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POLITICAL CO-OPERATION

Introduction

- In these introductory remarks, I would like to cover very briefly the following points:
 - the genesis and development of political co-operation
 - the machinery, as it now exists
 - the field of subjects covered
 - the development of political co-operation thinking in two of these, namely the M.E. and CSCE.
 - some personal reflections about the constraints of political co-operation, and how some of them might be overcome.

Un peu d'histoire

- Political co-operation was launched on 2 December 1969.
- The EC had reached, at that time, a decisive moment in its life.
- It was a little over 10 years old.
- It had got over the internal crisis of 1965/66.
- Its institutions had settled down and were working surprisingly smoothly.
- The relatively precise targets which the Treaty had laid down for the Community's early years of life had been achieved, in some cases faster than envisaged.
- But problems had arisen about where to go next.
- Should the Community move from the transitional to the definitive stage?
- Should Britain, Ireland and Denmark, once again knocking on the Community's door, be admitted?
- Should the EP be given more powers?
- Should the Community be given its own sources of income, instead of relying on annual contributions from member states?
- And finally, should some move be made towards greater political unification?
- To all these questions, on that day at the end of 1969, answers were found at a meeting in The Hague of the Heads of Government of the Six founder members of the Community.

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- As part of the package, a decision was taken to instruct Foreign Ministers to study the best way of ensuring progress in the field of political unification.
- Meeting at Luxembourg, in the following July, the Six Foreign Ministers adopted a report which fixed two objectives for political co-operation.
- Here they are:
 - to assure, by regular information and consultations, a better mutual understanding of major problems of international policy
 - to reinforce their solidarity by harmonising their views, by concerting their attitudes, and - where possible and desirable - by common actions.
- The Report also suggested the methods to be followed by the political co-operation in its first phase.
- Finally, it underlined the connection between membership of the Community and membership of political co-operation.
- As a consequence, the first enlargement of the Community brought Britain, Ireland and Denmark into political co-operation.
- The same will be true for Greece next January, and for Spain and Portugal when they too join the Community.
- The proposals in this Report were accepted by Governments and put into effect.
- Three years later, after a good deal of practical experience, the Foreign Ministers, now nine in number, met in Copenhagen and approved a second Report.
- This contained a political engagement on the part of the member states to consult altogether on all important foreign policy questions before fixing their own positions definitively.
- This far-reaching engagement - constituting a milestone in the development of political co-operation - has been largely, though as we shall see not entirely respected.

How it works today

- Political co-operation is not based on any treaty.
- The Luxembourg and Copenhagen Reports constitute political, but not legal engagements.
- Taken together, they are the twin pillars of the temple.
- They prescribe not only the aims of political co-operation, but also the mechanisms.
- On them, over the years, a considerable structure has been built, whose bricks by and large are common sense and precedent.

- How does the political co-operation in fact work today?
- The Foreign Ministers meet in this framework at least 6 times a year, but in practice more than twice as often.
- The Political Committee, which underpins them, and which is composed of senior officials from the Foreign Offices of the Nine, meets about once a month.
- This Committee is the central pivot of the whole machinery.
- It is supported by about a dozen working groups, composed of sectoral experts from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs.
- The work of the Foreign Ministers, and that of the Political Committee, is normally based on a written report.
- Sometimes Ministers will simply take note, and give instructions for further work.
- Sometimes they will decide on a common action by the Nine.
- Where a common action is decided, it frequently takes the form of a public declaration or a diplomatic démarche.
- But it may be more directly operational.
- This was the case when the Nine adopted a code of conduct for their business enterprises working in South Africa.
- It was the case again when the European Council, meeting at Venice last June, agreed on a series of principles in relation to the Arab-Israel dispute and on the opening of exploratory talks by M. Thorn, now President of the Council, with all the parties concerned.
- In cases where there is to be a diplomatic démarche, this is undertaken by the diplomatic missions of the Nine in the countries concerned.
- These missions are also called on to make joint reports on selected matters to the Political Committee.
- It is for the Presidency Embassy, in the capital of each third country, to co-ordinate this kind of activity.
- Very often the Presidency Ambassador will in fact go alone, on behalf of all the Nine, to make a démarche to the government to which he is accredited.
- The whole mechanism of political co-operation is supported by a system of cypher communications which directly links all the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Nine, through which nowadays a very large number of messages is sent.

