

## **The French Road to European Community: From the ECSC to the EEC (1945-1957)**

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*France has made three major attempts at building supranational European institutions during the early years of integration—the ECSC (1951), the EDC/EPC (1954), and the EEC/EURATOM (1957). Among them, the ECSC and the EEC/EURATOM have been successful, while the EDC/EPC initiative was aborted. This paper asks when and how the French supranational initiative could have survived during the years leading to the Treaty of Rome. Based on a historical survey of French European policy from the ECSC to the EEC, this paper argues that a European supranational initiative could have survived, had it been combined with specific political or economic interest. French European initiatives could have led to European institution building when domestic political support was sufficient to ratify the proposal. External factors affected both the interest calculation and the domestic political cost.*

**Keywords:** *France, Europe, ECSC, EDC, EPC, EEC*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It was the French supranational initiative that was known to be the driving force behind the launch of European integration. The Schuman Plan, initiated by Jean Monnet, led to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which became the touchstone of European integration. France was also regarded as the leading country in establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and EURATOM, which formed the major institutions of the European Community (EC) together with the ECSC. Two Founding Fathers - Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman - were the proponents of building a supranational Europe.

However, contrary to conventional wisdom that the French contribution to European integration was simply an outcome of the Founding Fathers' supranational idea, the French initiative toward the European Community was also a process of maximizing national interest - both political and economic. An integrated Europe did not emerge simply out of humanitarian impulses from idealistic founders, but was instead due to the selfish realization of national interests. The creation of the ECSC and the EEC was, to a large degree, a reluctant acceptance of supranationality to guarantee France's interest in a changing European political and economic environment. France pursued integration in Europe insofar as its own economic and security interests were assured.

French initiatives to participate in European integration were also affected by its own domestic political context. Only when the majority in the National Assembly supported the French proposal, could it be used toward successful institution building. In addition, external factors, like circumstances inside Europe, and the US policy toward Europe at that time constituted the environment under which France could pursue its European policy.

This paper examines the period in which France pursued early European integration - from the end of the Second World War to the Treaty of Rome in 1957. France has made three major attempts at building supranational European institutions during the early years of

integration - the ECSC (1951), the EDC/EPC (1954), and the EEC/EURATOM (1957). Among them, the ECSC and the EEC/EURATOM were successful, while the EDC/EPC initiative was aborted. This paper asks when and how the French supranational initiative could have survived during the years leading to the Treaty of Rome.

This paper assumes that the French supranational initiatives were an amalgamation of the idea of a European construction and specific political and economic interests. Finally, to further elucidate the French initiative in European institutional developments during this period, this paper specifically examines the following variables: the ECSC, the EDC/EPC and the EEC/EURATOM.

**Political Interest.** Geopolitical motivation comprised an important part of France's political interest. The German problem was at the center of French concerns throughout the early integration period. The maintenance of France's position as a great power was another key element in comprising French political interest in European integration.

**Economic Interest.** Postwar reconstruction and the modernization of the French industry were also at the core of the French agenda. French economic interest was also related to France's economic influence in Europe *vis-à-vis* Germany and Britain.

**The Idea.** The pro-European idea of political leaders and policymakers was essential to pursuing European integration. The idea of European integration and supranational institutions, promoted by Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, was an important parameter in explaining the French initiative.

**Political Context.** Political instability of the Fourth Republic continued until 1958. Between 1946 and 1958, there were twenty-five governments, of which only one lasted more than a year. French ratification of the major initiatives was made in the context of a complicated party coalition. Therefore, it is essential to understand the dynamics of party politics and the positions of major political parties in explaining the French position in European integration (Guyomarch *et al.* 1998: 6).

**External Factors.** French European policy during the postwar years had been influenced by US foreign policy as well as the British and German situations. The emergence of the Cold War, the outbreak of the Korean War, and tensions among the French colonies affected the French choice of European initiative. These external conditions worked as environmental factors, influencing the interest calculation as well as domestic political affairs.

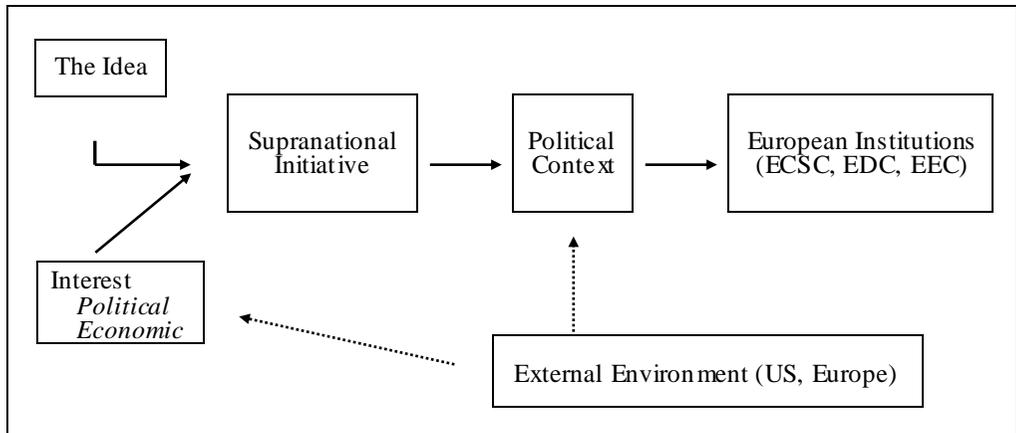
The relationships among the above variables are summarized in Figure 1.

