

## Western Europe's presence in the contemporary international arena

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Western Europe's status and impact within the contemporary international arena is a matter of contention and debate, reflecting its often elusive and intangible nature. On the one hand, enthusiasm for the notion of a 'European foreign policy' and for the idea that Western Europe can play a constructive role in the world is evident both in academic analysis and in the pronouncements of West European political leaders. On the other, there is often a yawning gap between the promise or the prescription and the reality of European disunity and pluralism. One possible reason for this gap between enthusiasm and reality is that concepts fail us when the discussion turns to Western Europe's international role: the notion of 'Europe' or 'Western Europe' is often taken to be consubstantial with the European Community, and the notion of a European 'foreign policy' carries with it a conceptual framework which is inseparable from the state-centric view of world politics.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the idea of 'Western Europe' as an international actor of the conventional state-like kind based on the EC leads inevitably into the analysis of European Political Co-operation as a proto-foreign policy; it can extend into evaluation of the 'external relations' encompassed by the Treaty of Rome; and it may entail a consideration of the potential for further development in the security field by the European members of NATO.<sup>2</sup> At its most ambitious, it might lead to the proposal that these three areas could be combined to produce an integrated, state-like policy mechanism. Although there are few who would explicitly argue that the EC is on the verge of emerging as a 'European state', it is the ideal type of a state-based foreign policy which lies behind much contemporary analysis of Western Europe's international status.<sup>3</sup>

The problem faced and often highlighted by analysis of a 'European foreign policy' is that whilst Western Europe is clearly consequential in the international arena, its status and impact are inherently ambiguous. As Stanley Hoffmann has noted, Western Europe is a 'complex and messy' phenomenon;<sup>4</sup> as such, it clearly both requires exploration and evaluation and defies it, at least in the terms most frequently used for the purpose. As a result, the idea of 'Western Europe' as an actor in world politics is employed both empirically and normatively by those involved in the international arena, including those political leaders in Western Europe itself who have no intention at all of permitting the transfer of foreign policy authority to a

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion of the issues raised here, see D. Allen, 'Europe's Role in World Affairs: A Framework for Considering European Foreign Policy', unpublished conference paper, European University Institute, (Florence, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, C. Layton, *A Step Beyond Fear: Building a European Security Community* (London, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> Allen, *Europe's Role*.

<sup>4</sup> S. Hoffmann, 'Reflections on the Nation-State in Western Europe Today', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 21 (1982–83), pp. 21–37.

'European state'. Whilst there is a common understanding that presently there is no such thing as a fully-fledged 'foreign policy' conducted on behalf of Western Europe, there is a persistent tendency to define that as the ultimate objective almost in spite of the facts.

Notwithstanding the confusion which attends the analysis of Western Europe's role, it is indisputable that the notion plays a part in the international arena, and it is the purpose of this article to define that part more precisely. The exercise is important since although Europe may be engaged in a 'journey to an unknown destination', the process by which and the routes along which the journey takes place are potentially of great significance. During the 1980s, there has been widespread and sustained attention to the evolution of Western Europe, and it has been high on the agenda of political action as well as public polemic. In the first place, the idea of an emerging 'European identity' has preoccupied both its enthusiasts and its opponents. Secondly, and perhaps more tangibly, the development of increased European security collaboration has given cause for thought in many quarters and on both sides of the Atlantic. Finally, the move towards the completion of the EC's internal market, known everywhere by the shorthand '1992', has uncovered more clearly than ever before the political and security implications of economic cooperation. But amid all this movement and speculation, the precise qualities of 'Western Europe' itself have remained obstinately undefined and resistant to analysis. Is the concept a permanent or a transitory one? Is it an autonomous entity or some kind of epiphenomenon, dependent almost entirely on the development of relations between 'real' international actors such as the USA and the USSR or the members of the EC? Will 'Western Europe' be seen by generations not all that far in the future as a mere 'blip' in the flow of European affairs? Such questions have been the focus of much debate,<sup>5</sup> and it is therefore appropriate to sharpen appreciation of what is being discussed.

The central argument here is that Western Europe is neither a fully-fledged state-like actor nor a purely dependent phenomenon in the contemporary international arena. Rather, it is a variable and multi-dimensional presence, which plays an active role in some areas of international interaction and a less active one in others. This presence is significant not only in itself, but also because it reflects important qualities of the international arena itself—qualities which may be growing in significance and thus in their implications for policies at the national and the international levels. Somewhat similar arguments have been made before by such scholars as Donald Puchala,<sup>6</sup> but the events of the 1980s have both given them broader implications and rendered them more appealing as a way of conceptualizing the European role on the world stage. The article will proceed first by discussing the concept of 'presence' in the international arena and describing some of its dimensions. It will then explore the general position occupied by Western Europe in the international arena, and analyse in more detail three areas of West European activity: the political, the military and the economic. Finally, it will reassess the concept of 'presence' and offer some tentative conclusions about the part played by the West European presence in the three areas of activity.

<sup>5</sup> For example, J. Palmer, *Europe Without America? The Crisis in Atlantic Relations* (Oxford, 1987), and J. Joffe, *The Limited Partnership: Europe, the United States and the Burdens of Alliance* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987).

<sup>6</sup> D. Puchala, 'Of Blind Men, Elephants and Regional Integration', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 10 (1971–72), pp. 267–84.

**The concept of an international 'presence'**

Writing in 1978, Wolfram Hanrieder expressed succinctly some of the consequences flowing from the changing links between national and international systems. As he put it, 'Access rather than acquisition, presence rather than rule, penetration rather than possession have become the important issues'.<sup>7</sup> Others such as Oran Young have noted that 'actorness' is at least partly defined by presence in an issue-area or domain of activity.<sup>8</sup> There is thus at least some history of attention to the importance of presence, but it has usually been defined by reference to a given actor or set of institutions. It can be argued, though, that in many ways it is not the actor but the presence itself which is the more significant phenomenon: in other words, the ways in which a particular notion or set of expectations is shaped by the attention of policy makers and institutions can itself enter into the realm of political reality and play a consequential role in unfolding events. Seen in this way, 'presence' is a feature or a quality of arenas, of issue-areas or of networks of activity, and it operates to influence the actions and expectations of participants. It can be associated with tangible institutions or groupings, but it can also be expressed in essentially intangible ways which are none the less powerful. A particular presence, then, is defined by a combination of factors: credentials and legitimacy, the capacity to act and mobilize resources, the place it occupies in the perceptions and expectations of policy makers. It will vary along two dimensions (at least): first, the tangible/intangible dimension, and second, the positive/negative dimension.

