THE EUROPEAN SUPERPOWER

A critical assessment *

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1. An economic community, and a book

What I shall try to do in the following pages, is to reflect on the European Community, using my own book, The European Community: A superpower in the making, as a baseline for the assessment, both for the community, and for the book. The book was published in 1973 in English, and around that time in a number of other countries (Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Netherlands, Germany, Argentina).** It was rejected by publishers both in France and in Italy, and one publisher did so with a very significant comment: "If your book, Professor Galtung, had been marxist, I might have published it as an analytical contribution to contemporary culture. But your book is not marxist, your book is political, and I am in favour of the European Community!" Let me only add to that comment that I find nothing objectionable in the premisses, but of course disagreed with the conclusion! A useful warning for marxists: extremely clever, but not very dangerous.

Ten years have now passed, we are now in the middle of the 1980s. So it is time for the author to have a look at the book and ask which predictions came true and 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 meantime and I also see the world somewhat differently. Thus, had I written the book today, I would have emphasised the European Community less and the South-Eastern corner of the world - Japan, East-Asia and South-East Asia - much more.(1)

But that does not necessarily mean that the conceptualisation of the European Community was wrong. The book was written in a tense period in Norwegian history, with the whole population preparing for the referendum of September 1972, on whether or not to apply for membership in the European Community, ending up rejecting membership in the EC (53% to 47%), much against most predictions, including my own. I made the basic mistake

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of assuming that Brussels would understand how serious the opposition was and accede to the demands of Norwegian fishermen who wanted fish off the Norwegian coast to be treated preferentially (for them), and by Oslo so that the government would come down off the fence and declare itself openly, seeing the European Community as a part of the Western security/defense posture, not only as an economic arrangement, drawing on the rich reservoir of anti-Soviet feeling and positive attitudes to NATO. Had only one of these things happened, the percentages might have been turned around. With two of them, the YES-people might have won. However, they would hardly have won a decisive victory, meaning at least a two-thirds, preferably (from their point of view) a three-fourths majority. More than 53% "yes" would have been needed.

However, that may be, in those years the European Community loomed large. For that I certainly do not apologise: in a book about the European Community, the subject of the book will necessarily loom large. But the world context has changed since that time and the European Community today inspires, indeed, a feeling of fatigue and boredom rather than excitement and scepticism. I do not think I am alone in having such feelings: I think they are shared by the great majority of the inhabitants of that particular community. A community of petty merchants, incapable of inspiring even their own protagonists.

2. The European Community and the First World

One thing I had not imagined was that the community would be so incapable of solving internal problems, for instance 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).[2] However, there were good 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 rule 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 maximum average people are able to handle.[3]

This, however, is a purely quantitative consideration. In addition comes another factor, more qualitative. 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 of the South. I am more thinking of the difference in political styles, particularly Anglo-Saxon/Nordic 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 Anglo-Saxon, Gallic and Teutonic styles[4] may be less important. The moment one is supposed to share costs and risks and build common institutions, and there is no master (like the U.S. for NATO) to cut through differences in style and settle matters, this factor may be rather important. The reader will find such considerations in the book, but not sufficiently spelled out.

This lack of cohesiveness was very clearly seen at the EC summit meeting in Milan, July 1985 where not only the two Anglo-Saxon/Nordic countries, United Kingdom and Denmark voted against the idea of moving towards a political union, but were joined by Greece, probably partly because of difference of style, partly because of its more radical government, and to a large extent because Greece is a pro-Mediterranean country. On the other hand, had Spain and Portugal, also relatively poor Mediterranean countries, been present at the meeting, the similarity in politics and style would probably have made them join the majority - they tend to admire the "gallic" approach.

Thus, the European Community has not been able to maintain, or even obtain, cohesiveness among its members on basic issues. Where consensus has nevertheless emerged, it has been built around a political content so thin as to be nearly negligible. As a result one may today perhaps even talk about a three-speed Europe: the original inner axis (from 1952) France-Germany now even in a de facto military alliance[5]; then Be-Ne-Lux, Italy and Ireland, and then the outer fringe, the United Kingdom, Denmark and Greece. Spain and Portugal will probably join the middle.

