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Third Force Ambitions: Claude Cheysson and the Rebranding of Eurafrica into Europe's Grand Design

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This essay discusses how the European Community used its relations with the Third World to leverage increased power in the Cold War. It argues that resuscitating the interwar concept of Eurafrica to emerge as a credible alternative to Cold War superpowers went hand in hand with the systematic effort to distance themselves from the colonial legacy and the American strategy. It claims that it took a dynamic leader – Claude Cheysson – to make the Common Market a pivotal actor of globalism, with regional partnership and support of the new international economic order, until its transformative potential waned with the neoliberal turn of the 1980s.

‘The Europe of tomorrow must be a Europe that extends into the Third World’, stated the European Commissioner for Development Claude Cheysson in 1973, commenting on the future of European foreign relations.¹ His declaration was one in a series of similar statements aimed at inaugurating a new phase in European global ambitions: an era when the European Community (EC) would cease being the junior partner in the transatlantic Western strategy and move to become a new protagonist of international politics. This essay discusses how the EC used its relations with Third World countries, which stemmed from a reengineered colonial legacy, and channelled them through trade and development in order to play a greater part in the Cold War. It argues that resuscitating the interwar concept of Eurafrica so as to present a credible alternative to Cold War superpowers was a fundamental feature of West European strategy ever since the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, although it took some time to rebrand Eurafrica as a joint European policy able to transcend imperial legacy. Often downplayed as some garrulous politician, Cheysson, who was essentially in charge of EC Development and North–South relations for two decades,² was crucial in refashioning outdated imperial notions, pushing EC policies into a more decolonial direction by meeting Third World aspirations voiced internationally with the New International Economic Order (NIEO) and siding with developing countries to pursue a European Grand Design.

Eurafrica and the Ambitions as a Distinct Actor in Postwar International Relations

At its origins, the European Community was made up of once-powerful colonial empires and was intrinsically a project for preserving the empire. The imperial legacy in European cultural foundations is increasingly at the centre of historiography today, and the narrative of the construction of Europe as

¹ ‘Déclaration faite à Yaoundé le 29 décembre 1973 devant les représentants de la presse du Cameroun par M. Claude Cheysson,’ Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU), BAC 25/1980, 1877, 8.

² Under the presidents François-Xavier Ortoli (1973–1977), Roy Jenkins (1977–1980), Gaston Thorn (1981), and Jacques Delors (1985–1989).

the work of national entities striving for peace on the continent, regardless of their colonial dependencies, is rejected as a cheap oversimplification.³ Peo Hanssen and Stephen Jonsson effectively sum up the extent to which the imperial nature was immanent in European construction ever since the early pan-European projects of the interwar years, explaining how Europeanist and Eurafrikan ideologies remained dominant in the interwar years and beyond.⁴ The consensus around Eurafrika as a geopolitical panacea to avoid decline was ideologically fluid and resonated throughout the political spectrum in the interwar years, starting with Coudenhove-Kalergi's pan-European idea launched in 1923 and continuing into the 1930s, when economic rationale merged with fascist civilisational fantasies to give birth to projects such as the Germans' Mitteleuropa and Mittelfrika or the Italians' Mediterranean *mare nostrum*.⁵

After the war, in a world where colonial empires were still attempting a comeback, betting on regional systems that coexisted side by side was an option on the table. In the words of economist Karl Polanyi, the postwar order was regional more than global, and it was about taming empires and adapting them to new international power structures.⁶ The construction of a European bloc by uniting European empires in a Eurafrikan project was tossed by Labour British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin into the debate on the post-war international order to revive the European role as a 'Third Force' in the emerging Cold War.⁷ Although a last-minute addition, the development of the African continent was mentioned in the foundational document of Europe, the 9 May 1950 Schuman Declaration, as one of the essential goals to be achieved by the future European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).⁸ Expert meetings within the ECSC mentioned over and over again that it was essential to include former colonies in order to achieve a better market for raw materials.⁹ Other postwar West European institutions concerned with the shortage of raw materials, such as

³ See, for example, Paul Betts, *Ruin and Renewal: Civilising Europe After the Second World War* (New York: Basic Books, 2020); Hans Kundani, *Euro Whiteness. Culture. Empire and Race in the European Project* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023); Emily Marker, *Black France, White Europe: Youth, Race, and Belonging in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022).

⁴ Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, *Eurafrika: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014). Fundamental in the historiographical comeback of Eurafrika as a concept are Giuliano Garavini, *After Empires: European Integration, Decolonization, and the Challenge from the Global South 1957–1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Yves Montarolo, *L'Eurafrique: contrepoint de l'idée d'Europe: le cas français de la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale aux négociations des Traités de Rome* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 2010), and, lately, Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Post-Imperial Possibilities: Eurasia, Eurafrika, Afroasia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023).

⁵ Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, 'Afrika,' *PanEuropa* 5, no. 2 (1929): 3. On French and German ideas on cooperation in Africa and the role of private business see Giovanni Costenaro, 'L'Africa per salvare l'Europa? I progetti di cooperazione economica nelle colonie durante l'appeasement,' *Storia Contemporanea in Friuli*, no. 51, 2021 and Chantal Metzger, 'L'Allemagne et l'Eurafrique', in *L'Europe Unie et l'Afrique: de l'idée d'Eurafrique à la convention de Lomé I. Actes du Colloque international de Paris (1er et 2 avril 2004)*, eds. Gerard Bossuat et al. (Brussels: Bruylant, 2005).

⁶ Karl Polanyi, 'Universal Capitalism or Regional Planning?', 1945, https://www.karlpolanysociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Universal-Capitalism-or-Regional-Planning_e.pdf.

⁷ Anne Deighton, 'Entente Neo-Coloniale? Ernest Bevin and the Proposals for an Anglo-French Third World Power, 1945–1949', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 17, no. 4 (Dec. 2006): 835–52; John Kent, 'Bevin's Imperialism and the Idea of Euro-Africa', in *British Foreign Policy 1945–56*, eds. Michael Dockrill and John W. Young (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 47–76; John Kent, *The Internationalization of Colonialism: Britain, France, and Black Africa, 1939–1956* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). Third Force ideas in the late 1940s were not exclusively (nor mainly) about Eurafrika. See for example Carlo Sforza, 'Italy, the Marshall Plan and the "Third Force"', *Foreign Affairs* 26, no. 3 (1948): 450–56. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20030124> and Piero S. Graglia, ed., *Europa terza forza: Altiero Spinelli, scritti 1947–1954* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000).

⁸ France would bring its industry and Africa's market 'as a dowry' to the European wedding, added Schuman in the following days. 'Entre la France et l'Allemagne une rivalité ruineuse doit faire place à l'intérêt commun,' Schuman à Nantes, *Le Monde*, 23 May 1950, quoted in Megan Brown, *The Seventh Member State: Algeria, France, and the European Community* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022), 74. The Schuman Declaration is available at https://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_schuman_declaration_paris_9_may_1950-en-9cc6ac38-32f5-4c0a-a337-9a8ae4d5740f.html.

