

Interview with Jacques F.°Poos: the political role of the Council of Europe (Sanem, 16^oApril 2004)

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[Étienne Deschamps] Compared with the Western European Union (WEU) and also the Council of Europe, with which, as a former President of the Council, you are well acquainted, and as someone who therefore knows the intergovernmental approach of these institutions, what, in your view, have been the benefits of the strictly Community method of the European Union? In practical terms what distinguishes the *modus operandi* of these institutions and what might explain the success or failures of either one?

[Jacques F. Poos] The Council of Europe was, in fact, the first joint European establishment founded following the Second World War, and it always had much wider and much vaguer objectives than the European Economic Community. It was very useful at the time and I think that it still is now and that it continues to be today, because the Council of Europe includes countries like Russia, which I cannot see ever becoming a member of the European Union, whatever Mr Berlusconi says. I do not see it ever doing so and, besides, it would not wish to; since it has its own stature as well as a culture, a dynamic and an economic structure of its own. There is no place for it, but it is possible to have good relations and agreements with Russia. Concerning the Council of Europe, especially relations to do with the workings of democracy and compliance with human rights, the Council of Europe plays its role, just as it did, for example, during the war in Chechnya, putting Russia under strong pressure. These intergovernmental bodies still have their importance today. I should not like to see them disappear.