

# De Gaulle Between Grain and *Grandeur*: The Political Economy of French EC Policy, 1958–1970 (Part I)

❖ Andrew Moravcsik

Over two thousand books and articles in over forty-five languages have been devoted to the life of General Charles de Gaulle. Many more treat his policies within the context of French foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> Yet in at least one respect, these studies are remarkably uniform. Almost without exception, they treat de Gaulle as the archetype of the visionary or ideological statesman. Biographers and commentators agree that he was an “innovative leader” driven by “high” rather than “low” politics; he desired political-military prestige and security more than economic welfare; and he had a distinctive geopolitical world view that eschewed mundane concerns of democratic governance. His leadership style, it is argued, encouraged mass mobilization by appealing to an idiosyncratic yet resonant set of symbols and ideas. His term as French president from 1958 to 1969 is widely regarded as a study in the possibilities and limitations of visionary statecraft in the modern era.<sup>2</sup>

1. On the number of books, see Philip H. Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France: French Security Policy and the Gaullist Legacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 203n. A selective, one-decade compilation is over three hundred pages long. Institut Charles de Gaulle, *Nouvelle bibliographie internationale sur Charles de Gaulle, 1980–1990* (Paris: Plon, 1990).

2. This is evident from recent titles: Regis Debray, *De Gaulle: Futurist of the Nation* (London: Verso, 1994); Daniel J. Mahoney, *De Gaulle: Statesmanship, Grandeur, and Modern Democracy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996); John Newhouse, *De Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxons* (New York: Viking Press, 1970); Stanley Hoffmann, “De Gaulle as an Innovative Leader,” in Gabriel Sheffer, ed., *Innovative Leaders in International Politics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 57–81; John Pinder, *Europe against de Gaulle* (London: Pall Mall, 1963); Charles Williams, *The Last Great Frenchman: A Life of General de Gaulle* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1993); Serge Bernstein, *La France et l’expansion: Le république gaullienne, 1958–1969* (Paris: Seuil, 1989); Lois Pattison de Ménil, *Who Speaks for Europe? The Vision of Charles de Gaulle* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977); Stanley Hoffmann, “De Gaulle’s Foreign Policy: The Stage and the Play, the Power and the Glory,” in Stanley Hoffmann, ed., *Decline or Renewal? France since the 1930s* (New York: Viking Press, 1974), pp. 283–331; Anton W. DePorte, *De Gaulle’s Foreign Policy, 1964–1966* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); and Nora Beloff, *The General Says No: Britain’s Exclusion from Europe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963).

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Nowhere is the overriding importance of de Gaulle's distinctive ideas said to be demonstrated more clearly than in the striking set of French policies toward the European Economic Community (EEC) developed under his presidency. De Gaulle's approach toward European integration had four strands. First, upon entering office in 1958, the General surprised observers by swiftly embracing the Treaty of Rome, and he subsequently worked closely with leaders of the five other EEC countries to accelerate its implementation, including establishment of a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Common Commercial Policy. Second, in the early 1960s, de Gaulle proposed but unsuccessfully promoted the Fouchet Plan, an intergovernmental arrangement for European foreign and economic policy coordination. Third, de Gaulle consistently opposed closer relations with Britain, successively vetoing British proposals for a free trade area (FTA) in 1959, an EEC-EFTA agreement the following year, and British membership in the EEC in 1963 and 1967. Not until 1970 did his close associate and Gaullist successor, Georges Pompidou, finally lift the veto, following up on preliminary steps taken by de Gaulle himself. Fourth and finally, de Gaulle launched the "empty chair" crisis in July 1965—a six-month French boycott of decision making in Brussels with apparent intent to alter the institutional structure of the EEC. The crisis, which appeared to call into question the very existence of the EEC, was resolved only with the Luxembourg Compromise of 1966, which granted each member government an extra-legal veto over any EEC legislation that threatened a "vital interest."

There is a great divergence of opinion on whether this multifaceted policy toward the EEC was effective, far-sighted, or beneficial, but there is little discussion of its underlying objective. Leading politicians of the time, such as Jean Monnet and Paul-Henri Spaak, contemporary commentators such as Miriam Camps and John Newhouse, political scientists such as Stanley Hoffmann and Ernst Haas, biographers such as Jean Lacouture and Charles Cogan, and diplomatic historians such as Maurice Vaïsse and François de la Serre, not to mention myriad former associates, all concur that de Gaulle's actions were motivated primarily by his distinctive geopolitical ideas.<sup>3</sup> A consensus has developed that portrays de Gaulle as a unique vi-

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3. Widely cited works, in addition to those in footnote 2, include Maurice Vaïsse, *La grandeur: Politique étrangère du général de Gaulle 1958–1969* (Paris: Fayard, 1998); Alfred Grosser, *La Politique Extérieure de la Ve République* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1965); Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed., *De Gaulle en son siècle: Europe*, Vol. 5 (Paris: Documentation Française, 1992); Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 3 vols. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1984–1988); Jean Touchard, *Le gaullisme: 1940–1969* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978); Frédéric Bozo, *Deux stratégies pour l'Europe: De Gaulle, les États-Unis et l'Alliance atlantique 1958–1969* (Paris: Plon/Fondation Charles de Gaulle, 1996); Stanley Hoffmann, "Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation State and the Case of Western Europe," *Daedalus*, Vol. 95, No. 3 (Summer 1966), pp. 892–908; Charles Cogan,

sionary leader who towered above interest-group politics and commercial concerns. De Gaulle's supposed goal was to realize a distinct geopolitical vision: the construction of an autonomous European foreign and military policy that would explicitly challenge U.S. efforts to strengthen the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), create a "Multilateral Force," and forge a privileged nuclear connection with Britain. This policy rested, in turn, on de Gaulle's deep belief in the need to reinforce French *grandeur*; his wartime suspicion of the "Anglo-Saxons," his commitment to a unilateral foreign policy backed by nuclear weapons, his nationalist obsession with the preservation of sovereignty, and, above all, his search for a European foreign policy free from superpower influence. It is argued that this distinctive cluster of ideas explains French support for the EEC, cooperation with Germany at the expense of Britain and the United States, and suspicion of supranational institutions during this period. In the language of neofunctional theories of integration, he was a "dramatic political actor" who personified nationalist opposition to the technocratic focus on economics espoused by Monnet.<sup>4</sup> In common language, the key to de Gaulle lies in his ideological vision and individual psychology.

This essay seeks to overturn the conventional wisdom. Most documentary and circumstantial evidence suggests that the primary goals underlying French policy during the four major European episodes listed above—acceptance of the Treaty of Rome and promotion of the CAP, the Fouchet Plan, the veto of British membership, and the "empty chair" crisis—were not the *grandeur* and military security of France. On the contrary, the primary French objective was to secure preferential commercial advantages for French industry and agriculture. De Gaulle, like all other politicians in France and across the postwar world, sought to generate electoral support, promote industrial modernization, prevent disruptive strikes and protests through guarantees of economic welfare for farmers, and avoid massive government deficits. De Gaulle's foreign policy was designed to appease powerful industrial and agricultural groups. He did this despite his own very strong inclination, reflected in continuous conflict over agricultural policy, to resist the demands of farmers for subsidies in pursuit of the broader national interest of industrial modernization. Rhetorical flourishes aside, the broad lines of de Gaulle's European policy hardly differed from that pursued by his Fourth Republic

*Charles de Gaulle: A Brief Biography with Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1995); Philip Cerny, *The Politics of Grandeur: Ideological Aspects of de Gaulle's Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Miriam Camps, *European Integration in the Sixties: From the Veto to the Crisis* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966); and John Newhouse, *Collision in Brussels* (New York: Norton, 1967).

4. Ernst B. Haas, "The Uniting of Europe and the Uniting of Latin America," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (June 1967), pp. 315–344.

predecessors or his various Gaullist and non-Gaullist successors. Insofar as he added something distinctive, it was not geopolitical vision as much as successful domestic economic and political reform, which removed the obstacles to trade liberalization that had stymied his Fourth Republic predecessors and thereby facilitated a more forthcoming policy toward the EEC. In all this, de Gaulle was, or was constrained to be, a modern democratic politician first and a geopolitical visionary second.

My argument here is not meant to deny that de Gaulle held the geopolitical beliefs generally attributed to him. Surely the General would have liked to see more autonomous European foreign and defense policies, more intergovernmental institutions for the EEC, and a more widespread acknowledgment of the primacy of the modern nation-state. Surely, moreover, other aspects of Gaullist foreign policy—de Gaulle’s nuclear policy, his criticism of the United States, his policy toward the developing world, his schemes for overcoming the East-West divide, and his withdrawal from certain NATO functions—may well have been motivated by this distinctive geopolitical vision. I insist only that the pursuit of mundane agricultural and industrial interests, combined with domestic economic reforms, constitutes a *predominant influence on and sufficient explanation of French policy toward the EEC under de Gaulle*. To the extent that the General may have sought to realize geopolitical and visionary goals through European integration, he did so under such exceedingly narrow economic constraints that his individual geopolitical vision was reduced to a secondary, largely insignificant, role. Both he and his very closest associates, I shall argue, not only acted accordingly, but acknowledged the predominance of commercial concerns in their internal deliberations and even, to an extent neglected by commentators, in their public utterances. French policy toward the EEC in the 1960s would have been very nearly the same, no matter what the geopolitical vision underlying it—the extreme viewpoints of the French Communist Party and the Poujadists aside. De Gaulle’s tactics and his geopolitical vision may have been distinctive, but the conception of national interest underlying actual French policy choices was not.<sup>5</sup>

This flatly contradicts the received wisdom. The literature on de Gaulle, as I have noted above and shall demonstrate in more detail below, does not simply underestimate the role of commercial motivations in French EEC policy; it utterly belies its overriding causal role. To my knowledge, not a

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5. This assertion suggests, but does not require, that de Gaulle’s predecessors also were motivated primarily by commercial interest. For evidence that they were, see Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), ch. 2.

single book or article in the entire corpus of work on de Gaulle's foreign policy accords primary, let alone sufficient, causal weight to enduring French commercial interests. Commentators fall instead into two categories: those who argue that commercial interest was entirely irrelevant, and those who argue that commercial interest was present but distinctly secondary. Even the most subtle and balanced of the latter leave little ambiguity about the primacy of de Gaulle's geopolitical vision in dictating his policy.<sup>6</sup>

Against this consensus, I offer a simple counterargument. The overwhelming preponderance of direct evidence in the published public record about the motivations of de Gaulle and his closest associates with respect to the EEC confirms the primacy of commercial concerns. If existing studies reach the opposite conclusion that French EEC policy in this period is to be explained primarily with reference to de Gaulle's geopolitical vision, it can only be because they fail to make use of new published materials, lift ambiguous statements by the General out of context, ignore important differences between de Gaulle's EEC policy and his general foreign policy, neglect alternative commercial explanations, or—in extreme but not uncommon cases—engage in outright and ungrounded speculation about de Gaulle's true political calculations.

This two-part article proceeds as follows. Section I elaborates two competing explanations of de Gaulle's European policy, focusing respectively on geopolitical vision and commercial interest. Section II assesses their relative importance across the four major episodes of Gaullist European policy listed above: promotion of the customs union and the CAP, the Fouchet Plan, the veto of Britain, and the "empty chair" crisis. The first two of these episodes are covered here, and the other two are discussed in Part 2 of the article, to

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6. Vaisse, *La grandeur*, p. 175; François de la Serre, "De Gaulle et la candidature britannique aux Communautés européennes," in Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed., *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol. 5, pp. 192–202; Edmond Joue, *Le Général de Gaulle et la construction de l'Europe (1940–1966)*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie Général de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1967), *passim*, summarized on pp. 718–725. While biographers of de Gaulle and analyses of French foreign policy invariably emphasize geopolitical interests over economic ones, narrower studies by economic historians and political economists of postwar European agriculture and industry have occasionally stressed commercial concerns. Examples include John Keeler, "De Gaulle et la politique agricole commune de l'Europe: logique et héritages de l'intégration nationaliste," Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed., *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol. 5, pp. 155–167; John Keeler, "De Gaulle and Europe's Common Agricultural Policy: The Logic and Legacies of Nationalistic Integration," *French Politics and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Fall 1990), pp. 62–77; Leon N. Lindberg, "Integration as a Source of Stress in the European Community," in Joseph S. Nye, ed., *International Regionalism* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968); William F. Averyt, *Agropolitics in the European Union* (New York: Praeger, 1977); Edmund Neville-Rolfe, *The Politics of Agriculture in the European Community* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1984); F. Roy Willis, *France, Germany and the New Europe, 1945–1967* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968), pp. 273–365 and Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*, chs. 1–3. For rare economic interpretations by former associates of de Gaulle, see Jean-Marc Boegner, "Les principes de la politique européenne du général de Gaulle," Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed. *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol. 5, p. 67; and Alain Prate, *Le batailles économiques du Général de Gaulle* (Paris: Plon, 1978).

be published in the next issue. The final section of the article (also in the next issue) explains where and why previous analyses have gone wrong, and draws broader conclusions about the use of historical evidence. De Gaulle's experience, I assert, illustrates the narrow constraints imposed by democratic politics in a globalizing world economy on those who would base foreign policy on idiosyncratic geopolitical ideas, whether in the process of European integration or in the modern world system more generally.