When the two central dimensions or qualities of presence are combined, it is possible to discern certain typical manifestations of the phenomenon, and these are expressed in the matrix below. Four broad forms of presence can be derived from the matrix: 'initiator', 'shaper', 'barrier' and 'filter'. Each of these forms has a characteristic set of qualities and of implications for the actors in a given domain. Thus, the 'initiator' form provides a positive stimulus to certain courses of action, and is often

	TANGIBLE		
	Initiator	Barrier	
P O S I T I V E			N E G A T I V E
	Shaper	Filter	
	INTANGIBLE		

<sup>7</sup> W. Hanrieder, 'Dissolving International Politics: Reflections on the Nation-State', *American Political Science Review* 72 (1978), pp. 1276-87, p. 1280.

<sup>8</sup> O. R. Young, 'The Actors in World Politics', in J. Rosenau, V. Davis and M. East (eds.), *The Analysis of International Politics* (New York and London, 1972), pp. 125-44.

associated with specific institutions or organizations. The 'shaper' form, on the other hand, has a more intangible manifestation, and it operates subtly to mould the actions of participants in a given arena. The 'filter' function is also intangible, but it operates to exclude certain possibilities and to constrain expectations. Finally, the 'barrier' constitutes a tangible but negative set of forces, which provides disincentives to actions and may impose costs or punishments on actors who operate in defiance of it. Central to all of the forms is that they make no assumptions about 'actorness': there is no presumption that consequences can flow only from the positive movement of tangible and unified entities, and there is at least as much attention to the 'notional constraints' or 'notional opportunities' offered by intangible forces.

The notion of 'presence' thus permits consideration and analysis of forces in the international arena without committing the analyst to a state-centric or 'actor-centric' version of international processes. It also raises important questions about such issues as international legitimacy, the nature of influence and the saliency or latency of particular forces. Thereby it responds to some of the most frequently noted features of the contemporary international arena: the disaggregation of power and activity, the interpenetration and overlapping of issue areas, and the need for adaptability and creativity on the part of those participating. If it is accepted that the establishment of a 'presence' in a given domain—whether tangible or intangible—is not the prerogative solely of 'actors' centred on people and institutions, but can be a property of ideas, notions, expectations and imaginations, then the way is at least partly open to evaluation of problematic phenomena such as 'Western Europe'. It is to this subject that the discussion now turns.

### **Western Europe and the international system**

The nature of the interactions that have developed between the states and societies of Western Europe during the post-1945 era is arguably of a different order from that which prevails among any other grouping of societies in the international system. Measured against international relationships in general, and against the historical patterns of intra-European relationships, the present system is distinctive if not unique. Apart from anything else, contemporary international relations in Western Europe demonstrate that under certain conditions state systems can develop common forms of behaviour that transcend the supposed imperatives of 'power politics'. Although Western Europe has not evolved into the 'civilian power' envisaged by Francois Duchene and others,<sup>9</sup> it has in many ways become 'civilized' in its regional dealings, and force—with one or two very minor exceptions—has been ruled out as a means of achieving goals or resolving disputes. This is no mean achievement given that the states of Western Europe still jealously guard their independence and that there is no shortage of disputes arising from the very intensity of their mutual relations, both within and outside the proliferating West European institutions.

Even though there is no single authoritative body in Western Europe charged with identifying, evaluating and pursuing the 'European' interest—that is, there is no West

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the issues relating to 'civilian power', see H. Bull, 'Civilian Power in Europe: A Contradiction in Terms', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 21 (1982–83), pp. 149–64, and the comments which follow it.

European government—this does not prevent Western Europe from establishing an identifiable and specific role in the international arena. The fact that the states of the region have so far denied themselves, or been denied, the collective status of 'government' means that direct comparison with the more conventional power blocs is not appropriate, but the very fact of this distinctive structure creates other possibilities for action and influence. To take but one example, the 'Euro-Arab dialogue' of the 1970s arose at least in part because Arab governments wanted to avoid entanglement with the Superpowers, and because they wanted to discover whether the Arab League could emulate the West European example. The Arabs, like the West Europeans, had an interest in unity, but recognized the difficulties of transcending a diversity of national strengths, interests and perceptions.<sup>10</sup>

The European Community provides perhaps the most complex and institutionalized expression of 'Western Europe', but an exclusive concentration on the EC can be misleading when dealing with the West Europeans' presence on the world stage. The image of 'variable geometry Europe' or 'Europe a la carte'<sup>11</sup> expresses a reality which may be disturbing to EC enthusiasts, but which reflects the diversity of roles and manifestations which Western Europe can present to the world. In addition to the EC, which has added foreign policy and even the beginnings of a security policy to its armoury since the acceptance of the Single European Act, there is a wide range of other 'European' patterns to be considered. Among them are certain unilateral acts by West European states which gain backing and legitimacy from actual or perceived support within the West European system: even the British and the French governments have gained satisfaction at various times from being thought to represent a 'European' stance. Another dimension lies in the numerous *ad hoc* bilateral and multilateral exchanges between West European governments which are evoked by events in the wider world; these may only rarely result in a concrete 'European' policy or pronouncement, but they can none the less have perceptible impacts on the expectations of others.<sup>12</sup> At the level of formal organizations, the EC is joined on the West European stage by a host of other bodies either wholly or partly 'European' in character: the WEU, NATO with its Eurogroup and Independent European Programme Group, the Council of Europe, EFTA, the Nordic Council and a host of others. In a wide range of international fora, the 'Europeans' can be and are identified as a caucus or an interest which is collectively more than the sum of its parts: Western Economic Summits, the Groups of Five and Seven, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, for example.

'Western Europe' in these terms is far from being a unified actor. Rather, it is a flexible and disaggregated series of patterns, arrangements and institutions which expresses a collective yet pluralistic identity, and of which others are increasingly aware. Such an identity does not grow in a 'zero sum' fashion, at the expense of the national authorities in West European societies, which retain considerable vitality and a sense of their own individuality, as well as often powerful links outside Europe itself. Importantly, the international system generally has evolved in ways which lend

<sup>10</sup> See D. Allen, 'The Euro-Arab Dialogue', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 16 (1977-78), pp. 323-42.

