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The Fouchet Plan: De Gaulle's Intergovernmental Design for Europe

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The Fouchet Plan: De Gaulle's Intergovernmental Design for Europe

Anthony Teasdale

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The Fouchet Plan: De Gaulle's Intergovernmental Design for Europe

Anthony Teasdale*

Abstract

This paper explores the politics of the Fouchet Plan, the unsuccessful initiative by French President Charles de Gaulle in 1961-62 to create a new 'union of states' for foreign-policy and defence cooperation among the six founding members of the European Community. The paper traces the origins of de Gaulle's proposal – which was designed not only to parallel the existing Community, but potentially to subsume it – and analyses the complex and fraught course of the subsequent negotiations, which divided the Six and ended in stalemate. The struggle between intergovernmental and supranational visions of Europe thrown up by the Fouchet Plan represented an early, acute example of the recurrent institutional and political problems involved in developing structures to share sovereignty in areas of power which are central to the claim of larger nations to remain independent states, and it pointed to the limits of integration likely to be confronted by simple replication of the classic 'Community method' in increasingly sensitive areas of policy. Although the dilemma of how to incorporate a significant intergovernmental dimension within the European institutional structure was eventually resolved in the Maastricht Treaty two decades later, the Fouchet dispute had important consequences in the years that followed, notably in hardening de Gaulle's attitude to British membership of the Community and in seriously constraining the dynamic of the integration process more widely.

Keywords: Adenauer, de Gaulle, Spaak, Luns, Fouchet, intergovernmentalism, supranationalism, political union, veto, European Union

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The Fouchet Plan: De Gaulle's Intergovernmental Design for Europe

'L' Europe sera supranationale ou ne sera pas'
Paul-Henri Spaak, January 1962

Introduction

The struggle between supranational and intergovernmental visions of the future of Europe – between concepts of closer cooperation and deeper integration – has been an important and recurrent feature of debate about the potential shape of unity among European states since the Second World War. Nowhere was this contest more dramatic than in the now largely forgotten battle over the Fouchet Plan in 1961-62. This was a major, if unsuccessful, diplomatic initiative by the then French President, Charles de Gaulle, to alter the emerging institutional balance of the European Community away from the supranational model of the Founding Fathers in the 1950s, towards a looser, intergovernmental approach based on cooperation among 'sovereign' nation states. It was the most significant attempt by the General to promote what he called a *Europe des Etats* – and what his first prime minister, Michel Debré, styled a *Europe des patries* – during his decade-long tenure of the French presidency.¹

By proposing to create a new 'union of states' to parallel the existing European Community, in which a foreign-policy and defence dimension would be added

¹ Although de Gaulle claimed at least twice as President that he had never used the phrase *Europe des patries*, preferring instead *Europe des Etats*, it was employed by Michel Debré as early as January 1959 and on several subsequent occasions.

to established European policies, the Fouchet Plan was ostensibly integrationist. It offered to complete some of the unfinished political business of the Founding Fathers, left open by the failure of the European Defence Community (EDC) in 1954, and which the 1957 Treaty of Rome had been careful to avoid. However, by casting this new form of political cooperation in a strictly intergovernmental mould, and then going on to suggest that some existing Community functions might be subsumed within the new intergovernmental union, the Plan raised the spectre of the progressive deconstruction of the supranational character of the EC and the frustration of its federal institutional dynamic.² In the words of Murray Forsyth, the Fouchet Plan 'may be said to represent the nearest approach to the founding text of a classic confederation that has been made in post-war Europe.'³

The deliberate ambiguity of the Gaullist proposal divided advocates of closer European integration, at least initially. Some, such as Jean Monnet, were anxious to exploit the French President's apparent willingness to consolidate the political dimension of the Community, seeing this as an opportunity to build something which would outlast the General, whilst proving to public opinion in the interim that Europe was 'not only economic but political, ... something bigger than any of their countries alone.'⁴ Others, notably the Dutch

² For the purposes of this essay, *federalism* is taken to mean a multi-layered system of government in which the highest level (in this case the EC/EU) enjoys exclusive competence in at least one policy field, and in which some decisions at that level can be taken without the unanimous agreement of all participating states. *Confederalism*, by contrast, is a multi-layered arrangement in which the highest level enjoys exclusive competence in no area, and all decisions at that level have to be taken unanimously. *Supranationalism* is literally a system of decision-taking above the level of the nation state. In the EC/EU context, it is synonymous with federalism, in that it implies an independent centre of authority outside the unanimous control of the governments of the member states. *Intergovernmentalism*, by contrast, is literally a system of decision-making between governments. In the EC/EU context, it implies the absence of an independent centre of authority, with all decisions requiring unanimous approval and being implemented by the states themselves. If the EC had been founded on intergovernmental, rather than supranational, lines, it would have been a confederation.

³ Murray Forsyth, *Unions of States: The Theory and Practice of Confederation* (Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1981), p180.

⁴ Jean Monnet, *Memoirs* (Collins, London, 1978), p437.

and Belgian governments, took the opposite view, expressing increasingly violent objection to what they judged to be an assault on the whole European construction.

To this institutional concern was added a deep fear that de Gaulle would attempt to use any putative European foreign and defence policy to promote the continent's independence from the Atlantic Alliance and US strategic interests. The General's desire to give Europe a stronger, more distinct voice on the international stage was seen, especially by the Dutch and Belgians once again, as part of a wider Gaullist threat to Western stability and security. In their reactions to the Fouchet Plan, institutional differences among the Community's six member states were thus compounded by competing visions of Europe's place in the world. As the French position hardened in the face of growing opposition, and the Dutch and Belgian governments asserted that negotiations should be deferred until pro-Atlanticist Britain had been admitted to the EC, the discussions reached deadlock and were suspended, never to be resumed.

At the time, the failure of the Fouchet Plan was a source of embarrassment for both proponents and opponents of closer European integration. The objective role of the small, pro-European states in frustrating the construction of a limited and imperfect political union was something they preferred to forget. Gradually interpretations coalesced around the integrationist view that the Fouchet Plan was a recidivist proposal which threatened the *acquis communautaire*. The Gaullist initiative became, as the years passed, something of a by-word in Community circles for hostility to unification. It came to be viewed less as a serious proposal for closer cooperation, and more as an elaborate diversion, significant only in offering a foretaste of the kind of diplomatic shock tactics which de Gaulle and his government were to use on European issues in the years ahead.

However, following the relaunch of the European Community in the mid-1980s, pioneered by Jacques Delors as President of the European Commission and culminating in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the competing merits of 'supranationalism versus intergovernmentalism' in the construction of Europe came strongly back into focus among both politicians and commentators. Interest began to revive in a whole series of institutional questions that had been prominent in the 1950s and early 1960s, but which often lay dormant during the decades of stasis from 1966 to 1986. The story of the Fouchet Plan - which until then was largely seen as an inconsequential cul-de-sac of post-war history, of greater interest to students of Gaullism than to thinkers about European integration - gradually acquired renewed relevance. The failure of de Gaulle's initiative could now be seen as an early, acute example of the recurrent institutional and political problems involved in designing structures to share sovereignty in the foreign policy and defence fields - areas of power central to the claim of larger nations to remain independent states. It also pointed to the limits of integration likely to be confronted by simple replication of the classic 'Community method' in increasingly sensitive areas of policy. The acceptance of intergovernmental pillars for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) in the Maastricht Treaty, signed three decades after the collapse of the Fouchet negotiations, led to the latter re-entering European political consciousness, with a renewed tolerance in certain quarters for the logic of de Gaulle's institutional design.

Writing in *Le Figaro* in January 1995, for example, de Gaulle's former finance minister, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, declared that:

With the passage of time, one can see how the rejection of the Fouchet Plan was a serious political error. It is true that the Community would have been endowed with two institutional structures: one federal, to manage external trade and the economy; the

*other intergovernmental, to conduct foreign policy and defence. But the essential unity of these two policies would have been asserted from the early 1960s onwards, instead of having to wait three decades for this to happen. And it would have been done in the compact and homogeneous framework of the then Six member states, guided by a common political will.*⁵

Giscard's revisionist view of the Fouchet Plan reflected the fact that the same central uncertainty characterised both the Fouchet and Maastricht texts: whether closer partnership outside the conventional Community structure threatened supranationalism or was simply a useful complement (and potential precursor) to it. Did intergovernmental cooperation represent the first step towards the deconstruction of the Community – or was it rather a further, if looser, move towards practical integration, which might later be consolidated by formal adoption of the traditional Community structure, if and when all countries were prepared to make that leap?

The dilemma of how to incorporate intergovernmentalism within the evolving European institutional structure, eventually resolved at Maastricht, paralysed integrationists in the 1960s, with the result that little progress was made, in either an intergovernmental or a supranational direction, for many years. As Giscard notes, after the rejection of the General's *démarche*, European unification entered a period of sustained stagnation, in which France, frustrated in its ambitions, turned away from the European project. The advocates of 'ever closer union', in stalling de Gaulle's plans for a confederal 'union of states', almost certainly overestimated the internal dynamic of economic interdependence, which failed to lead of its own accord to closer

⁵ Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, 'Pour une nouvelle Europe' in *Le Figaro*, 10-11 January 1995 (reprinted as a pamphlet, published privately), p10. In 1961-62, as junior and then the full finance minister in the government of prime minister Michel Debré, Giscard was obliged to support the Fouchet Plan publicly. His subsequent strong commitment to European integration, however, renders Giscard's continued public endorsement of the Plan interesting.

political integration on any serious scale, just as they may have exaggerated the strength of de Gaulle to use parallel diplomacy to build a structure beyond their eventual control.

Early Gaullist thinking

‘France cannot be France without greatness’, de Gaulle had written in 1954 on the first page of his memoirs.⁶ Greatness implied a France ‘sovereign, independent and free’, as he declared in the same year, explaining his opposition to the European Defence Community (EDC), which the 120 Gaullist deputies at that time played a central role in defeating on the floor of the French National Assembly.⁷ The EDC envisaged a supranational defence structure for Europe, placed at the disposal of NATO, in which common armed forces would be managed by commissioners reporting to a directly-elected assembly, and subject to the decision-making, both unanimous and by majority vote, of national ministers. Virtually all these features of the EDC were unacceptable to the General. To Gaullism, interdependence could only be admissible on French terms.

⁶ Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre: L'Appel 1940-1942* (Plon, Paris, 1954) p1.

⁷ The European Defence Community (EDC) had been approved, in the original form of the Pleven Plan (named after then French prime minister, René Pleven), by 348 votes to 224 by the National Assembly in October 1950. The EDC Treaty was duly signed in May 1952, under the premiership of conservative Antoine Pinay. By August 1954, however, when the final vote took place on ratification of the treaty, it was rejected by 319 votes to 264 (in a procedural division). This defeat was a result of several factors: the growing strength of Gaullists in the National Assembly (following the June 1951 general election) matched by the continued hostility to the EDC of the Communists; the increasing division of Socialists (by now out of government) and Radicals on Europe; the increasing ambitiousness of the European project, with the parallel drafting of plans for a parallel European Political Community (EPC); the rising tide of popular discontent with French humiliation abroad (in May 1954 Diên Biên Phu had fallen, the Tunisian crisis was sapping French confidence, and the Algerian war was imminent); and the refusal of Radical prime minister Pierre Mendès-France to make ratification of the treaty a matter of confidence for the survival of his two-month old government.

De Gaulle's opposition to the supranationalism of the EDC did not, however, mean that he evidenced no interest at all in European cooperation in foreign policy and defence. It had, he subsequently wrote, been his ambition since 1940 to bring together 'the states which border the Rhine, the Alps and the Pyrenees' as 'one of the three global powers and, if necessary one day, the arbiter between the Soviet and Anglo-Saxon camps' in world politics.⁸ A united, powerful Europe in international affairs had an important place in the General's thinking. Provided it respected the right of states to maintain separate military structures and to exercise an absolute power of veto in decision-making, common action in the fields of foreign policy and defence could prove central to the rebirth of France's international power. Europe might offer a platform on which a nascent France could project an influence beyond its capacity as one state alone, and in which Paris, through clarity of insight and force of purpose, could exercise leadership of other nations, especially West Germany, and act as their spokesman in the world.

