

European Community

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THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY IN WORLD AFFAIRS

Roy Jenkins, former President of the Commission of the European Communities, delivered the first Samuel D. Berger Memorial Lecture at Georgetown University today. Excerpts follow.

Speech file

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ON ATLANTIC ALLIANCE:

In broad terms, where the Europeans have joined together, they have fortified themselves, and where they have not, they have become dependent on others and weakened thereby. Even in areas where there is an identifiable European interest, the Europeans have not always come together. An example is defense. Americans and Europeans, are, of course, joined in defense of the North Atlantic countries on both sides of the ocean.

There is a belief that an effective European grouping might be divisive of the Atlantic Alliance. I do not think this to be true. What is true is that European views on defense have at present little collective weight, and this at a time when crucial defense decisions for the next decade need to be taken.

By contrast, the area in which the Europeans have increasingly worked together, made the necessary sacrifices, and, often unwillingly, surrendered ancient, but illusory, elements of sovereignty is that of their economic activities in the widest sense. From the beginning their aims have been political and their means economic; and in both political and economic terms the Community already exercises the weight which is more than the sum of its parts. It has thus become the most important interlocuter of the United States.

ON GOVERNING:

It is not always easy to work with this multifarious, growing organisation with its changing competences and shifting balance of

power between the Community and its constituent states. No wonder that Americans sometimes find the Community exasperating to deal with, and complain that the Europeans are either incapable of putting together a common policy or that if they have done so it becomes unnegotiable and set in concrete. All I can respond is that we in the Community sometimes have the same feeling when dealing with the agencies in Washington; and when the President has put his thumb on a policy, that too can take on the consistency of concrete. Moreover, we have an added dimension of difficulty in that your executive is subject to Congress, and Congress, particularly in the last few years, has strong views of its own.

ON DEPENDENCE:

The central characteristic of Europe is its vulnerability. I have already spoken of the continuing division of Europe with its long Eastern frontier garrisoned by Soviet forces (although more to keep people in on their side than to prevent incursion from ours). Unlike the United States we have a border problem of such magnitude that American forces, by our wish, your sense of duty and our common interest, have never gone home, thirty-five years after the war. By itself Europe is not a defensible entity in the conditions of modern war.

Next there is our vulnerability over raw materials. The Community has to import 75% of its raw materials. By comparison the United States imports under 25% and the Soviet Union under 10%. Like Japan, most West European countries must import not only the energy they need to power industry but also the minerals they need for industry to convert into manufactured goods.

It follows that Western Europe as a whole and the Community in particular is highly dependent on external trade. The percentage of GNP devoted to foreign trade varies from Community country to country but in some cases it reaches up to 60%. This means that Europe has an enormous interest, even greater than yours, in the stability of the world economy and respect for international rules governing trade, investment, money and other forms of exchange between states.

ON GLOBAL ROLE:

There have been suggestions in the past, notably from Dr. Kissinger in 1973, that the role of Europe in the world has become more regional than global. For the reasons I have given, I believe this to be misleading. What is true is that neither the European states nor the Community of today exercises political power commensurate with the worldwide network of European interests and responsibilities.

The Europeans are compelled by their circumstances as well as their history and inclinations to play a world role but they do so from a position of vulnerability. When Europeans can accurately boast that the Community inside and out accounts for some 40% of the world's trade, that the population of the Community is substantially greater than that of either the United States or the Soviet Union, and that its heritage of civilisation, skill, technology and inventiveness is second to none, on the other hand it must be said that many of these assets are unfocussed in terms of political and economic power and that the present Community could not, even if it so wished, play that relatively independent role in world affairs which is open to the United States, the Soviet Union and, to some extent, China.

ON OIL:

Next, I look at the Community's relationship with the oil producing countries. Again, I must remind you the Community's vulnerability. Although we are less dependent than Japan on Middle Eastern and North African oil, we still draw about 40% of all our primary energy supplies directly from those areas. By comparison the United States draws less than 9%. The Community consumes 2.1 tons of oil per head a year, of which 86% comes from oil imports, while the United States consumes 3.9 tons of oil per head a year, of which 50% comes from imports. These figures show, if it is necessary to show, why the Community is so concerned not only about stability of oil supplies but also about the problems of the area from which most of the oil comes. Our relationship with the Middle East is not of course one-sided. In a traditional area of European interest our trade has greatly increased, particularly in the last few years. European products have found new markets and European service industries have taken deep root. As for the oil producing countries, they have invested substantially in Western Europe and in economic terms our relationship has become close.

ON THE MIDDLE EAST:

It is not therefore surprising - although it seems to surprise some people - that the Member States of the Community, working together through the process of Political Cooperation should have sought to develop a correspondingly important political relationship. There is much common ground between the process launched at Camp David and the ideas set out in the Venice Declaration of the Community Member States.

Both look for a comprehensive settlement; and both call for recognition of the right of existence within secure borders of all in the area, and of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. But at Venice and subsequently at the European Council at Luxembourg in December we went a little further than was possible at Camp David. We spoke of borders being guaranteed and of the readiness of the Member States of the Community to participate in such guarantees.

We spoke of the need for involvement of all the parties, including the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. We drew attention to the problem of Jerusalem. Since then there has been a follow-up in the form of talks with all countries in the area, and these are continuing.

We now have to reflect and consider further what kind of initiative we might take. Obviously, we want to work as closely as possible with you. Equally obviously, we could not accept that Europe, with its enormous interest in the Middle East and its stability, could or should be excluded from helping in the search for a long-term and comprehensive settlement.