⁹ Giovanni Costenaro, 'European Trans-Imperial Corporate Cooperation in the French Colonies: The Eurafrikan Illusion in Italy and West Germany, 1950–1960' (PhD diss., EUI-Florence, 2024).

the Council of Europe and the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), discussed joint efforts to develop the overseas territories as well.¹⁰

In the 1950s, discussing Eurafrica meant talking about the economic union of the six Western European countries participating in the ECSC (France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, West Germany, and Italy) with their African dependencies. It was a Eurocentric concept and largely a French initiative that borrowed its language from the colonial tradition – especially the term ‘association’ introduced by the Overseas Minister Albert Sarraut in the 1930s. Frederik Cooper explains it as ‘a call for cooperation in exploitation’ with the Union Française (born in 1946) at its centre – an international task including West Germans.¹¹ Africa was represented as the Far West of Europe: it was essential to catch up with the accelerated growth and drive to modernity of the United States.¹² Eurafrica was a building site for postimperial Western Europe, argues Yves Montarsolo, who describes how it was fraught with domestic controversy in France, attacked as ‘international supercolonialism’ by opponents of free market ideas and American business groups from both the left and the right. In favour of a *Jeune Eurafrrique* were instead both European federalists and African nationalists such as Léopold Senghor, who saw Eurafrica as the cornerstone of a civilisational project which could enhance African sovereignty.¹³ Among the French political elite, the discussion was how to make Europe without unmaking France, and although there were a few younger officers in the diplomatic corps who were not hostile to independence movements (Cheysson was one of them), the main concern was to ensure the continuation of the empire by Africanising local institutions.¹⁴ For example, socialist Overseas Minister Gaston Defferre, a staunch advocate of a united Europe since 1949 and author of the 1956 *Loi-cadre*, was adamant: France could not abandon its empire in order to opt for Europe, since its very constitutional system declared it imperial and colonial. For him, the inclusion of the colonies in the European Defence Community (EDC, the organisation meant to warrant Western Europe’s active participation in Cold War military build-up) was essential to maintain peace in Europe and avoid both Soviet and American intrusions.¹⁵

With the failure of the EDC, Eurafrica entered the negotiations leading to the Treaties of Rome signed in March 1957, where discussions largely revolved around the association of colonial territories. Colonial links – now shrouded behind terms such as development, progress, interdependence, and mutual benefit – were still deemed necessary to secure an expanded economic base and geopolitical influence vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and the United States, especially against liberation movements across the Third World.¹⁶ A union with Africa with ‘the consent of Africans’ was specifically referred

¹⁰ Raphaël Saller, ‘Special Report of OEEC on the Strasbourg Plan’, Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 27 May 1954, <https://pace.coe.int/pdf/aaa8e5a535a957e4dd98f7a627baba5f38e888f12bfa1bb859bd2b08b51783a0/doc.%2020259.pdf>. See also Brown, *The Seventh Member State*, 65; Betts, *Ruin and Renewal*, 247–51.

¹¹ Burbank and Cooper, *Post-Imperial Possibilities*, 94; on the puzzled comments about sharing imperial projects with the Germans see Raphaël Saller, ‘L’avenir économique de l’Afrique et le pool franco-allemand de l’acier et du charbon’, *Marchés coloniaux* (3 June 1950), 1247–48, quoted in Brown, *The Seventh Member State*, 77.

¹² Anton Zischka spoke of *L’Amérique de l’Europe in Afrique: complément de l’Europe* (Paris: R. Laffont, 1952), 238, originally published as: Anton Zischka, *Afrika, Europas Gemeinschaftsaufgabe Nr. 1* (Oldenburg: G. Stalling, 1951). On the use of the Far West as a metaphor – and a reaction to the perceived American danger throughout the first half of the twentieth century – see Sven Beckert, ‘American Danger: United States Empire, Eurafrica, and the Territorialization of Industrial Capitalism, 1870–1950’, *American Historical Review*, vol. 122, no. 4 (2017): 1137–70. See also Thomas Borrel, Amzat Boukari-Yabara, Benoît Collombat, Thomas Deltombe and Nadia Yala Kisukidi, *L’empire qui ne veut pas mourir: une histoire de la Françafrique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2021), 97.

¹³ Senghor spoke of ‘la pierre angulaire de la civilisation’; see Montarsolo, *L’Eurafrrique*, 111.

¹⁴ Borrel et al., *L’empire qui ne veut pas mourir*, 100–2.

¹⁵ Anne-Laure Ollivier, ‘Entre Europe et Afrique: Gaston Defferre et les débuts de la construction européenne (archives)’, *Dans Terrains & travaux* 2005/1 (no. 8), 14–33. Guia Migani, *La France et l’Afrique sub-saharienne, 1957–1963: histoire d’une décolonisation entre idéaux eurafricains et politique de puissance* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008), 50–63, 11. On the EDC see Denise Artaud, ‘France between the Indochina War and the European Defense Community’, in Lawrence S. Kaplan, et al., *Dien Bien Phu and the Crisis of Franco-American Relations* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1990), 251–68.

¹⁶ On the Cold War implications, see especially Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution:*

to as the only way for Europe to thrive as a Third Force in the Cold War, as opposed to a lonely, small Western Europe ‘crushed between the USSR and the USA’.¹⁷ With the EEC, Western Europe built a regional system of dependent territories, hoping for it to be long-lived. The design, included as Part IV of the founding Rome Treaty, was based on trade and aid as its main pillars: preferential trade between members and associated territories, with a gradual abolition of tariffs, and the establishment of a European Development Fund (EDF), designed for developing the associated regions.¹⁸ Ever since the beginning, and throughout the whole Cold War era, development policy was used ‘to enhance Western Europe’s role and influence in the postcolonial world, as well as to deal with the legacy of colonialism’, sums up Giuliano Garavini.¹⁹ Many European leaders saw European integration as the opportunity for the continuation of Europe’s ‘grand and global civilising mission’, as Dutch Foreign Minister Joseph Luns put it in 1957, and understood the EEC as a project for joint imperial management, ‘a Eurafrican as much as a European scheme’.²⁰

Transitioning into a Postcolonial World: Development as a Foreign Policy for the EEC in the Cold War

Divorcing the nation from the empire became problematic in Europe as decolonisation sped up at the end of the 1950s: it implied creating projects that would make it easier to cope with the loss of the empire.²¹ Eurafrica was one of these projects. In 1957, in an address to the Council of Europe, the French Christian Democrat Pierre-Henri Teitgen (former president of the MRP, the Popular Republican Movement) imagined the future of international relations after decolonisation. After independence, he said, Africa had several options: the American bloc, the Soviet world, the Bandung coalition, the Afro-Asian group, or Free Europe.²² Their choice would involve much more than a mere economic link. The world Teitgen pictured was multipolar, not bipolar. He could see a distinct international role for Europe in the Cold War framework. Eurafrica was a project per se, manifestly different from neutralism or pan-Africanism but also distinct from the American idea of a Western-Atlantic alliance. General Charles de Gaulle, who returned to power in 1958, was at best lukewarm toward Eurafrica. He did not think that a joint European framework was ideal to serve French strategic priorities, and though he attempted to twist the European project toward his interests, he preferred to have an independent voice in the Cold War.²³ As for Africa, the Gaullist design, implemented by the all-powerful Jacques Foccart, was to choose empire over Europe.

Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Irwin Wall, *France, the United States, and the Algerian War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹⁷ Eurafrica was Europe’s last chance, argued the former chief of intelligence of Free France and successful writer Pierre Nord, linking Eurafrica to accessing the African mineral deposits necessary to develop the atomic bomb. Pierre Nord, *L’Eurafrrique, notre dernière chance* (Paris: A. Fayard, 1955); Chloë Mayoux, ‘Le soutien britannique aux essais français pendant la décolonisation africaine (1959–1960): un paradoxe’, *Relations internationales* 194, no. 2 (2023): 27–47.

¹⁸ On the early build-up of the system and the importance of the *pact colonial*, see Véronique Dimier, ‘Bringing the Neo-Patrimonial State Back to Europe: French Decolonization and the Making of the European Development Aid Policy’, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 48 (2008): 433–57; also Thomas Moser, *Europäische Integration, Dekolonisation, Eurafrika: eine historische Analyse über Entstehungsbedingungen der Eurafricanischen Gemeinschaft von der Weltwirtschaftskrise bis zum Jaunde-Vertrag, 1929–1963* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2000).

¹⁹ Giuliano Garavini, ‘The EC’s Development Policy: The Eurafrica Factor’, in U. Krotz, K.K. Patel and F. Romero, eds., *Europe’s Cold War Relations: The EC Towards a Global Role* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 205–28. More broadly, see Sara Lorenzini, *Global Development: A Cold War History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 76–81.

²⁰ Uwe W. Kitzinger, ‘Europe: The Six and the Seven’, *International Organization* 14, no. 1 (1960): 31; C.A. Cosgrove, ‘The Common Market and Its Colonial Heritage’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 4, no. 1 (1969): 76. Luns is quoted in Hansen and Jonsson, *Eurafrica*, 238.

