2 Diplomacy, Codes and Sanctions: 1977–1989

In the 1970s the EC was faced with the challenging and perhaps perplexing task of designing the scope and content of its foreign policy. Confronted with a *tabula rasa*, understandably, this process was initially reactive: where possible, political cooperation provided a collective response to international events as each situation demanded. This intrinsically *ad hoc* procedure was admittedly unsatisfactory, but it reflected the insecure nature of EPC in its formative days. Consequently, the EC did not approach the question of South or southern Africa with a clearly delineated set of policy objectives. No such policy existed in practice or in abeyance awaiting implementation. Rather, the policy was reactive in origin and borne out of an international incident, the Soweto uprisings of 1976 and the repressive South African Government response. In this sense, policy in southern Africa has followed the traditional path of incrementalism typical of the majority of early Community foreign policy actions.

In contrast, the European Community’s earliest formal relations with Africa were not within the political framework of EPC, but were specifically trade related. In 1963 the first of two Yaoundé agreements were signed. This provided 18 former Belgian and French territories with preferential trade relations with the then Six. At that time the countries of southern Africa remained peripheral to Community interests: Angola and Mozambique were regarded as autonomous Portuguese foreign policy issues, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) exclusively a British concern and despite shared historical and cultural links, for reasons of trade and investment South Africa was considered part of the British rather than the Dutch foreign policy sphere. As a result, for the period up until the early 1970s southern Africa was an area where the EC “tacitly agreed to follow national priorities rather than develop a common European strategy” (van Prag, 1982, p. 134).

With the first enlargement of the EC in 1973 and the setting up of the Lomé Convention to embrace British post-colonial and
Commonwealth global responsibilities there slowly emerged a recognition that bilateral approaches to southern Africa were no longer sufficient. However, these were rudimentary days in political cooperation and the new Community was still wary of committing itself to more than cautious statements. The EC's muted responses to both Angolan and Mozambique independence were typical of this initial hesitation. However, as an emerging international actor the Community could not avoid reacting to the developments in South Africa. The first EPC statement on South Africa was issued in 1976 in which the then Belgian presidency called for the "condemnation of the policy of apartheid in South Africa" (Foreign Ministers, 1976). This statement, while of historical importance in the development of EPC did not end the preferences for bilateral positions on South Africa; a collective Community perspective took longer to gestate.

THE POLITICAL OBJECTIVE: THE ABOLITION OF APARTHEID

The enduring nature of the South African question has made this the Community's oldest foreign policy issue. From 1977 onwards, the EC operated dual collective foreign policy objectives: the instigation of democratic reform leading to the abolition of apartheid in South Africa; and support for the economic independence of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) states (the then so-called "frontline states") from South Africa. While both policies were enacted in tandem within the framework of EPC, understandably, the priority was initially on how to secure the abolition of apartheid, with regional development a taking second place (see Holland, 1987, 1988a). Only with the eventual removal of apartheid legislation, enfranchisement and the transition to democratic rule in 1994 was this first objective realized. This chapter examines the policies adopted between 1977–89 to achieve this political objective.

In contrast with the low profile consensual procedure that characterized the EC's economic regional objective, the political objective of ending disenfranchisement and racial discrimination in South Africa was acted out publicly and often acrimoniously. While the Community agreed on both the need for, and the