

THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY:
SUPERPOWER IN THE MAKING?

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The book The European Community: A Superpower in the Making was published in 1973 in English, and around that time in a number of other countries (Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Netherlands, Germany, Argentina). Ten years have passed, we are now in the middle of the 1980s. It is time for the author to have a look at the book and ask which predictions came true, which did not - to what extent was the European Community correctly or incorrectly perceived in the book. Of course, the world has changed in the mean time, and of course I also see the world somewhat differently. Thus, had I written the book today I would have emphasized the European Community less and the South-Eastern corner of the world, Japan, East-Asia and South-East-Asia much more. But that does not mean that the conceptualization was wrong, only that that the book about the European Community-written in a tense period in Norwegian history, with the whole population preparing for a referendum on a rather basic issue, and ending rejecting membership, much against most predictions (including my own) made the European Community loom large. For that I certainly do not apologize: in a book about the European Community the subject of the book necessarily will loom large.

One thing, however, that I had not imagined was that the community would be that incapable of solving internal problems, for instance as relating to the total budget, the sharing of costs among the members of the community, and that perennial burden on community policies: the "common" agricultural policy (CAP). Of course, there were two reasons to believe that it would turn out that way. First, the extension in numbers, from six to ten

(only that instead of Norway it became Greece) is against a basic role in psycho-politics: be very careful with the numbers of members of any organization, it is limited what the human mind can conceive of conceptually in a creative manner. And this obviously throws shadows into the future: the book talks about Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish membership in addition, meaning an expansion far beyond the magic number seven in psychological studies as some kind of average maximum people are able to handle.⁽¹⁾

This, however, is a purely quantitative consideration. In addition comes another factor, more qualitative. And I am not thinking so much of the factor over burdening—the press reports, the unequal levels of development attained by Mediterranean countries and countries more to the North, threatening the agriculture of the North and the industries to the South. I am more thinking of the difference in political styles, particularly Anglosaxon pragmatism as opposed to continental legalism and delight with declaratory politics. Had Norway joined the Norwegians would have sided with the Britons in this important matter. As long as politics is mainly declaratory, like in the Council of Europe, the differences between Anglosaxon, Gallic and Teutonic political styles⁽²⁾ may be less important. The moment one is supposed to share costs and risks and build common institutions and there is no master to settle matter and cut through differences in style this factor may be rather important - as indicated by the much more action-oriented North-Atlantic Treaty Organization. The reader will find such considerations in the book but not sufficiently spelled out.

However, this hardly detract from the general theoretical scheme of the book since it is less based on institutional analysis, and more on the role of Western European countries in world politics in general, and relative to the third world and the socialist countries in particular. It is pointed out that the European Community has a tremendous resource power and this is still the case: they still command about one-half of the world export in manufactured products. And the structural power is also considerable: very many of the bilateral interactions and multilateral nets have their centers in Western Europe. But it is not yet a real actor.

The basic prediction in connection with the Third world was that the European Community would not contribute to development, but continue the pattern of vertical division of labour, with products at lower levels of processing going from South to North and higher level of processing the other way. The ACP countries, African, Caribbean and Pacific, now 63 in number, express their views very clearly (through their speaker, Mister Kanu minister for development and planning in Sierraleone) at a meeting in Hamburg November 1983: only a few countries have benefitted from the agreements (the Lome agreements). The gap between expectations and outcome of the agreement had in the last years become bigger and bigger, and the proportion of the total trade of the European Community carried by the ACP countries had decreased.

Of course, the situation is much worse than this. The ACP countries, no doubt, have done at the elite level as much as they possibly can to adjust their economic systems to export products

that can gain access to European Community markets, so as to obtain "badly needed foreign currency" as the saying goes. Badly needed, for whom? Military equipment, luxury good, airplanes, all such matters are often contrary to the interests of the people themselves. Building infra-structures, particularly in the fields of education and health, capital goods for industries for local production may be of interest, but it is not clear that this dominates the economic activities of the sixty-three countries. To the contrary, I think it would be difficult to find among these sixty-three countries more than maximally ten that do not satisfy the general rule: the "development" serves the elites, but not the people. Hence, the gap between elite and people in the Third world countries increases, and as a result military equipment may be needed but for maintainance of internal order rather than for any defense purposes against external aggressors. Admittedly, the data for all this do not exist since data continue to be produced in a deluding way, operating with aggregated numbers for the countries as a whole, such as gross national product and its rate of increase. The internal discrepancies are not made visible by European Community statistics.

