

De Gaulle and Europe:
Historical Revision and Social Science Theory

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Abstract

The thousands of books and articles on Charles de Gaulle's policy toward European integration, whether written by historians, social scientists, or commentators, universally accord primary explanatory importance to the General's distinctive geopolitical ideology. In explaining his motivations, only secondary significance, if any at all, is attached to commercial considerations. This paper seeks to reverse this historiographical consensus by examining the four major decisions toward European integration during de Gaulle's presidency: the decisions to remain in the Common Market in 1958, to propose the Fouchet Plan in the early 1960s, to veto British accession to the EC, and to provoke the "empty chair" crisis in 1965-1966, resulting in the "Luxembourg Compromise." In each case, the overwhelming bulk of the primary evidence—speeches, memoirs, or government documents—suggests that de Gaulle's primary motivation was economic, not geopolitical or ideological. Like his predecessors and successors, de Gaulle sought to promote French industry and agriculture by establishing protected markets for their export products. This empirical finding has three broader implications: (1) For those interested in the European Union, it suggests that regional integration has been driven primarily by economic, not geopolitical considerations—even in the "least likely" case. (2) For those interested in the role of ideas in foreign policy, it suggests that strong interest groups in a democracy limit the impact of a leader's geopolitical ideology—even where the executive has very broad institutional autonomy. De Gaulle was a democratic statesman first and an ideological visionary second. (3) For those who employ qualitative case-study methods, it suggests that even a broad, representative sample of secondary sources does not create a firm basis for causal inference. For political scientists, as for historians, there is in many cases no reliable alternative to primary-source research.

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Over two thousand books and articles in over forty-five languages have been devoted to the life of General Charles de Gaulle.¹ Thousands more treat his policies within the context of European integration, postwar Western defense, or French foreign policy. 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. He was, biographers and commentators agree, an “innovative leader” driven by “high” politics rather than “low” politics, politico-military prestige and security rather than economic welfare, a distinctive geopolitical worldview rather than the mundane concerns of democratic governance. His term as French President from 1958 to 1969 is a study in the possibilities and limits of visionary statecraft in the modern era.²

Nowhere, it is said, are de Gaulle’s ideational motivations more clearly demonstrated than by the striking series of French actions toward the European Community (EC) taken under his presidency. Upon entering office in 1958, the General surprised observers by swiftly embracing the Treaty of Rome and working closely with German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to accelerate its implementation. This involved pressing both Adenauer and his successor, Ludwig Erhard, to institute the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In 1960, de Gaulle proposed the Fouchet Plan, an intergovernmental arrangement for European foreign and economic policy coordination. Between 1958 and 1969 de Gaulle consistently opposed closer relations with Britain, first vetoing a free trade area (FTA) in 1959, then calling off two years of negotiations over British entry in January 1963,

¹ This article draws on materials in Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). For criticism and comments, I am particularly indebted to Stanley Hoffmann, for whom disagreement is no barrier to dialogue. I also thank Charles Cogan, Piers Ludlow, Alberta Sbragia, and Kip Wennerlund for close readings of the book chapter from which this argument is drawn. On the number of books devoted to de Gaulle, see Philip H. Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France: French Security Policy and the Gaullist Legacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 203n. The one-decade compilation, Institut Charles de Gaulle, *Nouvelle bibliographie internationale sur Charles de Gaulle, 1980-1990* (Paris: Plon, 1990) is almost four hundred pages long. This does not include general articles and materials on related subjects French foreign policy of the period.

² This is evident from the titles of recent works. See Daniel J. Mahoney, *De Gaulle: Statesmanship, Grandeur, and Modern Democracy* (Westport: 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: State University of New York Press, 1993), 57-81; John Pinder, *Europe against de Gaulle* (London: Pall Mall, 1963); Maurice Vaisse, *La grandeur: Politique étrangère du général de Gaulle 1958-1969* (Paris: Fayard, 1998); Charles Williams, *The Last Great Frenchman: A Life of General De Gaulle* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1993); Serge Bernstein, *The Republic of De Gaulle, 1958-1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Lois Pattison de Ménéil, *Who Speaks for Europe? The Vision of Charles de Gaulle* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977).

and rejecting British initiatives to begin them again in 1967; he then turned around as initiating discussions over British cooperation with the EC in 1969, which swiftly became membership discussions under his close associate and Gaullist successor, Georges Pompidou. In July 1965, in an effort to alter the institutional structure of the EC, de Gaulle launched the “empty chair crisis”—a six-month French boycott of decision-making in Brussels. The crisis, which appeared to threaten the very existence of the EC, was resolved only with the “Luxembourg Compromise,” which granted each member government an extra-legal veto over any EC legislation that threatens a “vital interest.”

There is a great divergence of opinion on whether de Gaulle’s policy was effective or not and whether it was suited to the objective circumstances or not; there is next to none concerning its causes. Without exception, participants like Jean Monnet, contemporary commentators like Miriam Camps, political scientists like Stanley Hoffmann and Ernst Haas, and myriad policy analysts and biographers all explain de Gaulle’s actions by invoking his geopolitical ideas.³ All agree that de Gaulle’s primary goal throughout was the construction of an autonomous European foreign and military policy—an alternative to US efforts to strengthen NATO, create a “Multilateral Force,” and forge a privileged nuclear connection with Britain. De Gaulle’s desire to reinforce French “grandeur”, his wartime suspicion of the “Anglo-Saxons,” his pursuit of a distinctive unilateral foreign policy backed by nuclear weapons, and his nationalist commitment to the preservation of sovereignty are credited with inspiring French cooperation with Germany at the expense of Britain

³ Widely cited works include those cited in footnote two, and Nora Beloff, The General Says No: Britain's Exclusion from Europe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963); Frederic Bozo, Deux strategies pour l'Europe : De Gaulle, les Etats-Unis et l'Alliance atlantique 1958-1969 (Paris: Plon: Fondation Charles de Gaulle, 1996); Charles Cogan, Charles de Gaulle: A Brief Biography with Documents (Boston: Bedford Books, 1995); Anton W. DePorte, De Gaulle's Foreign Policy, 1964-1966 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Alfred Grosser, La Politique Extérieure de la Ve République (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965); Michael Harrison, The Reluctant Ally: France and Atlantic Security (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Stanley Hoffmann, “De Gaulle, Europe and the Atlantic Alliance,” International Organization 18:1 (Winter 1964), 1-25; Stanley Hoffmann, “Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation State and the Case of Western Europe,” Daedalus 95 (Summer 1966): 892-908; Stanley Hoffmann, “De Gaulle's Foreign Policy: The Stage and the Play, the Power and the Glory,” in Hoffmann, ed., Decline or Renewal? France since the 1930s (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 283-331; Ghita Ionescu, Leadership in an Independent World (Boulder: Westview, 1991); Institut Charles de Gaulle, ed. De Gaulle en son siècle: Europe Vol. 5 (Paris: Documentation française, 1992); Jean Lacouture, De Gaulle 3 vols (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1984-1988) cited from English edition, De Gaulle: The Ruler, 1945-1970 (New York: Norton, 1991); Jean Touchard, Le gaullisme: 1940-1969 (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1978); Edward Kolodziej, French International Policy under De Gaulle and Pompidou (Ithaca: Cornell

and the United States, as well as French opposition to the growth of supranational institutions in Europe. De Gaulle was a visionary leader; he stood above interest group politics and commercial concerns. For neo-functional integration theorists like Haas, as for their critics like Hoffmann, de Gaulle was a “dramatic political actor” who personified nationalist opposition to the technocratic focus on economics espoused by Monnet.⁴ “The price of milk”, Philip Williams and Martin Harrison observe, “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.”⁵

This essay proposes a revisionist reversal of the conventional wisdom concerning de Gaulle’s European policy. The price of wheat, not the political grandeur and military security of France, was the national interest that drove de Gaulle’s European policy. De Gaulle’s nuclear ambitions, his criticism of the United States, his policy toward the developing world, and his schemes for overcoming the East-West divide may well have been motivated by a visionary geopolitical ideology. His European policy, however, was motivated by the same goals shared by postwar democratic politicians everywhere: generation of electoral support and avoidance of disruptive strikes and protests through the promotion of economic welfare and, above all, appeasement of powerful sectoral producer groups. Systematic analysis of the available primary evidence reveals conclusively that the four major European decisions 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—directly promoted the narrow export interests of organized agriculture and industry in France or were decisively constrained by those interests. De Gaulle pursued preferential access to foreign markets for agricultural exporters in order to raise prices and quell opposition to the government despite his own very strong inclination, reflected in continuous conflict over

University Press, 1974); Philip Cerny, The Politics of Grandeur: Ideological Aspects of de Gaulle’s Foreign Policy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁴ Ernst B. Haas, ““The Uniting of Europe” and the Uniting of Latin America” Journal of Common Market Studies 5:4 (June 1967): 315-344;

agricultural policy, to resist the demands of farmers for subsidies in the broader national interest of industrial modernization. De Gaulle's European policy was also, albeit secondarily, concerned with assuring export markets for large industrial producers. For all its rhetorical flourish, de Gaulle's European policy differed hardly at all from those pursued by his Fourth Republic predecessors and his various successors, both Gaullist and non-Gaullist.