<sup>11</sup> For example, as discussed in H. Wallace and A. Ridley, *Europe: The Challenge of Diversity* (London, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> See W. Wallace, *Britain's Bilateral Links within Western Europe* (London, 1984), and H. Simonian, *The Privileged Partnership: Franco-German Relations in the European Community, 1969-1984* (Oxford, 1985).

meaning to this growing West European identity: power is increasingly disaggregated, and often only tangentially related to the traditional symbols of military might. The dominant military-security regime remains essentially bipolar, but the link between military predominance and international political influence is frequently tenuous. The 'gaps' created by this tendency enable the West Europeans, and others, to play an active and independent role in world politics despite their inability to match the armouries of the Superpowers. The international economic system, for so long ordered by the hegemonic power of the USA, has increasingly appeared both disordered and multipolar, and the USA, the EC and Japan represent the three poles of a rather asymmetrical triangle: here again, the way is open for the expression of specifically 'European' needs and skills.<sup>13</sup>

Given these broad trends, it is hardly surprising that since the mid-1970s the West Europeans have encountered new challenges and opportunities in the world arena, and that these have had catalytic effects on their ability and inclination to express themselves. Until the 1970s, any 'European' posture was essentially a defensive reaction to threats posed by the Superpowers—militarily from the East and the USSR, economically from the USA—and dependent upon the global rivalry of the 'Big Two'. The Americans were anxious for the West Europeans to unite, but increasingly wary of the economic consequences of the EC, whilst the global influence of any of the West European states had disappeared with the collapse of their colonial empires and had been exposed as a sham most spectacularly in the Suez crisis. Uncomfortable as it was for many West European leaders, there was a good deal of strength in American claims that the USA was a global power whilst the West Europeans were merely regional in their orientation.<sup>14</sup> The system-wide interests of West Europeans were effectively subsumed within the American imperium: in the early 1970s, the significant changes were seen by many not as emerging from the growth of the European Community but from the re-entry of the Peoples' Republic of China into the international arena. Increasingly, it appeared, the West Europeans were marginalized, consulted only after the event and called upon to do their duty for the West.

It is only fair to record that for many West Europeans the priorities were indeed those of regional co-operation and its concomitant introspection. Not only in the EC but also in EFTA, the focus was on the completion of relatively limited but time-consuming exercises in collaboration and economic management. Since it appeared for a long time that the Americans were prepared to pay the economic costs for the construction of the 'New Europe', there were relatively few peremptory external pressures calling for collective responses. Much changed, though, in the early 1970s. The 'Nixon Shock' of 1971 both signalled the end of a relatively benign American hegemony in the world economy and put pressures on the West Europeans to participate in the management of the changing system. Simultaneously, a series of

<sup>13</sup> On this issue see, for example, L. Thurow and L. D'A. Tyson, 'The Economic Black Hole', *Foreign Policy* 67 (1987), pp. 3–21, and C. F. Bergsten, 'Economic Imbalances and World Politics', *Foreign Affairs* 65 (1986–87), pp. 770–93.

<sup>14</sup> M. Smith, *Western Europe and the United States: The Uncertain Alliance* (London, 1984), p. 42. Two examples of the American approach to this issue are those of Henry Kissinger and Lawrence Eagleburger: see H. Kissinger, 'The Year of Europe', in H. Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy* (New York, 3rd edn, 1977), pp. 101–13, and L. Eagleburger, 'The Transatlantic Relationship—A Long-Term Perspective', address to the National Newspaper Association, Washington, DC, 7 March 1984.

transatlantic disputes over agricultural trade, North–South relations and defence burden-sharing brought home to the West Europeans both the fracturing of the Atlanticist consensus and the growth of important linkages between issue-areas.<sup>15</sup>

It was not only the break-up of the postwar economic structure that impinged upon the West European consciousness. As Superpower détente gathered momentum, the threat of conflict was replaced in some leader's minds by the prospect of condominium. Détente brought opportunities as well as challenges, though, not least because of the increasing salience of economic issues and the need for 'European' participation in the reordering of the world political economy. The growth of multipolarity in a loosening bipolar system also enabled other regional groupings to exploit the 'gaps' in the international structure, and a number of new regional groupings felt the need to look to the West Europeans as an example or a supporter. As already noted, the Arab countries showed the way in the mid-1970s, to be followed by ASEAN, the Contad970s, to be followed by ASEAN, the Contadora group and most recently by the countries of the CMEA. The effect was both to call for responses from the West Europeans and to lend added legitimacy to their collective activities.

In this light, the development of a 'European foreign policy' through the growth of European Political Co-operation can be seen not as a reflection of the internal logic of integration in the EC, but as a response to a much more wide-ranging set of pressures and demands from the international arena as it passed through a period of flux and turbulence. The greatest collective success of the early 1970s—the EPC leadership of Western actions in the 'Helsinki process' of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe—is thus to be seen in terms of American leadership and of US–Soviet relations as well as in relation to the changing composition of the EC itself.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, when new fractures arose in the international system with the onset of the 'second Cold War', the pressure was on the West Europeans to regress and to become subsumed in a new inter-bloc confrontation. But on this occasion, the imperatives of Superpower conflict were not an automatic determinant of the West European position: clearly, other factors and influences in the international environment had shifted the parameters of 'European' activity. Thus, the mechanisms of West European collaboration were used to maintain an economic dialogue with Eastern Europe, and to maintain distance between the West European stance and US policies in both the Middle East and Central America. Whereas in the early 1970s the Americans had been able to disrupt and fragment the West European position with considerable ease—whether intentionally or not—now there could be discerned a determination and an ability on the West European side to resist the tendency.

It could be argued that this often intangible but none the less cumulative and influential awareness of 'Europeanism' reflects a fundamental challenge to the assumptions of classical Atlanticism, and a means through which the underlying conflicts of interest between West Europeans and Americans are given increasing

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *Western Europe and the United States*, p. 113. See also Palmer, *Europe Without America?*, and M. Smith, 'Atlanticism and North Atlantic Interdependence: The Widening Gap?', in R. J. Barry Jones and P. Willetts (eds.), *Interdependence on Trial* (London, 1984), pp. 167–99.

<sup>16</sup> G. von Goll, 'The Nine at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe', in D. Allen, R. Rummel and W. Wessels (eds.), *European Political Co-operation: Towards A Foreign Policy for Western Europe* (London, 1982), pp. 60–9.