As early as 1947, de Gaulle had spoken of the need for what he (mistakenly) styled a 'federation' in Europe, based on the primacy of the sovereign nation state.⁹ In 1950, his long-time confidant, Michel Debré, clarified this notion into one of confederation, prompting the General to declare two years later that 'a European confederation is perhaps the last chance for the West'. At the time of the EDC discussions, the Gaullist leadership elaborated in greater detail their intergovernmental alternative to the supranationalist blueprint of the Six. Debré suggested the foundation of a 'Union of European States', directed by a political council of heads of government, promoting common policies in a

⁸ Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre: Le Salut 1944-1946* (Plon, Paris, 1959), pp179-180.

⁹ De Gaulle's irritation with his own *mis*-description of an intergovernmental Europe as a 'federation' lingered for many years. Having requested Alain Peyrefitte to compile a compendium of all his European speeches since the war with a view to their publication, the General decided in the course of 1960 to abandon the project seemingly because of the embarrassment involved in either including or excluding the reference to a federation. See Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle: La France redevient la France* (Fayard, Paris, 1994), pp64-65.

number of fields, political and economic. In February 1953, de Gaulle drew upon these ideas in asserting his own vision of future European cooperation. 'Instead of an intolerable and impractical fusion,' he told a press conference, Europe should form an 'association' of nations, built in the 'simplest' of institutional forms. This structure would involve 'a periodic and organic council of heads of government', taking 'decisions in the areas of politics, economics, culture and defence; a deliberative assembly; [and] a referendum organised in all the countries, in order to involve the people and base the confederation on the explicit decision of the vast mass of Europeans.'¹⁰

De Gaulle and Debré were whistling in the wind when they expressed such ideas in the early to mid-1950s, even as Gaullist opposition to the EDC destroyed the immediate prospects for anything other than economic integration in Europe, relaunched in 1955 by the Messina conference which led to the 1957 Treaty of Rome. When the General came to power in June 1958, however, the position was very different. Suddenly he could, if he wished, seek to define the parameters of institutional debate across Europe and propose European architecture for the enhancement of French power. This de Gaulle was to do with striking determination in launching the Fouchet Plan discussions, even if he was ultimately unable to persuade sufficient of France's partners to put his intergovernmental design for a political union into effect.¹¹

¹⁰ Quoted in Susanne Bodenheimer, *Political Union: A Microcosm of European Politics 1960-1966* (Council of Europe, *European Aspects*, series C, number 19; Sijthoff, Leyden, 1967), p54.

¹¹ Once he came to power – from June 1958 to January 1959 as prime minister, and thereafter as President of the Republic – de Gaulle was obliged to take some early and important decisions about France's relationship with the new European Community. Although he had refused to endorse the Treaty of Rome during its negotiation and ratification – and indeed his new prime minister, Michel Debré, had violently opposed it – the General chose pragmatic acceptance of the Community. He quickly concluded that France should respect the timetable for the first stage (due to begin in January 1959) of the EC's three-stage transitional period, during which the customs union and common market would be completed. The need to meet this deadline, and the market consequences of failure to do so, were used as a justification for the government's so-called 'Pinay-Rueff' austerity plan of December 1958. As Georges-Henri Soutou has written: 'For the General, the common market was to be an essential component in the economic recovery of France. But at the same time it was understood that the institutional system of the Treaty of Rome should not spill

De Gaulle's 1960 initiative

Despite the immediate and complex challenges of Algeria and domestic constitutional reform, de Gaulle from the start of his presidency attached high priority to forging a more active, confident role for France in international affairs. Indeed he saw that the reassertion of France's global profile would be important in reconciling nationalist opinion at home to decolonisation abroad, especially in Algeria. First and foremost, de Gaulle's preference lay in bilateral diplomacy with the United States to secure Washington's help for French development of nuclear weapons, and with it, the creation a 'nuclear directory' of Western powers at the heart of NATO.¹² When this approach was rebuffed (on the first of several occasions) in the autumn of 1958, he looked to the creation of a political directory of the three largest nations in Europe, excluding the United Kingdom, as a vehicle for magnifying and projecting French power.¹³ When this in turn was frustrated the following year, the General's

over into the political domain.' (Soutou, 'Le général de Gaulle, le plan Fouchet et l'Europe' in *Commentaire*, number 52, winter 1990-91, p759).

¹² On 4-5 July 1958, only five weeks after taking up office, de Gaulle informed Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, whom he met in Paris, that France wished to obtain US technical assistance in the development of nuclear weapons. Dulles replied that such help could only be made available, as it had in the case of the United Kingdom, in return for Paris accepting the deployment of US nuclear weapons on French soil. The General indicated that this was unacceptable.

On 17 September 1958, de Gaulle sent a secret memorandum to President Eisenhower suggesting a radical reform of the NATO system, based on a three-power 'political-military directorate' of the Americans, British and French, established to discuss strategic issues. The Americans and British rejected this initiative out of hand, with Eisenhower replying in writing: 'I must in all frankness say that I see very serious problems' with the French proposals. De Gaulle responded by pushing forward ever more actively with France's development of an independent nuclear deterrent, the existence of which he announced publicly in November 1959, and the first testing of which took place in February 1960. The effect of this nuclear capability would be to complicate US and NATO strategic thinking, by ensuring that France enjoyed the capacity unilaterally to provoke nuclear war with the Soviet Union, whether or not Washington wished it to occur, so undermining the notion of flexible response in the European theatre.

¹³ In August and September 1958, de Gaulle used meetings with Italian prime minister Amintore Fanfani and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of West Germany to float ideas for closer dialogue in the foreign-policy field. In March 1959, de Gaulle proposed to Bonn and Rome that the 'big three' within the EC should concert their foreign policies on a tripartite basis. The Chancellor's response was one of interest without commitment. In a meeting with de Gaulle and Debré, Adenauer caused amusement by taking out of his briefcase a copy of latter's 1953 proposals for a 'Union of European States'. Fanfani was less positive still, saying that Italy could only agree if the Benelux countries were included; the latter then insisted that the United Kingdom would need to be involved in some

thoughts moved towards relaunching the ideas he had expressed in 1953 for some form of 'union of states' to coordinate foreign policy and defence among the six member states of the European Community.

In de Gaulle's mind, these ideas were not exclusive. If the United States was not prepared to reform NATO so that its nuclear powers constituted a governing directory, then a more united European position under French leadership would give Paris greater claim to the privileged status it sought. Likewise, the habit of foreign-policy and defence cooperation among the Six did not preclude, indeed it should make more probable, the emergence of an inner-core group of larger states, in which France was likely to be politically dominant. From de Gaulle's point of view, there was nothing to be lost, and potentially much to be gained, from a stronger European voice in world affairs, provided it did not allow (what he subsequently called) a 'foreign majority' to constrain France's capacity to define its own interests on its own terms. As the historian Georges-Henri Soutou has written: 'De Gaulle's concept of Europe was rather like that of a holding company: France would dominate the Franco-German couple, and through that relationship assure itself of the leadership of Europe. ... [It] could then transform the Atlantic Alliance without actually breaking with the United States.'¹⁴

way. As well as ensuring the participation of Europe's then most powerful international actor, British involvement was seen, especially in The Hague, as a vital guarantee that a commitment to NATO and the Atlantic Alliance would be given primacy in any new European profile on the world stage. As a result, stalemate ensued. Nothing came out of this early Gaullist move, other than a commitment to hold informal quarterly meetings of the six EC foreign ministers to discuss 'international policy' issues of mutual concern. The first such gatherings took place in January and May 1960, just as de Gaulle was preparing his Fouchet initiative, and they continued until April 1962.

¹⁴ Soutou, *Commentaire*, pp759, 766. Soutou goes on to assert: 'De Gaulle understood that the era of "France alone" was over. It was by cooperation among European states that France could re-establish its independence, since it would thus obtain the power-base which was indispensable in the twentieth century, without sacrificing too much of its freedom of decision. ... in the General's eyes, national independence and cooperation between the states of Europe were dialectically linked, especially as he believed that by its very nature Europe was comprised of nation states' (p760).

De Gaulle first gave public expression to his interest as President in forging a limited political union within Europe on 31 May 1960. In a televised address on foreign policy, he declared somewhat vaguely that France's intention was to help build a European 'grouping' which was at once 'political, economic, cultural and human, organised for action, progress and self-defence'. This goal, he asserted, 'which in former times was the dream of the wise and the ambition of the powerful ... seems today to be an indispensable precondition for equilibrium in the world'.

A few months later, on 5 September, de Gaulle gave greater substance to these ideas. At one of his set-piece press conferences in the Elysée Palace, the President declared that 'ensuring regular cooperation between the states of Western Europe is something which France considers desirable, possible and practicable in the political, economic, cultural and defence fields'. (This listing of subjects echoed precisely his pronouncement of 1953). To promote this, he proposed 'regular organised concertation between governments', based on a new intergovernmental structure, meeting at the level of heads of government and foreign ministers, answerable to an assembly of national parliamentarians, and enjoying public endorsement by means of a 'solemn European referendum' to give this undertaking 'the popular support and participation which is essential to it'. The emphasis on strong ministerial or executive authority based on a direct mandate from the electorate – one of the most important features of Gaullism and one which the President had already succeeded in embodying in the new Fifth Republic – would now be replicated at European level. The implication was that this structure would operate separate from, but in parallel to, the existing EC, based on the Treaties of Paris and Rome.

De Gaulle's decision to come forward publicly in September 1960 with detailed suggestions for closer political and defence cooperation in Europe flowed

directly from a successful bilateral discussion which he had held with Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of West Germany earlier in the summer. At this meeting, hosted by the President at Rambouillet on 29-30 July, 'France put all her cards on the table', as his foreign minister, Maurice Couve de Murville, later wrote.¹⁵ De Gaulle explained to Adenauer the political union scheme which he had in mind and invited his response. The Chancellor reacted broadly positively, expressing serious reservations only about the idea of a Europe-wide referendum (since plebiscites were debarred under the German constitution) and the project's potential implications for the coherence of NATO.

Given Adenauer's past reservations about both de Gaulle's development of a nuclear deterrent and his suggestion that a nuclear directory should control NATO, this reaction was both somewhat surprising and extremely encouraging. The General judged from it that the Chancellor would be prepared to back his initiative against the natural caution of many of his Bonn advisers, whether they were sceptics of intergovernmentalism or advocates of an Atlanticist, American-led Europe – most notably his free-market finance minister, Ludwig Erhard. Adenauer, it seems, was keen that the French President should not be rebuffed, believed that institutional forms were less important than policy substance in foreign-policy cooperation, and felt that so long as de Gaulle understood that NATO could not be prejudiced, a deal which would push Europe towards closer integration was indeed possible.¹⁶

¹⁵ Maurice Couve de Murville, *Une politique étrangère 1958-1969* (Plon, Paris, 1971), p244.

¹⁶ Concern among Adenauer's advisers about the implications of the Rambouillet discussions was sufficiently great for junior foreign minister (state secretary) Hilger van Scherpenberg to be dispatched to Paris in order to obtain further insight and reassurance concerning the French proposals. The Chancellor subsequently wrote a letter to de Gaulle setting out his formal position. In his memoirs, Adenauer talks defensively of there having been 'obvious misunderstandings' about what had been agreed between the two principals at their Rambouillet meeting in July (Konrad Adenauer, *Mémoires 1956-1963* (Hachette, Paris, 1967), p256).

