of Christian values and European vocation are treated as identitarian elements that the Group ostensibly seeks to preserve, albeit with various levels of success. These elements can also be seen as assets to be used by the Group in the pursuit of political objectives and its own consolidation. Christianity has long been recognised as one of the fundamental elements of the European value structure even in countries without a proper Christian democratic political tradition. Politically, values such as the importance of family as a cornerstone of society and the equidistance between the aspirations of groups belonging to different societal strata overlap considerably with those of ostensibly secular, moderate to conservative parties across Europe. This, as well as the power and influence that comes with the Group's size, has attracted sister parties from all EU expansion Member States as successive enlargements have increased the number of EU Member States to 27 after having reached a maximum of 28. However, this successful process has come at a price. The Group's internal composition has become increasingly fragmented following the three-fold increase in the number of national delegations since 1979. At the same time, the Group's ideological make-up has been modified and is no longer based exclusively on Christian values. Both circumstances are potential internal governance problems facing the Group's leadership.

Besides coping with internal changes, the EPP Group now faces more potentially menacing external challenges. Sovereignist and anti-EU sentiments have emerged in several Member States and are, according to some, threatening the EU's very existence. The objectives of the Group's 'European ambition' must be recast. It may be necessary to balance progress towards European integration with the preservation of what has already been achieved. As is consistent with the gradualist approach that has always characterised its actions, the EPP Group seems to have identified a new intermediate step in the empowerment of the EP: the acquisition of a new co-decisional role with the Commission and the European Council in long-term budgetary and financial planning.

At the time of completion of this manuscript in spring 2020, in a letter to the (Christian democratic) President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, the EPP Group's Chair, Manfred Weber, and Vice-Chair, Siegfried Mureşan, advanced a request for the EP to be *"fully involved in the decision-making process and the adoption and implementation of the Recovery Plan"* (emphasis in the original). Their contention was that the coronavirus recovery plan "cannot be an exception to this basic rule of democracy and legitimacy". They went as far as listing the conditions under which the EPP Group

would approve the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the Recovery Fund (EPP Group 2020a). Whilst the letter was characterised on the EPP Group's own website and reported by the online media as an ultimatum (EPP Group 2020b; Express 2020), supported by the threat to veto the MFF, the EPP Group representatives also expressed the hope that the "Commission and the Council would share the same level of *ambition*" (emphasis ours) as the Group.

Chapter 1 Shaping institutions and policies: The EPP Group in the European Communities

Wolfram Kaiser

The political parties of the Left should have comprehensively won the first free elections in (Western) Europe in 1944-45 after the experience of fascism and national-socialism, as well as conservative and Catholic nationalist collaboration as in the case of Vichy France. After all, even in the unoccupied United Kingdom, the Labour Party defeated the Conservative war-time leader Winston Churchill in the general election in July 1945 to win a parliamentary majority for the first time ever. However, it was not to be. The Left's relative electoral failure to gain majority support in free elections after the war was to preoccupy historian sympathisers for a long time. Mirroring the debate about the fate of the German Reich after 1918-19, they tended to argue that the Socialists should have dedicated themselves to far more revolutionary change of the social and political institutions and socio-economic policy-making to achieve a more decisive break with the past (de Graaf 2019; Judt 2005).

Instead of the Social Democrats, the Socialists and Communists, the more centrist and centre-right Christian Democrats became the strongest electoral force in continental Western Europe after 1945. They revived interwar political party traditions largely untainted by collusion with fascism as in the case of Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands, or they created new formally non-confessional or inter-confessional parties as in France, Italy, and Western Germany. At the time of the negotiation of the Treaty of Paris, that resulted in the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951-2, the Christian Democrats were in power in all of these six founding Member States – together with the Labour Party in the Netherlands, temporarily ruling with an absolute majority in Belgium, and leading coalition governments as far and away the largest single party in all other countries. They continued to dominate continental Western European politics as well as the politics of European integration well into the 1960s (Gehler and Kaiser 2004a; Buchanan and Conway 1996).

The emerging Cold War greatly facilitated the rise and political hegemony of these parties. After all, pronounced anti-communism had charac-

terised both political Catholicism and more secular conservative political tendencies since Karl Marx first advocated socialist class struggle and revolution in the middle of the nineteenth century. Conveniently for the Christian Democrats, the Cold War greatly simplified ideological and political choices once more: this time between parliamentary democracy and private ownership in a predominantly market economy on the one hand, and class dictatorship and centrally planned collectivised production on the other. Aligning themselves strongly with the United States as the protector of Western Europe's democracies, the Christian Democrats successfully presented themselves as the only effective bulwark against bolshevism externally as well as internally: in France and Italy where the Communists did very well in free elections, with the Socialists allying themselves with them in Italy; and in Western Germany in opposition to the newly formed Eastern German communist state effectively set up and protected by the Soviet Union.