This conclusion flatly contradicts the received wisdom. In the entire corpus of work on de Gaulle and his European policy, there is—to my knowledge—not a single scholarly book or article that accords primary importance to French commercial interests. The literature can instead be divided into two categories: those that argue commercial concerns were decidedly secondary and those that argue they were entirely irrelevant.⁶ Let me be clear from the start: This is not to say de Gaulle was unmoved by a particular intergovernmental vision of Europe, but where such concerns clashed with commercial imperatives, the latter invariably prevailed. I am not asserting that economic interests motivated de Gaulle to the exclusion of geopolitical ideas and interests. De Gaulle did hold distinctive geopolitical ideas, which played an important, even dominant, role in French foreign policy of this period—particular interrelated policies toward nuclear weapons, NATO, the third world, and the superpowers. I am asserting that in de Gaulle's European policy, the one area where major economic and geopolitical interests were directly engaged, the role of economic motivations has been greatly underestimated. By any reasonable measure, commercial considerations were far more important than the geopolitical concerns in determining French policy toward the EC in this period.

While revising the received wisdom concerning one of the great statesmen of the 20th century is a worthwhile end in itself, this revision also suggests three more general conclusions about modern

⁶ Philip Williams, Crisis and Compromise: Politics in the Fourth Republic (London: Archon Books, 1964), 342.

world politics. These concern, respectively, the explanation of European integration, theories about the role of ideas in foreign policy-making, and the proper use of historical and social scientific methods in case-study-based research on world politics.

For those concerned with explaining European integration, this analysis suggests that the motivations that have led governments to promote the EC are more commercial and less geopolitical than is commonly supposed. It is commonplace to argue that the primary reason for postwar European integration was to prevent another Franco-German war, to balance against one or both of the superpowers, or to realize the ideological goal of a European federation. Opponents of integration are seen as pursuing different, but equally geopolitical, interests and ideologies. For a generation de Gaulle's foreign policy was held up further as definitive demonstration that integration was primarily about competing geopolitical interests and ideas, not commercial and economic interests.⁷ Hence this analysis is something of a "crucial case" in Harry Eckstein's sense: If even de Gaulle was motivated to support European integration primarily by commercial considerations, surely most other postwar European governments were as well.⁸

Turning from European integration to comparative foreign policy ore generally, this analysis suggests that a modern democracy imposes narrow constraints on the pursuit of an ideological foreign policy at the expense of domestic socioeconomic interests. This challenges traditional diplomatic historians and foreign policy specialists, who see de Gaulle as an archetypal "great man" pursuing ideological, idiosyncratic, individualistic foreign policy, as well as contemporary "constructivists" in IR theory, who would see de Gaulle as striving to realize an interpretation of

⁶ For the former, see Vaisse, *Grandeur*, 163, 167, 175, 613. Yet even Vaisse argues that "for General de Gaulle, the economic success of the Europe of Six was not an end in itself." (175)

⁷ For a review of this literature, see Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*, Chapters One and Three.

⁸ Harry Eckstein, "Case Studies and Theory in Social Science," in Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science* Volume 7 (Addison-Wesley, 1975), 79-138.

French “identity.”⁹ Yet even the most institutionally insulated and electorally powerful among democratic politicians—in this regard, de Gaulle is once again something of a “crucial case”—find it nearly impossible to pursue idiosyncratic policies in certain areas. At the very least, a strong dose of commonsensical skepticism about ideational explanations for major foreign policy decisions is warranted. In the context of de Gaulle’s relative success in defining distinctive French policies toward NATO, the Third World, and the superpowers, the failure of de Gaulle’s “visionary” European policy, suggest that a democratic statesman can pursue diffuse ideological goals only as long as they do not challenge the interests of powerful organized groups.

For those, finally, who seek to improve the application of qualitative methods in the study of world politics, this analysis suggests the decisive importance of adherence to rigorous methodological standards, both historiographical and social scientific, when conducting qualitative or case-study research. Much has been written recently calling for more intense interchange between historians and political scientists. Yet there remains considerable confusion about what this really means, if anything, for concrete empirical research.¹⁰ This study demonstrates some practical implications of such exhortations for research design. Only a combination of primary sources and objective, explicit, transparent standards of judging evidence—in short, qualitative methods drawn from both history and social science—can overcome the biases in prior interpretations. Without adherence to methodological principles drawn from both political science (e.g. explicit consideration of a full range of alternative theories and hypotheses) and from history (e.g. the use wherever possible of hard primary evidence), both social scientists and historians are condemned to repeat the conventional wisdom, whether correct or, as in this case, questionable. Methodological choices are neither abstract nor incidental but essential to an accurate interpretation and explanation of foreign policy.

⁹ Craig Parsons, “France and European Integration: A Constructivist Explanation,” (Berkeley: Unpublished Paper, 1998).

From historians, this study suggests, we must accept the need to rely on primary sources. The case of de Gaulle suggests, as Ian Lustick has recently argued, that it is not good enough to rest one's analysis on selected secondary sources. In contrast to Lustick, however, this study challenges also his preferred alternative, namely to provide a representative sample of the secondary literature. This study shows that even the entire range of secondary sources—even when they number in the thousands—may well be, at the very least, biased and perhaps uniformly wrong; at best, one is condemned to repeat the existing consensus, whatever it is. In this regard, de Gaulle is something of a “crucial case,” since it is hard to imagine a scholarly consensus deeper—but, I argue, more erroneous—than the one behind an ideological and geopolitical interpretation of de Gaulle's European policy. Only a firm grounding in primary sources, in this case some which heretofore have not received serious consideration by analysts of French foreign policy, gives us the leverage required to make an original empirical contribution by reversing the conventional wisdom of historians.¹¹

From political scientists, this study suggests, we must accept the discipline of social scientific methods—the statement of clear competing theories, the specification of explicit hypotheses, and objective presentation and balancing of the evidence both for and against each explanation. Without being compelled to confront and present the existing evidence for alternative explanations, it is difficult to know whether analysts have simply presented the evidence and interpretations that supports preexisting conclusions. This is particularly important in the case of de Gaulle, a statesman who expressed himself in a rich, allusive and often deliberately ambiguous rhetoric, and wielded an extraordinarily magnetic hold on those close to him. This has tempted generations of commentators, scholars and memoir-writers to read into his rhetoric what they want to hear, thereby—as we shall

¹⁰ For an overview with citations, see “Symposium: History and Theory,” *International Security* 22:1 (Summer 1997).

¹¹ Ian Lustick, “History, Historiography and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias,” *American Political Science Review* 90:3 (September 1996), 605-618.

see in detail below—engaging in unparalleled acts of selective, out of context citation. One example must suffice: De Gaulle’s press conference of 14 January 1963, at which the British veto was announced, is perhaps the most oft-cited source of quotations to support the view that de Gaulle had fundamental ideological and geopolitical objections to British membership. We often read of de Gaulle’s characterization of Britain’s “insular” character and “very original habits and traditions,” his concern about “a colossal Atlantic community under American dependence,” and much more. What is never mentioned is that de Gaulle’s comments were entirely and unambiguously dedicated to a discussion of the political economy of Britain and the United States, particularly in the agricultural sector. There is not a single mention of NATO, the MLF, the “special relationship,” or any other geopolitical issue. In fact, the overwhelming majority of explicit statements by de Gaulle on Europe are of this kind; only a small minority—typically the vaguest, most indirect, most public allusions—mention geopolitical concerns.

The remainder of this essay proceeds as follows. The first section below presents two competing theoretical explanations of de Gaulle’s European policy, one focused on geopolitical interests and ideas, the other on commercial interests—and draws explicit hypotheses from each. The second section employs primary data to evaluate these two sets of hypotheses across the four major episodes of Gaullist policy listed above. The third section draws more general empirical, theoretical, and methodological conclusions.

I. DE GAULLE AND FRENCH VITAL INTERESTS: TWO EXPLANATIONS

Broadly speaking, there are two plausible explanations of French policy toward Europe under de Gaulle, a conventional view that stresses de Gaulle’s geopolitical ideas and politico-military concerns and a competing view that looks to the commercial interests of important French producer groups.