Based on a historical survey of French European policy from the ECSC to the EEC, this paper argues that a European supranational initiative could have survived as an initiative, had it been combined with specific political or economic interests. French European initiatives could have led to European institution building when domestic political support was sufficient to ratify the proposal. External factors affected both the interest calculation and the domestic political cost.

Part two examines the earlier attempts at European cooperation following the end of the Second World War until the creation of the ECSC. Parts three to five review the French position on major institutional developments from the ECSC to the EEC in 1957. The

concluding part summarizes the interplay of ideas, interests, and political contexts in French European policy during the early years of European integration.

**Figure 1.** Relationships among the Variables



## 2. EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN THE POSTWAR YEARS

Postwar European cooperation was based on the awareness of the weakness of the European countries and the belief that a war among European states must be avoided at all costs. The recognition of this reality evinced the necessity for European integration. A series of cooperative measures were thus introduced in the postwar years.

In 1948, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) was created at the initiative of the United States. The OEEC intended to liberalize trade among the member states and enhance monetary and economic cooperation (Gillingham 2003: 38).<sup>1</sup> The United States started economic intervention in Europe with the delivery of massive economic help as outlined in the Marshall Plan.

On March 17, 1948, France, the United Kingdom, and the Benelux countries signed the Brussels Treaty, leading to a common defense aimed at preventing German rearmament and promising military cooperation during a crisis situation (Salmon 1997: 31-2).<sup>2</sup> It also aimed at strengthening economic and cultural ties among the member countries.

The United States began to see the economic recovery of Germany and later its military contribution to Western defense as vital to Europe. In April 1949, the United States and ten European states signed the North Atlantic Treaty Agreement, which led to the advent of the

<sup>1</sup> The OEEC undertook responsibility for eliminating quantitative restrictions as part of its trade liberalization program. Established by the Marshall Plan as a mechanism to distribute financial aids, the OEEC took no account of European cooperation or “integration” as an objective. The OEEC was godfather to the European Payments Union (EPU), which served as a temporal and functional link between the Marshall Plan on one side and the EEC and the EFTA on the other.

<sup>2</sup> The Brussels Treaty was replaced by the Paris Treaty in 1954, in which the phrase, “the cooperation to cope with Germany’s aggression,” was revised to “promote the unity and to encourage the progressive integration of Europe.” (Salmon 1997: 32-3)

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the great Western military alliance that would confront the Soviet Union.

The following year, the Council of Europe, based on the intergovernmental model was set up to facilitate political cooperation among European countries.<sup>3</sup> The Council was given very broad functions, but no real power under the unanimity rule.<sup>4</sup>

European cooperation was being discussed in diverse manners when the idea of an ECSC was hatched. However, European political leaders were divided on the method of constructing a European framework. In the immediate postwar period, a cautious “bottom up” approach was adopted with a focus on intergovernmental cooperation (Guyomarch *et al.* 1998: 22).<sup>5</sup> An alternative method was that of sectoral integration, which would lead eventually to a supranational organization.<sup>6</sup> The second method was adopted partly in reaction to the disappointment over the poor performances of earlier attempts by the Council of Europe and the OEEC (Guyomarch *et al.* 1998: 22). Criticizing the existing organization - the OEEC - the Brussels Treaty and the Council of Europe were making no real progress,<sup>7</sup> Monnet proposed a transformation of past forms of cooperation by establishing new authorities (Diebold 1959: 15).

### 3. THE CREATION OF THE ECSC

#### 3.1. The French Initiative: The Monnet Plan and the Schuman Plan

The French *Plan de Modernisation et d'Équipement*, so called the “Monnet Plan” was designed to offset the lack of wartime investment and to achieve European steel supremacy.<sup>8</sup> One of the major concerns of postwar France was the relative underdevelopment of its economy in comparison to those of Germany and the UK. In 1944, over 25 percent of the labor force was still involved in the agriculture sector, and often in inefficient peasant farming. The manufacturing and service sectors were both small-scale and not dynamic, and much capital and infrastructure had been destroyed during the German occupation. Most

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<sup>3</sup> However, its statutes did not claim to be the union, nor the federation of States, without mentioning the transfer of sovereignty. Their main function, therefore, has been to reinforce the democratic system and human rights in the member states.

<sup>4</sup> It stipulated that national defense matters do not fall within the scope of the Council of Europe (Article 1) (Salmon 1997: 38-9).