The Cold War alone does not sufficiently explain the durability and adaptability of centre-right political parties in Western Europe after 1945, however (Botsiou 2009: 175). As Martin Conway (2004) has pointed out, the key tenets of political Catholicism remained quite stable from the interwar period into the 1960s. It retained a 'fortress mentality' until the death of Pope Pius XII in 1958 and beyond. Crucially, however, political Catholicism still achieved greater success at escaping the confessional political ghetto of practising Catholics than the Socialists did at overcoming class barriers. As a result, it was able to ally itself increasingly with protestant, liberal and moderate conservative political forces as in the Netherlands, where the two traditional protestant political parties initially continued to exist alongside the Catholic People's Party, and in Western Germany, where new Christian democratic parties overcame the Centre Party's confessional limitations.

After 1945 the Christian Democrats developed a political vocabulary of human dignity, individual freedom, social rights and subsidiarity that loosely drew on a combination of personalism and Catholic social teaching. At the same time, the Christian Democrats built bridges to liberal concepts of political pluralism, private enterprise and market economy. This in turn allowed the creation of broad centre-right political groupings as in the case of the Western German Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), and the Italian Democrazia Cristiana (DC). The parties' evolving doctrines and programmes were adapted to specific national contexts, traditions and structures of party competition. However, all Christian democratic parties sought to connect Christian values with secular political causes. They also

advocated different versions of a socio-economic ‘third way’. Depending on national circumstances, their programmatic preferences could flexibly be made compatible with a diverse range of economic policies, from indicative planning in France to *ordo-liberal* competition policy in Western Germany.

With their pronounced anti-communism, advocacy of a ‘third way’ for European societies and middle-of-the-road-policies in government, the Christian Democrats shaped the post-war consensus about the developing welfare state to a large degree. Their European ambitions were designed to sustain these programmatic preferences. They also developed a life of their own, with the Christian Democrats adopting strong advocacy of European integration as one of their core ideological and programmatic tenets after 1945. They strongly influenced many core features of the present-day European Union (EU), and did so not just through intergovernmental bargaining, but also via their transnational party co-operation, which was both formalised and highly informal (Kaiser 2007). In addition to private personal and bilateral contacts, this cooperation mainly took place in the *Nouvelles Equipes Internationales* (NEI) formed in 1948, the informal Geneva Circle and – from 1949 onwards – in the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe.

In 1952–3, the ECSC Common Assembly for the first time constituted a formal institutional platform for a more exclusive cooperation among the Christian democratic parties from its six founding Member States. They formed the largest common transnationally constituted parliamentary group, alongside those of the Socialists and Liberals. In 1958, they remained the largest group by a significant margin in the integrated Parliamentary Assembly of the European Economic Community (EEC), which renamed itself the European Parliament (EP) in 1962. In conjunction with its first direct election in 1979, the Christian Democratic Group (CD Group) renamed itself the European People’s Party (EPP) Group following the transnational organisation of parties from the by now institutionally integrated European Communities (EC) in 1976.

This first chapter analyses and discusses the European cooperation and joint political action of the CD/EPP Group in the EC into the 1980s before its transformation into the EU in the Treaty of Maastricht, when the EP acquired legislative co-decision powers. When the EP was first directly elected in 1979, the EPP Group’s political activism was strongly influenced by long-term vectors (Kaiser and Patel 2017), or what historical institutionalists call path-dependencies (e.g. Pierson 2000), both in terms of its internal organisation and practices and its political preferences. For this reason, the chapter’s first section traces the origins of the transnational and parliamen-

tary co-operation of the Christian democratic parties (hereafter CD parties) until 1958 to sketch these long-term continuities and to facilitate an assessment of what actually changed with the direct elections during the 1980s.

The second section then analyses the CD/EPP Group's changing composition and internal governance over time. This includes how the Group allocated posts internally and how it organised its policy-making before and after the first direct elections. As we will see, while the Group grew in size and the administration became professionalised, key practices – such as the close cooperation between the German and Italian Christian Democrats – at least initially survived the direct elections.

The third section then addresses the Group's evolving relations with the EPP as its EC-level party organisation and with the other political parties within the EP. This section seeks to understand why and how the Christian Democrats laid the groundwork for becoming the largest and most influential Group in the EP once again, having lost the position in 1975; and how it co-operated with other groups in the EP – especially the Socialists – to decide the distribution of posts and influence budgetary and legislative action.