Subjects covered

- The subject matter treated by the political co-operation is very extensive.
- Without pretending to offer you an exhaustive list, I will mention the main areas in which the Nine, through political co-operation, have tried to work closer together.

/Here is my list:

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- Africa
- The Middle-East
- Southern Asia
- South-East Asia
- Latin America
- Eastern Europe
- CSCE and other détente questions
- Disarmament
- UN peace-keeping operations.

- One thing is demonstrated by this list which I would like to draw to your attention.
- There is a close connection between the work of the political co-operation and the work of the European Community, as such.
- For example, both CSCE and the Euro/Arab Dialogue have strong economic as well as political connotations.
- It is natural, in these circumstances, that there should be close co-ordination between the machineries of the Community and of the political co-operation.
- The main responsibility for this falls on the Presidency country, since the Presidency of the Community goes hand in hand with that of the political co-operation.
- In addition, the Commission of the European Community participates extensively in political co-operation work.
- It takes part in all political co-operation meetings of the Foreign Ministers, in all meetings of the Political Committee, and in all meetings of working groups when the agenda includes questions which could affect Community activities.
- So much for the mechanics of political co-operation today.
- Now I should like to try and put some flesh on the bare bones.
- I think a helpful way of doing this would be to give you some idea of how things have developed in two main sectors, namely the handling of the Arab/Israel dispute and of CSCE.

./ These have always been

THE MIDDLE EAST

- I turn now to the Middle East.
- Ten years ago, the individual positions of the Nine in the M.E. varied considerably.
- Nevertheless, last June, the Nine heads^{of}/government agreed in Venice to launch a European initiative, the so-called "Venice mission".
- How was it possible to reach such a degree of coherence among the Nine in ten years ?
- The threat of an energy crisis certainly contributed to the evolution of European positions on the Middle East.
- But it was by no means the only factor.
- I will mention two others.
- First, public opinion in Europe - and especially in countries which were traditionally close friends of Israel - became increasingly aware of the Palestinian problem and the sufferings of the Palestine people.
- Second, ten years of exchanging information and views, inevitably brought thinking closer together, a process which was reflected by the adoption, one by one, of a series of public declarations by the Nine on different aspects of ME dispute.
- The evolution of opinion was also helped by the fact that the Nine had, in 1974, started the Euro-Arab Dialogue.
- Gradually, the common ground between them was extended.
- An important stage was reached when the nine Heads of Government, meeting in London in June 77, issued a wide-ranging statement, which included for the first time a recognition of the need for a homeland for the Palestinian people.
- Then came the Camp David agreements of September 1978.
- The Nine could not remain silent.
- They appreciated at full value the enormous road which had been travelled by President Sadat and Mr. Begin, at their 12-day meeting with President Carter.
- They noted that the text of the agreements, besides their specific content, looked forward to a comprehensive settlement involving all those affected.

./But the Nine wondered

- But the Nine wondered whether the modalities chosen would best serve that end.
- Their public reaction was to pay tribute to President Carter's will to peace, and to the efforts of President Sadat and Mr. Begin.
- However, they spoke also of the difficult road which remained to be trodden before Resolution 242 could be implemented.
- And they expressed their hope that there would soon be a "comprehensive agreement in which all the parties concerned, including the representatives of the Palestinian people, would participate, and to which the international community could give its endorsement".
- Over the next couple of years further declarations by the Nine were made.
- In these, they sharply criticized the Israeli government's policy of establishing settlements in the occupied territories, contrary to international law.
- And last September in the U.N., they included in a joint declaration, for the first time, a mention of the PLO.
- The declaration was worded so as to make clear that we saw the PLO as a necessary party to a comprehensive settlement.
- But it also made clear that the PLO must, like everybody else, accept the right of Israel to live in peace.
- That was the run-up to the Nine's Venice declaration, which pulled together and clarified a corpus of common thinking that had developed over the years.
- On basic principles, there is much common ground between Camp David and Venice.
- Both plead for a comprehensive settlement, based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338.
- Both speak of the right to existence,