## **De Gaulle and Europe: The Enduring Puzzle**

There are, broadly speaking, two plausible explanations of French policy toward the EEC under President de Gaulle. The conventional view, dominant in the existing literature, stresses de Gaulle's geopolitical ideas and politico-military concerns. An alternative view, at best secondary and often ignored in current analyses, highlights the enduring commercial interests of powerful economic producer groups in France. Let us consider each in turn.

### ***Geopolitical Interest and Ideas: "Une certaine idée de l'Europe"***

"All my life," General de Gaulle declares at the outset of his celebrated memoirs, "I have had a certain idea of France."<sup>7</sup> It is thus no surprise that interpretations of de Gaulle's European policy invariably focus on the nature of his distinctive geopolitical ideas. De Gaulle is consistently cited as the modern archetype of the visionary statesman, a nationalist for whom idiosyncratic understandings of *grandeur*, "sovereignty," and "prestige" were the primary ends of policy. He is seen as a living embodiment of the continuing relevance of a voluntaristic, antitechnocratic view toward foreign policy making. He constructed his own constitutional order, an enduring system of centralized foreign policy making, and an ideology that persists to this day. No postwar democratic chief executive, the argument goes, has enjoyed greater independence from domestic partisan constraints, broader executive prerogatives, or a deeper commitment to distinctive geopolitical ideas.

What is this geopolitical vision? Although the General tended to be pragmatic in his choice of tactics, most analysts have reconstructed a philosophy based on three fundamental ideas: nationalism, independence, and military force.<sup>8</sup>

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7. Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de Guerre: l'Appel*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Plon, 1954), p. 1.

8. Nearly every book on de Gaulle's foreign policy (see footnotes 2 and 3) begins with an elaboration of de Gaulle's ideas similar to this one, then employs them to explain his policies. See Vaisse,

The most distinctive element in de Gaulle's political ideology was nationalism. De Gaulle affirmed the unquestioned primacy of the modern nation-state as a political instrument for the pursuit of national interests. Nation-states are not only the most effective actors in world politics, he argued, but the most legitimate as well. De Gaulle sought to express the essence of the French nation in terms of shared historical memories. He invoked French resentment about being defeated by the Axis and snubbed by the Allies during World War II, as well as being abandoned by Britain and opposed by the United States at Suez. Prone to trans-historical generalities about French nationalism, de Gaulle observed on more than one occasion that since the Hundred Years' War "our grand hereditary enemy has not been Germany but England."<sup>9</sup> Yet there was nothing narrowly French about this view; it was universal: "Every people is distinctive, incomparable, inalterable. They must remain themselves, that which their history and their culture have wrought, with their memories, beliefs, legends, faith, and will to construct their future."<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, and in contrast to West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's professed view, de Gaulle invoked the spirit of the German people, which implied the inevitability of German reunification.<sup>11</sup>

Second, it followed for de Gaulle that every state must pursue an independent policy consistent with its unique purposes, thereby seeking its rightful place in the world. France's rightful place, he argued, was to realize the country's distinctive heritage of prestige as a great power—its *grandeur*.<sup>12</sup> One major objective of de Gaulle's grand strategy was thus to augment France's role as a "principal player" on the world scene. One knowledgeable historian concludes, "the paramount goals of France were in the psychological domain—in the areas of independence, rank, prestige."<sup>13</sup> In 1962 he mused: "Will France decline? Will it be Portugalized? Or will it again ascend the heights? . . . That is the only question."<sup>14</sup> This goal, in turn, required a measure of independence and autonomy. There were "three realities" in the

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*La grandeur*, pp. 22–52; Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France*, pp. 3–22; Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, pp. 630ff. When I refer to de Gaulle's views as an "ideology," I do not mean to imply a teleological view of class conflict, but simply a coherent set of values and priorities in foreign affairs.

9. Alain Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Fayard, 1994), p. 153.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 296. This, according to de Gaulle, was one of four "guiding principles" underlying his European policy. Also see Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France*, pp. 3–22, especially pp. 3, 10; Cogan, *Charles de Gaulle*, p. 140; and Vaisse, *La grandeur*, pp. 23–24, 34ff.

11. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, pp. 160–163.

12. Vaisse, *La grandeur*, pp. 35–40; Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France*, pp. 15ff.; and Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, pp. 279–281.

13. Charles G. Cogan, *Oldest Allies, Guarded Friends: The United States and France since 1940* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), p. 145.

14. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, p. 280.

modern world, he asserted: the United States, the Soviet Union, and France. All other countries were “nebulous,” “divided,” “hesitant,” or “perpetual aspirants.”<sup>15</sup> This implied, finally, that France must rise from its place as a “brilliant second” to Britain and take over as “the first in Europe.”<sup>16</sup>

For de Gaulle, independence was as much internal as external. Internationally, de Gaulle surely viewed *grandeur* and autonomy in part as instruments for the prudent realization of conventional geopolitical goals. Prestige could augment political influence, while potent symbols could legitimate greater national unity around external commitments. Yet de Gaulle also seems to have wanted to renew the pride, patriotism, and unity of the French for their own sake. Perhaps his obsession with rank in the world system as an end in itself stemmed from the experience of Anglo-American slights during World War II, most notably the failure to extend timely recognition to his provisional government.<sup>17</sup> He himself noted that France suffered more than many others in World War II because it was defeated at the start and then was only “associated with,” but not responsible for, its own liberation.<sup>18</sup> It should not be forgotten also that this public ideal garnered him strong electoral support among French voters, and provided a justification for an extraordinary transfer of political power away from parliament toward the executive.<sup>19</sup> As Marisol Touraine observes of the Gaullist legacy to this day: “France’s position seems guided more by the concern for asserting what France is or should be than by any concern for reaching a given goal.”<sup>20</sup>

To nationalism and independence, de Gaulle added a third element, namely, faith in military force as the decisive means to project national influence. He argued that there is an eternal hierarchy of issues in foreign affairs, with traditional politico-military issues (“high politics,” one of de Gaulle’s leading interpreters called them) at the top. “National defense,” he declared, “is the primary *raison d’être* of the state.”<sup>21</sup> He believed that nuclear weapons and classical diplomacy would make France a power to be reckoned with;

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 282–283.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

17. For a persuasive case, see Cogan, *Oldest*, pp. 19–53, 123–126; and Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France*, pp. 17–21.

18. Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, pp. 62–63.

19. In a unique, if somewhat speculative, interpretation, Cerny views the policy of “*grandeur*” as a “Bonapartist” tool designed primarily to bolster domestic political support for strong domestic action. This view is different from, though not necessarily inconsistent with, mine. See Cerny, *Politics of Grandeur*.

20. Marisol Touraine, “Le représentation de l’adversaire dans la politique extérieure française depuis 1981,” *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 43, No. 5 (October 1993), p. 808.

21. Vaïsse, *La grandeur*, pp. 24–26, 44–50; Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, pp. 323–324. “The state is the skeleton. The spine is the army.”

supported a strong Western military response to the Cuban and Berlin crises; and remained skeptical of efforts to replace military force with schemes to project international power through economic interdependence or strong international institutions. “It had been obvious since 1944,” a leading analyst writes, “that General de Gaulle regarded the prime purpose of statecraft as enabling the state to count in world affairs and to have the means to defend itself in the ruthless struggle that nations wage against each other.”<sup>22</sup> For this reason, too, he was openly contemptuous of any effort to impose even modest constraints on state autonomy through international organizations, let alone the dissolution of the nation-state in a supranational polity.

Did “une certaine idée de la France” imply “une certaine idée de l’Europe”? De Gaulle believed so.<sup>23</sup> Nearly all interpretations of French foreign policy in this period assert that these three principles implied a very specific set of rules for national policy. De Gaulle’s tripartite view of world politics—nationalism, independence, military force—is said to have had three concrete implications for France’s European policy: the primacy of high foreign policy, the importance of European independence from the superpowers, and opposition to supranational institutions.

First, de Gaulle is said to have judged policies, even trade and agricultural cooperation, not by their direct commercial benefits, but by their ability to promote French national independence, military prowess, grandeur, and prestige—in short, by their power to promote French great power status. Accordingly, in European policy, Serge Berstein notes, “what really mattered for de Gaulle’s government was not economics but the construction of a political Europe.”<sup>24</sup> As de Gaulle said of French space and nuclear policy: “The purpose of Europe is to avoid domination by the Americans or Russians. . . . Europe is the means by which France can once again become what it has not been since Waterloo: First in the world.”<sup>25</sup> Those who rely on geopolitical interpretations sometimes concede that economic benefits were also a secondary motivation, but they view economics as no more than an indirect means to augment French military power and political prestige. In the end it is deemed secondary. Maurice Vaisse’s recently published, masterful treat-

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22. Berstein, *La France*, pp. 220, 221–224.

23. Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, p. 61. Although the phrase is Peyrefitte’s, de Gaulle responds at length to a request to elaborate his idea of Europe in these terms.

24. Berstein, *La France*, pp. 246–247, also 245–251. Also see Vaisse, *La grandeur*, p. 175; and de la Serre, “De Gaulle et la candidature britannique.” In the language of international relations theory, de Gaulle is said to have judged foreign economic policy not on its own terms, but according to the “security externalities” it generated. Theorists generally assume security externalities to be highest in a bipolar world system. Joanne Gowa, *Allies, Adversaries, and International Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

25. Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, pp. 158–159.

ment of de Gaulle's foreign policy, for example, elaborates his economic concerns and then concludes flatly: "For General de Gaulle, the economic success of the Europe of Six was not an end in itself."<sup>26</sup> Most analysts find it impossible to imagine that de Gaulle even thought about economics. "The price of milk," Philip Williams and Martin Harrison remind us, "was the very phrase which de Gaulle once chose to sum up in contemptuous dismissal the entire range of mundane trivia which were beneath his attention."<sup>27</sup>

Second, in dealing with the EEC, de Gaulle's central aim is said to have been the construction of an independent European foreign policy under the political and military dominance of France. De Gaulle himself referred to this as one of four "guiding principles" of his European policy.<sup>28</sup> Only thus could France balance the superpowers and control Germany. He staunchly opposed what he viewed as efforts to transform Europe into what he termed "a gigantic Atlantic Community . . . dependent on [and] run by America."<sup>29</sup> "I am for Europe," he railed in private, "not for a protectorate."<sup>30</sup> He regarded Britain as the American "Trojan horse."<sup>31</sup> The immediate goal was to maintain French nuclear preeminence and institutional prerogatives among European countries. The long-term goal was to establish an independent European third force with the eventual objective of constructing a Europe stretching "from the Atlantic to the Urals."<sup>32</sup> Upon entering office he canceled secret Franco-German cooperation on nuclear weapons, and soon began distancing France from NATO, culminating in withdrawal from NATO's integrated military structure in 1966. He grasped every opportunity to block U.S. influence in Europe, as well as the influence of Britain, which he viewed as bound to the United States by Anglo-Saxon culture, a shared history, and the "special relationship."

Third, de Gaulle opposed the construction of supranational or "federal" institutions, advocating in their place classic confederal or intergovernmental forms. The obverse of de Gaulle's nationalism was a deep disdain for any scheme for international order not based on coherent nation-states. At a 1962

26. Vaïsse, *La grandeur*, p. 175, also pp. 163, 167, 613.

27. Philip Williams and Martin Harrison, *Politics and Society in de Gaulle's Republic* (London: Longman, 1971), p. 34.

28. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, pp. 62ff.

29. Press Conference of 14 January 1963, cited in Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 283–286. As we shall see below, this citation refers unambiguously to foreign economic policy, not military policy or geopolitics.

30. Alain Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Fayard, 1997), p. 257. Whether de Gaulle is referring to military or economic policy remains ambiguous.

31. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, p. 283.