Sections four and five of the chapter are devoted to the CD/EPP Group's European ambitions for shaping two crucial functions of the EP: system-building and policy-making. In the period covered in this chapter, the CD/EPP Group's greatest contribution to European integration was arguably its consistent approach to system-building based on its broadly federalist agenda, and its relatively united approach to making the EC/EU institutions both more efficient and more democratic – the latter primarily by working towards a significant strengthening of the EP's role and powers broadly in line with the national template of parliamentary democracy.

In contrast, regarding socio-economic policy issues that lay at the heart of European integration in the EC, the CD/EPP Group was generally more heterogeneous than the Socialists. Section five focusses on the Group's policy-making by selectively discussing three key policy challenges: the integration of agricultural policy, which was dear to the Christian Democrats; issues of economic integration from the common market to competition, monetary cooperation and regional policy; and the origins of EC environmental policy – a policy that the CD Group somewhat surprisingly co-shaped in the 1970s as one of several new policy areas that evolved in response to new societal challenges and pressures from new social movements from the 1960s onwards.

On this basis, the chapter's conclusion draws out some larger questions of continuity and discontinuity across the first direct elections in 1979, which the EP itself usually assumes to mark a watershed in its own history

and that of the EC/EU. In doing so, the conclusion also pinpoints some of the CD/EPP Group's core structural and policy challenges that continued to inform its later parliamentary organisation and actions as addressed in chapters two to five in this book. They included the Group's – and the EP's – great difficulty in going beyond the system-building and policy-making functions to act as intermediaries between EU institutions and citizens to strengthen their political engagement for European integration, to foster European identity, and to enhance the legitimacy of the EU and its institutions.

Shaping European integration: transnational party cooperation after 1945

Political Catholicism as it evolved in the nineteenth century was transnational primarily in the sense that it sought to organise Catholics against the modern secular ideologies of liberalism, socialism and anticlericalism in defence of the Church as a global institution (Clark 2003). Organised transnational networks were largely limited to the so-called Black International dominated by Catholic aristocrats (Lamberts 2002), which unsuccessfully tried to protect the Vatican's temporal powers after the occupation of the Papal States by the liberal Kingdom of Italy. After the First World War, politicians from the Italian Partito Popolare created in 1919 first initiated bilateral contacts with the German Centre Party. The Italians began to advocate a thorough revision of the Versailles Treaty, including territorial changes with the aim of the full integration of the Weimar Republic into the post-war international order of the League of Nations (Gualerzi 1959).

When the Italian party's founder Luigi Sturzo went into exile after the usurpation of power by Benito Mussolini, he started to work towards organised cooperation among Catholic parties to strengthen moderate political Catholicism against the authoritarian and fascist threat from the Right as well as communism from the Left. He made contact with the French Parti Démocrate Populaire (PDP) which broke ranks with the nationalist Right when it voted for the ratification of the Locarno Treaty. Keen on developing a more conciliatory approach towards Germany, the PDP sought to establish contacts with other Catholic parties and in December 1925 launched the *Sécretariat International des Partis Démocratiques d'Inspiration Chrétienne* (SIPDIC) in Paris, with full German Centre Party participation (Kaiser 2007: 72–118).

This limited interwar Catholic party cooperation was dominated by left-Catholics who often had close links to Catholic trade unions and charities.

In policy terms, these politicians were primarily concerned with issues of industrial, social, and education policy that even within the present-day EU have largely remained a national competence. As a result, their policy debates focused on the exchange of information and learning from foreign examples in these policy domains. They were not geared towards developing plans for European economic integration, as advocated at the time particularly by the French Socialist foreign minister Aristide Briand and liberal political parties. When the National-Socialists took power in Germany in 1933, SIPDIC effectively became defunct. The only loosely organised co-operation among Catholics in exile in the United Kingdom and in the United States subsequently failed to produce blueprints for a European post-war order, as the German question continued to polarise participants (Kaiser 2000).

Despite strong continuities in the social organisation, political beliefs and cultural practices of Catholics, the end of the Second World War fundamentally changed the conditions for party organisation and transnational co-operation. To begin with, while they still supported more neo-corporatist forms of societal organisation, the new Christian democratic parties were reconciled to parliamentary democracy. When discussing transnational party co-operation with Catholics from neutral Switzerland in 1946, DC representatives stated, and other Christian democratic party representatives concurred, that “democracy [is] the sole political system compatible with Christian beliefs”, categorically excluding participation by representatives of Franco’s Spain, for example.¹ As a result, the Christian democratic parties favoured co-operation with anti-communist clerical regimes and military dictatorships during the Cold War. However, they also aligned themselves with socialist and liberal preferences for the protection of human rights (Duranti 2017) and supported the exclusion of non-democratic regimes like Franco’s Spain from Western European integration organisations with clear political objectives such as the ECSC/EEC.

