



79/79

★ EXTERNAL POLITICAL RELATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

1. The external political relations of the Nine Member States of the European Community are conducted mainly through the machinery of political cooperation on foreign policy (see Annex). It was at first intended in 1970 that matters relating to political cooperation should be dealt with by the Foreign Ministers separately from Community matters. But this distinction between the Foreign Ministers acting in political cooperation and in the Council of Ministers of the Community has now become blurred in regard to many subjects, and in particular the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Euro-Arab Dialogue (EAD).

2. Possibly the most spectacular example of foreign policy cooperation by the Nine has been the leading role they have played in the CSCE. In the now lengthy history of the Conference, from Helsinki in 1973, through Geneva in 1974-5 to Helsinki again in 1975, when the Final Act was signed, the Nine acted as one. They continued to do so at Belgrade in 1977-78. Their achievements were real: -

- a) They won recognition by the West, including the USA and Canada, as the Western spokesman opposing the Eastern bloc led by the USSR and including the Warsaw Pact countries.
- b) They won acceptance by the neutral and non-aligned nations (NNN) e.g. Yugoslavia and Austria, for their stance as acting not just in the interests of the EEC or the Nine, but in many cases in those of the NNN.
- c) Despite the fact that "Basket II" (economic cooperation matters) of the CSCE alone concerned the Community as such, and Baskets I and III (security cooperation, and freedom of movement and human rights) concerned the Foreign Ministers, both bodies acted throughout as one.
- d) The Final Act of Helsinki was signed on behalf of the EEC and the Nine by the late Mr Aldo MORO, then President-in-office of the Council of Ministers.

e) Despite the attempts of the Eastern bloc to detach one or other of the Nine from the others on particular issues (e.g. France almost acted independently on the content of the final communiqué of the Belgrade Conference), the Nine have continued to act together by dint of collaboration between Foreign Ministers.

3. This unity has won both the Community and the Foreign Ministers' meeting in political cooperation considerable influence and prestige not only in the CSCE but in negotiations with the Comecon countries on the one hand, and with the USA and Canada on the other. This in turn has enabled the Community and the Nine to act firmly and unitedly vis-à-vis these countries not only in bilateral negotiations, but also across the table at multilateral international negotiations, such as the Tokyo Round.

4. It may be argued that implementation of the Helsinki Final Act has been limited, especially by the Eastern bloc in regard to Basket III (human rights and freedom of movement). While there are legitimate grounds for disappointment on this score, it should however be recalled that a conference on implementation of a sector of the Final Act has been held at Montreux and another is planned soon at Malta in regard to Mediterranean questions. These are only part of the preparations for the Madrid Conference of 1980 to follow-up (as did that at Belgrade) the implementation of the Final Act.

Relations with the USA

The Community has established a system of biannual meetings between the Commission and representatives of the US Administration to discuss purely economic matters. In the political field, relations with the United States went through a difficult period in 1973 and 1974 when Mr Kissinger was Secretary of State. In particular, problems between the US and French governments soured the relations of the Nine with the USA at that time.

A solution to these difficulties was found under the German Presidency at a meeting at GYMNICH castle, near Bonn, of the Nine Foreign Ministers' meeting in political cooperation. After having discussed the question of consultations with allied or friendly nations, the Foreign Ministers decided on a pragmatic approach in each individual case. The Press statement by Mr Genscher, President-in-office of the Foreign Ministers defined the new practice as follows

In practice, therefore, if any member of the EC raises within the framework of EPC the question of informing and consulting an ally or a friendly State, the Nine will discuss the matter and, upon reaching agreement, authorize the Presidency to proceed on that basis.

This arrangement has since worked extremely well, and there have not only been no major differences between the Nine and the US government in the political field since 1974, but cooperation has become ever closer and more effective. For example, each of the Nine Foreign Ministers who has held discussions with the US government reports to the other eight, and cooperation has been fruitful in the fields of the CSCE, Rhodesia, the Middle East, China, and on coordinated action at the UN.

The Nine and the United Nations

Following criticisms made by the European Parliament and its Political Committee in the light of frequent examples of discord between the Nine in votes on resolutions in the General Assembly of the UN, some improvement has been registered. The ambassadors of the Nine to the UN keep in frequent contact as regards the likely content of resolutions of the General Assembly, in order to prepare *pari passu* the position of the Nine. By dint of this cooperation, the Nine have achieved consensus in the great majority of resolutions on major political matters. In addition, they showed a united front at the UN Conference on Apartheid in Lagos, Nigeria, in August 1977, and also at the Special UN Conference on Disarmament in the autumn of 1978.