²¹ Kojo Koram, *Uncommon Wealth: Britain and the Aftermath of Empire* (London: John Murray, 2022), 90.

²² Harold Callender, ‘Ambiguity in France. An Analysis of Nationalist Strivings Contrasted with Internationalist Aims’, *The New York Times*, 15 June 1957, 6.

²³ See especially N. Piers Ludlow, ‘The History of the EC and the Cold War: Influenced and Influential, but Rarely Center Stage’, in Krotz, Patel and Romero, eds., *Europe’s Cold War Relations*, 15–29; on De Gaulle, see N. Piers Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s: Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge* (London: Routledge, 2006).

With decolonisation, the joint European administration systematically claimed to be something different from the individual countries and their imperial structures. For national independence leaders such as Senghor of Senegal or Félix Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast, maintaining relations with the former colonial power in the watered-down version offered by the European Commission with its trade and aid policies was less problematic. In July 1963, when eighteen independent African countries decided to continue association by adhering to the Yaoundé Convention, links to colonial ideology were underplayed, even though the fundamental elements of the colonial system survived. The machinery of empire had been based on unequal relationships, and such relationships were there to stay, decolonisation notwithstanding. The Convention retained preferential trade with the Associated African and Malagasy States on a bilateral basis with reciprocal obligations. It guaranteed non-discrimination and the continuation of the aid regime.²⁴ Yaoundé was not seen as something positive in the post-independence UN system. It was a project opposed to pan-African ideals, a rival of pan-Africanism and the Organisation of the African Union. Many leaders in developing countries attacked it as another tool of capitalist dominance, with the world economy split into three macroeconomic areas: the Americas dominated by the United States, Eurafica dominated by the EEC, and Asia dominated by Japan. They were also critical of the protectionist Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the limited aid which was provided to the developing nations.²⁵

From the beginning, the Common Market was linked to the West within the context of the Cold War divide. The Atlantic defensive cocoon covered the whole EEC system and its imperial dependencies and NATO had plans to promote cultural exchanges, scholarships, and technical and financial assistance to advertise Western-style democracy and to counter communist threats in the Third World.²⁶ The US administration counted on the EEC as an agent to promote Western values, methods, and goals. In the DAC, the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD set up in 1960 with the task of coordinating foreign aid, the EEC performance was submitted for evaluation just like any other national donor. As Véronique Dimier points out, EEC officials were not interested in following the US example. They were products of the colonial system of their country of origin and abhorred the modernisation theories of Anglo-Saxon sociologists who ‘played with statistics’.²⁷ They had the distinctive mentality of members of an international organisation and believed they were carrying a superior morality, acting for the common good of the organisation independently of bleak national interests. Jacques Ferrandi, for example, the prominent head of the European Development Fund who decided on aid allocation, despite being a French national and the former director-general of economic affairs in Dakar, was not acting to promote French national interests (much to de Gaulle’s dismay), nor did he submissively follow American instructions, or agree with ‘applying a solution developed in a lab onto a specific situation’.²⁸

In 1964, despite differences deriving from national or imperial traditions, the EEC started conforming to the mainstream ideas on development prevailing in the DAC, investing in rural development, the food processing industry, and infrastructure. However, it resisted American pressures to contribute specifically to the Cold War effort by politicising development. When the United States insisted that the EEC ‘use the weight of its financial contribution to guide the policy of the states which were aided’,

²⁴ Enzo R. Grilli, *The European Community and the Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 18–21. On the interpretation of Yaoundé as the first step into a new era (the first act of foreign policy) see Sara Lorenzini, ‘At the Origins of European Foreign Policy: European Exceptionalism and the Case of European Development Aid’, in L. Antonioli, L. Bonatti and, C. Ruzza, eds., *Highs and Lows of European Integration* (Cham: Springer International, 2019), 11–25.

²⁵ Garavini, *The EC’s Development Policy*, 211–13.

²⁶ NATO, *Restricted Working Paper AC/119-WP(58)58*, 17 Aug. 1958, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (PA AA) B34 Ref. 307, 114.

²⁷ Véronique Dimier, *The Invention of a European Development Aid Bureaucracy: Recycling Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 32–6.

²⁸ Oral History Interview with Jacques Ferrandi, HAEU, INT 711, 62; Jacques Ferrandi, ‘La Communauté européenne et l’assistance technique’, *International Development Review* 8 (1964): 8–9.

the Community opposed their requests. They were not playing with old power politics nor serving the American Cold War, stated the Director General of the Department of Overseas Territories and head of the EEC delegation, Dr. Heinrich Hendus.²⁹ In truth, the criteria for aid included preventing African leaders from seeking funds from the Soviet bloc, but this conditionality was not explicit. The Cold War always played a role: to prevent African leaders from seeking funds elsewhere, admitted one EC officer, one had to accommodate their demands.³⁰

A Revolution? The Controversial Trajectory of Claude Cheysson

While in the 1950s and 1960s the project of European integration refashioned the old concept of Eurafrica as a means of gaining more power in the post-war international order, at the beginning of the 1970s its prospects changed dramatically. West European ambitions took a leap forward, helped by changes in international relations during the years of détente and the rise of social movements. In the golden age of European social democracy, new national and international political leaders opened a new cycle, bringing a new flair to transatlantic relations – and plunging them into crisis soon thereafter. Enlargement, with the entry of the United Kingdom into the Common Market, led to ambitions that reflected a whole new global potential and contributed to a new concept of ‘civil power Europe’.³¹ The financial crisis (1971), the oil crisis (1973–4) and the resurgence of Third World activism, spurred on by the success of OPEC and the renewed calls for urgent structural reform of the international economic system, helped to set a new course.³² Instead of building on imperial foundations, the EC would project an entirely new image of itself as a friend of the Third World so as to establish itself as an alternative to the United States and to the Soviet Union in the changed international system.

Development Commissioner Claude Cheysson was crucial to this reshaping of EC relations with the South. As a representative of the socialist opposition, he was chosen by the new French President Georges Pompidou because of his reputation in the business world, because of his previous experience in Asia and Africa, and because the British liked him. He was the key to this change, precisely because he supported a shift in strategy based on the promotion of national independence. A man of ‘the finest intelligence and legendary egotism’, he was not particularly popular at home, but he was welcomed by Third World leaders.³³ The most remarkable feature of Cheysson’s style was his very distinct way of promoting French interests within a European framework while taking care to involve Third World leaders. Cheysson’s fondness for the European project began early on when, as a young French diplomat, he worked closely with Konrad Adenauer in Bonn in 1948–9.³⁴ In 1952, he was sent to Vietnam, where he set up Franco-Vietnamese companies within the Union Française. It was there that his fundamental conviction emerged: that France should not be afraid

²⁹ Auclert, Development Assistance Policy of the European Economic Community, summary minutes, DAC/M(64)8, PA AA, B58 IIIB1 381.

³⁰ Dimier, *Invention*, 36. On the EC in the DAC, see Lorenzini, *Global Development*, 71–81.

³¹ The concept is famously in François Duchêne, ‘The European Community and the Uncertainties of Interdependence’, in Max Kohnstamm and Wolfgang Hager, eds., *A Nation Writ Large? Foreign Policy Problems before the European Community* (London: Macmillan, 1973); for context see, among others, Kiran Klaus Patel, *Project Europe: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) and Mark Gilbert, *Surpassing Realism: The Politics of European Integration since 1945* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

³² Michele Di Donato and Mathieu Fulla, eds., *Leftist Internationalisms: A Transnational Political History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023); Aurélie Andry, *Social Europe, the Road Not Taken: The Left and European Integration in the Long 1970s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

³³ Jean François-Poncet, 37, *Quai d’Orsay: Mémoires pour aujourd’hui et pour demain* (Paris: Jacob, 2008), 141. Cheysson has been described by Véronique Dimer as ‘a present to the British’, in Gérard Bossuat and Gordon D. Cummings (eds), *France, Europe and Development Aid: From the Treaties of Rome to the Present Day* (Paris: Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, 2013), 54. Available at <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.igpde.2932>. Cheysson joined the Socialist Party on the eve of his appointment.