Moreover, liberal-conservative party elites largely came to dominate the CD parties and their developing transnational cooperation in parliamentary forums as well as in the NEI and the Geneva Circle, with a more marginal role for Christian trade unionists. These liberal-conservative elites quickly came to see European economic integration as the only suitable structure for defending private ownership and a mixed economy; for what Alan S. Milward (1992) has called the “European rescue of the nation-state” through creating large more efficient markets and European welfare

1 Bundesarchiv, CVP-Archiv JIII.181, 2659, Meier to Rosenberg, 29 October 1946.

policies in sectors like coal and steel and agriculture; and for maintaining peace in Europe. Moreover, they were able to draw on a new repertoire of cross-party constitutional visions for a united Europe, which were already developed during the war and fostered by various federalist organisations and the European Movement, as witnessed at its congress at The Hague in May 1948.

Lastly, the Christian Democrats also benefitted in different ways from how the Cold War shaped the external conditions for European integration. The division of Europe, first of all, excluded the German-Polish conflict from cooperation among the Western European political parties, which had severely complicated the work of SIPDIC in the interwar period. Moreover, the division of Germany allowed the Christian Democrats to develop a simplistic narrative in relation to a Prussian-communist German East in their party co-operation after 1945 and, in contrast, a Western German culture and society with connections to Latin-Roman culture, which could be democratised, Westernised, and successfully integrated in European organisations, as was indeed the overriding objective of Konrad Adenauer, the first German CDU Chancellor after 1949. Even better, the division of Germany also militated against the possible danger of a German domination of European integration organisations – a wide-spread latent fear in Western Europe put in a nutshell much later by the Italian DC politician Giulio Andreotti, when he said that he loved Germany so much that he preferred when there were two (Trocini 2012).

The Cold War additionally guaranteed that the United States strongly supported European integration, for political as well as economic reasons. Finally, the United Kingdom, where the Christian Democrats had no sister party, refused to participate in more meaningful economic, let alone political, integration (Kaiser 1999). This in turn strengthened the Christian Democrats' political hegemony in continental 'core Europe' until the first EC enlargement in 1973. In these changing circumstances after 1945, the Christian Democrats now saw their party co-operation not just as a forum for the exchange of ideas, but as an essential mechanism for discussing and somewhat aligning their programmatic objectives on key shared policy challenges, and for influencing the politics of European integration.

The Christian Democrats formally founded the NEI at its first official congress in Liège in Belgium in May 1947 (Gehler and Kaiser 2004b: 97–100). With its weak secretariat, bureau meetings and annual congress, the NEI were institutionally ineffective, primarily due to opposition from the French and Belgians to formalising them as an organisation of political parties. The French Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP), which was essential to NEI cooperation, sought to establish itself as a non-clerical cen-

trist party in French politics, and was initially keen to avoid too close an association with what could be presented by the French Left as more clerical or conservative parties elsewhere in Western Europe. The NEI were also weakened by their broad membership, including the Swiss and Austrian political parties. While both shared a strongly anti-communist orientation, the Austrians could not commit to participation in Western European integration with Soviet troops still in Eastern Austria until 1955, and the Swiss did not want to do so due to their established policy of neutrality. Moreover, the NEI even had exile groups from Eastern Europe and Spain. The ‘core Europe’ parties from the founding Member States of the ECSC/EEC remained rhetorically loyal to Christian Democrats in and from Eastern Europe (Kaiser and Kosicki 2021). However, under the conditions of the deepening Cold War, they were keen to concentrate on the integration of continental Western Europe.

In contrast to the NEI, cooperation in the so-called Geneva Circle from 1947 was much more informal, and was even kept secret initially to avoid compromising its participants in domestic politics (Gehler 2001). Initiated by Georges Bidault, the MRP foreign minister and Prime Minister to establish links with reliable German Christian Democrats like Adenauer, the meetings primarily created a platform for bilateral Franco-German co-operation, albeit with broader participation, which seemed especially useful before the Federal Republic was created and governmental contact became possible in 1949. While the NEI meetings and annual congresses focused more on fundamental ideological and policy issues, the encounters in the Geneva Circle were geared closely towards the concertation of policy on concrete issues, such as the constitutional future of West Berlin within the Federal Republic of Germany.