<sup>17</sup> See Palmer, *Europe Without America?*, and also: K. van der Pijl, *The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class* (London, 1984); S. Gill (ed.), *Atlantic Relations in the Reagan Era* (London, 1989); D. Calleo, *After American Hegemony: The Future of the Western Alliance* (New York, 1987).

expression.<sup>17</sup> Significantly, such a process is to some extent paralleled by the shifting centre of gravity of American attention and activity, from the Atlantic to the Pacific basin, but this trend is still ambiguous and ill-defined. More important, perhaps, is the shift not in US policies but in the posture of the USSR under Mikhail Gorbachev: this is partly expressed in the renewal of Superpower détente, but is also aimed fundamentally at the redefinition of 'Europe' through the notion of a 'common European home'.<sup>18</sup> For the first time in the late 1980s, the Soviet Union has responded to the notion of a collective West European entity—partly out of a desire to drive a wedge between the USA and its allies, but also because of a growing interest in both Moscow and East European capitals in an alternative to the partition of Europe. This fulfilment of a speculation first made explicit during the late 1960s creates both opportunities and dangers for the West Europeans, and will focus increasing attention on their role in a changing international arena.

Alongside the pressure to redefine their political stance in a changing international system, the West Europeans have experienced difficulties in maintaining other long-standing foundations of their international role. In particular, the distinction between political, security and economic domains of activity has come under considerable pressure and has been adapted to changing circumstances. During the 1970s, the West Europeans—largely but not exclusively in the EC context—found it increasingly difficult to maintain the fiction that these areas of policy could be sealed off from each other, although there were advantages to be reaped from the supposed limitations on 'European' competence imposed by the Treaty of Rome and other arrangements. By the end of the decade, a series of international trends and pressures had conspired to politicize economic relations and to expose the linkages between economic and security issues. Thus, the linking of oil supplies to the Palestinian cause in the Middle East, the use of economic sanctions as punishment for political transgressions in the Iranian, Afghan and Polish cases, and the increasing use of Western economic summits for the pursuit of political objectives, confirmed the seemingly inexorable tendency for Western Europe's international position to be seen as a seamless web of 'Europeanness' rather than as a series of untidy and often *ad hoc* mechanisms. Certainly, this was the verdict of outside observers as well as of many West Europeans, whether they approved of the tendency or not.

As a result of these trends and pressures, the international engagement and perception of 'Western Europe' has been a source of considerable attention during the 1980s; but this has not led to the neat and tidy conclusion that 'Europe' is now an actor along with others on the world stage. Rather, it has underlined the fact that different sectors and aspects of the West Europeans' international presence have produced different levels of coherence, purpose and impact. The EC has thus provided a focus for much of the speculation and aspirations, but it has by no means formed an exclusive focus of activity or attention. The development of a 'European' political consciousness has not been consummated in the emergence of a unified West European foreign or security policy, and there are only some elements of a common European economic role. Thus, variation and fluctuation are key features of Western Europe's international presence; and in the remainder of this article the focus is on precisely those variations and fluctuations.

<sup>18</sup> M. Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for our Country and the World* (London, 1987).

## Western Europe's presence: the experience of the 1980s

### *The political dimension*

It is clear that developments in the international arena have played an important role in providing incentives and occasions for West European collaboration in the foreign policy field. Not only this, but on many occasions international developments have been reinforced by pressures from within the EC especially, from those who wish to extend the integration from 'economics' to 'politics', and who have supported moves towards a common 'European' foreign policy. The early years of EPC were largely dominated by symbolic and 'theological' arguments about the respective merits of supranationality and intergovernmentalism, about the linkages between EPC and other areas of EC policy, and about the relationship between national and collective foreign policy activities.<sup>19</sup> As already noted, the realities of international change have rendered many of these debates redundant and exposed the inevitability of linkage and compromise. As a result, an ever more refined procedure of diplomatic-political co-operation is one of the fundamental resources underpinning Western Europe's international role. Not only that, but there is a growing tendency for the economic 'weight' of the EC to be mobilized in political causes, and for the actions of the EC to be concerted at least informally with those of other West European organizations such as the Nordic Council, the Council of Europe and EFTA. Thus it has been possible for major countries to develop a counter-terrorism policy, which was then extended via EPC to the EC framework and further developed through the Council of Europe. Equally, the EC's leadership in the CSCE process has enabled them to carry the West European neutrals along with many initiatives. In such cases, the 'civilian' nature of the EC and its dissociation from the NATO framework has enabled it to practice a 'politics of inclusion' which could not be achieved through other channels.

Although the EC has generated the most elaborate formal procedures, this is only part of the political presence of the West Europeans in the international arena. The major EC states have developed a complex network of bilateral and multilateral relations, often in part as a response to the frustrations of life in the EC itself.<sup>21</sup> This has enabled them to avoid the straitjacket of conformity to the EPC procedure, and has been accepted by the lesser members of the EC; now that the Single European Act has provided an organic link between EPC and other EC procedures, there may be attempts to increase the pressure for conformity, but it is open to question whether that would remove some of the essential flexibility which has enabled EPC to adapt itself to changing circumstances and priorities. A number of possible sticking-points suggest themselves: the British-American 'special relationship' so publicly asserted by the Thatcher and Reagan administrations, the conflicts of interest in progress towards a settlement in the Middle East, and French and British involvement in their ex-colonies, to name only three of the most obvious.

There is thus a substantial procedural base for collective West European action in

<sup>19</sup> D. Allen and W. Wallace, 'European Political Co-operation: The Historical and Contemporary Background', in Allen *et al.* (eds.), *European Political Co-operation*.

<sup>20</sup> Von Goll, 'The Nine at the Conference'.

<sup>21</sup> Wallace, *Britain's Bilateral Links*.

the political arena; but it is open to question how far this can be translated into substantive 'European' policy. The lack of tools for the implementation of common action beyond the level of the diplomatic declaration or the demarche has frequently been noted as a deficiency in EPC, and the continued use of declarations which cannot be followed through clearly casts doubt upon their credibility. On the other hand, it can plausibly be argued that on such issues as the Middle East and East–West trade the West Europeans have shaped the agenda and anticipated the implications of change precisely because they are not committed or entangled in the way that the Superpowers have been. Not only this, but the contemporary premium on diplomatic communication and the 'politics of persuasion' rather than the 'politics of strength' arguably represents a more appropriate response to the complexities of the contemporary arena than those based on the traditional tools of foreign policy. When this is added to the potential for offering economic incentives and rewards, as well as economic punishments, it is plain that the West Europeans collectively occupy a different position on the foreign policy spectrum from those either of the Superpowers or, it must be said, of some individual EC members.

