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**DE GAULLE THROUGH HIS SPEECHES: THE
PROCESS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

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INTRODUCTION

Charles de Gaulle is one of the most contradictory and ambiguous figures of the XX century has ever had. He was born in a Catholic aristocratic family, from whom was taught the love for the motherland. This sense of belonging to the nation will follow him throughout his life and will be the pivot around which the General will base his political action. His patriotism was inherited from his father, Henri de Gaulle, who fought in the Franco-Prussian War, witnessing the huge humiliation France was subjected to in 1870 at Sedan. Due to his family background, de Gaulle devoted all his life to one specific goal: conferring France back its super-power *status* in the world.

De Gaulle's participation in the two world conflicts will enormously contribute to shape his political thought. By the beginning of the XX century, the world underwent dramatic changes in the international scenario, overwhelmed by the brutality of wars.

Having the nation-state at the core of his philosophy, he will struggle to defend and to re-affirm French interests worldwide. According to him the nation was the only international actor which could play a major role in the international area. The nation and its independence were to be preserved at all costs. France's *grandeur* needed to be restored.

Starting from this assumption, the main aim of this research work is to investigate the ambiguous relations between the General and the European integration process. Being so often depicted as a fervent anti-Europeanist, Charles de Gaulle did nothing but the interests of his own country. To the supranational approach, supported by personalities such as Monnet and Hallstein, de Gaulle will always oppose a *Europe des patries*. Every state should maintain its own independence. It is in light of these considerations that the General's opposition to specific European projects, such as the European Defense Community, can be justified. Before being a Europeanist he was a nationalist. In the Europe he had envisaged, France played a dominant role.

This supremacy necessarily had to pass through the reform of French institutions. The weakness of the executive was, according to de Gaulle, one of the main reasons why the Fourth Republic collapsed. Thus, his return to the political scene, in 1958, coincided with the drafting of a new Constitution, which invested the President of the Republic with considerable powers. Finally, France was given a strong figure who could lead the country to the restoring of its *grandeur*.

This search for independence concretized, in the foreign policy field, in de Gaulle's refusal of the Cold War division in two blocs. In this sense, the progressive

rapprochement with the USSR can be explained and it is so clearly expressed by the formula “Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals”. So, Europe should have stood as a third force in the international context, able to cooperate with both the West and the East.

Nonetheless, this foreign policy, so oriented toward national independence, led the country to numerous clashes with the USA.

The General’s willingness to confer France a predominant role in Europe soon collided with the role the country was playing inside the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Charles de Gaulle could no longer tolerate the country’s subordinate position and the American interferences in the Old Continent. He engaged a fight that culminated with the withdrawal of the French armed forces from the Organization in 1966.

Parallel to the NATO issue, the second chapter will focus on the French development of its own nuclear arsenal, also known as *force de frappe*. National independence for the General could have also been granted by the power of deterrence France could have exerted.

With regard to the European integration process, the third chapter will examine de Gaulle’s desire to somehow reform the already established European Economic Community by the means of the Fouchet Plan. As the first European transitional period was coming to an end, it clearly emerged the supremacy the supranational approach was having in the bosom of the Community.

According to the General, supranationalism would have meant a strict American control over European matters and this was intolerable.

By means of a series of proposals, made between 1961 and 1962, de Gaulle sought to invert this tendency that would have made the nation lose its sovereignty.

However, the confederal Europe he had envisaged culminated in a huge failure, both plans being rejected by the other EEC member states.

At this point, de Gaulle found himself isolated and consequentially he oriented his attention towards a closer union with Western Germany. The similarities between the two great statesmen, de Gaulle and Adenauer, largely contributed to the rapprochement between the countries they ruled. Starting from 1958, when France and West Germany decided to cooperate, the major turning point in the Franco-German relations was represented by the signing of the Élysée Treaty on January 1963. The Treaty committed the two countries to hold regular meetings on specific matters, such as defense, education and youth and had a huge resonance in Europe, astonished by the official end of rivalries between these two great enemies.

A few days before the Treaty was signed, Charles de Gaulle was the protagonist of

another striking act: he vetoed the United Kingdom's entrance inside the Community. As will be explained through the chapter, this gesture will be once again justified in light of the General's unwillingness to sacrifice French independence. Britain had, according to de Gaulle, a too close and privileged bound with the USA. Allowing the country to join the EEC would have meant, once again, being under the American control. Furthermore, it was during those years that the six founding states should have finally reached an agreement over the Common Agricultural Policy, so desired by France. The UK entrance in the Community would have had the effect of jeopardizing the ongoing negotiations.

The last battle engaged by de Gaulle inside the European framework became widely known as the "Empty Chair" crisis. Works in the core of the European Commission were paralyzed for more than six months as a result of the collision between the two different approaches, the confederal and the supranational one.

Charles de Gaulle found himself confronting with the President of the European Commission Walter Hallstein, a strong supporter of a federal Europe, to be organized around the European institutions. Hallstein proposed a series of measures that would have advanced the process of integration but that would have implied a huge transfer of sovereignty to the Community institutions.

The crisis was finally solved in 1966 with the Luxembourg compromise, a document that proved France's ability to once again partially impose its conditions.

FIRST CHAPTER

First steps towards the European integration and the French position

Introduction

During the XX century, few people have played such a decisive role as Charles de Gaulle did. Born in a Catholic middle-class family, de Gaulle was taught, since he was a child, the love for the motherland. The years of his childhood coincided with a gloomy period for France, which was still facing the harsh consequences of its defeat at Sedan in 1870. Therefore, it followed that de Gaulle devoted his life to the restoring of his country's *grandeur* in the world. His political thought was largely influenced by both his family and his participation in the two world conflicts. All the changes the world underwent in the first half of the century are fundamental in order to comprehend the great statesman mentality, so often contradictory. At the core of his philosophy stood the nation, in its purest meaning. Around this concept de Gaulle will base every single aspect of his political activity and, will struggle all his life to defend the idea he had of France. His vision, based upon the centrality of the nation, will, on several occasions, clash with those European integration projects that were slowly emerging in the post Second World War scenario. Europe's first steps were in fact oriented toward a supranational dimension, that would have had the effect of eroding the nation's prerogatives. In this sense, despite being far from the political scene from 1946 to 1958, de Gaulle strongly opposed any plan of federal Europe, the most important of which was represented by the establishment of the European Defense Community.

1.1 De Gaulle: war and politics

Born in Lille on November 1890, since the very beginning, Charles de Gaulle was raised nourished by a very strong patriotic feeling. His family was devoted to the Roman Catholic Church and was permeated by a fierce sense of belonging to France. His father, Henri, was in fact a veteran of Franco-Prussian War, that culminated with the huge France humiliation in Sedan¹. Henri de Gaulle, a history professor and fervent patriot, largely influenced his children, who grew up with the scope of restoring France greatness and with a fervent revanchist sentiment. As de Gaulle will later write in his *Mémoires de guerre*:

«Mon père, homme de pensée, de culture, de tradition, était imprégné du sentiment de la dignité de la France. Il m'en a découvert l'histoire².»

His mother played also a central role in the shaping of de Gaulle's mentality. She was even more intransigent than her husband in her devotion to the country and far more reluctant to accept the republican form of government, as she was a fervent monarchist. De Gaulle's education was in no contradiction with his family tradition and values. From 1896 to 1900, he attended the Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin, ruled by the Brothers of the Christian schools, and later the Jesuits École Libre until 1907 in Paris.

His father strongly influenced him during all the years of his early formation. From Henri, he will inherit the ability to look over history in a detached-and consequentially-clear manner. Thus he became able to impartially judge all the errors made by the nation and by its leaders during the Second Empire.

What emerged from his youth and from the education he received was a man hugely permeated by patriotism and so, naturally attracted by the military career. The military was the only apparatus, according to him, that could rewrite the destiny of France in Europe. In this sense, the years he passed in the military academy of Saint-Cyr, represented the highest contribution in the shaping of his ideas. Following 1904, the world was assisting to the establishment of new alliances and to the rising of new tensions. France and Germany, even if not always directly involved, were however often implied. The issue of the territories of Alsace and Lorraine, despite being dormant for a while, emerged again after 1910 in the form of local incidents.

¹ FENBY JONATHAN, *The General, Charles de Gaulle and the France he saved*, Skyhorse publishing, New York, 2012, p. 81.

² DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Mémoires de guerre*, Tome I, Plon, Paris, p.1.

Furthermore, the pan-German propaganda that characterized the reign of William II, contributed to the awakening of a French nationalism that slowly spread in the military circles.

It was in this specific scenario that de Gaulle developed his concept of nation. Around this image he will later base his entire vision of international relations as well as his political thought.

He refused to consider the nation as merely dependant by specific ethnic or territorial characteristics. France had, from his point of view, a well-defined mission, that is to say, being the world spokesman of precise values: free determination, justice and rights.

The concept of nation was not dependent by the one of ideology. Indeed, de Gaulle will always reject every form of ideology, considered as a deceptive element, transcendent from national boundaries. The nation and its interests were fundamental, ideologies only transitory. This conception can be very useful to later examine his ideas over all the European projects and his refusal of every supranational aspect they implied. Supranationalism would have, according to him, destroyed every nation's prerogative, as well as its democratic principles and bases.

The government was the necessary appendix of the nation. According to de Gaulle, it played a fundamental role in safeguarding and protecting the nation and its independence. Despite he was not an admirer of the Third Republic, a regime he will always condemn, he proved to be a republicanism supporter. The Republic he had imagined was to be guided by a strong leader, to be accompanied by a weak legislative power. Moreover, he had little sympathy for political parties, accused to be guided only by selfish men who did nothing for the nation's interests.

The outbreak of the First World War is traditionally considered as the event that definitely shaped de Gaulle personality, political thought and military considerations. In light of that revanchist feeling he was permeated by since his childhood, it can be cautiously affirmed that de Gaulle sought in the Great War the decisive fight between France and Germany. This conviction was influenced for sure, by the awakening of nationalism in the form of a necessary revenge over Germany.

The letters he sent to his mother from the front showed a partial understanding of the real entity of the conflict, which was generally underestimated.

What is interesting to highlight is his growing despising of the French Third Republic, a sentiment that increasingly strengthened as a consequence of all the difficulties the country was facing during the war. This disdain emerged once more in the above-mentioned letters he addressed to his mother, in which he criticized the excessive

power the Parliament had and the subsequent dependence the executive was subjected to.

The year after the war had started, de Gaulle was still convinced of the French military superiority. The reason why France had not won the war yet was that the German political system was deemed by him better than the French one.

March 1916 was the date that marked the beginning of his imprisonment and can be considered another turning point in his life. De Gaulle developed a new conception of the war, now understanding also its most innovative factors³. Parallel to the new interpretation he gave to the conflict, he also revised also his ideas of political regimes. He basically formulated and recognized the necessity of separating the military power from the civil one, the latter was in fact playing a broader role during the conflict.

The ongoing war proved to be a clash between nations, in which every single dimension of a country was involved, from the economic, political and social points of view. In this sense, the French political regime was seriously questioned by de Gaulle.

In a speech he gave for his companions he mourned about the uncontrolled parliamentarism the Third Republic was characterized by and the consequent loss of importance the President of the Republic was experiencing. According to de Gaulle, the figure of the President of the Republic should embody the principle of unity of the nation, however, it was then reduced to a mere representative role and undressed of all its executive powers.

As the First World War was coming to an end, de Gaulle was fully aware that the peace would not last long. This conviction was further strengthened by the fact that the Franco-German rivalries were still in place. He was strongly convinced that Germany would have disattended all the provisions set up by the Versailles Treaty and that the country would have strived, even using the force, for a partial revision of the peace treaty.

Indeed, he believed that the war had not come to an end and the Treaty of Versailles was only a temporary armistice.

The years between the two great wars were characterized by his reflection over France's destiny in Europe. During those years, Europe was still not a central issue. The view he had about it was largely shared by the majority of the XX century leaders: it was only a matter of relations among different and independent nations. Furthermore, the European issue was still biased by the Franco-German tensions.

³ JACKSON JULIAN, *A Certain Idea of France: The life of Charles de Gaulle*, Penguin Books, London, 2018, p.150.

Europe was for him, during those years, reduced only to the conflict between these two countries.

The Weimar Republic, a consequence of the German defeat in WWI, contributed to exacerbate de Gaulle's diffidence towards Germany. The new political system proved to be instable from every point of view. The Constitution provided in fact for a huge disequilibrium of powers and paved the way for a parties regime, the main cause of its weakness.

Nonetheless, the point that troubled de Gaulle the most was the fact that Germany was still a unitary state. It is worth to further analyze this statement since it can be considered the pivot around which the General's European conception was based on. As Maillard⁴ argued, de Gaulle was not concerned about German unity in itself, but he feared instead the centralized apparatus in which the country was organized by Bismarck.

A strong and centralized state could, according to de Gaulle still represent a threat, in the first place, for France and subsequently for the entire European continent.

In addition, the country was still largely influenced by those social forces and classes, the army and the heavy industry, that had previously given their support to the old regime that had led the country to wage war⁵.

Indeed, two other aspects contributed to upset the General. The first one was related to the alleged reorganization of the Reichswehr, while the second regarded the ambiguous foreign policy the Weimar Republic was pursuing with both the West and the East. In 1922 in fact, the Republic inaugurated a sort of economic collaboration with the U.S.S.R.

De Gaulle's concerns were further confirmed by the rapid collapse of the Weimar Republic followed by the Hitler's takeover.

It was just during those years that his book *Vers l'Armée de metier*, was published. A huge part of the work was dedicated to his analysis of all the factors that led the two countries to fight one against the other. What emerged from the book is that de Gaulle will maintain for all his life a double attitude towards Germany. On the one hand in fact, he admired the German strength and their undeniable military might. They were, in the General's opinion, a well-organized population from every point of view. On the other hand, however, he deemed the Germans to be highly contradictory and this was obvious considering that the country consisted in different people, often

⁴ MAILLARD PIERRE, *De Gaulle et l'Europe, entre la nation et Maastricht*, Tallandier, Paris, 1995, p.62

⁵ This fear will follow de Gaulle until the end of the Second World War, when West Germany will be given its Basic Law and will be organized in a federal structure. The process of democratization the country will be forced to, will lead to a complete upheaval of the pre-war social classes and force ratios that will completely detach from the old regime.

demanding for their division.

The outbreak of the Second World War did not substantially change de Gaulle's perspectives and ideas over Europe. In 1940 the French situation appeared to be desperate. De Gaulle was appointed by the government, led by Paul Reynaud, Under-Secretary of State for National Defence and War.

The German troops entered in Paris on June 14th 1940 and, only two days later, de Gaulle was sent to London to ask the Prime Minister Churchill for aerial and maritime forces support. In the meanwhile, Reynaud was replaced by Marshal Pétain, a very popular man among the French people, who started negotiating the armistice with the German forces. Refusing to surrender, de Gaulle, who in the meanwhile flew back to London, was authorized by the British Prime Minister to make an appeal from the BBC radio.

The June 18th 1940 appeal to France is traditionally considered by historiography as the beginning of de Gaulle *charisma* and of the Gaullist movement.

« Les chefs qui, depuis de nombreuses années, sont à la tête des armées françaises, ont formé un gouvernement. Ce gouvernement, alléguant la défaite de nos armées, s'est mis en rapport avec l'ennemi pour cesser le combat.

Certes, nous avons été, nous sommes submergés par la force mécanique, terrestre et aérienne de l'ennemi.

Infiniment plus que leur nombre, ce sont les chars, les avions, la tactique des Allemands qui nous font reculer. Ce sont les chars, les avions, la tactique des Allemands qui ont surpris nos chefs au point de les amener là où ils en sont aujourd'hui.

Mais le dernier mot est-il dit ? L'espérance doit-elle disparaître ? La défaite est-elle définitive ? Non !

Croyez-moi, moi qui vous parle en connaissance de cause et vous dis que rien n'est perdu pour la France. Les mêmes moyens qui nous ont vaincus peuvent faire venir un jour la victoire.

Car la France n'est pas seule ! Elle n'est pas seule ! Elle n'est pas seule ! Elle a un vaste Empire derrière elle. Elle peut faire bloc avec l'Empire britannique qui tient la mer et continue la lutte. Elle peut, comme l'Angleterre, utiliser sans limites l'immense industrie des Etats-Unis.

Cette guerre n'est pas limitée au territoire de notre malheureux pays. Cette guerre n'est pas tranchée par la bataille de France. Cette guerre est une guerre mondiale. Toutes les fautes, tous les retards, toutes les souffrances n'empêchent pas qu'il y a, dans l'univers, tous les moyens pour écraser un jour nos ennemis. Foudroyés aujourd'hui par la force mécanique, nous pourrons vaincre dans l'avenir par une force mécanique supérieure. Le destin du monde est là.

Moi, général de Gaulle, actuellement à Londres, j'invite les officiers et les soldats français qui se trouvent en territoire britannique ou qui viendraient à s'y trouver, avec leurs armes ou sans leurs armes, j'invite les ingénieurs et les ouvriers spécialisés des industries d'armement qui se trouvent en territoire britannique ou qui viendraient à s'y trouver, à se mettre en rapport avec moi.

Quoi qu'il arrive, la Flamme de la résistance française ne doit pas s'éteindre et ne s'éteindra pas. Demain, comme aujourd'hui, je parlerai à la radio de Londres⁶. »

What is extremely important to highlight is that his appeal to the nation was substantially addressed to the army. He actually invited all the French soldiers to keep fighting with the British ally and to find in them the support they required.

There were other speeches that followed the June 18th appeal, which is still considered to be the founding act of the *France Libre* resistance movement. In a letter addressed, few days later, to Winston Churchill he reiterated once again the formal apolitical and military basis of this new movement and also explained where the legitimacy of his new mission came from. He claimed to be the last member of the last independent government and, more important, to be a general of the French army. However, at a first stand, the movement did not enjoy the necessary support, as de Gaulle's position was still very weak and the French people were disillusioned after the defeat.

The progressive politicization of the *France Libre* followed the establishment of de Gaulle's contacts with France internal resistance, especially after the German attack to the U.S.S.R.

The new order convinced him of the necessity to rebuilt the unity of his country through the support and the representation of all those resistance movements that were slowly appearing in France. The document that, above all, signed the political conversion of the *France Libre* is considered to be the *Déclaration aux mouvements de résistance*, submitted by de Gaulle to the trade unionist Pineau in London on April 1942. The document, as Quagliariello⁷ highlighted, consisted in four main points: the full acceptance of democracy, followed by the conviction that national unity could only be embodied by the republican tradition, the necessity of a sort of revolution - to be carried out once the war had end - of political, economic and social aspects and last but not least, he reiterated his reject of both the Third Republic and the Vichy Regime. The declaration must be however examined in the light of the fact that, every General's political declaration and act, during the war period, was influenced by two main

⁶ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Appel du 18 juin 1940*. Available at: <http://www.cher.gouv.fr/content/download/12058/81263/file/Appel+du+18+juin+1940.+de+Gaulle.pdf>.

⁷ QUAGLIARIELLO GAETANO, *De Gaulle*, Rubbettino, Catanzaro, 2012, p.98.

worries: the echo his actions would have had in France and the need for his movement to obtain a formal recognition from other nations⁸.

In the meanwhile de Gaulle's relations with Britain, and consequentially with the United States, started to deteriorate and this led the General to seek for a rapprochement with the Soviet Union.

De Gaulle began to distance himself from the United States mainly in the light of Roosevelt's ideas over the reorganization of Europe after the war. In fact, the USA President aimed at a substantial reduction of the European nation states, a move that would have favoured the American economic hegemony within the Old Continent. From de Gaulle's perspective, of course, this would have been unacceptable since the role he aimed at giving to France. These conflicting views surely influenced for sure the position the *France Libre* has had since then with the UK, which preferred not to distance itself from its overseas ally.

After 1942, the movement was proceeding towards its rapid politicization. The American unwillingness to cooperate with de Gaulle induced him to seek for a sort of democratic legitimacy that could only come by the adherence of those representatives of the Third Republic to his movement. This resulted in his progressive rapprochement with the parties environment that concretized in a shift to the left of the *France Libre* government in London. The politicization of the movement resulted even more evident with the creation in Alger of the *Assemblée Consultative provisoire* a sort of Parliament made up of all those members of movements and parties linked to France's resistance.

In the aftermath of the Paris liberation in 1944, the provisory government of Alger was finally able to move back to France and changed its name in *Gouvernement provisoire de la République Française*. The General was appointed leader of this temporary government and remained in charge of it until 1946. The transitional period, that led to the establishment of the Fourth Republic, was inaugurated by de Gaulle's decision to schedule two referenda by October 1945, parallel to the election for the Constituent Assembly. The first referendum asked the French citizens to decide on the maintenance of the institutions of the Third Republic. The second, instead, concerned the fixation of a term for the works of the Constituent Assembly and the necessity for them to be further submitted to a confirmative referendum. By the means of both initiatives, the French people, women included, were asked to choose the future institutional framework of France. The practice of calling for *referenda* will be the

⁸ *Ivi.*

distinctive point of Gaullism.

With a striking majority, France expressed its unwillingness to return to the old pre-war regime. The assembly emerged from the elections, in charge of drafting the new Constitution was strongly left-oriented. The majority of its members were Socialists, Communists and those leftists Christian Democrats, who joined the new emerging party of the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP)*. From November 1945 until January 1946, General Charles de Gaulle held the office of French President of the Council. However, soon the newly established political elite proved to be in disagreement over the institutional form of the new Republic.

While Communists supported the idea of a mono-cameral legislative, that would have been largely controlled by the people itself, others were mostly favouring the perspective of giving the executive a more predominant role. Of course, despite he kept himself far from this debate, de Gaulle was one of them.

The exacerbating of these conflicts in the bosom of the Constituent Assembly, as well as the Communist struggle to draft a Constitution inspired by the 1793 experience, led General de Gaulle to resign from his office.

What induced the General to withdraw from his position has been frequently discussed. Indeed, behind this decision stood the conviction that he would have been recalled to office. Nonetheless, he was fully aware that the period of crisis he was asked to manage was still not over. Thus he decided to step aside the political framework and to prepare the next move for the forthcoming tempest the newly born Republic was sure to face.

Furthermore, the major frictions that led him to abandon the power were to be found in the substantial incompatibility and hostility of his role - and more in general - of his ideas with the role of the French parties. He was convinced that the party system was not at all able to confront itself with the huge efforts and compromises the post war period required for. The first incomprehension did not come much later. By the time of the consultative referendum, through which the population was asked to pronounce on the new Constitutions, the MRP decided to distance itself from the tripartite ruling coalition, supporting the “no” at the polls. In this specific occasion, the General decided not to take part to the debate and remained silent.

As expected, the project that emerged from the Constituent Assembly was not approved by the people, and by the time of the election of a new Constituent Assembly, the dominant party resulted to be the MRP. However, it decided not to substantially change the Constitution draft, but only proposed some amendments to it. The most important were the reduction of the Assembly prerogatives and the strengthening of

the President of the Republic's role.

This time the General decided to pronounce himself and, on June 1946, he gave one of his most famous speeches in Bayeux. The speech can be undoubtedly considered as a declaration of intents as it contained the institutional asset de Gaulle aimed at giving to France. The main points of his institutional proposals can be summarized in: the necessity of a bicameral Parliament; the clear need of separation between powers; the need for the President of the Republic to be a *super partes* figure, and – to this aim – to be completely free from any party influence. A specific electoral college, made up of Parliament members and representatives of all France's *outré-mer* possessions, should have been charged of his election. The executive, embodied by the President of the Republic, would have played a more consistent and important role, as he was not to be perceived as a representative figure anymore.

These proposals were considered outrageous and provoked a deeper gap between de Gaulle and the Christian-Democrats.

However, the new Constitution was approved, even if the percentage of abstentions was extremely high. For de Gaulle this was a sort of victory and was one of the reasons why he decided to found his own political party.

Nonetheless, his decision came also from a structural analysis of the post-world scenario. He considered the outbreak of the Cold War a highly likely event and decided, in order to face the communist threat, both from an internal and external points of view, to closely cooperate with the American side. This choice must be however examined in the light of the circumstances of the time; it was taken on the basis of a realistic approach towards the two blocks division that was slowly emerging and he still continued to be profoundly anti-American. As he was, for his entire life, a strong supporter of the centrality of the nation, he deemed that the division of the world into two spheres of influence, and so not nation-based, could not lead to a substantial equilibrium. Furthermore, what pushed de Gaulle to embrace the American side was mostly the U.S.S.R. attitude, considered by the General in strong disagreement with France's ambitions.

A further reason that urged de Gaulle to found a new party can be found also on the economic ground, at that moment extremely weak. This internal weakness would have, from the General's perspective, led the country to another terrible internal crisis. This idea convinced him that it was high time to return inside the political arena.

On April 14th 1947, the *Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF)* was officially founded. He choice of defining his movement a "*Rassemblement* ", a rally, was no casualty. Through this name, the General, who had been always hostile to political

parties, aimed at avoiding any possible accuse of factionalism. The RPF should have been, according to him, in total continuity with the *France Libre* experience.

Indeed, both movements had the specific task to restore France *grandeur* and they were both founded following the outbreak of a dangerous crisis. The *France Libre* was deemed necessary to contrast the relentless Nazi's invasion, while instead the RPF was born following the tragic events the Cold War brought about. Had none of these two contingencies happened, both the *France Libre* and the RPF would have been useless. They simply arose from specific events of the time.

The RPF proved to be more successful than the *France Libre*, immediately gaining many recruits. In the municipal elections that were held in 1947 it obtained 35% of consensus, then culminated in the 1951 elections, when it became the largest parliamentary force, winning 119 seats⁹.

Despite this consistent result, the 1951 elections were no victory for the Gaullists at all. Right before going to the urns, the majority parties, the so called Third Force (socialists, radicals, conservatives and Christian-Democrats) were able, after a long and intense debate, to pass a new electoral law that became widely known as the "apparentement law". This new law provided for the opportunity for parties to find an ally in each district. If the "apparented" list gained at least half of the votes, it would obtain all the seats in that specific district. In case no group of lists, or no single list, would have obtained an absolute majority, the seats were to be redistribute among all the lists, by the means of the highest average formula¹⁰.

Indeed, this new electoral system was voted by the ruling coalition, willing to exclude from governmental positions both the Communists and the Gaullists. Despite being very powerful in the country, the two parties were in fact completely isolated in terms of alliances.

What determined the RPF defeat at the 1951 elections was its inability to take advantage from the "apparentement law", which was underestimated. The RPF was slowly declining, also due to its internal contrasts. The movement was fragmented among two different wings, one represented by the intransigent military Gaullism and the other represented by those supporting a parliamentary Gaullism. These contrasting points of view were one of the main causes why the RPF ceased to take action on the political and parliamentary ground, remaining a mere military organization.

Nonetheless, the Gaullist presence remained relevant until 1955, making itself heard

⁹ ATKIN NICHOLAS, *The Fifth French Republic*, Palgrave Macmillan, England, p.33.

¹⁰ TOUBEAU SIMON, *Electoral System Change in Europe since 1945: France*. Available at: http://www.electoralsystemchanges.eu/Files/media/MEDIA_211/FILE/France_summary.pdf.

in the first phases of the process of European integration. Starting from June 1950, the General, contrarily to what he had strongly affirmed since then, became favorable to the German rearmament, to be circumscribed however, inside a European confederal agreement. This change of view arose as a consequence of the everyday more impellent Communist threat and can be so defined, once again, as the result of particular contingencies. According to the General, the European security was to be necessarily built around a closer cooperation between France and Germany.

As the European Coal and Steel Community was established in 1952, the Gaullist movement clarified its position toward the process of integration. To a supranational character, in which only specific interests prevailed, namely those of the technocrats and those belonging to the Anglo-Saxon world, de Gaulle contraposed his idea of a confederal Europe, in which the role of the nation, was predominant. The Gaullist positions radicalized following the shift from the economic dimension, embodied by the E.C.S.C., to the political one, represented by the European Defense Community.

As the European integration process was slowly taking place, it must be recalled that during the years from 1946 - when he decided to retire from the political scene - to 1958, date that marked his return to power as President of the Republic, de Gaulle kept himself far from political issues, retiring to Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises.

1.2 The Pleven Plan and its failure

Alongside the development of the Shuman Plan, which established the European Coal and Steel Community, a new project was slowly shaping in Europe: the European Defense Community (E.D.C.). It originated from the necessity to rearm Germany, a fact that brought not few worries in the Old Continent. Furthermore, some international events, such as the Berlin blockade in 1948 and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, highlighted how precarious the situation was. This new international scenario convinced the USA to push for a further integration of the German Federal Republic in the defense system inaugurated by the Atlantic Alliance in 1949.

De Gaulle immediately recognized the reasonableness of the Americans' proposal at the condition, however, that the creation of a more integrate military organization in Europe, would have granted France's predominance in the Old Continent. Despite being frequently depicted as a strong anti-Europeanist, General de Gaulle constantly invoked, from the years that went from 1947 until 1952, the necessity to build a European organization. In the specific, this need to create a closer Europe emerged in the light of France's interest. France should have been the nation in charge of guiding the process of integration, standing on a privileged position. The Europe de Gaulle envisaged was a confederal union, based upon strong and independent nation-states and more important, based upon a military alliance with West Germany, which limits of action where to be decided inside this European confederation. In this sense, the European organization process should have begun from its defense. The European defense should have necessarily passed through the European people's association. Its organization should have been based upon the consideration that nations and peoples differed from each other and, from the assumption that the army was called to fight only for its country and was willing to receive orders only from its government. His ideas were the opposite of what instead the European Defense Community provided for.

The proposal came from the French government led by René Pleven in 1950 and laid down the establishment of a European army that would have been:

- dependent from the European political institutions; under the responsibility of a European Minister of the Defense;
- under the control of a European Assembly;
- financed by a common military budget.

Furthermore, all the contingents provided by national governments would have been incorporated at a level of the smallest possible unity. Thus, national unities of European divisions would have been made up of a maximum of 800/1000 men, in order to dilute the German presence. Lastly, this European army would have been integrated inside the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and, consequentially, it would have been under the American strategic direction¹¹.

Despite with small modifications to the initial project, the plan was approved by the six founding countries in 1952.

The issue of creating a European army troubled the French politics and led to an heated debate that lasted for years. The project, as previously stated, was deemed necessary in order to control the German rearmament in the European framework and also implied, according to Article 38, the establishment of a political union, that would have later absorbed those functions proper of the E.C.S.C. and those of the E.D.C.

The European Defense Community would so have been conferred a supranational dimension and mainly for this reason, its ratification continued to be postponed for years by all the French governments that have followed.

From the very beginning, de Gaulle condemned the project as it would have been based upon a supranational Europe that would have questioned the central political and cultural role of the nation¹².

Already on October 1950, he indirectly denounced the Pleven Plan in his speech at the Vélodrome d'Hiver, asserting the absolute necessity of an independent national defense *apparatus*. The following passage is in this sense extremely explanatory:

«S'il faut que la France ait une épée, il faut que ce soit la sienne. Certes, la sécurité du monde libre forme un tout. Certes, nous faisons partie de l'Alliance Atlantique et, même, nous en sommes l'avant-garde. Certes, les États doivent régler d'accord l'ensemble de leurs préparatifs. Quant aux opérations à mener le cas échéant par les forces occidentales, sans doute faut-il qu'elles soient dirigées par un système unique de commandement. Mais, parce que la cohésion s'impose, il ne s'agit pas de passer la main. I ne s'agit pas, sous prétexte du matériel ou des crédits à obtenir, de l'unité dans la préparation, des nécessités de l'action commune, de soumettre les intérêts de la France et de l'Union Française à des décisions extérieures. Il ne s'agit pas, comme incline à le faire un pouvoir flageolant et larmoyant, de dissoudre ses responsabilités nationales dans un système dirigé par d'autres. Pour la défense de la Métropole, de l'Afrique française, de l'Indochine, nous

¹¹ DEDMAN MARTIN, *The Origins and Development of the European Union 1945-1995: A History of European Integration*, Routledge, London, 1996, p. 74.

¹² QUAGLIARIELLO GAETANO, *op.cit.* p. 252.

acclamons, nous, la coopération, mais nous ne voulons pas d'absorption.¹³»

Furthermore, on January 7th 1951, in a speech he gave at Nîmes, he affirmed that:

«Pour organiser l'Europe, qu'on la prenne donc comme elle est, c'est-à-dire comme une ensemble formé de peuples très distinct dont chacun a, bien à lui, son corps, son âme, son génie et, par suite, doit avoir ses forces. Renvoyons aux géomètres les plans étranges qui prétendent mêler, à l'intérieur des mêmes unités, les contingents de pays divers pour fabriquer l'armée apatride.¹⁴»

The General's opposition towards the common European army was not firstly inspired by the German re-militarization 'threat'. His rejection of the Plan came instead from the conception he had of the military. His willingness was to safeguard and to integrally preserve the French army's autonomy as well as its existence. He always considered the army as an essential national element, the only reason for the nation to remain unite and the tool through which reaffirming France's *grandeur*. The army was fundamental for General De Gaulle, since his very young age. It was impossible for him seeing it dissolving and being mixed with different nationalities and more important not having it under an entirely French command. An army deprived of its soul and of its main goal, the Motherland defense¹⁵, was out of the question.

Furthermore, another objection he made to the European army was about his very specific nature. The project imposed an army defined by de Gaulle as "*apatride*", an hybrid creation established for the defense of a Europe that still did not exist. It was unconceivable for the General the role this army should have had. Few years later, in 1953, his considerations were:

«Je viens de dire que le nom donné à l'armée dite « européenne » est un titre fallacieux. Pour qu'il y ait l'armée européenne, c'est-à-dire l'armée de l'Europe, il faut d'abord que l'Europe existe, en tant qu'entité politique, économique, financière, administrative et, par-dessus tout, morale, que cette entité soit assez vivante, établie, reconnue, pour obtenir le loyalisme congénital de ses sujets, pour avoir une politique qui lui soit propre et, pour que, le cas échéant, des millions d'hommes veuillent mourir pour elle. Est-ce le cas ? Pas

¹³ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Discours prononcé à Paris, 21 Octobre 1950*, Discours et Messages, II, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 387-388.

¹⁴ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Discours prononcé à Nîmes, 7 Janvier 1951*, Discours et Messages, II, Plon, Paris 1970, p. 405.

¹⁵ MAILLARD PIERRE, *De Gaulle et l'Europe, entre la nation et Maastricht*, Tallandier, Paris, 1995, p. 121.

un homme sérieux n'oserait répondre oui.¹⁶ »

The General opposition to the E.D.C. came also from his view on the basis of which was impossible to have an army not defending its own nation and not under the rule of its own government. Moreover, another argument can be added to explain why the General was so disappointed by the creation of a European army. Despite the fact that the Plan was born as a French proposal and, would have theoretically implied a French predominance in the direction of all the operations, it was nonetheless subjected to the American control by the means of the national forces' integration in the NATO. De Gaulle, whose strongly anti-Americanism reemerged in 1952, in a declaration made on June 1952, affirmed:

« Bien entendu, la France entre tous les grandes nations qui ont, aujourd'hui, une armée, est la seule qui perde la sienne. D'autre part, les dispositions financières adoptées pour la «communauté» stipulent que, des trois occupants de l'Allemagne de l'Ouest, la France est la seule auquel les frais de ses troupes que nous allons être amenés à nous retirer du Rhin, c'est-à-dire à jouer les comparses, tandis que l'Angleterre et les États-Unis laisseront leur forces en territoire allemand. En fin, la France ne pourra pas, sans l'agrément du chef suprême américain, envoyer dans les territoires d'outre-mer aucun des éléments qu'elle verse à l'armée dite « européenne ». [...] En acceptant ainsi d'être une espèce de protectorat, serons-nous, du moins, protégés ? Non !¹⁷ »

And moreover, the following year :

« Cette alliance, il était bon de l'accepter, puisque nous étions menacés. Mais il fallait qu'elle fût une alliance. L'inconsistance de notre régime fait en sorte qu'elle est une espèce de protectorat. Quel autre nom donner, en effet, à un système dans lequel la stratégie commune, y compris la défense de la France, dépend en réalité entièrement et exclusivement du commandant en chef américain, où nos bases, notamment celles du Maroc, lui sont livrées sans conditions, où nous ne pouvons disposer d'aucune de nos propres forces qu'avec son autorisation ?¹⁸ »

He remarked the strong dependence the Community would have had to the NATO

¹⁶ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenue à l'hôtel continental, 25 Février 1953*, Discours et Messages, II, Plon, Paris 1970, p. 565.