The advise these countries were given at the Hamburg meeting, by the Minister of State of the German foreign ministry, Dr. Alois Mertes, was to adjust their range of products more to the requirement of the European markets, and to improve the conditions for foreign investment. Whatever can be said about this recipe, familiar sounding as it is, it sounds highly unlikely that it would serve the fundamental needs of those most in need, and/or tend to reduce internal inequalities. And in addition to this the

whole arrangement has to some extent split sixty-three "developing" countries off from a totality double that number, and thus to some extent served the divide et impera purposes that was the general thesis of the book. Of course, it is difficult to say whether the Third World would have been much more cohesive had the European Community not existed. And there is also the possibility that through the institutional arrangements accompanying the Lome agreements developing countries have gotten a training in collective bargaining in a realistic manner, not as declaratory politics in UN fora in general and UNCTAD in particular, that may be useful in the longer run.

If we then turn to the relation with socialist countries the general idea becomes, in a sense, more clear. As it stands right now the somber prediction of the book: the European Community as a Superpower in the Making, looks more likely than ever. However, in the book two mechanisms were indicated: the position taken by the European Community relative to the Third World, and the position relative to the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, and particularly the Soviet Union. More particularly the point was made that the European Community would tend to freeze relations in Europe, to make it less easy for one country to establish more positive bilateral relations with the Eastern side and thus have a possible detente-building function in times of crisis. Military relations have been between blocks for a very long time, now;

Any European Community insisting that they should be dealt with as a totality, not as a set of individual countries, would tend

to have the same effect for economic relations. Moreover, for a long time there has been a "Euro-group" inside NATO trying to serve as a forum to coordinate Western European interests with the alliance as a whole. With the expansion of the European Community the membership of that group would gradually tend to coincide with the membership of the European Community, particularly if Spain should also join NATO (as she has partially done since the book was written).

However, the decisive mechanism, as seen by the book, was located in Southern Africa. My prediction was, and in a sense still is that sooner or later the big race war will come in South Africa, and that white Western Europeans will tend to take sides dictated by racial rather than human considerations. The thesis was that Western European intervention in such a case would be more likely than US intervention, particularly after the unsuccessful US intervention in what was formerly French Indo-China (the book was written in 1972).

Today I certainly would stand by the prediction of a coming race war, given the intransigence of the white minority, their inability to understand what would even be to their own advantage. But I would be less sure that the United state would not intervene, particularly under a second Reagan administration. And that would take some of the bottom out of the argument since Western Europeans would prefer the US to do the dirty job for them - as they have tended to do through out the period after the Second world war was over, and the British and the French gradually gave up keeping their empires together with military means.

The forces I would identify today as stimulating the European community not only as an economic superpower, but a military-political one, would relate to the conflict with the Second World rather than with the Third World. They are visible today, and tend to center on Paris in particular, and a Paris-Bonn axis even more particularly. When using the names of the capitals it is actually implied that I do not think there is great public interest or approval in this, maybe rather some kind of apathetic curiosity.

But the general idea seems to be clear: to make use of the very high level of tension with the Soviet Union - to some extent brought about by the action and the rhetoric of the Reagan administration - as a raw material that can be processed in the direction of higher levels of European military integration. When economic integration seems to stagnate and institutional integration does not work, (an example being the national character and the low participation of the European Parliament elections) there is always the old possibility of invoking an external threat. Historically this is interesting: I think it can be argued that the Soviet Union has almost never been so lenient towards its own internal opposition, letting them migrate in great numbers into Israel, and putting very few in prison or concentration camps, so that all the West has to rely upon are admittedly severe cases of harsh treatment of individuals. Nothing to day can be compared to the horrors of Stalinism.