A. Geopolitical Interests and Ideas: “Une certaine idée de la France”

“All my life,” de Gaulle declares at the outset of his celebrated memoirs, “I have had a certain idea of France.”¹² It is thus no surprise that interpretations of de Gaulle’s European policy tend to center on the nature of his distinctive geopolitical ideas. Although Gaullism was famously absolutist in symbolic expression and frustratingly pragmatic in tactical application, nearly all interpretations of French foreign policy in this period assert that “de Gaulle’s worldview... implied a very specific set of rules for national policy” based on three tenets: nationalism, independence and military power.¹³

The most distinctive element in de Gaulle’s political ideology was nationalism. De Gaulle believed in the unquestioned primacy of the modern nation-state as a political instrument for the effective and legitimate pursuit of national interests. Nation-states remained the primary protagonists of modern history in part because they were the only truly effective actors in world politics, but more fundamentally because they were the most legitimate actors. The legitimate purposes of nation-states vary greatly: states are “very different from one another”, each with “its own soul, its own history, its own language and its own misfortunes, glories and ambitions.”¹⁴ De Gaulle sought to express the particular underlying purposes of modern France 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. He voiced French frustration at the outcome of Suez. He termed the settlement in Algeria a contribution by France “once again in its history, to the enlightenment of

¹² Charles de Gaulle, Mémoires de Guerre: l’Appel Vol. 1 (Paris: Plon, 1954), 1.

¹³ Gordon, Certain, 5. Similar summaries can be found in the works cited in footnotes 2-3 above. I do not mean “ideology” in the sense commonly employed in French polemics for or against Marxism, namely a teleological view of class conflict, but as a coherent world-view of international relations. For a discussion of the definitions and role of ideas in world politics, see Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane, eds. Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

¹⁴ Gordon, Certain, 10.

the universe.” He was prone to transhistorical generalities, as when he observed that “over the past 800 years [France’s] greatest hereditary enemy was not Germany, but England.”¹⁵

For de Gaulle, it followed that each state should pursue an independent policy in order to “seek its rightful place in the world.”¹⁶ France’s rightful place in the world, de Gaulle argued, was to realize its distinctive heritage of prestige as a great power—her “grandeur,” he termed it.¹⁷ The primary objective of de Gaulle’s grand strategy was thus to augment France’s role as a “principal player” on the world scene; one historian concludes, “the paramount goals of France were in the psychological domain—in the areas of independence, rank, prestige.”¹⁸ This required, in turn, a measure of independence and autonomy.

There is considerable disagreement about the extent to which these goals were pragmatic or ideational. De Gaulle may have viewed grandeur and autonomy simply as instruments for the prudent realization of conventional geopolitical goals. Internationally, a measure of power and prestige permitted the exercise of political influence; domestically, it provided symbolic legitimation for a greater sense of national unity and a shared commitment to common interests. De Gaulle’s also seems to have sought to renew the pride, patriotism and unity of the French for its own sake—a goal that also, it should not be forgotten, 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. Perhaps, some speculate, de Gaulle’s obsession with rank in the

¹⁵ Alain Peyrefitte, C’était de Gaulle Vol. 1 (Paris: Fayard, 1994) 153; Hoffmann, “De Gaulle,” 1-2, 16-19; Gordon, Certain, 10-11; Cogan, Charles de Gaulle, 140; Vaisse, Grandeur, 23-24.

¹⁶ Harrison, Reluctant Ally, 49.

¹⁷ Gordon, Certain, 9ff. Vaisse, Grandeur, 24-25.

¹⁸ Charles de Gaulle, Lettres, Notes et Carnets (Paris: Plon, 1980ff), IV/170; Charles G. Cogan, Oldest Allies, Guarded Friends: The United States and France since 1940 (Westport: Praeger, 1994), 145.

world system stemmed from the experience of Anglo-American slights during World War II—not the least the failure to extend timely recognition to his provisional government.¹⁹

To the primacy of the nation-state and the pursuit of French grandeur and independence, de Gaulle added a Realist faith in military force as a decisive means to project national power and influence. De Gaulle apparently believed in a hierarchy of issues, 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.”²⁰ He supported a strong Western position in Cuba and Berlin. He believed nuclear weapons and classical diplomacy would make France a power to be reckoned with and remained contemptuous 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,” one 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.”²¹ Military dependence begets political dependence.

This tripartite worldview—nationalism, grandeur, military force—is said to have had three implications for France’s European policy. First, de Gaulle is said to have judged policies, even economic policies within international institutions like the EC, not by their direct economic benefits, but by their ability to promote French great power status as embodied in its national independence, military prowess, and diplomatic prestige—in short, French grandeur. In the language of international relations, de Gaulle judged a foreign economic policy not on its own terms, but according to the “security externalities” it generated. In European policy, “what really

¹⁹ For a persuasive case, see Cogan, Oldest Allies, 19-53, 123-126; Gordon, Certain, 15-17. On the power of the executive, see Charles de Gaulle, Le fil de l’épée (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1932). In a unique, if speculative, reading of de Gaulle’s intentions, Philip Cerny (Politics of Grandeur) offers a “Bonapartist” interpretation of the policy of “grandeur” as a tool designed primarily to bolster domestic political support for strong domestic action.

²⁰ Vaisse, Grandeur, 44, also 24.

mattered for de Gaulle was not economics but the construction of a political Europe.²² Geopolitical interpretations sometimes concede that economic benefits were also a secondary motivation, but even such interpretations often treat economic welfare benefits as an indirect means to augment French military power and political prestige, not as an end in itself.

Second, de Gaulle is said to have placed great weight on an independent European foreign policy under the leadership of France, particularly in the area of national defense, as a means to balance the superpowers and control Germany. To be sure, this was not a purely ideational preference, as is evident from the fact that it was neither de Gaulle's optimal nor even his second-best policy. He would have preferred to dismember Germany, a policy he advocated immediately following World War II, or, failing that, he may well have favored a nuclear triumvirate with Britain and the US. Only after Anglo-American rejection of plans to dismember Germany and, a decade later, their dismissal of de Gaulle's September 1958 proposal for nuclear cooperation, did he turn definitively to the five other EC governments and, finally, to Germany.²³ Whatever the combination of ideas and interests, the result was an obsession with the recognition of French equality in foreign policy and staunch opposition to efforts to transform Europe "into a gigantic Atlantic Community...dependent on [and] run by America."²⁴ This position was sometimes linked to the vision of a Europe stretching "from the Atlantic to the Urals." More immediately, the primary goal was to establish French nuclear hegemony and institutional prerogatives among continental European countries. This is said to have driven de Gaulle's interest in European integration.²⁵

²¹ Berstein, *Republic of de Gaulle*, 153, also 154-155.

²² Berstein, *Republic*, 171, also 170-172. Also Vaïsse, *Grandeur*, 25-26, 34-52. On "security externalities" more generally, see Joanne Gowa, *Allies, Adversaries and International Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Gowa argues that security externalities are most important in a bipolar world order like that governing postwar Europe.

²³ Vaïsse, *Grandeur*, 46, also 26, 35-40. Charles Cogan (Personal Communication) argues that the tripartite initiative was simply a ploy.

²⁴ De Gaulle's Press Conference of 14 January 1963, cited in Edmond Jouve, *Le Général de Gaulle et la construction de l'Europe (1940-1966)* Vol. 2 (Paris: Librairie Général de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1967), 283-286.

²⁵ Cogan, *Oldest Allies*, 128-31 and Chapter Six, *passim*. Jouve, *Général*, 347-348, 352-358, 372-373, 381.

Third, de Gaulle adopted an extremely skeptical attitude toward any effort to impose even modest constraints on state autonomy through international organizations. He was openly contemptuous of plans for the dissolution of the nation-state in a supranational polity. He opposed the European Defense Community (EDC) and Euratom, as well as canceling secret Franco-German cooperation on nuclear weapons. He began distancing France from NATO, a process culminating in withdrawal from NATO's integrated military structure in 1966. He often spoke of the debate over European integration in the 1960s as a battle between two "visions" of Europe: the "utopian myths [of] supranational power" on one side and a "confederation" in which no sovereign state could be "exposed to the possibility of being overruled on any economic matter...and therefore in social and sometimes political matters" on the other.²⁶ Monnet, Walter Hallstein and other convinced federalists of the period saw the issue in the same light, even if their normative evaluation was the opposite. De Gaulle therefore rejected outright the pooling and delegation of sovereignty in the form of QMV or Commission autonomy, preferring to view the Treaty of Rome as simply "an improved treaty of commerce."²⁷ A crisis over the general nature of the EC and in particular its supranational institutions, he subsequently maintained, was "sooner or later inevitable" because of "certain basic errors and ambiguities in the treaties on economic union of the Six."²⁸

While de Gaulle's geopolitical views seem to provide a convincing account of his European strategy, before moving on it is important to note that the link between a Gaullist geopolitical vision and French policy is more considerably more problematic than most commentators concede, for two basic reasons.