./within secure borders

within secure borders, of all States in the area; and of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

- But Venice contains elements that are absent from Camp David; or which, if present, are expressed in a more muted way.
- For example, Venice speaks of borders being guaranteed and of the Nine's readiness to participate in a system of guarantees.
- It stressed the need for involvement of all the parties, including the PLO.
- And it draws particular attention to the Jerusalem problem.
- But the real novelty of Venice was, not so much the content of the declaration (as we have seen, the Nine have made joint declarations before), but the decision to move from words to action.
- Venice ended with this passage:

"The Nine have decided to make the necessary contacts with all the parties concerned.

"The objective of these contacts would be to ascertain the position of the various parties with respect to the principles outlined in this declaration, and, in the light of the results of this consultation process, to determine the form which an initiative on their part could take."

- This was for the Nine a major step in more ways than one.
- Not only did it commit us to playing an active rather than a declaratory role in the ME, but it also confronted the political cooperation machinery with the need to conduct a sustained diplomatic action on a scale it had never attempted before.
- Consequently, procedures and machinery are having to be developed as we go along.
- What has in fact been done?
- For the conducting of the contact mission, the Nine opted for simplicity.
- They simply asked the Foreign Minister of the country holding the Community presidency to take on the job.
- That country happened to be Luxembourg, the smallest Member-State of the Community, whose population is only about 350,000.

./The fact that even

- The fact that even the biggest Community countries -- Britain, France, Germany and Italy -- were ready to confide such a delicate mission on their behalf to Luxembourg, is a personal tribute, certainly, to Mr. Thorn.
- But it is also a remarkable demonstration of how far we have come along the path of political cooperation.
- Mr. Thorn has already had contacts with Israel; with all of Israel's neighbors; with Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait and Tunisia; with the Arab League; and with the PLO.
- At the end of this month, he will make a second visit to Israel.
- There, he will see Mr. Begin again.
- But he will also, with Israel's full agreement, talk to representatives of the Arab population of the occupied territories.
- I need hardly tell you that, throughout the period of his contact mission, Mr. Thorn has been in close touch with the U.S administration.
- He has also been in touch with the Vatican.
- Where do we go from here?
- First, the Nine will have to assess carefully what they have learnt about the detailed thinking of Mr. Thorn's interlocutors.
- Second, they will have to develop their own thinking further, so as to be able, at a later stage, to put more flesh on to their present positions.
- Third, they will have (in the words of Venice) to determine the form which an initiative on their part could take.
- They will, of course, take fully into account all relevant factors, including progress in the execution of Camp David, and the position in the U.N.
- They will not proceed lightly.

./But it is clear

- But it is clear that they have to set their hand to the plough.

C.S.C.E.

- All this action by the Nine on the ME has been handled exclusively by the Political Cooperation.
- My other example, the handling of CSCE matters, is more complex, since the Community, as well as the Political Cooperation, is involved.
- Despite that, cooperation on CSCE questions was an early success.
- The fact that the Nine were able to elaborate and maintain common positions, from the beginning of preparations in 1970, up to the signature of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, surprised not only our negotiating partners, but also ourselves.
- It did much to convince diplomats in the nine capitals that we were on the right path.
- Perhaps it was helpful that the United States, pre-occupied with the war in Vietnam, was showing at that time only a limited interest in the CSCE process.
- As a result the Nine were somewhat on their own.
- They indulged in intensive preparation at all levels.
- They soon observed that, the more the "Security-Conference" became a "Conference on Security and Cooperation", the more it had to cover matters of economic cooperation, where Community competences were involved.
- Thus, at the very beginning, it was shown that ^{the} EPC and the Community were bound to work together.
- In the Community framework, proposals were evolved for common positions on commercial and other economic issues.
- Then, Commission officials were sent to EPC meetings to feed the Community contributions into the wider overall pattern.