<sup>5</sup> In the economic domain, the Ramadier government accepted Marshall Aid and membership of the loose, cooperative intergovernmental body, the OEEC. For defense, the Dunkirk Treaty with Britain in 1947, the 1948 Brussels Treaty (extending the Dunkirk arrangements to the Benelux states) and the 1949 Washington Treaty establishing NATO were all intergovernmental, including the Council of Europe.

<sup>6</sup> In the sectoral approach, integration was conceived as a dynamic process that involved bringing more policy sectors into structures for joint decision-making and policy implementation.

<sup>7</sup> During late 1948 and early 1949 the OEEC tried harmonizing the national recovery programs of its member countries, but it was not successful due to its complexity and the unwillingness of the countries.

<sup>8</sup> The coal and steel industries absorbed about 30 percent of the funds disbursed by the Monnet Plan for modernization.

political leaders were convinced that a recovery from wartime destruction required not only reconstruction, but also modernization (Guyomarch *et al.* 1998: 5).

The supply of coal was especially important in the immediate postwar years. The capacity of the French steel industry was rising rapidly and searching for expansion through export.<sup>9</sup> The problem was that France had plenty of steel but not enough coal. German coal, especially from the Ruhr area, was crucial to French postwar reconstruction and industrialization.

Monnet's policy was to decartelize coal and steel production and break up potential concentrations of the monopoly. It has been said that he wanted to "hogtie" the Germans until they could be trusted or until France had gotten "mean enough" to handle them (Gillingham 2003: 25). Restrictions had to be placed on German steel production.

The French national plan in January 1946 took into account French control of the Saar industry and the restrictions that France wanted to maintain over the industrial power of the Ruhr. France did not want to have an economically strong and rearmed Germany as its neighbor. Instead, France preferred a fragmented Germany. The French had hoped that the International Ruhr Authority would continue to guarantee them access to German coal, but German independence and the rise in Ruhr steel production were putting pressure on the supply (Diebold 1959: 18). The Authority, once regarded as a means to maintain control, seemed to lose its initial influence (Diebold 1959: 18). France faced an Anglo-American resistance and the Germans also resented the controls imposed upon them.<sup>10</sup>

The option the French government chose was to find a new approach to the German problem. Monnet pointed out that the German situation was becoming increasingly more dangerous and France had to deal with the German problem, which could not be settled with what France had in hand. France had to change what she had by transforming it.<sup>11</sup> Franco-German cooperation in the coal and steel industries would be inevitable for the modernization of France. Monnet's idea was elaborated and visualized by Foreign Minister Schuman.

The Schuman Plan was expected to stabilize the coal supply and bring fair competition, low consumer prices, and industrial concentration in the Ruhr (AMAE 1951a: 147-77). This proposal put together the two major sectors of heavy industry - coal and steel - under the supranational control of a new European institution.

The international situation also affected the initiative of the Schuman Plan (AHF-Information 2001). Germany was moving toward increased independence, strength, and eventually rearmament. The French government had gone along reluctantly with American and British measures that relaxed controls on Germany (Diebold 1959: 10). Germany wanted to restore her full sovereignty and industrial potential, which was under the authority of the Occupation. Previous institutions for supervision would be dismissed or turned into international institutions in which Germany could participate (AMAE 1949: 61-2). Recognizing this reality, Schuman noted, "We shall deal directly with the Germans and offer them equal status in return for mutual safeguards, not on paper but in the mines and factories

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<sup>9</sup> While France's steel output was rising above prewar levels that of West Germany was lagging.

<sup>10</sup> They were upset by what appeared to be French attempts to detach the Saar permanently from Germany. On the same day of the ECSC signing, German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer wrote a letter to Robert Schuman confirming the French disposition regarding the issue of the Saar. Germany was still doubtful of what the ECSC would do for the fate of Germany (AMAE 1951b: 42).

<sup>11</sup> Jean Monnet (Salmon 1997: 41-4).

of the Ruhr and Lorraine” (Diebold 1959: 11).

After eleven months of trying times of negotiations, the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg - the original “Six” - signed the Treaty of Paris in April 1951, establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The common High Authority was presided by Jean Monnet.

### 3.2. The French Choice for an ECSC

Initially, the French government preferred a vague form of international control of the Ruhr. However, it had to find a different strategy when the Anglo-Americans, without consulting the French, gave the Germans *carte blanche* to decide how and who would own the mines. When France realized that its initial position could no longer be maintained, France found the second best way to control the Ruhr in a supranational body.