At this point, one of the major limitations on a tangible West European role becomes apparent. It is inescapable that Western European governments hold conflicting views on many international issues, and there is inevitably an element of internal manoeuvring and compromise in any collective position which emerges from EPC or elsewhere. The disparate patterns of international involvement and commitments displayed by West European states constitute a major constraint on collective action, as evidenced for example by the difficulties experienced in developing an EC stance on South Africa.<sup>22</sup> When the additional complication of pressures from external sources is introduced, then the response of the West Europeans is often a kind of defensiveness based on the lowest common denominator of their competing viewpoints. This pattern of self-limitation has been particularly obvious in dealings with the USA, whether over the Middle East or Central America, and it is clear that there are gaps in the 'European' system which can be exploited by a variety of petitioners or opponents.

It is perhaps not surprising in this context that West European positions in the political domain have emphasized the need for consensus, not only within Europe itself but also in the world arena. In a variety of contexts, through EPC and otherwise, the West Europeans have attempted to deploy their diplomatic skills and experience in the cause of conciliation. The difficulty has often been that other significant actors have felt distinctly uncomfortable with this approach. In particular, the Americans have demonstrated their hostility towards the West European interventions in the Middle East and Central America, and towards initiatives taken in respect of the Persian Gulf. Here, there is an interesting disparity in perceptions—not only between the West Europeans and the Americans, but also between those who see such disagreements as the basis for an eventual 'European UDI' and the protestations of most West European governments that they remain wedded firmly to the Atlantic alliance. The tension between political and diplomatic pluralism and security dependence, so often noted by observers of the European scene, is thrown into new relief by such trends.

<sup>22</sup> M. Holland, *The European Community and South Africa: Political Cooperation under Strain* (London, 1988).

What has been the impact of the growth in West European political co-ordination and consciousness within the world arena? Such a question is by its very nature difficult to answer precisely, and indeed it is part of the 'European' argument that intangible factors and the climate of international dealings are at the centre of Western Europe's significance. It is in truth difficult to attribute specific changes in either American or Soviet policies to West European initiatives, although in the case of the Middle East it could be claimed that the 1980 Venice Declaration and subsequent diplomatic initiatives shaped the evolution of the Reagan Administration's peace plan.<sup>23</sup> The diplomacy of economic sanctions has also seen a tension between West European and American positions, but it is unclear how far the collective as opposed to the individual stances of West European governments have been considered by Washington. In the case of the USSR, it is far from clear that the West Europeans have had an impact on policy, despite their attempts to take the initiative over Afghanistan and their approaches to Eastern European leaderships; once again, there is a double tension between, on the one hand, the words and deeds of the West Europeans, and, on the other hand, the collective and individual actions they undertake. None the less, as already argued, the West European collective process is a given of the context in which the Gorbachev regime is attempting to redefine the USSR's international position. As such, it is an important feature of the diplomatic landscape.<sup>24</sup>

Away from the Soviet-American confrontation there has also been a growing recognition that Western Europe constitutes a focus of activity and attention, and a possible source of important initiatives. There has been over the last decade a steady flow of demands for diplomatic links with the members of the EC collectively, and the West European institutions have themselves generated new networks of international connections in particular with other regional groupings. The Lomé Convention, for example, now extends to just under seventy ACP states, including the marxist regimes of Angola and Mozambique, and embodies a set of European linkages with Africa in particular which are more impressive than those of either Superpower. The growing links with ASEAN in the Far East, and with the Gulf Co-operation Council in the Middle East have political as well as economic implications, as do the links with the Contadora group in Central America. Interestingly, the area in which the EC members have been able to display the least amount of diplomatic unity has been in relations with Japan; perhaps this is a measure of the ways in which the predominantly economic tenor of relations and the adeptness of Japanese tactics has maintained the divisions between West European countries.

The conclusion of this discussion is ambiguous. Clearly, over the past fifteen years the West Europeans have been able to lay the foundations of a significant political role in the international arena, and in many ways the changing nature of the arena itself has encouraged this trend. But equally clearly, Western Europe is not moving decisively towards a traditional type of 'power bloc' status. Whilst its collective identity and activities cannot be written off, it is evident that much of the significance of Western Europe in the international political system is essentially intangible: to use a phrase coined by Chris Hill, Western Europe (in particular the EC) functions as a

<sup>23</sup> D. Allen and M. Smith, 'Europe, the United States and the Middle East: A Case Study in Comparative Policy Making', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 22 (1983-84), pp. 125-46.

<sup>24</sup> D. Allen and M. Smith, 'Western Europe in the Atlantic System of the 1980s: Towards a New Identity?', in Gill (ed.) *Atlantic Relations*.

'civilizing power' as well as a 'civilian power',<sup>25</sup> and this status is likely to persist as long as there is no European superstate.

### *The military dimension*

Whatever other properties Western Europe may display in its international existence, it has not developed a collective and autonomous military dimension. European security has been a matter of contention and debate for the whole of the 1980s, but this has led to remarkably little in the way of institutional or policy innovation. One American observer concluded in 1984 that whilst the question of a West European security identity was on the agenda, it was not on the cards,<sup>26</sup> and this is still a valid judgement. This does not mean, however, that discussion of the role played by Western Europe in the development of the international military system is redundant: in fact, the characteristics and implications of 'Western Europe' have been central to the evolution of the strategic balance, and are likely to remain so.

One reason for this seeming contradiction—between the lack of West European autonomy and the centrality of the 'European problem'—clearly lies in the nature of the global security system itself. As noted earlier, it is in this area that the persistence of traditional symbols of power and statecraft is most evident and the dominance of the Superpowers most pervasive (although that power is open to challenge, with potential implications for the West European role, as will be seen shortly). The fate of the West Europeans has thus been a function largely if not wholly of the strategic debates in both Washington and Moscow, and of the relations between the USA and the USSR. During the 1980s, therefore, the proclamation of the 'second Cold War' and the stridency of Reaganism in the USA formed the essential parameters of any West European activity in the military domain; but equally, the modification of rhetorical Reaganism by the pressure of events and the shifting direction of Soviet policies under the Gorbachev regime has created possible 'gaps' and opportunities for the more tangible expression of the West European position.

A second area of tension and contradiction—and thus arguably of constraints on the role played by the West European—is that between national security and military policies and the idea of a collective European effort. Whereas in the political sphere there has been considerable institutional growth at the specifically West European level, in the military sphere this constitutes the least salient and influential of the possible areas for development. In some ways this is a direct function of the global military security situation, but this is not the only root of the problem. The 'European problem' in fact reflects the strength of institutions at the Atlantic and the national level in ways which do not have a direct parallel in the political sphere. On the one hand, the breakup of NATO which has been widely forecast since the 1960s has not yet taken place, whilst on the other hand the preservation of national security (and incidentally, national armed services and national armaments industries) has

<sup>25</sup> C. Hill, 'European Political Cooperation Considered as Foreign Policy', paper presented to British International Studies Association Annual Conference, December 1983.