Euro-Arab Dialogue

The Dialogue was initiated in 1974, following the participation at the Summit meeting in Copenhagen of the Nine Heads of Government in December 1973 of two emissaries from the Arab oil-producing countries. The parties to the Dialogue are the Community itself, represented by the Commission and Council, and the Nine Foreign Ministers on the one hand, and on the other representatives of the 21 states in the Arab League. The Palestine Liberation Organisation is also represented in the Arab League delegations, following an agreement reached at the European Council in Dublin in March 1975.

The object of the Dialogue is to enlist the cooperation of the Community in providing for the industrial, technological and agricultural development of the Arab countries, by use of the huge funds now available to the latter following the quadrupling of the price of oil since 1973. In this way a certain proportion of these funds would be returned to the Community Member States by way of contracts placed there by the Arab countries to assist in the process of their development. A further advantage to the Community was to be in the wider markets which would be created for Community exports in Arab countries, as their economies became stronger and more sophisticated.

The organisational structure of the Dialogue can be summarised as follows: -

- a) A General Committee meets annually to give general directives on major political and economic matters.
- b) Five sub-committees have been established to plan cooperation on agriculture, technology, industries, finance and culture.
- c) Within each sub-committee field, working groups concentrate on particular aspects, such as aid for a cotton-growing project in south Sudan, studies on aid for construction of sea-ports, and the protection of Arab countries from fluctuations in the currency parities of Community countries.

The political aspect of the Dialogue has always been regarded as more important by the Arabs than by the Nine. The Arab League states have long sought to discuss political questions alongside the discussions on economic cooperation. The Nine have however so far resisted - successfully - any major degree of politicisation of the Dialogue. The reasons for this lie partly in divisions among the Nine as to a joint policy on the Arab- Israeli conflict, and on the Palestinian problem in particular, and partly the unwillingness of the Nine to intervene politically in the Middle East, at least until a peace settlement is achieved between Egypt and Israel. Such a settlement being now in sight, the Nine may, at the 1979 meeting of the General Committee, be able to adopt a united front on the further politicisation of the Dialogue.

This is not to say that political questions have not already been discussed within the Dialogue. At the meeting of the General Committee at Damascus in December 1978, the final Declaration contained references to the policy of the European Council and the Nine on the creation of a Palestinian homeland, which excited the anxiety, not to say opposition, of the Delegation of the Knesset, at its meeting with an EP Delegation in December 1978 in Jerusalem.

To sum up, the Community and the Nine have worked in close cooperation in the framework of the Euro-Arab Dialogue. Community and foreign policy matters have been closely coordinated throughout between the Commission and the Foreign Ministers. The potential for wider cooperation between the Community and Nine and the Arab League is immense, and can only be to the respective advantage of both parties. The slowness of progress can be attributed largely to Arab differences between the oil-rich 'have' countries and the agricultural 'have-nots'; these as yet unresolved differences have blunted and retarded the Arab contribution to the Dialogue.

Rhodesia

The British and US governments jointly put forward in 1978 an "Anglo-American initiative" on Rhodesia, opposing the "internal settlement" arrived at by Mr Ian Smith and the black political leaders associated with him, and proposing that free elections be held with the participation of the parties led by Mr NKOMO and Mr MUGABE. This initiative has throughout been supported by the Nine Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the Community as the only acceptable solution to the political situation in Rhodesia. The Nine have throughout acted in unison and in close consultation with the US government, thus offering a further example of the close cooperation which exists between the two parties in the political field.

The Ostpolitik and Community foreign policy

Following the signature in the early 1970's of treaties of peace between the Federal Republic and the USSR and also with Poland, as part of the "Ostpolitik" pursued by Chancellor Brandt, the way was opened for progress in certain fields of East-West relations. One such field was the launching of the CSCE, which has already been mentioned above. A second field was in the opening of discussions, at the initiative of the COMECON countries, on trading relationships between the Community as such and the COMECON countries. Since the first approach made by COMECON to the Commission in 1975, progress has been slow, and in any event the negotiations have not entered the political field. Nevertheless, it was only after the success achieved by the Ostpolitik in improving East-West relations that the conditions were created for a dialogue between the Community and COMECON. It is however perhaps within the framework of the CSCE that such relations can be most fruitfully pursued by the Community in the near future.