¹⁷ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Déclaration, 6 Juin 1952*, Discours et Messages, II, Plon, Paris 1970, p. 524.

¹⁸ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenue à l'Hotel Continental, 12 Novembre 1953*, Discours et Messages, II, Plon, Paris 1970, p. 589.

system also in a Conference he gave on February 1953 :

«Mais, à supposer même que l'Europe existât, comme État et comme nation, il faudrait pour qu'il y ait l'armée européenne, que l'Europe dispose de son armée. Or, cette armée dite « européenne » que le traité prétend bâtir, il la remet pour l'emploi, organiquement, automatiquement, uniquement, au commandant en chef atlantique, c'est-à-dire, pour peu qu'on veuille bien ne pas jouer sur les mots, au commandant en chef américain en Europe ce qui en fait l'un des instruments d'une stratégie américaine¹⁹ »

The E.D.C. would have, according to De Gaulle, not only deprived France of its own army, but would have also made it totally dependent from the American orders. This dependence from the USA can be explained considering the fact that the E.D.C. was not an autonomous institution such as the E.C.S.C., but a branch of the NATO. The European Defense forces would have been at the disposal of the North Atlantic Organization's Supreme Commander. It was a too deep cut for France's sovereignty. Here, lays the difference on the European construction, between the General and the main architect of this plan, Jean Monnet. On the one hand, De Gaulle, despite being in favor of a closer cooperation among European states, invoked the concept of nation as the only possible point of departure. On the other hand, Monnet was willing to sacrifice national sovereignty in favor of a broader community.²⁰

The General's worries for a German rearmament, as already explained, were quite marginal in the E.D.C. debate. Indeed, he was fully conscious that the Defense Community would have brought a substantial disequilibrium between France and West Germany, in favor of the latter. Nonetheless, his attitude toward Germany's re-militarization, as previously affirmed, changed with the outbreak of the Cold War.

In 1950, he declared the impossibility to impede the country defending itself. However, the German defense should have been the outcome of a previous agreement between the two countries, stipulated in a European political organization. Germany was no longer perceived as a threat by the General, who shifted instead his attention to the U.S.S.R.

In addition, it was a no-sense, from his point of view, opposing to a reality now well-established, such as the German Federal Republic. De Gaulle would have rather prefer a military agreement between France and West Germany than the creation of the European army.

¹⁹ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenue à l'hôtel continental, 25 Février 1953*, Discours et Messages, II, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 565-566.

²⁰ MAILLARD PIERRE, *De Gaulle et l'Europe, entre la nation et Maastricht*, Tallandier, Paris, 1995, p. 123.

The E.D.C. Treaty was ratified by all five countries except for France. The Treaty encountered the strong opposition of both Gaullists and Communists in the French National Assembly²¹.

De Gaulle made of the failure of the Plan his main goal during those years. In an interview that took place in 1954 - when the project was about to fail - he declared that:

«Je garantis que l'armée européenne ne se fera pas ! Je ferai tout ce qui sera en mon pouvoir d'entreprendre contre elle. Je travaillerai avec les communistes, pour lui barrer la route. Je déclencherai une révolution contre elle. Je préférerais encore m'associer aux Russes pour la stopper. Elle ne passera pas. Je le répète, je ferai une révolution pour l'empêcher.²² »

As already mentioned, three were the main reasons why De Gaulle, and part of the Gaullists, were hostile to the creation of the European army. Firstly, they feared the loss of sovereignty the Treaty implied. Furthermore, they accused the project to be designed by a small number of technocrats, whom main objective was the reduction of France's independence. This belief emerged in the already mentioned press conference the General gave in 1953:

«La France semblait n'être là que pour subir l'impulsion des autres. Les pouvoirs publics, privés d'un arbitrage national, livrés à toute les ingérences des intérêts particuliers, absorbés par des querelles dérisoires et inextricables, étaient hors d'état de mener au-dehors une action nette et cohérente. [...]

Rien, en effet, n'est curieux, comme les interventions publiques ou dissimulées des États-Unis pour contraindre notre pays à ratifier un traité qui le voue à la déchéance. Oui! Curieux ! Car enfin, ce traité, les États-Unis n'y sont pas partie. D'autre part s'il trouvent si bon pour les Français et les Allemands le système de la fusion, que ne se fusionnent-ils, eux, avec le Canada, le Mexique, le Brésil, l'Argentine ?²³ »

Then, a little concern was given to the possibility of a progressive Germanization of the European army. But, as already highlighted, this fear was marginal.

Another critic concerned what the Treaty implied, that is to say the abolition of

²¹ RUANE KEVIN, *The rise and fall of the The Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community Anglo-American Relations and the Crisis of European Defence, 1950–55*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2000, p. 36.

²² *Ivi* p. 120.

²³ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenue à l'Hotel Continental, 12 Novembre 1953*, Discours et Messages, II, Plon, Paris 1970, p. 594.

national armies. This would have, according to the opponents, cut all the ties with the French possessions *d'outre-mer*. The creation of the European army was strongly linked with the issue of the French colonial Empire.

Soon, it became clear that the establishment of the European political community (Art. 38) would have led to a sharp cut between France and its *outre-mer* territories. France devolution of its troops to the common army would have meant the impossibility for the country to still exert its control on its colonies.

The Treaty, as it was formulated, represented a consistent devolution of sovereignty and needed a strong leader to be approved by the French National Assembly. Unfortunately, the Fourth Republic was characterized by its weakness and by the continuous succession of different governments. Only between 1952 and 1954, France was ruled by three different Prime Ministers, Pinay, Meyer and Laniel.

In the meanwhile, on May 1954, the French army was humiliated by the Dien Bien Phu defeat in Indochina. As a consequence, the priority for the governments was not the ratification of the Treaty, that continued to be postponed. Finally, the old pro-European leadership was finally replaced by a strong, inflexible man: Pierre Mendès France. The new government was willing to submit the Treaty to the National Assembly on August the 25th 1954.

The Prime Minister was conscious that the National Assembly would never have ratified a treaty implying such a loss of sovereignty. On the other hand however, he knew that the failure of the Plan would have had tremendous repercussions over his government. He then proposed, influenced by some *anti-cédistes* personalities, few amendments to the original text. He asked for the abolition of Article 38, that provided the institution of a European Political Community; he proposed a limit to the supra-national dimension the E.D.C. implied, asking for an eight-years long national veto on the actions of the Board of Commissioners and, he also asked for the so called *clause de liaison*, which suggested the possibility for a country to retire from the pact in the case Germany would have been reunited²⁴. Of course, his proposals were considered unacceptable.

On August the 30th, 1954 the French National Assembly rejected the Treaty with a majority of 319 votes against 264.

Only four days before, on August 26th 1954, de Gaulle decided to stand for the last time against the ratification of the Treaty and made his last appeal to the nation:

²⁴ GILBERT MARK, *Storia politica dell'integrazione europea*, Editori Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2015, p.44.

«Dix ans après la Libération, il semble qu'une fois encore un sursaut, venu des profondeurs, va sauvegarder l'indépendance de la France. La conjuration, qui vise à la priver de sa souveraineté, à lui prendre son armée, à la séparer des terres et des États qui la prolongent outre-mer, paraît sur le point d'échouer devant le refus national.

Rien, pourtant, n'aura mis en une plus triste lumière l'inconsistance du régime. On l'a vu, cédant à l'étranger, inventer la soi-disant Communauté de défense et la maintenir à l'affiche pendant quelque trois années. Mais on a vu, en même temps, ses successifs cabinets se garder d'en demander la ratification, soit au peuple, soit au Parlement, tant était manifeste la répulsion du pays. Si l'actuel président du Conseil, quoique ayant consenti à abandonner beaucoup, a rejeté pour son compte l'intégral abandon, on peut voir le gouvernement, sur une question dont dépend l'existence même de la France, refuser d'engager la sienne !

Cependant, si la France parvient, *in extremis*, à se tirer du marais où certains voulaient la noyer sous prétexte de la défendre, la menace qui pèse sur le monde exige toujours qu'elle agisse, que l'Europe s'unisse, que les peuples libres organisent leur solidarité. Cela requiert une politique française. Viser délibérément à la détente internationale dont le critère soit la limitation des moyens de combat et l'interdiction contrôlée des armes atomiques ; associer les nations de l'Europe en une confédération ayant pour artères, faute de mieux, le Rhin, la mer du Nord, la Manche, la Méditerranée ; faire prendre au Pacte Atlantique le caractère d'une bonne alliance, non d'un mauvaise protectorat ; voilà la grande entreprise que le destin offre à la France.

Pour qu'elle y entraîne le monde, au lieu d'en être le souffre-douleur, il faut à sa tête une régime tel que son âme, sa mission, son intérêt, y aient leur représentant qualifié pour l'arbitrage ; il lui faut des pouvoirs publics que les institutions mêmes portent à la fermeté et à la continuité ; bref, il lui faut un système opposé à celui qui fut rebâti contre elle après sa victoire pour les yeux des partisans et les ingérences des étrangers.

Mais la nation vient de remuer. Cette réaction de salut peut, bientôt, en entraîner des autres. Il n'est pas dit que vous tous, Françaises, Français, ayez en vain, voici dix ans, crié votre espérance en la patrie libérée. Pour moi, malgré le bassesses du présent, je ne renonce pas plus qu'hier à la grandeur de la France²⁵.»

More in general, the reasons why the Treaty was not ratified in France were: the transformations in the international scenario that after Stalin's death changed the security's perception; the uprising of strong national feelings, in opposition with continental aspirations, embodied by the figure of General De Gaulle; the opposition of the military circles, hostile to the loss of sovereignty their army would have been

²⁵ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Déclaration, 26 août 1954*, Discours et Messages, Tome II, Dans l'attente 1946-1958, Plon, Paris, 1950, pp. 620-621.

subjected to.

1.3 De Gaulle and the Treaties of Rome

Following the failure of the European Defense Community, the process of European integration came to an halt. The delicate issue of the German rearmament was finally solved by the means of traditional diplomacy.

German was allowed to re-organize its own army and to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization due to the creation of the Western European Union in 1954. The agreements establishing the Union provided for West Germany's full sovereignty with however, some restrictions. The United Kingdom maintained its troops in the German territory and the FRG was impeded to buy and to fabricate nuclear weapons and battleships²⁶.

Nonetheless, despite the great overall delusion, some new projects were about to be designed.

Jean Monnet decided to retire from the presidency of the E.C.S.C. High Authority, so that he would have entirely focused on the European integration relaunching. Furthermore, the small Benelux countries, always in favor of the community approach, which granted consideration even to their interests, largely contributed to this new integration *impetus*. Three major projects emerged. Monnet proposed a more sectorial approach based on the nuclear energy field. Through this sectors not only was possible to reach the energetic independence from the Middle East countries, but also member states would have been assured a stricter control over Germany's researches on the civil nuclear.

Spaak, similarly to Monnet, affirmed instead his willingness to expand the work of the E.C.S.C. to other sectors, namely the transport and the energetic ones.

Beyen, the then Dutch Foreign Minister, in opposition with the sectorial integration, proposed instead the creation of a great European common market. Since 1954, he pushed for the establishment of a custom union between the six that would have abolished every single form of commercial discrimination²⁷.

These proposals were clustered together in a *memorandum*, sent to the respective Foreign Ministers of the six. Despite the substantial different views on how the relaunching should have happened, this was the starting point for calling a meeting in Messina on June 1955. France was not in favor to the idea of a common market being instead, more oriented toward the sectorial approach in the energetic field. The other five countries supported the Beyen's project, especially the Germans. The Minister of

²⁶ GILBERT MARK, *op. cit.*, p.46.

²⁷ *Ivi*, p.48.

the Economy Erhard was really hostile to Monnet's idea, accused to be largely interventionist. Germany wanted a complete free-trade market. Italy and the Benelux countries were more willing to apply to the common market well-defined fiscal and social regulatory norms.

During the Messina conference, Spaak was appointed President of the committee in charge of examining and transforming all the different ideas arisen from the conference into concrete directives. The importance of this meeting derived from the fact it concretized the progressive shift from the sectorial to the so called horizontal integration. It provided for the realization of a European economic union based on the free movement of the different factors of production.

What the Spaak rapport, approved in 1956, established can be basically summarized into three points: the creation of a common free market, that would have led to the abolition of all the internal obstacles to trade, with shared rules and policies; the settlement of institutions that would act on the basis of a common method and, the sectorial integration in the nuclear energy field (EURATOM).

Three major events allowed the signing of the Treaties of Rome. On the one hand, the change in the France's attitude, able to impose its own needs. The new government, headed by Guy Mollet, obtained the possibility for each member state to independently carry out researches on the military nuclear. Furthermore, it obtained common economic and social policies, as well as the inclusion of France's colonial possessions inside the common market.

On the other hand, the international context which was shattered by two events, both happened in 1956: the Suez Crisis, that showed how deep the European dependence from other states was and the Hungary revolt that contributed to the re-growth of a shared apprehension feeling.

On March 25th, 1957, the governments of the six proceeded to the signing of the EURATOM Treaty and the one establishing the European Economic Community (E.E.C.). The treaties became effective starting from January 1st, 1958.

The preamble of the Treaty of the European Economic Community clearly exposed what the main goals of the organization were:

«His Majesty the king of the Belgians, the president of the Federal Republic of Germany, the President of the French Republic, the president of the Italian Republic, Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg, Her Majesty the Queen of the Netherlands, determined to establish the foundations of an ever closer union among the European peoples, decided to ensure the economic and social progress of their countries by common

action in eliminating the barriers which divide Europe, directing their efforts to the essential purpose of constantly improving the living and working conditions of their peoples, recognizing that the removal of existing obstacles calls for concerted action in order to guarantee a steady expansion, a balanced trade and fair competition, anxious to strengthen the unity of their economies and to ensure their harmonious development by reducing the differences existing between the various regions and by mitigating the backwardness of the less favored, desirous of contributing by means of a common commercial policy to the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade, intending to confirm the solidarity which binds Europe and overseas countries, and desiring to ensure the development of their prosperity, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, resolved to strengthen the safeguards of peace and liberty by establishing this combination of resources, and calling upon the other peoples of Europe who share their ideal to join in their efforts, have decided to create a European Economic Community²⁸»

The institutional structure that was given to the Community was basically traced on the model of the E.C.S.C., evidence of the large influence Monnet was still able to exert. The High Authority was replaced by a European Commission made up of nine independent members, each one chosen jointly by the national governments and in charge for four years. The Commission was the only organ with the exclusive power to make legislative proposals through the means of directives, decisions and regulations and was the responsible for their implementation.

The Council had the duty to complement the Commission in its work and was composed by the representatives of the Member States, at a ministerial level. Its main task was the approval of the legislative acts proposed by the Commission at a qualified majority. It also had the power to amend the Commission's act, at the only condition unanimity was reached.

The new Community still continued to share with the E.C.S.C. the Assembly and the Court of Justice, that gained new important functions.

The Assembly was made up of 162 members appointed by the respective national parliaments. Its tasks were at the beginning merely consultative, but were expected to enlarge as well as its members would have to be directly elected at universal suffrage. One important function that was attributed to the Assembly was its possibility to dismiss the Commission by the means of a vote of no confidence.

The role of the Court of Justice, as already mentioned, was strengthened. With the new

²⁸ Treaty establishing the European Economic Community. Available at: https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/ardb/evt/1_avrupa_birligi/1_3_antlasmalar/1_3_1_kurucu_antlasmalar/1957_treaty_establishing_eec.pdf.

E.E.C. Treaty, both the Commission and the Member States would have had the possibility to refer to the Court, whenever national legislation was found in open contrast with the correct application of European laws.

It was also created an Economic and Social Council, with mere consultative functions. It had the duty to represent the different productive categories of all the member states. It is worth noticing that soon the Commission became the most powerful organ in the Community. This was mainly due to three reasons. Firstly, because of the high profile of its members. Its first president was a committed federalist, Walter Hallstein. Furthermore, its importance derived also from its function of market supervisor. The E.E.C. Treaty can be considered as the first supranational antitrust agreement. The Commission was given the task to decide how all the existent cartels would have been abolished. At last, its empowerment derived from the huge responsibilities attributed to it. The Treaty assigned to the Commission very precise duties as well as a very precise timetable to achieve them²⁹.

What all these institutions were asked to do is clearly stated in Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty.

The Community, according to Article 2 was required to:

«It shall be the aim of the Community, by establishing a Common Market and progressively approximating the economic policies of Member States, to promote throughout the Community a harmonious development of economic activities, a continuous and balanced expansion, an increased stability, an accelerated raising of the standard of living and closer relations between its Member States. ³⁰»

Furthermore, Article 3 fixed the objectives the Community should have achieved in a twelve-years period:

«For the purposes set out in the preceding Article, the activities of the Community shall include, under the conditions and with the timing provided for in this Treaty:

- (a) the elimination, as between Member States, of customs duties and of quantitative restrictions in regard to the importation and exportation of goods, as well as of all other measures with equivalent effect;
- (b) the establishment of a common customs tariff and a common commercial policy towards third countries;

²⁹ GILBERT MARK, *op. cit.* pp. 57-58.

³⁰ Treaty establishing the European Economic Community. Available at: https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/ardb/evt/1_avrupa_birligi/1_3_antlasmalar/1_3_1_kurucu_antlasmalar/1957_treaty_establishing_eec.pdf.

- (c) the abolition, as between Member States, of the obstacles to the free movement of persons, services and capital;
- (d) the inauguration of a common agricultural policy; (e) the inauguration of a common transport policy;
- (f) the establishment of a system ensuring that competition shall not be distorted in the Common Market;
- (g) the application of procedures which shall make it possible to co-ordinate the economic policies of Member States and to remedy disequilibria in their balances of payments;
- (h) the approximation of their respective municipal law to the extent necessary for the functioning of the Common Market;
- (i) the creation of a European Social Fund in order to improve the possibilities of employment for workers and to contribute to the raising of their standard of living;
- (j) the establishment of a European Investment Bank intended to facilitate the economic expansion of the Community through the creation of new resources; and
- (k) the association of overseas countries and territories with the Community with a view to increasing trade and to pursuing jointly their effort towards economic and social development.³¹»

The Treaty provided for a more ambitious project. The six committed themselves to extend, once again in a twelve-years period, the common market even to agriculture and trade of agricultural goods. Article 39 is useful to clarify the goals this policy should have achieved:

« 1. The common agricultural policy shall have as its objectives:

- (a) to increase agricultural productivity by developing technical progress and by ensuring the rational development of agricultural production and the optimum utilization of the factors of production, particularly labor;
- (b) to ensure thereby a fair standard of living for the agricultural population, particularly by the increasing of the individual earnings of persons engaged in agriculture;
- (c) to stabilize markets;
- (d) to guarantee regular supplies; and
- (e) to ensure reasonable prices in supplies to consumers.

2. In working out the common agricultural policy and the special methods which it may involve, due account shall be taken of:

- (a) the particular character of agricultural activities, arising from the social structure of agriculture and from structural and natural disparities between the various agricultural regions;

³¹ *Ivi.*

- (b) the need to make the appropriate adjustments gradually; and
- (c) the fact that in Member States agriculture constitutes a sector which is closely linked with the economy as a whole ³².»

Nowadays, it is commonly accepted the view according to which if General de Gaulle would have come back to power before 1958, the Treaties of Rome would have never been signed³³. Indeed, the General's attitude toward the process of European integration can be misleading. In 1957, in a letter he wrote to Jacques Rueff, a French economist, called in 1958 to participate in the works for the economic and financial reform, his considerations of the establishment of a Common Market were:

«Mon cher maître,

J'ai lu vos très intéressants exposés sur la Communauté européenne du charbon et de l'acier et sur le projet de Marché commun. Je vous remercie de me les avoir aimablement adressés.

Quant à moi, je ne crois pas au « Marché commun » dans sa forme présente, et ceci pour diverses raisons dont l'une est l'inconsistance des pouvoirs publics en France.

Je vous prie de croire, mon cher maître, à mes sentiments les plus distingués et les meilleurs³⁴.»

At a first stand, and bearing in mind de Gaulle's aversion toward any supranational institution, it is hard to explain why France fully respected the provisions laid down by the Treaties of Rome.

The answer can be found in the pragmatic conversion of the General, who however, remained highly skeptical towards European institutions.

As already stated, de Gaulle witnessed the years of the so called European revival (1955-1957) from Colombey-les-deux-Eglises, far from the political scene. During these years he refused to publicly express over this delicate argument, preferring instead the silence.

We can try to reconstruct his main ideas through those Gaullists who were inside the parliamentary arena. Following the slow decline of de Gaulle's party, the *Rassemblement du peuple français*, some members, close to the General and willing to enter in the parliamentary logic founded a new party, the National Centre of Social

³² *Ivi*.

³³ BONFRESCHI, L and VODOVAR, C. , *Il ritorno al potere di De Gaulle e i trattati di Roma*, Ventunesimo Secolo, n 14, p. 103.

³⁴ DE GAULLE, CAHRLES, *Lettre à Jacques Rueff, 3 Julliet 1957*, Lettres, Notes et Carnets, Juin 1951-Mai 1958, Plon, Paris, 1985 p.323.

Republicans (CNRS).

Despite the General will always distance himself from this new party, he will never openly condemned it. Social republicans strictly were aligned with de Gaulle's political thought. They often invoked his declarations, as well as his actions and continuously defended the General's historical legitimacy. It followed that many contemporary scholars, in order to better analyze the General's attitude during his years of silence, based their work on the social-democrats parliamentary activities. Gaullism was, during the European revival years, no longer strictly framed inside a unitary view. The fact that the General was out of the scene led to the development of many different approaches in the Gaullist movement. Two main tendencies emerged: those who attested themselves on an intransigent opposition line, whom were led by Michel Debré, and those who actively participated in the parliamentary works, led instead by Jacques Chaban-Delmas³⁵. These two positions clashed over this new European integration progresses inaugurated by the Treaties of Rome. Already in 1956, the social republicans' views collided once it came to the EURATOM debate: the more moderate wing would have ratified the Treaty only in case France would have remained free to develop nuclear weapons. On the contrary, Debré and few more strongly condemned the project.

Despite these two different views, both tendencies shared a common vision over the European integration process. The social-republican line was largely in continuity with the position of the RPF and of de Gaulle himself. They rejected any supranational integration, preferring instead the Europe of nations; they wanted Europe to become the balance between the USSR, no longer perceived as a threat after Stalin's death and the USA, from which they pretended full independence. They further asked for France to become the guarantor of the European *equilibrium*.

Such as de Gaulle did, they always opposed to any project that would have implied an even small devolution of sovereignty. They fought against the establishment of the E.C.S.C. in 1950, accused to be a mere pawn of the USA, as well as they pounced against the more ambitious plan represented by the European Defense Community, that would have meant for France an enormous loss of independence from the military point of view. No need to say, that the Treaties of Rome were largely interpreted by the Gaullist movement as a *manoeuvre* meant to be only a mere substitute of the failed E.D.C. The Treaties of Rome, in particular the one establishing the Common Market, were accused to be a broader plan that would have led not only to the end of France's

³⁵ BONFRESCHI and VODOVAR, *op.cit.* p. 105.

economic sovereignty, but also to its political alienation in favor of supranational institutions.

Because of the consistent losses in terms of power France would have experienced by signing these Treaties, the country, according to the social-republicans and generally to the Gaullists, would have not been able anymore to protect its own worldwide interests³⁶.

Furthermore, the most intransigent wing inside the Gaullist movement, the one led by Debré, added one more consideration to the E.E.C. debate. They saw in the Treaties the American willingness to impose its hegemony though the economic and political supremacy of Germany³⁷.

Nonetheless, the social-republicans realized from the beginning that they were in minority and that the Treaties would have been for sure ratified. They so decided to act from the inside in order to undermine them. However, during 1957, two main factors contributed to the progressive marginalization of the European debate in France and to the return of the General on the political scene.

On the one hand, the Algerian crisis and, on the other, the widespread belief that the country would have not been able to completely fulfill the obligations provided by the E.E.C. Treaty because of its disaster balance of payments.

The position of the Gaullist movement during the years of de Gaulle's silence largely contributed to spread the idea of the General's strong opposition to the new European relaunch. But as was testified by both the socialist Mollet and the then Prime Minister Pflimlin, before coming back to power on June 1958, de Gaulle reassured his counterparts of his willingness to respect the already signed Treaties of Rome. In this sense, the positions assumed by the Gaullist movement was largely misleading. De Gaulle, even according to Mollet, was European, but in a different way. He was not in favor to a federation but to a confederation. He fought against the E.D.C. but not against the Common Market.

The General immediately recognized all the benefits the establishment of the Common Market would have brought to France³⁸. As reported by his predecessor Pflimlin, he once declared that:

«Au fond, ce Marché commun, ce n'est pas si mal que ça³⁹.»

³⁶ *Ivi.* p.107.

³⁷ *Ivi.* p.108.

³⁸ BANGE OLIVER, *The EEC Crisis of 1963: Kennedy, Macmillan, de Gaulle and Adenauer in Conflict*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2000, p. 24.

³⁹ PFLIMLIN, PIERRE, *Mémoires d'un Européen de la IVème à la Vème République*, Fayard, 1991 p.144.

Nonetheless, it is really difficult to trace back the real reasons behind de Gaulle's commitment to fully respect the Treaties. Of course, his guaranties were mostly based on circumstances. When he came back to power, the European debate was his primary concern. He first needed to solve the delicate Algerian issue by granting France stronger institutions.

The General was further convinced, despite his willingness to be true to his word, that it would have been possible to partially renegotiate the Treaties at a later date. This is the main reason why, the European integration process was not his priority once he came back to power as Prime Minister in 1958.

His first moves were to economically recover the country, that, as already mentioned, was badly damaged. Without the General leadership, France would have hardly been capable of fulfilling the obligations imposed by the Common Market.

It also must be considered that the project of a Common Market fully embodied his plan for the future of France. The E.E.C. was seen as a tool that would have largely contributed to the re-modernization of France economy. Many scholars were in fact convinced that de Gaulle accepted the conditions imposed by the Common market only as a justification of the strict measures he used to recover the economy. What pushed the Prime Minister to accept the E.E.C. was his intention to make an economic revolution that would have boosted French industries to adapt to the standards required by the European competition. The so called Rueff-Pinay Plan, launched from June to December 1958, had the merit to stabilize the economy allowing France not to invoke the safeguard clauses provided by the Treaty.

According to de Gaulle's perception, Europe would have served as a mean for France's *grandeur*. The Common Market would have served as a trampoline for the country's economic modernization.

He contraposed his view on the European destiny to the one embodied by his predecessors. The old leaders of the Fourth Republic were accused to passively accept the devaluation of the country in favor of a supranational dimension. In few words, France would have been subjected to laws imposed by other, losing in this sense its identity. The technocratic institutions, as designed by the Treaties, would have had the power to decide over the fate of French people. The General aimed instead at a systematic rapprochement between states, that would have not implied the fusion between different countries. The evolution of the relations between states, should have led, according to the Prime Minister, to the establishment of a confederation, a concert of independent states. This is the main point useful to explain why de Gaulle accepted

and contributed to the implementation of the economic community between the six signing states.

Europe should have been built on the rejection of every supranational institution; it should have been further developed on a political *ensemble*, possibly guided by a Franco-German alliance and made up of independent states; the “European Europe” should have been able to protect and defend itself from both the Atlantic and the Soviet influence (despite the General did not exclude the possibility of cooperating even with the East countries); and lastly, that the alliance between the Six should have not prevented other states to join the European Community⁴⁰.

The Europe of the six was something inherited but at the same time something from which by now was impossible to detach. It should so have become the support for France’s ambition of *grandeur*.

In a note he sent to the Foreign Minister in 1958 his European conception fully emerged:

«1. – L’Europe doit devenir pratiquement une réalité sur les plans politique, économique et culturel.

2. – Dans cet esprit, la mise en oeuvre des traités du Marché Commun et de l’Euratom sera poursuivie. A partir de la base ainsi établie, la coopération pourra être développée dans un cadre plus vaste que celui des Six évitant, toutefois, que l’évolution provoque des difficultés graves dans tel ou tel pays.

3. – La coopération européenne doit s’affirmer aussi en dehors de l’Europe, à l’égard des grandes problèmes mondiaux tels que, par exemple, celui du Moyen-Orient. Cette coopération pourra se manifester dans le domaine politique et dans le domaine économique.

4.- Pour atteindre les objectifs mentionnés ci-dessus, des consultations régulières auront lieu entre les gouvernements intéressés. Ce mécanisme de consultations pourra prendre un caractère en quelque sorte organique au fur et à mesure qu’il se développera⁴¹.»

⁴⁰ BONFRESCHI and VODOVAR, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

⁴¹ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Note pour les Affaires Étrangères, 13 Août 1958, Lettres, Notes et Carnets, Juin 1958-Décembre 1960*, Plon, Paris, 1985 p.73.

SECOND CHAPTER

La Grandeur, The General's domestic and foreign policy (1958-1969)

Introduction

Once he came back to power in 1958, de Gaulle was finally able to achieve his most ambitious goal: conferring France a great power status. For all his life, the General fought to reaffirm France's supremacy in Europe. According to him, this supremacy necessarily passed through the reform of the domestic institutions, which concretized in the establishment of the Fifth Republic and through a well-calculated, but sometimes contradictory foreign policy.

From the internal perspective the new Constitution, approved in 1958, invested the President of the Republic with wider powers. This figure could play a much more important role in the country's decision-making process. France was given, by the means of the new Constitution, a strong guide who could finally guide the country towards its national independence.

Externally, the *grandeur* concretized in France's progressive rapprochement with the Soviet Union, embodied by the General's famous slogan "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals" and, in the resolution of the Algerian issue, which was haunting France since the early 1950s.

However, his willingness to give France back its predominant role in Europe soon collided with the role the country was playing in the Atlantic Alliance and, more in detail, in the North Atlantic Organization. France's subordinate position in the Organization was deemed by the General unacceptable and incompatible with the reaffirmation of the country's *grandeur*. His battle against the American influence in the Old Continent concretized also in the progressive development of France's own *force de frappe*. Being in possess of nuclear weapons was for de Gaulle another tool that would have assured France national independence and would have conferred it a great power status.

2.1 *France au milieu du monde*

As already stated, the major cause why de Gaulle came back to power in 1958 was the Algerian crisis. Nonetheless, behind this issue laid a wider plan: the General's willingness to confer France the *status* of great power.

It is generally known that de Gaulle had a "*certain idée de la France*" and, this idea implied the country's supremacy and predominance in Europe. Bearing in mind his attachment to the military, he often used the term "rank" when referring to the role France should have played in Europe. The country should have been placed in the first rank of states.

France became an imperial power starting from the XVII century. Its literature as well as its philosophy and language largely helped the European process of civilization. However, this process arrested with the great defeats France was humiliated by in the XIX century. First Waterloo and later Sedan, followed by the German annexation of the French territories of Alsace and Lorraine, were a major turning point in the perception of the French role in Europe. With the outbreak of the Second World War and the consequent Nazi occupation in 1940, the country seemed to have no hope at all. De Gaulle's resistance and his continuous speeches from the exile in London, in which the country was presented as a fighting nation, largely contributed to boost the French people morale. He spoke about the French *grandeur* when the country was at its lowest point in history.

It is a commonly accepted statement that de Gaulle's political thought gave rise to a particular form of nationalism, that share nothing with the one of Mussolini or the one of the Nazis Germany. His main goal was to strengthen France's role in Europe from both political and economic perspectives. However, his main policy was militarily non-aggressive and territorially non-expansive. But politically and culturally, it was both aggressive and expansive. It did not preach neutrality, nor it did advocate isolationism⁴². He was willing to confer France a great power *status* that would have allowed it to influence international relations and at the same time to re-shape them in order to suit the French national interest. The foreign policy was in this sense the key point in pursuing the French *grandeur*. Already in the first page of his *Mémoires de guerre* he referred to it.

⁴² CHOPRA, HARDEV SINGH, *De Gaulle and European Unity*, Abhinav Publications, India, 1974 p.58

«Toute ma vie, je me suis fait une certaine idée de la France. Le sentiment me l'inspire aussi bien que la raison. Ce qu'il y a, en moi, d'affectif imagine naturellement la France, telle la princesse des contes ou la madone aux fresques des murs, comme vouée à une destinée éminente et exceptionnelle. J'ai, d'instinct, l'impression que la Providence l's créée pour des succès achevés ou des malheurs exemplaires. S'il advient que la médiocrité marque, pourtant, ses faits et gestes. J'en éprouve la sensation d'une absurde anomalie, imputable aux fautes des Français, non au génie de la patrie. Mais aussi, le côté positif de mon esprit me convainc que la France n'est réellement elle-même qu'au premier rang ; que, seules, de vastes entreprises sont susceptibles de compenser les ferments de dispersion que son peuple porte en lui-même ; que notre pays, tel qu'il est, parmi les autres, tels qu'ils sont, doit, sous peine de danger mortel, viser haut et se tenir droit. Bref, à mon sens, la France ne peut être la France sans la grandeur⁴³.»

Furthermore, when he came back to power, on June 1958, he clarified what his mission was in a letter addressed to the Count of Paris:

«Monseigneur,

Le témoignage que Vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'adresser, la marque de confiance que Vous voulez bien m'exprimer, me touchent et m'encouragent au plus haut point. La mission qu'il me faut assumer ne saurait être mieux définie que par Vous-même : sauvegarder l'unité de la France, la préserver de l'anarchie, tâcher que, vis-à-vis du monde, elle retrouve sa grandeur⁴⁴ [...].»

In this sense, the pursuing of the *grandeur* followed two different patterns: from an internal point of view, it required strong institutions and a well-organized military apparatus and, on the other hand, from an external point of view, it aimed at changing the international *status quo*. As Gordon argues⁴⁵ de Gaulle's fight for France's independence was one of the main causes of conflict that arose with both Western Europe and with the USA.

Internally, he fused the national independence concept with the one of sovereignty. According to the General's view a sovereign state was the necessary condition on which weaving international relations. De Gaulle was firmly convinced that national independence passed through a strong state, and more specifically through a strong

⁴³ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Mémoires de guerre*, t. I, *L'Appel*, p.1.

⁴⁴ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Lettre au Comte de Paris*, 9 Juin 1958, Lettres, notes et carnets, Juin 1958- Décembre 1960, Plon, Paris, 1985, p. 23.

⁴⁵ GORDON H. PHILIP, *A certain idea of France. French security policy and the Gaullist legacy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, p.38.

executive. In 1958, the need of giving France a new Constitution clearly appeared. The constitutional ideas the General had, derived from his own experience in 1940, when he witnessed the unstoppable fall of the executive.

In 1946, he delivered his famous speech, commonly known as “Bayeux Constitution” in which he gave his personal view on the structure the political powers should had and, he also traced back the chronicle difficulties the French state found itself submerged by. Highlighting the weaknesses of the then French parliamentary system, he proposed some alternatives. He required for this system to work, a bicameral and equilibrate legislative, well separated from the executive. The President of the Republic, sharing his powers with a Prime Minister, should have become the only figure capable of stemming the political instability derived from the multiparty-system. Despite he still not referred to universal suffrage, the President election should have been the outcome of a wider popular consultation and not the outcome of parliamentary elections.