³⁴ He had no typical CV, as a graduate from the Ecole Polytechnique before getting a degree at the ENA. He spent the war as a ‘brilliant fighter’ with Free France in North Africa and then was appointed as the head of the liaison service with the German federal authorities. ‘M. Cheysson succède à M. Denieu’, *Le Moniteur Africain*, 604, 26 Apr. 1973.

of the prospect of abandoning the empire and that technical assistance was essential for good relations with the newly independent countries. In 1955, in his article 'Presence Française dans les Etats Associés', he argued that economic cooperation was critical to keep independent states firmly within the French orbit. French private companies had to involve the local elites in their capital structures, and the state needed to support them by creating the Zone Franc, subsidising local production and providing aid. Educating local elites in France was essential to strengthen a common cultural background.³⁵ Essentially, he launched human bonding through aid projects. Technical assistance was a way to win affection and trust. His attitude was not unique among the late colonial elites.³⁶

Cheysson was often involved in negotiating independence agreements. After participating in the French Delegation to the 1954 Geneva Conference that dismantled French Indochina, he worked on the independence agreements with Morocco and Tunisia (1956). Stationed in Algiers, in June 1957, he contributed to the report 'Quelques données du Problème Algérien' (Some Facts about the Algerian Problem), which examined the economic and demographic reasons that made French rule over Algeria burdensome and argued that sovereignty was not a prerequisite for exploiting the Sahara. What was essential were good relations with local leaders and with neighbours, especially Tunisia, and avoiding the hostility of the Muslim population. The report stressed the need to promote Algeria's independence.³⁷ *Le Monde* published extracts from it, and it caused a lot of clamour. Soon thereafter Cheysson quit the diplomatic service, ostensibly to protest the kidnapping of National Liberation Front leader Ahmed Ben Bella. Kicked out of Parisian circles (de Gaulle would rehabilitate him one year later), he moved to Africa in November 1957 as the Secretary General of the Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara (CCTA), which he restructured as a more effective agency for technical aid. In his time at the CCTA, he worked towards the Africanisation of the institution. He started with moving the seat from London to Lagos and extending membership to African countries as soon as they got independence. This was widely acknowledged by African politicians, such as the minister for Transport and Communication of Mali: 'We have managed to join thanks to the concern of the Secretary General of the CCTA, Mr Cheysson, whose ardent desire to make the CCTA work for Africa with the active support of Africans I am pleased to underline.'³⁸ Under his leadership, the Commission lost all of its character as a white man's club: in the new statute, the colonial powers contributed financially to the organisation and were stripped of their voting rights. Unsurprisingly, they all left, starting with South Africa, Rhodesia and Portugal, and the CCTA was absorbed into the Organisation of the African Union.³⁹

During his period at the CCTA, Cheysson was consulted by President John Fitzgerald Kennedy on communism in Africa: 'He has some enormously preceptive and valuable suggestions and comments

³⁵ The article, co-authored with Charles Frappart, appeared in *La Nef*, a literary and political review founded in Algiers in 1943; see Thomas Deltombe, 'Michel Poniatowski et Claude Cheysson, deux théoriciens du néocolonialisme français (1954–1955)', in Borrel et al., *L'empire qui ne veut pas mourir*, 132–35. Deltombe calls Cheysson the architect of French neocolonialism.

³⁶ In 1958, for example, Pierre Wigny, the minister of the colonies in Belgium, proposed a Eurafrika based on personal ties with Congolese politicians as an institutional solution; Frank Gerits, *The Ideological Scramble for Africa: How the Pursuit of Anticolonial Modernity Shaped a Postcolonial Order, 1945–1966* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023), 88.

³⁷ 'L'économie algérienne peut-elle être développée et à quel prix. Des Hauts fonctionnaires s'interrogent sur l'avenir de l'Algérie', *Le Monde*, 22 Oct. 1957, 4 – now in *Claude Cheysson, une force de conviction* [préface de Jean Lacouture]. [Paris]: IBacom, 2014. The report, written together with Charles Frappart and André Valls, is available for download at <https://cheysson.belisa.com/tag/charles-frappart/>.

³⁸ Sunier, *Claude Cheysson*, 61.

³⁹ John Kent, 'The Creation and Development of the CCTA, 1950–1956', in *The Internationalization of Colonialism: Britain, France, and Black Africa 1939–1956*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198203025.003.0012>. On the CCTA, and especially its cultural mission: Damiano Matasci, *Internationaliser l'éducation: la France, l'Unesco et la fin des empires coloniaux en Afrique (1945–1961)* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2023), 205; Dores and Jerónimo, 'Un développement éclairé? La question de l'éducation coloniale en Afrique et les organisations interimpériales (1945–1957)', in D. Matasci, M. Bandeira Jerónimo and H. Gonçalves Dores, *Repenser la 'mission civilisatrice': l'éducation dans le monde colonial et postcolonial au XXe siècle* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2020).

about our operations in Africa', recited an info sheet on him.⁴⁰ Because of his formidable reputation as a supporter of anticolonial policies, he was recruited by de Gaulle as the Managing Director of the *Organisme Saharien*, an Algerian public body set up under the Evian Agreements to foster technical cooperation between Algeria and France in the Sahara, dealing with all oil extraction operations, until the establishment of the new oil system under the Franco-Algerian Agreement of 1965. It was not easy to convince the local elites to build an oil industry together with France, he commented.⁴¹ The staunch defence of French interests was part of the problem. Promoting infrastructures for joint energy production was his primary duty in his next post as the French Ambassador to Indonesia (1966–1970). Arriving at the time of the rocky transition from President Sukarno to his successor Suharto, just after the mass killings of Indonesian Communist Party members, he successfully promoted an agreement between the *Compagnie Française de Petroles* and Indonesia's Pertamina for joint oil production in Sumatra. He then returned to France, leaving the diplomatic service for industry and business, as Chairman of the Board of *Enterprise Minière et Chimique* (EMC), France's leading state-owned chemical company in the capital-intensive fertiliser sector. In the same year, he was also the director general of the *Compagnie des Potasses du Congo* (1970–1973). His expertise with mineral resources and oil, his impeccable anticolonial credentials, and his impressive talent for networking made him a key actor for European global projection in the early 1970s when raw materials entered centre stage.

Siding with the Third World

In 1973, Cheysson was ostensibly chosen as the new Commissioner for Development because he was considered an ideal candidate to eradicate French colonial practices in European development aid. When he took office, he presented himself as someone who, after eleven years 'spent in the employ of the countries themselves', was speaking 'as an African as much as a European'. Some historians stress his ambivalence and the fact that he intended to modernise colonialism, accommodating French and British interests alike, and that he was explicit about this.⁴² He clarified that colonial history implied responsibilities and the correction of past wrongdoings. In response to the vitriolic critique of neo-colonialism, he argued that enlargement would transform traditional colonial relationships. The difference between Europe and America was that, unlike the Americans, who were reluctant to open their markets to developing countries, Europeans were open to granting trade privileges, as a consequence of the traditional trade links dating back to colonial times. Moreover, building on a shared past made it possible to preserve a human dimension, with individuals interacting on the basis of personal relationships and rejecting the idea of aid as a huge, impersonal machine. After all, Europe, Africa, and the Mediterranean were members of a special club with a shared past that could be used for a unique dialogue. He envisioned a transformation somewhat similar to the one he had promoted in the CCTA. 'The association of tomorrow – he said – will be Africa's thing, governed by Africa, driven by Africa.'⁴³

During his mandate, Cheysson invested significant resources in staging proximity to the Third World, with travel and exchange, and in promoting the EC as an alternative to the superpowers, willing to accommodate demands for a change in the international order.⁴⁴ According to his aide Philippe

⁴⁰ Claude Cheysson, 'Rencontre avec le Président John Fitzgerald Kennedy', in *Claude Cheysson, une force de conviction*, 1962: CE-CHE, Claude Cheysson, Newsweek 1962, Collection Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President's Office Files, Kennedy Library (digital identifier: JFKPOF-007-009).