De Gaulle moved quickly to capitalise on the agreement in principle which Adenauer had given to his proposals at Rambouillet. He minuted Couve de Murville on 1 August: 'we must strike whilst the iron is hot in organising Europe, and this iron is hot'.¹⁷ A plan of action was evolved. First, selected journalists were alerted by the government to the fact that a Franco-German agreement on foreign-policy and defence cooperation in Europe might well be in the offing, so limiting the political leverage of potential critics in Bonn. Second, the General extended an invitation to other EC heads of government to visit Paris to discuss 'political Europe'. He entertained the Dutch and Italian prime ministers in late August and early September, and following his press conference on 5 September, he saw the Belgian and Luxembourg premiers as well. Third, Gaullist deputy Alain Peyrefitte (the President's future minister for information) was tasked with writing a series of four articles for *Le Monde*, setting out the case for creating an intergovernmental political union in Europe. Couched in highly conciliatory terms, these articles appeared on 14-17 September, and were closely analysed in other European capitals. Lastly, prime minister Michel Debré was despatched to Bonn on 7 October to reconfirm German support for the President's overall design.

Paris summit: February 1961

From the outset of this exercise, de Gaulle was convinced that the best way of building momentum for his 'union of states' would be to convene the first-ever summit meeting of Community heads of government. This gathering would serve a dual purpose: at the very least, it could establish a precedent for future meetings of this kind – which he hoped would form the core of evolving

¹⁷ Charles de Gaulle, *Lettres, Notes et Carnets: juin 1958-décembre 1960* (Plon, Paris, 1980), p383.

intergovernmental cooperation – and, more substantively, it might sanction actual negotiations to draft a new treaty text. The President had mentioned the idea of holding a summit to Adenauer at Rambouillet, but nothing much had followed. Now in October, Debré reiterated this suggestion, in the hope of agreeing a date. After brief hesitation and even though de Gaulle's public initiatives had irritated him, the Chancellor accepted the French proposal, again in defiance of orthodox opinion in Bonn, with the meeting initially scheduled for 5-6 December in Paris.¹⁸

As the date approached, the Adenauer entourage expressed growing reticence about the proposed meeting, not least because it would coincide with the interregnum between the election and inauguration of Eisenhower's successor as US President, so offering the prospect of discomfiture in Washington about the future direction of European policy. Their influence, however, was partly offset by intense lobbying for the summit by Jean Monnet, who wrote to Adenauer on 21 November, strongly supporting de Gaulle's initiative. As it happened, Adenauer fell ill in December, and the summit had to be deferred until January, and then February, the following year. This delay gave the General a useful breathing space. In the interim he was to secure massive public endorsement for Algerian independence in a high-risk referendum which greatly increased his political authority, both in France and abroad.

The first summit of heads of state and government of the European Communities was duly hosted by de Gaulle – the only executive head of state among the Six – in Paris, at the Quai d'Orsay, on 10-11 February 1961. The day before the meeting, de Gaulle and Adenauer met bilaterally and decided to

¹⁸ Adenauer's ambivalence was reflected in his emphasis to Debré that any future discussions on political union should be pursued through both 'institutions and governments' – implying a twin-track negotiation involving existing Community structures and a new intergovernmental forum working in tandem – on the basis that 'existing possibilities must also be exhausted.' Cited in Jeffrey W. Vanke, 'An Impossible Union: Dutch Objections to the Fouchet Plan: 1959-62', *Cold War History*, Volume 2, Number 1, October 2001, p100.

recommend to the four other leaders that they commit themselves to holding regular summits in the future. This was a major diplomatic breakthrough for the General. During the meeting itself, however, agreement proved more elusive. The Netherlands refused to sanction such an important development without a full discussion of its mechanics and implications. They were prepared, however, to accept de Gaulle's fall-back position: the creation of a special 'committee of representatives from the six governments', under French chairmanship, to draw up 'concrete proposals' for the holding of regular meetings of heads of state and government and foreign ministers, and to 'seek the methods by which closer political cooperation could be organised'. Although this mandate was more modest than de Gaulle might have hoped, it did at least launch negotiations towards the French goal.

The new group created by the Paris summit, which became known as the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Union, would be free to review a range of initiatives to strengthen foreign-policy coordination and to suggest institutional means to that end – whether by improved working methods within the existing Treaty of Rome, by formal amendments to that treaty, or by drafting a new, separate treaty text, as the French would ideally prefer. The group would report in time for a second summit meeting, to be held in the early summer. Although not formally constituted as an Intergovernmental Conference under Article 236 EEC, the intergovernmental committee would in effect perform the same role. The European Commission and European Parliament were not invited to observe or participate in its deliberations. This was to be an entirely diplomatic negotiation among states.

Institutional concerns

France's five EC partners were naturally cautious about de Gaulle's motives in proposing regular heads of government meetings and political union negotiations, for both institutional and foreign-policy reasons.

Since acceding to power in June 1958, only five months after the Treaty of Rome (for which he had no sympathy) came into effect, the General had consistently stressed his essentially intergovernmental, rather than supranational, concept of Europe. In his May 1960 speech, for example, he had talked of the Community following the path of 'an organised cooperation between states, which might one day evolve into an impressive confederation'. Such a confederation, in which the central authority would have no binding power over its constituent parts, was in striking contrast to the explicitly federal vision of Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, René Pleven and so many of de Gaulle's Fourth Republic predecessors. Unlike them, the General believed that an ambitious, ostensibly economic Europe, administered by technocrats, and enjoying supranational powers, would represent an unacceptable challenge to the sovereign authority of nation states endowed with direct democratic legitimacy.

Instead, as he told his September 1960 press conference, Europe's nation states were 'the only realities upon which one can build', unlike 'vaguely extra-national bodies' – such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, or indeed a Council of Ministers acting by qualified majority vote – 'which do not and cannot have ... any political authority'. He went on: 'It is an illusion to believe that one could build something capable of effective action, which would be approved by the people, above and beyond the nation state'. Any other approach would be 'to indulge in fantasy'.

The leadership of the five other EC member states eschewed this theologically intergovernmental approach, preferring either pragmatic sovereignty-sharing on a sectoral basis (broadly the German and Italian position), or a principled dissolution of national power into a wider European entity (broadly the Benelux approach). There was natural concern, admittedly in varying degrees, about whether de Gaulle would attempt to use his initiative to alter radically the emerging pattern of European integration. The emphasis upon the role of heads of government, in particular, threatened to create a power-centre with greater authority than the European Commission, whose political independence and supranational dynamism could be prejudiced. Establishing the precedent of intergovernmental cooperation, moreover, might freeze the existing EC at its present, early stage of evolution, without much prospect of future ‘federalising’ developments, such as extensions of majority voting or additional powers for the European Parliament. The larger states – West Germany and Italy – had least to fear in practice from the General’s insistence on intergovernmentalism, even if they had reservations of principle. The smaller states had most to lose over the longer run. The Dutch expressed outright hostility from the start; the Belgians joined them at a later stage.¹⁹

There is little doubt in fact that the fears of de Gaulle’s critics were well founded, in so far as he did intend his initiative to halt, or at least contain, the forward march of the Community institutions.²⁰ In a confidential manuscript

¹⁹ For a detailed analysis of thinking in The Hague throughout the political union discussions, see Vanke, *op cit*, pp95-112.

²⁰ Andrew Moravcsik has argued that de Gaulle’s advocacy of political union was in effect a diversionary tactic, designed to bolster and project his European credentials, whilst distracting attention from his key objective, which was the launch and deepening of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), whilst conveniently making it more difficult for Britain to join the Community. He claims that ‘failed domestic reform of agriculture’, combined with ‘relentless pressure from particularistic domestic interests’ had forced the General to conclude that ‘the only enduring solution’ was ‘to dispose of French agricultural surpluses’ within ‘a preferential and extremely protected European market’. In his view, this agricultural imperative, together with a search for preferential ‘commercial advantages’ for French industry more generally, constitutes ‘a predominant influence on and sufficient explanation of French policy towards the EEC under de Gaulle’, rather than the geopolitical motives or ‘distinctive political ideology’ more usually cited.

note on 'the organisation of Europe' handed to Adenauer at their Rambouillet meeting of July 1960 – a text deemed by Georges-Henri Soutou to be 'the most authoritative statement of his thinking'²¹ – the General had gone so far as to argue that the 'supranational structures established among the Six, which are tending inevitably and abusively to become irresponsible super-states' should be 'subordinated to governments' and confined to routine technical tasks determined by the Council of Ministers.²² Whilst de Gaulle and his ministers were careful to avoid employing such stark language in public – or indeed with interlocutors other than Adenauer – privately they were working on the basis that political union would, in the General's own words, 'not only be distinct from' the EC institutions, but 'hover over them with a view to bringing them under effective control'.²³

(This view is presented in his articles, 'De Gaulle between Grain and Grandeur: The Political Economy of French EC Policy 1958-70', Parts 1 and 2, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Volume 2, Numbers 2 and 3, Spring and Fall 2000, pp3-43 and pp4-68, and his earlier book, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (Routledge, London, 1998)). Moravcsik's view has found little support among other academics and commentators. As Robert Lieshout, Mathieu Segers and Anna van de Vleuten noted drily in one response: 'If commercial interests are indeed sufficient to explain French European policy, then it would not have mattered whether Charles de Gaulle or, say, Jean Monnet had been the first president of the Fifth Republic. This notion leaves scant room for nuance'. ('De Gaulle, Moravcsik, and *The Choice for Europe*: Soft Sources, Weak Evidence', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Volume 6, Number 4, Fall 2004, p116). Most likely, de Gaulle saw in the Community, whose supranational logic and pretensions he deeply distrusted, as a fortuitous opportunity to 'mutualise' the problem of France's unreformed agricultural sector by addressing it in the context of the new Community's putative CAP and then presented this concession to 'deep integration' as evidence of his broader European commitment. Moravcsik, for his part, seems to be attempting to project backwards into the 1960s, the thesis he developed to explain the negotiation of the Single European Act (SEA) in the 1980s, whereby major leaps in European integration can best be explained as episodes in which national leaders choose to pool sovereignty because it corresponds with their domestic economic interests.

²¹ Soutou, *Commentaire*, pp759-760.

²² De Gaulle, *LNC: 1958-60*, p382. The German Chancellor, for his part, seems either to have regarded de Gaulle's attack on the EC as a matter of political hyperbole or actually to have agreed with him. In his memoirs, Adenauer echoes the General's words without embarrassment in this striking passage: 'As to the [EC and Euratom], de Gaulle and I were agreed that we should not allow them to develop into super-states, given that they had no formal responsibilities. They had to be confined to their role of giving technical advice.' Adenauer could hardly be accused of displaying an excess of supranational zeal. (Adenauer, *op cit*, p254).

²³ Charles de Gaulle, *Lettres, Notes et Carnets: janvier 1961-décembre 1963* (Plon, Paris, 1980), p76. When Michel Debré visited Bonn in October 1960, for conversations which were bound to be transcribed by and circulated in detail among German officials, de Gaulle cautioned his prime minister in advance: 'Let's be careful not to throw oil on the fire which we have started. For the moment, we should confine it to the hearth, rather than try to set everything ablaze. ... we should not give the impression of attacking [the various Communities] directly, or indeed the treaties on

Foreign policy concerns

In addition to their institutional worries, France's partners harboured concerns, again to varying degrees, about de Gaulle's aspirations to give Europe greater independence in international affairs. These reservations had already surfaced over the previous two years, most notably in reactions to the French President's abortive suggestion in 1959 that there should be a tripartite political directorate at the heart of the Community. The concrete negotiations now sanctioned by the Paris summit of February 1961 were to bring to the fore central questions posed but left unanswered then. Most fundamentally, would a more coherent European voice strengthen the West or simply offer a vehicle for French-led disengagement? Was greater coordination of European foreign policy and defence actually in Europe's own best interest? If so, should UK membership be a formal precondition for deeper political cooperation, and should a firm commitment to NATO be its unequivocal foundation? Neither of the latter conditions were likely to appeal to de Gaulle.

As Miriam Camps wrote soon after: '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.'²⁴ The potential advantages of common European positions were widely understood, on both sides of the Atlantic. Improved coordination in the foreign-policy and defence spheres, on the right terms,

which they are founded. If we succeed in giving birth to a Europe of cooperating states, the Communities will ipso facto be consigned to their proper place. It is only if we do not succeed in creating political Europe that we would have to challenge directly the first effects of integration.' (De Gaulle, *LNC: 1958-60*, p399).