His view changed little when he was asked to rule the country in 1958. It must be highlighted that even if he was guided by the principles affirmed by the French Revolution in 1789, he was not willing to restore the monarchy. On the contrary, he wanted to give the country a strong presidential regime.

The new Constitution was presented to the French people on September 4th 1958. The speech was held, significantly, in Place de la République. The first part is highly relevant:

« C'est en un temps où il lui fallait se réformer ou se briser que notre peuple, pour la première fois, recourut à la République. Jusqu'alors, au long des siècles, l'Ancien Régime avait réalisé l'unité et maintenu l'intégrité de la France. Mais, tandis qu'une immense vague de fond se formait dans les profondeurs, il se montrait hors d'état de s'adapter à un monde nouveau. C'est alors qu'au milieu de la tourmente nationale et de la guerre étrangère apparut la République ! Elle était la souveraineté du peuple, l'appel de la liberté, l'espérance de la justice. Elle devait rester cela à travers les péripéties agitées de son histoire. Aujourd'hui, autant que jamais, nous voulons qu'elle le demeure. [...]

Cependant, le régime comportait des vices de fonctionnement qui avaient pu sembler supportables à une époque assez statique, mais qui n'étaient plus compatibles avec les mouvements humains, les changements économiques, les périls extérieurs qui précédaient la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Faute qu'on y eût remédié, les événements terribles de 1940 emportèrent tout. Mais quand, le 18 juin, commença le combat pour la libération de la France, il fut aussitôt proclamé que la République à refaire serait une République nouvelle. La Résistance tout entière ne cessa pas de l'affirmer.

On sait, on ne sait que trop, ce qu'il advint de ces espoirs. On sait, on ne sait que trop, qu'une fois le péril passé, tout fut livré et confondu à la discrétion des partis. On sait, on ne sait que trop, quelles en furent les conséquences. À force d'inconsistance et d'instabilité et quelles que puissent être les intentions, souvent la valeur des hommes, le régime se trouve privé de l'autorité intérieure et de l'assurance extérieure sans lesquelles il ne pouvait agir. Il était inévitable que la paralysie de l'État amenât une grave crise nationale et qu'aussitôt la République fût menacée d'effondrement⁴⁶.»

As already mentioned, he found in a strong presidency the solution to the political instability the Fourth Republic was characterized by. The Constitution conferred to the President remarkable authority⁴⁷. He could call for referenda, dissolve the parliament (only once a year), assume emergency powers, such as stated by Article 16⁴⁸, appoint the Prime Minister and, after consulting with the premier, he could appoint other ministers, not necessarily to be chosen among deputies or senators⁴⁹.

Due to the bicephalous executive, the President powers resulted to be somehow limited by the role attributed to the Prime Minister. This figure had the right to sign ordinances and decrees as well as the task to coordinate the government's business and the duty to preside over governments meetings⁵⁰.

The election of the President of the Republic was however still not based upon universal suffrage. The President was appointed by a specific electoral college made up of 80.000 *notables*, required to represent the people and asked to be unleashed from political parties. The appointment of the President so remained in the sphere of the political parties, so roughly condemned by De Gaulle.

The situation was about to change in 1962. During the Algerian crisis the General tended little by little to affirm the presidency's supremacy.

De Gaulle was given full powers on June 1958 and, he was able to call a referendum to solve the Algerian issue. His last achievement was the strengthening of the presidential powers. Another referendum was held in 1962 which established the

⁴⁶ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Discours prononcé Place de la République à Paris, 4 Septembre 1958*, Discours et Messages, III, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 41-42.

⁴⁷ NESTER R. WILLIAM, *De Gaulle's legacy. The art of power in France's Fifth Republic*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014, p. 38.

⁴⁸ <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/le-bloc-de-constitutionnalite/texte-integral-de-la-constitution-du-4-octobre-1958-en-vigueur>. Article 16 states that: "Lorsque les institutions de la République, l'indépendance de la Nation, l'intégrité de son territoire ou l'exécution de ses engagements internationaux sont menacés d'une manière grave et immédiate et que le fonctionnement régulier des pouvoirs publics constitutionnels est interrompu, le Président de la République prend les mesures exigées par ces circonstances, après consultation officielle du Premier ministre, des Présidents des Assemblées ainsi que du Conseil constitutionnel."

⁴⁹ ATKIN, NICHOLAS, *The Fifth French Republic*, Palgrave Macmillan, England, 2005, p. 39.

⁵⁰ *Ivi* p.40.

election of the President on the basis of universal suffrage. The referendum implied the preeminence of the “*Chef de l’État*” and furthermore, the presidential figure became the direct representative of the nation, since the direct election. The Prime Minister remained indirectly elected and its subordinate position toward the President of the Republic was reinforced. The president legitimacy became superior to the one embodied by the deputies.

His project of making France an independent nation consecrated even on the economic sphere. Once he came back to power in 1958, as was already mentioned, the country was facing hard times from an economic point of view. First of all, he wanted the external debt to come to an end. France owed the USA 3 billion dollars and moreover its gold reserves were almost gone. The General found unacceptable that the country still relied on the American aids. Thanks to the Pinay-Rueff plan for the economy⁵¹, the country, despite the enormous effort it implied, could finally achieve the independence de Gaulle was seeking for. France was not only able to stop receiving external aids, but was also capable of returning the money it borrowed as well as rebuilding its own money reserves. Moreover, in order to avoid any future currency devaluation, de Gaulle proceeded to the establishment of a new currency, the so called *franc lourd*. This move, would have been, according to the General’s view, a further step toward France’s supremacy. The new currency could have been converted and could have favored France participation to the worldwide liberalization of trade⁵².

It was mainly due to the stabilization of the franc that France could adhere to the project of the Common Market. Being in possess of a strong currency hugely contributed to the strengthening of France’s role in Europe. Finally, the country regained its ancient prestige. However, in 1963 the General was forced by the high inflation to adopt a new economic plan and, in 1969, after he refused to devalue the franc, he had to implement harsh fiscal and budgetary policies.

Nonetheless, despite all the corrective measures, the years that went from 1958 to 1969 witnessed a huge economic expansion. The industries modernization was a further step that would have granted France its national independence.

If from the domestic point of view, the policy of *grandeur* was characterized by the establishment of stronger institutions and the economic stabilization, the General foreign policy can be defined as his finest work.

⁵¹ CHÉLINI MICHEL-PIERRE, *Le plan de stabilisation Pinay-Rueff*, 1958, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, n. 48-4, 2001. Available at: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-d-histoire-moderne-et-contemporaine-2001-4-page-102.htm>.

⁵² VAÏSSE, MAURICE, *La grandeur, Politique étrangère du général De Gaulle 1958-1969*, Fayard, Paris, 1998, pp.42-43.

2.1.1. Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals

De Gaulle is universally known for his concept of Europe from the “Atlantic to the Urals”. It resulted in his progressive effort to grant Europe a solid basis for peace and unity even through a French-Soviet rapprochement.

It is worth noticing that already in 1944, de Gaulle’s trip to Moscow was not only an event happened in the light of the French-Soviet alliance treaty⁵³. It can instead be considered as an effort to contain the predominance of the Anglo-American in the war alliance. What de Gaulle saw in the Soviet Union was an element capable to re-balance the continent equilibrium and to assure the continent the peace.

Nonetheless, the French-Soviet relations as well as de Gaulle’s perspective of the Soviet Union itself are far more complex than they may appear. Firstly, he constantly referred to it as “Russia” and not “Soviet Union”, refusing its ideology and more important its totalitarian structure. On the other hand, the admiration the General had for the role Russia had played over the centuries and for the patriotism of its people during the Second World War was immense. The General’s visit in Moscow, in 1944, largely raised the expectations for the negotiations with Stalin to end with a concrete outcome. These negotiations must be however examined in the light of the different visions the two countries had on how to grant and assure security to the continent.

According to de Gaulle’s view, France and Russia were somehow bounded since the beginning of the XX century. De Gaulle explained to his Russian interlocutor how deeply the French-Soviet axis could influence the fate of the Old Continent. If in fact, in 1871 France lost the war against Germany, because alone, on the contrary, Germany was defeated in the First World War mainly thanks to the Russian military support. Furthermore, the General regretted the Soviet absence at the Versailles Conference. From his perspective, the Soviet Union was the only with a general view really similar to the one France had on security matters. For de Gaulle was so unacceptable that the country was left outside the negotiations and was strongly convinced that this should have never happened again.

In 1944, at the time of his visit to Moscow, his conception of the European defense against Germany was mainly framed inside a bipolar framework. The first stage was represented by the cooperation between Paris and Moscow, which would have been

⁵³ REY MARIE-PIERRE, *De Gaulle, French Diplomacy, and Franco-Soviet Relations as Seen from Moscow*, in *Globalizing de Gaulle, international perspectives on French foreign policies, 1958-1969*, Lexington Books, Plymouth, 2010, p. 25.

further enlarged establishing bilateral treaties with Great Britain. Even the USA would have been asked to participate to this collective defense system, but only in the end. A central role would have been played by the French-Soviet axis, due to their shared goal of securing the continent from the German threat. In addition, the fact that the U.S.S.R. was mainly a land power, largely contributed to reassure France that it would have not interfered with the country's *outré-mer* possessions.

However, in 1946 when he was no more ruling the country, his attitude toward the Soviet Union resulted to be deeply ambiguous. One of the main reasons why he founded the *Rassemblement du peuple français* in 1947 was to somehow fight against the strong Communist influence the country was subjected to. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that despite his condemnation of the USA interference in Europe, France adhesion to the NATO, as well as to the Marshall Plan, were strategic moves that should have contained the Soviet expansionism. But de Gaulle was still strongly convinced of the necessity of an *entente* between France and Russia. In this sense, the trip Nikita Khrushchev made to France in spring 1960 is highly relevant. The Eastern countries started to speculate about a possible rapprochement with them and, more, important with the Soviet Union. The article published by "*Le Monde*" on November 1959⁵⁴ helps us further comprehend the strategy de Gaulle was pursuing towards the U.S.S.R.

«[...] Bien au contraire, selon l'interprétation officielle toutefois, la véritable grandeur de la France ne pourra être réalisée que selon la méthode traditionnelle en recherchant du côté de l'Est un contrepoids à l'influence excessive des Anglo-Américains. Pour illustrer cette thèse on affirme que la rentrée de la France sur la scène diplomatique, à la fin de la guerre, a été marquée par le voyage du général de Gaulle à Moscou en 1944 et par la signature du traité d'amitié avec l'U.R.S.S. De même aujourd'hui, si l'on en croit Trybuna Ludu, la France pourrait exploiter " l'énorme capital " que constituerait pour elle la profonde sympathie de l'Union soviétique, de la Pologne, de la Tchécoslovaquie et des autres pays de l'Europe orientale. Enfin et surtout les commentateurs polonais soutiennent que les efforts du général de Gaulle en vue de renforcer l'influence de son pays sur le plan international ne réussiront pas si la France continue à se maintenir hors du courant qui mène à la détente et à la coexistence pacifique.»

What emerged from the Soviet Premier's visit in France was mainly what was

⁵⁴ LE MONDE, *Beaucoup de Polonais souhaitent que le général de Gaulle puisse rétablir l'influence française en Europe orientale*. 24th November 1959. Available at: https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1959/11/24/beaucoup-de-polonais-souhaitent-que-le-general-de-gaulle-puisse-retablir-l-influence-francaise-en-europe-orientale_2167052_1819218.html?xtmc=&xtcr=2600.

previously stated by de Gaulle during his trip to Moscow in 1944. Khrushchev affirmed the necessity for these two countries to cooperate in order to assure security in Europe; he also stressed the important role these two countries played in defeating Germany during the Second World War and at last, he argued that cooperation between France and Soviet Union was not impossible.

If during the 1944 meeting, de Gaulle's position was still really weak, in 1960 things have changed. He demonstrated to be the leader of a strong and powerful European state and this time was finally able to negotiate from a position of full equality. In the end, France and the U.S.S.R. concluded a commercial agreement of a two-years period and decided to jointly cooperate in the scientific as well as the peaceful uses of nuclear energy fields⁵⁵.

2.1.2. De Gaulle and the colonial issue

With regard to de Gaulle's foreign policy in Africa, he had the merit to comprehend from the start the historical limits of colonialism⁵⁶. Already in 1958, in France the priority was to end the Algerian war. One of the General's great abilities was being able to fully interpret the French popular will. In this case, to end the Algerian troubles. From the point of view of those people who lived in the country, the General seemed to be the only one capable of finding a concrete solution to this issue that was haunting France from 1954.

On the contrary, the so called *pieds noirs* were convinced that de Gaulle would have helped keeping Algeria a French colony. In this sense, the speech he gave on June 4th 1958 in Alger is fundamental:

«Je vous ai compris! Je sais ce qui s'est passé ici. Je vois ce que vous avez voulu faire. Je vois que la route que vous avez ouverte en Algérie, c'est celle de la rénovation et de la fraternité. (...) Eh bien! de tout cela, je prends acte au nom de la France et je déclare qu'à partir d'aujourd'hui, la France considère que dans toute l'Algérie, il n'y a qu'une seule catégorie d'habitants: il n'y a que des Français à part entière, des Français à part entière avec les mêmes droits et les mêmes devoirs.⁵⁷»

⁵⁵ CHOPRA, HARDEV SINGH, *op. cit.* p.76

⁵⁶ QUAGLIARIELLO, GAETANO, *op. cit.*, p.644

⁵⁷ LE FIGARO, "4 juin 1958 : que cachait le «Je vous ai compris» de De Gaulle ?", 4th June 2018. Available at: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/histoire/2018/06/04/26001-20180604ARTFIG00058-4-juin-1958-que-cachait-le-je-vous-ai-compris-de-de-gaulle.php>.

The General's attitude toward the Algerian crisis has always been reported as highly ambiguous. The debate whether de Gaulle, once he came back to power, already had the solution to the issue, is still open. Despite the immense historiography over this precise period, two theses, developed in the bosom of Gaullism are worth to be mentioned. On the one hand, Soustelle supported the idea of the General's betrayal. According to him, de Gaulle was fully aware that his return on the political scene was strictly dependent on the supporters of French Algeria, but nonetheless he would have disattended all the *pieds noirs*' expectations. Moreover, his betrayal would have been accompanied by hypocrisy. As in fact Soustelle argued, de Gaulle would have talked about independence with the progressives, while instead of integration with Gaullists⁵⁸.

On the other hand, Terrenoire wrote a book with the aim of defending the General's actions in Algeria. According to his view, de Gaulle's attitude towards the issue would have not changed since 1955. He was convinced that if France still wanted to exert a sort of influence over its colonies, striving for independence, it should have established the basis for a new association⁵⁹.

Despite the speeches he gave, that seemed to support the *pieds noirs*, de Gaulle revealed some years later, that he was highly pessimistic about the resolution of the crisis. However, he launched many political, economic and social reforms that would have guaranteed better living conditions to the Algerian Arabs⁶⁰. He also strived to find a "third force" that would have stood between the extremist positions of both the FLN (*Front de libération nationale*) and the colonials. In the meanwhile, the Fifth Republic's Constitution was draft. It borne with it an important concession for Algeria. According to it, the French colony would not have been anymore part of the French empire, but France associate territories.

All Muslims, women included, were registered in the electoral list and would have had the possibility to vote for the referendum on the new Constitution. The FLN harshly reacted to de Gaulle's initiative and established a temporary government (GPRA, *Gouvernement provisoire de la République algérienne*) of the Algerian Republic, based in Tunis. It is worth noticing that this exiled government was recognized by Tunisia, part of Morocco, some Asian states and far more important by the U.S.S.R.

From the General's perspective, the Algerian war was increasingly becoming an

⁵⁸ SOUSTELLE JACQUES, *L'espérance trahie 1958-1961*, p.7.

⁵⁹ TERRENOIRE LOUIS, *De Gaulle et l'Algérie : Témoignage pour l'histoire*, Fayard, Paris, 1964, p. 41.

⁶⁰ EVANS MARTIN, *Algeria: France's undeclared war*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2012, p. 647.

handicap that was hampering his goal of making France an internationally recognized great power. This idea is supported by a letter wrote by the General to the lieutenant commander Philippe de Gaulle:

«[...] Notre redressement intérieur et extérieur se poursuit. Au total, si les choses continuent d'aller pour nous comme elles vont, nous serons, dans quelque cinq ans, redevenus vraiment une grande puissance. D'ici là, il faudra, évidemment, que l'Algérie ait cessé de nous lier plus ou moins les mains⁶¹.»

In the meanwhile, the international pressions became everyday stronger. The Algerian war was no longer only related to France, but was an issue that started to worry even the NATO member states. Furthermore, the United Nations General Assembly dedicated once a year, starting from 1955, a specific session to discuss over the Algerian war. In a declaration made in September 1959, mainly because of the great support the FLN was registering, de Gaulle finally referred to the concept of auto-determination, convinced that he would so obtained a wider consensus for his project of Algeria being part of a French association.

The war, after difficult years finally ended in 1962 with the Evian Agreements. On July 1st 1962, a referendum established to almost unanimity the Algerian independence.

In the broader framework of decolonization, it was already affirmed that the General had realized very well the limits implied by it. However, in 1958 he still had the idea of establishing a sort of federal structure, headed by France, inside which the ex-colonies would have been granted autonomy instead of independence. This view was basically modified by the new Constitution according to which all the states that would have agreed to join the now called Community, would have been given internal autonomy as well as the freedom to choose their own governments. These states were only requested to recognized in some specific fields, such as foreign and monetary policies, the predominance of the French President of the Republic. This project failed in only one year⁶². Starting from 1960 the process on independence-association started, that implied the transfer of competences from France to its ex-colonies.

⁶¹ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Lettre au capitaine de corvette Philippe De Gaulle, 19 Juillet 1960*, Lettres, notes et carnets, Juin 1958- Décembre 1960, Plon, Paris, 1985, p. 379

⁶² QUAGLIARIELLO, GAETANO, *op. cit.*, p.644

2.2 *The nuclear issue*

In 1959, after hosting the High Commissioner for the atomic energy, Charles de Gaulle clearly affirmed that: «*la guerre atomique aura lieu. Je ne la verrai pas, mais vous, vous la verrez*⁶³.»

The nuclear issue was at the core of the Gaullist strategy. Starting from the half of the XX century, being in possess of a nuclear arsenal was more than a simple symbol, it represented instead a tool to reaffirm national independence. Though the development of the nuclear energy France, according to the General, could have re-gained its great power *status*⁶⁴. For this reason, de Gaulle found unacceptable that this weapon was only possessed by the USA and the Soviet Union. The French President of the Republic aimed at giving France its own *force de frappe*.

Charles de Gaulle deserves credit for his change of view over the utility of the military forces after WWII. The advent of atomic bombs, according to him, would have had the effect of making those countries which possessed it, more cautious. In the context of international relations, de Gaulle comprehended the huge potential of deterrence the atomic bomb had, especially in that new bipolar shaped world.

Nonetheless, his perspective was affected by all the different international events and transformations. In 1945, the General still was not convinced at all that the development of nuclear bombs would have change the international assets and that it would have prevented war. From 1945 to 1949, the monopoly of nuclear weapons was in the hands of the USA. Due to this possess, it could have threaten its use without fearing any nuclear response from other states. The USA had an enormous deterrence power, that could have avoid for example any possible Soviet invasion of West Germany.

During those years, de Gaulle still considered war as a likelihood possibility. The Berlin blockade, as well as the outbreak of the Korean war, strengthened this conviction. This fear was not however fully justified in the light of the power of deterrence the USA had. In this sense, this fear can be interpreted on the basis of the General's mistrust in the USA. There were in fact no guaranties that the Americans would have used their nuclear arsenal to protect Europe from the Red invasion. De

⁶³ LACUTURE, JEAN, *De Gaulle, Le souverain 1959-1970*, Seuil, Paris, 1986, p.452.

⁶⁴ BOZO FRÉDÉRIC, *Two Strategies for Europe: De Gaulle, the United States, and the Atlantic Alliance* Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2001, p.39.

Gaulle believed in the power of deterrence of the atomic bombs, but not when deterrence depended on one country using them in the defense of another⁶⁵.

What basically emerges from these consideration is that until 1954 the General was not fully convinced that the mere possession of nuclear weapons would have prevented war.

After 1954, de Gaulle's fears of the outbreak of a possible war finally ceased. By 1956, the General started to change his mind in favor of an even minimal need for France to have its own deterrence power and, by 1959 he was fully convinced that the Soviet Union had no interest at all in waging war against Europe. When he came back to power in 1958, in the French statesman emerged the conviction that a state would have been more reluctant to start a war against a country in possess of nuclear weapons. A possible reason to justify this change of view can be found in the new technical developments nuclear weapons experienced. It must be borne in mind, that from the 50s, the delivery of nuclear arsenals largely increased. Thermonuclear fusion bombs, now possessed even by the U.S.S.R. were invented and were, in terms of power, incomparable to the one delivered in Hiroshima. Furthermore, long-range bombers as well as ballistic missiles now could lead to the destruction of entire countries. As Gordon⁶⁶ stated: "If leaders were so afraid of the result of nuclear use even when they would be the 'users', it could reasonably be concluded that they would be even more intimidated by bombs that might be used against them. For de Gaulle, all of this seems to have led to the belief that the old ways of armed confrontation among the great powers had passed".

De Gaulle's attitude changed during the 1950s not only because of these new nuclear developments, but also because of new international events. In 1953 Stalin died and, as a consequence, the Communist threat in Europe seemed to be contained. Furthermore, China was about to secede from the Socialist bloc and NATO was fully operational. The Soviet danger was slowly losing ground.

The new conception of the world de Gaulle developed, was largely influenced by the process of nuclear reinforcement. This new way of thinking the international relations, followed mainly two different patterns. On the one hand, being in possess of a nuclear arsenal, would have implied for the nation-state to be the only legitimate actor in the international arena; moreover, the use of nuclear bombs would have largely contributed to one country's national defense. The nuclear weapons' power of

⁶⁵ GORDON, H. PHILIP, *Charles de Gaulle and the Nuclear Revolution*, p. 222, Available at: <https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2016/MVZ235/um/62791483/Gordon.pdf>.

⁶⁶ *Ivi*, p. 223.

deterrence would have had the effect of avoiding any possible aggression from other states.

On the other hand, nuclear bombs hugely contributed to make more blatant the bipolar division of the world. If the post Second World War period witnessed the West-East division, the nuclear discoveries made these division sharply grow. Those states not in possess of a nuclear arsenal were so forced to align with one or another bloc.

This new international relations interpretation can be useful to explain why, at this point of the analysis, for the General being in possess of nuclear weapons was no more irrelevant. Many justifications can be added to explain the French development of a nuclear arsenal.

At basis of this decision laid the General's willingness to reestablish France's international *status*. The pursuing of the nuclear defense passed through de Gaulle's idea of *grandeur*. As already argued, the possess of nuclear weapons represented a symbol of power and military supremacy, and was unconceivable that France still not had its own arsenal. In the speech he gave in Strasburg on November 1961, he clearly affirmed the necessity for a country, in order to be independent, to dispose of its own nuclear arsenal. The new international scenario in fact, imposed:

«Que notre puissance militaire soit organisée et dotée de manière à pouvoir agir suivant les conditions qui sont celles de notre temps. C'est dire qu'elle doit comporter un armement atomique, à moins, bien entendu, qu'il n'en existe plus nulle part. Car, si effrayants que soient ces moyens de destruction, et justement parce qu'ils le sont, un grand État qui n'en possède pas, tandis que d'autres en possèdent, ne dispose pas de son destin. Nous pouvoir de projectiles nucléaires, stratégiques et tactiques et d'engins pour les lancer, tant qu'il y en aura ailleurs, c'est notre premier but en fait de défense⁶⁷ »

Only a day after France tested its first atomic bomb in 1960, de Gaulle wrote to his son Philippe:

«Notre bombe va changer les idées de beaucoup. C'est un succès, surtout comme preuve de notre capacité à embrasser les techniques les plus ardues et les plus compliquées et de notre résolution de suivre notre propre route sans céder aux pressions du dehors. En tout cas, nous marchons maintenant vers la constitution d'une force de frappe atomique où la marine jouera un rôle capital⁶⁸.»

⁶⁷ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Allocution prononcé a Strasbourg a l'occasion du 17eme anniversaire de sa libération, 23 Novembre 1961*, Discours et Messages, III, Plon, Paris 1970, p. 369.

⁶⁸ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Lettre au capitaine de corvette Philippe De Gaulle, 14 Février 1960*, Lettres, notes et carnets, Juin 1958- Décembre 1960, Plon, Paris, 1985, p. 331.

What counted the most for de Gaulle was France to be included among *les Grands*. The President of the Republic's secretary-general de Courcel⁶⁹ affirmed that, what mattered for de Gaulle was that his country could be finally able to define itself a nuclear power and being an equal interlocutor with the Anglo-Saxon powers.

If France should have choose between having or not nuclear weapons, according to the General the only possible option was the former. The nuclear would have had the effect of making a country able to influence the whole world. This argument was initially used in terms of encouragement for the superpowers to disarm, but later this strike force became the justification even for exert political influence.

According to the General, once France would have had its own *force de frappe*, it would have had the right to pronounce itself in those domains of security and disarmament. The country would have been finally capable of playing a leading role inside the Atlantic Alliance.

Furthermore, as already explained, in order to be fully independent, France should have been in possess of its own nuclear armament. As previously highlighted, in the speech he gave in November 1961, a non-nuclear state would have been forced to be under the leadership of one of the two great nuclear powers, namely the USA and the U.S.S.R. This bipolar system could only be broken with one state's possess of nuclear weapons. The end of the two powers nuclear monopoly, would have meant for De Gaulle even the end of the bipolar political division. According to the General, one major mean to achieve national independence was through the development of a concrete nuclear program.

While France was providing itself with its nuclear arsenal, a new project which aimed at replacing the failed European Defense Community, was shaping. It became widely known as the Multilateral Force (MLF).

In a NATO ministerial meeting that took place at the end of 1960, the USA was given the task to furnish five nuclear submarines to the NATO multilateral force at the condition that the Europeans would have established a system to supervise them. When referring to the Multilateral Force are generally meant three distinct aspects: an interallied force made up of British-American unity strategic forces summed with tactic air forces; a multinational force based on nuclear submarines equipped with Polaris missiles with homogeneous American, British or French crews and lastly,

⁶⁹ GORDON, H. PHILIP, *Charles de Gaulle and the Nuclear Revolution*, p. 229, Available at: <https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2016/MVZ235/um/62791483/Gordon.pdf>.

another multilateral force made up of surface ships, with multinational crews⁷⁰.

The MLF was part of a broader plan that aimed at finding an answer to many issues regarding more in general the Atlantic Alliance. These issues mainly referred to the now discussible ability of the USA to assure Europe a concrete protection. The USSR had in fact deployed its own nuclear missiles and seemed, to the eyes of the Europeans, to be military superior even to the USA. Furthermore, the MLF was launched even in light of the then impellent emergency of nuclear capacities and on the need to solve this proliferation issue. Consequently to the United Kingdom, France was developing its own *force de frappe*. Both countries were strongly convinced that domestic security necessarily passed through the development of nuclear capability. Moreover, following the first successful French nuclear test, in Europe became widespread the fear that even West Germany would have started to develop its own nuclear program. Indeed, what the MLF aimed at was not specifically related to the military field, but it basically had the objective to strengthen the capacity of the NATO allies to defend themselves from any possible Soviet attack. It even hid a political goal. The USA wanted to restore the almost lost trust in their European partners.

The plan was lukewarmly welcomed by almost all NATO members, as they foresaw in it the point of departure for a nuclear sharing in the framework of the Atlantic Alliance. In addition, West Germany proposed the creation of a political union, with the inclusion of the United Kingdom, that would have administrate and supervised the use of nuclear might.

President Kennedy, once came into power in 1961, strongly supported the plan. Nonetheless, he gave priority to the development of European continental forces, addressing that there was no hurry in the establishment of the MLF.

The first boost to the MLF came in December 1962 within the Nassau meeting between the USA and the UK. This meeting provided for the American supply to the United Kingdom with Polaris missiles, in exchange for their commitment to participate in the NATO multilateral force. Furthermore, the agreement established that the United Kingdom could have used this missiles even in the case their national interest would have been threatened. Upon request of the British Prime Minister Macmillan, the USA should have made the same proposal to France. From the American perspective the enlargement of the Nassau agreement even to France would have hugely contributed to soften the French President attitude toward the British entry inside the E.C.C.

This hopes proved to be fully wrong. In the press conference he gave on January 14th

⁷⁰ VAÏSSE, MAURICE, *op. cit.*, 1998, p. 373.

1963, not only the General rejected the United Kingdom's entry inside the Common Market but also the American Multilateral Force plan:

«Là-dessus, au Bahamas, l'Amérique et l'Angleterre ont conclu un accord et il nous a été demandé d'y adhérer nous-même. Bien entendu, je ne parle de cette proposition et je ne parle que de cet accord parce qu'ils ont été publiés, et qu'on en connaît le contenu. Il s'agit de constituer une force atomique, dite multilatérale dans laquelle l'Angleterre verse les moyens qu'elle a et ce qu'elle aura et où les Américains placent quelques-uns des leurs. Cette force multilatérale est affectée à la défense de l'Europe et elle dépend du commandement américain de l'OTAN. Il est vrai que les Anglais conservent la faculté de retirer, de reprendre en main leurs moyens atomiques dans le cas où l'intérêt national suprême leur paraîtrait l'exiger. Quant à la masse des moyens nucléaires américains, elle demeure en dehors de la force multilatérale et sous les ordres directs du Président des États-Unis. D'autre part et comme par compensation, l'Angleterre peut acheter à l'Amérique si elle le veut, des fusées polaris qui sont, comme on le sait, lancés à partir de sous-marin construit en conséquence, et qui emporte à 2000 ou 3000 kilomètres les projectiles thermonucléaires qui leur sont adaptés. D'ailleurs pour construire ces sous-marins et pour construire ces projectiles les Anglais disposent du concours privilégié des Américains. On sait, je le dis en passant, que ce concours-là ne nous a jamais été proposé et on doit savoir, en dépit de ce que certains racontent, que nous ne l'avons jamais demandé. Alors pour nous, après avoir pris acte de l'accord anglo-britannique des Bahamas, comment se pose la question, cet accord tel qu'il est conçu, je ne crois pas que personne pense que nous puissions y souscrire. Il ne nous serait vraiment pas utile d'acheter des fusées polaris alors que nous n'avons ni les sous-marins pour les lancer, ni les têtes thermonucléaires pour les armer. [...] Au total, nous nous en tenons à la décision que nous avons arrêtée : construire et le cas échéant, employer nous-même notre force atomique. Cela sans refuser bien sûr, la coopération, qu'elle soit technique ou qu'elle soit stratégique. Si cette coopération est d'autre part souhaitée par nos alliés⁷¹. »

De Gaulle justified his veto to the British entry inside the E.E.C. in light of the supposed effort of the UK to strengthen its partnership with the USA.

In addition, as he affirmed on April 19th 1963:

«D'autre part, à l'intérieur de l'alliance atlantique, indispensable tant que se dressent les ambitions et les menaces des Soviets, notre pays, tout en conjuguant sa défense avec celles de ses alliés, entend en rester le maître et, le cas échéant, apporter à l'effort commun tout autre chose que le concours sans âme et sans force d'un peuple qui ne serait plus

⁷¹ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 14 Janvier 1961*, Discours et Messages, III, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 74-76

responsable de lui-même. Cela nous conduit à nous doter des moyens modernes de notre sécurité, autrement dit de ceux qui pourraient détourner quiconque d'attaquer notre pays, à moins de subir lui-même d'épouvantables destructions. Je veux parler, naturellement, des armes atomiques. Il est vrai que nos alliés américains disposent, à cet égard d'une puissance colossale, susceptible de jeter au chaos tout ou partie de l'Empire soviétique, qu'ils sont résolus, nous le savons, à combattre éventuellement pour empêcher que l'Europe ne tombe pas, morte ou vive, dans l'autre camp, qu'ils sont nos bons alliés comme nous-mêmes sommes les leurs⁷².»

France would have never accepted the American provisions, since they were accused to interfere with France's national independence. On the other side, he looked favorably to an alliance with West Germany to which he even offered cooperation inside the framework of the French *force de frappe*. The French-German axis could have, according to the General view, provided for the security of the Old Continent without any further American help.

Indeed, the USA could not allow the establishment of a closer cooperation between France and Germany. If Germany would have agreed to a military collaboration with France, the American position inside Europe would have been threatened and, this could have led to a crisis in the Atlantic Alliance.

Another main argument to explain the establishment of the MLF, was the American intent to avoid Germany being a nuclear power. Worried about the resurgence of the German nationalism, the USA strategy aimed at bounding this tendencies inside supranational institutions. The MLF was one of them. The USA would have rather preferred Germany to actively participate in the context of the Multilateral Force than to have the country developing its own nuclear force. Germany's views over the nuclear issue became everyday more aligned with those embodied by the USA. The new German Chancellor Erhard seemed closer to the Americans than to the French, despite the Treaty of friendship signed from his predecessor Adenauer in 1963.

Germany moved really diplomatically between France and the USA. Both countries were convinced that if the MLF would have failed, the other would have helped Germany to build its own nuclear arsenal. De Gaulle *in primis* feared the danger West Germany could have represented if allowed to develop its nuclear program.

In this sense, the world assisted to a French-American rivalry on the nuclear issue.

While the other NATO members exposed their doubts over the project, Germany was

⁷² DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Allocution radiodiffusée et télévisée prononcée au Palais de l'Élysée, 19 April 1963*, Discours et Messages, III, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 95-96

the only one who truly committed itself to its realization. On June 1964, the US President Johnson and the German Chancellor Erhard affirmed their willingness to reach an agreement before the end of the year, even if this would have implied the establishment of a bilateral agreement.

Indeed, France was hugely disappointed. Maurice Couve de Murville addressed the project as nothing but:

«Une affaire germano-américaine [...] Le seul résultat est que vous allez être tête à tête avec les Allemands, et que vous allez développer leur appétit atomique⁷³.»

According to his view, the Multilateral Force would have had the only responsibility to weaken the Alliance and would have changed nothing. The Americans would have been in fact once again in charge of the deployment of the nuclear weapons.

In addition, De Gaulle defined the project as a mere academic exercise. It would in fact implied that:

«L'Allemagne pourrait accéder à la responsabilité nucléaire sans posséder la bombe. [...] Il est clair que l'Allemagne ne sera pas satisfaite et qu'à mesure de ses moyens, ses ambitions croîtront. L'Amérique pourra peut-être sur le moment l'empêcher de fabriquer la bombe, mais non pas de la désirer. La force multilatérale lui en donnera plus encore le goût⁷⁴.»

It is worth highlighting that despite refusing any collaboration in the MLF framework, de Gaulle proved to be initially tolerant toward West Germany's participation in the project. At the time of the signature of the Élysée treaty in 1963, France reassured Germany that would have done nothing to impede its commitment to the MLF. However, this complaisant attitude lasted less than one year. In 1964, the MLF agreement, due to the planned meeting between the US President Johnson and the British Prime Minister Wilson, seemed finally to be concluded. As previously affirmed, France strongly opposed to the project and started to push for Germany to reject it too.

Speaking on the behalf of General de Gaulle, Prime Minister Georges Pompidou argued in 1964 that if Germany would have followed and joined the Multilateral Force program, France would have been obliged to end the cooperation inaugurated just one

⁷³ VAÏSSE, MAURICE, *op. cit.*, p. 374

⁷⁴ *Ivi* p. 375.

year before by the Franco-German Treaty. Any further German commitment with the USA would have been interpreted by France as an unfriendly act. Pompidou even threatened to leave NATO as well as obstruct the Common Market if Germany would have ignored these advice.