²⁶ Ménélik, *Who*, 151, 154; Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope: Renewal and Endeavor* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 182ff, 234; Record of Conversation with Macmillan, 2 June 1962 (**); Gordon, *Certain*, 12-13; Vaisse, *Grandeur*, 37-39; (**).

²⁷ Jacques Lepratte, *Une Clef pour l'Europe* (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 1994), 188.

²⁸ Ménélik, *Who*, 150.

First, while the General may have been motivated by distinctive geopolitical interests and ideas, he was also tactically quite flexible. Among de Gaulle's maxims was: "Audacity in words and prudence in actions."²⁹ Of the French government's surprising acceptance of the EEC in 1958, Raymond Aron observed that de Gaulle "had the intelligence to renounce his conceptions when they were overtaken by events."³⁰ Hoffmann observes that "it is the combination of inflexibility on fundamentals and pragmatism on tactics that made his style of leadership so predictable and so unpredictable at the same time."³¹ Any definitive interpretation of de Gaulle's actions is thus hampered by the fact that it can be explained either as the direct realization of his vision or as a tactical departure necessary to protect the core of that vision. The Gaullist position on European integration was in fact extraordinarily malleable, varying over time. De Gaulle and Gaullists supported dismemberment of Germany and an "Atlantic Community" in the late 1940s, advocated a "federal" Europe until around 1951, criticized proposals for the ECSC and EDC and a confederal Europe in the early-1950s, remained relatively silent on European economic integration from 1952 to 1958, proposed a US-UK-France triumvirate excluding Germany in 1958, pressed for the implementation of the Treaty of Rome in 1958, advocated European political cooperation from 1960 to 1962, supported a close bilateral Franco-German relationship after 1962, and turned to Great Britain in the late 1960s. President Jacques Chirac's much commented support for Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) in the 1990s is hardly unexpected.³²

Second, efforts to evaluate whether there really is a link between Gaullist ideas and French policy is hampered by the tendency of some analysts to construe anything that advances "French interests" as consistent with the promotion of French "grandeur." Some argue that de Gaulle sought

²⁹ Cogan, *Oldest Allies*, 17.

³⁰ Raymond Aron, *Mémoires: 50 ans de réflexion politique* (Paris: Julliard, 1983), 254. Also de Mènil, *Who*, 76.

³¹ Hoffmann, "De Gaulle as Innovative Leader," 71.

³² The complex evolution is traced in detail in Jouve, *Général*, I/1-86, 177-181, passim; Gordon, *Certain*; Andrew Knapp, *Gaullism since de Gaulle* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1994).

modernization only in order to increase and augment the independence and grandeur of France on the world stage. In order for France to be a great power, it needed a strong economy—a view for which de Gaulle’s memoirs offer some modest support. In this reading, the pursuit of electoral success, the promotion of material prosperity, or even the subsidization of backward sectors of the economy are consistent with the Gaullist vision, because they are in some sense preconditions for an active French world role. This sort of all-inclusive definition of “grandeur,” however, renders any claim about a distinctively Gaullist world-view and foreign policy untestable, ahistorical and unimportant. It is untestable because no observable implication could ever permit us to distinguish de Gaulle’s pursuit of such a broad conception of “grandeur” from an obsession with the sort of mundane commercial considerations he professed to despise. It is ahistorical because de Gaulle’s British and German counterparts—and apparently also the General himself—seem not to have seen the issue this way; they all distinguished explicitly between geopolitical and commercial motivations. Above all, it is unimportant because it renders epiphenomenal the decades-long debate over de Gaulle’s distinctive “vision” of Europe. By suggesting that any French statesman would have pursued similar goals, it limits de Gaulle’s distinctiveness to his tactics—skilful management of domestic matters and facility at diplomacy—a view that essentially concedes the argument I seek to advance here. If the promotion of French grandeur through economic liberalization is indistinguishable from the pursuit of producer group interests, that is, if even support for farmers—a group de Gaulle initially sought to liquidate in the national interest and for whose concerns about commodity prices he showed open contempt—is consistent with grandeur, then there remains little meaning to the notion of de Gaulle as a visionary ideological leader.

To assess de Gaulle’s motives, the notion of geopolitical ideology must be defined precisely. Accordingly, this analysis follows the great majority of de Gaulle’s contemporaries and commentators by ascribing to him a fundamental motivation to expand French influence, assert an

independent position vis-à-vis the superpowers, and control Germany by forging a Continental politico-military alliance around French nuclear primacy and global prestige—all of which he sought to do while neither compromising French military autonomy nor delegating sovereignty to supranational institutions. All this was mediated by General de Gaulle’s distinctive vision of French grandeur. As Marisol Touraine argues about French foreign policy 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.”³³ In short, this essay is concerned with the narrower problem of whether the proximate cause of de Gaulle’s policy was geopolitical or economic. This is the question that contemporaries cared about most; it is the question German and British diplomats posed in their post mortems. It is also the decisive question for any analysis of de Gaulle’s individual influence as a thinker and a statesman.

B. French Commercial Interests: “An 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 renewal—the “transformation” of France.³⁴ Two policies of economic renewal had particular implications for French foreign policy: industrial and agricultural modernization. Economic modernization was not just a state-led move to promote French industry and agriculture from above; it was also a response to pressures and constraints imposed by deeply entrenched French domestic economic interest groups—backed by their power to strike, disrupt, invest, and vote. The desire for economic modernization and pressure from commercial interests, I argue

³³ Marisol Touraine, “Le représentation de l’adversaire dans la politique extérieure française depuis 1981,” Revue française de science politique 43 (October 1993), 808.

³⁴ Williams and Harrison, Politics, 426.

below, suggest a second, equally plausible, prima facie explanation for de Gaulle's support of EC membership, promotion of the CAP, veto of Britain and conduct of the "empty chair" crisis.

Economic theories of commercial policy point to patterns of competitive position of national producers in global and domestic markets as the primary determinant of sectoral and national preferences across openness and protection of the domestic economy.³⁵ In this view, new opportunities for profitable international trade driven by expanding international markets create incentives for reciprocal and sometimes unilateral trade liberalization. These opportunities are supported most strongly by producers with international competitive advantages and tend to be viewed more skeptically by less competitive producers. The postwar period saw an extremely rapid expansion in trade among developed countries—an expansion that predated serious efforts at global or regional trade liberalization and subsumed even European countries that did not participate in regional trade liberalization. This trade was, moreover, largely intra-industry trade in manufactures, that is, two-way trade within industrial sectors. Rather than displacing sectoral producers entirely, intra-industry this tends to expand trade through specialization within sectors rather than displacement of entire sectors. France was particularly competitive within Europe, but not globally in bulk agricultural producers (grain, sugar, beef); its industry developed swiftly in the 1950s and 1960s, but remained only moderately competitive vis-à-vis Germany, Britain, or the US. This would lead us to predict that farmers would be the strongest interest group in favor of trade liberalization, with industry lukewarm; both groups, particularly farmers, would prefer regional to global trade liberalization.

In France during the 1950s and 1960s, the steadiest and most powerful interest group pressure for European integration came from farmers. In France agriculture comprised a higher share of

³⁵ The literature is enormous. For an introductory summary, see Robert O. Keohane and Helen V. Milner, eds. Internationalization and Domestic Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); for an application to the EC, see Moravcsik, Choice for Europe.

employment (25%) than in any other of the Six 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 produced predominantly 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. By the mid-1950s, as in most other West European countries, French farm groups imposed a de facto veto over the selection of Agriculture Ministers and had forced constant increases in agricultural subsidies. The Third Modernization Plan (1957-1961) committed the French government to support 20% annual increases in agricultural production, with wheat, sugar, milk and meat particularly favored, due to the domination of agricultural interest groups by wealthy, efficient farmers of Northwest France and the Paris basin. Yet subsidies and modernization only exacerbated pressures on farmers. Surpluses soared as France's enormous reserve of previously underutilized land was brought into more intensive production. Wheat production increased over 800%, sugar and wine over 300% each, creating a need for even larger government-funded stockpiles and export subsidies.³⁶ The policy was manifestly unsustainable.