In the beginning, ECSC discussions accompanied internal disputes. French political leaders disagreed on the appropriate dimensions for a new Europe. Monnet and many Christian Democrats took an integrationist position. On the opposite side, the Gaullists, the Communists, and some Independents voiced objections. General de Gaulle and his supporters in the RRF (the Gaullist Party) advocated “*l’Europe des Etats* (a Europe of nation states)” instead of a supranational European institution.<sup>12</sup>

Proponents of the ECSC argued that France would have to take economic risks in order to attain larger political and economic gains. They claimed that France could reap positive economic benefits from the ECSC and that France would still face many of the problems and risks without it. Without the ECSC, France would have no safeguards when the German economy eventually liberalizes. Under the ECSC, French and German buyers would have equal access to coal from the Ruhr and this elimination of any possible monopoly would contribute to the stabilization of the supply in the long run. Increased competitiveness would increase the efficiency of the French steel industry (Diebold 1959: 91-2).

Labor union and steel producers expressed their discontent. Some even contended that Monnet had manipulated technocrats and politicians (AMAE 1951c: 411-14, 1951d: 622-24). Official voices of the organized steel industry often spoke against the Schuman Plan or pressed for amendments. They were concerned over competitive disadvantages compared to the companies that operated in the Ruhr, as well as the control of their industrial activities by an international bureaucracy (Diebold 1959: 85-88). In their minds, the coal and steel community would have a more negative than positive impact on France.

In spite of the dispute, however, there was a general consensus that European unity was necessary and to support the ECSC was to support European unification. Opponents, including the Gaullists, asked for a stronger France in the new scheme, but did not outright confront proposed European integration itself. A favorable vote in the Foreign Affairs Committee in the National Assembly was a victory for the proponents (26-18) (Diebold 1959: 84).

The success of the ECSC was due in large part to Monnet’s vision and deft combination of national interest and backstage hard dealing, (Gillingham 2003: 21)<sup>13</sup> but the role of

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<sup>12</sup> But party line-up was not a religious attachment. There were a certain degree of disbarments within each party.

<sup>13</sup> The main source of Jean Monnet’s postwar power came from his special role as flow regulator along the American aid pipeline. Monnet could be the Frenchman that Washington trusted most.

Konrad Adenauer, a Francophile German counterpart, during his chancellorship also made an important contribution (Gillingham 2003: 22). Adenauer saw the Schuman Plan as an expedient means of bringing the occupation to an end and was willing to sacrifice the interests of the Ruhr to the greater good of a reconciliation with France (Petermann 2001).<sup>14</sup>

In sum, Monet and Schuman's vision could successfully be combined with French economic and political interests. Despite discontent from the opposition, the French government mobilized sufficient support to resolve the Ruhr problem in a supranational scheme and thereupon, maintain control over Germany.

#### 4. ABORTED INITIATIVES: THE EDC AND THE EPC

##### 4.1. Maintaining the Momentum: The Initiatives of the EDC & the EPC

In France, the preoccupation of political leaders with the unresolved problem of territorial security still lingered during the early European integration process (Tuominen 1997).<sup>15</sup> France found itself in an awkward predicament. On the one hand, it was concerned with the rise of Communism, but on the other hand it looked askance at a possible re-emergence of Germany. France feared that the German army would develop into an independent institution, functioning outside the control of the allies (Van der Harst 2003a). In order to cope with this predicament, the French government decided to utilize the Schuman Plan concept and apply it to military matters.

France became alarmed at a U.S. proposal in the summer of 1950 to rearm the Germans in an Atlantic context, which was prompted by the outbreak of the Korean War. Faced with U.S. demands for German rearmament, French Prime Minister Pleven announced in October 1950 a plan for German remilitarization under the aegis of the European Defence Community (EDC).<sup>16</sup> The Pleven Plan provided for a European Army under the Atlantic umbrella, run by a European Minister of Defense and the Council of Ministers, with a joint commander, common budget, and common arms procurement. A commissariat would have oversight powers over the multinational armed forces, much like that of the High Authority of the ECSC (Guyomarch *et al.* 1998: 29).<sup>17</sup>

The army of a united Europe, composed of men from different European countries, would achieve a complete fusion of human and material elements under a single European political and military authority.<sup>18</sup> France had the largest armed forces on the continent, and Britain as

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<sup>14</sup> The Federal Republic's economic strength would assure West European respect for its national interest. Political dwarfism and economic gigantism are the basis for the semi-sovereign status that has made Germany a model for the other great nations of Europe.

<sup>15</sup> A survey conducted in May 1953 showed the French fear of Germany. About 57 percent of the people believed that the existence of German military troops would create a danger to France.

<sup>16</sup> The suggestion is directly inspired by the recommendation adopted on August 11, 1950 by the assembly of the Council of Europe, demanding the immediate creation of a unified European army destined to cooperate with the American and Canadian Forces in the defense of peace.

<sup>17</sup> The "top down" model, constitutional federalism, based on the idea that a major constitutional change was required to establish a "United State of Europe," was adopted in Pleven's EDC.

<sup>18</sup> The main elements of the EDC Treaty include: division of different nationalities and the elevation to the level of national division; a common budget; and a common armament program.

was predicted refused to participate in the scheme. French officers were thus to be placed in command of a force composed largely of German troops (Gillingham 2003: 29). The French could keep its national forces apart from the European Army for colonial and other purposes. It was a proposition to rearm the Germans without re-establishing an individual German army (Tuominen 1997).