A huge contribution to the tightening of the nuclear debate came surely from the international context. The French-German relations following the Empty Chair crisis resulted to be cooled. In addition, the French rapprochement with the Soviet Union as well as France tendency to exclude the USA from the German nuclear issue contributed to discredit the French position.

The French positions clashed with those of the USA even on the ground of how the latter managed the conflict in Vietnam. France criticized the NATO's flexibility doctrine adopted in that issue and threatened to revoke its participation to the Organization if a new policy would have not been implemented.

In this sense, in a desperate effort to unfold the complicated relations with France, the US Secretary of Defense McNamara proposed to the country the establishment of a restrict committee, to which would have also participate Germany. This committee would have had the task to examine the employment of the strategic forces. As expected, de Gaulle refused to participate in this new plan. McNamara again proposed to replace this restrict committee with a special committee, that would have included in its decision all of its member states. This time it would have been in charge of examining the measures implying the use of nuclear weapons to be used in case of crisis and moreover, it would have deepened the allied participation modalities to the nuclear planification.

One again, the American proposal was followed by the General's reject. France was not in fact interested in participate to a tripartite committee. These projects were considered highly useless and would, according to the General's opinion, have brought nothing concrete. Behind this refusal laid again the impossibility for France to participate to initiatives that would have the effect to reaffirm the American supremacy and control.

On the other hand, Bonn was willing to participate to the definition of the nuclear strategy.

In this regard, de Gaulle in 1965 stated about Germany:

«Nous la connaissons bien : les Allemands sont un grand peuple dont on ne sait jamais ce qui peut en sortir. [...] L'idée que, dans les affaires atomiques, l'Allemagne serai sur le même plan que les autres pays n'est pas une idée juste. L'Allemagne a été vaincue et l'on

ne peut pas envisager qu'elle puisse participer, même indirectement, à la décision nucléaire. [...] Je vous le dis par rapport à l'Union soviétique et aussi par rapport à nous-même : nous avons été envahis plusieurs fois et nous ne l'avons pas oublié. Certes, nous avons fait la réconciliation, nous avons conclu un traité de coopération et nous voulons une Europe organisée avec l'Allemagne; mais nous ne pouvons pas négliger pour autant le danger que celle-ci représente dans certains cas. Elle ne doit pas pouvoir disposer de la puissance atomique des États-Unis. Quant à la nôtre, elle n'en disposera de toute façon jamais⁷⁵. »

Due to the strong French opposition and to the deterioration of the Franco-German relations, in 1964, the US President Johnson decided to cancel the deadline for the implementation of the MLF.

Nonetheless, the project echoed in the international agenda until 1965, but it mostly concerned the German-American negotiations.

De Gaulle conversing with Hervé Alphand seemed to have said: «La MLF est mort, c'est moi qui l'ai tuée⁷⁶».

⁷⁵ *Ivi* p. 376.

⁷⁶ SCHOENBORN BENEDIKT, *La mésentente apprivoisée: De Gaulle et les Allemands, 1963-1969*, 2007. Available at: <https://books.openedition.org/iheid/1087?lang=it>.

2.3 *The Atlantic policy*

In 1966 France left the military organization of NATO. Before examining this choice more in detail, it must be recalled that the Franco-American relations became more complicated with de Gaulle's return on the political scene in 1958.

The General's diffidence towards the Americans is deeply evident not only when referring to the bilateral relations between the two countries, but more in general if we consider that this hostility brought to a clash in both the domestic and the foreign context.

In a note regarding the situation of Laos de Gaulle, in 1960, clearly affirmed that:

« Dans l'affaire du Laos, j'estime que nous ne devons pas nous lier en quoi que ce soit aux États-Unis. Il nous faut garder les mains libres. Ceci à Vientiane, naturellement, mais aussi à Bangkok et, éventuellement, dans une réunion quelconque de l' O.T.A.S.E.⁷⁷ »

Furthermore, the following year:

« Au moment où va s'installer une autre administration américaine, vous aurez à évoquer avec les nouveaux dirigeants les principaux problèmes internationaux, compte tenu des objectifs de notre politique extérieure et de notre souci de mieux organiser notre coopération avec les États-Unis. Ce souci se manifestait déjà dans le mémorandum du général de Gaulle de septembre 1958, dont nous souhaitons qu'il soit connu et pris en considération par le gouvernement de M. Kennedy. Aujourd'hui comme hier, en effet, les États-Unis sont la force principale de l'Alliance atlantique ; ils sont, sans doute, intéressés d'une manière vitale à l'avenir de l'Europe ; enfin, ils jouent un rôle essentiel face au problème de l'évolution des pays sous-développés, lequel nous concerne aussi au premier chef dans le monde entier. Vous connaissez la politique du gouvernement dans les domaines essentiels, telle qu'elle a été en particulier à plusieurs reprises définie par le général de Gaulle. L'Alliance atlantique demeure indispensable pour la défense de l'Occident. Toutefois, son organisation répond mal à l'ensemble de la situation dans laquelle se trouve le monde libre. Elle doit donc être révisée et complétée, en particulier par le développement de la coopération tripartite. D'autre part, elle ne doit pas rester sous la conduite quasi exclusive, notamment au point de vue militaire, des États-Unis. Des réformes sont indispensables pour que l'Europe y exerce des responsabilités adéquates à

⁷⁷ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Note au sujet du Laos, 23 décembre 1960*, Lettres, notes et carnets, Juin 1958- Décembre 1960, Plon, Paris, 1985, p. 455.

sa capacité et y développe volontiers son effort ⁷⁸»

The Franco-American relations were highly ambiguous. They reflected the differences between a well affirmed great power and a newly born power. Furthermore, they were the logical outcome of the different positions they had inside the North Atlantic Organization, where the USA played a dominant role.

Despite all the frictions the two powers had, it must be recalled that after the Second World War, once European states were asked to align with the USA or the U.S.S.R., France chose the American side.

However, regardless this formal choice, starting from 1958, the country went through a period of crisis that called into question the NATO's role in Europe.

Far from being unexpected, the French decision to withdraw from the NATO's integrate command contributed to create a crisis whose effects had a considerable echo in the whole Occident. The General's decision emerged, as already stated, since the very beginning of his return to power. Therefore it can be framed as the outcome of a progressive evolution.

What France was basically asking for was to be a formal member of the Organization's strategic direction. The only thing it was able to obtain from the USA was to be admitted to the atomic *Standing Group* in Washington. Later on, however, it was further cut out with the creation of the Supreme Command in Europe (SHAPE). In this new organ France had no serious possibility to be taken into consideration, given that the major decisions were directly taken by the Pentagon or by the NATO High Command. In addition, even if the country was allowed to participate in the *Standing Group*, the Americans never hid that their privileged interlocutor was the UK. As a consequence of this special relation, the NATO became an organization mainly under the Anglo-Saxon direction.

On September 17th 1958, de Gaulle sent to the US President Eisenhower a *memorandum* in which he exposed the necessity to reform the integrate structures of the North Atlantic Organization. The document was at the same time transmitted to the British Prime Minister Macmillan. De Gaulle never received any answer. This is a crucial excerpt of the memorandum:

«Les événements récents au Moyen-Orient et dans le détroit de Formose ont contribué à montrer que l'organisation actuelle de l'alliance occidentale ne répond plus aux conditions

⁷⁸ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Project d'instruction pour l'ambassade de France à Washington, fin janvier 1961, Lettres, notes et carnets, 1961-1963*, Plon, Paris, 1986, pp.29-30.

nécessaires de la sécurité, pour ce qui concerne l'ensemble du monde libre. A la solidarité dans les risques encourus, ne correspond pas la coopération indispensable quant aux décisions prises et aux responsabilités. Le gouvernement français est amené à en tirer des conclusions:

1° L'alliance atlantique a été conçue et sa mise en oeuvre est préparée en vue d'une zone d'action éventuelle qui ne répond plus aux réalités politiques et stratégiques. Le monde étant ce qu'il est, on ne peut considérer comme adaptée à son objet une organisation telle que l'O.T.A.N., qui se limite à la sécurité de l'Atlantique Nord, comme si ce qui se passe, par exemple, au Moyen-Orient ou en Afrique, n'intéressait pas immédiatement et directement l'Europe, et comme si les responsabilités indivisibles de la France ne s'étendaient pas à l'Afrique, à l'Océan Indien et au Pacifique. D'autre part, le rayon d'action des navires et des avions et la portée des engins rendent militairement périmé un système aussi étroit. Il est vrai qu'on avait d'abord admise que l'armement atomique, évidemment capital, resterait pour longtemps le monopole des Etats-Unis, ce qui pouvait paraître justifier qu'à l'échelle mondiale des décisions concernant la défense fussent pratiquement déléguées au gouvernement de Washington. Mais, sur ce point également, on doit reconnaître qu'un pareil fait admis au préalable ne vaut plus désormais dans la réalité.

2° La France ne saurait donc considérer que l'O.T.A.N., sous sa forme actuelle, satisfasse aux conditions de la sécurité du monde libre et, notamment, de la sienne propre. Il lui paraît nécessaire qu'à l'échelon politique et stratégique mondial soit instituée une organisation dont elle fasse directement partie. Cette organisation aurait, d'une part, à prendre les décisions communes dans les questions politiques touchant à la sécurité mondiale, d'autre part à établir et, le cas échéant, à mettre en application les plans d'action stratégique, notamment en ce qui concerne l'emploi des armes nucléaires. Il serait alors possible de prévoir et d'organiser des théâtres éventuels d'opérations subordonnés à l'organisation générale :

- a)Arctique,
- b) Atlantique (Europe, Afrique du Nord, Moyen-Orient, Amérique orientale),
- c)Pacifique,
- d) Océan Indien (Inde, Madagascar, Afrique centrale et méridionale).

3° Le gouvernement français considère comme indispensable une telle organisation de la sécurité. Il y subordonne dès à présent tout développement de sa participation actuelle à l'O.T.A.N., et se propose, si cela paraissait nécessaire pour aboutir, d'invoquer la procédure de révision du traité de l'Atlantique Nord, conformément à l'article 12.

4° Le gouvernement français suggère que les questions soulevées dans cette note fassent le plus tôt possible l'objet de consultations entre les Etats-Unis, la Grande-Bretagne et la

France. Il propose que ces consultations aient lieu à Washington et, pour commencer, par la voie des ambassades et du Groupe permanent.⁷⁹»

As emerges from this *memorandum*, de Gaulle was demanding to his Anglo-Saxon interlocutors more freedom and more autonomy inside the alliance, specifically in the nuclear field. Furthermore, he asked for the establishment of a directory basically under the control of France, the USA and the UK⁸⁰.

At that time, in 1958, the role of the Atlantic Alliance was called into question for different reasons. The General, while approving the establishment of the North Atlantic Organization and, recognizing its utility during the first years of the Cold War, was completely disappointed by its military integrated system.

The critiques he moved to the alliance came substantially from the new international circumstances. Europe had finally recovered and was able to independently defend itself from any threat. Furthermore, the nuclear dissuasion, provided by the USA and the U.S.S.R., diminished the possibilities of war. It was the right time for France to reassert its own independence⁸¹. However, independence was not to be considered as isolation. Independence, according to the General's view, implied also solidarity.

By being part of the Atlantic alliance, France committed itself to defend the common interest, but from an equal position. The way NATO was organized did not conferr the country an equal treatment compared with the USA. France, as emerged from the first meeting of the Defense Council on June 17th 1958, was in a subordinate position inside the Organization.

The *memorandum* contained three main claims worth to be further examined. De Gaulle asked for the NATO to enlarge its competences; for a review of the military integration the Treaty implied and of the American nuclear monopoly and, lastly, the need for France to be part of the political and strategic directory⁸².

What the General condemned the most was the absence of political coordination also in those territories not directly linked within the Organization system. As was then organized, the Atlantic alliance was useless in solving those issues regarding for example the Middle East or Africa. The Organization should so have extended its work even to those countries.

⁷⁹ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Memorandum, 17 septembre 1958*, Lettres, notes et carnets, Juin 1958- Décembre 1960, Plon, Paris, 1985, pp.83-84.

⁸⁰ KOHL WILFRED, *French Nuclear Diplomacy*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2015, p. 6.

⁸¹ ELLISON JAMES, *The United States, Britain and the Transatlantic Crisis: Rising to the Gaullist Challenge, 1963–1968*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2007, p.11.

⁸² VAÏSSE, MAURICE, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

With regard instead to the review of the military integration, de Gaulle was strongly convinced that France needed to assure its defense by itself. This point was further explained in the speech the General gave at the *École militaire* in 1959:

«Il faut que la défense de la France soit française. C'est une nécessité qui n'a pas toujours été très familière au cours de ces dernières années. Je le sais. Il est indispensable qu'elle le redevienne. Un pays comme la France, s'il lui arrive de faire la guerre, il faut que ce soit sa guerre. Il faut que son effort soit son effort. S'il en était autrement, notre pays serait en contradiction avec tout ce qu'il est depuis ses origines, avec son rôle, avec l'estime qu'il a de lui-même, avec son âme. Naturellement, la défense française serait, le cas échéant, conjuguée avec celle d'autres pays. Cela est dans la nature des choses. Mais il est indispensable qu'elle nous soit propre, que la France se défende par elle-même, pour elle-même et à sa façon⁸³.»

Considering now the third point, as previously highlighted, the North Atlantic Organization, since the American preferences were oriented toward the UK, was basically guided by these two powers. Gaullist France was reclaiming its place inside the directory.

A further step towards the reassessment of France independence from the NATO was made in March 1959. The French President decided to withdraw the French fleet in the Mediterranean sea from the Atlantic alliance command.

The French Foreign minister Couve de Murville, who had the task to inform the Americans about the President's decision, justified the withdrawal as an action directly linked with the ongoing Algerian situation. At the same time, this decision has also to be considered as a signal to the USA, that still refused to discuss de Gaulle's tripartite proposal contained in the *memorandum*.

Nonetheless, any further doubt on whether these reasons were directly connected to each other was dispelled at the beginning of May 1959. The Prime Minister Debré explained to the American Secretary of State, that the French refusal to allow the USA deploying nuclear warheads for its nine air force squadrons based in France, was the direct consequence of the American unwillingness to further examine the General *memorandum*.

De Gaulle himself clarified his position on the issue. In a long letter addressed to Eisenhower, dated May 25th 1959, he explained that his decision to impede the NATO

⁸³ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Allocution prononcé à l'Ecole militaire, 3 Novembre 1959*, Discours et Messages, III, Plon, Paris 1970, p. 126.

nuclear stockpiling on French soil was due to the American unsatisfactory answer to his tripartite project. The letter contained many of the points already expressed in the 1958 *memorandum*. In addition, de Gaulle communicated that he had already established determined provisions requiring a unilateral action.

What was written in the letter was that, since no concrete changes were made regarding the France's position inside the NATO, he would have create a French command in the Mediterranean sea. This command would have answered to France's government only and, would have operated in the whole Mediterranean zone, plus the North Africa. However, he affirmed his availability to discuss either with Washington and London, either within the Atlantic Alliance any possible cooperation inside the zone.

In addition, the General clarified that his decision to impede the deployment of American nuclear weapons on French soil was the result of the American refusal to share its nuclear programs within France.

«D'autre part, laissez-moi appeler votre attention sur le fait que l'armement atomique et les conditions dans lesquelles l'action de celui-ci pourrait être déclenchée imposent à la France de prendre certaines précautions. Évidemment la question se présenterait d'une manière toute différente si vous nous aviez mis à même de mettre à profit vos propres réalisations. Mais l'Amérique entend garder ses secrets vis-à-vis de la France, ce qui nous oblige à les découvrir nous-mêmes et à grands frais. Sur ce point, cependant, nous n'avons rien d'autre à exprimer que des regrets. Il n'en est pas ainsi pour ce qui concerne le fait que l'Amérique se réserve la décision entière d'employer, ou non, les moyens nucléaires dont elle dispose. Car les conséquences qui pourraient résulter, pour nous, de toute action unilatérale que vous engageriez dans un pareil domaine nous amènent à formuler des demandes explicites et à adopter, autant que cela est possible, des mesures propres et de sauvegarde.

S'il n'y avait pas d'alliance entre nous, je conviendrais que votre monopole du déclenchement éventuel de la lutte atomique serait justifié. Mais vous et nous sommes liés ensemble, au point que l'ouverture de cette sorte de guerre, soit par vous, soit contre vous, exposerait automatiquement la France à une destruction totale et immédiate. Il ne lui est évidemment pas possible de s'en remettre entièrement de sa vie ou de sa mort à quelque État que ce soit, fût-ce au plus amical. C'est pourquoi la France tient d'une manière essentielle à participer, le cas échéant, à la décision qui serait prise par ses alliés d'utiliser des projectiles atomiques et de les lancer sur tels lieux, à tels moments. Tant qu'elle n'a pu conclure avec les États-Unis et avec la Grande-Bretagne l'accord qui lui paraît nécessaire à ce sujet, elle ne peut consentir à ce que de tels projectiles soient

entreposés sur son territoire et utilisés à partir de là à moins qu'elle n'en ait elle-même le contrôle complet et permanent⁸⁴. »

In an interview he made on the same date, to the journalist asking him what stood behind his decision to withdraw the fleet from the Mediterranean sea, the General briefly answered:

«Aujourd'hui J'observe simplement que la zone d'action éventuelle de l' O.T.A.N. ne s'entend pas au sud de la Méditerranée. Le Moyen-Orient, l'Afrique du Nord, l'Afrique Noire, Madagascar, la Mer Rouge etc., n'en font pas partie. Qui peut contester que la France puisse se trouver, éventuellement, dans l'obligation d'agir dans ces différentes contrées ? Il lui faudrait donc le faire indépendamment de l' O.T.A.N. Mais comment le ferait-elle si elle ne disposait pas de sa flotte ? Comment mènerait-elle, sans sa flotte, quelque action que ce soit dans les régions que je viens d'indiquer ?

J'observe, d'ailleurs, que les deux autres grandes puissances mondiales de l'alliance atlantique : États-Unis et Grande-Bretagne ont pris leur dispositions pour que la plus grande part de leurs forces navales ne soit pas intégrée dans l' O.T.A.N. J'ajoute qu'Américains et Anglais ont gardé dans leurs seules mains l'élément principal de leur force, les bombardiers atomiques. Le fait que la France a repris la disposition de sa flotte ne l'empêcherait pas de l'engager, le cas échéant, dans la bataille commune en Méditerranée. Il n'y a donc rien là qui puisse affaiblir l'alliance⁸⁵. »

As already argued before, the French withdrawal from the NATO integrate command was the outcome of a progressive evolution. Following the 1958 *memorandum*, in which the General proposed the establishment of a tripartite directory with the USA and the UK, the next steps, made in response to the American refusal to consider this project, were the 1959 French Mediterranean fleet disengagement from the Organization command and the 1963 withdrawal of the French Atlantic fleet from the NATO naval forces. Furthermore, in 1964 de Gaulle decided that the French ships would have not participate to the naval military manoeuvres organized within the Atlantic alliance. The same will happen in 1966.

In 1965, concerned about the escalation of tension with the USA, the General asked for the establishment of a French-American military treaty, that would have, in the

⁸⁴ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Lettre au Général Eisenhower, Président des États-Unis d'Amérique, 25 Mai 1959*, Lettres, notes et carnets, Juin 1958- Décembre 1960, Plon, Paris, 1985, pp.226-227.

⁸⁵ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenu au Palais de l'Élysée, 25 Mars 1959*, Discours et Messages, III, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 92-93.

future, replaced the NATO. At the basis of this military treaty would have been the principle of equality. The subordinate relations embodied by the North Atlantic Organization would have finally disappeared.

In a press conference he made on September the 9th 1965, his willingness to finally put an end to France subordinate position inside the Organization, clearly emerged:

«C'est ainsi, qu'aussi longtemps que la solidarité des peuples occidentaux nous paraîtra nécessaire à la défense éventuelle de l'Europe, notre pays restera l'allié de ses alliés, mais qu'à l'expiration des engagements pris jadis, c'est-à-dire au plus tard en 1969, cessera, pour ce qui nous concerne, la subordination qualifiée « d'intégration » qui est prévue par l'O.T.A.N. et qui remettre notre destin à l'autorité étrangère. C'est ainsi que, tout en travaillant à unir, aux points de vue économique, politique, culturel et stratégique, les États situés de part et d'autre du Rhin et des Alpes, nous faisons en sorte que cette Organisation ne nous prive pas de notre libre arbitre⁸⁶.»

General de Gaulle always refused the two blocs division emerged at the end of the Second World War. Furthermore, he strived to overcome the undefined international equilibrium inaugurated by the Cold War. In this sense, like he did with the European integration process, he aimed at finding a French way, characterized by a strong refusal of the bipolar world order. The French way would have allowed the country to regain a great power status and to finally be independent. In this sense, the distension with the Soviet bloc in 1963 must be considered. With regard to the Atlantic policy, the battle he moved to the Atlantic Alliance should have prevented France from being dragged into conflicts the country had never wanted to engage. Moreover, it would have avoid France waging war beside its willingness in the name of the Atlantic solidarity.

In addition to the military reasons why France fought against the well-established NATO domination in Europe, there was also the fundamental nuclear issue. If France wanted to reassert its national independence, the process passed necessarily through the development of its own nuclear program.

It was following these considerations that on April 21st 1966, France quitted the NATO integrate command, considered an insurmountable obstacle to France independence.

«Rien ne peut faire qu'une loi s'impose sans amendement quand elle n'est plus d'accord

⁸⁶ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenu au Palais de l'Élysée, 9 Septembre 1965*, Discours et Messages, IV, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 383-384.

avec les mœurs. Rien ne peut faire qu'un traité soit valable intégralement quand son objet s'est modifié. Et rien ne peut faire qu'une alliance reste telle quelle quand ont changé les conditions qui étaient celles dans lesquelles elle avait été conclue. Il faut adapter aux données nouvelles, la loi, le traité, l'alliance, si on ne le fait pas, alors, les textes seront vidés de leur substance et ce ne seront plus, le cas échéant, que de vains papiers d'archives, à moins que, il se produise une rupture brutale entre ces formes désuètes et les vivantes réalités. Eh bien je dis des conditions nouvelles. En effet, en raison de l'évolution intérieure et extérieure des pays de l'Est, le fait que l'Occident ne se trouve plus actuellement menacé comme il l'était quand le protectorat américain s'est installé en Europe, sous le couvert de l'OTAN. Et en même temps que s'éloignent ou que s'éloignaient, ces alarmes se réduisaient, la garantie de sécurité, autant vous dire absolue, que donnaient à l'ancien continent, la possession par l'Amérique, et par l'Amérique seule, de l'arme atomique, de l'armement atomique, et la conviction où on était, qu'en cas d'agression elle emploierait cet armement sans restriction. Car depuis lors la Russie soviétique s'est dotée d'un armement nucléaire capable de frapper directement les États-Unis, ce qui a naturellement rendu pour le moins indéterminées les décisions des américains, quant à l'emploi éventuel de leur bombe. Et ce qui a, du coup, privé de justification, je parle pour la France, non pas certes l'alliance mais certainement l'intégration. D'autre part, tandis que se dissipe, tout au moins dans une certaine mesure, la perspective d'une guerre mondiale éclatant à cause de l'Europe, voici que d'autres conflits où l'Amérique s'engage dans d'autres parties du monde, comme avant-hier en Corée, hier à Cuba, aujourd'hui au Vietnam, ces conflits peuvent, en vertu de la fameuse escalade, prendre une extension telle qu'on aboutisse à une conflagration générale. Et dans ce cas l'Europe, dont la stratégie est dans l'OTAN la stratégie de l'Amérique, y serait automatiquement impliquée, impliquée dans la lutte, même si elle ne l'avait pas voulue. Et ce serait le cas de la France, si l'imbrication de son territoire, de ses communications, de certaines de ses forces, de plusieurs de ses bases aériennes, de tels et tels de ses ports dans le système de commandement américain, devait subsister plus longtemps. Il faut ajouter que notre pays devenant, de son côté, et par ses propres moyens, une puissance atomique, est amené à assumer lui-même les responsabilités politiques et stratégiques que cela comporte. Et responsabilité que leur nature et leur dimension rendent, évidemment, inaliénables. Et enfin, la volonté de la France de disposer d'elle-même, ce qui est indispensable pour qu'elle croie à son propre rôle, et pour qu'elle puisse être utile aux autres, cette volonté de la France est incompatible avec une organisation de défense dans laquelle elle est subordonnée. Par conséquent, la France, sans revenir sur son adhésion à l'Alliance Atlantique, la France va d'ici au terme fixé comme ultime aboutissement de ses obligations, et qui est le 4 avril 1969, la France va d'ici-là continuer à modifier, les dispositions actuellement pratiquées, pour autant que ces dispositions la concernent. Autrement dit, ce qu'elle a déjà fait dans certains domaines, hier, elle le fera

demain dans d'autres, en prenant, bien entendu, les dispositions voulues pour que les changements s'opèrent progressivement. Et pour que ses alliés ne s'en trouvent pas soudain et de son fait incommodés, et d'autre part, elle se tiendra prête suivant ce qu'elle a déjà réalisé à différents points de vue. Elle se tiendra prête, à régler avec tels et tels d'entre eux, je parle des alliés, les rapports pratiques de coopération qui pourront paraître utile de part et d'autre, soit dans l'immédiat, soit dans l'éventualité d'un conflit. Et cela vaut naturellement pour la coopération alliée en Allemagne. Au total, il s'agit de rétablir une situation normale de souveraineté, dans laquelle ce qui est français, en fait de sol, de ciel, de mer, de force, et tout élément étranger qui se trouverait en France ne relèveront plus que des autorités françaises. On voit qu'il ne s'agit là, non pas du tout d'une rupture, mais d'une nécessaire adaptation.⁸⁷»

France's exit from the military organization did not however implied a definitive breach with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The General's decision was taken only in the light of his desire to grant the country the independence it needed, without undermining any further possible French engagement in the bosom of the Organization. A blatant example was that France in left in place the overfly authorization over its territory, in exchange for its free access to the information of the NATO Integrated Air Defense System⁸⁸.

Few days later on March the 5th, de Gaulle addressed to President Johnson an handwritten letter in which despite formally confirming France willingness to remain a contracting part of the Washington Treaty, which implied that it would have been still a former member of the Organization, it however « *se propose de recouvrer sur son territoire l'entier exercice de sa souveraineté, actuellement entamé par la présence permanente d'éléments militaires alliés ou par l'utilisation habituelle qui est faite de son ciel, de cesser sa participation aux commandements « intégrés » et de ne plus mettre de forces à la disposition de l'OTAN*⁸⁹. »

The French decision to withdraw from the NATO integrate command did not prevent the country to still maintain its seat inside the Organization Council.

To the General decision followed a reminder, dated March 29th, in which de Gaulle informed the Allied that their retreat from the French soil, should have been completed by April 1st 1967. On that date, finally the French troops were again under French

⁸⁷ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenu au Palais de l'Élysée, 21 Février 1966*, Discours et Messages, V, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 17-19.

⁸⁸ BOZO FRÉDÉRIC, *Chronique d'une décision annoncée: le retrait de l'organisation militaire (1965–1967)*, in Maurice Vaisse, Pierre Mélandri and Frédéric Bozo (eds.), *La France et l'OTAN 1949–1996*, Complexe, Brussels, 1996, p.155.

⁸⁹ De Gaulle letter to US President Lyndon Johnson, 7 March 1966. Available at: https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1997/10/13/d97b195-34e1-4862-b5e7-87577a8c1632/publishable_fr.pdf.

command.

THIRD CHAPTER

L'Europe des patries, De Gaulle and the European integration

Introduction

One of de Gaulle most ambitious ideas was embodied by the Fouchet Plans. With regard to the European integration process, the General, as abundantly stressed, affirmed the primacy of the nation opposed to the supranational logic. Supranationalism would have meant, according to him, a tight European dependence to the American control. Europe needed instead, to develop its own policies with no external interferences.

With the Fouchet Plans clearly appeared de Gaulle's intention to somehow reform the Community, having it based upon a confederal logic. The proposals he made between 1961 and 1962 aimed at giving Europe an intergovernmental alternative. The Plans were the logical outcome of the President of the Republic's fears to the France alleged loss of national independence. Both Plans ended however in a failure, due to the strong opposition coming from the other Community Member states.

After the failure of the Fouchet Plans and, founding himself largely isolated, de Gaulle oriented his attention toward West Germany. Since 1958 both countries committed to closely cooperate with each other. Their rapprochement culminated with the signing of the Élysée Treaty on January 1963.

The Treaty provided for France and West Germany to held regular meetings on important matters such as defense and education. It further implied both countries Heads of State and Government to cluster at least twice a year.

Only few days before the Élysée Treaty was signed, the General found himself to be the protagonist of another important event: the first veto to the UK entrance inside the Community in 1963.

What stood behind his decision was once again de Gaulle's willingness not to sacrifice France's independence. Britain's close relations with the USA contributed to enhance the General's diffidence toward the country. Furthermore, he feared that the British membership could have jeopardized the still ongoing negotiations on the Common Agricultural Policy.

3.1 *The Fouchet Plans: The confederal logic*

The debate on whether the future of Europe should have been based upon supranationalism or intergovernmentalism has been recurrent since the end of the Second World War.

Despite always being depicted as a fervent anti-Europeanist, General de Gaulle had instead his own particular view on the structure Europe should have had. Europe was to be built upon cooperation and not integration. Cooperation among states should have been established at every possible level, especially on the political one by the means of intergovernmental conferences⁹⁰. Nonetheless, every state should have maintained its independence when facing international affairs and, this freedom would have materialized in an unanimous decision-making process.

Indeed, he rejected every form of supranationalism. Supranational Europe, according to him, would have basically meant Europe under the American command and control. As examined in the previous chapter, starting from 1958 de Gaulle strived to change those institutions that were considered to obstacle France's *grandeur*. This reference can be clearly addressed to his strong opposition to the Plevin Plan, as well as the long NATO debate, an organization in which the country was deemed not to have the position it deserved. Furthermore, the establishment of the European Defense Community envisaged a supranational organization in the defense field. The common army should have in fact been placed under the NATO command. These features of the plan were unacceptable. However, this opposition should not lead to think that the General had no interest at all in defense and security matters. De Gaulle's ambitions were oriented towards a closer Europe, in which every single nation could have maintained its own military structures. According to his view, these nations would have disposed of an absolute veto-power when facing common decisions and would have jointly agreed on defense issues.

While the E.D.C. debate was keeping France in an *impasse*, de Gaulle elaborated his own intergovernmental alternative to the supranational approach. In this sense, what Debré proposed was the creation of a Union of European States. This union was to be ruled by a political committee made up of the head of the governments of the member states. The committee would have the task to enhance common policies in different fields, both political and economic.

⁹⁰ LUDLOW PIERS, *From Words to Actions: Reinterpreting de Gaulle's European Policy*, in *Globalizing de Gaulle*, international perspectives on French foreign policies, 1958-1969, Lexington Books, Plymouth, 2010, p. 65.

On February 1953 in a press conference, the General exposed his personal view over the future organization of Europe:

«Au lieu d'une fusion intolérable et impraticable, pratiquons l'association. En poursuivant des chimères, on a déjà perdu des années. Commençons par faire l'alliance des États libres de l'Europe. Cette alliance, organisons-là. Il y faut une direction : ce sera le Conseil des Chefs de gouvernements réunis d'une manière organique et périodique. A cette direction, il faut un instrument de travail et d'exécution. Ce sera l'État-major combiné, si l'on veut le Commissariat, mais un Commissariat qui n'aura pas le front de se proclamer souverain. Ainsi, seront arrêtés les plans, fournis les moyens, répartis les commandements. Ainsi, seront fusionnés tous les services qui doivent l'être : infrastructure, communications, ravitaillement, fabrications d'armements, etc.⁹¹»

This proposal remained completely unheard until the General's return on the political scene in 1958. Then, from a higher position, he could finally actively participate in the European institutional debate and seek the best alternative that would have granted France a dominant position.

In this context we can collocate the massive, but unsuccessful General's initiative launched in an effort to finally alter the supranational institutional character Europe was oriented to. The Fouchet Plan aimed at giving Europe a more looser and intergovernmental approach. States should have been united by the means of cooperation, but needed to maintain their sovereign features. The Fouchet Plan should have laid the basis for what de Gaulle referred to as *Europe des patries*.

It was already highlighted the importance de Gaulle gave to France's role worldwide. At a first stand, the policy of *grandeur* was oriented towards the development of the country's own nuclear arsenal. In order to do so, de Gaulle asked the Americans to help France building his *force de frappe* and at the same time, to have a seat in the NATO nuclear directory. Following the American disinterested attitude, the General focused on the establishment of a closer cooperation with Italy and West Germany. When even this project failed, the French President of the Republic decided to relaunch the ideas already expressed in 1953.

⁹¹ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenue à l'hôtel continental, 25 Février 1953*, Discours et Messages, II, Plon, Paris 1970, p. 573.

Since the NATO institutional reform became everyday more improbable, the only way for France to obtain a privileged position was to create a closer Europe that would have been posed under the Paris leadership.

The ideas of establishing a political union inside the framework of the European integration already emerged in his speech dated May 31st 1960:

«A quoi s'ajoute le fait qu'ils constituent un tout incomparable, eux que, précisément notre époque qui abolit les distances et les obstacles, réclame de grands ensembles. Contribuer à bâtir l'Europe Occidentale, en un groupement politique, économique, culturel, humain, organiser pour le progrès, l'action et la défense, c'est à quoi la France s'applique et continuera de s'appliquer. Déjà, l'Allemagne Fédérale, l'Italie, la Hollande, la Belgique, le Luxembourg collaborent directement avec elle, dans plusieurs domaines. Le Marché Commun des 6 entrera le 31 décembre dans sa réalisation pratique. Sans doute, les participants ne veulent-ils pas que cette institution puisse blesser d'autres pays d'Europe, et l'on doit compter que sera trouvé un accommodement, entre les intérêts. Sans doute aussi faut-il que les Nations qui s'associent restent elles-mêmes, et que la voie suivie soit celle de la coopération organisée des Etats. En attendant, qu'on en vienne peut-être à une imposante confédération. Mais pour ce qui la concerne, la France a reconnu une fois pour toute, la nécessité de cette Europe d'Occident, qui fut jadis le rêve des sages et l'ambition des puissants et qui est, aujourd'hui, la condition indispensable de l'équilibre du monde⁹².»

These ideas were further developed on September 1960. In another press conference, the General exposed what was his project of European cooperation. De Gaulle reaffirmed the necessity to assure a regular cooperation with the six founding states. This cooperation should have concerned political, economic, defense and cultural matters and would have implied a concertation of governments, representing the intergovernmental character he aimed at giving to Europe⁹³. The concertation of governments should have answered to an assembly, made up of delegates of national parliaments, in charge of delivering periodically deliberations.

This new European project was to be legitimized by the means of a “solemn European referendum” aimed at conferring Europe the indispensable popular support.

De Gaulle's September statement was the outcome of the successful meeting with German Chancellor Adenauer that took place on July 1960 in Rambouillet. From this meeting emerged nine main points on the basis of which Europe should have been

⁹² DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Allocution radiodiffusée et télévisée prononcée au Palais de l'Élysée, 31 Mai 1960*, Discours et Messages, III, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 220-221.

⁹³ GAFFNEY JOHN, *Political Leadership in France. From Charles de Gaulle to Nicolas Sarkozy*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2010, p. 52.

organized. Firstly, according to the General, Europe was required to be developed “*par elle-même et pour elle-même*” in those domains regarding politics, economics, culture and defense. Then, in order to be effective, Europe must have consisted in a cooperation among states. The first boost should have come from a French-German agreement, further extended also to Italy, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. The third point consisted in the rejection of the institutions supranational dimension, that should have instead been reformed and subordinated to the national governments. This new intergovernmental character would have largely helped European states to get rid of the American supremacy, so openly in contradiction with the new role Europe should have played. The fifth point regarded the regular cooperation that should have been implemented by the national governments, required to coordinate their action in the different domains. Moreover, the task to discuss and execute the Governments’ main guidelines should have been given to common and permanent commissions of experts. In this sense four commissions should have been established for the four different domains: political, economic, cultural and defense.