²⁴ Miriam Camps, *Britain and the European Community 1955-63* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1964), p307.

would be a prize worth securing. On the wrong terms, however, it could be dangerous, especially at a time of growing superpower confrontation.²⁵

If it was the French President's ambition to forge a Europe in which Paris exploited German ambivalence or passivity to define a path separate from that of the United States, preferably without British interference, then his initiative would certainly point in the wrong direction. But at the time nobody could be entirely certain what de Gaulle intended the substance of a European foreign policy to be, or whether he would have much practical chance of imposing it on others. The General was guarded in his public language about European independence, although again in his confidential note to Adenauer at Rambouillet, he was more explicit. He wanted 'to put an end to the American "integration" [of Europe] which the Atlantic Alliance currently entails, and which contradicts the existence of a Europe with its own personality and responsibility in international affairs.' Instead, Europe should be 'organised by itself and for itself', as a 'real entity' on the world stage.²⁶

The Germans reacted ambiguously to the awkward position in which de Gaulle's initiative put them, with Adenauer and some of his Bonn advisers seeming to take different views. The Chancellor believed he could use a Franco-German partnership at the core of a stronger Europe as a means to recover German confidence in foreign affairs, and that he could do this without jeopardising the US commitment to Europe. He believed that the implications of de Gaulle's ideas for European independence could and would be limited by the five other partners concerting against any French excess. In his memoirs,

²⁵ The backdrop of the Fouchet negotiations was one of constantly rising tension in the international arena. A few months in 1961 saw President Kennedy's commitment in his inauguration speech to 'pay any price' in defending freedom, his unsuccessful Bay of Pigs operation in Cuba, his proposal for the amalgamation of NATO nuclear forces (including British and French weapons), the success of the Soviet Union in putting a man in space, and Moscow's decision to construct the Berlin Wall. This process eventually reached its peak in October the following year, with the Cuban missile crisis, which brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

²⁶ De Gaulle, *LNC: 1958-60*, p382.

the Chancellor says that 'I too thought it was necessary for Europe to stand on its own feet. However, the transition would be difficult. It had to be done in such a way that the Soviet Union could not think that the West was disuniting, ... [or] that would reinforce isolationism in the United States.' Like de Gaulle, Adenauer accepted that 'one could not regard America as committed forever to the idea that defending Europe was necessary'. As a result, 'Europe should not fall into a position of being entirely dependent on America' for its defence.²⁷

Many of Adenauer's advisers tended to a more conventional view. They emphasised the risks of US decoupling for West Germany's capacity to defend its eastern frontier and West Berlin, and were anxious about the potential dominance of France in a defence union in which it might be the only nuclear power. At the same time, however, they did not wish to disappoint Paris to the extent of undermining Franco-German relations and were concerned about the damaging effect on future European integration of any rebuff to de Gaulle's political union plans. At its core, the German government was thus incapable of deciding whether, in the final analysis, it wanted the French initiative to succeed or not. The Chancellor said 'yes, but', and those around him 'no, however'. The message from Bonn was to prove reactive, rather than proactive, throughout the negotiations which followed.

The Italians also proved ambivalent. They welcomed the potential opportunity for Rome to play an enhanced diplomatic role in international affairs through greater political cooperation – and to some degree act as honest broker (as they were to do at several points in the Fouchet discussions) – but they feared that any anti-American tendency in European foreign policy would be against their interests. The Italian response was both hopeful and circumspect at the same time. It thus fell to the small states – at first the Netherlands and then Belgium

²⁷ Adenauer, *op cit*, p252.

too – to express unequivocal hostility to the international implications of de Gaulle's initiative, echoing their deep concerns about its likely institutional effects.

Initial discussions

In retrospect, at least, it is clear that, as the intergovernmental committee set up by the Paris summit began its work, there was little common understanding of what closer foreign-policy and defence cooperation in Europe might mean, and little consensus on the best practical route to attain it. Was a common foreign and defence policy meant simply to be an additional, optional mechanism, to be employed as and when governments saw it as useful? Or was it intended from the start to replace national policies on a binding basis, with the systematic elaboration of common positions on all the principal issues? The answer to neither question was clear, compounding with confusion the already-evident ideological differences between states about whether, institutionally, such cooperation should be founded on a supranational or intergovernmental design, and whether, substantively, it was intended to (or would in practice) undermine the Atlantic Alliance.

As a result, heads of government sanctioned and set in train a negotiation which lacked any prior agreement, even in outline form, on what sort of political union Europe actually needed. Perhaps crucially, the common ground between de Gaulle and Adenauer was insufficiently firm for a joint Franco-German position to be asserted, of the kind which in turn would carry the other four EC states before it. Equally, little serious effort was made to discuss the plans in advance and in detail with Italy and the Benelux states, and to try realistically to accommodate such reservations, institutional or political, as they

might express. Instead these reservations were to assert themselves at the negotiating table itself.

De Gaulle's hope was that, as discussions proceeded, his partners would wish to grab the opportunity of founding a new form of political cooperation, even if its exact format was not the one they would ideally have preferred and its policy consequences were uncertain. For his part, Adenauer assumed that, as the negotiations unfolded, the French would prove increasingly pragmatic and inclined to compromise. Both Paris and Bonn supposed that, faced with any prospect of failure, it was more likely than not that a deal would eventually be struck. In fact, as discussions continued, the opposite occurred, with positions hardening on both sides. Jean Monnet was probably right when he later wrote that 'failure was implicit, from the beginning of the talks, in the way they were undertaken. If any grand design existed [on the part of government leaders], it certainly had no time to take shape: instead, the six countries plunged right away into a defensive quest for reciprocal concessions.'²⁸

The Intergovernmental Committee on Political Union met between March 1961 and April 1962 under the chairmanship (for all but the last four weeks of its thirteen-month life) of Christian Fouchet, French ambassador to Denmark. A former Gaullist deputy and subsequently education and interior minister under de Gaulle, Fouchet was strictly speaking designated as the French representative on the committee. At the group's first meeting – held at the Hotel Majestic in Paris on 16 March – the representatives of the five other member states, all from their respective foreign ministries, chose him as their chairman, in accordance with the prior agreement of the Paris summit.²⁹ The committee met on seven occasions between March and June 1961, in the hope

²⁸ Monnet, *op cit*, p438.

²⁹ The members of the Fouchet committee were, in addition to Christian Fouchet: Attilio Cattani (Italy), Baron Holvoet (Belgium), initially Max Ophuels and then Josef Jansen (West Germany), Pierre Pescatore (Luxembourg), and Baron de Vos van Steenwijk (the Netherlands).

of making progress in time for the second meeting of heads of government, due to be held in Bonn during the early summer.

During these initial discussions, the German, Italian and Luxembourg governments proved broadly, if cautiously, supportive of the French *démarche*, with Belgium remaining neutral. They could agree that regular summit meetings of heads of government should act as the focal point of closer foreign-policy and defence cooperation, so long as the existing, separate role of the Community institutions was not threatened and the position of NATO was not jeopardised. From the start, however, the government of the Netherlands reiterated the strong opposition it had expressed at the Paris summit. The Dutch representative, with the full backing of foreign minister Joseph Luns, argued that any moves towards closer foreign-policy cooperation within Europe should, as a matter of principle, be firmly rooted in existing Community structures, and would also need to be underpinned by a clear and unequivocal commitment to the Atlantic Alliance. The best guarantee of the latter would be for negotiations to await British membership of the Community, an application for which seemed imminent. For the Dutch, building 'political Europe' in any form was less important than sustaining US leadership of Europe, which might be threatened by the emergence of a separate European identity in external affairs.³⁰

³⁰ See Vanke, *op cit*, pp97-99. On the institutional front, at least, the Dutch position was somewhat ironic, given that Britain had traditionally found intergovernmental, rather than supranational, structures of European cooperation much more appealing, from the Council of Europe through to EFTA. It was not at all clear that London regarded the Dutch insistence on conventional EC-based decision-making in the foreign-policy and defence field as at all preferable to the Gaullist notion of loosely cooperating nation states.

On the defence front, the Dutch argued that a pan-European organisation already existed in the form of the Western European Union (WEU). This had the advantages of including the United Kingdom, having a membership congruent with NATO, and holding ministerial meetings which rendered an important component of the French proposals redundant. However, since most other member states recognised the WEU to be largely moribund, there were few takers among the Netherlands' partners for their arguments on this front.

In *European Foreign Policy Cooperation: Interpreting the Institutional Debates from Fouchet to the Single European Act*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Durham, 1992, Kevin

Maurice Couve de Murville subsequently claimed that ‘among five of the states, that is excluding the Netherlands, agreement would have been achieved without difficulty on the main lines of the proposal.’³¹ A broad formula for future progress, endorsed by all representatives except the Dutch, proposed thrice-yearly meetings of heads of government to discuss foreign policy. This dialogue would operate outside the EC framework, managed by a rotating presidency determined by the heads of government themselves. A draft report setting out this arrangement was discussed but never formally submitted.³² Instead, the Fouchet committee had to report no agreement when foreign ministers met in Bonn on 5 May to prepare the gathering of heads of government, scheduled to take place in the same city two weeks later (19 May). Faced with the prospect of an embarrassing stand-off, France proposed that the summit be delayed until July. The Dutch readily agreed. De Gaulle visited

Miller argues that the Dutch government’s opposition to the Fouchet proposals was driven overwhelmingly by fear of the potential threat posed to the cohesion of the Atlantic Alliance by de Gaulle’s initiative, rather than by any deep institutional concerns about the form it might take. Miller claims that, when Joseph Luns objected, for example, to the ‘absence of those supranational aspects which provide guarantees for the interests of small countries’, as he did to his national parliament, such a statement was essentially a ‘rhetorical device’ designed to discredit the proposals, which the Netherlands never sought at any stage positively to amend in an integrationist direction (pp37-39 and 290-291).

Miller also argues that the Dutch determination to derail the ‘political Europe’ process was so strong that, believing that the UK application to join the Community was very likely to fail in any case, for other reasons, they deliberately insisted on the precondition of British participation in the talks – what he calls the *préalable anglais* – in order ‘to destroy any possibility of a successful outcome to the Fouchet negotiations; an aim in which they were completely successful.’ (Miller, *op cit*, p52).

³¹ Couve, *op cit*, p363.

³² The Fouchet committee’s draft report ran to fourteen paragraphs and some 1,600 words. It recorded the Dutch government’s inability to endorse any of its central recommendations for fear that ‘the system of European institutions might be compromised by the creation of a political superstructure of an intergovernmental character.’ It also stated, however, that if other delegations persisted in the view that the Six should strengthen foreign-policy and defence cooperation, the Netherlands ‘might perhaps agree to the following compromise: a) the Six should refrain from discussing during their consultations any problems directly connected with the structure or strategy of NATO; [and] b) the Six would undertake to advocate a greater degree of political consultation in the WEU by introducing consultations parallel to those of the Six.’ Subsequently the Dutch retreated from this position, returning to their initial stance that any new European mechanism for foreign-policy or defence cooperation, itself unnecessary, should await British membership of the EC. The report in question is reproduced in a contemporary European Parliament compendium, *Towards Political Union: A Selection of Documents* (EP, Luxembourg, 1964), pp7-9.

Adenauer at his home in Rhoendorf on 20 May in any case, to discuss a situation which both leaders found increasingly frustrating.

Bad Godesberg summit: July 1961

At the Bad Godesberg summit, eventually held on 18 July 1961, the damaging showdown which both the French and (to a lesser extent) the Dutch feared did not in fact occur. Although Joseph Luns took an aggressive stance towards de Gaulle at the meeting, compromise proved possible.³³ An ambiguous text, based on an Italian draft, allowed both Paris and The Hague to claim movement in their respective directions. The outcome was mistakenly hailed by the media as a decisive breakthrough towards closer European integration: 'Political Europe is Born' ran the banner headline of *Le Monde*. In fact, the Bad Godesberg communiqué was to be the only text on political union agreed by the Six during the remaining eight years of de Gaulle's presidency of France. It was a declaration of mixed intentions, nothing more.