Farmers and politicians alike understood that the only enduring solution was a preferential European trade agreement. French exports, in particular those of wheat and sugar, would displace less costly world-market imports in neighboring markets. France, farm leaders stated, "would thus be assured, in a community which grants a preferential exchange treatment to its member states, that

³⁶ The evidence is summarized in Moravcsik, Choice for Europe. See also Carol Levy Balassa, Organized Industry in France and the European Common Market: Interest Group Attitudes and Behavior (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD: unpublished dissertation, 1978), 450; Edelgard Mahant, French and German Attitudes to the Negotiations about the European Economic Community, 1955-1965 (University of London: Unpublished dissertation, 1969), 219-220; Alan S. Milward, The European Rescue of the Nation-State (London: Routledge, 1993), 246ff; Pierre Barral, Les Agrariens français de Méline à Pisani (Paris, Librairie Armand Colin, 1968), 325-327; Hanns Peter Muth, French Agriculture and the Political Integration of Western Europe: Toward "an Ever Closer Union of the European Peoples" (Leyden: Sijthoff, 1970), 19-51, 88, 113. The forced resignation of Pflimlin's successor, Paul Antier, in the early 1950s and de Gaulle's failed attack on agricultural subsidies in the late 1950s are two examples of the domestic power of agricultural interests. See Milward, Rescue, 247-248.

it would be able to increase, without risks, its production in the certainty of seeing it absorbed.³⁷ Within Europe, only British and German imports were sufficiently large to have a significant impact on French domestic prices. Hence French farmers had actively pressed for agricultural integration with one of these two countries—this pressure began well before the Schuman Plan. When in the mid-1950s Britain clearly signaled its lack of interest in such an arrangement, French farmers redoubled efforts to interest 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 difficult, perhaps impossible. Alone among interest groups, farmers telegraphed all French parliamentarians on the eve of the Treaty vote to request their support.³⁸

By 1958, when de Gaulle entered office, agricultural surpluses had reached the point of crisis—the importance of which de Gaulle weighed above all other domestic issues. The first instinct of de Gaulle and Prime Minister Debré—who both viewed agriculture as a backward sector the promotion of which was not in the national interest—was to impose "unvarnished economic liberalism," cutting agricultural subsidies to dampen surpluses and push farmers out of agriculture. Opposition from farmers, sometimes violent, swiftly stymied such efforts and de Gaulle reversed course. A different solution was required. 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.³⁹ At a key Cabinet meeting, de Gaulle called the stabilization of agriculture the "most

³⁷ Muth, *French Agriculture*, 88.

³⁸ Mahant, *French and German Attitudes*, 126ff. 134, 135-153, 168ff; Balassa, *Organized Industry in France*, 104.

³⁹ Williams and Harrison, *Politics*, 340, also 174-176, 339-346; Alain Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle* Vol. 2 (Paris: Fayard, 1997), 356-374. De Gaulle and his ministers gave up the purely liberal approach. With a strong executive of the Fifth Republic, they were able to dampen price increases somewhat, but not enough to resolve the problem by forcing rapid structural adjustment on the land.

important problem" facing France after the Algerian civil war. "If [agriculture] is not resolved," he concluded, "we will have another Algeria on our own soil."⁴⁰

De Gaulle came to the same realization that farmers had reached a decade before: the only enduring solution was to export surpluses within a preferential and externally protected European market. Without this, de Gaulle predicted, continued unilateral subsidization would cripple French finances and undermine the French balance of payments. With Britain uninterested, the only solution, farm leaders had already concluded by 1955, was to concede higher agricultural prices, a sine qua non for Germany, in exchange for preferential access to the German market. Such a deal was possible, de Gaulle later observed, because for Germany, prices were primary and the maintenance of cheap imports secondary, while for France, export markets were a necessity and prices secondary.⁴¹

A second economic reason for de Gaulle to support the EC was to promote and modernize French industry through export-led expansion. "It is absurd," de Gaulle stated in 1965, "to be a sick

⁴⁰ Peyrefitte, C'était, I/302. Most French archives for this period, including de Gaulle's personal materials, remain inaccessible. The analysis in this section rests heavily, therefore, on the memoirs of Alain Peyrefitte, oral history projects, leaked documents, diplomatic interactions with other governments, and reconstruction of the precise sequence of events. Peyrefitte's memoir is the most critical source. Peyrefitte, unlike, say, Pisani or ever Debré, was de Gaulle's chief assistant in this area and was consistently involved in the innermost deliberations. His rising role under de Gaulle, from MP to press spokesman to minister, suggests that he had the General's trust. His role as press spokesman lends plausibility to his consistent claim to have received direct instructions from de Gaulle on what to say and what not to say to the public. He was de Gaulle's chief staff assistant in this area and one of only two people (the other being the prime minister) permitted to take notes at de Gaulle's Cabinet meetings, from which he cites verbatim. Historians Georges Soutou and Gérard Bossuat, who has seen some of the archival material in question, and Charles Cogan, who has worked with public materials, report that the materials they have seen do not contradict Peyrefitte's account. No materials I have uncovered call the analysis into question. Peyrefitte, a classical Gaullist and, unlike Prate, not particularly involved in economic issues, appears to have no particular interest in exaggerating the economic roots of de Gaulle's actions. No materials I have uncovered call Peyrefitte's account into question; indeed, Peyrefitte's account is corroborated by his strategy document, leaked and reprinted in the mid-1960s, and by his contemporary articles in Le monde. (See Jouve, Général I/CITE) Peyrefitte's account is also supported by Prate, then a ministerial official, was in less favorable a position to judge, does not base the analysis on citations from contemporary materials, and more presents speculative conclusions. While Prate does assert at one point assert that "politics" was primary in de Gaulle's decision to veto the UK, he gives significant weight to industrial and agricultural interests; no factual information in his book contradicts an economic interpretation. Cf. Alain Prate, Les batailles économiques du Général de Gaulle (Paris: Plon, 1978), 64. Far sketchier and more speculative, by contrast, are memoirs by two old comrades of de Gaulle's. Michel Debré, Entretiens avec le général de Gaulle, 1961-1969 (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993), 69-70, does not take a firm position on the issue. Edgar Pisani (Le général indivis (Paris: Albin Michel, 1974), 77-82, 89-90, 102-105, generally 85-113) presents a speculative interpretation of the "profound realities" of de Gaulle's thought, stressing de Gaulle's vision of Europe's geopolitical and his commitment to Franco-German relations. He repeatedly insists that his analysis is not based on notes, records or facts, but on his own spiritual and emotional sympathy with his "great patron's" public and private utterances. It is clear that he was not in the inner circle of deliberations, given his uncritical acceptance of the importance of Nassau in triggering the veto of Britain—which, as we shall see below, is now clearly be false—and the fact that he was not fully informed of the impending veto, perhaps in part because of his pro-European sentiments. Yet, as we shall see in more detail below, when the concrete facts about negotiations reported by Pisani tend not to support his speculative attribution of geopolitical motivations, but an economic explanation.

⁴¹ -- Peyrefitte, C'était, I/67, 302, II/266; de Gaulle, Memoirs, 158-159, 180-185; Jouve, Général, II/359-360, 364-365, 492-498; Balassa, Organized, 393; Michel Debré, Trois républiques pour une France: Agir, Vol. 2 (Paris: Albin Michel, 1988), 432-434; F. Roy Willis, France, Germany and the New Europe, 1945-1967 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), 287ff.

country behind tariffs and barriers.” His “resolution to realize the Common Market”, which had been “nothing more than a piece of paper,” he wrote later, was aimed at “creating the international competition...the lever that strengthens domestic firms.”⁴² Here, too, there was continuity in French policy. During the negotiation of the Treaty, industry had viewed safeguards and escape clauses, social harmonization and unanimity voting as a way of offsetting the risks to domestic industry stemming from the overvaluation of the franc. Despite a rapid increase in exports to Europe during the 1950s, even the strongest supporters of the Treaty of Rome doubted any government’s ability to overcome business opposition to strict implementation of tariff reductions. French labor costs were relatively high and “until the French franc has been given a more realistic value, there is little chance of assuaging fears of foreign competition felt by French industry.”⁴³

In accordance with their commercial interests, both farmers and industrialists strongly opposed any free trade area (FTA) arrangement with Britain. For farmers, the reason was obvious and the opposition unequivocal. Since the mid-19th century Britain had imported agricultural commodities at world market prices—by the mid-20th century most imports came from the Commonwealth—and had thereby reduced its farming population to by far the smallest percentage in Europe. Britain was therefore certain to block a strong agricultural policy; hence British membership would undermine the preferential purpose of the customs union, which could be achieved only by linking industrial tariff liberalization to agricultural trade.⁴⁴ To be sure, farm groups had initially sought an arrangement with Britain—richer than Germany with a larger market—but when British opposition became clear, the major peak agricultural interest group, the Fédération Nationale des Syndicats

⁴² Alan Prate, Les batailles économiques du Général de Gaulle (Paris: Plon 1978), 45. Also Lacouture, De Gaulle, 212; Institut Charles de Gaulle, 1958, La Faillite ou le miracle. Le plan de Gaulle-Rueff (Paris: Economica, 1986), 126-130, 98-99, 137-138, 126-127, 183; Jouva, Général, II/195; Raymond Poidevin, “De Gaulle et l’Europe en 1958,” in Institut, De Gaulle, V/79-87; Alain Peyrefitte, The Trouble with France (New York: New York University Press, 1981), 39; Alain Prate, Les batailles économiques du Général de Gaulle (Paris: Plon, 1978), 64; Jacques Rueff, De l’aube au crépuscule. Autobiographie (Paris: Plon, 1977), 252-256; Rueff, Combats pour l’ordre financier (Paris, Plon, 1972), 458-464; L’année politique 1959, pp. xiii-xv.