But it is the subjective and not objective reality that counts. Hence, the more impossible European political integration by economic and institutional means, the more necessary political integration through foreign policy and military

perceptions and arrangements. In other words, some of the highly hostile image of the Soviet Union today can be explained by the institutional failure of the European Community: but certainly not all of it. (Another part can be explained by the elites in the US wanting to over-come the Indo-China defeat, still another part is due to the Soviet Union itself).

Of course, the European Community not being an alliance and indeed of a military organization the construction of a possible Western European superpower will have to be undertaken through the Western European Union. And the headquarter of the alliance appoints itself: not Brussel; Paris. The initiatives come from the present French government headed by Mitterand, seconded by the former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger in his general idea of reorganizing NATO so as to give more profile and prominence to Europeans, with not only a European secretary general, but also a European supreme allied commander in Europe; even with Europe conducting disarmament negotiations on behalf of the alliance. All of this can be seen as increasing European selfconsciousness, increasing US not isolationism but inclination to leave these highly intractable problems to noisy and quarrelsome Europeans rather than having to solve them not only for the US but also for Western Europe. The net outcome could be a NATO with two pillars, deriving some support from general popular scepticism about the real intentions of the United States - perhaps not see as belligerent but certainly not as peaceful enough. The military nucleus in this concept would be the French force de frappe, now to be heavily expanded by substituting for the current warheads seven warheads for each missile.

This is not the place to go into details with the concept. Suffice it only to note the high level of coincidence between the Western European part of NATO and the European Community. Of course, Ireland is an EC member and not a NATO member - as long as that lasts, that may rapidly change if a solution is found to the problem of Northern-Ireland. Turkey and Norway are NATO members and not members of the EC; Spain and Portugal are not yet members of the European Community. At the center of this conception is the Western European Union with its seven members, and at the center of that one, again, the Paris-Bonn axis announcing the idea of a two speed Europe. Tighter institutional arrangements for those who want, more political cooperation, more economic integration, more military cooperation.

Whether this can be carried out in practise is, of course, difficult to say. It may also be that the socialist countries will find some way of rewarding them if they do not do so. From their point of view it looks obvious that a French-German European pillar of NATO, with a certain autonomy, is in no way more reassuring than a Washington dominated NATO, with its center of gravity on the other side of the Atlantic. Moreover, it is not obvious that the Paris-Bonn axis is that firm. As one commentator said: "France's negative obsession with Germany, and the Federal Republic's suspicions of the French, must be overcome before a truly independent Europe, with a truly independent defense can realized". Maybe the policy makers will try to put the cart before the horse and create institutions with such suspicions alive and effective. In the age of nuclear weapons power belong to those who control them; they are few but tightly integrated through their own means of communication and have already shown total contempt for public opinion in their continued arms race. They may do so again.

Conclusior: I think the European Community is more or less evolving along the lines suggested by the book written more than a decade ago. Relative to the Third World it is a direct continuation of European colonialism, this time with economic rather than with military means. Relative to the Second World it is a direct continuation of Western European patterns of dominance in that direction in general, increasingly with political-military rather than economic means. In the first case the political means are in the background and may be mobilized. The Zaire rebellion some years ago, and the Kolwezi expedition, was a case in mind. But they have been less frequent than I have suspected - only again noting that the real test case is South Africa, not Southern Africa. And the economic means still play an important role in the relation to Eastern Europe, with the gradient in division of labour as effective as ever.

But relative to itself the European Community is much less significant than perhaps most people would have imagined. Very little that stimulates political imagination ever comes out of the buildings in Brussels or Strassburg; petty quarrels with highly commercial overtones dominate. For those who, like the present author, do not applaud the arrival of the European Community on the scene, feeling that it is too big - and for that reason tends to paralyse much more important local initiatives - and also too small - by encompassing only a little tip of the vast Eurasian continent - This institutional stagnation is of course welcome. From one summit failure to another the distance both in space and time is small. As long as that continues there is little to fear. But it may not continue, and there may also be new institutional arrangements on the scene stimulated by the economic crisis and the political-military confrontation. Given that kind of material to feed on even a stagnant European Community may one day really become what was predicted in the book: a Superpower, and not only in the making.