On the one hand, the General secured agreement that the Six would henceforth hold regular meetings of their heads of government (something which the Dutch had refused him at the Paris summit in February), that these meetings could discuss any matter (including both defence and Community matters, which the Dutch had opposed), that political cooperation between states would be deepened with a view to 'union', and that this process in time would

³³ Joseph Luns took a more active role than any other foreign minister in discussions at the Paris and Bad Godesberg Summits of heads of government. This was a consequence of the exceptional constitutional weakness of the Dutch prime minister, who is unable to take any foreign-policy initiative without the agreement of his foreign minister. Prime minister Jan de Quay was happy to leave the task of confronting de Gaulle to Luns on all occasions. De Gaulle's contempt for Luns is captured in his remark to Alain Peyrefitte, in January 1960, that the Dutch foreign minister 'wanted to build Europe on condition that he was the Trojan horse inside it operating for the Anglo-Saxons' (Peyrefitte, *op cit*, p61).

‘ultimately make it possible to embody in institutions the work undertaken’ in the foreign-policy sphere. On the other hand, the summit also expressed the desire to root political union in a strong Atlantic Alliance, to allow ‘the accession to the EC of other European states’, and to ‘study’ some of the institutional reform ideas of the European Parliament (including implicitly the direct election of the Strasbourg assembly and the merger of the executives of the three existing European Communities, as long advocated by strong pro-Europeans). These latter propositions gave comfort to the Dutch, with the second signalling a green light for Britain to submit its application to join the EC.

The Fouchet committee, for its part, had its mandate renewed by the Bad Godesberg summit. It was now charged with devising and submitting ‘proposals on the means which will enable as soon as possible a statutory character to be given to the union of [the] peoples’ of Europe. This delphic phraseology appeared to commit Community leaders to agree concrete proposals for cooperation in new areas, and then codify them in law, either through a new treaty or changes to the existing treaty – without (once again) requiring any prior agreement on their substance. Overall, the summit communiqué – ‘the most skilful and acrobatic compromise ever reached’ between Gaullist and non-Gaullist views of Europe, as one commentator has put it³⁴ – gave further impetus to the Fouchet negotiations, raising high expectations, without providing any serious help in answering the really hard questions which remained.

³⁴ Alessandro Silj, *Europe’s Political Puzzle: A Study of the Fouchet Negotiations and the 1963 Veto* (Occasional Paper No 17; Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, Cambridge, 1967), p11.

First Fouchet Plan: November 1961

Negotiations within the Fouchet committee resumed in September 1961, with a renewed sense of optimism. It was hoped that, if agreement could be reached during the autumn, a substantive document could be submitted to a third summit, to be held perhaps in Rome towards the end of the year. Whilst strictly speaking the Fouchet committee had not been 'mandated to decide upon a treaty text ... for formal adoption by [such] a summit', as de Gaulle subsequently claimed in his memoirs,³⁵ there was a widespread belief that this would be possible. Papers were received from the German, Italian, Belgian and Luxembourg governments. The first two accepted de Gaulle's logic of an intergovernmental structure for a future union; the latter two preferred a 'political community' to mirror the EC, based on an independent executive commission. These papers were general in character, avoiding specific treaty language. France decided to take the initiative by tabling a formal draft treaty for the committee to examine in detail. From the moment this text appeared, it became the basis for discussion. 'Only the Dutch made no written contribution,' as Irving Destler has observed, 'being unwilling thus to commit themselves to a positive outcome of the negotiation.'³⁶

Drawn up by the foreign ministry in Paris, submitted informally on 19 October and formally on 2 November, and now known as the first Fouchet Plan, the French document ran to 18 articles and some 1,500 words. This 'draft treaty for the establishment of a political union' envisaged the creation of a 'union of states, hereafter called the Union', which, operating in parallel to the existing EC, would adopt a 'common foreign policy', a 'common defence policy', and policies for 'close cooperation between member states in science and culture'.

³⁵ Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'Espoir: Le Renouveau 1958-1962* (Plon, Paris, 1970), pp208-209.

³⁶ Irving Destler, *Political Union in Europe 1960-62* (unpublished thesis; Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, 1964), p48.

The content or range of these policies was left open, although it was acknowledged that the Union's defence policy would be conducted 'in cooperation with other free nations', tacitly accepting the importance of NATO.

Most of the draft treaty was devoted to institutions. The Union would be governed by a Council representing national governments, all of whose decisions would be taken unanimously. Abstention of up to two states would not prevent a decision being taken, and decisions would only be binding upon those participating in them. The Council would meet every four months at the level of heads of government, and at least once in the intervening period at the level of foreign ministers. Each meeting of heads of government would elect a President from among their number, who would hold office for a two-month period either side of the next meeting. The Council would report annually to the existing European Parliament (of appointed national parliamentarians), which might address oral and written questions to it at any time. The Council would be serviced by a new body, the European Political Commission, to be based in Paris and composed of senior officials on secondment from domestic foreign ministries. The existing Brussels-based European Commission would be by-passed for this purpose. The activities of the Union would be financed by direct contributions from the member states.

The draft treaty contained provisions for a 'general review' of its operation three years after entering force. The purpose would be the 'the gradual establishment of an organisation centralising, within the union, the European Communities'. This phrase was ambiguous, in that it might promise either further intergovernmentalism – by attempting to merge the three existing Communities under the Union's control – or alternatively progressive 'communautisation' – by suggesting that the separate, parallel pillars of the Union and EC need not be permanent, with the terms and conditions of their amalgamation (and the Union's operating procedures) open to renegotiation at

a later date. Other member states might calculate that, given de Gaulle's age (71 in 1961) and the uncertain political situation in France (with the Algerian war and absence of a parliamentary majority making it increasingly necessary to govern by referendum), there was a fair chance that the current French President would no longer be in power by the time the three-year review took place (in 1965 at the earliest). As Couve de Murville later wrote, somewhat mischievously: 'Since nothing else was possible, why not welcome proposals which would at least set Europe on a political path? One could always look at them again later, and in any case de Gaulle would not last forever.'³⁷

Hardening opposition

The immediate reaction of France's partners to the first Fouchet Plan was mixed. Three countries – West Germany, Italy and Luxembourg – suggested they could do business on the basis of the French text, whilst seeking additional guarantees in respect of the importance of NATO and the integrity of the existing EC. The French in return implied that movement on these points might well prove possible, with a tacit commitment to try to amend their proposal accordingly. The Netherlands, by contrast, said the whole proposal was unacceptable. Belgium, for the first time, moved from the neutral camp into a position of opposition. This shift caused widespread surprise and was to prove of major importance.

Paul-Henri Spaak, who had recently returned to the post of Belgian foreign minister (from that of NATO Secretary General), was central to the change of position in Brussels. Having initially given the French initiative the benefit of the doubt, he now seems to have decided to penalise de Gaulle for two

³⁷ Couve, *op cit*, p361.

positions taken in other negotiations: the General's opposition to President Kennedy's ideas for a multilateral nuclear force in Europe and his obstreperousness in NATO negotiations on a joint Western response to the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961. These experiences appear to have convinced Spaak that unanimity in European foreign policy and defence cooperation, as envisaged by de Gaulle, might simply give France a dangerous veto over any action. A more integrationist framework, allowing an element of majority voting among member states, would help to ensure that a pro-NATO position triumphed. In lining up with The Hague against de Gaulle, the Belgian foreign minister was taking a high-risk decision, and one that was to have a crucial impact on what followed.

Both the Dutch and Belgian delegations now indicated that, in addition to their serious reservations about the intergovernmental form of the proposed Union and its defence provisions, they believed that the United Kingdom should participate directly in the political union discussions, and if it could not, that negotiations should be deferred until it had entered the Community. Following the Bad Godesberg summit, the British prime minister, Harold Macmillan, had applied for UK membership on 10 August 1961, a move quickly followed by the governments of Denmark, Norway and Ireland. Entry negotiations then opened two months later, in Paris, on 10 October, just before the submission by France of the first Fouchet Plan. This coincidence gave opponents of de Gaulle's initiative an immediate pretext for attempting to postpone discussion of the French draft treaty.³⁸

At this point, the head of the UK's new negotiating team, Edward Heath, played into Dutch and Belgian hands by confirming the country's willingness

³⁸ Luns claimed that the issuing of the first Fouchet Plan proposal was more than coincidentally linked to the opening of UK accession talks, in that de Gaulle wanted quickly 'to give a fixed form' to any political union treaty before enlargement negotiations established momentum, whilst also conveniently making the latter 'as difficult as possible'. (Cited in Vanke, *op cit*, p105).

to be involved in the Fouchet discussions. Speaking to the press in Paris on 10 October, Heath not only indicated that Britain supported the objective of political union, but stated that if the UK was invited by the Six to take part in the work of the Fouchet committee, it would indeed be happy to do so. Although strictly speaking this was not a new position – Macmillan and Heath had both said the same in the aftermath of the Paris summit – its reassertion at this juncture proved significant. The Netherlands immediately demanded that Britain be invited to participate in the committee, and said that continuation of the negotiations would depend upon London's inclusion. Belgium stated that it supported this position, conveniently invoking the UK application to join the Community as the reason for its tougher stance in the political union negotiations.³⁹ The net effect was that, just as France was presenting the first Fouchet Plan, the stakes were suddenly escalating.

'From that moment on,' as Jean-Claude Masclet has put it, 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 régime with British participation.'⁴⁰ Ideally, of course, both countries would have preferred a third option: a supranational system including Britain. The first and third alternatives were out of the question so far as de Gaulle was concerned (and were not supported by Britain either). The second also posed acute problems for France, in so far as it required Paris to decide its definitive attitude to UK membership, and it risked ensuring that the new Union would be more firmly tied to NATO than de Gaulle wished.⁴¹

³⁹ It is not clear how far Heath was acting in concert with Luns in asserting this linkage. Vanke notes that 'The Netherlands actively encouraged the British government to evince enthusiasm' for involvement in the Fouchet committee process, since this would be 'crucial' to the credibility to its position. (Vanke, *op cit*, p103).

⁴⁰ Jean-Claude Masclet, *L'Union politique de l'Europe* (PUF, Paris, 1994), p45.

⁴¹ The French knew, of course, that whilst Britain broadly shared their thinking on institutions, its approach to NATO was diametrically the opposite. And even on institutions, the motivations of London and Paris in resisting supranationalism may also have diverged. In the words of Miriam

Emerging stalemate

The hard-line position adopted by the Dutch and Belgians on the issue of British participation in the Fouchet negotiations shocked the French delegation and dispirited the other three member states. The first instinct of French officials was to continue to try to look reasonable and open to further concessions, but it was clear that something important had shifted in the parameters of the discussion. In Paris it was quickly perceived that France needed to relaunch a diplomatic offensive if the Plan was not to be blocked. Regarding Dutch and Belgian behaviour as unhelpful and aggressive, de Gaulle decided to repay those countries in kind by talking with the British prime minister direct, in the hope of discrediting their stance on UK participation.

Meeting Macmillan at Birch Grove, his country home south of London, in November 1961, the French President sought to clarify British thinking on political union. For the UK, keeping on side with the General was a matter of high importance, since ultimately successful entry to the Community would depend on his consent. The British government, the President was told, preferred the intergovernmental approach to the supranational one for foreign-policy and defence cooperation. Equally, although Britain certainly hoped to join any political union, it was not necessary for UK representatives to take part in the current negotiations. The conditions which the Dutch and Belgians were seeking to impose on the Fouchet discussions were thus not ones upon which

Camps, 'the British were worried about the spectre of government by bureaucracy without parliamentary control, as well as about the loss of their own freedom of action; the Gaullists were concerned about the threat that supranationalism posed to their own power to fashion Europe to their own design' (Camps, *op cit*, p428), a concern which also explained their distinct lack of enthusiasm for British membership of the Community.