Moreover, despite his apparent Atlantic orientation, Bidault strongly agreed with Adenauer and other participants during the meetings in 1948–49 that Britain’s self-exclusion from European integration was highly desirable to allow deeper economic and political integration in ‘core Europe’ – a position that quickly became prevalent in the MRP and other Christian democratic parties with the partial exception of the Dutch protestant parties that only joined the NEI in 1954. Supporting Bidault, P.J.S. Serrarens from the Dutch Catholic People’s Party (KVP) argued in the Geneva Circle in June 1949: “There is a British tendency to limit Europe to inter-state negotiations, if not to create no Europe at all. If England dominates, nothing will be achieved.”² Paolo Emilio Taviani (1954, 248), a close confidant of

2 ACDP, 01–009–017, Geneva Circle, 10 June 1949.

the Italian DC Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi, claimed that the English had an “insular mentality, which can never be extinguished”. At best, or so Ernest Pezet from the MRP phrased it, the British could accept facts and might eventually join, but “we must play the role of the engine”.³ This prevailing scepticism regarding the United Kingdom’s role in Europe also characterised the CD/EPP Group’s attitudes to the British Conservatives as a necessary but not always easy ally in the EP after 1973.

When the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe met for the first time in Strasbourg in August 1949, therefore, the Christian Democrats, despite their institutional limitations, operated fairly dense networks of transnational contacts – both bilateral and multilateral in nature – in the NEI and the Geneva Circle. Co-operation in the new parliamentary forums of the Council of Europe and, from 1952–53 onwards, the Common Assembly of the ECSC, became informally integrated with these networks to a large extent. For example, the MRP leader Pierre-Henri Teitgen and Heinrich von Brentano, the CDU/CSU parliamentary party leader in the German Bundestag, met and worked closely with each other in the Geneva Circle before they played a leading role in the Constitutional Committee of the ECSC Ad Hoc Assembly, which drafted the European Political Community (EPC) proposal in 1953.

On occasion, the Christian Democrats also drew upon these informal networks to support their governmental co-operation, such as when they convinced the MRP to pass the treaty creating the Western European Union in late December 1954 during a hastily arranged, last-minute mission to Paris (Kaiser 2007: 277–81). The overlap between party and parliamentary networks continued later, when the NEI were transformed into the European Union of Christian Democrats (EUCD) in 1965 and the EPP was founded in 1976. Over time, however, the CD/EPP Group acquired a far more dominant coordinating position and, as we will see below, frequently complained about the ineffectiveness of the EC-level party organisation.

The fact that the ECSC had a parliamentary assembly at all can, in fact, largely be attributed to pressure from the Christian Democrats at political party and government levels. After all, Jean Monnet’s original proposal for integrating the coal and steel industries had not even mentioned such a parliamentary dimension. Monnet’s objective was to institutionalise what Pezet in the Geneva Circle called a “para-political” institution run by inde-

3 KADOC, Archief CEPESS, 3.1.11, Geneva Circle, 12 June 1950.

pendent appointed experts –⁴ individuals who in Monnet’s vision would then act in “the interests of all”, free from pressures by national governments or interest groups (Duchêne 1994, BBC 1971). In contrast, the Christian Democrats were wary of such forms of technocratic government. They were initially flexible regarding the precise institutional form of European integration, but united in their advocacy of a popular parliamentary dimension, which would create a link with citizens and strengthen the legitimacy of European integration. Their debates about integration in the early post-war period created a strong ideological vector for their later advocacy of constitutionalising the EC in a European parliamentary system.

When the Common Assembly started its work, its first Rules of Procedure from January 1953 mentioned committees, but not political groups. Three transnational groups formed regardless, which became formalised in a revision of the Rules of Procedure five months later, in June 1953 (Mittag 2011). However, the delegates from national parliaments initially sat in alphabetical order. Seating according to group membership was only introduced in the new EP formed for the EEC, Euratom and the ECSC in 1958. The CD Group officially constituted itself in June 1953.⁵ It came close to an absolute majority of members, comprising 38 of 78 national delegates (Guerrieri 2015). The CD Group created an executive Bureau which was initially headed up by the Dutch KVP politician Emmanuel Sassen and comprised eight other members; this Bureau started to hold regular meetings in Brussels and Strasbourg. When the Belgian Robert Houben demanded at the end of 1954 that the Group “define its political programme more clearly so that we can accomplish our task better”,⁶ its members began to discuss concrete policy issues more and more. However, despite the transnational organisation of the political groups, nationality continued to matter in the Common Assembly (Mittag 2011, 20).