The seventh point addressed the need of creating an assembly made up of national Parliaments delegates, with a mere consultative function. This new organization, as was meant by the General, should have received the popular approval through a general referendum. In this sense, France and Germany were asked to implement the necessary measures to build this new Europe.

Adenauer reacted surprisingly positively to de Gaulle’s proposals. He was only partially concerned about the European referendum, banned by the German Constitution and, the impact this project could have had on the Atlantic alliance.

The General’s next move, towards the creation of a *Europe des États*, was to schedule a first summit between the six heads of government. The summit hide a double purpose. On the one hand, it could have represented a precedent, in case states would have agreed to the adoption of an intergovernmental approach. On the other hand, it might have led to the draft of a new treaty.

General de Gaulle already mentioned his intention to schedule a meeting between the six to Chancellor Adenauer, but his idea was not considered by his German counterpart.

This plan was relaunched in October by Prime Minister Debré, who was hoping for the six to finally agree on a date.

Adenauer accepted the French proposal and the meeting was to be held in Paris on December 5-6, 1960. Nonetheless, Germany was highly reluctant, since the meeting

would have coincided with the presidential elections in the USA. For many different reasons, the summit was then scheduled on February 1961.

Finally, on February 10-11 de Gaulle was able to host the first meeting between the six heads of state and government in Paris. The previous day the French President of the Republic and the German Chancellor bilaterally agreed to hold these conferences regularly in the future. They further decided to make the other four states aware of this decision.

The group of six states that participated to the Paris summit became widely known as the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Union. Its main task was to examine how states could have reached a deeper coordination on foreign policy matters. What is worth to highlight is that nor the European Commission, nor the European Parliament were asked to participate to the summit, that resulted to be a diplomatic negotiation among nations.

At the time the summit was held however, the ideas on how cooperation between states, in the fields of foreign policy and defense should have been realized, were still unclear. The situation proved to be far more complex if we consider the substantial ideological differences between the Six. Should cooperation have been achieved by supranational or intergovernmental institutions?

France's five interlocutors proved to react very cautiously to the General's project. Behind this reluctance stood two reasons, one institutional and one related to the foreign policy domain⁹⁴.

From the institutional point of view, the five EEC member states were concerned about de Gaulle's intention to radically change the European institutions as designed since then. France's EEC partners all agreed on the supranational pattern, despite theorized differently among countries. Germany and Italy were in favor of a devolution of sovereignty in well determined sectors, while instead the Benelux countries supported the complete transfer of powers to European institutions.

The intergovernmental approach, as proposed by de Gaulle, was interpreted by France's partners as a threat to the already established European Commission. The intergovernmental meetings should have exerted a wider influence in the executive branch and would have largely reduced the Commission's role.

⁹⁴ TEASDALE, ANTHONY, *The Fouchet Plan: De Gaulle's Intergovernmental Design for Europe*, 2016. Available at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/european-institute/Assets/Documents/LEQS-Discussion-Papers/LEQSPaper117.pdf>.

Furthermore, the proposal of establishing intergovernmental meetings would have had the effect, according to the five ECC states, to arrest the already ongoing integration process, mainly inaugurated by the Treaties of Rome.

On the other hand, referring to the framework of foreign policy, France interlocutors were mostly worried about de Gaulle's willingness to assure Europe a broader freedom of action when confronting with international matters. These worries already emerged in 1959, when the President's proposal of creating a tripartite directorate in the bosom of the Community was left unheard. The five partners of France were mainly doubtful whether a closer Europe, in the defense field, could have represented the best solution for the Community.

According to Miriam Camps: "there was general agreement within the Six that Europe united could exercise a power and influence in the world that a divided Europe could not, but there was also a fear that the Europe envisaged by de Gaulle was not a Europe working in close and equal alliance with the United States, but a "third-force" Europe playing a dangerous power-game between East and West ⁹⁵".

What de Gaulle was hoping for, despite the substantial ideological differences among the EEC states, was that they would have accepted giving Europe a new way to cooperate. Adenauer on the other side, was hoping that during this meeting France would have proved to be more willing to reach a compromise. As failure was a possible option, both statesmen were convinced that was better to reach any deal than returning home with nothing concrete.

During the Paris summit de Gaulle proposed to his five interlocutors the settling of a Study Group, chaired by the French ambassador in Denmark, Christian Fouchet and made up of the six heads of state and government. The Study Group should have had the task to further analyze any possible diplomatic and political cooperation among the Economic European Community member states.

The first meeting was held in Bad Godesberg, near Bonn, on July 18th 1961. Despite the Dutch opposition to de Gaulle's project of intergovernmental cooperation, it seemed likely possible for states to reach a compromise. Both stances, French and Dutch, were taken into consideration in the Italian draft that emerged from the meeting. But still, the document appeared to be highly confused.

De Gaulle was finally able to assure regular meetings among the governments of the Six. In these meetings the EC members could jointly discuss any matter. Furthermore,

⁹⁵ CAMPS, MIRIAM, *Britain and the European Community 1955-63*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1964, p. 307.

the political cooperation, as implied by the draft, aimed at realizing that union of states so hardly desired by the General.

The political union, as was to emerge by the Study Group, should have been linked to the Atlantic alliance, a bond that would have allowed other states to join the E.E.C.

The committee chaired by Fouchet saw its mandate renewed after the July meeting. It was now charged with the duty to study and submit new cooperation proposals even in new fields. These proposals could have also become laws by the means of a new treaty or by a substantial change in those already in place.

The committee started its work on September, willing to deliver a formal document by the time of the third meeting, planned for the end of the year. Every country, except for Holland contributed to the draft by sending papers to the committee. However, some substantial differences emerged. While Germany and Italy seemed to be more aligned with de Gaulle's intergovernmental view, on the other hand, Belgium and Luxembourg supported the idea of a political community, with an independent executive.

Finally, the first Fouchet Plan was officially submitted on November 2nd 1961. The draft provided for 18 articles and envisaged the creation, according to Article 1, of: "a union of States, hereafter called "the Union" [...] The Union is based on respect for the individuality of the peoples and of the Member States and for equality of rights and obligations. It is indissoluble⁹⁶."

Moreover, Article 2 clarified which were the main aims of the Union⁹⁷:

- to bring about the adoption of a common foreign policy in matters that are of common interest to Member States;
- to ensure, through close co-operation between Member States in the scientific and cultural field, the continued development of their common heritage and the protection of the values on which their civilization rests;
- to contribute thus in the Member States to the defense of human rights, the fundamental freedoms and democracy;
- to strengthen, in co-operation with the other free nations, the security of Member States against any aggression by adopting a common defense policy.

⁹⁶ Draft Treaty of the Fouchet Plan submitted on November 2nd 1961. Full text available at: https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/draft_treaty_fouchet_plan_i_2_november_1961-en-485fa02e-f21e-4e4d-9665-92f0820a0c22.html.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

A major part of the document was related to clarify the institutions' functioning. The Union in fact, would have been ruled by a Council which would have adopted decisions by unanimity. If more than two states would have abstained, decisions could still have been taken and would have been binding only for those states that participated in their adoption. The Council would have represented the national governments and it would have cloister every four months at Head of State or Government level, and at least once in the intervening period at Foreign Minister level. According to the Draft Treaty⁹⁸: "At each of these meetings at Head of State or Government level, the Council shall appoint a President who shall take up his duties two months before the subsequent meeting and continue to exercise them for two months after the meeting. Meetings of the Council held at Foreign Minister level shall be presided over by the Foreign Minister of the State whose representative presides over meetings at Head of State or Government level. The President in office shall preside over extraordinary meetings that may be held during his term of office. The Council shall choose the place for its meetings."

The reactions of the five EC countries to the French proposal, were highly mixed. On the one hand, Italy, West Germany and Luxembourg, despite seeking for more guarantees, recognized the potential of the work. On the other hand, Belgium and Holland found the project unacceptable. Belgium condemned the proposal in light of the huge power France would have gained by this new intergovernmental system. The country now had the possibility to veto every single action.

In addition, both countries claimed for the British participation in the intergovernmental political union debate. On August 1961, Britain's Prime Minister Macmillan had applied for the country's membership. This seemed a very good reason, for all those who were not supporting De Gaulle's project, to postpone the meeting.

As Masclet⁹⁹ argued: "from that moment on the Netherlands and Belgium posed the problem of political union as a choice between two alternatives: either a supranational system [without Britain] or a looser regime with British participation". Indeed, both countries would have rather preferred a third way, that is to say a supranational organization with British participation. No need to say that for de Gaulle the first and the third proposal were unacceptable. The second raised the issue that Britain participation inside the Union would have meant a tighter bond with the North Atlantic Organization.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁹ MASCLET, JEAN-CLAUDE, *L'Union politique de l'Europe*, PUF, Paris, 1994, p. 45.

Negotiations were deadlocked.

On January 18th 1962, France submitted to its five partners a revised version of the first Fouchet Plan. Despite the negotiations *impasse* would have required France to soften its position, the new document witnessed instead the country's hardening its conditions. The institutions' intergovernmental character was accentuated and implied a consistent independence from the USA. De Gaulle himself has been addressed to have drafted the proposed amendments to the original Plan. The French President was largely irritated by Belgium's and Holland's attitude during the negotiations. He considered that, in exchange for the Dutch and Belgian agreement to the project, they would have required Britain to be admitted to the Community. This would have meant for France the loss of its leadership inside the European framework.

However, de Gaulle's amendments were not welcomed even by the French delegation in the Fouchet commission.

The new draft implied five huge changes. First of all, the establishment of a Committee of Ministers and a Committee of Ministers of Education, that should have met at least four times in a year. They were designed so that over the years they could have superseded the European Council of Ministers.

In addition, the new draft implied the Union to cooperate also in the economic field. What France aimed at was to slowly erode those prerogatives belonging to the European Economic Community. Another important aspect this new Plan provided for, was the complete removal of any, even if implicit, reference to the NATO. Defense policy was no more required to be "in cooperation with other free nations".

The fourth point consisted in a substantial reduction of the consultative powers conferred to the European Parliament.

Lastly, Article 16¹⁰⁰ stated that: "three years after this Treaty comes into force, it shall be subjected to a review in order to consider suitable measures either for strengthening the Union in general in the light of progress already made or, in particular, for simplifying, rationalizing and coordinating the ways in which Member States co-operate." It mainly differed from the first draft because it implied the Union to be a distinct separate pillar from the European Economic Community.

The Benelux countries, as expected, again rejected the Plan. Nonetheless, France five EC partners submitted a counter-proposal that implied a much more federal approach. This was in turn, refused by de Gaulle. Furthermore, on April 1962, Fouchet was

¹⁰⁰ Draft Treaty of the Fouchet Plan II submitted on January 18th 1962. Full text available at: https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/draft_treaty_fouchet_plan_ii_18_january_1962-en-c9930f55-7d69-4edc-8961-4f12cf7d7a5b.html.

replaced by the Italian Cattani who proposed new amendments, in his struggling to reach a compromise between France and Benelux, that were demanding the UK full entry inside the Community. Due to the impossibility to reconcile the different positions on the issue, on April 17th 1962 the Foreign Ministers of the Six admitted the failure of the plan.

On May 15th 1962, General de Gaulle, in a press conference at the Élysée palace, declared that:

«Dans un monde où tout se ramène à la menace d'un conflit général, l'idée d'une Europe occidentale unie et qui aurait assez de force, assez de moyens et assez de cohésion pour exister par elle-même, cette idée-là apparaît tout naturellement. D'autant plus que les inimitiés qui avaient séculairement déchiré l'Europe, en particulier l'opposition entre l'Allemagne et la France, ont actuellement cessé. Du coup, voilà mis en lumière, d'abord le caractère qu'on peut appeler complémentaire – au point de vue géographique, stratégique, économique, culturel, etc. – des peuples de cette partie de l'ancien continent, l'Europe occidentale. Et puis, en même temps, la capacité globale qu'ils représentent en fait de puissance, de production, de création, d'échanges, par rapport à l'activité générale de l'univers. Enfin, les possibilités que leur ensemble pourrait offrir aux deux milliards d'hommes qui peuplent les pays sous-développés. Voilà des données de fait qui ont conduit six États du Continent à tenter d'établir entre eux des liens particuliers. [...]

Aux yeux de la France cette construction économique ne suffit pas. L'Europe occidentale – qu'il s'agisse de son action vis-à-vis des autres peuples, ou de sa propre défense, ou de sa contribution au développement des régions qui en ont besoin, ou de son devoir de détente et d'équilibre internationaux – l'Europe Occidentale doit se constituer politiquement. D'ailleurs, si elle n'y parvenait pas, la Communauté économique elle-même ne pourrait à la longue s'affermir, ni même se maintenir. Autrement dit, il faut à l'Europe des institutions qui l'amènent à former un ensemble politique, comme elle en est un déjà dans l'ordre économique.

La France a donc pris là l'initiative de proposer une telle organisation et vous savez que, l'année dernière au mois d'avril, les six Chefs d'État ou de Gouvernement se sont réunis à Paris pour discuter de son projet. Ils l'ont fait de nouveau à Bonn au mois de juillet. Puis, on a formé à Paris une commission politique – la commission Fouchet – qui était destinée à mettre au point le texte d'un traité d'union. Entre-temps, de nombreuses rencontres bilatérales et multilatérales avaient lieu sur ce sujet. Il était finalement convenu qu'une réunion au sommet des Six se tiendrait à Rome pour conclure, le cas échéant. On sait pourquoi et on sait comment on n'a pas encore abouti.

Qu'est-ce que la France propose à ses cinq partenaires? Je le répète une fois de plus. Pour nous organiser politiquement, commençons par le commencement. Organisons notre

coopération. Réunissons périodiquement nos Chefs d'État ou de Gouvernement pour qu'ils examinent en commun les problèmes qui sont les nôtres et pour qu'ils prennent à leur égard des décisions qui seront celles de l'Europe. Formons une commission politique, une commission de défense et une commission culturelle, de même que nous avons déjà une commission économique à Bruxelles qui étudie les questions communes et qui prépare les décisions des six Gouvernements. Naturellement, la commission politique et les autres procéderont, à cet égard, dans des conditions propres aux domaines particuliers qui seront les leurs. En outre, les ministres compétents à ces divers points de vue se réuniront chaque fois qu'il le faudra pour appliquer de concert les décisions qui auront été prises par le Conseil. Enfin, nous avons une Assemblée parlementaire européenne qui siège à Strasbourg et qui est composée de délégations de nos six Parlements nationaux. Mettons cette Assemblée à même de discuter des questions politiques communes comme elle discute déjà les questions économiques. Après expérience, nous verrons dans trois ans comment nous pourrons faire pour resserrer nos liens. Mais, tout au moins, nous aurons commencé à prendre l'habitude de vivre et d'agir ensemble. Voilà ce que la France a proposé. Elle croit que c'est là ce qui peut être fait de plus pratique¹⁰¹ .»

¹⁰¹ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 15 Mai 1962*, Discours et Messages, III, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 404-406.

3.2 Europe at stake: The French-German axis

As the Fouchet Plan ended in a huge failure, de Gaulle's project of creating a European political union based upon a confederal logic, was forced to arrest. On the other hand, he was still convinced of the necessity of a closer cooperation between France and West Germany. Being unable to establish a political community among the six founding countries, the General turned himself over the rapprochement with West Germany.

In the previous chapters, were already examined the difficult relations that characterized these two countries in the aftermath on the Second World War.

Germany after 1945 was in fact divided between the USA, Britain and the U.S.S.R. France obtained a territory to control, but still was not counted among great powers. Until the General's return on the political scene, the country was not considered as a potential threat in the new bipolar equilibrium.

The Fourth French Republic was so forced, at the beginning of the Cold War, to accept, despite its vigorous claims, the German rearmament and its entry inside the Atlantic Alliance. These years were lived by France within the constant fear that West Germany could have enjoyed a better treatment by the Anglo-Saxon powers. Furthermore, the country was still largely disappointed by the USA attitude during the Indo-China decolonization conflict and was quickly losing its confidence in the Atlantic alliance. On the other hand, both the USA and the UK were striving to find a way to indulge French fears by agreeing on the pooling of coal and steel resources in the bosom of the E.C.S.C.

In this sense, the progressive rapprochement between France and West Germany was the outcome of particular contingencies that emerged from the post-war scenario. The process of reconciliation was also blessed by the personal relations between the two great statesmen. De Gaulle and Adenauer were not only very similar on the religious and political ground. Adenauer, hugely esteemed the General and even declared himself to be a Francophile. In 1923, he in fact invoked a closer collaboration with France in the managing of the heavy industry. This project was later relaunched by de Gaulle in the aftermath of the Second World War. Furthermore, the already started rapprochement inaugurated by the E.C.S.C. was further deepened by the progressive European integration that experienced a major boost during the years in between 1956-57.

Another factor that contributed to the rapprochement between the two countries was that de Gaulle had a huge consideration of Germany, deeming it as the country most

similar to France. The General also admired of course, its well-organized military apparatus.

In light of these considerations, it can be affirmed that the Franco-German relations in 1958 unfolded. However, the reconciliation between the two countries must be also framed inside the resurgence of the Soviet threat in Europe. Despite after Stalin's death, the world assisted to a period of relative *détente*, the years following 1958 witnessed a renewed Cold War atmosphere. The Soviet ultimatum over the Berlin issue, as well as Communist China's bombing of the Quemoy and Matsu islands and the later Cuba crisis, were a huge turning point in the Franco-German relations.

At first stance, the return to power of General de Gaulle was perceived as highly threatening for the Federal Republic. A huge part of the population still recalled the role played by De Gaulle as the leader of the French resistance movement. By the end of the Second World War, de Gaulle sought to progressively detach, from a military, economic and political ground, the German zone of Rhineland, the Saar and the Ruhr. Furthermore, it must be borne in mind also the progressive French-Soviet rapprochement in 1944. All these factors contributed to a general diffidence towards the French President's attitude. Moreover, the General's strong opposition to the first European integration steps, which culminated in the failure of the European Defense Community, contributed to made the French statesman unpopular to the eyes of the German Chancellor. In addition, the French foreign policy, based upon the willingness to restore the old French *grandeur*, so openly hostile to the Atlantic Alliance, and so focused on reassuring France independence, did not contributed to reassure Adenauer. Nonetheless, all these doubts were blown away when the two great leaders met for the first time at Colombey-les-Deux-Églises on September 1958.

It was one of the most remarkable episodes the post-war world has ever assisted to. In this sense, the French journal *Le Figaro* reported that:

«Si un intérêt exceptionnel s'attache à la rencontre du général de Gaulle et du chancelier Adenauer, qui doit avoir lieu demain dimanche, à Colombey, ce n'est pas seulement parce que l'un et l'autre sont, au propre et au figuré, des hommes de grande taille, c'est aussi parce qu'ils représentent, tous deux des peuples dont l'hostilité mutuelle et permanente dominait, il n'y a pas si longtemps, la politique internationale et dont le rapprochement et les efforts de bonne entente, qui ont changé la face de l'Europe, constituent, sans doute, l'un des événements les plus importants, l'une des acquisitions les plus considérables de

l'après-guerre¹⁰² .»

During the meeting, the two statesmen discussed about major international issues, such as the Soviet expansion and the difficult relations inside the Atlantic alliance, even focusing on the complex matter of European integration.

The final communiqué written by de Gaulle at the end of the meeting represented a huge turning point in the troubled history of these two countries. He reported the common willingness to finally put an end to the rivalries that have conditioned for so long the Franco-German relations and furthermore, both France and West Germany committed to deepen their cooperation: *«nous croyons que l'ancienne rivalité doit être surmontée pour toujours et que Français et Allemands sont appelées à vivre en bonne intelligence et à travailler côte à côte*¹⁰³.»

What Colombey has the fortune to host was a bond meant to last over the years. De Gaulle and Adenauer met 15 times in the years that went from 1958 and 1963.

Indeed, despite the huge resonance the event brought with it, the meeting did not help the German Chancellor erasing all his doubts. Adenauer's adversaries warned the Chancellor to not accept so easily the General's proposals, considered to be mere efforts to impose the French supremacy over a country still largely controlled. Moreover, these reluctance was further deepened by the 1958 *memorandum*, in which De Gaulle proposed the USA and the UK to establish a tripartite directory. Again, the first French nuclear test was judged as a highly contradictory action by the German Chancellor.

It can be so stated that many divergencies still existed. Adenauer did not approve the General's relations with the U.S.S.R. The Soviet Union was in fact differently perceived by the two countries. While France, as previously examined, did not refuse at all to cooperate in the future with the Eastern countries, for Adenauer was completely out of the question.

The two statesmen's views collided also on the French policy towards the NATO and more in general the USA. The American presence on German soil was deemed as highly necessary by the Chancellor, even if the German-American relations were far from being idyllic. However, according to him it was the only factor that could have probably dissuaded the Soviet Union from militarily invade the country.

Another issue was the considerable gap between the two countries. Starting from 1958

¹⁰² LE FIGARO, *Le Général et le chancelier* , 13-14 septembre 1958, Available at: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/histoire/archives/2018/09/13/26010-20180913ARTFIG00277-premiere-rencontre-entre-de-gaulle-et-adenauer-a-colombey-le-14-septembre-1958.php>.

¹⁰³ VAÏSSE, MAURICE, *op. cit.*, p. 229

France, mainly thanks to the General, had acquired political and economic stability, West Germany was still weak because of its internal division.

In addition to these not insignificant differences, the two countries interests clashed even on the European integration process. France strongly opposed to the UK entry inside the E.E.C. West Germany was on the other hand not in favor to the establishment of a common agricultural policy; regarding the GATT France proved itself to be more protectionist than West Germany¹⁰⁴ .

Despite these differences seemed to be insurmountable, the newly born Franco-German axis was willing to keep going.

Only few months after their first meeting, de Gaulle was hosted by the German Chancellor in Bad Kreuznach on November 1958. This time, also the principal ministers of both countries were invited to the discussion. What emerged from the *rendez-vous* was the strengthening of the Franco-German solidarity, deemed necessary in the delicate moment of the Berlin crisis. General de Gaulle renewed his support to the FRG over the issue, especially after the Soviet ultimatum regarding the cessation of the quadripartite division of the city to be completed in six months. Despite the USA and the UK seemed more willing to reach a compromise, de Gaulle strongly opposed to any change in the Berlin status. Nonetheless, the French President of the Republic looked favorably to the German reunification as emerged from the press conference he gave on March 1959:

«La réunification des deux parties actuellement séparées de l'Allemagne en une seule Allemagne qui serait entièrement libre nous paraît-être le but, l'objectif, le destin normal du peuple allemand, à condition qu'il ne remette pas en cause ses actuelles frontières de l'ouest, de l'est, du nord et du sud et qu'il se destine à s'encadrer, le jour où ça sera possible, dans une organisation contractuelle de l'Europe pour la coopération de toute l'Europe, pour la coopération, pour la liberté et pour la paix. Mais en attendant que cet idéal puisse être atteint, nous pensons que les deux parties de l'Allemagne devraient pouvoir multiplier entre elles les relations et les liens dans tous les domaines pratiques, les transports, les postes, l'activité économique, les arts, les lettres, les sciences, les allées et venues des personnes, etc, pourraient, nous semble-t-il, donner lieu à des arrangements qui rapprocheraient les Allemands à l'intérieur de ce que j'appellerai la "chose allemande", et qui, après tout, leur est commune à tous, quels que soient les régimes et les différences des conditions¹⁰⁵ .»

¹⁰⁴ Ivi. P.232

¹⁰⁵ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 25 Mars 1959*, , Discours et Messages, III, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 84-85.

The Bad Kreuznach meeting witnessed the establishment of an even closer rapprochement. De Gaulle committed himself to participate to the launch of the Common Market, without asking for special safeguard clauses, as he had instead threatened to do. On the other hand, he asked West Germany to reject the British plan of a wider free-trade area. As already analyzed the General acceptance of the Common Market was justified in the sense that it would largely contributed to the modernization of France manufacturing industry and to the relaunch of its economy.

Starting from 1960, the Franco-German relations became more complicated. That year represented for France its affirmation as nuclear power, after the success of its first test in Reggane on February 13th. Many doubts on the real General's intentions assaulted the German Chancellor. By developing its own *force de frappe*, France would have placed itself in a superiority position with its partners. Furthermore, if the nuclear bomb would have represented the tool to reaffirm national independence, this would have meant the end of country's dependence from the Americans. This new French position extremely worried Adenauer.

Furthermore, the year 1960 assisted to another incredible event. Krushev's visit in France was highly condemned by the German public opinion, who feared the signing of a possible secret agreement between the two.

Adenauer and de Gaulle met again on July 1960 at Rambouillet. As already stated, what emerged from the meeting was the idea the General had over the reorganization of both Europe and the NATO should have had. Especially on the latter, de Gaulle hugely insisted. He accused the Atlantic Alliance to be excessively dependent from the USA. He was convinced of the fact that if Europe wanted to be internationally recognized as a great power, it needed more coordination on the defense ground. The General considered the political and defense matters as highly linked between each other. That was the main reason why he pushed so hard for a reform of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Despite agreeing on the necessity to reorganize Europe, Adenauer was not in favor of reforming the Atlantic Alliance. Nonetheless, he proposed the General to jointly draft a document with the possible points of reform. The day after the meeting, de Gaulle sent to his German counterpart a nine points text, that will be the basis for the future 1961 negotiations on the project of political Europe. The note he addressed the Chancellor covered the main points already discussed: the European reorganization, the NATO reform and the Europe's defense.

De Gaulle, as previously highlighted, envisaged the reform of all those European institutions deemed to exert an excessive supranational character. At the closing of the

meeting the General announced that the two countries were finally able to reach an agreement, which however proved later to be fictitious. It must be borne in mind, that the entire meeting only witnessed the two heads of state dialoguing with each other, and no one else.

On August 1st 1960, in a letter addressed to the Foreign Minister Couve de Murville, de Gaulle wrote:

«Mon cher ami,

A la suite de la visite du chancelier, il nous faut batter le fer de l'organisation de l'Europe, car ce fer est chaud. La première opération doit consister à former discrètement mais effectivement l'embryon de commission politique. Ce sera, d'abord, une affaire franco-allemande qu'il y a lieu de mettre en route tout de suite. D'accord avec M. Debré, proposez-moi quelqu'un pour ce qui nous concerne. Object du travail de la Commission: mise sur pied de coopération organisée des gouvernements. Étude de la réforme profonde des actuelles "Communautés". Étude de la réforme profonde de l'Alliance Atlantique¹⁰⁶. [...]

De Gaulle's plan, which aimed at establishing a political Europe, coincided within his effort to renew the tripartite nuclear cooperation among France American and British partners. This move largely contributed to cooling down the Franco-German relations and to make the German Chancellor lose his faith in the General.

At this point, France every day more isolated, could do nothing but relaunch its project of European organization.

After France's partners rejection of the Plan Fouchet I and II, the project of political cooperation among the Six died. However, this failure contributed to strengthen solidarity between France and West Germany.

Contrarily to every expectations, in fact, the predictable failure of the Fouchet Plan I and II, did not affect at all the Franco-German relations. A closer cooperation was inaugurated even in light of the new international events. Adenauer was increasingly becoming more cautious toward the newly elected American president Kennedy, suspected to seek an agreement with the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, between the 12th and the 13th of August 1961, the Berlin wall was erected and de Gaulle was the only one, unlike the Americans and the British, to harshly

¹⁰⁶ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Lettre à Maurice Couve de Murville, ministre des affaires étrangères, 1 août 1960*, *Lettres, notes et carnets, 1958-1960*, Plon, Paris, 1985, pp. 383-384.

condemn the Soviet initiative. At this point, Adenauer became aware of the fact that closer relations with France could have served containing the U.S.S.R.

In light of this new international scenario, even de Gaulle sought to establish *une union à deux*, which would have represented more than a simple alliance. The General in fact aimed at creating an organic structure that would have helped realizing a common policy between France and Germany.

At the end of April 1962, de Gaulle invited Adenauer to France. The main scope behind this invitation was to generate in the French public opinion a common sentiment of closeness with the German Chancellor Adenauer. The tour was meticulously prepared so that it could solemnly demonstrate the Franco-German rapprochement. Konrad Adenauer arrived in France on July 1962 and was welcomed by prestigious meetings in Paris, a military parade and by a great crowd at the Reims Cathedral.

On September of the same year, the General was hosted in West Germany, where was triumphally hailed. De Gaulle gave several speeches from which emerged the union then established between the two countries, the consequently end of the hostilities among them and more important, the General highlighted Germany's *grandeur*. What he wanted to establish was not a mere political cooperation, but a deeper cooperation among peoples. In this sense, what de Gaulle wrote in his book *Vers l'armée de métier* was highly significant:

«L'opposition des tempéraments avive cette amertume. Ce n'est point que chacun méconnaisse la valeur de l'autre et ne se prenne à rêver aux grandes choses qu'on pourrait faire ensemble, mais les réactions sont si différentes qu'elles tiennent les deux peuples en état constant de méfiance¹⁰⁷.»

This statement was highly true, especially in light of the fact that despite all the steps that were made to reconcile the two countries, Adenauer still had doubts on the General's policy.

These doubts started to become more impellent even considering the fact that the Chancellor's authority was slowly decreasing by the end of September. Bonn was in fact overwhelmed by a six weeks governmental crisis. This, led to a change in the government on December accompanied by internal rivalries that contributed to exacerbate fundamental divergencies. Furthermore, the possibility of the entrance of the United Kingdom in the Common Market, largely supported by the USA, contributed to this climate of uncertainty. The UK's entrance inside the European

¹⁰⁷ MAILLARD, PIERRE, *De Gaulle et le problème allemand*, François-Xavier de Guibert, Paris, 2001, p. 155.

Economic Community would have had overturned de Gaulle's project. Kennedy enormously pushed the Chancellor to accept the UK inside the E.E.C. Adenauer on the other hand, did not change his attitude toward the General, but his position was then highly compromising.

On January 14th 1963, de Gaulle held a press conference in which he strongly reaffirmed his adverse position toward a possible British entrance inside the Common Market, accusing the UK to be the American Trojan horse in Europe.

The German Chancellor, after this declaration was not in an easy position, but decided, against the willingness of the German common opinion, to keep pursuing the rapprochement with France.

On January 22nd 1963, Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer signed in Paris the Élysée Treaty. The treaty laid down the basis for a reinforced cooperation among the two countries in every domain, especially in the cultural, diplomatic, youth and defense fields. Cooperation between the two countries was to be exercised at the intergovernmental level, providing for regular meetings. Nonetheless, the agreement did not contain any binding commitment of internal policies harmonization.

However, the field of action of the Treaty was limited in the bosom of the Bundestag. Contrarily to de Gaulle willingness, it in fact drafted a preamble according to which West Germany reiterated its commitment to the Atlantic Alliance, its desire to still cooperate with the USA and the need for the UK, and other countries as well, to join the European Economic Community.

By approving this preamble, the German Bundestag contributed to deprive the Franco-German axis of that meaning given to it by de Gaulle.

The explanatory preamble in fact, stated that:

«Convinced

- that the treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic of 22nd January 1963 will deepen and shape the reconciliation and friendship of the German people and the French people;

recognizing

- that this treaty will not affect the rights and responsibilities that arise from the multilateral agreements concluded by the Federal Republic of Germany;

having resolved

- to use the application of this treaty to further the grand goals that the Federal Republic of Germany, in community with other allied states, has aspired to for years and that determine the Federal Republic's policies,

namely, the maintenance and consolidation of the association of free peoples, especially the close partnership between Europe and the United States of America, the realization of the right to self-determination for the German people, and the reestablishment of German unity, the collective defense within the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the integration of the armed forces of those states bound together in this alliance, the unification of Europe on the path started by the creation of the European Communities, including the United Kingdom and other states willing to accede, and the further strengthening of these Communities, the reduction of trade barriers through negotiations between the European Economic Community, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, as well as other countries within the framework of the “General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade”;

conscious,

- that a Franco-German co-operation that is guided by these goals will benefit all peoples, serve peace in the world, and thereby simultaneously contribute to the good of the German people and French people,

the Bundestag has passed the following law:

Article 1

The Joint Declaration of the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and the President of the French Republic signed in Paris on 22nd January 1963, and the Treaty signed at the same time between the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic on Franco- German co-operation are hereby approved. The Joint Declaration and the Treaty are published below.

Article 2

This law also applies in West Berlin, insofar as the state of Berlin declares the application of this law.

Article 3

(1) This law shall enter into force on the day after its promulgation.

(2) The day on which the Joint Declaration and the Treaty, pursuant to no. 5 of its final provisions, enter into force shall be announced in the Federal Law Gazette [Bundesgesetzblatt].

The constitutional rights of the Bundesrat remain intact. The abovementioned law is herewith promulgated¹⁰⁸ .»

¹⁰⁸ Bundestag explanatory preamble to the Élysée treaty, 15 June 1963. Available at: <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/Chapter2Doc4.pdf>.

3.3 The deterioration of the Anglo-French relations

The European Coal and Steel Community inaugurated the process that led to the establishment of the European Community. The United Kingdom had, since the very beginning, very contradictory positions towards the project. If on the one hand, it was highly interested, on the other it could not renounce to its national sovereignty. In this sense, its considerations were very close to those of de Gaulle. The UK, such as the General, strongly opposed to the supranational dimension that was conferred to the newly established organization, preferring instead a Community based upon intergovernmental cooperation.

It may seem controversial, since the ambiguous relation the UK had with the European integration process, that Churchill was actually one of the first leaders who spoke about the necessity for Europe to closely cooperate. In the speech he gave in Zurich on 1946, he sought the creation of the “United States of Europe” and, more important he deemed this cooperation to be built around a Franco-German axis.

« [...] I am now going to say something that will astonish you. The first step in the recreation of the European Family must be a partnership between France and Germany. In this way only can France recover the moral and cultural leadership of Europe. There can be no revival of Europe without a spiritually great France and a spiritually great Germany. The structure of the United States of Europe, if well and truly built, will be such as to make the material strength of a single state less important. Small nations will count as much as large ones and gain their honor by their contribution to the common cause. The ancient states and principalities of Germany, freely joined together for mutual convenience in a federal system, might take their individual places among the United States of Europe¹⁰⁹. [...]»

Despite his willingness to create a closer bond between the European states, the UK, according to him, should have not participate in it. He in fact declared that Britain, the USA and the U.S.S.R. should have been just partners of the future organization. Indeed, the European integration was largely supported by the British leader, but he did however not envisaged Britain participation in it. Already in 1930, he stated that:

«We have our own dream and our own task. We are with Europe, but not of it. We are

¹⁰⁹ CHURCHILL, WINSTON, *Zurich speech, 19th September 1946*. Available at: https://www.churchill-in-zurich.ch/site/assets/files/1807/rede_winston_churchill_englisch.pdf.

linked but not combined. We are interested and associated but not absorbed¹¹⁰.»

This statement largely helps us comprehend the attitude Britain maintained during the first steps of the integration process.

Churchill shared with de Gaulle the same view over the European integration. Both statesmen strongly disagreed on the political and economic union as envisaged by Shuman and Monnet. They clearly favored a more inter-state cooperation in every field based upon a traditional alliance. Nonetheless, the British leader largely contributed to the establishment, during the first phase of the process, of the Council of Europe and of the E.C.S.C., even if it did not reflect Churchill's initial idea.