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London insisted. Subsequently, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Home, delivered a similar message to Spaak when they spoke at the end of the month.

A meeting of EC foreign ministers was convened in Paris on 15 December to clarify the situation. The French took the high ground: they had no objection to Britain participating in the proposed Union provided its EC entry negotiations proved successful, but there could be no question whatsoever of UK involvement in the Fouchet discussions until such membership had been attained. That position, Couve de Murville declared, was understood and accepted by the British government itself. In the interim, London should be kept closely informed about how the negotiations progressed (something which was in fact already occurring). West Germany, Italy and Luxembourg supported this position. The Netherlands and Belgium dissented. However, faced with the prospect of inducing the negotiations to collapse on a point of principle which the British did not share, Spaak appears to have lost his nerve. The Belgians reluctantly accepted the majority view that, as a general proposition, membership of the political union would be automatic for any future EC entrant – essentially the German preference (and a concession by France) – with the specific question of possible UK participation in the negotiations being ignored. In the eyes of the Dutch, this latter issue was still open. Luns threatened to withdraw his representative from all future meetings of the Fouchet committee, a position he abandoned when Britain once again indicated that it did not need to be present.

By the end of 1961, the Fouchet negotiations had reached effective deadlock. Despite French success in maintaining majority support for their approach, there was no agreement on the institutional structure for political union – or indeed at root on UK involvement – and this was matched by a growing bitterness and aggressivity in the discussions. Certainly, it was the Netherlands and Belgium, not France, which increasingly appeared to be unreasonable and

isolated. The moral pressure, it was assumed, would be on them, not upon the French, to make further concessions. But without Dutch and Belgian acquiescence, there could be no agreement. If such agreement was to be reached, it seemed, it would only be under duress and with bad grace. Obviously there could be no question of a winter summit meeting of heads of government until some decisive movement towards compromise had occurred.⁴²

As the Fouchet negotiations broke for Christmas, there was an increasing sense of gloom about their prospects for success. This was compounded by the intervention of the European Parliament, which in its own-initiative resolution of 21 December 1961 – authored by former French prime minister René Plevén – piled criticism upon the first Fouchet Plan and carried the institutional criticisms of the Dutch and Belgians to something of an extreme. The resolution advocated use of majority voting in a Council whose President would be independent, the abolition of the proposed European Political Commission, and the granting of significant powers to both the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in Union affairs.⁴³ These ideas tended to

⁴² Throughout this period, Chancellor Adenauer played an even less active role than before in responding to French initiatives, either by solidifying support for the General's ideas or by defining the basis on which the other five states would agree to them. In the Bundestag elections of September 1961, his CDU/CSU party had lost its majority, and two months of negotiations ensued with the FDP before a coalition government could be formed. In the process, the Chancellor was forced to concede that he would resign during the next four years, and to install a new FDP foreign minister, Gerhard Schroeder, who held less sympathetic views towards de Gaulle than his predecessor, Heinrich von Brentano. The Germans, who might otherwise have been an important source of pressure on The Hague in particular, were largely immobilised, even though their official position remained one of general support for the Fouchet Plan.

⁴³ The European Parliament's text was drafted by René Plevén, the pro-European former prime minister of the Fourth Republic whose Plevén Plan in 1950 had foreshadowed the ill-fated European Defence Community. Specifically, the resolution proposed that the new Union be designated as one of 'peoples' rather than 'states', echoing the words of the Bad Godesberg summit. It argued that qualified majority voting should be available for Council decision-making. It suggested that in the future the President of the Council ought to be chosen from outside the ranks of heads of government, and that the Parliament itself should be involved in the selection. It rejected the need for a European Political Commission, arguing that its tasks could be performed by the secretariat of the existing EC Council of Ministers, supplemented by a Secretary General for Union affairs. It suggested that the President of the European Commission should be able to attend Council meetings. It proposed that the Parliament be much more closely involved in Union

radicalise the debate, rather than pacify it. They gave comfort to the Dutch and Belgians in standing out against de Gaulle, implying that his project should be treated with deep suspicion by pro-Europeans. Whether in the Fouchet committee itself or in the European Parliament, the ideological storm-clouds seemed to be gathering, eclipsing the traditional diplomatic impulsion towards compromise. From January 1962 onwards, the outlook was to deteriorate still further.

Second Fouchet Plan: January 1962

The first sign of the widening chasm between partners came as soon as the intergovernmental committee resumed its work in the New Year. On 18 January, France tabled a revised version of the Fouchet Plan. To widespread astonishment, this text was characterised not by concessions, but by a significant hardening of position. Instead of attempting to broaden the basis of agreement, it retreated from the original draft, with crucial changes accentuating the intergovernmental character of the proposed Union and enhancing its ability to act independently of the United States. The second Fouchet Plan was a political thunderbolt that astounded all participants in the negotiations.

De Gaulle was widely and correctly assumed to have been personally responsible for drafting the key amendments to the text, ignoring efforts by the Quai d'Orsay to narrow differences. He is said to have intervened after Michel Debré and other ministers complained to him that Fouchet and Couve de Murville were being unduly accommodative to the Dutch and Belgians in the

activities, with joint control over budgetary matters and a veto over treaties with third countries. It advocated using the ECJ to settle any disputes concerning the interpretation of the Union treaty.

negotiations.⁴⁴ If so, they were almost certainly pushing on an open door. At the most basic level, de Gaulle appears to have become increasingly irritated by Dutch and Belgian tactics in the autumn, and to have decided to make the point provocatively that France's previous approach had already involved a large number of concessions, so far unmatched by The Hague or Brussels. He waited until after a crucial EC Council of Ministers' meeting in early January – which agreed important founding regulations for the Common Agricultural Policy (in return for French acceptance that the EC should proceed to the 'second stage' of its transitional phase of development) – before throwing down the gauntlet on the Fouchet Plan.

At a deeper level, as de Gaulle reflected upon the situation, he may well have taken fright at the dangers of the new British linkage in the negotiations, with the potential for France to be forced to admit Britain to the Community in return for Dutch and Belgian agreement to the Fouchet Plan. Equally, Dutch and Belgian belligerence suggested that once Britain was inside the EC, the latter's potential to exercise leadership against France could be substantial. Moreover, these developments were happening against the backdrop of a rising tide of US activism in transatlantic relations, as President Kennedy's 'Grand Design' took shape, whether in the form of his proposed multilateral nuclear force under US command or his ideas (in January 1962) for a new GATT round, which would erode the tariff wall around the Six and dilute the distinction between the Community and EFTA. In these circumstances, the risks of a free-trade, Atlanticist Europe were growing. It was thus more important than ever to de Gaulle that any foreign-policy and defence collaboration should be as intergovernmental and independent as possible, even if hardening his position inevitably increased the possibility of defeat.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Silj, *op cit*, p14.

⁴⁵ Masclet, *op cit*, pp49-50.

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From the vantage-point of the Elysée, reversing some of the concessions France had already made seems to have looked an increasingly attractive proposition.

Whatever the reason for de Gaulle's decision to submit a less compromising text in January 1962, this initiative was not welcomed by France's negotiating team in the Fouchet discussions.⁴⁶ A revised version of the first Fouchet Plan, containing relatively minor amendments, had been prepared by the Quai d'Orsay on 13 January, and approved by Couve de Murville two days later. Its purpose was to try to narrow divisions within the Fouchet committee. On receipt of this document in the Elysée, the routine approval expected was not forthcoming. Important changes were made in the President's own handwriting, and the philosophy underpinning them was formalised in the conclusions of a meeting of the French cabinet on 17 January: France's commitment was to a new form of cooperation which would 'absorb' the existing EC, rather than operate in parallel to it.⁴⁷

Slightly more succinct than its predecessor, the revised Fouchet Plan involved five important changes. First, the new draft treaty proposed the creation of a network of 'Committees of Ministers' for the various policy areas of the Union, building a structure which could over time supersede the existing EC Council of Ministers. Second, it provocatively included 'economics' as one of the areas of cooperation within the Union, taking the latter directly into the central policy field of the EC. The implication was that the existing institutions and the supranational quality of Community law could be put under direct challenge. Third, defence policy was no longer to be conducted 'in cooperation with other free nations', thus removing any implicit reference to NATO. Fourth, the consultative powers of the European Parliament were somewhat reduced.

⁴⁶ Jean-Marie Soutou, *Un diplomate engagé: Mémoires 1939-1979* (Editions de Fallois, Paris, 2011), pp226-235. (Jean-Marie Soutou was director for European affairs at the Quai d'Orsay at the time).

⁴⁷ Georges-Henri Soutou, 'Le général de Gaulle et le plan Fouchet' in Institut Charles de Gaulle, *De Gaulle en son siècle* (Documentation française/Plon, Paris, 1992), volume 5, p137.

Lastly, the review scheduled for three years after the treaty came into force would now simply deal with 'simplifying, rationalising and coordinating' cooperation among the member states, rather than fusing the Union and EC. The separate Union pillar was thus to remain as a permanent feature, gradually acquiring new powers.

On hearing of these changes, Fouchet was initially relaxed, commenting jauntily that 'we can push them through *à l'hussarde*'. Couve de Murville's immediate reaction was much less sanguine, fearing that real problems would follow. He did not, however, seek to reopen the President's decision, seeing it as his task to find ways to implement it, however difficult that might be. At the time, both men claimed publicly that the amendments were essentially technical in character and made little difference to the thrust of the French proposals. Fouchet even maintains this fiction in his memoirs, asserting that the second Plan simply embodied 'a few amendments put forward by France'.⁴⁸ In his own memoirs, however, Couve goes somewhat further in distancing himself from the President: 'Without fundamentally altering what France was prepared to accept, [the second Fouchet Plan] aroused mistrust and seemed to justify that mistrust.'⁴⁹ The mood in the Quai d'Orsay was reflected in the comment which Jean-Marie Soutou, the ministry's then director for European affairs and chief assistant to Fouchet throughout the negotiations, noted in his private diary when the second Plan was submitted: 'That's the end of it all.'⁵⁰

If de Gaulle intended by the theatrical diplomacy of the second Fouchet Plan to force the Dutch and Belgian governments on to the defensive, he failed. The effect was rather to greatly to broaden the opposition to concluding a new treaty, at least on the General's terms. Given continued doubts about French

⁴⁸ Christian Fouchet, *Mémoires d'hier et de demain: Au service du Général de Gaulle* (Plon, Paris, 1971), p199.

⁴⁹ Couve, *op cit*, p370.

⁵⁰ Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle: Le Souverain 1959-1970* (Seuil, Paris, 1986), p322.

motives in pushing for political union, the hardening of the French position severely dented the extent to which Paris was perceived to be acting in good faith in the search for an arrangement which the maximum number of states could accept. The second Plan prompted the formation a brief-lived, but highly damaging, anti-French front among the other member states, significantly increasing the chances that the negotiations would fail.

Counter-Treaty of the Five: February 1962

Immediately the second Fouchet Plan was tabled, the three countries which had previously broadly supported France – Italy, Luxembourg and, most crucially, West Germany – all indicated that they could not accept a Union along the lines which Paris now envisaged. The Italians played a particularly important role in defining the response, acting as ring-leaders in the preparation of a counter-proposal, to be signed jointly by the Five, which would contradict French thinking on several vital points. This text – prepared by a sub-group of the Fouchet committee mandated with this task on 25 January – entered circulation in early February. It was the only text in the entire negotiation pitting all other states against France – a compromise uniting those who ultimately could support an intergovernmental political union and those who could not; those who wanted to find a solution and those who did not.