./When it came to the negotiations themselves,



- When it came to the negotiations themselves, another problem arose.
- The CSCE is a conference of states, and the Eastern European countries were strongly opposed to any form of Community presence.
- Nevertheless, for the Nine, Community competences had to be respected.
- A solution was eventually devised by the Community, and - after some hiccups - accepted by the Eastern countries.
- Commission officials were to be included in the list of the delegation of the Member State assuming the Presidency - with indication of Community title and they took the floor when economic matters came up.
- When, finally, it came to signature of the Final Act, the late Signor Moro signed it, both as Italian Prime Minister and as acting President of the Council of the European Communities.
- This scenario repeated itself three years later, at Belgrade.
- I have no doubt (and I speak in knowledge of how things are going in the preparatory meeting even now taking place) that the scenario will again be repeated in Madrid, where the next CSCE conference opens on 11 November.
- In contrast to the way that I spoke on the ME, I have deliberately concentrated on the more mechanical aspects of the Nine's cooperation on CSCE.
- As to the substance of Madrid, I would be willing to answer questions later.
- For now, suffice it to say that a major argument is likely to develop on the question whether détente is indivisible or whether it can be regionalized.
- Needless to say, the Community and the U.S. are of the same view on this matter.

./Personal reflexions

- I hope I have said enough to demonstrate that, in just a single decade, political co-operation has made remarkable progress towards the objectives set by the Luxembourg and Copenhagen Reports.
- There is a steadily growing number of concerted or common actions by the Nine on the international stage.
- There is steadily improving co-ordination between the work of the Community and the work of the political co-operation.
- Increasingly, the one complements and reinforces the other.
- To the world at large, it is often difficult to distinguish between the Community and the political co-operation.
- I do not think this matters.
- They are both emanations of a single thought, the desire of the member states of the Community to work together and to speak to others increasingly with a single voice.

- Perhaps the most striking result of the existence of political co-operation, however, is not so much the concerted or common actions themselves, but still more that the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Nine increasingly reflect and act in a European context.
- They are acquiring a European reflex.
- As more and more officials of the nine Ministries of Foreign Affairs pass through a period of involvement with the central machinery of political co-operation, and as Embassies of the Nine abroad become more and more used to working together, this trend is bound to continue.

- All these are pluses.
- But it is clear that political co-operation knows certain limits and faces certain constraints.
- First, it does not in practice extend to all important foreign policy questions, as the Copenhagen Report envisaged.
- I would put this down to growing pains.
- The range of subjects covered is constantly expanding, and this trend also will continue.
- Second, one must remember that the process is one of co-operation not of integration.
- In the political co-operation framework the Nine must therefore proceed by consensus.
- If there is no consensus, member states are free to act individually.
- Consensus is often hard to achieve.

/But, once it has been achieved,

- But, once it has been achieved, the difficulties overcome constitute a sort of advantage.
- They have the practical effect that, having expended so much effort on getting there, the Nine usually respect the consensus and move forward from it.
- Thus, gradually, an acquis of common policy is built up sector by sector.
- Third, political co-operation has no permanent infrastructure.
- It has no seat: every 6 months political co-operation meetings switch to the capital of the member state taking over the Presidency.
- It has no Secretariat of its own: every 6 months the next Presidency supplies a new one.
- Twice a year, therefore, the responsibility for running political co-operation on a day-to-day basis is handed on, like a baton in a relay race.
- Fortunately, using the same analogy, the members of the team know each other very well.
- To my mind it is surprising that political co-operation has been able to achieve so much, despite these constraints.
- But I have the feeling that we are coming to the point where it will not be able to raise substantially its level of performance, unless it supplies itself with a certain infrastructure.
- I think that, as a minimum, it needs a Secretary-General (or call him what you like), a Secretariat and a permanent seat.
- I also think that the natural choice for this permanent seat is Brussels;
- If any other place were chosen, the Community and the political co-operation, which have been steadily growing together, would start to grow apart again.
- And that would not help Europe to speak with one voice to the world at large.