⁴³ Moravcsik, Choice for Europe, Chapter Two; Balassa, Organized, 93-94.

⁴⁴ This judgement was correct. This was indeed one of the considerations mentioned by decision-makers who advocated British entry into the EC. Moravcsik, Choice for Europe, Chapter Three.

d'Exploitant Agricoles (FNSEA) reversed position, arguing for British exclusion. There could be "no equivocation" in the demand, the FNSEA stated, that a preferential arrangement should protect French producers from world market pressures. Industrial opposition to a free trade area (FTA) with Britain was initially equally strong but more qualified. One observer notes that in opposing an FTA the major industry group, the Conseil National du Patronat Français (CNPF), was "for the first time in its history... completely unanimous." CNPF studies 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 would soften only late in the mid-1960s, after the devaluation of the franc and the modernization of French industry (while British industry stagnated) moderated the competitive threat.⁴⁵

In sum, the political economic explanation treats de Gaulle's European policy as the reflection of an underlying desire to promote French industrial and agricultural producer interests by locking Germany into a preferential customs union from which Britain (and the US) would be excluded. This had to be achieved, however, without opening France up too rapidly to industrial and, above all, agricultural competition from third-country producers. De Gaulle inherited this pro-agricultural, anti-British policy from the Fourth Republic. For de Gaulle, as for his predecessors, the ultimate goal of the policy was to assuage powerful interest groups, garner electoral support, modernize the French economy, and prevent domestic disorder.

⁴⁵ Robert J. Lieber, *British Politics and European Unity: Parties, Elites and Pressure Groups* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 75; Institut Charles de Gaulle, *De Gaulle en son siècle: Moderniser la France* Vol. 3 (Paris: Documentation française, 1992), 46-56; Raymond Bertrand, "The European Common Market Proposal," *International Organization* 10 (November 1956), 570; Mahant, *French*, 177-185; Willis, *France*, 251-264; Erling Bjøl, *La France devant l'Europe. La Politique Européenne de la IVe République* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1966), Annexe; Pierre Guillen, "Le MRP et l'union économique de l'Europe, 1947-1950," in Serge Bernstein, Jean-Marie Mayeur, and Pierre Milza, eds., *Le MRP et la construction européenne* (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 1993), 142-144.

C. Making the Test Explicit: Cases, Hypotheses and Evidence

We have seen that a plausible a priori case can be made that de Gaulle's European policy was motivated either by commercial interest or by geopolitical interests and ideas. Since nearly everything written on de Gaulle stresses geopolitics, and most of this engages in literary or biographical explanation, we in fact know little about the relative explanatory power of these two competing explanations. In the next section of this paper, I assess the explanatory power of the two explanations in accounting for de Gaulle's actions in four episodes: the decision to remain in the EC and promote the CAP, advocacy of the Fouchet Plan, the vetoes of British membership, and the "empty chair" crisis of 1965-66. What is the appropriate method for structuring such case studies?

Here it is necessary to make a clean break with the existing literature on de Gaulle. One reason, as I shall demonstrate in more detail below, for the one-sidedness of the existing literature on de Gaulle is that it rests primarily on speculative, even imaginative reconstructions grounded in public writings and speeches. This approach suffers from two weaknesses.

The first weakness stems from reliance on public rhetoric and secondary sources, in this case primarily de Gaulle's own memoirs and speeches. Particularly when assessing hidden motivations and calculations, the quality of data is critical. Absent access to confidential documents, John Lewis Gaddis and others have observed, the public record is often incomplete or biased.⁴⁶ The reason is clear. Politicians and even journalists often have only weak incentives, if any, to reveal the full truth about their true motivations and calculations. Falsehood, whether intentional or inadvertent, often costs them little. Speculation or manipulation may often be politically or professionally profitable. Hence national decision-makers often express one position in public and the opposite in private, even many years after the events in question. Journalists often repeat the justifications of

⁴⁶ John Lewis Gaddis, We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), viii, 295 (**).

governments or the conventional wisdom of the moment without providing us with any hints of assessing their reliability.⁴⁷

This is particularly dangerous practice in the case of General de Gaulle, since, as we shall see in more detail, he and his associates treated at least some public justification as “deliberate deception.” De Gaulle, moreover, centralized foreign policy decision-making within a very small group of presidential advisors, often leaving important ministers wholly ignorant of critical decisions. There is thus a particularly good reason to believe that there is a disjuncture between public and confidential discourse and practices. The General was a “theatrical” politician who, we shall see in more detail below, regularly misled the public, his own Cabinet and even his own Prime Minister. Even his statements in Cabinet meetings were “prudent” and guarded.⁴⁸

In part this reflects the absence, until recently, of much direct primary evidence about internal decision-making in Gaullist France. It would be unfair, of course, to criticize too harshly speculative analyses by those who lack access to recently published sources.⁴⁹ Yet such is the fascination with de Gaulle and the size of the literature about him that there has been a remarkable tendency to entertain lengthy conjectures about his motivations. Due in large part to the brilliance and incisiveness of some who have done so—Raymond Aron, Alfred Grosser, Jean Lacouture, and Stanley Hoffmann come to mind—there is an exaggerated tendency, compared to the diplomatic history of any other modern statesman, to cite such secondary interpretations as if they were grounded in objective evidence, even when more reliable primary sources have become available. Many analyses are based in whole or in part on such sources.

⁴⁷ Not only is public misrepresentation of motives an oft-employed political tactic, but many statesmen, concerned about their place in history, are careful to cultivate a specific public impression. This was, for example, Monnet’s (substantially correct) interpretation of de Gaulle. Bruno Bottai, “Jean Monnet Visto da Vicino,” *LiMes* 2 (Summer 1997), 152. Analysts, depending on their professional commitments, are tempted either to weight equally all possible factors explaining a given decision, to privilege the most prominent justifications of important actors, or to select arbitrarily to support the author’s point. None is reliable.

⁴⁸ Peyrefitte, *C’était*, II/7-8; Hoffmann, “De Gaulle’s.”

⁴⁹ Very recent works have begun to offset the historical trend by placing geopolitical ideology in a broader context. But none displaces it as the

~~Yet for all the deliberate theatricality and ambiguity, we shall see that on balance even the~~
public record alone supports an economic interpretation of de Gaulle's European policy—albeit not
as unambiguously as confidential sources. Why have analysts failed to acknowledge this? The
reason lies in the second weakness of de Gaulle scholarship, namely the tendency to engage in
imaginative biographical reconstruction of the General's life and policies.

De Gaulle's extraordinary appeal—more books have been written about him and his policies than all but a handful of modern political figures—is essentially personal in nature. Just as his magnetic presence attracted associates of uncommon personal devotion, his extraordinary saga attracts commentators with literary biographical, literary, even philosophical sensibilities—especially in France, a country whose intelligentsia has long been celebrated for just these qualities. Thus nearly every interpretation of de Gaulle's personality and politics rests on the unquestioned premise that his foreign policy was governed by a unified personal and philosophical vision. Each analyst then seeks to reformulate de Gaulle's world-view in a way maximally consistent with his subsequent actions. The major debate among those who study de Gaulle's foreign policy centers around the extent to which this vision was a rational adaptation to security concerns or a sui generis world view. None seriously entertains the possibility that the General's vision was incoherent in the sense that different aspects of his foreign policy responded to different imperatives. Instead, as we saw in the case of the Fouchet Plan, de Gaulle's biographers and commentators unquestioningly treat departures from his personal "vision" as isolated acts of tactical expediency.