The counter-treaty presented by France's five partners was much closer to the European Parliament's Pleven resolution than to the first, let alone second, Fouchet Plan. It envisaged a 'European Union' of both 'states and of European peoples'. The Union's activities would not prejudice the powers of the EC. Economics would not feature as an area of cooperation. A common defence policy would be adopted within the framework of (or to strengthen) the

Atlantic Alliance. The dual structure of Council and Committees of Ministers would be retained, but decisions could be taken by qualified majority voting where the Council unanimously sanctioned it. A Secretary General 'independent of the member states' would be appointed to service the Council and Committees of Ministers, enjoying his own secretariat of supranational officials. The Political Commission would be confined to preparing the Council's meetings politically (as COREPER already did for the EC Council). The European Parliament would be consulted formally on some Union decisions before they were taken. The ECJ would be given the task of settling any disputes between member states on Union questions.

The biggest surprise came at the end: the proposed review after three years would occur automatically in January 1966 (when the EC moved to the third and last stage of its transitional phase of development). A draft constitution of the European Union would be drafted by the Council in preparation for this. The review would have several highly integrationist goals: to extend the use of majority voting in the Council; to introduce the direct election of the European Parliament; to give additional powers to the Court to adjudicate on Union matters; and, most importantly, to ensure that, at the end of the EC's transitional phase of development (scheduled for January 1970), the Union and Community should be 'incorporated in an organic institutional framework'. The Germans wanted to go even further, proposing the introduction of the concept of European citizenship, but this did not find favour with the four other co-signatories.

Tactical French retreat

The agreement by the Five on a counter-treaty was a major diplomatic defeat for France. De Gaulle's reaction was to fall back on bilateral discussions with the Germans, in the hope of prising them away, just as he had done with the British in November. He travelled to Baden-Baden to meet Adenauer on 15 February. Realising that the Chancellor's room for manoeuvre was now more limited than in the past, the General reluctantly decided to retreat somewhat from the second Fouchet Plan text. He agreed in principle that some implicit reference to NATO could be reinstated, and that this should be stronger than in the first Fouchet Plan, and he accepted that wording should be found to safeguard the role of the existing Community system. De Gaulle was not, however, prepared to offer any ground on the issues of majority voting or future institutional revision, and invited Adenauer to resile from the counter-treaty of the Five in these respects. The Chancellor said that he could agree to these changes, whilst stressing that he was not in a position to speak for any other country and that any Franco-German agreement should not be forced on the other four states. De Gaulle is reported to have replied that, as nothing could happen among the Six without Paris and Bonn concurring, once 'the two countries are in agreement, ... their decision should be imposed'.⁵¹

On 20 March, Community foreign ministers met in Luxembourg to review the situation. The meeting coincided with the assumption of the chairmanship of the Fouchet committee by its Italian member, Attilio Cattani, head of the foreign ministry in Rome. Christian Fouchet had been nominated by de Gaulle

⁵¹ Note by De Gaulle of 16 February 1962, contained in the Couve de Murville papers, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, cited in Vanke, *op cit*, pp107-108. The Franco-German Baden-Baden package was not discussed at the following meetings of the Fouchet committee, on 20 February and 15 March, which limited themselves to comparing the second Fouchet Plan with the counter-treaty of the Five, and drafting a synoptic report 'which explained the points of divergence [both] between France and the Five and among the Five themselves.' (Bodenheimer, *op cit*, p63). This report, dated 15 March, is reproduced in EP, *Towards Political Union*, at pp35-39.

to act as French high commissioner in Algeria, a move itself arguably reflecting the General's declining confidence in the likely success of his political union initiative. The atmosphere among the other foreign ministers towards France was initially frosty. Couve de Murville reciprocated by suggesting that the Dutch and Belgians were keen to extend to London an influence over foreign and defence policy which they would not accord to Paris. Failure of political union negotiations, he let slip, could only have negative implications for the success of the UK's application for EC membership. Couve then indicated that, given the importance of the Fouchet negotiations succeeding, France might be able to move in the various areas discussed between de Gaulle and Adenauer.

The Dutch and Belgians reacted sceptically, as did – somewhat surprisingly – the Italian foreign minister, Antonio Segni. Whilst Italy (like West Germany) could dispense with the specific proposal for an independent Secretary General for Union affairs, and agree that such a Union would be one of 'states' (rather than both 'states and European peoples' as the counter-treaty of the Five had foreseen), it regarded the other issues as points of principle. In particular, it needed to see economics removed as an area of Union activity, the possibility established of majority voting by mutual agreement, and the three-year institutional review maintained as something of real substance. The failure of Italy to support the Baden-Baden *démarche* was important. Since January, the Italian government had held the rotating presidency of the EC Council of Ministers, and now its representative was chairing the Fouchet committee. Unless France could win the support of both West Germany and Italy, it would not be possible to undermine Belgo-Dutch hostility. In his memoirs, de Gaulle makes pointed reference to Segni 'disapproving of the French proposal',

suggesting that there had been a breach of faith, given Rome's previously constructive approach.⁵²

True to form, the French President responded to the impasse of 20 March by attempting to outmanoeuvre Segni through bilateral discussion at the highest level. On 4 April, he visited Turin to talk with the Italian prime minister, Amintore Fanfani. De Gaulle appealed to him to back the Baden-Baden changes and re-engage in the process of finding practical solutions to the remaining problem points. Fanfani responded sympathetically. At the meeting, formulae were reached on two important issues: defence and economics. Any treaty, it was agreed, could make reference (although only in its preamble) to a common defence 'strengthening the Atlantic alliance'. It would also allow heads of government to discuss economic issues on an occasional basis, without prejudicing 'the powers of the institutions' of the EC. Economics as such would not be listed of the policy fields of the new Union. As de Gaulle notes in his memoirs, Fanfani gave him 'the impression that we were agreed, subject to an amendment here or there, on the text of the Fouchet Plan.'⁵³

The Turin amendments, which represented modest concessions by the French whilst reflecting a renewed willingness to compromise by the Italians, were presented by Fanfani to Adenauer on 7 April, and then formally tabled by the Italian government on 17 April, when foreign ministers met again in Paris. The issue of majority voting in the Council having been dropped by the Germans and Italians (although not the Belgians or Dutch), the only serious outstanding question was now the revision clause, on which the Italian position still diverged considerably from the French, but where an accommodation between Paris and Rome might be possible.⁵⁴ De Gaulle sensed that he was succeeding,

⁵² De Gaulle, *Mémoires*: 1958-62, p209.

⁵³ De Gaulle, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ The Quai d'Orsay believed Italy could ultimately be bought off with only 'vague promises' in respect of the review clause's commitments on institutional deepening of the EC and greater

through bilateral diplomacy, in returning to the position of December 1961, when it was the Netherlands and Belgium, rather than France, which were isolated in the Fouchet negotiations.

Negotiations collapse: April 1962

On 10 April, however, an unexpected event occurred, which decisively hardened Dutch and Belgian resolve to thwart de Gaulle's diplomatic offensive, and gave them an excellent pretext for doing so. Edward Heath gave a lengthy and widely-publicised speech on Britain's policy towards Europe at a meeting of the WEU Council in London. Far from moving towards the French view, as one might have expected, he tacitly supported de Gaulle's critics on a number of key points.

Arguing that the existing EC would be the central foundation on which European cooperation was to be built, Heath envisaged possible future institutional reform which would strengthen supranationalism. He accepted that deeper political cooperation would have to occur in a formally separate structure from the Community – as the French wanted – but believed that the two arrangements should be 'knit together ... in a coherent and effective whole'. In respect of defence, Heath said that common policies would have to operate 'shoulder to shoulder with the US', with the Atlantic Alliance as the 'indispensable shield' for freedom. He spoke of the progressive enlargement of the EC way beyond the possible four new adherents. Crucially, he reiterated the request that, 'as impending members' of the EC, the UK be allowed to join

'communautisation' of the new Union. By contrast the position of Belgium and the Netherlands on this point was seen as extremely difficult, and indeed to be hardening with time. The hope was that, once West Germany and Italy had resolved all outstanding points with France, the Belgians would peel off from the Dutch, and the Dutch in due course 'would be obliged to follow the current.' (Soutou, *De Gaulle en son siècle*, pp139, 141).

the discussions taking place 'about the future political framework of Europe'. The latter proposition, music to the ears of the Dutch and Belgians, remained out of the question so far as France was concerned.⁵⁵

When Community foreign ministers gathered in Paris a week later, at what was to prove the final meeting in the Fouchet negotiations, the potential basis for agreement sketched in Turin proved inadequate to meet Dutch and Belgian concerns. Joseph Luns and Paul-Henri Spaak had both been irritated by de Gaulle's bilateral approaches to Adenauer and Fanfani – which they saw as presaging their own exclusion from the power politics of the future Union – whilst the whole discussion over references to the Atlantic Alliance and the revision clause had confirmed their deep fears about the French President's desire for an independent, intergovernmental Europe, in which NATO and the EC were both systematically downgraded. In communicating on 15 April France's formal (but well-known) refusal of President Kennedy's proposal for a NATO multilateral nuclear force under US command, Couve de Murville's sense of timing had perhaps been less than adroit.

In Paris, on 17 April, despite pressure to compromise by Adenauer,⁵⁶ the Dutch and Belgian foreign ministers simply rejected the Turin amendments and declared that, especially in the light of Heath's speech, it would now be best if

⁵⁵ Heath subsequently claimed that his proposal was an 'offer ... made in good faith' and certainly was not intended to slow up political union, by playing into the hands of de Gaulle's opponents (Edward Heath, *Old World, New Horizons* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1970), p55). Heath's exact words to the WEU Council in London were: '... in view of the progress which we hope to make in the negotiations in Brussels in the next few weeks, I wonder whether it might now be helpful if we, as impending members of the European Economic Community, were to join with you now in your discussions about the future political framework of Europe. Might this not be a great stimulus to our whole work together? The two processes of discussion between us, both the economic and the political, might then go forward together, and we might find that they interacted favourably upon one another. This is a thought that I would like to leave with you, and on which no doubt you will want to consult together.'

⁵⁶ Vanke cites an internal Dutch foreign ministry memorandum (Luns to MBZ, GS-55-54,1898 of 18 April 1962), reporting that, on the eve of the 17 April meeting, the German Chancellor wired the Belgian prime minister, seemingly in a last-ditch attempt to disrupt the Belgo-Dutch common front, predicting 'worse treatment' for the UK membership application if the two countries frustrated a final deal on political union. (Vanke, *op cit*, p108).

the negotiations were suspended until it was unmistakably clear that the United Kingdom would be joining the EC. This represented a stiffening of their previous position (of December 1961) – when they had wanted Britain to participate immediately in the discussions, even before being admitted to the EC – and it cleverly exploited growing suspicions about de Gaulle’s intentions over British membership. In effect, the French being informed, quite unequivocally, that the cost of the Plan, even as diluted, would be British membership of the Community.

Couve de Murville refused to acknowledge the link, asking the foreign ministers: ‘Do we actually wish to bring our work to a conclusion, that is to say, reach an agreement, sign it and put it into effect? If so, we really must settle a treaty text.’⁵⁷ The West German, Italian and Luxembourg ministers answered in the affirmative. The Belgian and Dutch ministers reiterated their reluctance, with Spaak stating that although he might be prepared to continue negotiations in the interim – it is not clear that the Dutch would be – ‘we have no intention of signing [any treaty] until Britain has joined the EC.’ Spaak explained that for Belgium and Holland political union required one of ‘two possible safeguards: either the adoption of [supranational] Community methods, or the counter-weight provided by Britain.’ Given French refusal to countenance the former, ‘Britain must be one of the members of the inadequate union which people wish to impose on us.’ Neither of the Belgian or Dutch conditions being met, he said, ‘it is better to leave things as they are.’⁵⁸

Couve de Murville then offered one final concession, which involved little real risk to France. He suggested that if negotiations continued, the final draft treaty, when agreed, could be submitted to the British for their approval. Only if London accepted the text – it could hardly do otherwise, without

⁵⁷ Couve, *op cit*, p375.