Britain's foreign minister, Bevin, maintained a cool attitude in the very first phase of the process, avoiding any substantial policy commitment with Western states. Britain was still not ready to renounce to its sovereignty. This unwillingness to collaborate in creating a European Union, was further confirmed by the refusal to join the European Coal and Steel Community in the 1950s. In addition, Churchill's return on the political scene in 1951 did not change Britain positions. Any later British commitment in the European integration process must be considered, as for the Gaullist France, as only based upon a national interest logic.

To the Common Market, born the Treaties of Rome in 1957, the United Kingdom opposed the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). The association provided for a free trade area and, more important, it implied no shared institutions. It should have worked by the means of negotiations and agreements among member states. Despite being largely interested in the Common Market, Britain decided not to even participate in the discussion, since the highly supranational character the new organization should have had. Britain position towards Europe coincided with the one embodied by de Gaulle. At a first stance, it can be affirmed, that the General return to power in 1958 was almost looked favorably by Britain. According to the UK, the well-known French statesman's ideas over the destiny of the European integration could give the Community a new pattern to follow, no longer based upon supranationalism. As already highlighted, both countries were fervent supporters of national sovereignty and strongly disliked any common institution and political integration. Nonetheless, despite these similarities, de Gaulle did everything to obstacle the UK joining the E.E.C.

Indeed, the Franco-British relations cannot be confined only on the ground of the

¹¹⁰ CHURCHILL, WINSTON, *Quote reported by the American Saturday Evening Post, 15th February 1930*. Available at: <https://neweuropeans.net/article/604/revealing-deception-about-winston-churchill>.

Common Market, despite they mainly arose on that issue.

Since 1957, the British Prime Minister Macmillan was mostly concerned about the UK relations with the USA, especially with regard to the nuclear domain.

The UK was in fact able to obtain from its American partners access to information and material related to the nuclear development program. Of course, this privileged relation with the USA contributed to exacerbate tensions between Britain and France. At the beginning of the 1960s the European process of integration witnessed, as examined in the first paragraph, de Gaulle's strive to reshape the already existent European institutions. The Fouchet Plan I and II aimed at creating a European Political Union based exclusively on intergovernmental cooperation among member states. The ambitious plan had the main goal of gradually replacing those institutions established by the Treaties of Rome, reducing them at just mainly technical organs. The General's initiative was only supported by Adenauer's Germany. The other Community members were highly reluctant, fearing the possibility of a Franco-German axis and, more in general, of France supremacy inside the Union. Both plans, interpreted as a French provocation, failed by the end of 1962.

Parallel to the Fouchet Commission works, another important event occurred. In 1961, the United Kingdom began negotiations with the six to make sure they would have been available to partially modify the Treaties of Rome¹¹¹. This move must be considered in light of the possibility for the country to join the Community. What is important to highlight is that the United Kingdom did not present a formal candidature for accessing the Common Market.

The reasons behind the renewal of Great Britain interest to the E.E.C. are to find mostly in its precarious economic situation¹¹². During the 1950s, despite a considerable growth, the British economy was not able to compete with the other European states, such as France, Italy and West Germany. This position of inferiority progressively contributed to make the British Government aware of the importance of the European integration.

Furthermore, another reason stood behind the UK change of attitude and this time, it was merely geopolitical. By the time the country started the negotiations for a possible entrance inside the Community, its prestige was considerably decreasing as it was

¹¹¹ MANGOLD PETER, *The Almost Impossible Ally. Harold Macmillan and Charles de Gaulle*, I.B.Tauris & Co Lt, London, 2006, p. 159.

¹¹² ELLISON JAMES, *Britain, de Gaulle's NATO Policies, and Anglo-French Rivalry, 1963-1967*, in *Globalizing de Gaulle*, international perspectives on French foreign policies, 1958-1969, Lexington Books, Plymouth, 2010, P. 136.

beginning to lose its colonial empire. In addition, the Suez crisis in 1956, revealed to the UK that its privileged partnership with the USA was only unilateral. Also, the European Economic Community was slowly began to be controlled by the Franco-German axis and Britain could not allowed itself to remain out of it.

On October 1961, the man in charge of the negotiations, Edward Heath, clarified Britain's position recognizing that the possibility for the country to join the Community would have represented a huge turning point. He also claimed that what pushed the UK to revise its position over the Common Market was mostly its desire to play an active role in the framework of the European institution development.

He further insisted on the necessity for the Community to be enlarged since the enormous success it had proved to achieve.

As Gilbert¹¹³ highlighted, these declarations are still considered the clearest pro-European statements a British leader as ever made.

During the negotiations, the UK proved to be highly accommodative. The country declared in fact to be ready to accept Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty. The acceptance of this two articles would have implied, the abolition of custom tariffs and of quantitative restrictions to the entrance and exit of goods. Furthermore, the UK would have accepted the establishment of common agricultural and transport policies and it would have removed all the obstacles to the free movement of capital and goods.

So, Britain was willing to subscribe the Treaty, but only if the Six member states would have satisfied some conditions.

The first one concerned the UK trade with its Commonwealth partners. The country's entrance inside the Common Market was deemed impossible if it would have implied the total commercial rupture with the Commonwealth nations.

The second British claim regarded the agriculture policy. First of all, it must be highlighted that the UK was not a purely agricultural nation. Heath made its European interlocutors fully aware of the good functioning of the British agricultural system as was then. At that time in fact, Britain applied low taxes over its agricultural goods and no duties at all over those imported from the Commonwealth. The application of the Common Agricultural Policy would have meant for the United Kingdom the reversal of this *status quo* and the country had no intention to accept it.

The third request was linked instead with the nature of the possible agreements with its EFTA partners, but was only a formal claim.

The Six, under France pressure, were intransigent on the agricultural policy ground.

¹¹³ GILBERT, MARK, *op. cit.*, p. 78

Britain should have fully entered in the CAP by 1970. This intransigency was one of the basic factors that induced France to veto the UK entrance inside the European Economic Community in 1963¹¹⁴. The press conference the General gave on January 1963 was highly explicative in this sense. Asserting the importance of the agricultural sector for the country, de Gaulle reiterated the impellent necessity for the matter to be regulated at the European level. France is, according to him: “*le pays pour lequel cette nécessité-là s'impose de la manière la plus impérative*”¹¹⁵.

While France was still busy trying to regulate the agricultural issue, continued the General's speech, the United Kingdom advanced its candidature for entering the Common Market. De Gaulle wanted to avoid any possible British interference in the negotiations of the Common Agricultural Policy. He was convinced that by allowing the British participation to the discussions, the results would have been largely unfavorable for France¹¹⁶.

De Gaulle's reasons to refuse the British entrance inside the Community were perfectly explained. The UK wanted to enter with its own conditions and indeed it was not possible. Furthermore, the General highlighted the undeniable troubles the country would have brought to the Community, mainly due to its enormous differences:

«L'Angleterre, en effet elle, est insulaire. Elle est maritime. Elle est liée par ses échanges, ses marchés, ses ravitaillements aux pays les plus divers, et souvent les plus lointains. Elle exerce une activité essentiellement industrielle et commerciale, et très peu agricole. Elle a dans tout son travail des habitudes et des traditions très marquées, très originales. Bref, la nature, la structure qui sont propres à l'Angleterre diffèrent profondément de celle des continentaux. Comment faire pour que l'Angleterre telle qu'elle vit, telle qu'elle produit, telle qu'elle échange, soit incorporée au Marché commun tel qu'il a été conçu et tel qu'il fonctionne ? Par exemple, les moyens par lesquels se nourrit le peuple de la Grande-Bretagne et qui est en fait l'importation de denrées alimentaires achetées à bon marché dans les deux Amériques. ou dans les anciens Dominions, tout en donnant, en accordant des subventions considérables aux agriculteurs anglais. Ce moyen-là est évidemment incompatible avec le système que les six ont établi tout naturellement pour eux-mêmes. Le système des six ça consiste à faire tout avec les produits agricoles de toute

¹¹⁴ LUDLOW N. PIERS, *Dealing with Britain: the Six and the First UK Application to the EEC*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp.29-30.

¹¹⁵ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 14 Janvier 1963*, Discours et Messages, IV, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 67- 71.

¹¹⁶ TROITINO, DAVID RAMIRO, *De Gaulle and the European Communities*, 2008. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David_Troitino/publication/330712208_De_Gaulle_and_the_European_Communities/links/5c504d0d299bf12be3eb81a6/De-Gaulle-and-the-European-Communities.pdf.

la Communauté. A fixer rigoureusement leur prix. A interdire qu'on les subventionne. A organiser leur consommation entre tous les participants. Et à imposer à chacun de ces participants de verser à la Communauté toute économie qu'il ferait en faisant venir du dehors des aliments au lieu de manger ce qu'offre le marché commun. Encore une fois, comment faire entrer l'Angleterre telle qu'elle est dans ce système-là.¹¹⁷»

The reasons behind de Gaulle's veto to the UK's entrance in the Common Market were both geopolitical and economic.

As previously affirmed, the close relation between the UK and the USA was considered highly threatening by the General. Britain was the USA Trojan horse and, this conviction was further strengthened after the signing of the Nassau agreement between the two Anglo-Saxon countries over the defense policy. The General proved to be highly suspicious of the strict bond between the two great powers. The enlargement to the UK was considered by de Gaulle a move that would have favored the American penetration and interference in European issues, and in particular in those concerning France.

The policy of *grandeur* should have implied the emergence of France as a third power, capable to independently stand between the USA and the U.S.S.R. Britain's access to the Community would have had the effect of opening the back door to the USA for its domination in Europe.

These fears concretized also on the commercial ground. De Gaulle was mostly concerned that Britain, once inside the Common Market, would have established a free trade agreement with both the USA and Canada. This would have for sure allowed the USA economic domination of the Community. The General was fully aware of the risks this would have represented for France and for its agricultural sector, which was enormously benefitting from the Common Market.

Furthermore, Britain's entry inside the Community would have menaced its independence. At that time, in fact, France was gradually assuming the total control over the Community, perceived by De Gaulle as a tool to empower the country. Indeed, the entrance of another small state would have not represented a problem, but the UK was still a big country capable to exert an influence that would have led for sure to a reduction of the role France was playing. The country's dominant position in the Community would have been if the United Kingdom would have joined the

¹¹⁷ DE GAULLE, CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 14 Janvier 1963*, Discours et Messages, IV, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 67- 71.

Community.

Furthermore, it would have possibly contributed to the failure of the Franco-German rapprochement due to the loss of influence France would have faced. The Community did not have enough room for two independent and strong nations. Britain would have for sure overshadowed France's position and De Gaulle was unwilling to accept it. The E.E.C. enlargement to Great Britain should have been arrested.

From the economic point of view, another reason why de Gaulle decided to veto the British entrance in the Community was related to the Common Agricultural Policy.

The establishment of the CAP, provided by the Treaties of Rome, was still not in place. In 1961, when the UK started the negotiations, the terms and conditions of the Policy were still under discussion. Indeed, the General did not want the UK to interfere nor in the discussions nor in the outcome the Six should have reached. Any interference was deemed by de Gaulle as a possible threat against France's interests. The Common Agricultural Policy was strongly supported by France, which foresaw all the benefits it would brought to the country. At that time, France still largely relied upon the agricultural sector and for this reason the country needed subsidies to be worldwide competitive.

In addition, the country was still facing financial issues and the fact that the Agricultural Policy would have been financed by the Community would have enormously helped French farmers. Great Britain would have, from the General perspective, contributed to block every extra financing of the CAP.

Thus, since negotiations were not concluded yet, the priority for de Gaulle was to keep Britain out of the Community. Since the Communitarian legislation law established that any country joining the E.E.C. would have been committed to fulfill and respect all the rules, the CAP should have been approved before the UK's entrance, so that it would have been forced to accept the policy as formulated.

FOURTH CHAPTER

The Empty Chair crisis and the Luxembourg compromise

Introduction

As already stressed in the previous chapters, de Gaulle devoted his life to promote France interests and to reaffirm its grandeur. The supranational drift the European Community was witnessing during the 1960s could be no longer tolerated by the General, who accepted France membership inside the ECC only in the light of the benefit the country could have gained by it. In this last phase of his presidency, de Gaulle found himself once again central in the dispute with the European Commission President Walter Hallstein. The two statesmen were carriers of two different approaches. If de Gaulle, on the one hand, supported the idea of a *Europe de patries*, according to which the nation should have remained the pivot around which developing Europe, Hallstein, on the other hand, supported a federal Europe, a closer integration among states to be ruled and organized around the European institutions. The battleground on which these two different views collided rested on a series of proposals Hallstein made in order to advance the Community integration. The crisis, known as the Empty Chair crisis, arose following the French government decision to recall to Paris its permanent representative inside the European Council paving the way to the paralysis of the works for more than six months.

The issue was finally solved in 1966 with the so-called “Luxembourg compromise”. France was capable of partially imposing its conditions, preserving the unanimity voting procedure inside the Council when the nation interest was considered to be negatively affected. The compromise enshrined once again de Gaulle willingness to base the construction of Europe on a confederal basis, having the nation prevailing over the Community.

4.1 *Toward the crisis*

Until 1965, the newborn Economic Community had already witnessed two relevant crises. The first one in 1954 following France refusal to ratify the Treaty which should have established the European Defense Community and the second in 1963, with the failure of the Fouchet plan I and II.

A third crisis in 1965 resulted to be the most important the European Union has ever assisted to. Works within the Community were paralyzed for more than six months as a result of a growing acceptance of the integrationist approach.

Between June 1965 and January 1966 the crisis that hit the European institutions was nothing more than the consequence of the General's attempt to arrest any further supranational drift. The Community, as envisaged by de Gaulle, should have implied that every member state could have maintained a certain degree of autonomy in the decision-making process. In this sense, as previously stated, the UK entrance in the Common Market would have largely helped France in its battle against supranationalism, since the positions of the two countries often coincided. However, until the General remained in power, the Franco-British tensions were never ironed out. The General's veto to the UK entrance in the Community, convinced the other five partners over the necessity to change attitude when confronting with de Gaulle. Since his first "no" to the United Kingdom contributed to a general freeze in foreign relations, the then West Germany Foreign Minister Schroeder proposed the "synchronization" method. Decisions were to be taken only on well determined points, with no need to further discuss wider projects. However, these tensions came in a very delicate period of the integration process. The years that went from 1962 to 1966 were crucial as the E.E.C. should have continued with the custom union as well as should have better defined the Common Agricultural Policy.

In this framework, France position attested on two main grounds. The country had all interest in the better definition of the CAP and in the custom union, since it would have largely benefitted from them. On the other side, however, France feared that in return for the agreement on the agricultural policy, its five partners would have asked for the strengthening of supranational dimension of both the European Commission and Parliament, as the Treaty of Rome provided for.

The agreement over the Common Agricultural Policy was central from 1963 to 1964¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁸ LUDLOW N. PIERS, *Challenging French Leadership in Europe: Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the Outbreak of the Empty Chair Crisis of 1965–1966*. Available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge->

In the implementation of the CAP De Gaulle sought a way for modernizing France's agricultural sector and also a tool to counterbalance France market openness to its partners' industrial goods. Already in 1961, the agricultural sector in France employed 25%¹¹⁹ of the population. Since the 1950s, French farmers proved to be competitive on world markets only in the production of specific agricultural goods, such as wheat, wine and dairy products. To support the production of these goods, state subsidies were deemed highly necessary. With the Third Modernization Plan, that was launched in 1957, the French government was forced to increase these subsidies, mainly because of the great influence the agricultural interest groups were capable to exert. The government support to the farmers production led to the creation of an enormous surplus that the country was still not able to handle. In 1958, as de Gaulle came back to power, this surplus crisis had already reached its peak. The General immediately understood the impossibility for the French markets to support and to absorb this surplus and, furthermore he was fully aware of the huge costs these subsidies required and the French state could no longer afford them. New markets were to be found as well as new ways to finance the agricultural policy. The Common Agricultural Policy proved to be the perfect tool to help solve the agricultural crisis in France. It has already been stated that, despite provided by the Treaty of Rome, the CAP was limited by some unclear declarations¹²⁰. What de Gaulle aimed at was to support French agriculture no more at a national level, but at a European level. Starting from this assumption we can explain why the general attitude toward the Treaties of Rome had changed, doing nothing to obstacle their effectiveness.

By 1966 France was the main European wheat producer. Its other five partners preferred instead obtaining supplies on the world market, which were characterized by lower prices. It seemed strange that the only ally de Gaulle had in its battle was the European Commission, which was willing to affirm the Community logic and to have its competences enlarged. On January 1962 the Six agreed on the realization of the Common Agricultural Policy. It implied the free movement of goods, fixed prices for wheat, and the creation of a Common structure, the European Agricultural Guidance

[core/content/view/0EAD25A92AAC624228879CC73F2E063/S0960777399002039a.pdf/challenging_french_leadership_in_europe_germany_italy_the_netherlands_and_the_outbreak_of_the_empty_chair_crisis_of_19651966.pdf](https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/de_gaulle.pdf).

¹¹⁹ MORAVCSIK, ANDREW, *De Gaulle and European integration: historical revision and social science theory*, Center for European Studies Working Paper Series, May 1998. Available at:

https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/de_gaulle.pdf.

¹²⁰ KEELER T. S JOHN, *De Gaulle and Europe's Common Agricultural Policy: The Logic and Legacies of Nationalistic Integration*. Available at:

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/42844581.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A0bd7199da2dc53c9df623024779d3a74>.

and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), around which the Common Agricultural Policy was developed. With regard to the financial regulation, the same year the Council stated that the CAP would have been financed by member states free contributions. This regulation would have been in place until the end of June 1965. Nonetheless, France partners were still reluctant to the establishment of the Common Agricultural Policy. The solution to the debate was found on November 1963, when the vice-president of the Commission in charge of regulating Agricultural matters, proposed that wheat prices should have been progressively equalized by 1964. West Germany was the country that would have been affected the most by the realization of the CAP¹²¹. Its consumers were in fact used to low prices, and the new regulations would have damaged the German agricultural sector.

In 1963, West Germany still refused to substantially reduce the wheat price and, its attitude was slowing down negotiations with Kennedy over Europe commercial relations under the aegis of the GATT. The USA President was highly concerned that with the establishment of the European Economic Community, American goods would have been cut out from the European market. It was thus necessary to make some trade adjustments so that American economy would not have been damaged by the establishment of a European external tariff. It goes without saying that de Gaulle strongly condemned the attitude of both Germans and Americans, considered harmful to France interests. He expected West Germany to apply the required reductions by December 1964 and urged the USA to find the better export tariff for its cereals. In a press conference he gave on July 1963, referring to the European situation he declared that:

« [...] Pour ce qui est du Marché Commun, au développement duquel nous espérons que le traité franco-allemand contribuera d'une manière effective, c'est bien entendu, le problème agricole que les 6 ont encore à régler. Que signifieraient les mots mêmes « Communauté économique européenne » si l'Europe n'assurait pas, pour l'essentiel, son alimentation grâce à ses propres produits agricoles, lesquels peuvent y suffire largement? Et qu'irait faire la France dans un système à l'intérieur duquel il n'y aurait bientôt plus de douane excepté pour son blé, sa viande, son lait, son vin et ses fruits ? Sans doute, le traité de Rome, assez complètement agencé pour ce qui concerne l'industrie, se bornait-il à évoquer sans la résoudre la question de l'agriculture. Mais depuis le mois de janvier

¹²¹ GERMOND CARINE, , *La couple France-Allemagne et la "crise de la chaise vide", 1965-1966*, Rücker Katrin and Warloutet Laurent (eds), *Quelle(s) Europe(s)? Nouvelles approches en histoire de l'intégration européenne*, P.I.E. Peter Lang, Bruxelles, 2006, p. 80.

de l'année dernière où la France a obtenu de ses partenaires l'engagement formel d'aboutir dans ce domaine, faute de quoi le développement de l'ensemble serait arrêté, d'importants progrès ont été faits. Il reste à en accomplir de plus importants encore et cela doit avoir lieu avant la fin de cette année¹²². [...] »

On October 1964, the President of the Commission Hallstein submitted to the E.E.C. Council of Ministers and to the heads of government of the Six a document concerning the implementation of the Common Market, commonly known as "Initiative '64".

The very first pages of the document strongly reaffirmed the political and supranational dimension of the Community and the willingness to further proceed within the establishment of a closer political union. As expected, Hallstein's initiative was not warmly welcomed by France, which stigmatized the proposal as reckless. The document represented the prelude to the Commission proposals concerning the custom union, the Common Agricultural Policy and the establishment of an external tariff. These plans were to be presented when the third stage of the transitory period began (1966-1970).

On December 15th 1964, the European Council of Ministers gave the Commission the duty to draft and submit, before April 1st 1965, its proposals on how the Common Agricultural Policy would have been financed starting from July 1st 1965 and until its effective implementation.

On March 1965 the Hallstein Commission put forward to the European Parliament initially and later to the Council its proposals concerning the financing of the Common Agricultural Policy. The delicate issue of financing the CAP exacerbated tensions between de Gaulle and the European Commission. The plan provided for the E.E.C. own resources to finance the Common Agricultural Policy, starting from July 1st, 1965. The Community would have so, independently from single member states, implemented its own financial system, by collecting all the tariffs on import goods from non-ECC countries to ECC states. The Commission would have been also in charge, starting from January 1st, 1972, of administering all those levies that came from the common external tariff¹²³. The Hallstein Commission works went further. By submitting the draft to the European Parliament first, which had been long claiming for broader powers, Hallstein won its support. His proposals conferred in fact to the

¹²² DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 29 Juillet 1963*, Discours et Messages, IV, Plon, Paris 1970, pp. 128-129.

¹²³ CARAFFINI PAOLO, *De Gaulle, the "Empty Chair Crisis" and the European Movement*. Available at: http://www.on-federalism.eu/attachments/219_download.pdf.

European Parliament more budgetary powers, claims that were hampered by France for years. These proposals would have had the effect of increasing competences of both the Commission and the Parliament in an attempt to finally confer, to the European Economic Community, a supranational character. The Commission would have represented the Community “government” concerning budget matters, as it was not required to take into consideration member states desires.

A further relevant proposal was advanced, the intention to get rid of the veto power within the Council by extending the qualified majority vote on well determined issues by January 1st 1966. States could thus no longer exert their veto power, granted to them by the procedure of the unanimity vote into effect until then. The unanimity voting procedure implied the explicit consensus of all member states and the consequent veto power conferred them the possibility to preserve and to affirm the national interest over important decisions.

The issue of the voting procedure contributed to enlarge the already deep cleavage between the two different approaches over the process of integration. De Gaulle, who opposed to the introduction of the qualified majority vote, represented the willingness to establish an intergovernmental cooperation among states while instead, Hallstein embodied the desire of building a Community based upon federalism.

In his *Memoires* de Gaulle, referring to Hallstein, affirmed:

« Walter Hallstein est le Président de la Commission. Il épouse ardemment la thèse du super-État et emploie toute son habile activité à obtenir que la Communauté en prenne le caractère et la figure. De Bruxelles, où il réside, il a fait comme sa capitale. Il est là, revêtu des aspects de la souveraineté, dirigeant ses collègues entre lesquels il répartit les attributions, disposant de plusieurs milliers de fonctionnaires qui sont nommés, affectés, promus, rétribués, en vertu de ses décisions, recevant les lettres de créance d’ambassadeurs étrangers, prétendant aux grands honneurs lors de ses visites officielles, soucieux, d’ailleurs, de faire progresser l’assemblage des Six dont il croit que la force des choses fera ce qu’il imagine. Mais, le voyant, le revoyant attentif à son action, je pense que si Walter Hallstein est, à sa manière, un Européen sincère, c’est parce qu’il est d’abord un Allemand ambitieux pour sa patrie. Car dans l’Europe telle qu’il la voudrait, il y a le cadre où son pays pourrait gratuitement, retrouver la respectabilité et l’égalité des droits que la frénésie et la défaite d’Hitler lui ont fait perdre, puis acquérir le poids prépondérant que lui vaudra sans doute la capacité économique, enfin obtenir que la querelle de ses frontières et de son unité soit assumée par un puissant ensemble d’après la doctrine à laquelle, comme ministre des Affaires étrangères de la République fédérale, il a naguère donné son nom. Ces raisons n’altèrent pas l’estime et la considération que je

porte à Walter Hallstein mais font que les buts que je poursuis pour la France sont incompatibles avec de tels projets.

Cette divergence capitale entre la façon dont la Commission de Bruxelles conçoit son rôle et le fait que mon gouvernement, tout en attendant d'elle des études et des avis, subordonne les mesures importantes à la décision des États, entretient un désaccord latent. Mais, comme le traité spécifie qu'au cours de démarrage rien ne vaut sans l'unanimité, il suffit de tenir la main à ce qu'il soit appliqué pour qu'on ne puisse passer outre à la souveraineté française¹²⁴. »

Despite the harsh French reaction to Hallstein's proposal, the Six founding states, recognizing the huge power the European Economic Community was gaining, decided, on April 8th, to sign the Treaty that provided for the fusion of the three existing Communities executives. In general, Hallstein's plans for the future of Europe were warmly welcomed by the small member states, which shared with the President of the Commission the federalist approach. Not few worries were instead oriented toward the Franco-German axis, since, as already stated, the other member states seemed more moderate in their attitude toward the Commission. In West Germany, Adenauer successor, Erhard, was willing to remain faithful to the commitments taken with France by his predecessor, but at the same time, he wanted to proceed with the process of integration. West Germany would have never approved the financial proposal of the CAP, a harmful policy for the country, had France not made greater concessions with regard to the field of European institutions and economic policy. De Gaulle's visit to West Germany on June 11th did not led to any agreement on the issue, since France was not in the mood for compromise.

The proposals the Hallstein Commission made, were discussed during a first interim session of the Council of Ministers, held, from June 13th to 15th 1965. The strong French opposition did not come much later. On June 15th, during the Council of ministers meeting, the French government presented to its European interlocutors a counterproposal to the one of the Hallstein Commission. Basically, France asked for the Common Agricultural Policy to continue being financed by member states for the period 1965-1970. The Commission would have not been in charge of managing the common resources derived by the external tariff and would have not so experienced the huge increase of power as envisaged by the Commission proposals. This would have had implications also on the European Parliament role which would have not shared the budgetary functions within the Commission. The following day, the French

¹²⁴ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Mémoires d'espoir, Le renouveau, 1958-1962*, Plon, Paris, 1970, pp. 195-196.

Foreign Minister, Couve de Mourville, reiterated to the French National Assembly the plan, adding to his consideration the necessity for the European Parliament to still exert its merely consultative function, as envisaged by the Treaty. What France was claiming for was to postpone the CAP financial debate, that provided for the Community to finance it, as well as the enlargement of the European Parliament prerogatives to 1970, as the transitory period would have ended. France clearly distinguished between two different steps, the financing of the CAP, to be scheduled immediately, and the strengthening of the European institutions, which was an issue to be later decided upon.

In this conflicting context, Hallstein decided to call for all those supporters of this new European challenge in the speech he gave in the European Parliament on June 17th. His appeal proved to be a clear declaration of intents, after recalling all the successful achievements, reached with the Treaties of Rome, such as the custom union, the Common Agricultural Policy, the establishment of the Common Market, the President of the Commission reiterated the importance of this new step. By approving his proposals, finally Europe would have been able to politically speak as one entity, despite recognizing all the different cultures and tradition it was made of¹²⁵.

In this sense and to realize this project, some further steps needed to be made in order to grant those European institutions, which embodied the supranational character of the organization, a broader power.

¹²⁵ MALANDRINO CORRADO, *Oltre il compromesso del Lussemburgo verso l'Europa federale. Walter Hallstein e la crisi della "sedia vuota" (1965-66)*. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/6555036.pdf>

4.2 *Against a federal Europe : the Empty Chair crisis*

The Council of Ministers, held between June 28-30, experienced the escalation of tensions among Netherlands, Italy and West Germany on one side, and France on the other. France's five European partners wanted in fact the country to fully accept the proposals emerged from the Hallstein's Commission. On the other hand, de Gaulle wanted primarily to reach an agreement over the financing of the CAP before the end of June. He would have been later available to further discuss the terms and conditions of the European trade policy and the establishment of the industry levy. What was out of question for him was the issue of reforming the European institutions, something that, as previously highlighted, should have come after 1970.

On June 30th, the French Foreign Minister Couve de Mourville, following the Élysée instructions, decided to interrupt the meeting and dismissed the Council reunion, as a consequence of the impossibility for the Six to establish precise regulations over the financing of the Common Agricultural Policy. Of course, every further agreement over the institutional reform was not possible anymore.

France's decision to withdraw from the Council meeting had a huge resonance in the continent which however, did not perceive the consequences this move would bring about.

On July 1st, the French Information Minister, Alain Peyrefitte, published a government declaration according to which France would not participate in other E.E.C. Council meetings for the month of July, due to the failure of the previous¹²⁶.

The declaration was reported by the journal *Le Monde* and stated as follows:

«À la suite de l'échec des négociations menées à Bruxelles, le conseil a pris note, pour le déplorer, du fait qu'un engagement, remontant à trois ans et demi, de compléter avant le 30 juin 1965 le règlement financier, n'ait pas été tenu. Il a constaté que la Communauté économique européenne se trouvait de ce fait dans une crise d'autant plus sérieuse que c'était au vu du règlement financier que le gouvernement français avait, en janvier 1962, accepté de passer à la seconde étape du traité de Rome, et que les décisions relatives au prix commun des céréales, arrêtées le 15 décembre 1964, avaient été prises compte tenu d'assurances formelles et renouvelées, que le règlement financier serait complété, comme convenu, avant le 30 juin 1965.

Le conseil a également noté l'accord général quant à un calendrier proposé par la

¹²⁶ JOUVE EDMOND, *Le General de Gaulle et la construction de l'Europe (1940-1966)*, R. Pichon & R. Durand-Auzias, Paris 1967, 441-442.

délégation française qui prévoyait l'achèvement des règlements agricoles encore en suspens et la fixation des prix communs. Ce calendrier permettait d'envisager pour le 1er juillet 1967 la libre circulation des produits agricoles à l'intérieur de la Communauté, l'application des prix uniques et l'établissement aux frontières du Marché commun d'une protection uniforme par le mécanisme des prélèvements.

Le conseil a pris acte du fait que, tandis que les partenaires de la France au sein du Marché commun se ralliaient à ce calendrier, d'autre part, des conditions politiques et économiques nouvelles, suscitées à l'occasion de cette ultime négociation, avaient empêché l'accord sur la responsabilité financière commune.

L'ouverture de cette crise se justifie d'autant moins que la délégation française avait fait des propositions tendant à ce que la France assumât en partie des charges financières jugées excessives par certains de ses partenaires, et avait d'autre part accepté l'achèvement de l'union douanière pour les produits industriels le 1er juillet 1967¹²⁷.»

To the French government declaration followed the Élysée decision, on July 6th to recall to Paris its permanent representative at the ECC Boegner. The previous day Paris asked its ministers and technocrats to abstain in the Community works.

This new French attitude towards the E.E.C. is generally considered as the beginning of the Empty Chair crisis. Nonetheless, France representatives to the European institutions were still present and their protest was only limited to their abstention from voting.

The country's five partners largely condemned France attitude, but despite criticizing their hostility, de Gaulle's attacks were all oriented toward Hallstein. On July 27th the French prime Minister Pompidou dictated, during an open message broadcasted to the nation, France condition for its reentry in the Community works.

«Le Traité de Rome, tel qu'il avait été conclu, ne créait en fait que le Marché commun industriel. Or le Marché commun ainsi conçu mettait l'industrie française en concurrence directe avec l'extérieur et, notamment, avec la puissante industrie allemande. Il n'était supportable que s'il était compensé par un Marché commun agricole, fournissant à notre agriculture des débouchés importants à des prix rémunérateurs, et permettant ainsi à l'État, dégagé pour une bonne part de la nécessité du soutien à notre agriculture, d'alléger les charges pesant sur l'industrie. C'est pourquoi, en janvier 1962, le général de Gaulle a exigé la création du Marché commun agricole avant d'accepter la deuxième étape d'abaissement

¹²⁷ Le Monde, *La déclaration du gouvernement français, 1 juillet 1965*. Available at: https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1965/07/02/ladeclarationdugouvernementfrancais_2179754_1819218.html?xtmc=declaration&xtcr=10.

des droits de douane. Mais on comprend bien que l'essentiel de ce Marché commun agricole résidait pour nous dans le règlement financier dont l'objet est de répartir entre les six pays la dépense budgétaire considérable que représente l'exportation des surplus agricoles à des prix très inférieurs à ceux payés aux producteurs. L'esprit de ce règlement financier devait être de faire supporter cette charge pour une large part aux pays qui continueraient à acheter leur nourriture en dehors du Marché commun. Rien de plus normal, puisque cela permet à ces pays de la payer moins cher et constitue donc un avantage injustifié dans une communauté économique par rapport aux pays surproducteurs comme la France qui paient leur nourriture à un prix élevé et seraient de plus obligés, sans un tel règlement, de subventionner l'exportation des excédents.

Cette compensation nous avait été formellement promise en janvier 1962, avait été inscrite dans le premier règlement financier provisoire, puis dans le règlement définitif, confirmé à nouveau en décembre 1964. Or, quand il a fallu adopter à la date fixée depuis trois ans et demi le règlement pour la fin de la période transitoire, malgré des concessions considérables de notre part, nos partenaires sont revenus sur ces engagements pris et réaffirmés à plusieurs reprises. Mieux, on a soulevé de multiples affaires, économiques ou politiques, qui étaient à la fois nouvelles et inopportunes. En réalité, tout a été remis en question.

Nous n'avons pu que constater l'échec. Pour l'avenir, nous verrons bien, il y a des solutions à tout et les prochains mois nous diront vers quoi l'on peut aller. Mais ce qui est certain, c'est que, si l'on veut qu'il y ait marché commun, il faudra qu'il y ait un marché commun agricole et un règlement financier équitable. Ce qui est certain au surplus, c'est que nous n'accepterons pas que l'économie française toute entière soit dirigée du dehors sans que le Gouvernement puisse exercer les responsabilités qu'il exerce vis-à-vis du peuple français. Le bon sens nous avertit et l'expérience nous prouve que nous ne pouvons pas laisser à une Commission qui n'a pas de vocation politique le soin de décider du niveau de vie des Français en même temps que du destin de notre agriculture et de notre industrie. Nous ne voulons certes pas empêcher l'Europe de se faire, je crois même que nous sommes le pays qui pousse le plus à sa réalisation, mais elle ne se fera que par la coopération résolue des pays qui la composent. Voilà notre position et nous nous y tiendrons¹²⁸.»

Shortly, the conditions imposed by the French government for the country's renewed participation in the Economic Community were the agreement over the CAP financing and the consequently reduction of power of the European Commission and, last but

¹²⁸ POMPIDOU GEORGES, *Entretien à l'ORTF*, 27 Juillet 1965, Available at: <https://www.georges-pompidou.org/georges-pompidou/portail-archives/entretien-lortf-27-juillet-1965>.

not least, the preservation of the unanimity voting within the European Council of Ministers.

Facing France harsh positions regarding of his proposals, Hallstein was forced to modify the initial plan. He submitted an alternative document, in the shape of a *memorandum*, to the Council at the end of July.

In the very first part of the document, Hallstein reiterated his good faith and the logic on which he had based his previous reform proposals, that is to say the federalist approach. Furthermore, the *memorandum* was mainly based upon an idea inspired by Monnet, to finally have the Common market and the custom union working starting from July 1st 1967 and the CAP financing following the main guidelines established in 1962. The Agricultural Policy, according to the document, would start to be financed by the end of the transitory period and so its incomes would have been part of the Commission budget by 1970. With regard to the enlargement of the European Parliament competences, the Commission instead, stated that, since the outbreak of the Empty Chair crisis, and the consequent lack of discussion of the Six over the issue, it could have not referred about it.