The EDC was a policy conceived in the interests of the French, dressed up in European language. It concerned a French initiative to make German rearmament feasible within the controllable framework of a European army. Monnet was the architect behind this idea, too. Monnet seized the problem of rearming Germany and stressed the links between the Schuman Plan and a common defense policy. He insisted that France must regain the initiative because the Germans, with the aid of the United States, were going to rearm anyway, and if they did it nationally, then the entire process of integration, especially the Schuman Plan would be in jeopardy. The EDC emerged, to a large degree, as the French means of salvaging the Schuman Plan. Monnet simplified his European idea to the idea of defending France's interests. (Tuominen 1997).

Negotiations to form the EDC began in February 1951. Although Monnet was not directly involved in the EDC talks, he again used his influence behind the scenes to win powerful U.S. support for the Pleven Plan. The six ECSC countries signed the EDC treaty on May 27, 1952, in Paris. Article 38 of the Paris Treaty called for the establishment of a supranational political authority to direct the EDC. Ratification debates were successfully concluded in Germany (Spring 1953), Netherlands (July 1953), Belgium (November 1953) and Luxembourg (April 1954).<sup>19</sup>

Discussions of a European army and defense community triggered more discussions of common foreign policies and a political community. At the insistence of French socialists that a political control mechanism be established to oversee the EDC, a new round of negotiations for a European Political Community (EPC) was launched. In September 1952, the foreign ministers of the Six acted on a resolution to entrust a parliamentary body with the task of implementing Article 38, by drafting the statute for the supranational EPC. The EPC would not only encompass the EDC and the ECSC, but also embrace foreign, economic, and monetary policy coordination. The EPC was to be the beginning of a comprehensive federation to which the ECSC and the EDC would be subordinate. A proposal for the EPC came as a complement to the EDC, but it did not reach the treaty stage. A special ECSC assembly accepted the draft for the EPC in March 1953. Article 82 of the draft bore special importance; it became the starting point for the conclusion of the treaty establishing the European Economic Community.<sup>20</sup>

#### **4.2. The French Rejection of the EDC and the EPC**

The Pleven Plan and the EDC/EPC initiative, in general, followed the ECSC model, but they ran into a series of opposition from the beginning. The immediate challenge came from

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<sup>19</sup> For more discussion on the EDC, see Van Der Harst (2003b), Ruane (2000).

<sup>20</sup> "The Community, while upholding the principles defined in Articles 2, 3 and 4 of the treaty instituting the European Coal and Steel Community, shall establish progressively a common market of goods, capital, and persons," "In order to achieve the aim mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the Community shall foster the coordination of the policy of the member States in monetary, credit and financial matters," (Salmon 1997: 54-8).

the nationalist campaign in France opposing the European Army. Many French doubted whether an allied command structure would be efficient, and they were also skeptical of the ultimate subordination to NATO, and America. Moreover, there was a strong disinclination to hand over governmental control of the state's armed forces. There remained a deep antagonism over rearming Germany (Salmon 1997: 49-50). Even the French military was not wholeheartedly supporting the proposal.

The EDC/EPC problem was never an easy issue for political leaders of France. The French Fourth Republic was quite unstable and governments merely tended to delay controversial issues like the EDC/EPC to be dealt with at later dates. The reluctance to sacrifice sovereignty was especially difficult to accept for some politicians. Delegation of power from the national level to the European level was unbearable for the Gaullists, especially where the French army was concerned. It was feared that the EDC/EPC would dilute French capabilities to fight elsewhere over its overseas territories. The issue of colonial management was controversial, especially with the issue of the EPC. Many nationalist-minded people were concerned with losing control over the colonies under the supranational EPC structure (Kim 2001, 2002).

The domestic political context did not favor the French initiative for an EDC/EPC, either. Until late 1952, the pro-European MRP and the SFIO played a major role in pursuing European integration. But the election in late 1952 brought the Gaullist and Eurosceptic RPF considerable support. The new government had to depend on Gaullist support for its political survival. In the changed political situation, Schuman was replaced by George Bidault (MRP), a man who was much less convinced of the need to pursue an EDC.<sup>21</sup> Monnet's influence declined as well.

External situations also affected discussions of the EDC/EPC at home. Contrary to its previous position, the United States changed its European policy during the first half of 1951 and began to support the Pleven Plan and the idea of the EDC.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the US felt a large-scale deployment overseas more and more burdensome. With the intensification of the Cold War, German rearmament was becoming a near-future reality, with or without the EDC. The US pressed hard for the ratification of the EDC Treaty. The campaign on behalf of the EDC culminated in the new Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's "agonizing reappraisal" speech of December 1953, in which he threatened to cut back military aid to Europe if the treaty were rejected.