The Christian Democrats were not only keen on the inclusion of a meaningful parliamentary dimension in European integration. The decision to start with economic integration in one sector – coal and steel – also very much reflected their political preferences and followed their close transnational co-ordination, before the French foreign minister Robert Schuman adopted Monnet’s initiative for the French government and made it public on 9 May 1950 (Lynch 1997). Functional reasons for start-

4 Ibid.

5 EPP Group Archives, E.1, Déclaration de constitution, 23.6.1953.

6 ACDP, 09–001–009/1, Houben to Opitz, 12.11.1954, Note au groupe démocrate-chrétien de l’assemblée commune.

ing with integration in coal and steel included its importance for European, and not merely nationally focused reconstruction; the need under combined US and British pressure to replace the ineffective and discriminatory Allied control of German heavy industry through the Ruhr Authority; and the sector's symbolic value for European integration as a peace project (Kaiser and Schot 2014: 219–58). In addition, however, some Christian democratic parties had especially strong links to the industry. This was true for the German CDU, which initially lacked mass membership and was largely reliant on funding from German heavy industry (Bösch 2001). Industry also mattered immensely for some regions such as Wallonia in Belgium, the largest German state of North Rhine-Westphalia where the CDU led a coalition government from 1946 onwards, and Alsace-Lorraine, which was an electoral stronghold of the MRP.

Adenauer repeatedly suggested joint control over coal and steel in some form of sector integration in meetings in the NEI and the Geneva Circle, highlighting the fact that he had already made a similar proposal as early as 1923, when French and Belgian troops had occupied the Ruhr Area. At a meeting of the Geneva Circle in November 1949, von Brentano propagated the idea once more as a way to guarantee “effective French control over the production of German companies”.⁷ In a letter to French Prime Minister Bidault dated 22 March 1950, Adenauer again suggested starting European integration with the coal, steel and chemical industries – an initiative that guaranteed that Bidault was prepared for the idea when Schuman got the French government to support it in its meeting on 8 May 1950. However, leading Christian Democrats also discussed integration in coal and steel in many forums between 1948 and 1950, for example during a study visit by a French Senate commission to North Rhine-Westphalia in the spring of 1949, with meetings between Pezet and von Brentano and Karl Arnold, the state's CDU minister president (Kaiser 2007: 223–227).

The ECSC effectively developed quite neo-corporatist forms of governance, which later informed the sector's carefully negotiated restructuring in the EC in the late 1970s and 1980s. For the Christian Democrats it was clear in any case that European integration in one sector would have to be broadened as soon as possible to horizontal market integration in a customs union and common market. In its public message for 1949, the NEI for the first time committed publicly to treating the Benelux customs union, which was under construction at the time, as a template for wider

7 ACDP 01–009–017, Geneva Circle, 21 November 1949.

European economic integration.⁸ With their advocacy of market integration the Christian Democrats pursued three main goals. The first was to utilise the German economic potential as an industrial powerhouse and importer of agricultural products for European reconstruction. The second was to strengthen national economies, enhance growth and raise the welfare of citizens to counter the appeal of the communist ideology and political parties and thus enhance the security of Western Europe more generally. Finally, the third objective was to turn the to-be-created European common market into a third-way transnational market-based societal model between liberal capitalism and Soviet communism – a model that would have to cater for the needs of the core electoral constituencies of Christian democratic parties, especially the middle classes and farmers.

In these different ways, the Christian Democrats – through their cooperation in the NEI, the Geneva Circle and the CD Group in the Common Assembly – created long-term vectors for the later work of the CD/EPP Group in the EP. These concern the CD/EPP Group's broad political and more concrete policy preferences for the EC's institutional deepening and common policies. They also characterise key elements of its internal organisation and practices as well as its relations with other political parties in the EP, as we will now see.

Italo-German dominance: composition and governance

The CD/EPP Group was made up of MEPs from six Member States until 1973, seven (of nine Member States) until 1981 and eight (of ten Member States) until 1986. Until 1973 and again from when first the Spanish Partido Popular (PP) and then the British Conservatives joined in 1992, until 2009, the CD/EPP Group had members from all EC/EU states (see Bardi in Chapter 5 of this book). However, its percentage of MEPs and its internal composition by nationality changed significantly during the 35 years until the EC's transformation into the EU. In 1958, the CD Group had 67 of 142 delegated MEPs, with 38 Socialists and 35 Liberals. By 1968, the CD Group was marginally down to 65 MEPs. Between the 1973 Northern enlargement and the 1979 EP elections, it only had 52 of 189 MEPs, with the Socialists on 66 when Labour Party members joined after the British 1975 membership referendum to remain in the EC.

8 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Archiv der Republik, BKA/AA, II-pol., Int.14, Zl80.755-pol/49, Botschaft der NEI für 1949.