32. Cogan, *Oldest*, pp. 128–131 and ch. 6, *passim*; and Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 346–348, 352, 356, 358, 381.

press conference, he ridiculed European federalists for believing that Dante, Goethe, and others “would not much have served Europe if they had been stateless and had thought and written in some sort of Esperanto or stateless Volapük.” He concluded: “The only possible Europe . . . is that of states.”<sup>33</sup> In the 1950s, after flirting with federalism, he and most Gaullists opposed the European Defense Community (EDC) and Euratom. De Gaulle rejected outright the pooling and delegation of sovereignty in the form of qualified majority voting (QMV) or commission autonomy. He often spoke of the debate over European integration as a battle between two “visions” of Europe. On the other side were “utopian myths [of] supranational power.” On his side was the vision of a “confederation” in which France could not be, as in the EEC, “exposed to the possibility of being overruled on any economic—and therefore social and even political—matter.”<sup>34</sup> States would go further toward common institutions, if indeed ever they did, only by widespread popular will and thus by referendum, not parliamentary vote.<sup>35</sup>

Taken together, de Gaulle’s geopolitical views seem to provide a convincing explanation of the major decisions that defined his policy toward European integration. From this perspective, membership in the EEC was primarily an effort to expand French political influence, control Germany by forging a continental politico-military alliance around French nuclear primacy and global prestige, promote a basis for European foreign policy cooperation independent of the superpowers, and establish confederal alternatives to supranational federalism. De Gaulle’s support for the EEC in 1958 aimed to cement relations with West Germany and create the basis for independent European foreign-policy cooperation. His promotion over the next decade of the CAP helped French participation in the customs union. It was a clearly “European” policy that strengthened economic interchange, which could lead to foreign-policy cooperation. To be sure, de Gaulle later claimed (during the “empty chair” crisis of 1965–1966) that a crisis over the general nature of the EEC and in particular its supranational institutions was “sooner or later inevitable” because of “certain basic errors and ambiguities in the treaties on economic union of the Six.”<sup>36</sup> De Gaulle therefore promulgated the Fouchet Plan in the hope of establishing an alternative confederal

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33. Roger Massip, *De Gaulle et l'Europe* (Paris: Flammarion, 1963), p. 147.

34. Conférence de Presse du 9 septembre 1965 cited in Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 355; and Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Plon, 1970), p. 193. De Gaulle’s reference here is quite explicitly to the CAP.

35. Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, pp. 63–64. This was a second among what de Gaulle termed the four “guiding principles” of his European policy.

36. For the 9 September 1965 press conference, see Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 352, also pp. 352–358. See also De Ménéil, *Who Speaks for Europe?* p. 150.

institution, one more suited to foreign-policy cooperation. When it failed, he sought to establish the Franco-German Treaty as such a forum. De Gaulle vetoed British membership as a means of blocking a British challenge for political leadership of Europe, undercutting Anglo-Saxon influence over emerging European political cooperation, and responding to the Anglo-American nuclear deal at Nassau. The “empty chair” crisis was de Gaulle’s final, successful effort to reform the supranational institutions by limiting qualified majority voting and constraining the commission.

Therein lies the nearly universal consensus among commentators and scholars. Yet there exists a second possible explanation, to which we now turn.

### **French Commercial Interests: “Another Algeria on Our Own Soil”**

Analyses of de Gaulle’s foreign policy based on geopolitical interest and ideology often ignore the prominence in Gaullist rhetoric of a second major strand, namely, the overriding need for economic modernization and renewal—the “transformation” of France.<sup>37</sup> Industrial and agricultural modernization was at once a state-led effort to promote French industry and agriculture from above and a response to pressures and constraints imposed by deeply entrenched French domestic economic interest groups. The latter backed demands with the power to strike, disrupt, invest, and vote.<sup>38</sup> The desire for economic modernization and pressure from commercial interests, I argue below, suggest a second, equally plausible, *prima facie* explanation for de Gaulle’s support of EEC membership, promotion of the CAP, veto of Britain, and conduct of the “empty chair” crisis.

Theories of the political economy of commercial policy look to patterns of competitive position of national producers in global and domestic markets as the primary determinants of tariff and trade policy. The most important factor tends to be the overall level of opportunity for profitable international trade consistent with the willingness of domestic interest groups to tolerate adjustment. Expanding international markets tend to create incentives for reciprocal and sometimes unilateral trade liberalization. The postwar period saw an extremely rapid expansion in trade among developed countries—an

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37. Williams and Harrison, *Politics and Society*, p. 426.

38. For an introductory overview of this literature by political scientists on commercial policy, which differs significantly from the aggregate welfare calculations common among economists, see Robert O. Keohane and Helen V. Milner, eds., *Internationalization and Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For an explicit application to major EEC decisions from Messina to Maastricht, see Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*. For economic interpretations of the Treaty of Rome, see Alan S. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (London: Routledge, 1993); and Frances M.B. Lynch, *France and the International Economy: From Vichy to the Treaty of Rome* (London: Routledge, 1997).

expansion that predated serious efforts at global or regional trade liberalization and encompassed even European countries that did not participate in regional trade liberalization. It is no surprise, therefore, that de Gaulle hoped to promote and modernize French industry through export-led expansion. “It is absurd,” de Gaulle stated in 1965, for France “to shut itself up behind tariffs and barriers.” Tariff liberalization and export opportunities would strengthen French industry.<sup>39</sup> De Gaulle may have disliked the particular institutional form of the Rome Treaty, but he nonetheless valued it as “an improved treaty of commerce” compared to autarky or liberalization under the existing auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC).<sup>40</sup>

In pursuit of these commercial objectives there was considerable continuity of ends—albeit variable ability to achieve those ends—between the Fourth and Fifth Republics. During the negotiation of the treaty, both Fourth Republic governments and the major French industry interest group, the Conseil National du Patronat Français (CNPF or “Patronat”), had viewed trade liberalization as desirable in principle. Yet business insisted on safeguards and escape clauses, social harmonization, and unanimity voting as ways to offset the risks to domestic industry stemming from the overvaluation of the franc. Without these, even the strongest supporters of the Treaty of Rome doubted any French government’s ability to overcome the Patronat’s opposition to the high costs of adjustment needed to implement the customs union. French labor costs were relatively high and until the French franc was given a more competitive value, there was little chance of assuaging fears of foreign competition felt by French industry.<sup>41</sup> De Gaulle’s successful package of devaluation and austerity in 1958 gave French big business the competitive advantage it required, and business became an enthusiastic supporter of liberalization.

Theories of commercial policy also predict that reciprocal free trade tends to be supported not just by consumers and strong national executives, but also by domestic producers with international competitive advantages. Less competitive producers tend to view free trade more skeptically. Sectoral and national preferences for openness or protection of the domestic economy vary

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39. Prate, *Batailles économiques*, pp. 45, 64. See also Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 630–631; and Alain Peyrefitte, *Le mal français* (Paris: Plon, 1976), p. 43. See more generally, Institut Charles de Gaulle, 1958. *La Faillite ou le miracle. Le plan de Gaulle-Rueff* (Paris: Economica, 1986); and Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed., *De Gaulle en son siècle: Moderniser la France*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Documentation française, 1992), pp. 17–67.

40. Jacques Leprette, *Une Clef pour l'Europe* (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 1994), p. 188.

41. Carol Levy Balassa, “Organized Industry in France and the European Common Market: Interest Group Attitudes and Behavior” (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, 1978), pp. 83–95, 191, 441–442. More generally, see Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*, ch. 2.

greatly and have a dominant influence on state policy. In industry, France was competitive in the late 1950s within Europe, but not globally. Political demands followed. One observer notes that in opposing British proposals for a broad free-trade area, the CNPF was “for the first time in its history . . . completely unanimous.” Reports issued by CNPF predicted that many French industrial sectors would come under severe competitive pressure from British industry, while French colonial producers would be excluded. Industrial opposition to British membership did not soften until the early 1960s, after the devaluation of the franc, the modernization of French industry (while British industry stagnated), and the decline of colonial trade all moderated the competitive threat.<sup>42</sup>

The impact of France’s relative sectoral competitiveness on its trade policy was even clearer in agriculture. In the farm sector, the intensity of producer preferences affords modern governments (whatever their ideological stripe) very little policy autonomy. In the production of leading commodities (grain, sugar, beef), French producers were relatively competitive in Europe, yet uncompetitive with respect to North American and British Commonwealth producers. Agriculture in France accounted for a higher share of employment (25 percent) than in any other EEC member state except Italy. French farmers were competitive on world markets in only a few capital-intensive commodities, such as quality wines and specialty gourmet products, but they mainly produced land-intensive agricultural commodities, notably grain, sugar, wine, and dairy and beef products. Subsidies, in the form of price supports, were essential to their prosperity, and they wielded sufficient electoral power to impose their preferences for support prices on governments of any party. Accordingly, by the mid-1950s French farm groups, like their counterparts elsewhere in Western Europe, forced constant increases in agricultural subsidies and wielded a de facto veto over the selection of agriculture ministers. The domination of agricultural interest groups by wealthy, efficient farmers of northwest France and the Paris basin meant that the Third Modernization Plan (1957 to 1961) committed the French government to support 20 percent annual increases in agricultural production, with wheat, sugar, milk, and meat particularly favored. These

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42. On the near unanimity within the CNPF, see Robert J. Lieber, *British Politics and European Unity: Parties, Elites, and Pressure Groups* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 75. Also see Leon Lindberg, *The Political Dynamics of European Economic Integration* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1963), p. 121. For detailed analyses, see Balassa, *Organized Industry*; Erling Bjøl, *La France devant l’Europe. La Politique Européenne de la IVe République* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1966), Annexe; Edelgard Mahant, “French and German Attitudes to the Negotiations about the European Economic Community, 1955–1965” (Ph.D. diss., University of London, London, 1969), pp. 177–185; and F. Roy Willis, *France, Germany, and the New Europe, 1945–1967* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968), p. 278.

higher subsidies and moves toward modernization only exacerbated the economic pressure on agriculture. Surpluses soared as France's enormous reserve of previously underutilized land was brought into more intensive production. During the mid-1950s, wheat production increased over 800 percent, sugar and wine over 300 percent each, creating a need for ever larger government-funded stockpiles and export subsidies.<sup>43</sup> French farm policy was manifestly unsustainable.

It is therefore no surprise that in the France of the 1950s and 1960s, the steadiest, most powerful interest group pressure for European integration came from farmers. French farmers and politicians alike understood that the only enduring solution was a preferential European trade agreement. Exports, in particular those of wheat and sugar, would displace less costly world-market imports in neighboring European markets. Farm leaders claimed that France "would thus be assured, in a community which grants a preferential exchange treatment to its member states, that it would be able to increase, without risks, its production in the certainty of seeing it absorbed."<sup>44</sup> Within Europe, only British and West German imports were sufficiently large to have a significant impact on French domestic prices. Accordingly, French farmers actively pressed for agricultural integration with one of these two countries—pressure that began well before the advent of the Schuman Plan. When in the mid-1950s Britain clearly signaled its lack of interest in such an arrangement, French farmers redoubled their efforts to interest West Germany. Farm groups were sufficiently influential that one decision maker noted, "any French government was obliged to defend a common agricultural policy." In the Treaty of Rome negotiations, French ratification without adequate agricultural provisions was considered flatly impossible. Alone among interest groups, farmers sent telegrams to all French parliamentarians on the eve of the treaty vote to request their support.<sup>45</sup>

By 1958, when de Gaulle entered office, agricultural surpluses had reached the point of crisis. The first instinct of de Gaulle and Prime Minister Debré—both of whom both viewed agriculture as a backward sector, the promotion of which was not in the national interest—was to impose "unvar-

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43. The evidence is summarized in Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*, chs. 2 and 3. See also Balassa, *Organized Industry*, pp. 448–451; Mahant, *French and German Attitudes*, pp. 219–220; Milward, *European Rescue*, pp. 246–248; Pierre Barral, *Les Agrariens français de Méline à Pisani* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1968), pp. 325–327; and Hanns Peter Muth, *French Agriculture and the Political Integration of Western Europe: Toward "An Ever Closer Union of the European Peoples"* (Leyden: Sijthoff, 1970), pp. 19–51, 88, 113.