⁴¹ Claude Cheysson, 'Le Sahara dans l'Algérie Nouvelle', *Revue Tiers Monde*, 1963, Vol. 4, Problèmes de l'Algérie Indépendante (1963), 139–60, Publications de la Sorbonne, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23587067>; also in François Perroux, *Problèmes de l'Algérie indépendante* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1963).

⁴² See Cheysson, 'Europe and the Third World after Lomé', *The World Today*, 31, no. 6 (June, 1975), Royal Institute of International Affairs, 232–39, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40394858>.

⁴³ 'Déclaration faite à Yaoundé', cit. passim and 49.

⁴⁴ Véronique Dimier, 'Du bon usage de la tournée: propagande et stratégies de légitimation au sein de la Direction Générale Développement, Commission Européenne (1958–1970)', *Pôle Sud* 15, no. 1, 2001, 19–32, Doi: [10.3406/pole.2001.1120](https://doi.org/10.3406/pole.2001.1120).

Soubestre, he was 'deeply convinced of the danger posed to these new countries by the tensions arising from the Cold War' and of the role that Europe 'could play in promoting or facilitating their non-alignment, through intelligent cooperation policies'.⁴⁵ Having assumed his duties as Commissioner when developing countries launched the NIEO, Cheysson immediately set up a dialogue on their platform. He spoke of the necessity to create a new world economic order and argued that his policy was complementary to non-alignment, supporting their demands for a systemic change.⁴⁶ Instead of moaning about 'the so-called economic crisis' and turning to an alarming isolationist mood, the industrialised countries 'must recognise that they have a historical responsibility in having established this international economic order whose control seems to have slipped away from them', he complained.⁴⁷ The way to go was a 'cooperation policy' that resulted from the colonial past and implied taking up responsibilities to help newly independent countries.⁴⁸

Cheysson's support for Third World strategies included the adoption of OPEC as an organisational model. Africa should try to speak through one spokesperson as the Arab countries did.⁴⁹ Like young men, young countries were to learn that unity provided strength to a group of 'still unbalanced and economically poor' nations. Other speeches used the patronising language typical of the infantilisation of the colonised. Like young people, he said, the newly independent countries were 'proud, anxious to prove themselves and to stand together in spite of their mutual rivalries'; they yearned for economic security and needed stability to plan their development.⁵⁰ In June 1975, commenting on Lomé's innovation, he used the comparison again: 'A nation is like a young man. To develop it needs money, but mostly it needs training [...] so that it can develop by its own means.'⁵¹ To him, creating an institutional setup where developing countries could speak with one voice was a priority. Some of his co-workers described this as a fixation. He was proud to achieve this goal with the Lomé Convention of February 1975, which he called 'a unique act in the world's history' precisely because the developing countries acted as a united front before Europe. 'I assure you that it has not been easy', he commented.⁵² Europe, which had contributed to the division of Africa in the past, was now 'contributing to its unification' simply by encouraging the solidarity and unity of the ACP group: it was 'an extraordinary historical turnaround'.⁵³

The Lomé agreement signed between the EC and forty-six former European colonies (the ACP countries – Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) defined a new partnership. Although it perpetuated preferential links (in trade and aid) between the Community and the former colonies, it was cast as a revolutionary achievement because it was structurally based on equality. 'There is no cooperation without equality', was one of Cheysson's refrains. The convention was a contract that implied mutual obligations, not a unilateral concession. Its main point was free access to European markets, which gave the ACP countries 'the chance to develop on their own more than giving them our money'. It was not about charity but about promoting responsibility, Cheysson stressed – like a new edition of the

⁴⁵ Philippe Soubestre, 'Le commissaire européen du Tiers Monde', in *Claude Cheysson, une force de conviction*.

⁴⁶ Declaration du Monsieur Cheysson devant la reunion preparatoire de l'assemblee consultative ACP-CEE, Luxembourg, 27 Nov. 1975, Archive of European Integration (AEI), <http://aei.pitt.edu/8554/1/8554.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Claude Cheysson, *Address delivered by Mr. Claude Cheysson, Member of the Commission of the European Communities to the Second International Seminar of Economic Journalists*. New Delhi, 24 Jan. 1975, <http://aei.pitt.edu/8305/>.

⁴⁸ Pierre Cros, DAC meeting, 27 Nov. 1975, National Archives, OD 36/288. Opinion surveys placed development aid at the bottom of citizens' priorities, and the trend needed reversing: political leadership should 'reach beyond the aid lobby to the hostile and uncommitted'.

⁴⁹ Déclaration faite à Yaoundé, cit. 8 (49).

⁵⁰ Facing the Third World in a Changing Society. Summary of the address made by Mr. Claude Cheysson, Member of the Commission of the European Communities before the Economic Club of New York, 17 May 1976, available at <https://aei.pitt.edu/10830/>

⁵¹ Cheysson, 'Europe and the Third World after Lomé', 233.

⁵² 'Claude Cheysson "On Record": The EC Commissioner Responsible for Development Policy Talks about the Lomé Convention', *European Community*, no. 184, Mar. 1975, 10.

⁵³ Cheysson, 'Facing the Third World in a Changing Society', 1976.

Marshall Plan, with the EC instead of the United States and the ACP countries as the recipients.⁵⁴ Famously, he would say about development aid: ‘It’s your money! You will use it best according to your own priorities. We are here to give you technical advice if needed.’ The goal was the creation of a self-reliant economic system. The language (partnership, equality, self-reliance) winked at the successful discourse embraced by Chinese aid, the socialist alternative popular with developing countries at the time. It was Europe’s challenge to ‘the Soviet Union, the United States, Japan, and the entire industrialised world’.⁵⁵

The Lomé Convention was a very extensive document. In its trade provisions, it incorporated several of the requests of the developing countries. It established that agricultural and mining products would enter Europe free of duties and, differently to the past, without reciprocity clauses. Commodities that competed with European products (such as sugar) were governed by quota systems negotiated separately. Cheysson’s most celebrated innovation was STABEX (the acronym stands for *Système de Stabilisation des Recettes d’Exportation*), the mechanism for price stabilisation for agricultural commodities applicable to the export earnings of listed commodities.⁵⁶ It was quite a paradox, given that STABEX had been on the EEC agenda since 1959 when it had to contend with the hostility of West Germany, the Netherlands and, from the outside, the Americans. The market economy cannot be sacrificed on the altar of Europe, wrote Wilhelm Röpke, a superstar ordoliberal economist who loathed the ECSC as a bloc version of Europe and the EEC as a project to keep empire and protectionism alive in the era of the liberal world economy. West German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard agreed with him: STABEX was a French-inspired plot to Europeanise the costs of empire.⁵⁷ For this reason, it ended up in a drawer until it was resuscitated by Cheysson’s predecessor, Jean-François Deniau, in a famous 1971 ‘Memorandum on a Community Policy on Development Cooperation’. Upon his arrival, though, Cheysson did not immediately embrace a mechanism that he described as a ‘far-fetched story of price stabilisation’. ‘You won’t see me supporting this bullshit in front of member states’, he allegedly commented at first.⁵⁸ He then changed his mind, when it became clear that STABEX was being enthusiastically welcomed by the developing countries united in the G77.

Replicating Lomé: Europe’s Grand Design to Transcend Bipolarity

Cheysson’s vision was finally offering ‘the forest of political vision’ instead of ‘the trees of tariff reductions and social security improvements’ the press commented cheerfully, saluting the new EC global approach.⁵⁹ Lomé was the cornerstone for ‘the Europe of tomorrow’ able to offer to the Third World an integrated policy different from that of its member states – bolder and less tied to the past.⁶⁰ In this way, it was contributing to a multipolar world that was less dangerous than a bipolar setting ruled by two superpowers ‘fundamentally antagonistic despite their efforts to promote détente.’ Europe’s specific interests coincided with those of the developing countries that hoped to find a better balance in international relations.⁶¹ Lomé was therefore a model to be replicated globally. ‘Development policy is only significant if it’s coherent’, Cheysson said. With this, he meant that the EC should consider

⁵⁴ Marion Baywater, ‘The Lomé Convention’, *European Community*, Mar. 1975, 5–7.