In the early 1950s, France became increasingly preoccupied with colonial problems, especially those in Indochina, where France suffered a decisive defeat at *Dien Bien Phu* in May 1954. After the signing of the peace treaty on Indochina, French dependence on the United States reduced considerably. Following the decision to abandon French colonial rule in Indochina, France was finally in a position to risk US aid cutbacks (Gillingham 2003: 31).

In short, there was a consensus on the necessity of containing Germany within an EDC/EPC framework. However, there was also the suspicion that the EDC/EPC would sacrifice French sovereignty. The pursuit of French interests in a military domain faced opponents who put more weight on sovereignty and colony issues. Between the two contradicting national interests, the EDC/EPC initiative could not mobilize enough political support.

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<sup>21</sup> Regarding Bidault's position, see Soutou (1991), Kim (2001).

<sup>22</sup> The US had been disappointed with the performance of the OEEC. On the contrary, the Schuman Plan seemed to be a step in the right direction and the Pleven Plan would be the next step.

The EDC/EPC proposal was rejected in the French National Assembly in August 1954.<sup>23</sup> All Communists voted against the EDC, as did most Gaullists. Only the MRP voted solidly for it. Other parties were about equally divided (Petermann 2001). Even Monnet could not prevent the EDC/EPC from failing and the lukewarm stance of Mendès-France had doomed the EDC/EPC.<sup>24</sup>

The damage done to European integration was severe. Only the ECSC could survive European integration. Instead of an EDC, Great Britain, France, and the United States agreed to shift to the NATO alternative for German rearmament. A proposal for a loose intergovernmental defense organization to supervise the new German armed forces came from the British Conservative government led by Anthony Eden. The government of Mendès-France quickly accepted this proposal, and in October 1954, the six members of the ECSC and Great Britain signed a treaty creating the Western European Union (WEU) (Guyomarch *et al.* 1998: 23).

## 5. TOWARD THE TREATY OF ROME: THE EEC AND EURATOM

### 5.1. Reviving the European Initiative

The initiative of re-launching Europe was first taken by the Benelux countries in the form of a general common market. Dutch Foreign Minister Willem Beyen saw the EDC as a useful intermediate station on the road to further European integration, especially integration in economic matters. Within the framework of EPC discussions, Beyen launched his own Beyen Plan for trade liberalization. Beyen recommended that a customs union be formed to advance European integration to the next stage. Beyen's proposal was developed as the core of the "Benelux memorandum," which served as the basic text for discussions at Messina. Paul-Henri Spaak then prepared a memorandum suggesting further integration along the lines of an atomic energy community and a common market.

At a meeting in Messina, Italy, in June 1955, the ECSC foreign ministers discussed the future of European integration.<sup>25</sup> The Six were of the opinion that the objective of a European construction should first be achieved within an economic sphere. The goal of the economic policy included the construction of a common European market, free of internal duties and free of all quantitative restrictions. On March 25, 1957, the Six signed the Treaty of Rome, establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM).

The EEC was born through on a series of institutions: the European Commission, the European Assembly (later changed to the European Parliament), the Court of Justice, and the Economic and Social Committee. The other essential agreement included in the Treaty was the adoption of a Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). The French could once again play a leading role in the integration process (Gillingham 2003: 36).

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<sup>23</sup> The result of the vote was 264 ayes, 319 nays, and 43 abstentions.

<sup>24</sup> Dumoulin described the failure of the EDC as "collective murder" (Dumoulin 2000).

<sup>25</sup> Major agreements at the Messina Declaration were: the joint development of the main channels of communication; cooperation on energy production and consumption; and peaceful development of atomic energy (Salmon 1997: 59-61).

## 5.2. Negotiating Economic Integration

The idea of a common market ignited heated debates domestically. Fear had seized French businesses, bureaucrats, and the French public who had become accustomed to relying on protectionism (Gillingham 2003: 44). The idea of a customs union was at first opposed by some ministerial officials, as well as specific disadvantaged economic sectors. The *Quai d'Orsay* (French Foreign Ministry) had argued that more time was needed to observe the effects of the ECSC. They were skeptical of both the economic and the political benefits of a customs union (Lynch 1997: 169-70). Another concern was that the customs union would be the vehicle for restoring German political and economic hegemony in Europe. And the external tariffs set by the Benelux countries seemed too low, and would thus prove detrimental to France's external trade.

Support for liberalization came mainly from exporters and bankers. French industry was modernizing and French exports to Europe between 1953 and 1957 almost doubled (Gillingham 2003: 37).<sup>26</sup> Big businesses began to feel the need for closer commercial cooperation with other European countries. The *Conseil National du Patronat Français* (CNPF), the French Patron's Association, began leaning toward supporting the customs union. The idea that economic modernization would be possible only through trade liberalization, and concerns about economic isolation began to spread (Moravcsik 1998: 115).<sup>27</sup>

Compared to the *Quai d'Orsay*, the Finance Ministry was more supportive of the idea of further economic integration. The Finance Ministry noticed the improvement in the French payments position in the EPU since 1954 and it felt confident that the French economy could survive in a common market (Lynch 1997: 172).