<sup>26</sup> R. McGeehan, 'European Defence Cooperation: a Political Perspective', *The World Today* 41 (Oct. 1985), pp. 116–19. See also J. Alford and K. Hunt (eds.), *Europe in the Western Alliance: Towards a European Defence Identity?* (London, 1988).

remained the most central of government objectives. Again, there is at least the possibility that things are changing in this area: the Reykjavik summit and its aftermath, and the conclusion of the INF Treaty between the USA and USSR, have thrown into relief at least some of the ways in which the current security system may not respond to West European priorities, but there are still major obstacles to be overcome. Not the least of these is the historic unwillingness of West European governments and electorates to shoulder the true burden of defence as it has traditionally been construed—an unwillingness which is deeply ingrained into West European society.

In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that during the 1980s there has been a yawning gap between the rhetoric of West European identity in the military sphere and the reality of institutional stagnation. The onset of Reaganism and its disconcerting emphasis on the politics of strength did have some unifying effects on the West Europeans, particularly in respect of arms control: there was a shared perception that US policies were both provocative and unresponsive to European needs.<sup>27</sup> As this feeling grew during 1982 and 1983, there was more West European attention to the need for a more clearly defined defence identity—not only to defend against the supposed adversary in the East, but also to assert West European preferences against the dominant power in the West. The most obvious formal expression of this attitude was the increased attention paid to the Western European Union, largely on the initiative of the French, but this undoubtedly created as many problems as it promised to solve. One of the great attractions of the WEU for at least some of its members is that it extends neither to the USA nor to the smaller West European states which can cause great problems in the EC context. At the same time, one of the greatest problems the WEU has faced is the persistent reluctance of some of its members to distance themselves from the Atlantic connection, and their concomitant tendency to define the organization in Atlantic terms. As a result, the revitalization of the WEU and the adoption of its Platform for Europe security policy—not to mention its extension to Spain and Portugal during 1988—has not produced a transformation. Rather, it has exposed the limitations of an essentially defensive stance on the part of secondary powers. A qualification to this judgement must be made, however: although West European defence collaboration at the formal level is not much further forward as a result of the 1980s, the consciousness of distinct 'European' interests has been raised on both sides of the Atlantic and on both sides of the East–West divide. When this is set alongside a growing sub-structure of collaboration at the level of individual projects and between small groups of West European countries, there is a substantial if limited and unintegrated West European presence.<sup>28</sup>

Further evidence in this sphere is provided by the West European experience outside the Atlantic area during the 1980s. Here, if anywhere, could develop the 'gaps' between the Superpowers which might be exploited by a Western Europe collectively. The evidence is, though, that the occurrence of out-of-area crises and conflicts has done at least as much to disunite the West Europeans as to unite them. One reason for this is clearly that outside Europe itself there are inevitably differences of emphasis and interest between West European countries: whilst this can be

<sup>27</sup> Allen and Smith, 'Western Europe in the Atlantic System of the 1980s'. See also Joffe, *The Limited Partnership*.

<sup>28</sup> T. Taylor, *European Defence Co-operation* (London, 1984).

contained in the diplomatic sphere, it is much less amenable to containment when military operations and military risks are to be run. Thus it should occasion no surprise that the record of West European operations outside Europe during the 1980s has given no evidence of collective policy development.

This is not to say, though, that there has been no European military activity outside Europe during the last decade. Rather, it is to imply that such action has revealed the limitations of the West Europeans' capacity, either individually or collectively, to operate at more than a local level without the support or the assent of the major powers. The most spectacular West European use of force during the 1980s, that undertaken by the British in the Falklands conflict, would most likely not have succeeded without the assistance of the USA. Not only this, but the episode revealed the limits of the West Europeans' collective capacity: although the EC acted with impressive speed to deploy its economic weapons, there was never any suggestion of joint military action, and even the economic consensus was difficult to sustain in the face of conflicting national interests.<sup>29</sup> Likewise, where the French have used military means outside Europe, this has been understood as a national attempt to deal with post-imperial problems, not the occasion for West European unity.

In somewhat different ways, there have been efforts at joint—or at least parallel—West European activity in a number of regional theatres. A number of EC member countries took part in the multinational force established to oversee the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai under the terms of the Camp David Accords, and this was given a certain limited blessing by the EPC process.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the involvement of several West European countries in the attempts to supervise the cease-fire in Lebanon after the Israeli invasion during 1982–83 was explicitly on a national basis, and the problem which emerged were dealt with on an individual or on a bilateral level given their close connection with US embroilment. During 1987–88, five West European governments deployed naval units in the Persian Gulf as part of the attempt to keep the shipping lanes open, but there were self-conscious attempts on the part of some of them to distance themselves from any suspicion of 'European' co-ordination. Once again, the inclination to assert national priorities intersected with differences of attitude towards the USA, to produce a general ambiguity.

The direction of development in West European security concerns during the 1980s is thus inherently contradictory. Many of the contradictions are those which have existed since the establishment of NATO itself—for instance, the tension between the desire to be independent of the USA and the disinclination to assume the full burden of defending Western Europe. Others have been given a new twist by the progression from the 'second Cold War' to what might be termed the 'second détente' between the Superpowers: whilst the feeling has been abroad that Western Europe should assert its identity, there has also been the lurking suspicion that the Americans in such a case might really decide that the Europeans should look after their own interests. The picture in the late 1980s is thus one of limited progress on the institutional front, and patchy achievements on the collective policy level. The beefed-up provisions for EPC contained in the Single European Act refer to security co-operation, but only to its 'economic and political aspects'; not only this, but direct reference is made to the fact

<sup>29</sup> G. Edwards, 'Europe and the Falklands Islands Crisis 1982', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 22 (1983–84), pp. 295–313.

<sup>30</sup> A. Pijpers, 'European Participation in the Sinai Peace-Keeping Force', in D. Allen and A. Pijpers (eds.), *European Foreign Policy Making and the Arab–Israeli Conflict* (The Hague, 1984), pp. 211–23.

that nothing discussed in EPC must clash with deliberations about defence in the context of the WEU or NATO.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the strongest signal about Western Europe's defence identity that emanates from much of the debate during the 1980s is that the Atlantic Alliance must be made to work better, rather than that it should be either transcended or by-passed.