In the field of world politics this lack of cohesiveness also shows up as two rather important points that both have to do with the First World perspective. Accounting as it does for close to one half of world trade, why has this community of essentially rich, old, powerful, important countries not been able to make more of an imprint on world politics today? Why is it, to be more specific, that the world economy to a large extent seems to be a struggle between two giants, the United States and Japan, with the European Community members running around between the legs of the giants, unable to put their acts together, and the second and third world countries essentially being spectators? The latter is obvious given the high level of industrialisation and commercialisation of the world economy - the second and third worlds have neither the goods to trade nor the trade organisations, to be participants in the top league. But the European Community does. And yet there is no such thing as a (western) European car, or a European currency for that matter - the écu certainly not having caught on beyond the closed circle of finance experts.

The facts are just the opposite of the dream. If Western Europe is integrated at all, then it is probably more through the doings of the United States of America than from Brussels. The common language is English, increasingly spoken with an American accent - the King's English, Oxford, or BBC English being admired but not imitated except by the older generation. If

there is such a thing as a common currency it is certainly the US dollar, and when the dollar is weak no particular Western European currency emerges to fill the vacuum. Western Europe has not even been able to put together a European newspaper: the paper that comes closest is the International Herald Tribune originating in New York, although now coming out of Paris, but with an unmistakeable US bent both on the selection of news and on commentary. And when it comes to security matters it is again from the United States of America that integration has come: the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, again with an indellible US stamp on it, however much the organisation is said to be run from Brussels.

Thus, both in the fields of normative power (the newspaper, an increasing Americanisation with a faith not only in fast foods but also in computers penetrating even that citadel of European culture, Paris)[6], exchange power (the dollar as currency) and coercive power (NATO as instrument of security, both against internal and external threats) major integrative forces come from the outside, although partly in response to the negative pressure from another "outside", the colossal land mass of the Soviet Union with client states. What is left to the Western Europeans beyond the cultural, economic and military power just mentioned is, of course, political power. They can and do vote, these Western Europeans; they have parliaments at various levels, a Council of Ministers and a Commission more or less responsible to a European parliament. But how much does that really matter if major social forces are not controlled by these institutions at all? One may talk about politics as "meta-power". But the "meta", meaning above or after, may be so removed from real power that it becomes an exercise in words rather than actions.[7]

Thus, I think this goes far to explain why the community has not been very efficient as a bulwark against US economic penetration. If there are less US industrial goods around than there used to be in Western Europe this is a result of irrational

US policy (gambling on financial rather than industrial capitalism), rather than the making of Western Europeans working to obtain self-reliance. Of course, any trade union (and the European Community is also a trade union relative to the US), offers the master a unique opportunity: he can deal with all of them collectively rather than through the more laborious process of differential bilateralism. Concretely this would call for US transnationals to settle in Brussels in order to arrive at deals valid for all European Community members, forsaking some profits that could be obtained in the weaker countries for by and large cooperative relations. It is difficult to say whether US penetration would have been higher or lower had the European Community not existed . The correct answer is probably both/and, higher some places and lower some other places. But we shall not be able to run history once more to get more evidence. Moreover, Japan and Japanese goods have been much more decisive factors.

As an author, I think I should engage in self-criticism at this point. I had not imagined, as mentioned in the beginning, that the European Community would do that badly from a purely integrative point of view. I had not imagined that it would take that much time to arrive at the decision concerning a common passport, nor that the member countries would have such different speeds when it comes to making those passports available to their citizens, and certainly not that the Belgian government seemed to forget to inform its passport authorities who, at Brussels airport, refuse to let the eager Danes (Nordic efficiency?), brandishing their European community passports, through. A telling indictment, a not too atypical example.(8)

3 The European Community and the Third World

However, this hardly detracts 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. The book 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 there is not yet a real actor on the world stage.