⁵⁸ Paul-Henri Spaak, *Combats inachevés: De l'espoir aux déceptions* (Fayard, Brussels, 1969), p369.

undermining its EC membership bid – would the treaty be signed by the Six. Britain would then automatically sign it if and when it formally acceded to the Community. Spaak and Luns rejected this offer, noting that it did not in any way guarantee British membership, which was now their key priority. The meeting broke up acrimoniously, without agreement and issuing no communiqué. Discussions were ‘suspended’, never to be resumed.

Deepening rifts

The breakdown of the Fouchet negotiations was, at the time, the biggest political reverse suffered by the EC in its four-year history. It led to a significant loss of momentum by the Community and heralded a period of growing instability in diplomatic relations among the Six and between France and the United Kingdom. Its most immediate consequences were three-fold: a further hardening of de Gaulle’s attitude towards European integration; a new French commitment to press ahead with a strengthening of relations with West Germany bilaterally (to the exclusion of the Benelux states and Britain); and most dramatically the largely unexpected decision of the French President in January 1963 to veto UK membership of the Community. In short, the Fouchet reverse induced in de Gaulle an appetite for vindication and revenge.

Four weeks after the collapse of the Fouchet negotiations, on 15 May 1962, the French President gave his public reaction to the failure of France’s plans for political union in Europe. Speaking at a press conference in the Elyseé, he launched a spectacular verbal assault on the Community’s institutions and philosophy. The General satirised its functionaries as ‘stateless people’ and its technocratic jargon as a *Volapük* (an artificial international language akin to Esperanto). He declared that it was the United States, not the peoples of the

Community, that would become the true 'federator' of Europe. He condemned European supranationalists as divorced from political reality: 'only the states are valid, legitimate and capable of achievement. ... at present there is and can be no Europe other than a Europe of states – except of course a Europe of myths, fictions and pageants.'

Disturbed by the growing force of de Gaulle's attack on the Community, five ministers from the pro-European, Christian Democrat MRP resigned from his government the following day. These included Pierre Pflimlin, who had been the penultimate prime minister of the Fourth Republic, and Maurice Schumann, who later returned to power as foreign minister under de Gaulle's successor as President, Georges Pompidou. Pflimlin declared: 'A Europe of states will take us back to the nineteenth century, to the Congress of Vienna. Political Europe has no future if it is to be permanently subject to the law of unanimity.' A month later, on 13 June, centrist and Socialist deputies staged a walk-out from a National Assembly debate on European policy, following a speech by Couve de Murville. A total of 296 deputies (out of 552) signed a 'European Manifesto', protesting at the increasingly anti-European stance of the President and advocating a 'democratic community of peoples', based on majority voting in the Council and a directly-elected European Parliament.

These protests were to no avail. The General's break with the centre simply consolidated the ideological coherence of his (minority) Gaullist administration, whilst his overall position was decisively reinforced by the referendum he called in October on the direct election of the President. He won a crushing victory against all the parties of the Fourth Republic, which opposed the move. In the legislative elections which he called the following month, the Gaullist UNR party and its close allies secured a working majority in the National Assembly, something unknown in French democratic history.

During the late spring and summer of 1962, limited efforts were made to revive the Fouchet process. German foreign minister Gerhard Schroeder asserted that there were 'no insuperable differences' in the positions of the Six, and that a political union should proceed 'in the confident expectation' that Britain would soon be part of it. Fouchet's successor as chairman of the intergovernmental committee, Attilio Cattani, toured national capitals in May and June, seeking to persuade the Netherlands and Belgium in particular that negotiations should be resumed. A compromise text on the issue of the revision clause was floated, leaving the content of the three-year review open. De Gaulle indicated that he saw little point in the Fouchet committee resuming its work, and privately he thought that a political union of the Six was effectively dead.⁵⁹ If progress was to be made, he suggested, it could only be on the basis of Belgium and the Netherlands abandoning their positions of 20 April completely.

Whereas the Dutch held firm, to their irritation and indeed de Gaulle's, Spaak wrote to the General in July saying that the Belgians could now in fact agree to

⁵⁹ De Gaulle almost certainly decided to abandon the Fouchet Plan in its then form as a union of six states immediately after the collapse of negotiations on 17 April. When Couve de Murville reported to the French cabinet the next day on the failure of the Paris foreign ministers' meeting, de Gaulle was already in resigned mood. 'We cannot force Spaak and Luns to join a union of states,' the President declared. 'I wonder if Belgium and Holland are not really afraid of building Europe, whilst claiming that it is their strongest desire. They feel tiny in the face of the larger states. They hope that if Britain joins the big states will be so opposed that the small ones will be able to play on their antagonisms. The two demands of the Belgians and Dutch – "we must have Britain" and "we must have supranationality" – are obviously and irredeemably incompatible. ... Nobody believes that the Six really want and are able to have a common [foreign] policy... Why continue, if it going to come to nothing? Meeting to confirm that there is no common policy: what's the point of that?'

Later in the meeting, the General did confirm, in response to ministerial expressions in favour of continuing with the Plan, that 'despite the difficulties encountered, we remain determined to get our proposal adopted. It remains on offer to France's partners within the Europe of the Six.' However, the clear implication was that success was unlikely and alternative routes to build a stronger European voice in world affairs, outside the framework of the Six, would now need to be pursued. (Peyrefitte, *op cit*, pp107-111).

In his memoirs, Jean-Marie Soutou tellingly responds to the General's proposition about the inherent incompatibility of the Belgian and Dutch wish for both British membership and supranationalism in Europe, arguing that the real contradiction lay in France's determination simultaneously to deny the possibility of either. He writes: 'in reality, as Spaak said, and as many of my colleagues [at the Quai d'Orsay] often said too, it was we French who allowed ourselves to fall into the true contraction of refusing both Britain and supranationality. ... We were told that [by Fanfani] in Turin. It is clear that the contraction was ours.' (Soutou, *Un diplomate engagé*, p246).

political union, without the British as immediate members, so long as an independent political commission serviced the new Union, along the lines of the existing European Commission in Brussels. This elicited what Spaak called a 'glacial' response from the President, in which his proposal was dismissed out of court.⁶⁰ Ironically, the official French position was coming to resemble the Belgo-Dutch one of April: there should be no further discussions about political union until the question of UK accession had been definitively resolved.

De Gaulle's strategy was moving on to a new tack – one of trying to encourage bilateral arrangements at the heart of the Community (but outside its institutional structure), which would have the effect of excluding the Benelux states, on the one hand, and Britain, on the other. He discussed this idea with Adenauer during highly successful visits made by each leader to the other's country, in July and September 1962. In October, Couve de Murville visited Fanfani in Rome to invite Italy to participate in a tripartite directory, reviving de Gaulle's idea of 1958-59. The latter rejected the concept once again, reluctant to see the EC divided into two categories of nations.

The Germans had fewer fears, responding positively with a formal paper in November, and agreeing the basic arrangements at a meeting of the two foreign ministers before Christmas. When de Gaulle and Adenauer met in Paris on 22 January 1963, they were able to sign a 'Treaty on Franco-German Cooperation', which covered almost exactly the same territory as the failed Fouchet initiative: foreign policy, defence, economics and culture. The French and German leaders would meet at least twice a year, and other ministers usually at least

⁶⁰ Spaak, *op cit*, p376.

quarterly to 'reach, wherever possible, common positions' on issues of mutual concern.⁶¹

A few days before the Franco-German Treaty was signed, on 14 January 1963, the General used an Elysée press conference to declare that, as a result of 'very substantial problems', including a fundamental incompatibility both economically and politically between the UK and its partners, he believed that negotiations on British membership of the EC could not succeed. A critical week-long meeting of foreign ministers, designed to tackle outstanding accession problems, was beginning in Brussels just as news of the General's de facto veto came through. The impact of this move was stunning.

Legacy of stalemate

Like a nuclear bomb exploding at the heart of Community politics, the veto shattered the hopes of all who wanted either a wider Europe or a deeper Europe, or both. For so long as de Gaulle remained President of France, *l'Europe communautaire* was to stagnate. The stalemate over the Fouchet Plan gradually became endemic. Meetings of EC heads of government, which the Bad Godesberg summit had sanctioned on a regular basis, ceased. Except for a formal session to mark the tenth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome (in 1967), no summit was held until Pompidou replaced de Gaulle in 1969. The

⁶¹ Much to de Gaulle's irritation, the Bundestag, when ratifying the Franco-German Treaty in May 1963, unilaterally inserted a preamble (to the German version of the text at least), which precluded the new bilateral structures forming a 'core' to any wider intergovernmental union, foreshadowed the enlargement of the existing Community, and professed renewed commitment to the Atlantic Alliance. These changes effectively prevented the French President from exploiting the treaty as the basis for a substitute Fouchet Plan in the way he may have hoped. In July 1963, de Gaulle described the treaty as a rose which had withered away before even flowering. See Wilfried Loth, 'Hallstein and de Gaulle: the disastrous confrontation' in Wilfried Loth, William Wallace and Wolfgang Wessels (editors), *Walter Hallstein: The Forgotten European?* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1998), p139, and Jean Lacouture, *op cit*, p308.

Community's quarterly meetings of foreign ministers to discuss 'international policy' were discontinued. Efforts by the German and Italian governments in 1964 to relaunch a more flexible, less formal political union were rebuffed by Paris. Progress in the EC was to be allowed only in fields, such as the CAP, of potential benefit to France. When the Community approached the January 1966 deadline for the wider introduction of qualified majority voting (QMV) in the Council of Ministers – at the beginning of the third stage of the EC's transitional phase of development – the French government boycotted ministerial meetings for six months and forced agreement to the Luxembourg Compromise. By in effect requiring unanimity to prevail whenever any 'very important national interest' was deemed to be at stake, Community decision-making was frustrated in many areas for the next twenty years.⁶²

The long-range effects of the failure of the Fouchet Plan negotiations were thus significant. Unable to secure agreement to his intergovernmental design, de Gaulle resolved to stall the Community and prevent any who opposed his institutional vision (Belgium and the Netherlands) or who might challenge France's geopolitical interests (those states plus Britain) from getting their way. In this, he succeeded. It took six years (1969) before the process of European political integration was resumed in any meaningful way. It took ten years (1973) before Britain entered the Community. It took twelve years (1975) before heads of government began meeting on a regular basis in the new European Council. It took twenty-four years (1987) before foreign policy was codified in the Treaty – in the form of European Political Cooperation – and qualified majority voting was extended in EC decision-making. It took thirty years (1993) before an intergovernmental Common Foreign and Security Policy pillar was established along lines at all comparable to those of the Fouchet Plan.

⁶² See Anthony Teasdale, 'The Life and Death of the Luxembourg Compromise', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 31, Number 4, December 1993, pp567-579.

Christian Fouchet later claimed that, had the French proposals been adopted in 1962, 'something irreversible would have been created. Political Europe would have been born.' Failure to grasp the moment meant that 'a great hope was dead, a magnificent opportunity lost.'⁶³ De Gaulle's own attitude appears to have changed over time. Initially he shared the Fouchet view: 'if the union of the Six had not been rejected,' he told Alain Peyrefitte soon afterwards, 'what strength Europe would have had. What a shame, what foolishness!'⁶⁴ By 1967, however, the General confided to Michel Debré a more cynical judgement: 'the Dutch rendered us a proud service in 1962. Thanks to them, we kept our hands free' in foreign affairs.⁶⁵ Whether or not Europe would have used Fouchet's 'magnificent opportunity' to act together in the world, it is clear that de Gaulle exploited his remaining room for manoeuvre to the full. Spurned in his Fouchet *démarche* and in other initiatives, the French President chose to make any serious progress in the political integration of Europe impossible for many years. The cost to de Gaulle's opponents of their victory against him was thus to prove severe. For, to paraphrase Spaak, the General ensured that if 'political Europe' could not be intergovernmental, it would not be at all.

⁶³ Fouchet, *op cit*, p203.

⁶⁴ Peyrefitte, *op cit*, p111.

⁶⁵ Michel Debré, *Mémoires: Gouverner 1958-1962*, Volume 3, (Albin Michel, Paris, 1988), p442.

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