3
An Institutional Analysis of Pillarization

Introduction

The previous two chapters explained the pillarization structure that lies behind foreign policy collaboration in the contemporary European Union, and traced the origins of both CFSP and the pillared framework to the old process of European Political Co-operation (EPC) as transformed by the TEU (1992). As seen, the remainder of the book aims to use examples of one of the policy instruments established under the new CFSP – joint actions – as test cases of pillarization in action. Before turning to the case studies it is, however, essential to clarify what they are intended to demonstrate. This should ideally involve the following: the identification of some central question of academic or practical significance raised by pillarization; the development of alternative theories capable of answering that question; and specification of indicators that would allow us to tell which of the theories is vindicated by the case studies.

This chapter, accordingly, moves through the following stages. The first section argues that the main gap in current understanding of how CFSP operates within the pillarization framework would be best addressed by developing a full institutional analysis of the second pillar and its linkages to the first. In other words, it should be possible to expand understanding of how process is linked to policy output through further work in specifying the impact of the following as independent causal variables in their own right: arrangements for agenda-setting and the preparation of decisions; forms of role specialization in the decision-making process; the cognitive framing of decisions; the rules for the taking of decisions, whether formal or informal; and methods for implementing what has been decided. The
second section argues that there are three approaches to the analysis of institutions that provide a good fit with the ontological characteristics of pillarization: rational choice perspectives; policy networks under bounded rationality; and garbage can models. These alternatives would, moreover, appear to be both exhaustive and mutually exclusive. The third and final section of the chapter moves on to set out the case studies. It begins with some aggregate information about the overall population of joint actions from which our sample is drawn. It goes on to discuss our selection of three of those joint actions for study in depth. It concludes with a detailed list of the indicators we intend to use in our evaluation of where the cases fit the theoretical alternatives.

**Why conduct an institutional analysis of CFSP under pillarization?**

The study of CFSP is one of those unusual areas of academic enquiry in which the ‘what question’ is analytically more demanding than the ‘why question’. It often seems harder to determine the nature of CFSP, and give it secure classification within commonly-understood categories (Hill and Wallace, 1996, p. 1) than it is to offer explanations for why it has developed. Pillarization would seem to be the most obvious source of such ambiguities. As seen in the last two chapters, the development of CFSP within the TEU’s pillarization framework has features of all of the following:

*Intergovernmentalism*, amounting to little more than an ever-changing matrix of member state preferences, unconstrained by the parameters of shared process. Under the Treaty specification of the second pillar, CFSP reproduces the ‘doubly voluntaristic’ character of EPC: agreements require unanimity and there is no mechanism to enforce them even where agreement is reached. The result is that member states still have a high level of discretion as to whether they will mediate a foreign policy problem through CFSP at all, or, indeed, whether they will continue to focus on CFSP, rather than redirecting the policy energies to an alternative framework.

*Transgovernmentalism*, formed through direct contacts between the foreign ministries of member states. What is striking about these contacts is, first, their intensity – the volume of ‘traffic’ that they are made to carry through the exchange of information and discussion of