POLITICAL COOPERATION ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

History

It has been argued since 1958 that the Community's advanced level of economic integration, particularly in the commercial sector, would call for a degree of alignment of the foreign policies of the Member States.

At the Hague Summit Conference of December 1969 the Heads of State or Government asked the Foreign Ministers of the Community to draw up a report on the possibilities of cooperation on foreign policy.

In October 1970 in Luxembourg the Foreign Ministers approved the resulting 'Davignon Report'. This report proposed a number of procedures which, as a result of the Conference of Heads of State or Government held in Paris in 1972, were extended and improved in a second report adopted in Copenhagen on 23 July 1973.

In a further move, the Community Heads of Government, meeting in Paris in December 1974, stated their determination gradually to adopt common positions and coordinate their diplomatic action in all areas of international affairs which affect the interests of the European Community.

POLITICAL COOPERATION INSTITUTIONS

As a result of the reports and Summit Conferences mentioned above, a number of institutions have been set up to allow fairly flexible consultations and exchanges of information to take place between the Foreign Ministers at various levels.

- European Council

The aim of the European Council is to coordinate discussion of foreign policy matters and Community affairs at the level of Heads of Government. It is both an initiating and decision-making body.

Foreign Ministers meeting in Political Cooperation

The meetings of the nine Foreign Ministers in political cooperation constitute its main organ. There are at least four formal meetings each year, and the Foreign Ministers also hold further meetings in political cooperation as necessary.

Apart from their own activity, the Foreign Ministers draw up and execute the decisions taken by the European Council which fall within their jurisdiction. The role of the chairmanship has been strengthened by the fact that the Chairman-in-Office of the Foreign Ministers acts as spokesman for the Nine.

- Political Committee

The Political Committee is composed of senior officials of the Foreign Ministries of the nine Member States. It meets frequently, on average once a month. Its job is to study current problems and to maintain close contacts between the Ministers in order to prepare their meetings and carry out their instructions. The Committee also sets up working parties of officials, e.g. on the Middle East, détente, and Southern Africa.

Embassies of the Nine

The diplomatic missions of the Nine throughout the world cooperate in the execution of foreign policy matters. Coordination is undertaken by the mission of the country holding the Presidency of the Council.

COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS AND POLITICAL COOPERATION

Although political cooperation operates in a separate field, the Commission, COREPER, and the European Parliament are involved.

- The Commission of the Communities takes part in all the ministerial meetings and is represented at the meetings of the Political Committee and of the working parties.

- The Committee of Permanent Representatives or COREPER (the body which prepares the work of the Council) works in close collaboration with the Political Committee on problems in which Community affairs and 'cooperation' questions overlap, as was the case for the work on economic problems (Basket 2) in the Conference

The European Parliament has three procedural links with political cooperation.

First, the Chairman-in-Office of the Foreign Ministers makes an annual oral report to the Parliament on the progress made during the year and on the actions proposed, which is debated. Secondly, the Parliament's Political Affairs Committee meets the Chairman-in-Office of the Foreign Ministers at quarterly colloquies, to be briefed on their latest discussions and to answer questions by Committee members. Thirdly, the right of Members to put written or oral questions, with or without debate, to the Council and the Commission, has since 1974 been extended to include questions to the Foreign Ministers meeting in political cooperation.

Matters discussed in Political Cooperation

Since 1973 the Foreign Ministers 'meeting in political cooperation' have achieved some success in dealing with foreign policy matters, and in coordinating them with Community activities and policies as such. The artificial distinction between the two areas is beginning to disappear.

In the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Nine presented a common front in the discussions in Helsinki, Geneva and Belgrade, particularly on human rights and free movement of persons. As a result they wielded substantial influence.

In the United Nations, the Nine present a united stand on almost all important resolutions. On Namibia the Nine have succeeded in following a common policy, both in the United Nations and outside.

In Africa, the Nine have issued joint declarations on Rhodesia, but have so far been unable to coordinate their policies on Zaire and Shaba, and on the Horn of Africa.

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