⁵⁵ Dieter Fritsch, ‘Le rôle de la France et des Français dans la politique européenne de coopération au développement’, 125.

⁵⁶ Guy Martin, ‘African-European Economic Relations under the Lomé Convention: Commodities and the Scheme of Stabilization of Export Earnings’, *African Studies Review* 27, no. 3 (Sep., 1984): 41–66. John Ravenhill, ‘What is to be Done for Third World Commodity Exporters? An Evaluation of the STABEX Scheme’, *International Organization* 38, no. 3 (1984): 537–74. Doi: [10.1017/S0020818300026849](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300026849).

⁵⁷ Quinn Slobodian, *Globalist: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 183–85 and 207.

⁵⁸ HAEU, Interview with Jean Deniau, INT 767. See ‘Draft Memorandum on Future Relations Between the Community, the Present AASM States and the Countries of Africa, the Caribbean, the Indian and Pacific Oceans Referred to in Protocol 22 of the Act of Accession’, 23 Mar. 1973, in HAEU, CEUE_SEGE-COM(1973)0500.

⁵⁹ ‘EC Global Approach’, in *European Community*, Mar. 1976.

⁶⁰ Claude Cheysson, ‘An Agreement Unique in History’, *The Courier* no. 31 Special Issue Mar. 75, 13.

⁶¹ ‘Note for the Members of the Commission, 18 Feb. 1975’, in Sunier, *Claude Cheysson*, 94–5.

multiplying regional agreements resembling Lomé.⁶² He did not think that regionalism and globalism were in conflict: they could reinforce each other, and the multiplication of Lomé was a way to prove it. Britain was pressing for greater attention to the non-ACP world, including important Commonwealth countries such as India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Singapore. But Cheysson preferred to start with the Mediterranean, a region he knew well and where Western Europe had fundamental interests: markets, energy sources and raw materials.⁶³ In 1975, he presented the Lomé method at the Trilateral Commission, the think-tank on global issues set up by David Rockefeller and composed of experienced government and private sector leaders from the United States, Europe, and Japan. On that occasion, Lomé was praised as a regional contribution toward a global understanding, as Europe's own way of acting in the Cold War.⁶⁴ The applause of this audience was far from obvious, for the rhetoric of 'Lomé as a method' emphasised European independence from Cold War logic and American strategy and did so in an assertive tone. The Lomé policy, Cheysson stressed, was 'a special contribution to détente, and a special responsibility towards the Arab countries and Africa'. Quoting Julius Nyerere, he stressed that aid to developing countries should be 'a matter of right not a system of begging', based on a deep respect for identity and non-interference, agreed with a group of countries, rather than individual countries.⁶⁵

The Cold War continued to serve as an ever-present framework, although Cheysson did not like to think of himself as a player in that arena. 'In my career and for the places where I have served, I have been more of an actor in North–South relations than in the East–West conflict.'⁶⁶ However, he confessed, the European construction was 'a good framework to stand up to the Soviets, to prevent them from going any further'. In turn, the Cold War was 'an element that favoured a specific policy' and gave Europe 'an identity of its own'.⁶⁷ The special relationship with the Third World was a fundamental element of European identity. When the socialist countries attacked the Lomé Convention as a neo-colonial policy resulting from a compromise between packs of imperialist wolves, he responded with scathing criticism: the Eastern bloc was absent from any serious economic discussion of the world's future, and while the Soviet Union was excellent at providing military support for a war of liberation, it was utterly 'incompetent' at helping other peoples to develop.⁶⁸ Elsewhere he commented: 'The Eastern Europeans [...] contribute almost nothing to development.' The total amount of grant aid from Eastern Europe, he added, was less than \$1 billion a year, while OECD countries provided \$14 to \$15 billion and Arab countries \$4 to \$5 billion. But 'everyone in the Third World is convinced that they are making a great effort' and that they can rely on Eastern Europe for support, not only for their liberation but also for their development. It would therefore make sense to include them in North–South talks on a new world economic order.⁶⁹

⁶² 'Meeting with Trade Unions, Geneva, 22 June 1974', HAEU, BAC 25/1980 n.1878.

⁶³ Marion Bywater, *The Lomé Convention*, European Community, Mar. 1975, 184, 7.

⁶⁴ Claude Cheysson, 'Partial Summary of Remarks 29 Nov. 1975', *Dialogue. Economic Cooperation and Resource Management*, T9 [1976], ed. François Sauzey, 10–11.

⁶⁵ Cheysson, 'The Relationship Between the European Community and Africa', *Europe and Africa. Trends and Relationships*, Guildhall, 20 Oct. 1977, 12–19.

⁶⁶ Interview, Sunier, *Claude Cheysson*. Piers Ludlow, 'History Aplenty but Still Too Isolated', in Michelle Egan, Neill Nugent and William E. Paterson, eds., *Research Agendas in EU Studies: Stalking the Elephant* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁶⁷ Interview, Sunier, *Claude Cheysson*.

⁶⁸ 'Interview with Jacques Docquier', in *La Croix*, 14 Jan. 1978, 4, available at <http://aei.pitt.edu/12710/>, accessed Sept. 2017; Cheysson, Claude. (1980) Intervention de Monsieur Cheysson devant l'Assemblée consultative ACP/CEE. 25 Sept. 1980 = Speech by Mr Cheysson [member of Commission responsible for development] before the ACP/EEC Consultative Assembly, 25 Sept. 1980, available at <http://aei.pitt.edu/11825/1/11825.pdf>, accessed July 2023. The 'imperialist wolves' quote is in V. Kazakevicius, *The Common Market and the Developing Countries*, *International Affairs*, June 1979, 57–66. See also Angela Romano and Federico Romero, eds., *European Socialist Regimes' Fateful Engagement with the West: National Strategies in the Long 1970s* (London: Routledge, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429340703>, 13–15 and 36–39.

⁶⁹ Cheysson, 'On Record', interview with James O. Goldsborough, *European Community*, Mar.–Apr. 1977.

With the energy crisis, establishing closer relations with Arab countries became a strategic priority for Western Europe, and the relations with the Third World were construed as the way out of the crisis. Houari Boumediene's invitation to choose the Third World over American imperialism was tempting. Saudi Prince Abdul Aziz spelt out what he saw as the terms of a profitable mutual exchange: 'We need European expertise in the field of land reclamation, industrialisation, and armaments. The Europeans need our oil, our other raw materials, and our markets.'⁷⁰ 'We are doomed to cooperate', added Ismail Khelil, the Tunisian Ambassador to Brussels. The dialogue between the Arabs and the Western Europeans was based on 'affinities between two regions which have everything to gain from cooperation' and on an important trade partnership.⁷¹ The growth of the Arab world was Europe's trump card, Cheysson believed. 'We want to have a Middle East policy', he said at the inauguration of his first term as a European Commissioner at Chatham House in 1973.⁷² Europe should not be afraid of competition but should look to the new market on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. The problems of Arab countries had to be seen by Europeans as domestic problems. Cheysson was well aware that Lomé represented a rupture in the Western partnership with the United States: 'The Lomé policy cannot be a marginal one for us', he maintained. 'It sets us apart – it is true – from our usual industrialised partners and allies, because our past is different and – let us acknowledge it simply and modestly – because our needs are not the same.'⁷³

Top officers of the Directorate General for Development and Cooperation were assigned to the Mediterranean question with a precise cultural objective. In the hands of Klaus Meyer, the Euro-Arab Dialogue was defined as a contract of civilisation.⁷⁴ In 1975, to promote cultural affinity, the Commission sponsored the journal *Eurabia*, which hosted intellectuals supporting Euro-Arab unity.⁷⁵ The construction of the dialogue was to become Europe's Grand Design, emphatically proclaimed Cheysson.⁷⁶ To those who felt that the dialogue did not aim high enough, he objected that it was imperative to bring together 'the Arab nation and the European nation', united by neighbourly solidarity, geography, history, and culture.⁷⁷ The Euro-Arab Dialogue was met with derogatory comments by Henry Kissinger, who dismissed it as an element of tension and confusion in the international system, just as he did with any European initiative that did not fit his plans.⁷⁸ The Economic Community of Europe and the Arab Countries – a grand Eurafrica project centred on the Mediterranean as a laboratory for civilisation – became instead a shared goal with Third World leaders.⁷⁹ One of them was Léopold Senghor who, during a Club of Rome meeting in Stockholm in September 1977, presented Cheysson's approach as a fundamental step towards Eurafrica, the utopian project that would remedy Balkanisation and unite all of its components, black and Arab, and eventually include Israel and Iran.⁸⁰ Undoubtedly, it was a far-fetched geopolitical fantasy.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Garavini, *After Empires*, 185.

