

The EEC as a major player in international relations

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The EEC as a major player in international relations

In the 1960s, the countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) enjoyed exemplary economic growth. This was, however, stopped in its tracks by the economic crisis of the mid-1970s.

Nevertheless, the EEC became a major player in international relations. Many countries in the world were therefore keen to build closer trade links with the EEC. Economic cooperation with the members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the United States was strengthened by new agreements. The Europeans also felt a need to deepen their relations with the countries of the third world and concluded agreements with many African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States.

The Europeans were able to maintain their presence in the Middle East because of their good relations with both the Arab States and Israel. However, their influence on the course of events was relatively insignificant. The Nine, whose political and economic interests were rather varied, often found themselves playing a role as back-up to US policy. However, they were directly affected by the consequences of the wars in the Middle East, especially by the oil crisis and the economic aftermath of the Yom Kippur War between Israel and the Arab States in autumn 1973.

During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, France's Middle East policy shifted under President Georges Pompidou from traditional support for Israel to favouring the Arab countries. In a similar fashion to France, Great Britain came to be regarded as sympathetic to the Arab powers. The Netherlands, on the other hand, openly supported Israel.