The CD/EPP Group's relative decline was due in large measure to the electoral decline of Christian democratic parties as seen in the Benelux countries, and the fact that it had no MEPs from the United Kingdom and Denmark. However, the EPP parties did well in the first direct elections in 1979 (Bomsdorf 1980). They gained the largest percentage of the popular vote and ended up with 107 MEPs of 410, only marginally behind the Socialists on 113. However, throughout the 1980s, the gap with the Socialists widened significantly once more. In 1984, the EPP Group won 110 of 434 seats and in 1989, 121 of 518 seats. In 1989, this constituted only 23 % compared to the Socialists' 35 % of all seats (European Parliament 2009a; Fontaine 2009: 593–597).

Compared to the composition of the EP generally, and broader patterns of policy-making in the EC, the CD/EPP Group was characterised by two key features which impacted directly on its internal dynamics. The first concerned the low representation of French parties, which resulted from the Fifth Republic majoritarian voting system, the decline and subsequent dissolution of the MRP in the 1960s, and the shifting party organisation and transnational allegiances in the centre of French politics. In 1968, for example, only two of 65 members of the CD Group were from France. In 1989 six of 81 elected French MEPs joined the EPP Group. This constituted just 5 % of its total of 121 MEPs, which was barely more than in 1968. For historical, economic and political reasons, Franco-German bilateralism heavily dominated intergovernmental relations and bargaining in the EC, however (e.g. Germond and Türk 2008). The low French representation and influence meant that, in contrast to the great importance of bilateral Franco-German co-operation in multilateral party networks in the early post-war period, the CD/EPP Group could do very little to support Franco-German co-ordination at government level later. This was especially true while the German CDU/CSU was out of power at the federal level between 1969 and 1982.

The second key feature was the strong representation of the Italian DC. This was only in part down to its electoral strength. Additionally, the DC profited heavily from the pro-Western centrist parties' decision to exclude the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI) as well as the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and (initially) the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), who were allied to them until 1956, from the Italian representation in European parliamentary assemblies (Guerrieri 2011). In 1953, the PCI and PSI together gained 35 % of the popular vote in the Italian elections but had no members in the ECSC's Common Assembly. The issue became embroiled in the DC's vociferous internal debate in the 1960s regarding its political opening to the Left. In 1966, DC leader Benigno Zaccagnini still

claimed that his party was blocking communist representation in the EP (as in France) out of “political responsibility” (Guerrieri 2011: 54). In contrast, the PCI argued that their exclusion was undemocratic and could obviously not be maintained anyway once the EP was directly elected (Feld 1967). The issue was only resolved in 1969 after the PCI had completed its turn towards Europe and gained nearly 27 % of the popular vote in the 1968 Italian elections (Pons 2010).

As a result of the DC’s anti-communist policy, the Italians, with 18 of 38 members, nearly had an absolute majority in the CD Group in the Common Assembly. Initially, the numbers were similarly skewed towards the DC in the EP. In 1968, out of 65 MEPs, 28 were Italian and only 18 German, eight Dutch and six Belgian; there were also three from Luxembourg and two from France.⁹ The internal composition only became normalised after 1969. After the first direct elections, the 42 German CDU/CSU MEPs constituted 40 % of the EPP Group and the Italians with 30 members, 28 %. In 1989, when the CDU/CSU did badly in the third direct elections just before the end of the Cold War and German unification, the 32 CDU/CSU MEPs constituted 27 % of the EPP Group and the Italian 27 MEPs 23 %.

Against this background, the CD Group initially developed an informal tripartite relationship between the Italian, German and Benelux groups of MEPs, which strongly influenced its internal governance, including the allocation of the Group and EP posts as well as recruitment for the Group’s administration. The Group’s working patterns were also characterised by a strong bilateralism between the Germans and Italians, who together formed a numerical majority in the CD/EPP Group, which could greatly facilitate internal policy-making. This bilateralism became especially pronounced during the long reign of Egon Klepsch as Chair of the EPP Group from 1977 to 1982 and again from 1984 to 1992. As early as November 1975, Klepsch wrote to the CDU leader Helmut Kohl that one should aim to make close informal co-operation between the CDU/CSU and the DC before any meeting of the CD Group or the EUCD a habitual, regular practice, to facilitate policy-making.¹⁰ More generally, for Klepsch and the CD/EPP Group, the DC constituted a European bulwark against the challenge from the Left during the 1970s and 1980s. At a meeting between the CD Group, members of the EUCD’s Political Bureau and leading DC po-