⁷¹ 'The European Community and the Arab World', *Information, Cooperation. Development* 169/78, 23; https://aei.pitt.edu/7824/1/31735055281335_1.pdf.

⁷² Cheysson, 'Europe and the Third World after Lomé', 237.

⁷³ ACP-EEC Consultative Assembly. Constituent meeting. Summary report of the proceedings of 1–3 June 1976. Luxembourg [EU European Parliament Document], available at <http://aei.pitt.edu/39079/1/A4011.pdf>.

⁷⁴ *Le Courier*, n.38, July–Aug. 1976, 54.

⁷⁵ Ali A. Mazrui, 'Eurafrica, Eurabia, and African-Arab Relations: The Tensions of Tripolarity', in *Interdependence in a World of Unequals: African-Arab-OECD Economic Cooperation for Development*, ed. Dunstan M. Wai (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), 17–46.

⁷⁶ *Extraits de l'allocation prononcée par M. Claude Cheysson, lors de l'inauguration de la Foire Internationale de Marseille, 18 Sept. 1975*, Archive of European Integration, <https://aei.pitt.edu/8526/>.

⁷⁷ 'The European Community and the Arab World.'

⁷⁸ Editorial in *The Courier* 44 (July–Aug. 1977). On the Euro-Arab Dialogue: Maria Eleonora Guasconi, 'Europe and the Mediterranean in the 1970s: The Setting Up of the Euro-Arab Dialogue', *Les cahiers Irice* 2013/1 (no. 10), 163–75. On the Mediterranean, Elena Calandri, 'The EC and the Mediterranean: Hitting the Glass Ceiling', in Krotz, Patel and Romero, eds., *Europe's Cold War Relations*. <http://doi.org/10.5040/9781350118539.ch-005>.

⁷⁹ Claude Cheysson, 'Union Européenne-Méditerranée: Un Modèle d'Accord', in *Claude Cheysson, Une Force de Conviction*, 147–8.

⁸⁰ L.S. Senghor, 'Pour une Afrique qui intègre le Moyen-Orient, Club de Rome, Colloque de Stockholm, 27–28 Sept. 1977', ESPPA, Strong Papers, box 58, file 567.

Cheysson stubbornly insisted that Europe and the Third World countries were ‘gradually becoming indispensable to one another’;⁸¹ that trade with the Third World was a ‘condition of survival’ for a United Europe that could count on cooperation with the Third World to gain growth and prosperity;⁸² and that it was ‘not excessive to state that we will be saved by the poorest’.⁸³ In 1978, he ventured to define his idea of Europe in a speech entitled *Une idée qui s’incarne* (An Idea Taking Shape). Relations with the Third World were the area in which Europe had set in motion a true reconceptualisation, a shift from unilateral concessions to ‘a freely negotiated contract between two parties made equal by representing a regional grouping’. Europe’s policy towards the Third World was strengthening the European edifice, and the progress of the Third World was ‘one of the best, or perhaps the only chance to create new markets and promote general growth worldwide’.⁸⁴ Increasingly, however, such statements sounded like worn-out refrains. Expanding the Lomé method to the Mediterranean and the Middle East did not yield the desired results: countries in the area could barely talk together and resisted establishing binding horizontal economic partnerships, let alone a real community. Moreover, the negotiations for Lomé renewal were vexed by the disappointing economic performance of the system, worsened by the second oil crisis of 1978–79. The human rights issue, that is making Europe’s aid conditional to respecting human rights, was critical to winning over European public opinion, but a treacherous area for many African governments.⁸⁵

The years 1978–79 were marked by the North–South Dialogue, the process through which the developing countries in the Third World engaged the industrialised countries of North America and Western Europe in negotiations over changes to the international economic system. Cheysson insisted on championing the cause of the developing countries waging an international class struggle. It was a matter of class solidarity that had to be inspirational for the whole European project: ‘The Europe that will be capable of such a renewal of relations with the Third World, of projecting itself into the future, can only be the Europe of all Europeans, the Europe of workers as well as employers, the Europe of the people.’⁸⁶ Our workers ‘must understand that the fight for a new, more just and more equitable, economic order cannot be confined to the frontiers of Europe, that the struggle of the proletarian nations [...] is the same as their own’.⁸⁷ The Third World was ‘the world’s proletarian class’ and thus was entitled to the benefits the European working class claimed in the nineteenth century: rights, security, and a fair share of wealth.⁸⁸ However, the prospects of playing the privileged relations to the Third World as a card to gain exceptional leverage in the Cold War gradually eroded with the waning of the decade, when the NIEO, inspirational and propulsive in the early 1970s, was crushed by the ‘divide and rule’ attitude of the newly born G5. To political realists such as Henry Kissinger, global negotiations were just another round of ‘global bullshit’.⁸⁹

⁸¹ Address by Mr. Cheysson at a meeting of businessmen organised by CISMEC (Centro Informazioni e Studi Sulla Comunità Europea), Milan, 30 Oct. 1975 (Press release, 4 Nov. 1975), <http://aei.pitt.edu/13193/1/13193.pdf>.

⁸² Extraits de l’allocution prononcée par M. Claude Cheysson, lors de l’inauguration de la Foire Internationale de Marseille, 18 Sept. 1975.

⁸³ Claude Cheysson, ‘La contribution du Tiers Monde à la relance de l’économie mondiale’, in *Studia diplomatica*, vol. XXXI, 1978, 19.

⁸⁴ Speech held at the reception for the Joseph Bech award in 1978, <https://cheysson.belisa.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Une-idee-qui-sincarne.pdf>.

⁸⁵ On human rights and the renegotiations of Lomé, see Lorenzo Ferrari, *Sometimes Speaking with a Single Voice: The European Community as an International Actor, 1969–1979* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2016), 191–7; also Karin Arts, ‘The Negative Approach: Sanctions on Violations of Human Rights’, in OECD, *Integrating Human Rights into Development Cooperation: The Case of the Lomé Convention* (Leiden: Brill/Nijhoff, 2000). https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004482494_017.

⁸⁶ Extraits de l’allocution prononcée par M. Claude Cheysson, lors de l’inauguration de la Foire Internationale de Marseille, 18 Sept. 1975.

⁸⁷ ACP-EEC Consultative Assembly. Constituent meeting.

⁸⁸ Intervention de M. Claude Cheysson, débat organisé par la revue ‘Croissance des jeunes nations’, 18 mars 1979, quoted in Sunier, *Claude Cheysson*, 95.

⁸⁹ The words by Henry Kissinger and Lawrence Eagleburger are in Marc Pierini, *Télégrammes diplomatiques. Voyage au coeur de la politique extérieure de l’Europe* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2010).