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 coming the other way. The ACP countries, African, Caribbean and Pacific, now 64 in number, express their views very clearly (through their speaker, Mr Kanu, Minister for Development and Planning in Sierra Leone) at a meeting in Hamburg, November 1983:[9] only a few countries have benefitted from the agreements (the Lome agreements). The gap between expectations and outcome of the agreement has in recent years become wider and wider, and the proportion of the total trade of the European Community carried by the ACP countries has decreased.[10]

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, by whom? Military equipment, luxury goods, 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 aspirations of the 64 countries. To the contrary, I think it would be difficult to find among these 64 countries more than ten at the most that do not satisfy the general rule: the "development" serves the elites, but not the people. Hence, the gap between elite and people in Third World countries increases, and as a result military equipment may be needed, but for maintenance 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, nor the nature of the goods imported (the export is simple,since these are often mono-culture countries).(11)

The advice 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 64 "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 my 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 three Lomé agreements(12) 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. But it may also be that they are bargaining about the wrong things - better deals within the existing division of labour rather than changing that division of labour.

Of course, it is impressive that the European Community system has expanded through the five EC/Third World conventions (Yaounde, I and II and Lome I, II, and III) from 24 to 74 countries (from 6 to 10 - now 12 - EC countries and 18 to 64 Third World countries, the latter dividing into 44 African, 13 Caribbean and 7 Pacific countries - the ACP States).

But the result is considerably less impressive. I do not think we have yet sorted out the causes and consequences of the Sahel tragedy, but as the title of the book by the International Federations of Institutes for Advanced Studies (IFIAS) indicates, Nature Pleads Not Guilty. To export beef cattle are needed, to have cattle grazing is indispensable, for grazing water is indispensable, but where does the water come from? Who will win in that struggle for scarce resources, the new economic forces with infrastructure funds from the European Community, bent on export, or the old economic, traditional "forces", small farmers, nomades with neither resource power, nor structure power? The forces are too unequal even for a real struggle to emerge.

And then there is another point which also has a bearing on the relations between rich and poor in Third World countries: the composition of imports. It is incredible that Western Europe, with its long-standing humanist tradition, has not been able to extract from the statisticians working for the EC-ACP system data that show clearly the plight of the poor, and at the same time what kind of things the rich import, assuming that it is the rich rather than poor who decide what to import. Here is one example that should and could be updated[13] the imports of 14 francophone African countries were divided into productive and unproductive, and studied for the years 1964 and 1971. The productive imports were tractors, fertilisers and agricultural equipment; the unproductive imports, alcoholic beverages, personal cars and cosmetics and perfumes.[14] In the time span 1964 to 1971 both types of imports almost doubled. But for both points in time the unproductive imports were more than double the productive ones.[15] And the result is there for everybody to see: the elites driving around in personal cars with the women exuding cosmetics and perfumes and the men heading for the bars, while at the same time the "traditional sector" is trying to do what it used to do, but against heavier odds than ever. It is just the opposite image of what one may get in socialist countries: many tractors, often rusty and badly administered , a constant smell of fertiliser and much agricultural equipment all around, run by people who

arrive on foot or bicycle or motor-bike, many of them women certainly not exuding cosmetics and perfumes or by men with a rather high intake of alcohol, but then usually of the national variety, not imported. I am not saying this is the alternative, only that import (and production) priorities matter.

For the future a minimum demand on the European Community would the type of intellectual honesty that might one day even lead to political honesty: get these data clearly out in the tables, spell out what "imports" means, spell out the differences between high and low. If the present statisticians are unwilling / unable to do so, get new and better ones. As it is now the relationship to the Third World is just more of the same, with 99.5% of raw material entering without tarifs - as if that were a positive achievement. As the ambassador from one small sugar-producing ACP state told me: it is exactly the raw material the EC States want, nothing processed. The moment we want to process the sugar outselves, and particularly if we should dare process so as to obtain some import substitution, then we are up against a massive wall of distrust and get into major conflicts. To contact Cuba in order to find out how they do it would be out of the question . Is this freedom of economic transactions?

4. The European Community and the Second World

If we then turn to the relation with socialist countries, the superpower thsis becomes, in a sense, more clear. As it stands right now the sombre 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 particularly South Africa, and the position relative to the socialist countries of Eastern

Europe, and particularly the Soviet Union. The point was made that the European Community would tend to freeze relations in Europe making 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. One country going alone would make for more flexibility, as seen by French (de Gaulle) action in 1965-66. Military relations have been between blocks for a very long time, now; and 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, i.e. direct EC-CMEA negotiations (now coming). More rigidity, less flexibility.

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).