This mode of interpretation is suspect above all because of its circularity: Nearly all biographers and analysts examine de Gaulle's overall policy—his views on World War II, nuclear weapons, the superpowers, the developing world, and NATO—then argue that the same considerations must lie behind his European policy, because the General would not have tolerated intellectual incoherence.

primacy motivation for de Gaulle's European policy. Vaisse, Grandeur; Cerny, Politics. The only earlier exception is Lindberg, "Integration."

Such reasoning is circular, for it assumes what it sets out to demonstrate, namely that de Gaulle was indeed motivated by an integrated vision—without considering alternative interpretations or evidence. It requires little evidence of specific motivations for decisions about the EC.

These weaknesses in the existing literary-biographical approach to explaining de Gaulle's policies suggests that an objective assessment of the General's motivations, not to mention a historical revision of the consensus view about those motivation, requires more rigorous and objective historical and social scientific methods. This study adheres to three methodological principles grounded in historical or social scientific methods. From historians it takes the use of primary sources, from social scientists the use of competing theories and explicit hypotheses.

First and most obvious, this study rests on both more extensive and more reliable primary evidence than existing studies of de Gaulle's European policy. By taking advantage of direct evidence of confidential deliberations and decision processes, most of it newly available, this study seeks to move beyond the public justifications of politicians.⁵⁰ An important element of the case for the economic explanation is that empirical support becomes stronger as sources grow "harder", that is, as one moves from ex post speculation and overt attempts to persuade public opinion to direct evidence of considerations raised in confidential meetings. Finally, this study employs various types of direct evidence, not just the rhetoric of decision-makers, but the timing of decisions, the identity of those involved in domestic deliberations, and the negotiating tactics and trade-offs chosen. In sum, I assign no weight to speculation, whether by participants or by secondary analyses, and less weight to public utterances than records of confidential decision-making.

Second, this study evaluates competing theories. The two explanations considered here—one stressing commercial advantages and the other geopolitical interests and ideas—are derived from

⁵⁰ The most important source is Peyrefitte's memoir. See fn 40 above. Wherever possible, sources are triangulated; independent corroboration for each piece of data is sought.

two major schools of international relations theory that seek to explain the motivations for international economic cooperation. One school stresses the management of economic interdependence, the other “security externalities” from cooperation. By forcing the analyst to evaluate the evidence for each explanation explicitly, the reader is better protected against one-sided interpretation. In presenting the data, therefore, I attempted to provide a representative sample of what is available. In citing documentary evidence of motivations, I both present specific quotations, as do most studies, and, where relevant, provide both a description of the context and an assessment of the extent to which the entire class of documents of this type support the conclusion. In short, I seek to provide assurances against the widespread tendency, exemplified above, to cite de Gaulle’s statements out of context. Hence, for example, this study illuminates a critically important fact ignored by all existing, more interpretive studies: Based on currently available records, a far greater number of justifications for France’s European policy offered by de Gaulle and his ministers, whether public or confidential, stress the realization of commercial interests, especially those of farmers, than stress geopolitical interests.

Third, this study employs explicit hypotheses, that is, explicit standards for confirmation and disconfirmation. This reduces the ability of the analyst to reinterpret data in an ad hoc way to favor a given hypothesis. While the use of explicit hypotheses can never entirely eliminate interpretive ambiguity, it renders interpretation more objective and transparent. Literary and biographical analysis undisciplined by any systematic guarantee of unbiased selection of data and balanced interpretation becomes more difficult. It is more difficult to reach a premature and biased conclusion and it is easier for others to challenge either the criterion or the interpretation. In each case—and at the expense of lengthening the analysis—representative samples of both confirming and disconfirming evidence are reported. In short, interpretations are more rigorous and more replicable.

Accordingly, the analysis in the next section, which summarizes the analysis found in a forthcoming book, relies exclusively on four types of data, each of which bears on the accuracy of explicit competing hypotheses drawn from the two theories above.

- Discourse – If geopolitical motivations predominate, discourse among French decision-makers privilege geopolitical arguments by mentioning them more often, with greater emphasis than economic ones. If economic motivations predominate, we should observe the reverse. To avoid inferring motivations from opportunistic, manipulative, or unconsidered statements, it is important wherever possible to move beyond public statements by government officials or ex post speculations, which (as we shall see in more detail below) are often incomplete if not disingenuous, and instead rely on confidential discussions between de Gaulle and his closest advisors, as well as interviews and memoirs (by those without a clear incentive to dissemble) that reliably report the details of confidential processes of decision-making at the time.

- Patterns of Domestic Support and Decision-Making – If geopolitical motivations predominate, we should observe critical pressure and involvement by broad public opinion, the military, and foreign ministries. If economic motivations predominate, we should observe critical pressure from producer groups, their partisan supporters, and economic officials.

- Timing – If geopolitical motivations predominate, policy shifts should follow major geopolitical events that reveal new information or alter preferences concerning the security environment. For example, we should observe a weakening of support for the EC in the transition from the Fourth to the Fifth Republics in 1958, closer relations with Germany after the rejection of the General's proposal for a US-UK-French nuclear triumvirate in 1958, French reactions to the US proposal for a Multi-Lateral Force, a downgrading of European ambitions after the collapse of the Fouchet Plan negotiations, and heightened hostility toward Britain after the US-UK Nassau

agreement. If economic motivations predominate, policy shifts should generally be correlated with shifts in competitiveness or domestic support, not geopolitical events. They should be more gradual or linked to major domestic economic reforms. We should, therefore, observe a rapid strengthening of French support for European tariff reductions in the late 1950s, slow acceptance of GATT industrial tariff reductions during the 1960s, but no underlying shift in policies toward agriculture until the CAP is fully secure.

- Resolution of Conflicts among Competing Objectives – If geopolitical motivations predominate, clashes between geopolitical and economic imperatives tend to be resolved in favor of the former. De Gaulle should consistently be willing to trade economic objectives to achieve geopolitical objectives. Maintenance of intergovernmental institutions and exclusion of the “Anglo-Saxons” should take precedence over commercial concerns. If economic motivations predominate, we should observe the reverse. France should generally accept supranational institutions and British participation to achieve economic ends.

II. DE GAULLE AND EUROPE: EVALUATING THE HISTORICAL RECORD

We have seen that there are two plausible explanations of de Gaulle’s policies: a conventional geopolitical view and a revisionist economic explanation. The great preponderance of evidence assembled below demonstrates that the latter were sufficient to explain French policy toward the EC and predominated where the two came into conflict; geopolitical interests and ideas remained secondary concerns. The public perception of French policy was often deliberately manipulated to serve commercial ends. De Gaulle planned years in advance and pursued a consistent policy. As we shall see, each of the major French decisions from the Fouchet Plan through the “Empty Chair”

TABLE 1. DE GAULLE AND EUROPE: ISSUES & EVIDENCE

DIRECT EVIDENCE (<i>Bold evidence supports an economic explanation. Italicized evidence supports an explanation based on geopolitical interest or ideas.</i>)				
MAJOR ISSUES	Domestic Discourse	Domestic Cleavages	Timing	Negotiating Tactics
Acceptance of customs union and CAP	<p>(1) Nearly all direct references by de Gaulle and his associates to EC and CAP in internal deliberations and subsequent memoirs or interviews cite economic considerations. No confidential records mention geopolitics; memoirs treat it as secondary.</p> <p>(2) Strongest statements concern economics. CdG confidentially calls agriculture the “most important problem facing France save Algeria”; without a European solution there will be “an Algeria on French soil.”</p> <p>(3) Gaullist rhetoric is initially generally anti-EC.</p> <p>(4) Record of 1958 reforms suggests economic motivations.</p>	<p>(1) Farmers are clearly a critical constituency. French government spends much time and effort trying to placate them.</p> <p>(2) Gaullists initially seek to cut agricultural subsidies, but reverse policy.</p> <p>(3) Gaullists are initially hostile to EC (on ideological grounds) but reverse course in 1958.</p>	<p>(1) CdG maintains the policies of his Fourth Republic predecessors.</p> <p>(2) CdG appears to commit to EC before US-UK response to triumvirate proposal or meeting with Adenauer.</p>	<p>(1) CdG opposes ideology and institutions in the Rome Treaty but accepts them.</p> <p>(2) CdG threatens withdrawal from EC and geopolitical policies to achieve the CAP, but never links withdrawal or makes economic threats to geopolitical goals.</p> <p>(3) French government promotes supranational institutions to secure CAP.</p> <p>(4) 1958 economic reforms include much more than trade liberalization, suggesting that they were not designed simply to fulfill Treaty obligations.</p>
Fouchet Plan	<p>(1) Peyrefitte Memo of 1960, accepted by CdG, confidential discussions, and negotiating instructions treat the Fouchet Plan as “deliberate deception,” an attempted “seduction” of federalists, and a disguise for French proposals of a “British Europe without the British.”</p> <p>(2) This “prudently audacious” plan delays frontal attack.</p> <p><i>3. CdG voices consistent ideological opposition to the Fouchet Plan and to the European Community.</i></p> <p><i>4. CdG's statements from 1962 through 1966 mention geopolitical goals, though economics is almost invariably treated in greater detail.</i></p>	<p>(1) CdG successfully secures support from Monnet and federalists for several critical years until 1962.</p>	<p>(1) Tougher second version of Fouchet is drafted in CdG's hand within 48 hours after key CAP agreement.</p> <p>(2) Geopolitical events that reveal new information—including the MLF, revisions to the Elysée Treaty—have no apparent effect on French policy.</p>	<p>(1) CdG refuses to negotiate seriously on Fouchet Plan—offering no economic concessions and toughening his demands over time. Geopolitical explanations that make him out to be irrational or uninformed are implausible.</p> <p><i>(2) CdG consistently seeks Franco-German foreign policy cooperation between 1963 and 1965.</i></p>

