


Chapter 8

The Influence of the Spinelli Plan on the European Integration Process (1984–1992)

Maria de Fátima Tomé Florêncio de Oliveira

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6218-5175>

Universidade Lusófona, Portugal

ABSTRACT

The 1984 Spinelli Plan was a visionary proposal for a more integrated and politically cohesive Federal Europe. This study examines the period from 1984 to 1992, when Spinelli's ideas significantly influenced European integration, particularly through institutional reforms leading to the Maastricht Treaty. It explores how proposals like strengthening the European Parliament and enhancing the autonomy of the European Commission contributed to more effective governance. Despite implementation challenges, the plan acted as a catalyst for treaty reform and deeper integration. Spinelli's legacy remains evident in today's European Union, reflecting his vision of a Europe united economically, politically, and socially.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the post-war period, the European integration project has served as a strategic response to the challenges of peace, stability, and the reconstruction of the continent. This process, which evolved from economic cooperation into a broader political ambition, found in Altiero Spinelli¹ one of its most visionary advocates. However, the intergovernmental model initially adopted by the European Economic

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Community (EEC) proved limited in terms of political cohesion and efficiency. Within this context, Spinelli proposed, in 1984, an ambitious plan for a Federal Europe, known as the Spinelli Plan.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the structural and ideological impact of the Spinelli Plan on the European integration process, particularly during the period from 1984 to 1992, with an emphasis on the institutional reforms that culminated in the Treaty of Maastricht. The research is based on qualitative and documentary analysis, including a critical review of primary sources (such as the Ventotene Manifesto and the 1984 Draft Treaty) and secondary literature (academic works on European integration, federalism, and institutionalism).

The central research question is:

“To what extent did the Spinelli Plan serve as an effective catalyst for the federalization of the European Union, rather than merely an idealistic proposal?”

To address this question, the analysis is structured into four parts:

The historical context and origins of the proposal;

Its impact on institutional reforms;

Its realization through the Maastricht Treaty;

Contemporary challenges and limitations.

Altiero Spinelli (1907–1986) was an Italian political theorist and federalist, considered one of the founding figures of the European Union.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Historical Context and the Spinelli Plan

Altiero Spinelli’s political trajectory was profoundly shaped by his steadfast commitment to building a united Europe grounded in federalist principles. His vision began to take form during World War II, when, in 1941, while imprisoned by the Italian fascist regime, he co-authored the renowned Ventotene Manifesto with Ernesto Rossi. In this seminal document, Spinelli and Rossi advocated the progressive transcendence of national sovereignty in favor of a European federation, which they considered the only viable path to ensure lasting peace and prosperity on the continent (Spinelli & Rossi, 1941).

The manifesto became one of the first texts to clearly articulate a federalist proposal for Europe, firmly rejecting the nationalisms that had led to war. In the ensuing decades, Spinelli dedicated himself tirelessly to making this vision a reality. From the 1970s onward, his role in the European Parliament became especially significant. There, he successfully mobilized a group of Members of the European

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