The forces I would identify today as stimulating the European Community not only as an economic superpower, but a military-political one, would certainly 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 of this, maybe rather some kind of apathetic curiosity.

But the general idea seems 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 in 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, putting very few in prison or concentration camps, so all the West has to rely upon are - admittedly severe - cases of harsh treatment of individuals. Nothing today can be compared to the horrors of Stalinism. And yet anti-Sovietism seems higher than ever.(16)

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 hostile foreign policy and military perceptions and arrangements. In other words, some of the highly hostile images 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 overcome the Indo-China defeat, still another part is due to the Soviet Union itself. And still another by the horrible weapons, worse than ever, being developed and deployed. Superpowers need superweapons; superweapons require superenemies.

Of course, with the European Community being neither an alliance nor - indeed - a military organization the construction of a possible Western European superpower will have to be undertaken through the Western European Union. And the headquarters of the alliance appoints itself: not Brussels, 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.[17] All of this can be seen as increasing European self-consciousness; 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 seen as belligerent, but certainly not as peaceful either, reckless. 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, (actually more complicated), and the French willingness to place Western Germany under the French "nuclear umbrella".

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).[18] Turkey and Norway are NATO members and not members of the EC. At the centre of this conception is the Western European Union with its seven members, all EC states, and at the centre of that one, again, the Paris-Bonn axis announcing the idea of a two-speed Europe that may actually, as argued above, turn out to be three-speed. Tighter institutional arrangements for those who want more political cooperation, more economic integration, and above all, more military cooperation. And - at the very top of concerns : Europeanisation of the arms industry - a common concern for the European Economic Community and the Western European Union.

Whether this can be carried out in practice is, of course, difficult to say. It may also be that the socialist countries will find some way of rewarding countries that do not cooperate. 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 centre 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 be realized".(19) 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 much power belongs to those who control them. Those people 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.

Some years ago, the British Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, gave a very important speech in Brussels, where she argued that the European Community and NATO must find ways of coordinating their political, economic and defense policies if the West is not to be weakened by "confusion of purpose" in the face of the continuing expansionism of the Soviet Union.(20) According to her it could not be right that the two great organisations concerned with the protection and prosperity of Western Europe should be based in the same city and yet, "have little to say to one another".

Of course, Margaret Thatcher is not identical with the European Community, emphasising economics (free trade area) and military matters (cooperation with NATO) more, and culture and politics less than the continentals had been planning. Yet her words become very meaningful today.

5. The European Community and South Africa

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 even to understand what would be to their own advantage. But I would be less sure that the United States would not intervene, particularly given the politics of reaganism (that may survive Reagan). 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 throughout 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.

However, my prediction may of course also come false for another reason: South Africa may eventually turn out to become not too dissimilar from the rest of Southern Africa. Demonstrations, the dialectic between torturism and terrorism, even guerrilla warfare; but not the big all-out racial war. The process may become more protracted, leaving much time for politics inside and outside the country to work and develop formulas not too dissimilar from what eventually led to the creation of Zimbabwe. So, for all those reasons I would say that it is probably in the relationship to the Soviet Union that a major source of the crystallisation of Western Europe as a real super-power capable of acting, if mainly destructively, with military power, is to be found.

6. Conclusion

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.[21] 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 mobilised. The Zaire rebellion some years ago, and the Kolwezi expedition,was a case in mind. But they have been less frequent than I had suspected - only again noting that the real test case is in 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: processed goods from West to East; (energy) raw materials, foodstuffs, semi-processed from East to West.[22]

But relative to itself the European Community is much less significant than (perhaps most) people, including myself, would have imagined. Very little that stimulates political imagination ever comes out of the buildings in Brussels or Stasbourg; petty quarrels with highly mercantile overtones dominate. For those who (like the present author) do not applaud the arrival of the European COmmunity on the world scene - feeling that it is <u>too big</u> and for that reason tends to paralyse much more important local initiatives; and also <u>too small</u> 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 of a more military nature 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. Added to the U.S. superpower, this will only provoke the Soviet Union even further into arms race, repression of opposition and reckless policies (such as Afghanistan). As "independent" superpower, I doubt very much that the EC will have a bridging role. A military arm will make Western Europe more, hardly less, arrogant. Hence, I stand by my generally pessimistic prognosis for the European Community.