44. Muth, *French Agriculture*, p. 88.

45. Robert Marjolin, cited in Balassa, *Organized Industry*, p. 450; and Mahant, *French and German Attitudes*, pp. 126–153, 168ff.

nished economic liberalism.” Lower prices and agricultural subsidies would dampen surpluses, push farmers out of agriculture, and promote rapid modernization. As late as 1963 and 1964, de Gaulle railed in private against agricultural special interests: “We should not subsidize agriculture. . . . They stick the money in their pockets and don’t make the slightest effort to reform. . . . They are anachronistic.”<sup>46</sup> Opposition from farmers, sometimes violent, swiftly stymied these reform efforts. Repeatedly during the early and mid-1960s de Gaulle was forced to reverse course and retain high subsidies. As a result, the underlying structural problem of surpluses only worsened. By the early 1960s, farmers, an important electoral constituency for Gaullists and other center-right parties in France, were again growing restless, as the government tried to limit increases in government subsidies. Intermittent riots rocked the country. If de Gaulle contemptuously dismissed agricultural concerns (“the price of milk”), it was because he was constantly forced—against his deepest inclinations—to take account of them.<sup>47</sup>

De Gaulle swiftly reached the same conclusion that French farmers had reached a decade before, namely, that the only enduring solution was to export surpluses within a preferential and externally protected European market. Without trade, de Gaulle predicted, continued unilateral subsidization would cripple French finances and undermine the French balance of payments. At numerous cabinet meetings, de Gaulle called for European cooperation to dispose of farm surpluses. “Exports,” he concluded in a 1965 discussion of agriculture, “are everything.”<sup>48</sup> With Britain uninterested, the only solution—as farm leaders had already realized in 1955—was to concede industrial free trade (and higher agricultural prices), the *sine qua non* for Germany, in exchange for preferential access to the German market.<sup>49</sup> Such a deal was possible because for Germany, prices were primary and the maintenance of cheap imports secondary, while for France, export markets were a necessity and prices secondary.

The importance of the CAP to de Gaulle cannot be overestimated. At a critical cabinet meeting in August 1962, he called the stabilization of agriculture the “most important problem” facing France after the Algerian civil war. If the problems are not resolved, he declared, “we will have another Algeria

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46. Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 356, 358.

47. On de Gaulle’s worries about riots and his subsequent turnaround, see Williams and Harrison, *Politics and Society*, p. 340, also pp. 174–176, 339–346; and Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 356–374.

48. Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 373.

49. Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d’espoir*, Vol. 1, pp. 167, 196–197. Also see Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, p. 67; *ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 266; Balassa, *Organized Industry*, pp. 180, 448–451; and Bjøl, *La France devant L’Europe*, pp. 269–272.

on our own soil.”<sup>50</sup> By 1961, as we shall see in more detail, the CAP became the main focus of French EEC policy, dominating bilateral and multilateral meetings among ministers and heads of government.

The French government’s commitment to the CAP had clear international implications. Until the CAP was financially, legally, and politically secure, Britain had to be excluded, GATT negotiations had to be postponed, and unanimity voting within the EEC had to be retained. In accordance with commercial incentives, farmers, like industrialists, opposed any arrangement for a free trade area or membership for Britain. The farmers’ unequivocal stance on these matters is easy to explain. Since the mid-nineteenth century Britain had imported agricultural commodities at world-market prices—by the mid-twentieth century most such imports came from the commonwealth—and had thereby reduced its share of the population in farming to around 5 percent, by far the smallest proportion in Europe. Britain was therefore certain to block any arrangement to foster preferential agricultural trade in Europe.<sup>51</sup> From 1955 onward, France continuously fought German opposition to the construction of the CAP, a battle that did not end until 1970 with the promulgation of a permanent financing arrangement. If Britain were admitted at any prior time, the French knew, it would side with Germany and perhaps the Netherlands (along with the United States in GATT) to block development of the CAP. In GATT, there could be “no equivocation” in the demand—so stated the leading agricultural peak organization, the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d’Exploitant Agricoles (FNSEA)—that a preferential arrangement protect French producers from world-market pressures.<sup>52</sup> Finally, the imposition of qualified majority voting in EEC institutions, scheduled for 1966, would facilitate the emergence of an anti-CAP, pro-GATT coalition against France, threatening the major objectives of the EEC. This concern, as we shall see in Part 2 of this article, appears to have obsessed de Gaulle during the “empty chair” crisis.

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50. Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, p. 302. This was not an isolated reference. At an October 1964 cabinet meeting, Agricultural Minister Edgar Pisani voiced the same sentiment, though (paradoxically) as a criticism of de Gaulle’s threats to withdraw from the customs union if the CAP were not included: “For French agriculture to envisage no Common Market is for them to envisage a revolution in France.” *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 265. See also Vaïsse, *La grandeur*, p. 416.

51. French farmers initially sought an arrangement with Britain—a richer and larger agricultural export market than Germany in the 1950s—but when British opposition became clear, they instead proposed exclusion of Britain. The judgment of the French on this was correct. Blocking the CAP before it was established was indeed one of the major objectives of British officials and politicians. See footnote 15 in Part 2 of this article, and Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*, chs. 2 and 3.

52. Mahant, *French and German Attitudes*, pp. 177–185; Bjøl, *La France devant L’Europe*, pp. 388–393; Willis, *France, Germany, and the New Europe*, pp. 256–257, 278–279; and Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, pp. 644–645.

In sum, a commercial explanation treats de Gaulle's European policy as the reflection of an underlying desire to promote French industrial and agricultural interests by locking the country's neighbors, above all West Germany, into a preferential customs union that promoted industry and included agriculture. This had to be achieved, however, without opening France up too rapidly to industrial trade and, even more, without permitting agricultural imports from third-country producers. British membership and U.S. pressure through GATT must be opposed, because they would undermine the construction of a generous preferential CAP, a policy de Gaulle inherited from the Fourth Republic. The ultimate goal of the policy, for de Gaulle as for his predecessors and successors, was to assuage powerful interest groups, prevent domestic disorder, garner electoral support, modernize the French economy, and stabilize government finances.

## **De Gaulle and Europe: The Historical Record**

We have seen that there are, broadly speaking, two plausible explanations of de Gaulle's policies toward the EEC. The conventional view stresses his distinctive geopolitical ideology; the revisionist view stresses the enduring commercial interests of French agriculture and industry. Each offers a *prima facie* plausible account of the French decision to join the EEC, promulgate the Fouchet Plan, veto British membership, and provoke the "empty chair" crisis. Each is also consistent with the sort of rhetorical evidence of de Gaulle's geopolitical motivations that one most often encounters in existing studies of French foreign policy. (What is often overlooked is that statements asserting "European" interests against "Anglo-Saxon" interests, opposing the entry of an Anglo-Saxon "Trojan horse," and advocating a "European Europe" against an "Atlantic Community" could refer either to the geopolitical goal of foreign-policy cooperation *or* to the economic goal of commercial solidarity.) In assessing the relative weight of commercial and geopolitical factors, therefore, speculation about this sort of symbolic rhetoric can be only a thin and ultimately inconclusive foundation for analysis.

We require more fine-grained evidence. For the sake of transparency—and to demonstrate how this study differs from its predecessors—I shall be explicit. The analysis in the next section relies on four types of evidence:

- *The discourse of de Gaulle and other French decision makers.* If geopolitical ideology predominates, discourse among French decision makers, particularly de Gaulle and his closest confidants, should mention geopolitical interests more often and with greater emphasis. To

the extent that economic interests predominate, we should find the reverse. The more explicitly that such statements link the justification to EEC policy, the more weight they should be given.

- *The pattern of domestic political cleavages.* If geopolitical interests predominate, we should observe, in addition to a strong role for the chief executive himself, critical pressure and involvement at critical junctures by the military or foreign ministry, backed perhaps by diffuse public opinion. If economic interests predominate, we should observe concern about pressure from producer groups and their partisan supporters.
- *The overall coherence of policy.* We can learn much from the way in which governments develop a coherent strategy by resolving conflict among competing objectives. If geopolitical ideology predominates, de Gaulle should consistently make economic concessions to achieve geopolitical objectives. France should concede to West Germany on the CAP and GATT policy to achieve tighter political cooperation and the dilution of federalist institutions. If economic interests predominate, we should observe the reverse. Policy toward the EEC should be consistent with broader commercial or geopolitical policy, respectively.
- *The consistency of policy over time and the timing of policy change.* If geopolitical ideology predominates, policy shifts should follow major geopolitical events that reveal new information about the security environment or alter security interests. We should, for example, observe weaker support for the EEC after the transition from the Fourth to the Fifth Republic in 1958, closer relations with West Germany after the rejection of de Gaulle's proposal for a U.S.-British-French nuclear triumvirate in 1958, a downgrading of European political ambitions after the collapse of the Fouchet Plan, and heightened hostility toward Britain after the U.S.-British Nassau Agreement. If economic interests predominate, policy shifts should generally be correlated with shifts in economic circumstances and events that reveal new information or change economic interests. We should observe, for example, a rapid strengthening of French support for European (and even GATT) tariff reductions in the late 1950s after the 1958 reforms and devaluation, an underlying shift in policies toward British entry only after the CAP was fully secure in 1970, and French willingness to assume geopolitical risks only after trade agreements were reached.

In this section, these four types of evidence—discourse, cleavages, resolution of conflict, and timing—are employed to evaluate the relative explanatory power of the geopolitical/ideological and commercial factors in French

policy from 1958 to 1970. The analysis is organized around the four critical episodes mentioned above: (1) the decision to remain in the EEC and promote the CAP; (2) advocacy of the Fouchet Plan; (3) successive vetoes of British association and membership; and (4) policy leading to the “empty chair” crisis of 1965 to 1966. In each case, as we shall see, the preponderance of direct evidence confirms the primacy of commercial interests.

### ***Accepting and Completing the Customs Union: “If There Is No CAP, There Will Be No Common Market”***

A direct clash between geopolitical ideas and commercial interests arose immediately after de Gaulle took office in 1958. Whereas the Gaullist party had opposed the EDC outright, it split its parliamentary votes on ratification of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, thereby facilitating the treaty’s passage. Yet the EEC was viewed as an affront to Gaullist geopolitical ideals. Upon de Gaulle’s entry into office, leading Gaullists like Michel Debré, de Gaulle’s first prime minister, called for immediate renunciation or renegotiation of the treaty. De Gaulle himself, though long remaining silent on the issue, was widely expected to follow suit. In an internal strategy meeting in June 1958, he conceded that “if I had negotiated [the treaty], I probably would have done it differently”—referring to the supranational form of EEC institutions as well as its incomplete provisions for agriculture. This became a constant refrain over the next decade. Looking back in a 1964 cabinet meeting, he observed that the open-ended and incomplete nature of the CAP initially negotiated by France was “a crime against the French economy.”<sup>53</sup> He complained constantly about the supranationality of EEC institutions.

Despite these ideological and economic misgivings, de Gaulle moved within months toward swift and full implementation of the treaty’s provisions for a customs union. Thereafter he accelerated reductions in industrial tariffs, supported construction of a common external tariff and trade policy, and, above all, pressed for rapid and full elaboration and implementation of its agricultural provisions. How is de Gaulle’s unexpected support for the EEC best explained? The conventional view, as we have seen, is that the General reversed course because he sought to facilitate French and European military and foreign policy autonomy. Support for the customs union was a way of

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53. Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 364. Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 266. De Gaulle did, of course, cut off Franco-German bilateral nuclear cooperation, but the Euratom clauses of the Treaty of Rome pertaining to military matters had already been gutted by Guy Mollet’s Fourth Republic government, as well as the demands of German industry, long before the treaty was signed.

strengthening European economic cooperation, which in turn was designed to facilitate European, and above all Franco-German, political cooperation independent of the superpowers.

Consider first the discourse of de Gaulle and top French decision makers. Commercial and above all agricultural concerns, far more than geopolitical objectives, dominate de Gaulle's memoirs, interviews, cabinet sessions, and discussions about the EEC during this period. He would later write of the 1958 reforms: "I was concerned with international competition, for this was the lever that could activate our business world, compel it to increase productivity. . . hence my determination to promote the Common Market."<sup>54</sup> In de Gaulle's memoirs—surely the place where he would elaborate a grand global vision, if there was one—the discussion of the 1958 decision focuses on economic considerations, in particular its contribution to the modernization of French industry and agriculture. Other sources corroborate this impression.<sup>55</sup>

Agricultural cooperation was even more important. The need for the CAP was driven by French domestic surpluses, as de Gaulle describes at length in his memoirs:

France . . . was able to produce far more food than she herself consumed. . . This imbalance was growing more pronounced as every improvement in equipment, methods, and soil treatment raised . . . yields. Therefore we must export [and] at prices related to the needs of our producers unless the State is to provide them with subsidies so enormous that they would cripple our finances. I may say that if, on resuming control of our affairs, I embraced the Common Market forthwith, it was as much because of our position as an agricultural country as for the spur it would give to our industry. . . For France, it was a *sine qua non* of membership, for . . . where domestic agricultural products did not enjoy preference over those from outside, our agriculture would . . . put us in a position of chronic inferiority. . . To impose on the Common Market what we considered necessary, we needed to put up a literally

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54. Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, Vol. 1, p. 143. For de Gaulle, Alain Prate recalls, a preferential arrangement in agriculture, opposed by West Germany, was the "primary precondition" for de Gaulle to accept the customs union. Prate, *Batailles économiques*, p. 52, also pp. 45, 64. On Pompidou's similar recollection, see Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, p. 210.

55. Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, Vol. 1, pp. 145ff.; Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed., *1958: La Faillite ou le miracle—Le plan de Gaulle-Rueff* (Paris: Economica, 1986); Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed. *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol. 3. We are not concerned in this article with ex post speculation, even by participants, but it is worth noting that in this case even those who tend to have a geopolitical understanding of de Gaulle accept an economic motivation for the 1958 reform. See Couve de Murville, cited in Raymond Poidevin, "De Gaulle et l'Europe en 1958," Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed. *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol. 5, p. 82.

desperate fight, sometimes going as far as to threaten to withdraw our membership. Nevertheless we succeeded.<sup>56</sup>

If anything, public statements of this kind *underestimate* the weight de Gaulle privately placed on agriculture. At a critical cabinet meeting in August 1962, as we have seen, de Gaulle called the stabilization of agriculture the “most important problem” facing France after the Algerian civil war. On other occasions, de Gaulle linked agriculture directly to European integration. Typical is a 1965 cabinet meeting, which began with the General’s observation that France and its industry were “being crushed by our agriculture. . . . The organization of the market, exports, are critical. . . . We constructed the Common Market above all to permit agriculture to participate.”<sup>57</sup> The only solution, he believed, was to export within a significant preferential area, which in turn required access to either the German or the British domestic market. Subsequent cabinet meetings on the EEC of which we have records were dominated by discussions of commercial issues, mostly agriculture. The sufficiency of economic interest in explaining French support for the EEC is demonstrated by the fact that de Gaulle repeatedly threatened continuously to withdraw from the organization if the CAP was not created.<sup>58</sup> “France,” de Gaulle confided in 1963, “is agricultural as much as European.”<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps most striking is de Gaulle’s repeated admission in private that ostensibly geopolitical matters—for example, Franco-German cooperation

56. Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d’espoir*, Vol. I, p. 167. This is a consistent refrain. See, e.g., Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 359–360.

57. Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 372–373; see also *ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 301. Peyrefitte reports that de Gaulle’s “major argument for the CAP was that French industry could not afford to subsidize our agriculture alone”—a claim that the verbatim record confirms. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 267; and *ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 109.

58. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 265, 369, also 219–225, 231–232, 249, 251–254, 263–267, 271–274, 282. In Peyrefitte’s limited selection of cabinet meetings alone, de Gaulle stressed the fundamental agricultural interests behind French support for the EEC on dozens of occasions. On the dominance of socioeconomic issues at cabinet meetings more generally, see de Gaulle, *Mémoires d’espoir*, p. 161. When doubts were raised by Gaullist ministers about the credibility of such threats, de Gaulle responded that if the EEC disappeared, French industry would remain highly competitive, while France would be free of the supranational baggage of the EEC. Such threats were continuously proclaimed until early 1966. Pompidou observed during the “empty chair” crisis that “the agricultural common market must take place, for without it the industrial common market will simply collapse. . . . If France at any given moment were to consider that the Common Market is dead because . . . it has lost its essential characteristics . . . it will die a fine death.” Newhouse, *Collision*, p. 40. It is true that at this press conference Pompidou also stated with regard to the Multilateral Force: “We may ask if such a project . . . would not destroy Europe.” Yet note that this sentence is far more equivocal (“we may ask”) and speaks metaphorically of “Europe” rather than the EEC.

59. Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 265. See also *ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 230–232, also 274. Also see Prate, *Batailles économiques*, pp. 52ff.; Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d’espoir*, Vol. I, p. 167; Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 364; and Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 671–673.

or adversarial relations with the “Anglo-Saxons”—were in fact driven by commercial concerns. To be sure, de Gaulle often spoke of the geopolitical aims of the Franco-German partnership. Yet commercial interests offered a necessary and sufficient reason to pursue Franco-German cooperation. In 1963 to 1964, the critical years of decision, de Gaulle noted repeatedly that agriculture is the “dominant subject” and the “core difficulty.”<sup>60</sup>

The dominant subject is agriculture. . . . This is the reason for which the Franco-German relationship must continue. . . . If the CAP is [not] on its feet by the end of the year . . . our regular meetings have no point. On the other hand, if the Common Market is on its feet, the whole treaty, along with agriculture, is justified.<sup>61</sup>

In his discussions of the links between Franco-American relations, we do find, of course, that the General repeatedly criticized American geopolitical “hegemony.” Yet explicit references in confidential meetings to the potential for Anglo-American influence *within or through the EEC* pertain explicitly and almost exclusively to British and U.S. trade policy, not their defense policy or geopolitical strategy. The trade conflict between the United States and Europe, he observed in one cabinet session on transatlantic relations, is concerned primarily with agriculture. “Should the EEC accept the Kennedy Round [of] negotiations without having established the CAP: That is the essential question.” He continued: “It is not possible to negotiate with the United States until the EEC is completely organized, *with agriculture included*.”<sup>62</sup> Why is there a Franco-American conflict over the GATT, the foreign minister asks? De Gaulle replies: “We are both agricultural producers. It all boils down to that.”<sup>63</sup> Elsewhere in the memoirs and statements, de Gaulle reiterates time and time again that the commercial interests of agriculture and industry constituted a sufficient justification for France to participate in the customs union and to maintain control over GATT negotiations.<sup>64</sup> By 1964,

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60. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 245.

61. *Ibid.*, pp. 232, 265. In 1964, de Gaulle noted also that satisfaction on agricultural demands provided “very clear proof of European solidarity.” Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, p. 133, generally pp. 132–133.

62. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 265. [Emphasis in the original.]

63. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 265, also pp. 237, 264–266, 271–274; and Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 283–288. “The conflict with the United States in GATT,” Couve notes in a 1964 cabinet session discussing European-American relations, “pertains only to the agricultural part of these negotiations.”

64. In addition to that cited above, see Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 352–353, especially paragraph 5, on de Gaulle’s views in 1965. In the *Mémoires*, it is difficult to reach a balanced assessment of de Gaulle’s chapter on “Europe,” since it ranges over European integration, Franco-German relations, and security issues.

even a close associate as steeped in Gaullist ideology as Debré, engaged in conversation with de Gaulle, had come to understand a reference to the threat posed by American policy to French efforts to create a real European union as a reference to the Kennedy round of GATT negotiations, not U.S. politico-military strategy.<sup>65</sup>

Overall, the record reveals no comparably strong and consistent rhetoric, in public or in private, linking French policy toward the EEC (as opposed to French policy more generally—for example, with NATO or the developing world) to de Gaulle’s geopolitical vision.<sup>66</sup> In contrast to the mass of evidence for commercial concerns, there exists to my knowledge no source in which de Gaulle states unambiguously that French support for the EEC rested primarily on the desire to promote noneconomic cooperation among the Six. Apart from a few quotations connected with the Fouchet Plan for confederal foreign policy cooperation, which we shall examine in the next section, none of de Gaulle’s statements suggests that geopolitical justifications for European integration were coequal to, let alone privileged above, commercial interests. To my knowledge there exists only one clear exception—a passage from his memoirs—that could plausibly be interpreted as privileging geopolitical interests:

France can survive only in the first rank of nations . . . and nothing in life was more important than working toward this goal. This is what we were aiming for in the vast arena of Europe. . . . My policy aimed at the setting up of a concert of European States, which in developing all sorts of ties between them would increase their independence and solidarity. . . . There was every reason to believe that the process of evolution might lead to their confederation. . . . In practice this led us to put the European Economic Community into effect; to encourage the Six to concert together regularly in political matters; to prevent certain others, in particular Great Britain, from dragging the West into an Atlantic system . . . totally incompatible with a European Europe. . . . [Germany] would have an essential role to play within the Economic Community and, should it ever materialize, in the political concert of the Six. . . . I intended that France should weave a network of preferential ties with Germany.<sup>67</sup>

65. Michel Debré, *Entretiens avec le général de Gaulle, 1961–1969* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993), p. 69n.

66. We shall encounter even more evidence when we examine de Gaulle’s attitude toward Britain—not least the *entirely* commercial content of de Gaulle’s oft-excerpted remarks at his celebrated 14 January press conference vetoing British membership.

67. Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d’espoir*, Vol. 1, pp. 181–182. One could also read the conjunction “in practice” (“En fait”) to mean that economic cooperation is an example of how French greatness can be realized. This, too, is not inconsistent with the sufficiency of commercial inter-

Yet even this passage, the strongest link I could find between de Gaulle's geopolitical ideas and his EEC policy, is exceedingly qualified, if read in its full context. The bold statement about France's primacy among nations notwithstanding, de Gaulle treats European political cooperation not as an imperative, but as an aspiration—a potential second stage perhaps to be achieved (“should it ever materialize”) after economic cooperation is complete.

This qualified reference to geopolitical interest is typical of de Gaulle's memoirs and of his other public and confidential utterances. De Gaulle, to be sure, consistently aspired to establish European political cooperation. Yet mentions of geopolitical advantages of the Common Market are almost invariably accompanied by a mention, and often more detailed analysis, of commercial advantages. The reverse is far less often the case.<sup>68</sup> Often he mentions only commercial concerns. In addition, many of de Gaulle's statements contradict otherwise plausible attributions of French geopolitical interest. At his first meeting with Adenauer in September 1958, de Gaulle insisted on the inclusion of agriculture as (the only) “essential” aspect of the Common Market and emphasized that France, unlike West Germany, aimed primarily at “practical” cooperation. He conceded that West Germany would remain within NATO even if France pulled out, a situation that limited any possible aspiration for an alternative European security structure.<sup>69</sup> At around the same time, he openly denied that West Germany posed any direct threat to France.<sup>70</sup>

In sum, de Gaulle's discourse, taken as a whole, supports a more nuanced assessment of his motivations and calculations. De Gaulle most often employs a particular sort of phrase to describe the fundamental interests underlying French support for the EEC—one prefigured in the long quotation above. He implies that economic cooperation is a necessity, whereas political union is a desirable goal if it can be achieved. He observes in his memoirs: “I adopted as my primary principle . . . [that] its objective was—it would already be a lot!—the harmonization of the practical interests of the six States, their economic solidarity in the face of the outside world and, if possible,

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ests. Vaisse, *La grandeur*, p. 167, reports a more typical remark in 1958: “The EEC is not a goal in itself. The essential thing is that the Common Market is not a bad thing in itself as well as above all the political and cultural organization of Europe.” This suggests that either economic or geopolitical factors, but not a federal vision, could justify the EEC.

68. Although de Gaulle often spoke about the desirability of a common European or Franco-German foreign policy, he rarely linked this to the EEC. Among the few exceptions, though even here economic factors are mentioned, is Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 260–263, but see pp. 264ff. on commercial concerns.

69. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, Vol. 1, p. 188, generally pp. 184ff.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

their cooperation in foreign policy.”<sup>71</sup> For de Gaulle, geopolitical cooperation was potentially valuable, but inessential; agricultural and industrial exports were the real immediate imperative. Export promotion was, as we shall see in detail later, the “essential” and “primordial” interest of France. This formulation is the most common one in de Gaulle’s utterances and is the only interpretation that makes coherent sense of the preponderance of de Gaulle’s statements in all forums, public and confidential, between 1958 and 1966.

In assessing de Gaulle’s general commitment to the EEC and the CAP, we turn next to domestic pressures facing French governments. With regard to industrial tariff liberalization, de Gaulle’s policies were perfectly in tune with the demands of French business. Here the major difference between de Gaulle and his Fourth Republic predecessors lay not in geopolitical strategy, but in domestic policy. Both de Gaulle and his predecessors hoped to liberalize trade, but de Gaulle’s stronger domestic position enabled him to devalue the franc and impose budgetary austerity as part of the economic reforms of 1958. This in turn led to a swift reversal of the position of French business on trade liberalization—not because business succumbed to de Gaulle’s distinctively geopolitical vision, but because the General gave industry the economic outcome it had long advocated but thought impossible, namely, a real devaluation of the franc of over 20 percent.<sup>72</sup> By 1959, in the midst of the resulting European export boom, French industry had become an enthusiastic supporter of accelerated tariff and quota removal and was even willing to accept modest liberalization within a European FTA or GATT. De Gaulle was now free to support an acceleration of industrial tariff removal among EEC members. Over the next eight years, de Gaulle’s major priority with respect to the EEC remained the elaboration and implementation of its vague treaty clauses calling for a CAP.<sup>73</sup>

71. *Ibid.*, p. 194. For similar formulations, Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, pp. 68, 108–111, 285, 301, 385; and *ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 273, 277. More ambivalent are Peyrefitte’s comments on pp. 107, 111 of Vol. 1. In the latter he speculates about the withering of the EU. Peyrefitte on p. 157 of Vol. 1 offers related evidence when he tells of de Gaulle’s exaggerated rhetoric about the warm welcome of Adenauer to France when in fact the streets were empty. De Gaulle explained his action: “I always act *as if*. Often in the end it happens.” [Emphasis in the original.] De Gaulle stated elsewhere in 1962: “We are trying to move European union from the domain of ideology and technocracy to the domain of reality, that is, of politics. . . . For example, we have not agreed to create a Common Market without agriculture. . . . On the contrary, we have repaired this essential omission in the Treaty of Rome. . . . But we have also proposed a general organization for cooperation among states.” Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 263. For similar formulations, see *ibid.*, pp. 345–346, 353, 366, 372. See also Couve cited in Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed. *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol. 5, p. 183.