9 EPP Group Archives, E.3.1, Il Gruppo Democratico Cristiano del Parlamento Europeo, 6.11.1968.

10 ACDP, 01-641-003/1, Klepsch, Persönlich-Vertraulich [für Kohl], 3.11.1975.

liticians like Amintore Fanfani in Rome in May 1976, for example, the CDU Secretary-General Kurt Biedenkopf claimed that the DC was “the only party in Italy to uphold the European idea”.¹¹

Transcending nationality, the members of the CD/EPP Group were largely united in their strong support for further integration. The notion of self-selection of Europhile delegated and elected MEPs fits particularly well for the members of this Group (Kerr 1973, 79). The CD parties did initially face internal scepticism or opposition against their strong preference for a spatially limited ‘core Europe’ without the United Kingdom based around the creation of a common market and the dismantling of trade barriers. This is true of some on the MRP Left, who disliked NEI party cooperation and ‘core Europe’ integration as collusion with Catholic conservatives to protect industry cartels and interests; for nationalists in the CDU like Jacob Kaiser, who wanted to prioritise German unification, if necessary at the expense of Western integration; or Dutch Catholics and Protestants who were initially afraid that supranational integration could jeopardize the interests of small states that could be better defended through intergovernmental negotiation. By the late 1950s, however, such forms of internal dissent were marginal to the point of extinction in most Christian democratic parties creating a climate that was highly conducive to strong support for the further deepening of integration in the direction of ‘ever closer union’. As a result, the most pro-integration politicians, who often had formal or informal links with federalist organisations, frequently became members of the EP.

Their shared European integration ideology acted as strong glue that helped the CD/EPP Group transcend internal transnational social, political and cultural divides. These divides included the latent tensions between Christian trade unionists and MEPs close to industry, in particular the farming lobby, which was extremely well-organised within the Group and integrated into the policy community that developed and defended the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Their shared European ideology also made it easier for the CD/EPP Group to ignore the Nazi past of several German members, who were in fact at the forefront of propagating federalist solutions for the EC after the war. These members included Hans Furler, who had joined the SA in 1934 and the Nazi party in 1938 and was EP President from 1960 to 1962, and Hans Edgar Jahn, who had become a Nazi party member as early as 1932. After the ‘reworking’ of the German

11 ACDP, 01-641-004/1, Protokoll der Sitzung der CD-Fraktion unter Teilnahme von Mitgliedern des Politischen Bureaus der EUCD am 6.5.1976 in Rom.

past had started, he resigned his EP mandate in June 1979 after it became known that he had published a heavily anti-Semitic treatise in 1943 (Meyer 2012).

The shared ideological commitment to deeper European integration also made it easier for the Christian Democrats to grapple with the practical problems of inter-cultural communication. Until the 1973 enlargement, the CD Group mainly used French and German for purposes of internal communication.¹² Despite the relatively low number of MEPs in the Group who spoke it as their first language, French was the most important EC language and the first foreign language for most Italian MEPs, if they had one. German in turn was spoken by many MEPs from the Benelux countries, in addition to the CDU/CSU members. English only slowly became more important as the main language of internal communication throughout the 1980s and 1990s. At times, informal communication between Group members remained impossible. Hans-Gert Pötering, who was first elected to the EP in 1979, for example, recalls (Interview Pötering, 26.06.2018) that he only ever smiled at a certain Italian DC member as they did not share even a rudimentary knowledge of any one language. As had been the case in the Geneva Circle, the CD/EPP Group leadership drew on the linguistic versatility of cultural mediators to facilitate informal communication. Thus, Klepsch worked closely with Maria Louisa Cortivo from South Tyrol, who was fully bilingual in German and Italian, to manage his cooperation with Italian members and the DC.

The internal composition of the CD/EPP Group made it necessary to strike a delicate balance in the allocation of posts. Until the 1980s, this balance largely reflected the interests of the German, Italian, and Benelux delegations, with some scraps left over for the Irish Fine Gael members after 1973 and the Greek New Democracy MEPs after 1981. The Group leadership sought to achieve such a balance by combining internal posts – especially the Chairmanship – with those available to the Christian Democrats in the EP, especially the prestigious Presidency and the Chairmanships of parliamentary committees (see Bardi in Chapter 5 of this book). The presidencies of the EUCD and – from 1976 onwards – the EPP became more loosely connected to such package deals.

The controversy about the Group Chairmanship in the spring of 1975 shows how challenging it could be to maintain the internal power balance.

12 ACDP, 01–641–005/2, Egon A. Klepsch, Arbeit an der Europäischen Einigung. Zum Beitrag der EVP-Fraktion in der 1. Wahlperiode des direkt gewählten Europäischen Parlamentes, Januar 1984.