

## INTRODUCTION

The period 1989-90 marked a watershed in Canada's relations with the European Community (EC).<sup>1</sup> It marked a shift in Canada's policy responses away from what had largely been declarations of intent throughout most of the 1980s, to statements more binding and substantive, as illustrated by the "Europe 1992" component of the Government's "Going Global" initiative and by the formalization of trans-Atlantic political links.<sup>2</sup> The environment was fertile for the institutionalization of high level political relations between Ottawa and Brussels for a number of mutually reinforcing reasons: the momentum of the EC's move to create the internal market as the centrepiece of the new stage of its integration process; the pace of revolutionary developments in Eastern Europe; and the signals from both Washington and Bonn on the desirability of a more formal trans-Atlantic dialogue.<sup>3</sup>

Developments during this period reinforced the belief among Canadian decision-makers responsible for managing relations with the Community, that just as the successful implementation of a trade development strategy depends on a coordinated trade policy approach, the success of a nation's foreign trade strategy requires appropriate nursing and support at the highest political levels. Smith and Clarke, for example, state that the political framers of a strategy (viz., the politicians as distinct from officials) can have an unexpectedly strong influence on its ultimate impact. The more politicians intervene in the subsequent or 'sequential decisions' needed to implement a strategy by driving, influencing, testing or even side-stepping the bureaucracy, the more likely will it be for the initial decision and its eventual impact on intended targets to coincide.<sup>4</sup>

This assertion must be qualified, however, because a middle power<sup>5</sup> such as Canada is most often a *demandeur* (i.e., the party most anxious for movement towards more formal discussions on particular issues) in the international system, which may explain why Canadian politicians, even if they want to side-step their foreign policy bureaucracy and follow up on the implementation of specific foreign policy initiatives, still have only limited success in making their initial foreign policy decisions bear a close resemblance to their actual impact. Accepting the inherent limitations of being a smaller state, the question then is to what degree has the necessary high level of political support been evident in Canada's relations with the European Community?

Ottawa's relations with the Community over the past two decades highlight the lack of formal high level political links. This has contributed to the disequilibrium in bilateral diplomatic relations and has not helped to expand bilateral trade and