72. On the Patronat’s demands for precisely the reforms de Gaulle put through, see Henri Lerner, “De Gaulle et le patronat,” in Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed. *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol. 3, p. 181.

73. These interest group positions are outlined in detail in Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*, chs. 2 and 3.

The promotion of agriculture, a backward sector, was hardly de Gaulle's preferred policy. He came to it only in response to relentless pressure from particularistic domestic interests. Upon entering office, de Gaulle and Prime Minister Michel Debré believed that agriculture was not worth promoting. Consistent with the spirit of the "Plan Rueff" (see below), they sought to embrace economic liberalism. Lower prices and lower agricultural subsidies would dampen surpluses and push farmers out of agriculture, thereby promoting modernization and reducing pressures on state finances and the industrial tax burden. Yet opposition from farmers (sometimes violent) swiftly stymied such efforts, and de Gaulle reversed course and retained high subsidies. The underlying structural problem of surpluses only worsened.<sup>74</sup>

By the early 1960s, farmers, an important electoral constituency for Gaullists and other center-right parties in France, were again growing restless, as the government tried to limit increases in government subsidies. Intermittent riots shook the country. The threat of further disorder was a constant refrain in de Gaulle's cabinet sessions on agriculture.<sup>75</sup> As late as 1963 and 1964, de Gaulle continued to rail privately against agricultural special interests. The power of farmers to inflict electoral punishment was most evident during the first direct presidential elections held under the revised Fifth Republic constitution in January 1966. The elections coincided with the "empty chair" crisis of 1965 to 1966, which will be analyzed in greater detail in Part 2 of this article. Suffice it to say here that massive electoral opposition from farmers angered by de Gaulle's European policy led to one of the turning points of his presidency—one that reversed not only his farm policy, but also his entire style of governance. The same cannot be said for any European geopolitical event of his presidency.

The timing and continuity of de Gaulle's critical decisions further supports the primacy and sufficiency of commercial interest as a justification for participation in the EEC and CAP. Three points deserve mention.

First, if geopolitical concerns are important, then French policy toward the customs union should have evolved—and presumably should have grown less committed to economic cooperation—as it became clear between 1961 and 1964 that meaningful European political cooperation under the Fouchet Plan and the Elysée Treaty was not to be. While it is often argued that de Gaulle became "tougher" on Germany during this period, his policy—support for the CAP, suspicion of supranational institutions, opposition to British membership, pressure on Germany to make financial concessions, threats to pull out of the EEC if it did not—remained precisely the same. This continuity

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74. For an insightful overview, see Neville-Rolfe, *Politics of Agriculture*, pp. 104–148.

75. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 356–374.

of policy, which allowed integration to proceed, poses a problem for even the most subtly balanced geopolitical interpretation. Vaisse observes: “For the period 1963 to 1969 . . . [de Gaulle] no longer considered political unity a priority. . . . *Paradoxically*, this did not impede the progress of the Common Market.” In the words of Agriculture Minister Edgar Pisani, who also believed de Gaulle was motivated by geopolitical ideals, it was “a permanent miracle.”<sup>76</sup> Yet this result is paradoxical only if we assume, as does Vaisse, that geopolitical interests were the primary motivation all along. In fact, as we shall see in greater detail below, de Gaulle was pursuing unchanging economic objective set forth explicitly (at the latest) in 1960 to 1961. Indeed, de Gaulle’s insistence from 1964 on that CAP financing arrangements be swiftly completed was in part a result of the 1964 EEC agreement, which set support prices closer to the high domestic price prevailing in Germany rather than the moderate to low French price. This meant, one analyst observes:

French farmers were inevitably going to overproduce—probably massively—and would need the full panoply of Community support in order to stay solvent and export their excess production. Such support would be extremely expensive. This state of affairs would therefore only be acceptable to France (and especially to the French Ministry of Finance) *provided* the financial regulation entered into force as planned, thereby shifting the burden of paying for the unavoidable surpluses from the French government onto the shoulders of the food importing countries such as Germany. Bonn’s last minute attempt to renegotiate or delay the CAP funding deal—the central dispute in May-June 1965—was therefore highly alarming, since it endangered not only one part of the hard-won CAP, but instead the whole structure.<sup>77</sup>

Hence de Gaulle viewed financial regulation, the final stage, as the “keystone” of the CAP.<sup>78</sup> Franco-German conflict in the mid-1960s resulted from the success of French foreign economic policy, not the failure of French geopolitical policy.

Second, it is often stated that de Gaulle turned to West Germany and the EEC after his proposal for a nuclear triumvirate was rebuffed by the United

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76. Vaisse, *La grandeur*, pp. 543–544. [Emphasis added.]

77. N. Piers Ludlow, “The Eclipse of the Extremes: Demythologizing the Luxembourg Compromise,” paper delivered at the Conference of the European Liason Committee of Historians, Essen, 1999, p. 17. For de Gaulle’s understanding of the linkage at a cabinet meeting immediately thereafter, see Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 272–273, cited in Ludlow, “Eclipse of the Extremes,” p. 17.

78. “. . . *la clef de voûte* . . .” Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 273, cited in Ludlow, “Eclipse of the Extremes,” p. 17.

States and Britain. It is unclear how seriously de Gaulle's proposal was meant, but it appears from confidential and public statements, as well as discussions with Adenauer and Macmillan, that he had already decided to respect the Treaty of Rome by June or July 1958, *before* he sent the September 1958 memorandum to Washington and London proposing a nuclear triumvirate and well before he knew of its rejection. Surely the latter events did not cause the former. There appears to be no discontinuity in French policy in September-October of that year.<sup>79</sup>

Third, the initial decision to participate in the customs union was taken as one of three major pillars in a comprehensive economic reform in 1958, centered on the Plan Rueff. Trade liberalization and a one-time devaluation were international; most of the other reforms involved domestic fiscal and monetary policy. It is implausible that the entire reform package was driven by a desire to promote European cooperation or Franco-German foreign policy cooperation. Although this is not the place for a comprehensive discussion, certainly little in de Gaulle's own description of these events, or that of other participants, leaves such an impression.<sup>80</sup>

This last point leads us to the internal coherence of de Gaulle's strategy and tactics. The major obstacle to the realization of de Gaulle's chief objective—the creation of the CAP—was the West German government, which sought to protect relatively uncompetitive German farmers. To ensure that the CAP would serve French interests, de Gaulle had to persuade West Germany (alongside Britain, the major agricultural importer in Western Europe) to open highly protected domestic agricultural markets and to abrogate existing bilateral arrangements with third countries.<sup>81</sup> The seriousness with which de Gaulle looked to the CAP as an end in itself is evidenced by the tactical flexibility of his effort to overcome German opposition. De Gaulle threatened to pull out of the EEC and to revise fundamental geopolitical commitments. He accepted supranational institutions. He demonstrated no such flexibility and resolve in his concurrent pursuit of European geopolitical goals.

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79. Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, pp. 194–197, 212; Vaïsse, *La grandeur*, pp. 166–167; interview with Baron Snoy et d'Oppuers, July 1987, interview 27, 38, EEC Archives Fiesole, p. 14. Frédéric Bozo further undermines the geopolitical explanation when he concludes that de Gaulle did not decide definitively for a geopolitical move toward West Germany, rather than the United States and Britain, until 1962. See Frédéric Bozo, *Deux stratégies pour l'Europe*.

80. Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, Vol. I, pp. 131–162; Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 195, 364; Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 671–673; and Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed., *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol. 3. Gladwin Jebb, *The Memoirs of Lord Gladwin* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1972), p. 317, reports a January 1957 conversation with de Gaulle in which he opposed Monnet's Europe but accepted economic rationalization. Vaïsse, *La grandeur*, pp. 169–175.

81. Maurice Couve de Murville, cited in Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed., *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol. 5, p. 181.

De Gaulle threatened dozens of times in public and private, in the most unequivocal manner possible, to exit or destroy the EEC if West Germany refused to approve the CAP. This strongly implies that European integration had little geopolitical value in and of itself. In confidential discussions, whether bilateral or within de Gaulle's circle, there is hardly ever mention of the geopolitical risks of destroying the EEC. In any case, if such concerns existed, agricultural interests must have overridden them.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, de Gaulle threatened to suspend or renounce the Franco-German Treaty of 1963, shift alliances away from West Germany toward the Soviet Union, withdraw French troops from German soil, delay GATT negotiations, and obstruct the implementation of a European competition policy—all directed at German farm policy.<sup>83</sup> Geopolitical cooperation was impossible, de Gaulle told Adenauer in late 1961, if the CAP was not created first.<sup>84</sup> If de Gaulle supported integration primarily to achieve geopolitical objectives, what sense does it make to risk the EEC, let alone major alliance commitments, to benefit the “anachronistic” farming sector?

De Gaulle was also quite careful, when issuing such ultimatums, to avoid threatening his commercial objectives. We find almost no instances in which he threatened to liquidate the EEC or to offer economic or agricultural compromises to Germany in return for foreign-policy cooperation—as the geopolitical explanation would predict.<sup>85</sup> Peyrefitte recounts an instructive episode, in which de Gaulle conducts very close to a “counterfactual thought experiment.” De Gaulle had repeatedly threatened to withdraw from the EEC—to trigger an “explosion,” as he put it in cabinet sessions—if the West Germans rejected the CAP. What would France do, Peyrefitte asked, if West Germany offers satisfaction on the CAP but simultaneously joins the MLF—

82. To be sure, all of this was in part a bluff. Only a “total error,” de Gaulle believed, would force France actually to make good on such threats. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 265–267. Still, “one always needs to envisage all the possibilities.” *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 350.

83. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 231–237, 245–261; Volker Hentschel, *Ludwig Erhard: Ein Politikerleben* (München: Olzog Verlag, 1996), p. 541. It is hard to know what to make of de Gaulle's occasional willingness to employ potentially costly geopolitical threats to force completion of the CAP. These threats, while far less common than those to abandon the EEC, seem on the surface to support the commercial explanation of French policy. If geopolitical goals were more important, why risk them for tactical reasons? Yet one might argue that these threats were transparent bluffs. In pressuring Adenauer and Erhard to accept the CAP, de Gaulle threatened a radical reconsideration of French political-military policy.

84. Georges-Henri Soutou, “Le général de Gaulle et le plan Fouchet,” Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed., *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol. 5, p. 138.

85. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 222–223. The only exceptions are very rare hints at a potential shift in alliances toward the Soviet Union if Germany failed to implement the Franco-German treaty. Yet when the treaty led to no foreign-policy cooperation, de Gaulle simply interpreted it to mandate prompt implementation of the CAP. When this economic interest was realized, de Gaulle dropped the threats. Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, Vol. 1, p. 186, also pp. 182, 185–188. For numerous threats, see Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*, chap. 3.

an economically attractive but geopolitically disastrous prospect? The General replied: “We would not trigger an explosion. We find the Multilateral Force unpleasant, but they are free to do as they please.”<sup>86</sup> For de Gaulle, as we shall see in even more detail later on, geopolitics served as the instrument of commercial interest, but not the reverse.