However Hallstein's *ouverture* came however too late. Despite the *memorandum* was a clear effort to accommodate France instances over the Common Agricultural Policy, what the President of the Commission did not realized was that France position was no longer justified in light of the CAP. The country initiated a personal battle against the European Commission itself and against the desired change in the voting procedure inside the Council. France proved to be irremovable on these two issues and even asked for the modification of the European Economic Community Treaty. Its willingness was to avoid any possible interference of the Community inside those domains on which only France was called to decide upon.

After the French Prime Minister Pompidou released its interview, position that was enormously supported by the majority of Gaullists, all eyes were set on de Gaulle. The General had in fact preferred to remain silent throughout the first phase of the crisis. Nonetheless, he finally clarified his position in a speech given in September. France had no intention to back off and continued to adhere to its intransigent position.

In the meanwhile, the European Council, which met again of July 26th, expressed all its willingness to further continue with the integration process. It had also invited France to retake its place, but all appeals remained unheard.

As reported by Malandrino¹²⁹, the man who proved to thoroughly understand the real dimension of the crisis, was Rolf Lahr, responsible for the West Germany European policy. In his document, he began by recognizing Hallstein's willingness to satisfy France claims in the Common Agricultural Policy and institutional fields. Nonetheless, he demonstrated to be fully aware of the fact that, after the draft of the *memorandum*, the battle engaged by France - and more specifically - the strategy de Gaulle was pursuing, was changing. What the General was in fact aiming at was to dismiss Hallstein, by condemning the mere technocratic composition of the Commission itself, and to impede the switch toward the majority voting system, by asking for the review of the ECC Treaty.

De Gaulle opposition was, according to Lahr, the logical outcome of the French statesman's ideas over the European integration process. What he wanted to avoid, and with the "Empty Chair" crises this resulted clear to everyone, was a Europe based upon a federal scheme, that would have eroded all the nation prerogatives. In this sense, Lahr advanced three options, however none practicable. The first one implied the continuation of the integration process without France. Then, he proposed France to be replaced by the United Kingdom and lastly, the establishment of a free trade area that would have unified the member states of both the EEC and the EFTA¹³⁰.

These proposals were impossible to implement and soon France five partners realized that the only possible path to follow was the reconciliation with the country, even though not at the conditions it had imposed. What mattered the most was to preserve the Commission role, without which the Community could have not fulfill those commitments implied by the Treaty. The Community should reconcile with France in order to keep pursuing the process of integration.

First steps were made by the Belgian Spaak, who demonstrated to its French counterpart, Couve de Murville, how the reconciliation was possible on those matters from which the controversy began. However, by the beginning of August, the General was still silent. The situation was at an *impasse*.

Finally, on September 9th 1965, the General released a press conference in which he reiterated once again his beliefs over France's role in international organizations.

He criticized those countries, which main intent was to destroy France personality in favor of an organization largely controlled by the USA. The European Community, as envisaged by the federalist, would have contributed to the subjugation of the European countries to the American domination. These were the years that witnessed the

¹²⁹ MALANDRINO CORRADO, *op. cit.* Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/6555036.pdf>.

¹³⁰ *Ivi.*

crescendo of de Gaulle hostilities toward the North Atlantic Organization and that would have led in 1966 to the withdrawal of the France contingent.

The General had no intention to be subjected to a so massive reduction of national prerogatives. France should continue to have its own independent policy, which was however not allowed by this federal drift the Community was experiencing.

«Ce qui s'est passé à Bruxelles, le 30 juin, au sujet du règlement financier agricole a mis en lumière, non seulement les persistantes réticences de la plupart de nos partenaires en ce qui concerne l'entrée de l'agriculture dans le Marché commun, mais aussi certaines erreurs ou équivoques de principe qui figurent dans les traités relatifs à l'union économique des Six. C'est pourquoi la crise était, tôt ou tard, inévitable. [...]

Mais, ce que nous avons voulu hier et ce que nous voulons aujourd'hui, c'est une Communauté qui soit équitable et raisonnable.

Équitable : cela veut dire que les produits agricoles, compte tenu des conditions qui leur sont propres, doivent entrer dans le Marché commun en même temps que les produits industriels. Raisonnable : cela signifie que rien de ce qui est important, à présent dans l'organisation, plus tard dans le fonctionnement, du Marché commun des Six ne doit être décidé et, a fortiori, appliqué par les pouvoirs publics raisonnables dans les Six Etats, c'est-à-dire les Gouvernements contrôlés par les Parlements.

Or, on sait, Dieu sait si on sait ! qu'il y a une conception différente au sujet d'une fédération européenne dans laquelle, suivant les rêves de ceux qui l'ont conçu, les pays perdraient leur personnalité nationale, et où, faute de fédérateur, tel qu'à l'Ouest tentèrent de l'être chacun d'ailleurs à sa façon César et ses successeurs, Charlemagne, Othon, Charles Quint, Napoléon, Hitler, et tel qu'à l'Est s'y essaya Staline, ils seraient régis par quelque aréopage technocratique, apatride et irresponsable. On sait aussi que la France oppose à ce projet contraire à toute réalité le plan d'une coopération organisée des Etats évoluant, sans doute, vers une confédération. Seul, ce plan lui paraît conforme à ce que sont effectivement les nations de notre continent. Seul, il pourrait permettre un jour l'adhésion de pays tels que l'Angleterre ou l'Espagne qui, comme le nôtre ne sauraient accepter de perdre leur souveraineté. Seul, il rendrait concevable dans l'avenir l'entente de l'Europe tout entière.

Cependant et quelles que pussent être les arrière-pensées en fait de théories politiques, il avait pu sembler que les très longues et minutieuses négociations de Bruxelles étaient sur le point d'aboutir. Certes, nous avons eu les plus grandes difficultés à faire admettre en pratique par nos partenaires que les produits agricoles fassent partie intégrante de la Communauté. Or, nul ne l'ignore, c'est là pour nous une condition « sine qua non », car, faute qu'elle soit remplie, nous resterions chargés du poids très lourd que représente pour nous, plus que pour nos voisins, le soutien de notre agriculture et nous serions, par là,

handicapés dans la concurrence industrielle. Aussi, avions-nous dû, en janvier 1962, ne consentir à ce qu'on passât à la deuxième phase du traité, c'est-à-dire à un abaissement considérable des barrières douanières, que moyennant l'engagement formellement pris par les Six, de régler le problème agricole, notamment au point de vue financier, au plus tard le 30 juin de cette année, dans des conditions et suivant un calendrier précisés explicitement. Bien qu'il y ait eu alors quelques pleurs et grincements de dents, nous avons pu, sur le moment, obtenir l'adhésion de nos partenaires et nous étions en droit de croire qu'à l'échéance, ils rempliraient leurs engagements.

D'autre part, tout en observant que le très lourd appareil international construit à grands frais autour de la Commission faisait souvent double emploi avec les Services qualifiés des six Gouvernements, nous avons, à mesure des travaux, pris acte de la compétence des fonctionnaires de la Communauté et constaté qu'ils s'abstenaient d'empiétements excessifs sur les seules responsabilités qui fussent valables, à savoir celles des Etats.

C'était trop beau pour aller jusqu'au terme ! En effet, à Bruxelles, le 30 juin, notre délégation se heurta à une fin de non-recevoir pour ce qui concernait la mise au point définitive d'un règlement financier conforme à ce à quoi on s'était engagé. Peu auparavant, d'ailleurs, la Commission, sortant soudain de sa réserve politique, avait formulé au sujet de ce règlement des conditions tendant à la doter elle-même d'un budget propre dont le montant aurait atteint jusqu'à 20 milliards de nouveaux francs, les Etats versant entre ses mains les prélèvements et recettes douanières qui eussent fait de cet organisme littéralement une grande puissance financière indépendante. Il est vrai que, suivant les auteurs du projet, ce budget énorme, que les Etats alimenteraient aux frais de leurs contribuables mais qu'ils ne contrôlèrent pas, serait soumis à l'examen de l'Assemblée européenne. Mais l'intervention de celle-ci, qui est essentiellement consultative et dont les membres n'ont jamais, nulle part, été élus pour cela, ne ferait qu'aggraver le caractère d'usurpation de ce qui était réclamé. Quoi qu'il en soit, la conjonction, préméditée ou non, des exigences supranationales de la Commission de Bruxelles, de l'appui que plusieurs délégations s'affirmaient prêtes à leur accorder, enfin du fait que certains de nos partenaires revenaient au dernier moment sur ce qu'ils avaient antérieurement accepté, nous imposait de mettre un terme à ces négociations.

Je dois ajouter, qu'à la lumière de l'événement, nous avons plus clairement mesuré dans quelle situation notre pays risquerait de se trouver demain si telle et telle dispositions, initialement prévues par le Traité de Rome, étaient réellement appliquées. C'est ainsi, qu'en vertu du texte, les décisions du Conseil des ministres des Six seraient, dès le 1^{er} janvier prochain, prises à la majorité, autrement dit que la France serait exposée à se voir forcer la main dans n'importe quelle matière économique, par conséquent sociale et souvent même politique, et qu'en particulier ce qui aurait paru acquis dans le domaine agricole pourrait être, malgré elle, remis en cause à tout instant. En outre, à partir de la même date, les propositions que ferait la Commission de Bruxelles devraient être

adoptées, ou non, telles quelles par le Conseil des ministres, sans que les Etats puissent y changer rien à moins que, par extraordinaire, les Six Etats fussent unanimes à formuler un amendement. Or, on sait que les membres de la Commission, naguère nommés par accord entre les Gouvernements, ne sont désormais aucunement responsables devant eux et que, même au terme de leur mandat, il faudrait pour les remplacer l'unanimité des Six, ce qui en fait les rend inamovibles. On voit à quoi pourrait nous conduire une telle subordination si nous nous laissions entraîner à renier, à la fois, la libre disposition de nous-mêmes et notre Constitution, laquelle fixe que « la souveraineté française appartient au peuple français, qui l'exerce par ses représentants et par la voie du référendum », sans qu'il y soit prévu aucune espèce d'exception.

Les choses en sont là. Sans doute est-il concevable et désirable que la grande entreprise de la Communauté puisse être remise un jour en chantier. Mais cela n'aura lieu, éventuellement, qu'après un délai dont on ne peut prévoir la durée. Qui sait, en effet, si, quand, comment, la politique de chacun de nos cinq partenaires, compte tenu, d'ailleurs, de certaines conjonctures électorales ou parlementaires, s'adaptera finalement aux nécessités qui viennent d'être, une fois de plus, démontrées ?

Quoi qu'il en soit, la France, pour sa part, est prête à participer à tous les échanges de vues qui lui seraient proposés sur ce sujet par les autres Gouvernements. Le cas échéant, elle envisage de renouer la négociation de Bruxelles, dès lors que l'entrée de l'agriculture dans le Marché commun serait véritablement adoptée et qu'on voudrait en finir avec les prétentions que des mythes abusifs et chimériques opposent au bon sens et à la réalité¹³¹.»

A month later, on October 20th 1965, the French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville, in a speech he gave at the French National Assembly, renewed the conditions to which the European Community should have been subjected to if France had to seat again in the Council. He stated as follows:

«L'Europe politique est toujours en attente. Seul le temps, qui apporte toujours des expériences et par conséquent des enseignements, permettra de déterminer s'il s'agit d'un simple retard. Dans l'intervalle, et sans doute en grande partie parce que le politique n'a pas suivi, l'Europe économique se trouve dans la crise.

Je dis : parce que le politique n'a pas suivi. Si, en effet, entre les Six du Marché commun, le climat politique avait été différent, il eût été difficile d'imaginer que la discussion des problèmes qu'il s'agissait de régler avant le 1er juillet 1965 aboutisse à un désaccord général dans des conditions telles qu'en réalité, aucun débat de fond n'a même pu à aucun moment être sérieusement engagé. [...]

¹³¹ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Elysee, 9 Septembre 1965*, Discours et Messages, Tome IV, Plon, Paris, 1970, pp. 377-381.

A vrai dire, personne n'avait prévu qu'il y aurait des difficultés sérieuses, comme le démontre le fait que des engagements répétés et formels d'aboutir en temps utile avaient été pris sans discussion, d'abord en janvier 1962, lors du passage à la seconde étape du Marché commun, puis en décembre 1964, lors des accords que je viens d'évoquer, enfin au début de 1965, lorsqu'avait été fixé le calendrier des travaux de la présente année. Après toutes les péripéties qui avaient jalonné l'élaboration de la politique agricole, il ne venait à l'esprit de personne même d'imaginer que, le plus difficile ayant été acquis, l'échec serait rencontré dans cette phase presque finale.

Comme il est de règle, il appartenait à la Commission de soumettre des propositions en vue de préparer les décisions du Conseil des Ministres. Elle le fit le 30 mars dernier. Nous les connaissions déjà non que, comme il eût été normal, les six gouvernements eussent été au préalable discrètement informés et pressentis, mais parce que ces propositions avaient été, le 24 mars, exposées publiquement et en détail devant l'Assemblée de Strasbourg. Il était clair, dès ce moment, que, si l'on en restait là, la crise était ouverte.

Loin de se borner au mandat que nous lui avions confié et forte du droit que lui confère le Traité de Rome de présenter des propositions allant jusqu'à la modification de ce texte, droit qui n'est pas contesté, mais dont on peut penser qu'il convient de n'user qu'à bon escient, la Commission, en fait, suggérait un ensemble de mesures de caractère politique, dont l'objet était de transformer profondément le caractère de la Communauté dans le sens qu'elle a, semble-t-il, toujours voulu, c'est-à-dire en faisant d'elle-même une autorité véritablement politique, de moins en moins contrôlée par les gouvernements responsables. Tel était le sens d'une affectation de ressources permanentes allant bien au-delà des charges prévisibles. Tel était aussi le sens de l'octroi, en apparence, de pouvoirs à l'Assemblée, qui, en réalité, tendait à faire de la Commission l'arbitre entre cette assemblée et le Conseil des Ministres. [...] ¹³² »

While France still continued to bestaunchly firm on these positions, slowly Hallstein began to realize that the “Empty Chair” crisis was nothing but a conflict emerged as a consequence of two different approaches over the European integration process. The crisis did not outbreak from the difficulty of finding an agreement for the CAP financing, issue on which France partners were fully available to discuss upon, but was a matter of different views.

¹³² *Déclaration de Maurice Couve de Murville devant l'Assemblée nationale, 20 octobre 1965.* Available at: https://www.cvce.eu/obj/declaration_de_maurice_couve_de_murville_devant_l_assemblee_nationale_20_octobre_1965-fr-d5edfa8c-c94b-4690-97dd-71a1b081dba6.html.

Nonetheless, he declared himself available to reach a compromise with France but without making any substantial modification to the treaty, as instead France was asking for.

4.3 *Constat des désaccords: The Luxembourg compromise*

Soon it became very clear to France's five partners that any agreement was not possible at least until the result of the French Presidential elections that were scheduled in December 1965. What emerged from the urns did not satisfy at all the General's expectations. De Gaulle, at the first ballot, held on December 5th, did not reach an outright victory against the socialist and pro-European candidate Mitterand. Nonetheless, the second round, on December 19th, witnessed the General victory with 55,9 % of votes. The huge consensus he had always enjoyed had begun to weave.

In the light of this tepid results, the French Prime Minister Pompidou announced France's availability to take part in an extraordinary Council that should however be summoned without the Commission presence.

The five agreed and ratified the French decision and, two special Council meetings were scheduled for January 1966 in Luxembourg¹³³.

The first meeting was held between January 17-18. In the reunion, the French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville submitted to his counterparts a document made up of ten points, concerning the role the European Commission should have played, as well as its relations with the Council of Minister.

«1. La coopération du Conseil et de la Commission constitue l'élément moteur de la Communauté. Cette coopération doit se manifester à tous les stades. En conséquence, avant d'adopter définitivement une proposition présentant une importance particulière pour l'ensemble des Etats, la Commission doit consulter les gouvernements à un niveau approprié. Cette consultation ne porte pas atteinte au pouvoir d'initiative et de préparation que la Commission tient du Traité ; elle oblige seulement cette institution à en user à bon escient.

2. Il doit être posé en règle qu'en aucun cas, la Commission ne doit dévoiler la teneur de ses propositions à l'Assemblée ou à l'opinion publique avant que le Conseil en ait été saisi officiellement. A fortiori, la Commission n'a pas à prendre l'initiative de publier ses propositions au Journal officiel des Communautés.

3. a) La Commission propose souvent au Conseil des décisions qui, au lieu de traiter le fond des problèmes posés, se bornent à lui donner des pouvoirs pour agir ultérieurement,

¹³³ TEASDALE L. ANTHONY, *The Life and Death of the Luxembourg Compromise*, p. 569. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1468-5965.1993.tb00481.x>.

mais sans préciser les mesures que la Commission prendrait dans le cas où ces pouvoirs lui seraient donnés (proposition de 1963, relative à la défense commerciale ; certaines propositions de politique commerciale).

b) Dans certains cas, la Commission peut recevoir du Conseil les compétences requises pour assurer l'exécution des règles que celui-ci établit. Ce transfert de compétence ne saurait impliquer que les tâches confiées à la Commission doivent échapper au Conseil. Sans doute, dans certains secteurs comme celui de l'agriculture, le Conseil peut intervenir au niveau de l'exécution par sa représentation au sein des comités de gestion. Il faut pourtant noter que, loin de se satisfaire de ce système, la Commission cherche à substituer aux comités de gestion de simples comités consultatifs ne lui imposant pas de contrainte (cas du règlement n° 19/65 relatif aux ententes ; proposition de la Commission de 1965 relative aux transports).

c) Il importe que les pouvoirs d'exécution ainsi confiés à la Commission soient exactement définis et ne laissent pas place à des appréciations discrétionnaires ou à une responsabilité propre, faute de quoi ne serait pas respecté l'équilibre des pouvoirs, caractéristique de la structure institutionnelle de la Communauté, garantie fondamentale accordée par le Traité.

4. Le Traité dispose que « la directive lie tout Etat membre destinataire quant au résultat à atteindre, tout en laissant aux instances nationales la compétence quant à la forme et aux moyens. » Force est de reconnaître que, dans la pratique, la Commission propose très souvent des directives qui contiennent dans le détail la description des règles applicables ; la seule liberté laissée alors aux Etats est de choisir la forme nationale dont son contenu sera revêtu, ainsi que de prendre les diverses mesures nationales de mise en œuvre qui s'imposent.

Il est évident qu'une telle pratique constitue de la part de la Commission une tentative de faire glisser la matière dont de telles directives sont l'objet, de la compétence nationale à la compétence communautaire.

Il convient donc que de tels errements soient abandonnés.

5. En 1959, le Conseil a arrêté les règles devant régir, à titre provisoire, la reconnaissance des missions diplomatiques accréditées auprès de la Communauté. Ces règles aboutissent à un partage de prérogatives entre le Conseil et la Commission. En particulier, les lettres de créance sont présentées au président de la Commission qui a institué à cet effet un cérémonial calqué sur celui en usage dans les Etats, alors que le traité de Rome prévoit que, seul, le Conseil peut engager la Communauté à l'égard des pays tiers.

Il faut donc mettre un terme aux errements actuels et rétablir le Conseil dans l'intégralité de ses prérogatives.

6. Par voie de conséquence, les démarches des représentants étrangers faites auprès de la Commission doivent être portées, dans les délais les plus brefs, à la connaissance du Conseil ou du représentant de l'Etat qui assure la présidence.

7. Le Traité règle de manière nuancée, selon les organisations concernées, la procédure suivant laquelle la Communauté entretient des relations avec les autres organisations internationales.

Cette situation paraît avoir été perdue de vue par la Commission, qui semble croire qu'elle dispose dans ce domaine d'un véritable pouvoir discrétionnaire.

Il convient que le Conseil apprécie, cas par cas, en fonction des seuls intérêts de la Communauté, la forme et la nature des liaisons à établir.

8. Les membres de la Commission doivent être tenus d'observer dans leurs déclarations publiques une neutralité décente à l'égard de la politique suivie par les gouvernements de tous les Etats membres.

9. La politique d'information ne doit pas être conçue et mise en œuvre par la Commission seule, mais conjointement par le Conseil et par la Commission. Le Conseil doit exercer un contrôle effectif et pas seulement d'ordre budgétaire sur les activités du service d'information des Communautés.

10. Les modalités du contrôle de l'engagement, de l'ordonnancement et de l'exécution des dépenses des Communautés devraient être révisées en vue de donner à ce contrôle une efficacité que, notoirement, il n'a pas actuellement. [...] ¹³⁴ »

He further added to his considerations that no compromises could ever be sought with regard to the qualified majority voting system. On the other hand, the Five seemed well-disposed to meet French claims and affirmed that some agreements over certain French requests could have been reached.

Nonetheless, the French *memorandum* aroused the strong opposition of France's interlocutors over the voting procedure issue and it was decided to postpone the meeting to January 28th.

This time - to avoid any possible distraction – a pre-meeting document, containing a sort of re-elaboration in seven points of the one presented by Couve de Murville, was drafted. The document would have helped the Six in the discussion as it once again aimed at clarifying the institutional relations between the Commission and the Council. The issue of the qualified majority voting procedure was not added to the document as it was clear that no agreement could be reached on the matter. France was still well determined to preserve its veto power and consequently its independence and, on the other hand, the other five member states wanted with the same stubbornness the introduction of this new voting procedure.

¹³⁴ *Mémorandum du gouvernement français (Luxembourg, 17 et 18 janvier 1966)*. Available at : https://www.cvce.eu/obj/memorandum_du_gouvernement_francais_luxembourg_17_et_18_janvier_1966-fr-ad4d00b0-a4a6-4071-ac68-6dc0631bdba8.html.

Negotiations lasted until January 29th and what emerged became well known as the “Luxembourg compromise”. The text was divided in two parts: the first was entirely devoted to the definition of the qualified majority voting procedure while instead the second one, concerned the interaction modalities of the Council and the Commission. The first part is of course the most important as it is the core of the compromise reached by the Six. with regard to the majority voting procedure it was stated that:

- I. Where, in the case of decisions which may be taken by majority vote on a proposal of the Commission, very important interests of one or more partners are at stake, the Members of the Council will endeavour, within a reasonable time, to reach solutions which can be adopted by all the Members of the Council while respecting their mutual interests and those of the Community, in accordance with Article 2 of the Treaty.
- II. With regard to the preceding paragraph, the French delegation considers that where very important interests are at stake the discussion must be continued until unanimous agreement is reached.
- III. The six delegations note that there is a divergence of views on what should be done in the event of a failure to reach complete agreement.
- III. The six delegations nevertheless consider that this divergence does not prevent the Community’s work being resumed in accordance with the normal procedure ¹³⁵.

As a result, it is clear that France was able to retain its veto power in the case other states would have taken decisions deemed to interfere within the country’s domestic affairs.

It was mainly thanks to the obstructionist line that led to the Empty Chair crisis that de Gaulle was finally able to impose his own view. Despite in fact, the Luxembourg compromise represented only a partial victory, since the unanimity procedure would have been applied only in the case of vital interests at stake, the General considered it as an essential point, that would have impeded the supranational drift of the Community. Cooperation would have been basically reduced to the inter-state level. As Gilbert argued “the Luxembourg compromise” made everyone aware of the fact that a single Government had imposed its desires over the Community interests and, had assured the predominant position of national governments at the expenses of the Community institutions¹³⁶.”

¹³⁵ *Final Communiqué of the extraordinary session of the Council. Luxembourg, 17 to 18 and 28 to 29 January 1966.* Available at: http://www.internationaldemocracywatch.org/attachments/297_Luxembourg%20Compromise.pdf.

¹³⁶ GILBERT MARK, *op.cit.* p. 92.

What de Gaulle was able to obtain was also the Common Agricultural Policy to be financed by national states until 1970. The Commission own resources debate was postponed to that date. Furthermore, the Common agricultural market would have started to be working by July 1st 1968.

Despite its extraordinary nature, the “Luxembourg compromise” can be considered as a *constat des desaccords*, that is to say an agreement over the disagreement. The document finally marked an end to the Empty Chair crisis and made finally possible for the Community to proceed with its normal works. For the General, as already stated, it represented a sort of victory, but on the other hand, the French statesman was not able to fully impose his conditions. No Treaty revision was made, as instead envisaged by the General. Overall, what emerged from the Luxembourg meetings was the reiteration of the intangibility of nation states interest and the veto power every single member state had. National sovereignty stood once again at the core of the integration process and the compromise represented, in this sense, a significant loss for the President of the Commission Hallstein. What is important to highlight is that after the agreement over the voting procedure, the qualified majority was rarely used, as there was the constant fear of new crises in the Community.

Few days later, in a press conference, de Gaulle pronounced himself over the “Luxembourg compromise”, adding his own personal considerations over the fate of Europe:

«En ce qui concerne l'Europe, je vais vous dire où nous en sommes et ce que je pense après l'accord de Luxembourg.

Cet accord entre les six Gouvernements est d'une grande et heureuse portée. En effet, pour la première fois depuis que l'affaire du Marché commun est en cours, on est sorti ouvertement de cette espèce de fiction suivant laquelle l'organisation économique de l'Europe devrait procéder d'une autre instance que celle des États, avec leurs pouvoirs et leurs responsabilités. Par le fait même qu'on en a traité avec succès entre ministres des Affaires étrangères et en dehors de Bruxelles, on a explicitement reconnu que, pour aboutir dans le domaine économique, il fallait des bases et des décisions politiques ; que ces bases et ces décisions étaient du ressort des États, et d'eux seuls ; enfin, qu'il appartenait à chacun des Gouvernements d'apprécier si les mesures à adopter en commun seraient, ou non, compatibles avec les intérêts essentiels de son pays.

Alors, à partir de là, on peut se demander si les négociations économiques qui vont reprendre aboutiront à un résultat satisfaisant. Il fallait que la question politique fût tranchée.

Sans méconnaître ce que peuvent valoir les études et propositions de la Commission de Bruxelles, il y avait beau temps, qu'en fait, c'est grâce aux interventions des États et, pour ce qui est du Marché commun agricole, grâce à celles de la France, que la construction économique européenne surmontait peu à peu ses difficultés. Mais l'application imminente de la règle dite « de la majorité » et l'extension corrélatrice des pouvoirs de la Commission menaçaient de remplacer cette pratique raisonnable par une usurpation permanente de souveraineté. Comme la raison a prévalu, on peut penser que les négociations économiques vont se poursuivre dans de bonnes conditions.

Mais serait-ce là le seul objectif de l'ambition européenne ? Faut-il admettre que les six États de l'Europe occidentale, qui viennent de s'accorder sur les conditions politiques qui concernent leur économie, doivent s'abstenir décidément de traiter entre eux d'autres questions qui, elles aussi, les intéressent au premier chef ? Bref, en vertu de quel charme malfaisant les Six trouveraient-ils impossible de considérer entre eux les sujets politiques d'intérêt commun, bref d'organiser leurs contacts politiques ? On sait que, depuis longtemps, la France a proposé de le faire. On sait que, de leur côté, le gouvernement allemand, le Gouvernement italien, le ministre des Affaires étrangères belge, ont, par la suite, avancé des propositions analogues. Sans doute, ces projets différaient-ils quelque peu les uns des autres, mais tous sont d'accord sur un point essentiel qui est celui-ci : amener les six Gouvernements à se réunir d'une manière régulière pour considérer ensemble les sujets politiques d'intérêt commun. Eh bien ! Dès lors qu'après Luxembourg l'organisation économique des Six a repris son cours normal, la France croit qu'il est plus indiqué que jamais de mettre en pratique les rencontres politiques.

Il va de soi qu'il ne s'agit pas, pour les Six, de brandir une fois de plus des théories absolues quant à ce que devrait être dans l'idéal le futur édifice européen, d'imposer un cadre rigide et conçu *a priori* à des réalités aussi complexes et mouvantes que celles de la vie de notre continent et de ses rapports avec l'extérieur, de supposer résolu le problème de la construction de l'Europe avant même qu'on y ait commencé à vivre ensemble politiquement parlant, bref de se perdre de nouveau dans les mythes et les abstractions qui ont toujours empêché les Six d'entreprendre en commun quoi que ce soit d'autre que l'ajustement pénible de leurs productions et échanges économiques. Non ! ce qui s'impose, au contraire, c'est qu'ils se réunissent pour travailler dans le but de coopérer. Justement, lors des récents entretiens franco-allemands qui ont eu lieu lors de la visite du Chancelier Erhard à Paris, les deux Gouvernements sont tombés d'accord sur ce point et cela me paraît être l'un des principaux résultats de leur cordiale rencontre.

La sécurité des Six, compte tenu de leur étroit voisinage réciproque, comme de leur situation géographique et par conséquent stratégique ; leurs rapports de toute nature avec les peuples qui leur sont proches : Angleterre, Espagne, Scandinaves, etc., ou avec les États-Unis, ou avec les pays de l'Est, ou avec la Chine, ou avec l'Asie, l'Orient, l'Afrique, l'Amérique latine ; leur action conjuguée dans les domaines scientifique, technique,

culturel, spatial, etc., dont dépend l'avenir des hommes, voilà de quoi, pensons-nous, les Six doivent se saisir. Comme le mouvement se prouve en marchant, ainsi leur solidarité se prouvera-t-elle en coopérant.

Cette solidarité faudra-t-il qu'elle s'enferme dans une sorte de citadelle politique et économique ? Au contraire ! L'union des Six, une fois réalisée et, à plus forte raison, si elle venait à se compléter ensuite d'adhésions et d'associations européennes nouvelles, peut et doit être, vis-à-vis des États-Unis, un partenaire valable en tous domaines, je veux dire puissant et indépendant. Cette union des Six peut et doit être aussi un des rôles sur lesquels seraient progressivement bâtis, d'abord l'équilibre, puis la coopération, et puis peut-être un jour l'union de l'Europe tout entière, ce qui permettrait à notre continent de régler pacifiquement ses propres problèmes, notamment celui de l'Allemagne, y compris sa réunification, et d'atteindre, en tant qu'il est le foyer capital de la civilisation, à un développement matériel et humain digne de ses ressources et de ses capacités. Dès à présent, d'ailleurs, cette union des Six, si elle se réalisait, serait un élément actif de premier ordre en faveur du progrès, de l'entente et de la paix de tous les peuples du monde.

Et voilà pourquoi si l'un des États qui sont en train de construire avec nous la communauté économique européenne, croyait devoir, dans cet esprit, prendre à son tour l'initiative de proposer une réunion politique des six Gouvernements, la France y répondrait positivement et de grand cœur. [...] ¹³⁷»

De Gaulle's last moves inside the European framework were his opposition to Hallstein re-election, substituted by Rey on July 1967 and the General second veto to the UK joining the Community, in 1967. This time, the French rejection was supported by the British precarious economic situation. The veto can be so considered as a mere act of caution. The pound devaluation, to which the country was forced to in 1967, would have had, according to de Gaulle, economic repercussions also on the other member states in case the UK would have entered the Community.

Another battlefield to which the General devoted his last years of presidency was the blockade of any further enlargement of the European Parliament competences. The Community should have waited until de Gaulle exit from the political scene, to experience direct parliamentary elections.

In the meanwhile, the overall consensus toward the General began to decline. As previously stated, the 1965 presidential elections, despite enshrining his victory,

¹³⁷ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Elysée, 21 Février 1966*, Discours et messages, Volume V: Vers le terme (1966-1969). Plon, Paris, 1970, pp. 20-22.

witnessed a considerable decrease of popular support. Furthermore, the political elections, held on March 1967, confirmed this declining trend, although the Gaullist party obtained once again the majority of votes.

The situation collapsed with the outbreak of the 1968 student protests. The “French May” as the period became generally known, erupted out of nothing. The protest, which involved at first students and included later also the French Communist Party and the *Confédération générale du travail*, basically asked for a radical change in the political and social life scenario. Influenced by the main international events, such as the Vietnam War, the Chinese “Cultural Revolution” and the Prague Spring, French people aimed at the complete upheaval of the old establishment, accused to be no longer representative.

De Gaulle attitude toward the protest has been frequently under discussion. By May 14th, a day after the massive demonstration in *Place Denfert-Rochereau*, he left for Romania where he had planned a state visit, leaving his Prime Minister Pompidou solving the troubled issue. The contingencies would have required him to remain in France, but he had however misjudged the crisis that was about to shake to world.

Few days later in a television broadcasting speech, he proved once again to not have well comprehended the real dimension of the protests. He proposed a further strengthening of presidential powers by the means of a referendum. This move would have, according to him, responded to that student demand of *participation* at the basis of the protest.

«Tout le monde comprend, évidemment, quelle est la portée des actuels événements, universitaires, puis sociaux. On y voit tous les signes qui démontrent la nécessité d'une mutation de notre société. Mutation qui doit comporter la participation plus effective de chacun à la marche et au résultat de l'activité qui le concerne directement. Certes, dans la situation bouleversée d'aujourd'hui, le premier devoir de l'Etat, c'est d'assurer en dépit de tout, la vie élémentaire du pays, ainsi que l'ordre public. Il le fait. C'est aussi d'aider à la remise en marche, en prenant les contacts qui pourraient la faciliter. Il y est prêt. Voilà pour l'immédiat. Mais ensuite, il y a sans nul doute des structures à modifier. Autrement dit : il y a à réformer. Car dans l'immense transformation politique, économique, sociale, que la France accomplit en notre temps, si beaucoup d'obstacles, intérieur et extérieur, ont déjà été franchis, d'autres s'opposent encore au progrès. De là, les troubles profonds. Avant tout dans la jeunesse qui est soucieuse de son propre rôle, et que l'avenir inquiète trop souvent. C'est pourquoi, la crise de l'université, crise provoquée par l'impuissance de ce grand corps, à s'adapter aux nécessités modernes de la Nation, ainsi qu'au rôle et à l'emploi des jeunes, a déclenché dans beaucoup d'autres milieux, une marée

de désordre, d'abandon ou d'arrêt du travail. Il en résulte que notre pays est au bord de la paralysie. Devant nous-mêmes, et devant le monde, nous, Français, devons régler un problème essentiel que nous pose notre époque. A moins que nous nous roulions à travers la guerre civile, aux aventures et aux usurpations les plus odieuses et les plus ruineuses. Depuis bientôt 30 ans, les événements m'ont imposé en plusieurs graves occasions, le devoir d'amener notre pays à assumer son propre destin, afin d'empêcher que certains ne s'en chargent malgré lui. J'y suis prêt, cette fois encore. Mais cette fois encore, cette fois surtout, j'ai besoin. Oui, j'ai besoin que le peuple français dise qu'il le veut. Or, notre Constitution prévoit justement par quelle voie il peut le faire. C'est la voie la plus directe et la plus démocratique possible, celle du référendum. Compte tenue de la situation tout à fait exceptionnelle où nous sommes, et sur la proposition du gouvernement, j'ai décidé de soumettre au suffrage de la Nation, un projet de loi, par lequel je lui demande de donner à l'Etat, et d'abord à son chef, un mandat pour la rénovation. Reconstruire l'université, en fonction, non pas de ses habitudes séculaires, mais des besoins réels de l'évolution du pays, et des débouchés effectifs de la jeunesse étudiante dans la société moderne. Adapter notre économie, non pas aux catégories diverses, des intérêts, des intérêts particuliers, mais aux nécessités nationales et internationales, en améliorant les conditions de vie et de travail du personnel, des services publics et des entreprises, en organisant sa participation aux responsabilités professionnelles, en étendant la formation des jeunes, en assurant leur emploi, en mettant en oeuvre les activités industrielles et agricoles dans le cadre de nos régions. Tel est le but que la Nation doit se fixer elle-même. Françaises, français, au mois de juin, vous vous prononcerez par un vote. Au cas où votre réponse serait non, il va de soi que je n'assumerai pas plus longtemps ma fonction. Si par un oui massif, vous m'exprimez votre confiance, j'entreprendrais avec les pouvoirs publics, et je l'espère, le concours de tous ceux qui veulent servir l'intérêt commun, de faire changer partout où il le faut, les structures étroites et périmées, et ouvrir plus largement la route au sang nouveau de la France. Vive la République, vive la France !¹³⁸»

This time, his allocution did not have the huge impact his speeches has always had. De Gaulle was no longer the man of the war resistance and neither the man who solved the Algeria crisis. He began to be marginalized.

