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A FORM OF REGIONALISM AND ITS CHALLENGES  
THE EXPERIENCE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY  
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## A Foam of Regionalism and Its Challenges:

### The Experience of the European Community

In the first years of its existence, the European Community (EC) has shown itself a model. The old Europe (or at least its Western part) which had torn itself apart over centuries, made peace with itself; and above all, this old Europe resolved its most serious problem through the creation of an economic unity with Germany's return (or rather the return of its Western part) to the Atlantic block and later to the International community. In addition, the European Community appears as a remarkable economic success combining a constantly growing interdependence of the economies of its member-state; and one of the strongest growth rates. Finally, the commercial links seem destined to bloom into a political construction - a confederation.

Thirty years later, the lyrical illusion is gone. Nevertheless, the balance is far from being negative. An economic integration does exist. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), Italy, France and the Benelux exchange about half of their foreign trade with their European partners. Great-Britain (UK), which joined the EC only in 1973, ships about 40% of its exports toward the member-states and also buys from them the equivalent of 40% of its imports.

The commercial links with the Commonwealth have decreased a great deal. In the same way, the European Community (which had six members in 1970, nine in 1973, ten after the entry of Greece in 1981, and will soon have twelve members with Spain and Portugal), is setting up quite an effective policy of diplomatic

x;onsultation (for example the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (cscaa.

Now, why does the European Community seem to be only half-achieved? the European trade zone and the free floating exchange rates did not lead to an industrial integration, meaning rapprochements or merging of German, Italian, French companies, and also common policies (with respect to Energy, Research, High Technology ...). In the same way, the political consultation did not lead to a common view of Europe's foreign policy, especially of its security.

The history of the European Community is finally a simple and even a basic warning to those who have a look from the outside on the European adventure, and wonder whether there will be a chance of getting a similar global approach in other continents, especially in Africa. Economic relations might not bring political unity. The latter requires will and obstinacy. Sharing prosperity during a period of economic growth does not mean sharing scarcity and efforts in times of crisis. The present report has been written by an European who wants nothing else than enlightening non-Europeans on the reasons of this half-failure (from the most general and the most materialistic ones to the most political).

First of all, the European construction as an historical work is the result of a specific time, the time of reconstruction, of reviving prosperity and especially of a mandatory Frenco-German reconciliation (during cold war and as American protection war due for ever). The treaties organizing the European Community aim to develop exchanges between the member-states and also with

' third countries. (This is the reason why trade agreements with other European and Mediterranean countries, and negotiations within the GATT were multiplied). Now, the first shock for the European Community was the oil crisis in 1973. There, the European countries discovered their dependence and their vulnerability. They also rediscovered a feeling of anxiety in front of the growing tensions and the dangers of conflicts, especially in 1975 when the Soviets pointed against them a new series of missiles - the SS-20. According to the historian Michael Howard, Europe is sheltered by a "complex of reassurance" and is built up outside or at least besides History. The European countries had a rude awakening in the mid-70's when they became aware of their industrial and demographic decline. But instead of providing reactions of unity and solidarity, it emphasized some national characters, which were illustrated by the misperceptions of the "Soviet issue" and the "Pacifism". Furthermore, the failures of a tentative Common Market in some parts of the Third World have demonstrated how much the success of the Community requires a certain economical complementarity within the member-states, and consequently a relative homogeneity. The Six have this asset. There are obviously some disadvantaged regions (especially in South of Italy and to a lesser degree in South-West of France), but the Community remains a coherent block. In 1973, the Community welcomed two countries with a deep industrial decline - Great-Britain and Denmark - and a real poor one - Ireland. Finally, Greece and soon Spain and Portugal will make a developing Europe entering the Common Market. The European Community is now confronted with different types of economies in terms of growth and even modernization.

Those changes of the geographical and economical balance of the Community are challenging the general rules. The budgetary system/for example, was fixed in 1970: It was conceived as a financial instrument for common actions (justifying the allotment of 2/3 of the spending for the common agricultural policy, the only global one of the Community).

Great-Britain advocates an other conception of European finances: the wealth of each member\_state should be taken into consideration and the budget should be a channel for financial transfers from the "rich" countries (like FRG, France, and the Benelux) to the "disadvantaged" ones (UK, Inland and Italy). This point of view can only be supported if Spain and Portugal will join the EC. Germany, on its side, complains of being the strongest contributor and requires some compensations (like specific programs in the area of Energy). There is no point here to discuss technical details" But the budgetary issue of the Community makes one aware of the importance - and the difficulty - in conceiving a common policy of solidarity. In addition to that, the economic crisis revives the demands and the oppositions.

The Community increased its membership twice - in 1973 and 1981 - and it will soon expand again with Spain and Portugal. The welcoming of new member-states upsets the existing relationship (for example through the multiplication of the languages and the breakdown of the European officials...). But above all, each new member-state wants to transform the Community and to mould it to its own image.