But before the EEC could be launched, France had to deal with the free-trade proposal designed by the British and officially sponsored by the OEEC. To the British, a free-trade area was the only way to weaken the Six as the core of a new continental power. For France, closer relations with Britain were desirable, but an FTA was just not in France's economic interests unless agriculture could be included. Guy Mollet once considered an Anglo-French economic union to keep France out of the common market, but he did not receive warm support from the British government.<sup>28</sup>

Confronted with this situation, atomic energy and consequent EURATOM discussions were considered as a new breakthrough.<sup>29</sup> EURATOM was accepted as "the lesser evil" than the customs union, and the Mollet government preferred a staged approach, hoping that the success of EURATOM would subsequently make it easier to ratify the Common Market

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<sup>26</sup> World trade increased about threefold in the 1950s. Intra-European exports and imports quadrupled, while West Germany's exports and imports nearly quintupled during this decade. During these years the European economy was being internationalized and Europeanized.

<sup>27</sup> Compared to the cautious and conditional support from businesses, the position of agriculture was more positive. Agriculture accounted for a higher share of employment (25 percent) in France, but the bulk of French production was in less competitive, land-intensive agricultural commodities. Subsidy from the CAP was necessary for farming prosperity.

<sup>28</sup> Mollet traveled to London, but he was rebuffed because the British were reluctant to deal with French agriculture.

<sup>29</sup> Monnet thought that the idea of an economic community was too broad, especially after the failure of the EDC and the EPC. Instead, he supported the initiation of EURATOM first.

Treaty. However, the German government was adamant on linking the two treaties simultaneously and had the full agreement of Belgium and the Netherlands (Lynch 1997: 173).

The debate turned to the costs of non-acceptance. There were concerns that France would be driven into isolation in both economic and foreign policies. The failure of the EDC and the EPC added a burden for non-acceptance of the treaty. The French government began to realize that the French Union could be maintained only through European financial assistance, investment, and market opportunities. Finally, France decided to step toward further European economic integration.<sup>30</sup>

### 5.3. The French Choice for the Treaty of Rome

The January 1955 replacement of the anti-European French Prime Minister Pierre Mendès-France by Edgar Faure, a pragmatic European, was a turning point that re-launched the French European initiative. His successor, Guy Mollet,<sup>31</sup> was well disposed to advancing integration.

In January 1956, the French legislative elections led to a new center-left government. The number of Communists had increased, but the number of Gaullists had fallen from eighty to twenty. The rest of the government, led by Mollet, was sympathetic to the idea of a common market, but it still feared a repetition of the EDC fiasco.

The governments of Edgar Faure and Guy Mollet, which directed policy making during the re-launch of European integration, championed the Monnet proposal as the preferred approach to integration because it provided not only a convenient “smokescreen” behind which France could protect its interests, but also a bargaining chip that could be traded for economic concessions needed to make French entrance into a future customs union politically acceptable.

Unlike the EDC/EPC ratification, however, when unified opposition of the Gaullists overwhelmed the split among the proponents (SFIO, Radicals, Conservatives), the Gaullists were divided, whereas the proponents reunited in EEC votes. The vote united the Socialists, who had once been divided over the EDC/EPC. SFIO leaders stressed that the customs union and export-led growth were economic imperatives (Moravcsik 1998: 121).<sup>32</sup> Unlike previous antipathy toward the EDC/EPC, de Gaulle himself remained silent in the EEC from Messina throughout ratification. De Gaulle’s silence and the absence of compelling geopolitical arguments permitted a majority to support the treaty on essentially economic grounds

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<sup>30</sup> Instead, the French government proposed several conditions to be met before moving toward a common market (Lynch 1997: 177). At the Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Venice, in May 1956, the French Foreign Minister Pineau agreed to the Spaak Report on the condition that the length of time needed to proceed to the second stage of tariff reductions should depend on the progress made in harmonizing legislation and that the overseas territories should be included in the common market. France also argued for the harmonization of social legislation from the early stages. In the end, there was a compromise; general energy and technology sharing to make EURATOM acceptable to Germany and the inclusion of agriculture and protection of overseas territories into the EEC, making it acceptable to the French.

<sup>31</sup> Mollet was a minister for Europe, 1950-1951, president of the Council of Europe, 1954-56, and a member of Monnet’s Action Committee for Europe.

<sup>32</sup> The turning point was the signing of the London Accords, resolving the German situation.