It is striking, finally, that de Gaulle and his Gaullist successor Pompidou were willing to accept substantial formal constraints on French sovereignty—anathema to the Gaullist ideology—in order to lock West Germany, France, and eventually Britain into ever closer agricultural cooperation. In the early 1960s, it was above all Gaullist France that insisted on moving beyond long-term bilateral agricultural contracts, a minimalist form of agricultural cooperation initially favored by France as less “supranational,” to a more centralized CAP system managed in large part by Brussels-based officials and financed by common agricultural funds. The major goal of France during the late 1960s was, as we shall see in Part 2, a permanent centralized financing arrangement. This eventually involved an entire system of supranational value-added taxation. France favored this delegation of sovereignty in order to lock in the CAP against persistent efforts by West German agricultural officials to postpone agricultural integration and frustrate the everyday implementation of agreements that were reached. (It was West Germany, rhetorically more “federalist” but also swayed by narrow commercial interests, that most strongly opposed such financial centralization.) Strong central institutions would also secure the CAP against future efforts by Britain to undermine it—a point to which we shall return in Part 2.<sup>87</sup> As Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville observed, the French government subordinated ideology and became “the guardian of the Treaties” whenever it suited its interests.<sup>88</sup> De Gaulle was a

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86. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 269. Also *ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 284. De Gaulle notes that France would then be free to seek alternative alliances in the East.

87. De Gaulle's willingness to compromise dates from 1958. Dusan Sidjanski, *Le principe supranational et le processus d'intégration dans les Communautés européennes* (Paris: Cours de l'IHEI, 1962–1963), p. 12, cited in Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, p. 203. To be precise, de Gaulle was at least as willing to centralize financing as were the leaders of the five other member governments, and probably more so, whereas no government was willing to move as far as the commission proposed. Precisely the opposite arose with external tariff and competition policies. After France blocked efforts to develop a flexible negotiating position in the GATT, Germany sought greater commission administrative autonomy from the intergovernmental committees overseeing the GATT negotiations (the 111 and 113 committees). This suggests more broadly that European governments, regardless of their ideology, delegated powers to European institutions when they sought to lock in credible commitments to policies that offered concrete gains. For a complete argument along these lines, see Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*.

88. Leprette, pp. 118–119. Also see Raymond Poidevin, “De Gaulle et l'Europe en 1958,” Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed., *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol. 5, p. 87.

“fédérateur malgré lui” (a federalist despite himself).<sup>89</sup> This, like so much else in France’s willingness to accept the EEC and promote the CAP, is easily explicable from the perspective of enduring French commercial interests and perplexing from the perspective of de Gaulle’s geopolitical vision.

### **The Fouchet Plan: A Strategy of “Seduction”**

The Fouchet Plan, first proposed in 1961 by De Gaulle’s Minister Christian Fouchet, is generally taken to be the centerpiece of the General’s alternative geopolitical vision for Europe. The Fouchet Plan reflected de Gaulle’s dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Rome, which he planned to revise from his first months in office.<sup>90</sup> In its place, he called for a new institution without supranational powers to coordinate European foreign and economic policy. In its initial form, it was meant to be a narrow arrangement limited to foreign policy—a modest institution alongside the EEC. In January 1962 the proposal was suddenly revised (literally in de Gaulle’s own hand) into a much more intransigent, “nationalist” plan. The General cut acknowledgments of the Atlantic Alliance and the Treaty of Rome, proposed to supplant the EEC in economic affairs, removed references to an “indissoluble union,” reduced any supranational powers, and deleted a “revision clause” permitting the institution to be brought back within the EEC. Thereafter de Gaulle remained intransigent, making a few concessions but never returning to a position as forthcoming as the original proposal. The negotiations collapsed, leaving only the possibility for modest bilateral cooperation between France and Germany under the Elysée Treaty of 1963.<sup>91</sup>

Contrary to what many have argued, the promulgation of this alternative plan, including explicit provisions for European political cooperation, does not clearly demonstrate the overriding importance of de Gaulle’s geopolitical vision. To be sure, de Gaulle would have preferred more intergovernmental institutions in Europe, as well as closer European foreign-policy cooperation. International opposition may have rendered the failure of such a proposal inevitable.<sup>92</sup> Yet what is most striking, for our purposes here, is

89. Newhouse, *Collision*, p. 54.

90. Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, pp. 202–203.

91. This plan, developed by Soutou, Couve, and others, appears to have been designed to be at the extreme limit of what the other five governments might accept. Soutou, “Général,” p. 137. See also Alessandro Silj, “Europe’s Political Puzzle: A Study of the Fouchet Negotiations and the 1963 Veto,” Occasional Paper No. 17, Center for International Affairs, Cambridge, MA, 1967, pp. 14–16; and Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 441–458.

92. For an argument that failure was not inevitable but stemmed from misunderstandings and overly conflicting negotiating tactics adopted by de Gaulle and others, see Soutou, cited in Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed., *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol. 5, pp. 190–191; and Soutou, “Général.”

that de Gaulle appears not to have fully expected the Fouchet Plan to succeed, not to have made significant efforts to make sure it did, and not to have allowed its failure to have any impact whatsoever on his policy toward the EEC. De Gaulle's first priority throughout, sufficient to keep integration moving forward, remained commercial interest. In contrast to his brutal negotiating tactics in promoting the CAP, de Gaulle made no extraordinary efforts—neither an offer of economic concessions nor a threat to break up the EEC—to gain foreign support for the Fouchet Plan. The plan nonetheless was useful to him, not simply because it gambled that political cooperation might actually be possible, but also because it served as a deliberate deception that established de Gaulle's European credentials and differentiated French policy from that of Britain. This offered a critical source of legitimacy for French diplomacy faced with the delicate task of negotiating agricultural cooperation while opposing British membership. Again, commercial concerns remained preeminent and are sufficient to explain French support for the EEC; the Fouchet Plan is, at most, a sideshow.

In presenting the evidence for this interpretation, we begin with the coherence of de Gaulle's policies and tactics. The curious history of the Fouchet Plan confounds historians inclined to see it as the centerpiece of his geopolitical strategy in Europe. Particularly difficult to explain are de Gaulle's apparently contradictory and self-defeating tactics. When conducting a negotiation, parties generally begin with extreme positions, then compromise toward a median position. Yet the historical record reveals not a single occasion on which de Gaulle signaled willingness to make even the smallest compromise to secure agreement on the Fouchet Plan. If political cooperation was de Gaulle's major priority, why was his second draft tougher than the first? When others react negatively, why did he not compromise?<sup>93</sup> In particular, why was his diplomacy so much less flexible than contemporaneous French diplomacy on economic issues like the CAP? If the General truly sought an independent European foreign policy, why did he not, for example, link the Fouchet Plan to even the most marginal quid pro quo in other areas—direct elections to the European Parliament, for example? Why did he not accept the myriad compromises proposed by others? Why, in the years following the abandonment of the Fouchet Plan, did he reject proposals from his advisers, as well as from Chancellor Ludwig Erhard in West Germany, to resurrect it?<sup>94</sup>

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93. To be sure, after making additional demands midway through the negotiations, de Gaulle rescinded some of them, but the net result was still to harden the French position.

94. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 214–217; Newhouse, *Collision*, pp. 100–101; Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, Vol. 3, p. 325; and Soutou, "Général," p. 143. Debré reports a subsequent conversation with de Gaulle in which he notes that the Dutch did the French a favor by killing the proposal. Vaisse, *La grandeur*, p. 190.

To explain this paradoxical behavior, biographers and historians of de Gaulle are forced to advance speculative and unlikely conjectures that contradict their own portrait of the General as a master diplomat and politician with one eye ever fixed on the realization of a geopolitical vision. Some conjecture that de Gaulle suddenly noted details in the first Fouchet Plan that he had previously overlooked, or that he fell prey to a miscommunication within the French bureaucracy. Some attribute the change to de Gaulle's impetuous personality or exceptional sense of principle. Some speculate that de Gaulle's intransigence reflected pressure from Prime Minister Debré. Some conjecture about a link to concurrent security concerns, such as the four-power discussions in Berlin. Some speculate that it was a failed tactic.<sup>95</sup> A French participant believes that it was an unintentional and impulsive oversight: "The General . . . could not resist the temptation to add two or three little touches that looked like nothing."<sup>96</sup>

Such ad hoc explanations are neither supported by any hard evidence nor remotely consistent with what we know about the conduct of foreign policy under de Gaulle's presidency. Intervention by Debré would constitute a unique demonstration of ministerial independence by a man who enjoyed neither significant political support (he was about to be forced to resign) nor a reputation for particular intellectual creativity in office. There is no evidence of a link to security matters.<sup>97</sup> It is implausible, moreover, that de Gaulle would "overlook" a proposal that constituted the core of his European strategy. In contrast to his typical role in domestic affairs, where details were indeed often left to ministers, the realm of foreign policy making under de Gaulle was a centralized "domaine réservé" of presidential activity. Records of policy making during this period leave little doubt that de Gaulle took decisions without prior ministerial consultation and, in important cases like the British veto and the "empty chair" crisis, without informing his ministers until much later. His verbatim revision of the second Fouchet Plan is the rule, not the exception, and it demonstrates his control over even the minute details of policy. Since the consequences were immediately apparent to de

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95. Silj, "Europe's Political Puzzle," pp. 13–16; Pierre Gerbet, "In Search of Political Union: The Fouchet Plan Negotiations (1960–62)," in Roy Pryce, ed., *The Dynamics of European Union* (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 121–122; Pierre Maillard, *De Gaulle et l'Europe* (Paris: Tallandier, 1995), p. 205; Soutou, "1961: le plan Fouchet," *Espoir*, Vol. 90 (March 1993), pp. 40–55; also see *Espoir*, Vol. 87 (December 1992). Soutou reports the recollections of Jean-Marie Soutou. A more convincing interpretation, more consistent with the argument I advance, is found in Soutou, "Général," p. 143.

96. Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, Vol. 3, p. 321. Vaïsse accepts this criterion for de Gaulle's seriousness and cites as evidence the concessions he made to the others (Vaïsse, *La grandeur*, p. 191), yet this conclusion belies his own concrete evidence (Vaïsse, *La grandeur*, pp. 184–185).

97. Maillard, *De Gaulle et l'Europe*, p. 205; and Silj, "Europe's Political Puzzle," pp. 13–16.

Gaulle's negotiators, any errors could easily have been reversed. Any claim that de Gaulle attached primary importance to geopolitical goals like those embodied in the Fouchet Plan therefore requires that one paint him as irrational, impetuous, uninformed, or perpetually distracted, for which there is not a shred of evidence.<sup>98</sup> If we instead accept, as the evidence suggests, that de Gaulle was a master tactician who did not make elementary errors, there is no alternative but to question the universally held assumption that his tactics in promoting the Fouchet Plan reflected geopolitical imperatives.

A far simpler explanation of French policy—one much more consistent, as we shall soon see, with de Gaulle's own statements—is simply that de Gaulle, whatever his ideals, was constrained to promote French commercial interests. This rendered the Fouchet Plan secondary. To be sure, de Gaulle would have preferred that political relations be conducted under an inter-governmental arrangement like the Fouchet Plan. Yet he gave priority to the EEC at least as long as the customs union and CAP remained incomplete.<sup>99</sup> To be sure, he did, if very rarely and rather vaguely, hint that economic cooperation might not persist if it did not deepen toward political cooperation. Yet he never sought to follow up on this implicit threat, if in fact he meant it as one. His lack of follow-through stands in striking contrast to his explicit threats to withdraw France from the EEC if the CAP was not realized.<sup>100</sup> Only the primacy of commercial considerations can make sense of these tactics without recourse to ad hoc claims about the General's debility.<sup>101</sup>

Fortunately we need not rely only on such circumstantial evidence and counterfactual speculation to confirm a commercial explanation. An examination of the discourse of de Gaulle and other French policy makers confirms the secondary role of de Gaulle's geopolitical ambitions. It reveals that de Gaulle did have a long-term strategic and tactical approach to European integration. The Fouchet Plan was in large part, though of course not entirely, a deliberate deception intended to disguise the tension between France's economic interests and de Gaulle's opposition to supranational institutions.<sup>102</sup>

De Gaulle's overall strategy was set forth in confidential documents, negotiating instructions, and cabinet discussions from 1959 through 1961, of

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98. Soutou, "Général." See also John Newhouse, *De Gaulle*, p. 107. On the reserved domain, see Vaisse, *La Grandeur*, pp. 284–286.

99. Maillard, *De Gaulle et l'Europe*, p. 205.

100. Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 263–280.