The example of the Community and particularly of its enlargements provides

some simple teaching that may affect as well Asia, as American common political view must back up every form of regional if the goals are commercial or economic ones. The organization mutual understanding of its values, of its orientations, its main objectives; and this mutual consent should become treaty looking somewhat like a constitution, or a charter. Beyond two elements - an historical situation which is transformed, and the changeover from an homogeneous block association the Community is confronted with a new problem the seizing of the process of integration. The founders of believed that the European build-up should lay on the two - economic interdependence would trigger political unity; - the political unity would breed a confederation, a sort of This supra-national ideal was also marked by an epoch. War destroyed the nationalisms and especially to have confirmed dangerous role. Europe (or at least its Western part) will get rid of the past. But the two gambles fell through. Political specificity and its autonomy. This fact has been obviously a Gaullist phenomenon. Back in power in 1958, General de Gaulle an economical and commercial Europe would unconditionally modernization for the French industry. But he always denied merging economics and politics. Each member-state within unable to say no to every major issue. De Gaulle refused even nationalism, and particularly the changeover from the unanimity rule. (This was the origin of the crisis of the early 1970s and Africa's withdrawal from the Community.)

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The Gaullist period reveals a challenge for every regional construction. In other words, the question is whether such a construction will develop itself following its own dynamic, or whether it will be the result of the decision of the states. Thirty years of European construction suggest the following cements:

- No process of economico-political unification can succeed without a genuine project. This points out the need for an institution able to enlighten such a . 3551M ,

project. Such is the duty of the European Commission, the Guardian of the Treaties, in charge of making proposals, and therefore of giving a boost to the European build-up. However, the Commission is less and less fulfilling this mission. This attrition has multiple origins and is reflecting how breathless the European enterprise is. What should be reminded here is how this institution which stems from the imagination is necessary but fragile, because it breaks off when it is drawn into political rivalries.

- Every major progress in the European build-up is born from the consultation and from the dialogue between the member-states, and often between two or three of them. The recent example of the European Monetary System, created in 1979, is significant. This system stemmed from high-level specialists (Mr. Barre, Mr. Triffin etc.), from informal talks between French, British and German experts, and finally from close relations between the German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt and the French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Therefore, does the dynamic of the Community appear to be the result of the

conjunction of a European project with the will of the states? But there is no new project. Since the setting up of the Customs Union and the common agricultural policy in the sixties, no major and especially no coherent action has been undertaken. The European Monetary System is far from representing a common currency, and in a certain way the election of the European Parliament to the direct universal suffrage has been confiscated by the machinery of the political parties. As to the will of the states, it has principally expressed itself by interminable discussions. Thus, recourse to the unanimity rule became systematic, although General de Gaulle thought it should only intervene in some major decision-making.

In 1982, Great-Britain opposed the fixing of the agricultural prices, not because it disagreed with the price proposals, but only because it makes a habit of blocking any decision as long as its budgetary demands are not satisfied. In the end, the partners of Great-Britain overruled these objections, and the UK had to comply with their decision.

Finally, the fundamental EuroEgan dilemma appears: the ten member-states know that they are condemned to live together, but they are not able to think about a common future, and particularly to accept its price. The Community is confronted with two simple challenges which are the key of its future: those challenges are first, the weakening of its industry and the urgency of reorganizing deeply some inadequate structures; and second, the need of creating a policy of security, a common defense.

In the industrial sector, the European project remains today a vague dream. The states have all completely different ideas. There is a widening gap



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between the French policy of interventionism and the German and British policy of liberalism. And above all, the British, German, French, Italian... firms have rather sided with the United States instead of trying to become closer to each other. A Europe of Enterprises is still to be created, combining a technical efficiency and a certain political preference.

As to the security of Europe, this remains a major issue although it has been forgotten, since the failure of the project for a European Community of Defense in 1954. The security of Western Europe is based on three facts:

- the US nuclear umbrella
- the assurance of a certain status quo in Europe
- and the French autonomy of defense.

Any consideration about defense in Europe leads to think about the actual European order. The choices depend on the Atlantic relations or on the stakes of the East-West relations. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) appears once more to be in the heart of the debate. On one side, the United States and their nuclear umbrella continue to protect West Germany, and on the other side, e.g. Detente and Germany's Ost Politik confirm the rejection of nuclear weapons by this country (the adherence to the 1968 Non-Proliferation-Treaty (NPT) was one of the Soviet conditions). In those conditions, the dimension of the European defense is rather thin and may focus on the cooperation of the conventional weapons systems.

Every process of regional unification should be fascinated by the concept of "Nation-State", and should also be willing to acquire a similar cohesion and a similar permanency. The successes and the weaknesses of the European build-up

underline the link between the realities of an epoch and the attempts to go beyond it. The European Community is born under precise circumstances and chose its way: integration. Today and from now on, one should imagine another Europe, combining supranational aspects and an intergovernmental cooperation, that will blend and balance out the European issue and some national concerns. But finally, the most serious weakness of the Eurpean construction is that it remains the business of a few officials and technocrat 5. Europe doesn't exist for the people. It is an abstgct idea, without any image and symbols. In other words, Europe is got to make itself a face...

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