The Demise of Third World Centred Strategies in the World Economic Disorder

In the context of Cold War détente, the idea of the European Community as a Third Force alternative to the United States and the Soviet Union, possibly in partnership with the Third World, had become fairly popular, especially among socialist leaders, and Cheysson was one of its champions.⁹⁰ When he moved on to become the French Minister of External Relations in May 1981, selected by François Mitterrand to inject a touch of socialism into French foreign policy, he imagined a robust Third World oriented strategy, making of Western Europe a companion to non-alignment. This did not mean a policy of neutralism between East and West. To him neutralist tendencies surfacing in Germany and Britain were a ‘cause of despair’.⁹¹ Cheysson may have hoped for systematic cooperation between France and the EC, but his departure was followed by the restoration of the old technocrats, originally close associates of Ferrandi, including Jean Durieux and Dieter Frisch, who had often clashed with Cheysson from the outset in 1973–74.⁹² Moreover, his successor as the EC Development Commissioner, Edgard Pisani (1981–84), a former Gaullist turned socialist, was not keen on solidarity with the Third World. To them, Cheysson’s pro-Third World strategy, which they pejoratively defined ‘laissez-faire’, was anathema. They moved on to align the EC policies with international organisations, substituting project aid with programme aid, introducing conditionality. Pisani’s mandate ‘started from the premise of the failure of the North–South Dialogue and of the New International Economic Order’ and with a focus on food issues, correcting the ‘historic scandal’ of neglecting agriculture and food production in the developing countries.⁹³ Although paying lip service to Lomé, Pisani completely reversed the previous strategies, replacing them with ‘policy dialogue’ and mutual commitments, and did not refrain from fighting with Cheysson in public.⁹⁴

Disinvesting from foreign aid became a trend in the Global North, and the Lomé approach was now considered inapt to foster economic growth. Monetarism, supply-side economics, structural adjustment programmes and the Washington consensus, encouraged by the debt crisis, conquered EC policy making. More broadly, globalisation lost its emancipatory character. The 1980s reflect dramatically the sense of a missed opportunity for the EC to become a special partner to the Third World and promote its role in the international order. The Cancun summit of 1981, remembered as a ‘substantial success’ but in truth unpleasant for everyone involved, played the requiem for the NIEO and sanctioned the marginalisation of the EC, which was not even invited to the meeting. Cheysson, who was there as the French Foreign Minister, insisted that ‘the best possibilities for growth in the First World are to be found in the Third World’. But no European leader dared to take this up. The fruitless attempts promoted by Indira Gandhi in 1983 to revive the Cancun moment did not involve the EC in any way.⁹⁵ By then, Cheysson had fallen out of grace with

⁹⁰ Especially significant personalities counting on the EC as a privileged partner for the South were Willy Brandt and Sicco Mansholt.

⁹¹ Jean Lacouture, ‘Cheysson Is New External Relations Minister: Leaves EC Commission With Brilliant Record’, *Europe* (Washington, DC), no. 226, 1981, 18.

⁹² See for example ‘Note by Frisch’, 22 Mar. 1974, in HAEU, BAC 25/1980, 1877, 71. See also the oral history interviews with Durieux and Frisch, respectively https://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT693 and https://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history/INT162.

⁹³ ‘Memorandum sur la politique communautaire de développement’, Aug. 1982, HAEU, EN-1080. See also Eurofocus 32/82, 11 Oct. 1982, in <https://aei.pitt.edu/57345/1/A8544.pdf>; Garavini, *The EC’s Development Policy*, 219; Guia Migani, ‘L’aide au développement: entre anciennes priorités et nouveaux défis’, in Michel Dumoulin, ed., *The European Commission, 1973–1986* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014), 401–20.

⁹⁴ Dieter Frisch, ‘The Role of France and the French in European Development Cooperation Policy’, in *France, Europe and Development Aid: From the Treaties of Rome to the Present Day* [online] (Paris: Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, 2013). Available at <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.igpde.2944>, 42–46.

⁹⁵ The summit ended with an agreement saying that all 22 nations favoured global negotiations within the United Nations on world economic problems, but global negotiations mean different things to different nations. Brief on the Cancun Summit (22–23 Oct. 81), FCO 59/1797; Cheysson is quoted in Jahangir Amuzegar, ‘After Cancun, The Deluge?’, *SAIS Review* (1956–1989) 3, no. 1 (1983): 195–206, 197, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45349170>; UN summit, New York, 1983. Proposal by Mrs Gandhi, FCO 58/3204. See Guia Migani, ‘The Road to Cancun: The Birth and Death of the North–South Summit, 1978–1982’, in Federico Romero and Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, eds., *Summitry at the Dawn of the Global Era: Historical Enquiries into the Rise of the G-7 and the European Council* (London: Routledge, 2014),

President François Mitterrand, who was now embarrassed by his diplomatic gaffes and called him ‘the least diplomatic of all the diplomatic corps’.⁹⁶ The two disagreed on almost everything: the Middle East, South East Asia, China, and Central America.⁹⁷ Cheysson may well have been the man of the day in the mid-1970s when friendship with the Third World seemed to promise significant payoffs, but he was certainly not the man of the neoliberal future. Mitterrand thought of getting rid of the problem by promoting him to a top position in the EC. However, Margaret Thatcher vetoed his candidacy for President of the European Commission in retaliation for Cheysson calling the Falkland War a colonial conflict. When he returned to Brussels for a final four-year term as a commissioner in 1985, the architect of a global development policy on a European scale now had a different touch. Financial issues were more central to his discourse, substituting the previous focus on compensatory trade. Cheysson was concerned with the lack of growth and a unitarian political view in Western Europe. Free societies need growth, he repeated obsessively. Debt rescheduling, the threat of protectionism, and an inadequate monetary system were the main threats to Europe’s growth.⁹⁸ The rescheduling of most of the Third World’s debts was a great success, a marvellous effort of solidarity, he said, and rigorous structural adjustment policies were necessary. But such measures were not enough to contain economic disorder. Europe had to become more constructive and aggressive, he contended, calling for the EC to be involved in World Bank and IMF initiatives on monetary stability.⁹⁹ Despite the monetary fixation of his speeches on the international disorder, he was still convinced that Keynesianism retained its value on a global scale and that the exemplary initiatives of the past (Lomé) needed to be continued. But his arguments now sounded inconsequential.¹⁰⁰

‘I was never seduced by the idea of *Eurafrique*. I didn’t understand what it meant and I still don’t’, confessed Cheysson in a late interview.¹⁰¹ His biography offers evidence of Western European ambitions to regain centrality in international politics during the Cold War through projects to refashion the imperial legacy into an entirely new alliance with the newly independent countries of the Global South. Since the 1950s, Cheysson, a keen observer of the changes in the international order brought about by decolonisation, had pioneered the idea that national independence was an inalienable right to be supported and accompanied by joint development projects based on mutual interest. His strategy, centred on a close political cooperation with Third World leaders, was successful as long as the international system was receptive to the prospect of a new global projection of the EC based on a unique partnership with the Third World. In the window of opportunity of the 1970s, Cheysson’s plan was to promote a socialist alternative within the orbit of a Western partnership. He was creative, surpassing bipolarism in favour of a multipolar, regional strategy. Ultimately, he failed. His ideas during the 1980s were a mere shadow of his earlier commitment, and were not always consistent. The lack of political support from a network in the EC played a large role: it surely takes more than the individual commitment of a charismatic personality to bring about lasting change.

174–97. See also Laurent Warlouzet, ‘The European Commission Facing Crisis: Social, Neo-Mercantilist and Market-Oriented Approaches (1967–85)’, *European Review of History = Revue Européenne D’histoire* 26, no. 4 (2019): 703–22. For the context, Michael Franczak, *Global Inequality and American Foreign Policy in the 1970s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022), 184–90.

⁹⁶ Abou Diouf, ‘Un Européen et Tiers-mondiste convaincu’, in Claude Cheysson, *Une Force de Conviction*, 113–14.

⁹⁷ ‘France: Cheysson’s Final Faux Pas’, *Time Magazine*, Monday, 17 Dec. 1984. <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,923824,00.html>.

⁹⁸ Claude Cheysson, ‘Le Désordre Economique Mondial’, *Studia Diplomatica* XXXIX, no. 1986/3 (10 Feb. 1986), 239–50.

⁹⁹ Claude Cheysson, ‘Europe’s Dilemma’, in Charles A. Cerami, ed., *A Marshall Plan for the 1990s: An International Roundtable on World Economic Development* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1989), 85–91.

¹⁰⁰ Cheysson, ‘Le Désordre Economique Mondial’.

¹⁰¹ Cheysson in Montarsolo, *Eurafrique*, 6.