101. Silj, "Europe's Political Puzzle," pp. 14–16.

102. Debré recalls that the basic French goals in this period were neither ideological nor geopolitical, but instead aimed at realizing three "national interests": blocking a free-trade area without external tariffs, providing for French overseas territories, and establishing the CAP. Michel Debré, *Trois républiques pour une France: Agir*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Albin Michel, 1988), pp. 432ff.

which the most important was a 1960 strategic plan drafted by Alain Peyrefitte, subsequently de Gaulle's chief strategist and closest adviser on this issue.<sup>103</sup> The "Peyrefitte Memorandum" set forth what its author termed a "prudently audacious" strategy, one that foresaw the major trends in France's relationship to the EEC from 1960 through 1966. France, Peyrefitte later wrote, found itself in a "paradoxical" diplomatic position. De Gaulle opposed the many elements of the supranational form of the EEC, yet supported its substantive cooperation—a common external tariff and agricultural policy.<sup>104</sup>

If agriculture had been clearly secondary, the General could simply have challenged supranational institutions outright, but the simultaneous pursuit of agricultural integration and British exclusion, while necessary, posed tactical problems. If de Gaulle's opposition to supranational institutions became too obvious, other countries might side with Britain, thereby endangering ongoing negotiations. To maintain progress in important EEC areas (notably agriculture), preserve the psychological upper hand, avoid triggering counterdemands and obstruction from other member states, and block any alliance between the Five and the British government, the French government must disguise its true goal of undermining supranational institutions. Peyrefitte proposed a subterfuge—a strategy of "seduction"—in which France strove "never to appear negative." France must avoid conveying any inkling of the true French goal—"a British Europe without the British"—whereby France would profit from European economic cooperation, yet destroy supranational institutions and exclude the British.<sup>105</sup> This delicate diplomatic circumstance called for what Peyrefitte termed a "prudently audacious" strategy.<sup>106</sup> It was to proceed in two stages:

First, the French government must articulate a positive "European" vision. Peyrefitte recommended that France propose a "European" plan—

103. On Peyrefitte's subsequent role in implementation, Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 636.

104. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, p. 302. Peyrefitte's recollections of this policy review are corroborated by other sources. Although some deny the importance of the memorandum, its influence is clear from the nearly verbatim adoption of its rhetoric in de Gaulle's speeches and confidential negotiating instructions to the prime minister. See the negotiating instructions to Debré and the memorandum to himself in Charles de Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets, juin 1958–décembre 1960* (Paris: Plon, 1985), pp. 398–399, 401, cited in Olivier Bange, *The EEC Crisis of 1963: Kennedy, Macmillan, De Gaulle, and Adenauer in Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 27–29. Also see Leprette, p. 105n. For dismissive views among French historians, see de la Serre, "De Gaulle et la candidature britannique," pp. 192–217; and Vaïsse, *La grandeur*.

105. Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 487–499, especially pp. 489, 495, 498. To appreciate the deception, compare the subtle differences in Peyrefitte's articles in *Le Monde* (14, 15, 16, and 17 September 1960). Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 427–441. In this context, we might also recall also de Gaulle's characteristically ambiguous advice to Giscard: "Never invoke special interests in public. Talk only about the country's interests and have only its interests at heart." Philippe Alexandre, *Le Duel: De Gaulle, Pompidou* (Paris: Gresset, 1972), pp. 150–151.

106. Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, p. 489.

something very much like the later Fouchet Plan—to provide political cover for the pursuit of self-interest. At most, such a plan might “seduce” the five other governments away from the EEC. More likely, it would create the beneficial illusion of a positive French policy toward Europe. This positive vision would contribute to French plans to block British entry. The apparent “deepening” of integration, de Gaulle and his associates reasoned, might force the British to “exclude themselves” from a superficially federalist, but actually more “British” arrangement. Perhaps, Peyrefitte cynically speculated, the Fouchet Plan might even persuade European federalists, who constituted a majority in many national parliaments and were not without power in de Gaulle’s government, that “the President of the Republic had been ‘converted’ to their principles.”<sup>107</sup> This tactic was effective. We now know that de Gaulle and his ideological nemesis Jean Monnet drew up a secret memorandum on 25 October 1960 (later leaked to the British government) in which Monnet pledged support for the Fouchet Plan, while de Gaulle pledged to maintain the Treaty of Rome intact.<sup>108</sup>

Second, should the Fouchet Plan fail to induce institutional change, France would eventually confront its European counterparts directly. It would threaten radical action—including withdrawal from Europe—if the treaty were not revised to remove supranational elements. France could not do this, however, until two vital and closely related French interests were secure: implementation of the CAP and rejection of British membership. De Gaulle’s confidential negotiating guidelines to Debré in September 1960, a month after Peyrefitte’s memorandum, instructed him not to challenge the EEC overtly. If the Fouchet Plan succeeded, de Gaulle observed, the EEC would wither away. If it failed, France was to confront the five other member governments and deal directly with EEC institutions when the time was right.<sup>109</sup> This second stage, de Gaulle implies, could not proceed until the customs union was secure.

We have every reason to believe that the Peyrefitte Memorandum was of decisive importance. De Gaulle requested it, read it, adopted some of its rhetoric, and immediately sought to implement parts of it—if not the Fouchet Plan itself. Peyrefitte was rewarded with remarkably rapid advancement from an obscure position in the *Assemblée Nationale* to a position as press spokes-

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107. *Ibid.*, pp. 489–499, especially p. 498.

108. Bange, *EEC Crisis of 1963*, pp. 27–29. Bange’s finding also confirms the importance of domestic political constraints on de Gaulle’s European policy.

109. Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 489–499; Charles de Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets* (Paris: Plon, 1980), pp. 398–399; Soutou, “Général,” pp. 126–127, 130; Soutou, “1961”; and Susanne J. Bodenheimer, *Political Union: A Microcosm of European Politics* (Leyden: Sijthoff, 1967), pp. 77–84.

man with ministerial rank and a privileged interlocutor. Thereafter, he was briefly appointed to a more conventional ministerial position. (Significantly, his qualifications for the appointments were not prior service with de Gaulle or any particular knowledge of geopolitics, but his role in the technical negotiations of the Treaty of Rome.) De Gaulle, moreover, followed Peyrefitte's "prudently audacious" plan to the letter for six years. Almost every major step in French European strategy from 1960 through 1966, including more direct conflict, is foreseen in the Peyrefitte Memorandum of 1960. De Gaulle pressed forward on agriculture, disguised his true political intentions through positive proposals, and confronted supranational institutions only after the customs union was secure.<sup>110</sup>

It is often argued that when the Fouchet Plan failed in mid-1962, de Gaulle's primary focus turned to Franco-German relations—thus demonstrating the consistency of his pursuit of geopolitical goals. Yet de Gaulle's confidential views about Franco-German relations are just as cynical as his views toward the Fouchet Plan. The Common Market had clear priority. In French European policy of early 1963, de Gaulle confided, questions of nuclear weapons and economic interests were "essential," whereas Franco-German ties were a matter of public relations: "Naturally, I will also draw the lessons of the last autumn's referendum and elections and glorify the Franco-German relations, but [nuclear weapons and economic interests], as you well know, are the two principal questions. It will be amusing."<sup>111</sup> On 18 December 1964, de Gaulle stated, in a confidential passage Peyrefitte places in the context of a discussion of West Germany's inconstant attitude toward European political cooperation: "All this agitation doesn't matter to us. Only one thing matters to us, the Common Market. There we'll see what will happen, whether the Common Market will continue or not. And that's it."<sup>112</sup>

In de Gaulle's thinking, Peyrefitte observes, the Franco-German relationship "was not a substitute for the Common Market, but a means to advance it."<sup>113</sup> Even before Adenauer stepped down, agriculture, not political coop-

110. This is the conclusion of Jouve. For evidence, see Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, p. 72; Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 485–502; and Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, pp. 66–70. See also Bange, *EEC Crisis of 1963*, pp. 27–29. The premise of the Peyrefitte memorandum is that the EEC was working so well economically as to tempt even the British.

111. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle* Vol. 1, p. 336.

112. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 270. In response to a question on the German-American offset deal, a matter of both economic and geopolitical importance to France, de Gaulle adds: "The Germans handled it poorly. They were the puppets of the Americans. They betrayed the spirit of the Franco-German agreement. They betrayed Europe." Yet he does not link this to the EEC negotiations, place any priority on it, or contemplate any response.

113. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 232.

eration, had established itself as the “test case” (“die Testfrage”) for Franco-German cooperation under the Elysée Treaty and the most important ongoing subject of Franco-German summit discussions.<sup>114</sup> In sum, the discourse of de Gaulle and his closest advisers, like the overall coherence of French policy, suggests the sufficiency of economic interests in motivating French policy toward the EEC. By contrast, political union remained an aspiration—desirable perhaps, but dispensable.

Turning from the discourse of policy makers to the timing and consistency of changes in policy with respect to the Fouchet Plan and institutional issues, we find further evidence of the priority accorded commercial interests over geopolitical ideas. Although the promulgation of the Fouchet Plan in the early 1960s, a period in which de Gaulle was moving simultaneously toward the customs union and a looser relationship with NATO, is consistent both with commercial concerns and with geopolitical ideas, more fine-grained details of timing demonstrate the primacy of commerce.

Only commercial concerns can account for the precise timing of the decision to promulgate a second, tougher version of the Fouchet Plan. This abrupt revision, drafted at a meeting between de Gaulle and a few of his ministers, was not contemporaneous with any major geopolitical event. It did occur, however, just four hours after the decisive EEC agriculture compromise of January 1962—the most important CAP decision to date. It appears that de Gaulle, now confident that the CAP was inexorably moving forward, could afford to take a more intransigent position on institutions. His goal in doing so may have been to force other governments to accept responsibility in public for the collapse of the negotiations, thereby preserving his “pro-European” image, as in fact occurred. Only commercial concerns can explain, moreover, why de Gaulle deliberately restrained his ministers and diplomats from provoking a direct conflict over supranational institutions. Only years later—after the elections of late 1962, the British veto, and the CAP agreements of 1964 and 1965—would he provoke the “empty chair” crisis, a decision to be examined in Part 2. The timing of these two decisions—toughness of the Fouchet Plan in early 1962, no direct challenge until 1965—is difficult to explain unless one assumes that de Gaulle was following the Peyrefitte Memorandum *and* that he valued successful economic cooperation more than autonomous European political cooperation or intergovernmental institutions.

Turning finally to domestic societal pressures, we observe that whatever de Gaulle might have desired in theory, the Fouchet Plan was intended, at

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114. Bundesrepublik Deutschland, *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1963*, Band II (München: Oldenbourg, 1994), Document 217 (pp. 703–704) and Document 219 (p. 720).

least in the short term, as a deliberate deception to disguise the General's true calculations while economic negotiations proceeded. For nearly two years it had the intended effect on none other than Monnet, who, as we have seen, secretly agreed to support de Gaulle's plans for foreign-policy coordination. Monnet and other leading politicians of the French center-right broke with de Gaulle only after the president had established an unassailable domestic political majority and had vetoed British membership. These partisan considerations aside, the Fouchet Plan generated little interest. De Gaulle proposed and then killed it without generating much political activity. In sum, de Gaulle sought to indulge, albeit to a limited extent, his personal ambition to move Europe toward a more intergovernmental and perhaps more plebiscitary form, but such efforts were strictly subordinated to economic interests, above all the realization of the CAP, around which significant social pressures could be mobilized. We shall observe this more directly in Part 2 when we discuss the "empty chair" crisis, which sought to bring the policy set forth in the Peyrefitte Memorandum to its conclusion.

Overall, French negotiation of the Fouchet Plan demonstrates that ambitions for eventual political union, no matter how strongly supported by de Gaulle, were only secondary determinants of his attitude toward the EEC. This is not to deny the existence or distinctiveness of de Gaulle's geopolitical vision. Surely he would have liked to see tighter European foreign-policy cooperation or less supranationalism. He spoke often, if vaguely and conditionally, of geopolitical tasks that awaited a politically unified Europe. A future stage was foreseen even in the Peyrefitte Memorandum.<sup>115</sup> Yet de Gaulle moved cautiously, never challenging the EEC until the moment when the CAP was secure. Whereas a geopolitical explanation might explain why the Fouchet Plan was ultimately blocked by foreign governments, it offers no plausible explanation of de Gaulle's unwillingness to negotiate seriously to realize it. Instead, from the Peyrefitte Memorandum onward, we see the consistent primacy of commercial concerns over geopolitical vision. It is therefore unsurprising to read a close associate's recollection that when the Fouchet Plan collapsed, de Gaulle "did not mourn."<sup>116</sup> Having come to see political cooperation as hampering his ambitions for an independent foreign policy, he quietly let it go and focused his attention for the moment on more essential matters—such as the price of grain.

*(Part 2 will appear in the next issue, along with responses from six scholars and a reply by the author)*

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115. The quotations are too numerous to recite, yet—as we have seen in the previous section—they are rarely linked in any concrete way to the EEC.

116. Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, Vol. 2, pp. 325, 342. Also Etienne Burin des Roziers, *Retour aux sources, 1962 l'année décisive* (Paris: Plon, 1986), p. 59; and Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 1, p. 111.

## Note

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