This perception at least partly explains the fact that assertions of 'European identity' have also called forth restatements of Atlanticism in the security field. On the other hand, the presumed support for 'Europeanness' has also had to cope with other tendencies, which during the 1970s would have been labelled 'finlandization' but which might more generally be termed the atomization of Western Europe itself. The most pressing problems here involve the West Germans, whose position has been made more complicated and uncomfortable by the onset of 'Gorbachevism' in the USSR and by its effects in Eastern Europe. As one response to this perceived threat, there has been an attempt to enhance bilateral collaboration in Western Europe, particularly within the Franco-British-German triangle.<sup>32</sup> Although this embodies a very different notion of West European defence from that implied either in a unified 'European identity' (or entity) or in the NATO structure, it reflects the kind of diversity and pluralism which seems to lurk only just below the surface in many areas of West European security policy. As further evidence of the tendency, it is apparent that the extension of the CSCE process into new areas directly dealing with conventional stability will give a new dimension to the already established West European role in the negotiations.

### *The economic dimension*

It is in the economic domain that the notion of 'Western Europe' comes into its closest relationship with the institutions of the EC, since the most tangible and unified West European role in the world economy is played by the Community or by groups of countries which are members of the EC. Even those states such as EFTA members which have abstained from formal EC membership are entangled in the gravitational field of the Brussels organization, and indeed one of the functions of the EFTA framework is to provide a means of keeping in step with the EC's development. The outcome of this set of relationships is a condition of close co-operation and almost continuous negotiation between virtually all of the countries of non-communist Europe, whether it is in the context of monetary relations or the broader trade and commercial implications of the '1992 process'.

As a result, the raw resource position of the EC-Twelve itself is broadly comparable in the economic field with those of the USA and Japan, and clearly the addition of the EFTA countries would enhance this position. The foundations for a tangible and active international role are present, and are enhanced at the level of formal institutions and powers by the evolving Treaty of Rome framework (now significantly

<sup>31</sup> See the discussion in E. Kirchner, 'Has the Single European Act Opened the Door for a European Security Policy?', paper presented at the Convention of the International Political Science Association, Washington, DC, August 1988.

<sup>32</sup> H. Wallace, 'Bilateral, Trilateral and Multilateral Negotiations in the European Community', in R. Morgan and C. Bray (eds.), *Partners and Rivals in Western Europe* (Aldershot, 1986), pp. 156-74.

amended by the Single European Act). In trade policy, industrial policy and a range of other internationally consequential areas, 'Western Europe' had not only the raw material but also at least part of the conversion process necessary to play an active part on the world stage. Critically, however, the EC's ability to mobilize its potential at either the European or the global level is limited by the nature of the Community itself and the internal relations between its members. Collective 'European' action will thus always be strongly influenced if not determined by the 'balance of power' between member countries and the Community institutions: some states will always prefer to inhibit effective collaborative action in the cause either of an entrenched sense of national independence, or from fear of the domestic consequences of being seen to promote 'European' solutions, or for the sake of extorting concessions in other areas of EC activity.

This means that the objectives and direction of EC policies are at least as likely to reflect attempts to manage the Community's internal development as they are to respond directly to external problems and opportunities. For an example, it is only necessary to examine the disputes between the EC and the USA in the context of the GATT: here, successive major rounds of negotiation have been strongly conditioned by the need for the EC to resolve major 'domestic' issues either before or at the same time as they were committed to international procedures.<sup>33</sup> From the difficulties of the Kennedy Round in the 1960s to the stalemate in the Uruguay Round expressed in the failure of the Montreal conference at the end of 1988, the EC has been a frustrating partner for those, especially in the USA, who have aspired to authoritative and binding agreements. It can, of course, be pointed out that both the USA and Japan pose their own peculiar problems in this field, and that the 'domesticism' of international economic policy everywhere in the advanced industrial world is a source of difficulties for any attempts at global economic management. During the early 1990s, though, the EC push for completion of the internal market is likely to compound the traditional problem and underline the gap between economic resources and international action: West European introspection has already been attacked on several fronts by those who see it as damaging not only to their particular interests but also to the world economy.<sup>34</sup>

The EC's role in the world economy is thus likely to reflect not only unified action but also trade-offs, package deals and the displacement of failures at the domestic level. In a number of areas, it is also likely to reflect the assertiveness of the dominant economic powers in Western Europe, whose objectives may be presented or perceived as 'European' even when they are essentially national in origins and direction. West Germany's reluctance to expand its economy, and the deflationary pressure thus exerted on other West European economies through the operation of the European Monetary System, is a case in point. If collective action can be taken in these circumstances, then it is likely to be conservative and defensive rather than innovative or aggressive, but that does not mean that it will not lead to international disputes or confrontations. Indeed, some of the more notable economic conflicts of the 1980s

<sup>33</sup> See E. Preeg, *Traders and Diplomats: An Analysis of the Kennedy Round of Negotiations Under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade* (Washington, DC, 1970); G. Casidio, *Transatlantic Trade: USA-EEC Confrontation in the GATT Negotiations* (Farnborough, 1973); T. Peeters (ed.), *United States-European Community Trade Relations: The Search for Common Ground* (Leuven, 1986); L. Tsoukalis (ed.), *Europe, America and the World Economy* (Oxford, 1986).

<sup>34</sup> For a good review of the general arguments, see M. Calingaert, *The 1992 Challenge from Europe* (Washington, DC, 1988).

have arisen precisely from the EC's attempts to preserve its position rather than any drive for the conquest of new economic territory—for instance, the agricultural disputes with the USA and the industrial dumping conflicts with Japan. The reluctance or inability of the EC to respond to international initiatives such as the US proposal for 'agricultural disarmament' in the context of the Uruguay Round indicates not only a well-founded scepticism about the merits of the proposal but also a set of generalized limitations on the EC's capacity to act.

In these circumstances, what is the likely impact of West European policies on the wider world? Perhaps the most obvious is that, where policy is internally focused and defensive, the West Europeans will find it difficult to exercise international leadership or to take initiatives designed to produce change in the world economy. This might change if, for example, the West Germans gained ascendancy within the EC and were prepared to use it in pursuit of positive change, but the possibility of such a change is remote given the structure of the European institutions and the sensitivities of the West Germans themselves. Although the relationship of the USA and the EC can be presented as a 'bigemony' within the context of the GATT,<sup>35</sup> the partnership has never been an equal one and indeed it is challenged in an increasing number of areas by the Japanese. The West Europeans, it might be said, will inevitably punch below their collective weight in the world economy, and this might mean a shift of focus to the US–Japan axis: indeed, in the financial sphere this has already begun despite the promise of the 1992 process for the EC's banking and financial institutions. It is thus not entirely surprising that the EC stance in the runup to 1992 has often seemed to stress the need for effective protection against dynamic American or Japanese forces, despite the protestations from Brussels that the Europe of the 1990s will be a 'world partner'.<sup>36</sup> In effect, the Europeans find themselves in a double bind: the process of resolving or at least managing their internal problems is quite likely to lead to precisely the introspection and lack of responsiveness which in the outside world will be construed as a 'fortress Europe' stance, whilst the need to react to outside pressures for openness will increase the penetration of the 'new Europe' by outside forces with consequences for domestic economic and political structures in EC member states.

