

European Integration and National Interests (1962)

Abstract

From the outset, the governments of the EC member states had differing views on how far European integration should go. This summary, which is based on speeches by European statesmen, reveals fundamental differences of opinion on the goals and contours of European integration in France, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Great Britain.

Source

Differences of Opinion on the Construction of Europe

Compiled by the editorial office on the basis of declarations by the respective statesmen published recently in Archiv der Gegenwart

1. France

General Charles de Gaulle wants a Europe of states (governments) and no integrated supranational Europe, which he characterizes as a myth and a fiction. He wants the states (governments) to have the deciding vote, also in economic matters, and not the supranational authorities of the European Communities, such as the EEC Commission. He is opposed to majority decisions by the European Council of Ministers in all questions that are significant from a national or international perspective because neither France nor any other country is prepared to do anything it believes is bad or wrong on command. He emphasizes that an integrated Europe would require a federator, which is presently lacking, with the necessary power, reputation, and resonance for the project, and he warns that an integrated Europe would not develop any of its own policies as a result of majority decisions and might therefore comply with an external federator who is not European (USA) out of weakness. He is willing to allow the European parliament the right to discuss even political issues but not to pass laws that would be binding for the European states. De Gaulle is not pleased that Britain is applying for membership in the EEC, since he is concerned that that country could challenge his leading role in the European Union, especially since Britain has a huge head start in the nuclear field, in part because of U.S. information to which de Gaulle is denied access. He also fears that, for the benefit of the Commonwealth countries, Britain might challenge, especially in Africa, the advantages (i.e., bonds from the EEC development fund) enjoyed by the twelve African republics that were previously French possessions and are now associated with the EEC. He is committed to tying the French Army—which, in the Algerian crisis, ran the risk of being forced into a position opposing the state—closer to the nation, to having it stationed largely on French soil, and to letting France's defense become a national defense again. De Gaulle maintains his resolve to build up France's own power to act as a nuclear deterrent. As long as the United States had a clear nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union, he believed it was justified that France practically gave the United States responsibility for its defense. At that time, it could still be thought certain that any communist aggression in Europe could be destroyed by a nuclear response from the United States. In view of the present nuclear stalemate between the two giants and their mutual knowledge that each could destroy the other, de Gaulle thinks that no one can know in advance if, when, and under what circumstances the United States would decide for a nuclear response and thereby accept the risk of suicide. This is also one reason why de Gaulle would like to see Europe as a Third Power between the two superpowers, one that would raise its voice in the world and—furnished with the necessary clout—make itself heard effectively. In this sense, de Gaulle hopes for a reform of NATO; he feels this is fundamentally necessary and is willing to meet the attendant obligations. He would like this reform to include: giving the European states a say

regarding the organization and deployment of U.S. nuclear deterrents within the scope of NATO, the expansion of NATO to Africa and Asia, and the creation of some sort of three-member directorate to discuss global issues through regular meetings of the heads of the governments of the United States, Great Britain, and France. Regarding the Berlin Question, de Gaulle is opposed to any departure from the Four Powers Agreements of the occupation regime. He is tolerating the so-called Berlin exploratory talks that the United States, on its own authority, is conducting with the Soviet Union. He explains that France wants nothing to do with them and stresses that he considers such talks not only pointless but also dangerous. In his view, the Berlin problem and the Berlin chicaneries staged by the Soviet Union only serve the Soviet Union as a suitable—that is, crucial—point of departure for bringing up the entire Germany problem in its own interest. Every concession made to the USSR in the Berlin Question would therefore lead only to new chicanery and pressures under worsened conditions for the West. Regarding the German Question, de Gaulle supports maintaining the status quo at the present time in view of the precarious balance between East and West, since any talks come at the risk of a setback for the West and because any hope of uniting Europe depends on solidarity between Germany and France, as does the fate of Europe from the Atlantic to the Ural Mountains. By creating an attractive Western Europe, this solidarity could help establish a European balance with the states of the East, especially if the totalitarian regime there would abandon its ambitions at the same time. Only then would it be possible to solve the German problem objectively.

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3. The Federal Republic of Germany

From the outset, the Federal Republic of Germany has in principle advocated an integrated Europe. It is a principle that was already anchored in the Basic Law in 1948 and was supported by terrible experiences with nationalistic ideas in two lost world wars. Germany regrets that the attitude of General de Gaulle has brought a delay to the idea of integration. It respects de Gaulle's opinions without sharing them and hopes and trusts that a Europe made up of separate states will still ultimately lead to a confederation – a possibility that de Gaulle also did not rule out entirely. Britain's joining the EEC is not a problem for the Federal Republic; in fact it supports the move. But the Federal Republic seeks to avoid anything that could question what has been achieved thus far, especially the very valuable anchoring of its friendship with former "archenemy" France in the European Community. The Federal Republic is opposed to inflating the EEC, above all through the membership of non-European countries strictly for economic reasons, since that would threaten the political substance of the European Union, which the Federal Republic sees as its most essential aspect. The Federal Republic attaches great importance to maintaining NATO, since it believes that Western policies and the defense of Western Europe are not possible without the United States. This is especially true with respect to the Berlin Question and the German Question in general. The Federal Republic approves of the U.S.-Soviet exploratory talks but wishes that any new regulation of the question of access routes to Berlin and other related issues remains the primary responsibility of the Four Powers and does everything possible to avoid what could be seen as a *de facto* or even *de jure* recognition of the Soviet zone. The Federal Republic is also opposed to any arms limitations that are not general in nature but would apply only to Germany or only to a certain area. With respect to information, its wishes for certain minimum guarantees and for having some say regarding non-NATO nuclear deterrence were essentially satisfied at the meeting of the NATO Council of Ministers in Athens in 1962.

4. Great Britain

Britain's decision to apply for membership in the EEC, which is based primarily on economic considerations, did not become politically viable until it became clear that de Gaulle's insistence on a Europe of separate states (governments) did not leave any options for the advocates of an integrated Europe to see their goal implemented quickly. The supranational elements in the treaties of Paris (ECSC)

and Rome (EEC), namely, the High Authority or Commission and, with respect to voting regulations, the decisions of the Council of Ministers, were the utmost that seemed acceptable to Britain in this regard, at least for the present time, especially since these supranational elements refer only to economic matters. Once Britain becomes a member, then its approval is necessary for any expansion of the supranationality, and for any treaty amendments at all. Britain emphasizes that it belongs to Europe and is firmly resolved to participate actively and positively in the political – that is, not only the economic – consolidation and shaping of Europe. However, it always supports pragmatic – and not dogmatic – methods for structuring Europe. This difference in method was also the main subject of numerous years-long debates in the Council of Europe since 1950, just as it was in the talks on establishing a European Free Trade Zone, and it was ultimately the reason for creating the EFTA. And so General de Gaulle, through his equally pragmatic stance – in contrast to the views and plans of the previous French governments – has also played an essential role in Britain’s decision to apply for membership in the EEC, even though he is not too happy about its becoming a member. Great Britain has declared its willingness to fully accept the Treaty of Rome. It would like, however, to see special provisions within the framework of the treaty – such as those that also exist for the benefit of other EEC members – that take into account its preferential trade relations with the Commonwealth and the particular aspects of its agriculture. It also wants a satisfactory solution to be found for its EFTA partners, since it promised not to let them down. Britain is in full agreement with the U.S.-Soviet exploratory talks and with the standpoint of the United States regarding the questions of Berlin and Germany.

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Source: “Die Meinungsverschiedenheiten über die Konstruktion Europas,” *Archiv der Gegenwart*, May 19, 1962, pp. 9867–68.

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