(Moravcsik 1998: 117). In January 1957, the French government secured almost all of its conditions for the common market at the National Assembly. On July 10, 1957, the French National Assembly ratified the Treaty of Rome.<sup>33</sup>

Like the ECSC, the EEC was a means of tying Germany to Europe and thus rendering a future European war impossible. Geopolitical ideas and interests were still important, but the German problem was less sensitive in the negotiation of the EEC than that of the EDC/EPC or the ECSC. Coexistence with Germany had already become a given condition. A few sensitive issues on German rearmament had already been solved. Economic integration followed the resolution of outstanding geopolitical issues, such as the formation of NATO and the WEU, the disposition of the Saar and Moselle issues, and the launching of the French nuclear program (Lynch 1997: 183; Moravcsik 1998: 118).<sup>34</sup>

Pressures from colonial issues were alleviated after 1954, giving more leverage to those who were pursuing further European integration. Ties to French colonies began to weaken in the 1950s, while financial costs of the empire became more and more unsustainable. The French government could no longer cope with the burden of financing investment in their overseas territories and was failing to mobilize sufficient private investment (Gillingham 2003: 48). Economic cooperation with continental European countries was the only remaining way to maintain close relations with the present and former colonies.

The Suez Crisis of November 1956 was another shock to the French.<sup>35</sup> France realized that an alliance with Britain was of little help and so shifted its focus to Germany and other continental countries. The rise of German power, the prospect of decolonization, and the failure of the EDC engendered in the French a fear of diplomatic isolation. The EEC provided an opportunity to repair the damage to their own prestige and position caused by their rejection of the EDC.

The initiative toward the EEC was reinforced by the French government's awareness of economic necessity. The political costs of launching a common market were not as high as those required for an EDC/EPC. The issue of sovereignty was less salient. The return of pro-European politicians also facilitated the French move toward the EEC.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The French road to a European Community was a strategic outcome to maximize its national interests under a changing European environment. A series of French initiatives for a supranational European institution reflected the combination of European ideas and the two pillars of national interest - politics and economics. They were also affected by domestic and international political contexts.

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<sup>33</sup> The vote was 342 in favor and 239 against, including sixteen out of twenty-one (Gaullists).

<sup>34</sup> Lynch argues that the French government's decision to sign the Treaty of Rome was not its preferred foreign policy option. Even though the government justified it to the National Assembly in foreign policy terms, it was the persuasive strength of the economic case, which ensured its success. After Britain's rejection of Mollet's proposal for an Anglo-French Union, the French government had no foreign policy alternative left.

<sup>35</sup> However, direct evidence for the widespread claim that the Suez Crisis fundamentally altered French preferences is sparse.

The idea of a supranational Europe was an important source for integration, but the idea alone could not drive an integration strategy. In the beginning, pro-European ideology was shared only by a limited pool of political elites. Fear and doubt prevailed within the public and among the bureaucrats. In this uncertain political situation, the idea did play the role of focal point and roadmap, especially in establishing the ECSC. During this period, Jean Monnet was at the center of spreading the European idea. However, the idea only survived and became effective when it was combined with certain types of interests: the containment of Germany, economic modernization, and France's *grandeur* in Europe and the world.

The French Fourth Republic constantly sought to control Germany's economic power and diplomatic strength. Germany would eventually be restored to a position of equality in Europe, but at the price of merging a crucial component of its economy, its coal and steel productive capacity, with those of its neighbors, allowing France one way of keeping some measure of control over the development of the German economy. More importantly, German rearmament would be controlled as Germany became integrated into Western Europe (Hitchcock 1998). The French ambition to maintain a great power status, together with its management of its colonies was its main political interest.

The need for economic recovery had also been at the center of French strategy, as shown in the Monnet Plan. French postwar economic policy had the objectives of industrial expansion and liberalization of domestic markets within the EC (Moravcsik 1998: 193). Economic interest became even more salient after the abandonment of the EDC. As compared to the debacle of the EDC/EPC rejection in 1954, it was commercial interests that permitted rapid negotiation and ratification. The EEC negotiations deliberately avoided confronting sensitive political issues. In fact, by the beginning of the EEC negotiations, the concern for German rearmament under the transatlantic alliance had already become a reality.

In the political context, both inter- and intra-party alliances influenced the articulation of a particular type of interest and ultimately decided the stop-and-go results. The European federalist movement in France was modest and often faced vehement opposition. Only the MRP showed unquestioned support for supranational institutions and federal schemes. Deliberate political maneuvering had been crucial to advancing the integration strategy.

During the ECSC negotiations, both political and economic interests were combined with the idea of Monnet and Schuman. In spite of doubts and some discontent, political support for the European coal and steel cooperation enabled the successful launch of the ECSC. In the EDC/EPC case, the French political interest of building a European army coupled with the supranational momentum of the ECSC could not overcome the objections from nationalist-minded politicians, who constituted the majority in the National Assembly. In EEC negotiations, economic issues replaced political issues. Economic agenda, in fact, was much easier in mobilizing domestic support than supranational political initiatives. The French initiative toward a common market and EURATOM successfully mobilized support from the pro-European majority in the National Assembly. The diplomatic burden from the failure of the EDC became, in turn, a basis for further initiatives. An abrupt increase in European economic interdependence, a loosening of ties with the colonies, and the settlement of German issues under the transatlantic military alliance led to the recalculation of the French national interest, which ultimately led to the ratification of the Treaty of Rome.

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