As already noted, the West Europeans are not alone in presenting a problem for global economic management: it is quite possible to discern the same 'domesticism' and defensiveness in other major economic groupings, despite the rhetorical commitment to multilateralism and openness. But there is a fragility to European positions which is not duplicated in the case either of the USA or of Japan, and which arises from the lack of unqualified legitimacy accorded to 'European' policy instruments. This limitation is well exemplified at Western Economic Summits, or in a number of fora for currency management, where the EC's role is best described as that of observer rather than full member; as has been seen, this is not the case in the GATT, but limitations are still imposed in that case by the lack of direct domestic legitimacy for the EC's policies. The dilemma for West Europeans is that national policy failures and the persistence of domestic (national) political concerns severely constrain the effectiveness of the collaborative structures they have established; Mrs Thatcher's

<sup>35</sup> J. Pelkmans, 'The Bickering Bigemony: GATT as an Instrument in Atlantic Trade Policy', in Tsoukalis (ed.), *Europe, America and the World Economy*, pp. 83–123.

<sup>36</sup> See D. Henderson, 1992. *The External Dimension* (New York and London, 1989), for an interesting discussion of the trade policy implications.

pronouncements on the undesirability of a West European 'superstate' at Bruges in September 1988 only stated in explicit form sentiments held implicitly by a number of her West European colleagues which reflect this persistent parochialism in the economic as well as the political sphere.

Western Europe's presence in the world economy thus presents a paradoxical image. On the one hand, it is impossible to deny that 'Europe' through the EC in particular constitutes a powerful and tangible force in the international arena. On the other, the unresolved internal problems of West European co-operation and the lack of unqualified legitimacy for the EC's policy instruments severely limit the role a West European collectivity can play in the proactive management of the system. As a result, it is more feasible to compose a list of what not to expect from the West Europeans than of what they might achieve in the world arena: no dynamic approach to the management of world monetary problems, beyond what might be achieved by the West Germans in their relations with the USA and Japan; no breakthrough in the GATT framework; no grasping of the nettles of international debt or surplus industrial capacity at the level of international management. The impact of the '1992 process' is likely at best to be ambiguous, and at worst to be a source of considerable international uncertainty, compounding already existing pressures for protection or 'bloc politics' in the world economy. Compared with the political and the military spheres, the West European role in the world economy constitutes a relatively known quantity, and the problems of the future are likely at least in some respects to resemble those of the recent past. Whether the world economy itself will be a hospitable environment for the West Europeans is a rather different and highly significant question, but not one which should be tackled here.

## Conclusions

At the beginning of this article, it was noted that the growing significance and salience of 'Western Europe' in the contemporary international arena posed problems for the analysis of activities and trends which do not fit easily into the inherited concepts of a state-centric (or even an integrationist) perspective. There was thus a need to detach analysis and evaluation from the assumptions of a statist approach, and to cater for the impact of intangible as well as tangible or institutionalized forces when considering the international presence of Western Europe. The evidence produced here indicates that the presence of Western Europe on the international scene is indeed significant: it possesses relatively few of the credentials of a unified international actor, but it has considerable structure, salience and legitimacy in the process of international politics.

In reaching such a conclusion, the article bears out some of the arguments made in the early 1970s by Donald Puchala, who conceived of Western Europe (or more properly in his case, the EC) as a 'concordance system': . . . an international system wherein actors find it possible consistently to harmonize their interests and reap mutual rewards from their interactions.<sup>37</sup> According to Puchala, such a system exhibits complexity of structure, heterogeneity of participation and novelty of

<sup>37</sup> Puchala, 'Of Blind Men', p. 277.

process; in many ways, it consists of a framework for mutual exchange, bargaining and learning on the part of its members. Although Puchala's primary focus was on the EC, it is clear that his ideas could be applied to regional integration and co-operation in the widest sense. The evidence examined here, both in general and with specific reference to the experience of the 1980s, lends weight to the case advanced by Puchala, but it extends it in important ways. Specifically, it implants the West European experience in the broader international setting and it points to important areas of variation and fluctuation in the salience of 'Western Europe' itself.

In relation to the first of these dimensions—the West European position in the broader international system—it is clear that the circumstances of the 1980s represent the continuation and growth of trends which can be traced back to the late 1960s, and which have enhanced both the tangible and the intangible elements of Western Europe's presence. These trends have also underlined the variations and fluctuations already mentioned, and it is possible to evaluate the diversity of Western Europe's presence by using the categories developed earlier in the article and applying them to the three domains of Western European activity. The following assessments make no pretensions to complete accuracy or rigour, but they reflect the burden of the argument made in the body of the article.

First, in the political sphere, there is no doubt that the presence of Western Europe is best seen as a 'shaper' or 'filter', moulding the perceptions of both West European policy makers and others, shaping collective action and filtering out certain options. This is a mainly intangible process, but it is increasingly taking on tangible form through EPC and other mechanisms.

Second, in the military sphere, the presence of Western Europe is also often intangible but powerful. The achievements of West European security co-operation during the 1980s have been relatively modest, and there has been little in the way of institutional development, but the shaping power of ideas about a 'European identity' has been consistent. Such ideas, though, have to contend with powerful barriers set up both by individual countries and by NATO.

Third, the most tangible West European presence is to be found in the economic sphere, but the effect of this presence is far from universally positive. Indeed, the burden of the evidence explored here is that the West European presence is in many ways a strong inhibiting factor, and one which reinforces or rationalizes defensive postures on the part of national authorities. Not surprisingly, it is this aspect of the West European presence which is most easily and frequently targeted by other actors in the international arena.

The overall conclusion to which the argument leads is that Western Europe presents strong evidence for the politics of presence and of inclusion in the international arena. This presents an interesting contrast to the politics of strength or of national self-assertion which have been characteristic of the 1980s in many other respects, and leads to important questions about the sustainability of such a pluralistic and diverse presence in an uncertain future. It is hoped that this article provides at least some basis for thinking about such issues in an organized way.