As the protests harshened, the General demonstrated to not possess the same skills in solving crisis, as he showed previously. He disappeared on May 29th and returned to Paris the day after when he presided the Council of Ministers to be held later that afternoon, in which it was decided to dissolve the National Assembly. Later that day

¹³⁸ DE GAULLE CHARLES, *Allocution du 24 Mai 1968*. Available at: <https://fresques.ina.fr/de-gaulle/fiche-media/Gaulle00142/allocution-du-24-mai-1968.html>

he addressed the nation and his speech was followed by a well-organized and orderly pro-Gaullist demonstration that aimed at comparing it to those violent and confusing proper of the student movements.

«Françaises, Français, étant le détenteur de la légitimité nationale et républicaine, j'ai envisagé, depuis vingt-quatre heures, toutes les éventualités, sans exception, qui me permettraient de la maintenir. J'ai pris mes résolutions. Dans les circonstances présentes, je ne me retirerai pas. J'ai un mandat du peuple, je le remplirai. Je ne changerai pas le Premier ministre dont la valeur, la solidité, la capacité méritent l'hommage de tous. Il me proposera les changements qui lui paraîtront utiles dans la composition du gouvernement. Je dissous aujourd'hui l'assemblée nationale. J'ai proposé au pays un référendum qui donnait aux citoyens l'occasion de prescrire une réforme profonde de notre économie et de notre université et en même temps de dire s'ils me gardaient leur confiance ou non par la seule voie acceptable, celle de la démocratie. Je constate que la situation actuelle empêche matériellement qu'il y soit procédé, c'est pourquoi j'en diffère la date. Quant aux élections législatives, elles auront lieu dans les délais prévus par la constitution à moins qu'on entende bâillonner le peuple français tout entier en l'empêchant de s'exprimer en même temps qu'on l'empêche de vivre, par les mêmes moyens qu'on empêche les étudiants d'étudier, les enseignants d'enseigner, les travailleurs de travailler. Ces moyens, ce sont l'intimidation, l'intoxication et la tyrannie exercés par des groupes organisés de longue main, en conséquence, et par un parti qui est une entreprise totalitaire, même s'il a déjà des rivaux à cet égard. Si, donc, cette situation de force se maintient, je devrai, pour maintenir la république, prendre conformément à la constitution d'autres voies que le scrutin immédiat du pays. En tous cas, partout et tout de suite, il faut que s'organise l'action civile. Cela doit se faire pour aider le gouvernement, d'abord, puis localement, les préfets devenus ou redevenus commissaires de la République, dans leur tâche qui consiste à assurer, autant que possible, l'existence de la population, et à empêcher la subversion à tout moment et en tout lieu. La France, en effet, est menacée de dictature. On veut la contraindre à se résigner à un pouvoir qui s'imposerait dans le désespoir national, lequel pouvoir serait alors évidemment et essentiellement celui du vainqueur, c'est-à-dire celui du communisme totalitaire. Naturellement, on le colorerait, pour commencer, d'une apparence trompeuse en utilisant l'ambition et la haine de politiciens au rancart. Après quoi, ces personnages ne pèseraient pas plus que leur poids, qui ne serait pas lourd. Et bien non, la République n'abdiquera pas. Le peuple se ressaisira. Le progrès, l'indépendance et la paix l'emporteront avec la liberté. Vive la République ! Vive la France !»

What clearly emerged from this last speech is de Gaulle's willingness to solve the social turmoil passing through the "institutional structures of elections¹³⁹". And this method proved to be right since he won the parliamentary majority and saw his popularity increasing.

The referendum de Gaulle had planned was finally held on April 1969. It asked French people to approve a progressive decentralization in the government and would also have implied some changes in the Senate structures. The referendum was rejected with 52.4 per cent of no, which led to his resignation, announced on April 28th.

Charles de Gaulle died the following year.

¹³⁹ ATKIN NICHOLAS, *op.cit.* p.110.

CONCLUSION

Charles de Gaulle represents one of the most relevant figures of the XX century. His actions, as well as his political thought, still echo in our contemporary world. The main purpose of this elaborate was to analyze and explain his political action and his decisions with a special focus on the process of European integration. To do so, I considered also France's relations with the other main Western powers, all the issues related to the Atlantic Alliance as well as the major conflicting themes with the USA. But, was de Gaulle a fervent anti-Europeanist as he has always been depicted? What emerged from the work is that, guided by his personal conditions and his ideals, de Gaulle enormously contributed to the establishment of the European Community. Nonetheless, the contribution he gave can be analyzed in light of his personal ideas of the role France should play in Europe and, more in general, worldwide. The pivot around which his deeds can be explained is the nation-state. As clearly emerged from the analysis, de Gaulle before being a Europeanist was a nationalist. For all his life he struggled to restore France's *grandeur* and to re-assure to his country the central role he deemed it deserved.

Following these assumptions, his opposition to the main European projects can be justified. In the building of Europe in fact, two different approaches emerged. Charles de Gaulle became the spokesman of the confederal one, according to which the Community should have been built preserving every state's national independence. His view often collided with those who were willing to base the European Community upon supranationalism. Every state should have, according to this approach, devolved its sovereignty in favor of the European institutions, which were asked to coordinate member state's policies at a federal level.

This tendency clearly emerged for example, with the proposals advanced by the President of the European Commission, Walter Hallstein in 1964. His willingness to move toward a closer European integration generated a crisis that paralyzed the action of the Community for more than six months. In this case, as highlighted in the last chapter of the dissertation, de Gaulle was able to partially impose his conditions. Nonetheless, the "Luxembourg compromise", the document that ended the so called "Empty Chair" crisis, proved once again the General's ability to impede any supranational drift.

For sure, Charles de Gaulle can be considered as one of the main architects of Europe. He decided however, to stand for a "European Europe", capable, with France's leadership, to impose itself as a third force in a world divided by the Cold War. The

Europe he envisaged was a *Europe des patries*, in which every state could have preserved its own independence. France would have returned to its *grandeur* and would have been the ruler of all the European affairs.

The European evolution seemed at a first stand, not to be reflecting the Gaullist conception.

The General fought to reform the supranational drift the Community was assisting to. His partial adherence to some European projects, such as the Treaties of Rome, can be justified by bearing in mind the consideration he had of France's role in Europe. The reason why he did not oppose to the establishment, for example, of the Common Market can be found in the enormous benefits the country would have gained by its implementation.

Throughout all the process of European integration de Gaulle remained the protagonist, causing several troubles to the Community. The failure of the European Defense Community and the "Empty Chair" crisis are clear examples useful to comprehend the General's rejection of a federal Europe.

In his battle for independence the General's positions often collided with those of the USA. The American constant interferences led de Gaulle to question a well-established organization such as the NATO and, more in general, the Atlantic Alliance. According to him, France could not play the role it deserved. This can explain the General's decision to progressively question the American supremacy within the Organization. This decision will bring de Gaulle to withdraw the French armed forces from the NATO integrate command, a move that aroused not little sensation worldwide.

Another blatant action was the General's veto to the United Kingdom entrance in the Community. This move was also motivated in the light of France's interest. Britain's joining the ECC would have, according to de Gaulle, enormously contributed to limit the Community's independence from the USA, which was still closely linked with the United Kingdom.

Charles de Gaulle was an able strategist. After the failure of the "Fouchet Plan", through which the General intended making his view prevailing, he sought an alliance with West Germany. The signing of the Élysée Treaty in 1963 officially marked the end of the Franco-German rivalries, called to a closer cooperation.

In conclusion, Charles de Gaulle's actions toward the process of European integration find their justification in his intrinsic nationalism. The contribution he gave in shaping the European Community was immense, but always motivated by doing, above all, France's interest.

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SUMMARY

Charles de Gaulle is one of the most contradictory and ambiguous figures of the XX century has ever had. He was born in a Catholic aristocratic family, from whom he was taught the love for the motherland. This sense of belonging to the nation will follow him throughout all his life and will be the pivot around which the General will base his political action. His patriotism was inherited from his father, Henri de Gaulle, who fought in the Franco-Prussian War, witnessing the huge humiliation France was subjected to in 1870 at Sedan. Due to his family background, de Gaulle devoted all his life to one specific goal: conferring France back its super-power role in the world.

De Gaulle's education was in no contradiction with his family tradition and values. From 1896 to 1900, he attended the Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin, ruled by the Brothers of the Christian schools, and later the Jesuits École Libre until 1907 in Paris.

His father strongly influenced him during all the years of his early formation. From Henri, he will inherit the ability to look over history in a detached and consequentially-clear manner. Thus he became able to impartially judge all the errors made by the nation and by its leaders during the Second Empire.

What emerged from his youth and from the education he received was a man hugely permeated by patriotism and so, naturally attracted by the military career. The military was the only apparatus, according to him, that could rewrite the destiny of France in Europe. In this sense, the years he passed in the military academy of Saint-Cyr, represented the highest contribution in the shaping of his ideas. Following 1904, the world was assisting to the establishment of new alliances and to the rising of new tensions. France and Germany, even if not always directly involved, were however often implied. The issue of the territories of Alsace and Lorraine, despite being dormant for a while, emerged again after 1910 in the form of local incidents. Furthermore, the pan-German propaganda that characterized the reign of William II, contributed to the awakening of a French nationalism that slowly spread in the military circles.

It was in this specific scenario that de Gaulle developed his concept of nation. Around this image he will later base his entire vision of international relations as well as his political thought.

He refused to consider the nation as merely dependant by specific ethnic or territorial

characteristics. France had, from his point of view, a well-defined mission, that is to say, being the world spokesman of precise values: free determination, justice and rights.

The concept of nation was not dependent by the one of ideology. Indeed, de Gaulle will always reject every form of ideology, considered as a deceptive element, transcendent from national boundaries. The nation and its interests were fundamental, ideologies only transitory. This conception can be very useful to later examine his ideas over all the European projects and his refusal of every supranational aspect they implied. Supranationalism would have, according to him, destroyed every nation's prerogative, as well as its democratic principles and bases.

The government was the necessary appendix of the nation. According to de Gaulle, it played a fundamental role in safeguarding and protecting the nation and its independence. Despite he was not an admirer of the Third Republic, a regime he will always condemn, he proved to be a republicanism supporter. The Republic he had imagined was to be guided by a strong leader, to be accompanied by a weak legislative power. Moreover, he had little sympathy for political parties, accused to be guided only by selfish men who did nothing for the nation's interests.

The outbreak of the First World War is traditionally considered as the event that definitely shaped de Gaulle personality, political thought and military considerations. In light of that revanchist feeling he was permeated by since his childhood, it can be cautiously affirmed that de Gaulle sought in the Great War the decisive fight between France and Germany. This conviction was influenced for sure, by the awakening of nationalism in the form of a necessary revenge over Germany.

As the First World War was coming to an end, de Gaulle was fully aware that the peace would not last long. This conviction was further strengthened by the fact that the Franco-German rivalries were still in place. He was strongly convinced that Germany would have disattended all the provisions set up by the Versailles Treaty and that the country would have strived, even using the force, for a partial revision of the peace treaty.

Indeed, he believed that the war had not come to an end and the Treaty of Versailles was only a temporary armistice.

The years between the two great wars were characterized by his reflection over France's destiny in Europe. During those years, Europe was still not a central issue. The view he had about it was largely shared by the majority of the XX century leaders: it was only a matter of relations among different and independent nations. Furthermore, the European issue was still biased by the Franco-German tensions.

Europe was for him, during those years, reduced only to the conflict between these two countries.

The Weimar Republic, a consequence of the German defeat in WWI, contributed to exacerbate de Gaulle's diffidence towards Germany. The new political system proved to be instable from every point of view. The Constitution provided in fact for a huge disequilibrium of powers and paved the way for a parties regime, the main cause of its weakness.

Nonetheless, the point that troubled de Gaulle the most was the fact that Germany was still a unitary state. A strong and centralized state could, according to de Gaulle still represent a threat, in the first place, for France and subsequently for the entire European continent.

In his book *Vers l'Armée de métier*, a huge part of the work is dedicated to his analysis of all the factors that led the two countries to fight one against the other. What emerged from the book is that de Gaulle will maintain for all his life a double attitude towards Germany. On the one hand in fact, he admired the German strength and their undeniable military might. They were, in the General's opinion, a well-organized population from every point of view. On the other hand, however, he deemed the Germans to be highly contradictory and this was obvious considering that the country consisted in different people, often demanding for their division.

The outbreak of the Second World War did not substantially change de Gaulle's perspectives and ideas over Europe. In 1940 the French situation appeared to be desperate.

The German troops entered in Paris on June 14th 1940 and, only two days later, de Gaulle was sent to London to ask the Prime Minister Churchill for areal and maritime forces support. In the meanwhile, Reynaud was replaced by Marshal Pétain, a very popular man among the French people, who started negotiating the armistice with the German forces. Refusing to surrender, de Gaulle, who in the meanwhile flew back to London, was authorized by the British Prime Minister to make an appeal from the BBC radio.

The June 18th 1940 appeal to France is traditionally considered by historiography as the beginning of de Gaulle *charisma* and of the Gaullist movement.

What is extremely important to highlight is that his appeal to the nation was substantially addressed to the army. He actually invited all the French soldiers to keep fighting with the British ally and to find in them the support they required.

There were other speeches that followed the June 18th appeal, which is still considered to be the founding act of the *France Libre* resistance movement. In a letter addressed,

few days later, to Winston Churchill he reiterated once again the formal apolitical and military basis of this new movement and also explained where the legitimacy of his new mission came from. He claimed to be the last member of the last independent government and, more important, to be a general of the French army. However, at a first stand, the movement did not enjoy the necessary support, as de Gaulle's position was still very weak and the French people were disillusioned after the defeat.

In the meanwhile de Gaulle's relations with Britain, and consequentially with the United States, started to deteriorate and this led the General to seek for a rapprochement with the Soviet Union.

De Gaulle began to distance himself from the United States mainly in the light of Roosevelt's ideas over the reorganization of Europe after the war. In fact, the USA President aimed at a substantial reduction of the European nation states, a move that would have favoured the American economic hegemony within the Old Continent. From de Gaulle's perspective, of course, this would have been unacceptable since the role he aimed at giving to France. These conflicting views surely influenced for sure the position the *France Libre* has had since then with the UK, which preferred not to distance itself from its overseas ally.

The politicization of the movement resulted even more evident with the creation in Alger of the *Assemblée Consultative provisoire* a sort of Parliament made up of all those members of movements and parties linked to France's resistance.

In the aftermath of the Paris liberation in 1944, the provisory government of Alger was finally able to move back to France and changed its name in *Gouvernement provisoire de la République Française*. The General was appointed leader of this temporary government and remained in charge of it until 1946. The transitional period, that led to the establishment of the Fourth Republic, was inaugurated by de Gaulle's decision to schedule two referenda by October 1945, parallel to the election for the Constituent Assembly. The first referendum asked the French citizens to decide on the maintenance of the institutions of the Third Republic. The second, instead, concerned the fixation of a term for the works of the Constituent Assembly and the necessity for them to be further submitted to a confirmative referendum. By the means of both initiatives, the French people, women included, were asked to choose the future institutional framework of France. The practice of calling for *referenda* will be the distinctive point of Gaullism.

From November 1945 until January 1946, General Charles de Gaulle held the office of French President of the Council. However, soon the newly established political elite proved to be in disagreement over the institutional form of the new Republic.

The exacerbating of these conflicts in the bosom of the Constituent Assembly, as well as the Communist struggle to draft a Constitution inspired by the 1793 experience, led General de Gaulle to resign from his office.

Having the nation-state at the core of his philosophy, he will struggle to defend and to re-affirm French interests worldwide. According to him the nation was the only international actor which could play a major role in the international area. The nation and its independence were to be preserved at all costs. France's *grandeur* needed to be restored.

Starting from this assumption, the main aim of this research work is to investigate the ambiguous relations between the General and the European integration process. Being so often depicted as a fervent anti-Europeanist, Charles de Gaulle did nothing but the interests of his own country. To the supranational approach, supported by personalities such as Monnet and Hallstein, de Gaulle will always oppose a *Europe des patries*. Every state should maintain its own independence. It is in light of these considerations that the General's opposition to specific European projects, such as the European Defense Community, can be justified. Before being a Europeanist he was a nationalist. In the Europe he had envisaged, France played a dominant role.

This supremacy necessarily had to pass through the reform of French institutions. The weakness of the executive was, according to de Gaulle, one of the main reasons why the Fourth Republic collapsed. Thus, his return to the political scene, in 1958, coincided with the drafting of a new Constitution, which invested the President of the Republic with considerable powers. Finally, France was given a strong figure who could lead the country to the restoring of its *grandeur*.

This search for independence concretized, in the foreign policy field, in de Gaulle's refusal of the Cold War division in two blocs. In this sense, the progressive rapprochement with the USSR can be explained and it is so clearly expressed by the formula "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals". So, Europe should have stood as a third force in the international context, able to cooperate with both the West and the East.

Nonetheless, this foreign policy, so oriented toward national independence, led the country to numerous clashes with the USA.

The Franco-American relations were highly ambiguous. They reflected the differences between a well affirmed great power and a newly born power. Furthermore, they were the logical outcome of the different positions they had inside the North Atlantic Organization, where the USA played a dominant role.

Despite all the frictions the two powers had, it must be recalled that after the Second

World War, once European states were asked to align with the USA or the U.S.S.R., France chose the American side.

However, regardless this formal choice, starting from 1958, the country went through a period of crisis that called into question the NATO's role in Europe.

The General's willingness to confer France a predominant role in Europe soon collided with the role the country was playing inside the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Charles de Gaulle could no longer tolerate the country's subordinate position and the American interferences in the Old Continent. He engaged a fight that culminated with the withdrawal of the French armed forces from the Organization in 1966.

Far from being unexpected, the French decision to withdraw from the NATO's integrate command contributed to create a crisis whose effects had a considerable echo in the whole Occident. The General's decision emerged, as already stated, since the very beginning of his return to power. Therefore it can be framed as the outcome of a progressive evolution.

The critiques he moved to the alliance came substantially from the new international circumstances. Europe had finally recovered and was able to independently defend itself from any threat. Furthermore, the nuclear dissuasion, provided by the USA and the U.S.S.R., diminished the possibilities of war. It was the right time for France to reassert its own independence. However, independence was not to be considered as isolation. Independence, according to the General's view, implied also solidarity.

By being part of the Atlantic alliance, France committed itself to defend the common interest, but from an equal position. The way NATO was organized did not confer the country an equal treatment compared with the USA. France, as emerged from the first meeting of the Defense Council on June 17th 1958, was in a subordinate position inside the Organization.

De Gaulle asked for the NATO to enlarge its competences; for a review of the military integration the Treaty implied and of the American nuclear monopoly and lastly, the need for France to be part of a political and strategic directory. What the General condemned the most was the absence of political coordination also in those territories not directly linked within the Organization system. As was then organized, the Atlantic alliance was useless in solving those issues regarding the Middle East or Africa. The Organization should so have extended its work even to those countries.

With regard instead to the review of the military integration, De Gaulle was strongly convinced that France needed to assure its defense by itself.

Furthermore, his desire for France to independently provided for its own defense, concretized with development of France's nuclear arsenal, also known as *force de frappe*. National independence for the General could have also been granted by the power of deterrence France could have exerted.

When he came back to power in 1958, the French statesman was convinced that a state would have been more reluctant to start a war against a country in possess of nuclear weapons.

The new conception of the world de Gaulle developed, was largely influenced by the process of nuclear reinforcement. This new way of thinking the international relations, followed mainly two different patterns. On the one hand, being in possess of a nuclear arsenal, would have implied for the nation-state to be the only legitimate actor in the international arena; moreover, the use of nuclear bombs would have largely contributed to one country's national defense. The nuclear weapons' power of deterrence would have had the effect of avoiding any possible aggression from other states.

On the other hand, nuclear bombs hugely contributed to make more blatant the bipolar division of the world. If the post Second World War period witnessed the West-East division, the nuclear discoveries made these division sharply grow. Those states not in possess of a nuclear arsenal were so forced to align with one or another bloc.

With regard to the European integration process, despite always being depicted as a fervent anti-Europeanist, General de Gaulle had instead his own particular view on the structure Europe should have had. Europe was to be built upon cooperation and not integration. Cooperation among states should have been established at every possible level, especially on the political one by the means of intergovernmental conferences. Nonetheless, every state should have maintained its independence when facing international affairs and, this freedom would have materialized in an unanimous decision-making process.

Indeed, he rejected every form of supranationalism. Supranational Europe, according to him, would have basically meant Europe under the American command and control. While the E.D.C. debate was keeping France at stake, de Gaulle, who was then far from the political scene, elaborated his own intergovernmental alternative to the supranational approach. In this sense, what Debré proposed was the creation of a Union of European States. This union was to be ruled by a political committee made up of the head of the governments of the member states. This committee would have had the task to enhance common policies in different fields, both political and economic.

This proposal remained completely unheard until the General's return on the political scene in 1958. Then, from a higher position, he could finally actively participate in the European institutional debate and seek the best alternative that would have granted France a dominant position.

In this context we can collocate the great, but unsuccessful General initiative launched in an effort to finally alter the European supranational character. The Fouchet Plan aimed at giving Europe a more looser and intergovernmental approach. States should have been united by the means of cooperation, but needed to maintain their sovereign features. The Fouchet Plan should have laid the basis for what de Gaulle referred to as *Europe des États*.

In a press conference in 1960, the General exposed what his project over the European cooperation was. De Gaulle reaffirmed the necessity to assure a regular cooperation with the Six founding states. This cooperation should have concerned political, economic, defense and cultural matters and would have implied a concertation of governments, representing the intergovernmental character he aimed at giving to Europe. The concertation of governments should have answered to an assembly, made up of delegates of the national parliaments, in charge of deliver periodically deliberations.

This new European project should have been legitimized by the mean of a "solemn European referendum" aimed at conferring Europe the indispensable popular support. De Gaulle's September statement was the outcome of the successful meeting with German Chancellor Adenauer that took place on July 1960 in Rambouillet. From this meeting emerged nine main points on the basis of which Europe should have been organized. Firstly, according to the General, Europe was required to be developed "*par elle-même et pour elle-même*" in those domains regarding politics, economics, culture and defense. Then, in order to be effective, Europe must consisted in a cooperation among states. The first boost should have come from a French-German agreement, further extended also to Italy, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. The third point consisted in the rejection of the institutions supranational dimension, that should have instead been reformed and subordinated to the national governments. This new intergovernmental character would have largely helped European states to get rid of the American supremacy, so openly in contradiction with the new role Europe should have played. The fifth point regarded the regular cooperation that should have been implemented by the national governments, required to coordinate their action in the different domains. Moreover, the task to discuss and execute the Governments main guidelines should have been given to common and permanent commissions of experts.

In this sense four commissions should have been established for the four different domains: political, economic, cultural and defense.

The seventh point addressed the need of creating an assembly made up of national Parliaments delegates, with a mere consultative function. This new organization, as was meant by the General, should have received the popular approval through a general referendum. In this sense, France and Germany were asked to implement the necessary measures to build this new Europe.

However, the confederal Europe he had envisaged culminated in a huge failure, having both plans being rejected by the other EEC member states.

At this point, de Gaulle found himself isolated and consequentially he oriented his attention towards a closer union with Western Germany. The similarities between the two great statesmen, de Gaulle and Adenauer, largely contributed to the rapprochement between the countries they ruled. Starting from 1958, when France and West Germany decided to cooperate, the major turning point in the Franco-German relations was represented by the signing of the Élysée Treaty on January 1963. The Treaty committed the two countries to hold regular meetings on specific matters, such as defense, education and youth and had a huge resonance in Europe, astonished by the official end of rivalries between these two great enemies.

A few days before the Treaty was signed, Charles de Gaulle was the protagonist of another striking act: he vetoed the United Kingdom's entrance inside the Community. As will be explained through the chapter, this gesture will be once again justified in light of the General's unwillingness to sacrifice French independence. Britain had, according to de Gaulle, a too close and privileged bound with the USA. Allowing the country to join the EEC would have meant, once again, being under the American control. Furthermore, it was during those years that the six founding states should have finally reached an agreement over the Common Agricultural Policy, so desired by France.

De Gaulle sought in the realization of the CAP a way for modernizing France agricultural sector and also a tool to counterbalance France market openness to its partners' industrial goods.

The UK entrance inside the Community would have had the effect of jeopardizing the ongoing negotiations.

The last battle engaged by de Gaulle inside the European framework became widely known as the "Empty Chair" crisis. Works in the core of the European Commission were paralyzed for more than six months as a result of the collision between the two different approaches, the confederal and the supranational one.

Charles de Gaulle found himself confronting with the President of the European Commission Walter Hallstein, a strong supporter of a federal Europe, to be organized around the European institutions. Hallstein proposed a series of measures that would have advanced the process of integration but that would have implied a huge transfer of sovereignty to the Community institutions.

On October 1964, the President of the Commission Hallstein submitted to the E.E.C. Council of Ministers and to the heads of government of the Six a document concerning the implementation of the Common Market, commonly known as “Initiative ‘64”.

The very first pages of the document strongly reaffirmed the political and supranational dimension of the Community and the willingness to further proceed within the establishment of a closer political union. As expected, Hallstein’s initiative was not warmly welcomed by France, which stigmatized the proposal as reckless. The document represented the prelude to the Commission proposals concerning the custom union, the Common Agricultural Policy and the establishment of an external tariff. These plans were to be presented when the third stage of the transitory period began (1966-1970).

On March 1965 the Hallstein Commission put forward to the European Parliament initially and later to the Council its proposals concerning the financing of the Common Agricultural Policy. The delicate issue of financing the CAP exacerbated tensions between de Gaulle and the European Commission. The plan provided for the E.E.C. own resources to finance the Common Agricultural Policy, starting from July 1st, 1965. The Community would have so, independently from single member states, implemented its own financial system, by collecting all the tariffs on import goods from non-ECC countries to ECC states. The Commission would have been also in charge, starting from January 1st, 1972, of administering all those levies that came from the common external tariff

The Hallstein Commission works went further. By submitting the draft to the European Parliament first, which had been long claiming for broader powers, Hallstein won its support. His proposals conferred in fact to the European Parliament more budgetary powers, claims that were hampered by France for years. These proposals would have had the effect of increasing competences of both the Commission and the Parliament in an attempt to finally confer, to the European Economic Community, a supranational character. The Commission would have represented the Community “government” concerning budget matters, as it was not required to take into consideration member states desires.

A further relevant proposal was advanced, the intention to get rid of the veto power

within the Council by extending the qualified majority vote on well determined issues by January 1st 1966. States could thus no longer exert their veto power, granted to them by the procedure of the unanimity vote into effect until then. The unanimity voting procedure implied the explicit consensus of all member states and the consequent veto power conferred them the possibility to preserve and to affirm the national interest over important decisions.

The issue of the voting procedure contributed to enlarge the already deep cleavage between the two different approaches over the process of integration. De Gaulle, who opposed to the introduction of the qualified majority vote, represented the willingness to establish an intergovernmental cooperation among states while instead, Hallstein embodied the desire of building a Community based upon federalism.

The proposals the Hallstein Commission made, were discussed during a first interim session of the Council of Ministers, held, from June 13th to 15th 1965. The strong French opposition did not come much later. On June 15th, during the Council of ministers meeting, the French government presented to its European interlocutors a counterproposal to the one of the Hallstein Commission. Basically, France asked for the Common Agricultural Policy to continue being financed by member states for the period 1965-1970. The Commission would have not been in charge of managing the common resources derived by the external tariff and would have not so experienced the huge increase of power as envisaged by the Commission proposals. This would have had implications also on the European Parliament role which would have not shared the budgetary functions within the Commission. The following day, the French Foreign Minister, Couve de Mourville, reiterated to the French National Assembly the plan, adding to his consideration the necessity for the European Parliament to still exert its merely consultative function, as envisaged by the Treaty. What France was claiming for was to postpone the CAP financial debate, that provided for the Community to finance it, as well as the enlargement of the European Parliament prerogatives to 1970, as the transitory period would have ended. France clearly distinguished between two different steps, the financing of the CAP, to be scheduled immediately, and the strengthening of the European institutions, which was an issue to be later decided upon.

In this conflicting context, Hallstein decided to call for all those supporters of this new European challenge in the speech he gave in the European Parliament on June 17th. His appeal proved to be a clear declaration of intents, after recalling all the successful achievements, reached with the Treaties of Rome, such as the custom union, the Common Agricultural Policy, the establishment of the Common Market, the President

of the Commission reiterated the importance of this new step. By approving his proposals, finally Europe would have been able to politically speak as one entity, despite recognizing all the different cultures and tradition it was made of.

In this sense and to realize this project, some further steps needed to be made in order to grant those European institutions, which embodied the supranational character of the organization, a broader power.

The Council of Ministers, held between June 28-30, experienced the escalation of tensions among Netherlands, Italy and West Germany on one side, and France on the other. France's five European partners wanted in fact the country to fully accept the proposals emerged from the Hallstein's Commission. On the other hand, de Gaulle wanted primarily to reach an agreement over the financing of the CAP before the end of June. He would have been later available to further discuss the terms and conditions of the European trade policy and the establishment of the industry levy. What was out of question for him was the issue of reforming the European institutions, something that, as previously highlighted, should have come after 1970.

On June 30th, the French Foreign Minister Couve de Mourville, following the Élysée instructions, decided to interrupt the meeting and dismissed the Council reunion, as a consequence of the impossibility for the Six to establish precise regulations over the financing of the Common Agricultural Policy. Of course, every further agreement over the institutional reform was not possible anymore.

France's decision to withdraw from the Council meeting had a huge resonance in the continent which however, did not perceive the consequences this move would bring about.

To the French government declaration followed the Élysée decision, on July 6th to recall to Paris its permanent representative at the ECC Boegner. The previous day Paris asked its ministers and technocrats to abstain in the Community works.

This new French attitude towards the E.E.C. is generally considered as the beginning of the Empty Chair crisis. Nonetheless, France representatives to the European institutions were still present and their protest was only limited to their abstention from voting.

Shortly, the conditions imposed by the French government for the country's renewed participation in the Economic Community were the agreement over the CAP financing and the consequently reduction of power of the European Commission and, last but not least, the preservation of the unanimity voting within the European Council of Ministers.

Facing France harsh positions regarding of his proposals, Hallstein was forced to modify the initial plan. He submitted an alternative document, in the shape of a *memorandum*, to the Council at the end of July.

However Hallstein's *ouverture* came however too late. Despite the *memorandum* was a clear effort to accommodate France instances over the Common Agricultural Policy, what the President of the Commission did not realized was that France position was no longer justified in light of the CAP. The country initiated a personal battle against the European Commission itself and against the desired change in the voting procedure inside the Council. France proved to be irremovable on these two issues and even asked for the modification of the European Economic Community Treaty. Its willingness was to avoid any possible interference of the Community inside those domains on which only France was called to decide upon.

After the French Prime Minister Pompidou released its interview, position that was enormously supported by the majority of Gaullists, all eyes were set on de Gaulle. The General had in fact preferred to remain silent throughout the first phase of the crisis. Nonetheless, he finally clarified his position in a speech given in September. France had no intention to back off and continued to adhere to its intransigent position.

The crisis was finally solved in 1966 with the Luxembourg compromise, a document that proved France's ability to once again partially impose its conditions.

The text was divided in two parts: the first was entirely devoted to the definition of the qualified majority voting procedure while instead the second one, concerned the interaction modalities of the Council and the Commission.

France was able to retain its veto power in the case other states would have taken decisions deemed to interfere within the country's domestic affairs.

It was mainly thanks to the obstructionist line that led to the Empty Chair crisis that de Gaulle was finally able to impose his own view. Despite in fact, the Luxembourg compromise represented only a partial victory, since the unanimity procedure would have been applied only in the case of vital interests at stake, the General considered it as an essential point, that would have impeded the supranational drift of the Community. Cooperation would have been basically reduced to the inter-state level.

What de Gaulle was able to obtain was also the Common Agricultural Policy to be financed by national states until 1970. The Commission own resources debate was postponed to that date. Furthermore, the Common agricultural market would have started to be working by July 1st 1968.

Despite its extraordinary nature, the “Luxembourg compromise” can be considered as a *constat des desaccords*, that is to say an agreement over the disagreement. The document finally marked an end to the Empty Chair crisis and made finally possible for the Community to proceed with its normal works. For the General, as already stated, it represented a sort of victory, but on the other hand, the French statesman was not able to fully impose his conditions. No Treaty revision was made, as instead envisaged by the General. Overall, what emerged from the Luxembourg meetings was the reiteration of the intangibility of nation states interest and the veto power every single member state had. National sovereignty stood once again at the core of the integration process and the compromise represented, in this sense, a significant loss for the President of the Commission Hallstein. What is important to highlight is that after the agreement over the voting procedure, the qualified majority was rarely used, as there was the constant fear of new crises in the Community.

De Gaulle’s last moves inside the European framework were his opposition to Hallstein re-election, substituted by Rey on July 1967 and the General second veto to the UK joining the Community, in 1967. This time, the French rejection was supported by the British precarious economic situation. The veto can be so considered as a mere act of caution. The pound devaluation, to which the country was forced to in 1967, would have had, according to de Gaulle, economic repercussions also on the other member states in case the UK would have entered the Community.

Another battlefield to which the General devoted his last years of presidency was the blockade of any further enlargement of the European Parliament competences. The Community should have waited until de Gaulle exit from the political scene, to experience direct parliamentary elections.

In the meanwhile, the overall consensus toward the General began to decline. As previously stated, the 1965 presidential elections, despite enshrining his victory, witnessed a considerable decrease of popular support. Furthermore, the political elections, held on March 1967, confirmed this declining trend, although the Gaullist party obtained once again the majority of votes.

The situation collapsed with the outbreak of the 1968 student protests. The “French May” as the period became generally known, erupted out of nothing. The protest, which involved at first students and included later also the French Communist Party and the *Confédération générale du travail*, basically asked for a radical change in the political and social life scenario. Influenced by the main international events, such as the Vietnam War, the Chinese “Cultural Revolution” and the Prague Spring, French

people aimed at the complete upheaval of the old establishment, accused to be no longer representative.

De Gaulle attitude toward the protest has been frequently under discussion. By May 14th, a day after the massive demonstration in *Place Denfert-Rocherau*, he left for Romania where he had planned a state visit, leaving his Prime Minister Pompidou solving the troubled issue. The contingencies would have required him to remain in France, but he had however misjudged the crisis that was about to shake to world.

Few days later in a television broadcasting speech, he proved once again to not have well comprehended the real dimension of the protests. He proposed a further strengthening of presidential powers by the means of a referendum. This move would have, according to him, responded to that student demand of *participation* at the basis of the protest.

As the protests harshened, the General demonstrated to not possess the same skills in solving crisis, as he showed previously. He disappeared on May 29th and returned to Paris the day after when he presided the Council of Ministers to be held later that afternoon, in which it was decided to dissolve the National Assembly. Later that day he addressed the nation and his speech was followed by a well-organized and orderly pro-Gaullist demonstration that aimed at comparing it to those violent and confusing proper of the student movements.

The referendum de Gaulle had planned was finally held on April 1969. It asked French people to approve a progressive decentralization in the government and would also have implied some changes in the Senate structures. The referendum was rejected with 52.4 per cent of no, which led to his resignation, announced on April 28th.

Charles de Gaulle died the following year.