DIRECT EVIDENCE

(Bold evidence supports an economic explanation. *Italicized evidence supports an explanation based on geopolitical interests or ideas.*)

MAJOR ISSUES	Domestic Discourse	Domestic Cleavages	Timing	Negotiating Tactics
British Membership	<p>(1) CdG's own statements, including his memoirs, the 1/14/63 press conference, and cabinet meetings, mention economic motivations <u>exclusively and explicitly</u>, while ignoring geopolitics.</p> <p>(2) The factual reports of all CdG's close associates who speak out on the issue (e.g. Couve, Peyrefitte, Debré, Pisani, Pompidou) privilege economic interests.</p> <p><i>(3) A minority of these associates (Pisani, Prate) nonetheless speculate that geopolitics was the primary motivation.</i></p> <p>(4) CdG and Macmillan agree in 1962 summit meetings that agriculture is the critical issue whereas geopolitical differences are modest or ambiguous.</p> <p>(5) Internal German government study and Harold Wilson's information suggest economics predominant. Macmillan's views are uncertain.</p>	<p>There is consistent agricultural and industrial opposition to British membership, though the position of French industry softens during the 1960s after devaluation and industrial development.</p>	<p>(1) Fourth Republic governments are just as skeptical of FTA and British membership.</p> <p>(2) 1962 decision to veto was taken <u>before</u> Nassau.</p> <p>(3) French veto comes soon after elections, as predicted by British ambassador.</p> <p>(4) CdG and Pompidou reverse policy in 1969-1970—as CdG had predicted since 1963. Pompidou expects CdG's support.</p>	<p>(1) De Gaulle stresses agriculture and seeks to avoid discussion of (and later suppresses evidence of agreement on) geopolitical issues.</p> <p>(2) Failure of political union negotiations, admitted by CdG before veto, does not alter French policy.</p>
Empty Chair Crisis	<p>(1) CdG's few confidential statements suggest concern about maintaining control over the CAP and GATT policy.</p> <p><i>(2) Some of CdG's statements and objections concern symbolic issues e.g., Commission representation abroad</i></p> <p><i>(3) A 1965 French government study concludes that French national interests will not be compromised by the scheduled transition to majority voting</i></p> <p><i>(4) Peyrefitte votes in passing to pursuit of "national" interests against "electoral" interests</i></p>	<p><i>(1) Significant electoral opposition among farmers in 1965-1966—which is consistent with EITHER explanation.</i></p> <p>(2) Thereafter CdG reverses course, shifts from a "referendum" to an "election" campaign, turns much power over to politicians, and moves to reclaim farm support.</p>	<p>(1) CdG foresees crisis in 1960-1, so it cannot result from disillusion with Fouchet/Elysée Treaty.</p> <p>(2) CdG restrains his negotiators and waits five years until the CAP is essentially in place before provoking the crisis.</p>	<p>(1) CdG neither threatens exit nor fully suspends participation during crisis—in contrast to stronger threats over CAP.</p> <p>(2) CdG settles for very few of his original demands—those tacitly shared by other countries. The EC is not greatly altered. Four years later he still seeks reform.</p>

Crisis were explicitly foreseen in 1960, then executed as planned. These data are summarized in Tables One and Two.

A. Accepting the Customs Union and Advocating the CAP: “France is only as European as she is Agricultural”

A direct clash between geopolitical ideas and commercial interest arose immediately upon de Gaulle’s entry into office in 1958. The Gaullist party, having concluded that much less was at stake geopolitically than in the debate over the EDC four years before, had split its parliamentary votes on ratification of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Leading Gaullists like Michel Debré, de Gaulle’s first Prime Minister, however, had called for renunciation or renegotiation on ideational grounds. The General, though he himself had remained silent on this issue, was widely expected to do the same. In an internal strategy meeting in June 1958, he noted that “if I had negotiated [the Treaty], I probably would have done it differently”—referring, as he made clear, primarily to the lack of guarantees for agriculture.⁵¹ Within a few months, however, de Gaulle had opted to support swift and full implementation of the Treaty’s provisions for a customs union. De Gaulle supported a common external trade policy with respect to GATT and European non-members and accelerated reductions in industrial tariffs. Above all, he pressed for rapid and full implementation of open-ended provisions for a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a preferential arrangement for free trade in agricultural commodities within Europe with common support prices, financing mechanisms, levies on third-country imports and export subsidies. How is this surprising turnaround to be explained?

⁵¹ (**) He restated this in a 1965 interview. Jouve, *Général* II, 364. De Gaulle did cut off Franco-German bilateral atomic cooperation, but the Euratom clauses of the Treaty of Rome pertaining to military matters had already been gutted by the Fourth Republic government that negotiated the Treaty, headed by Guy Mollet.

The conventional view is that de Gaulle reversed course because he sought to construct an arrangement for European political cooperation independent of the United States. Yet there is almost no direct evidence that either the General's turnaround in 1958 or his subsequent policy of support for the customs union and the CAP reflected a distinctive geopolitical vision. The bulk of the evidence—the critical portions of which are summarized in Table One—suggests instead that he reestablished continuity in France's European policy despite Gaullist ideology.

Let us consider first de Gaulle's own expression of his motivations during this period confirms the primacy of economic interests. As we saw above, de Gaulle believed agriculture, the European issue discussed most extensively in his cabinet during this period, to be the major problem facing France next to Algeria. The economic sources of his support for the common market are reflected in his memoirs and interviews. Participants in decisions in 1958 report that de Gaulle saw liberalization as consistent with his broader economic reform plan (the "Plan Rueff") for devaluation of the franc to increase competitiveness, combined with fiscal austerity. This was a thorough-going reform economic policy, of which only one element, trade liberalization, was connected with the common market.⁵² The General's closest advisor reports that his "major argument for the CAP was that French industry could not afford to subsidize our agriculture alone."⁵³ For de Gaulle, another recalls, a preferential arrangement in agriculture, opposed by Germany, was the "primary precondition" for de Gaulle to accept the customs union.⁵⁴ Such concerns punctuate Cabinet meetings, whereas there is no record of even a single clear mention of a connection between agriculture and geopolitical goals: "The dominant subject," says de Gaulle, "is

⁵² de Gaulle, *Memoirs*, 159, 178-179, 182-183; Jouve, *Général* II, 195, 364; Peyrefitte, *C'était*, I-II; Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 224-225; Alessandro Sili, *Europe's Political Puzzle: A Study of the Fouchet Negotiations and the 1963 Veto* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for International Affairs Occasional Paper No. 17, 1967), 114-116; Pierre Maillard, *De Gaulle et l'Allemagne: le rêve inachevé* (Paris: Plon, 1990), 142; Jebb, *Memoirs*, 310; Institute Charles de Gaulle, 1958, 82; Gladwyn Jebb, *The Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn* (London: Weybright and Talley, 1972), 310, reports a January 1957 conversation with de Gaulle in which he opposed Monnet's Europe but accepted economic rationalization.

⁵³ Peyrefitte, *C'était*, II/267.

⁵⁴ Prate, *Batailles*, 52ff.

agriculture.”⁵⁵ Even in de Gaulle’s own memoirs—surely a place where he would elaborate a global vision—the discussion of the 1958 decision mentions only economic considerations, in particular the modernization of French industry and agriculture.⁵⁶

The only countervailing evidence comes from more general discussions of French geopolitical goals in de Gaulle’s memoirs and, though surprisingly rarely, in Cabinet meetings. As we have seen, such claims create a plausible prima facie argument for the importance of geopolitical factors, yet nothing links these objectives directly to economic integration. These discussions do not stress the need for European political cooperation vis-à-vis the superpowers. Whereas de Gaulle did criticize American “hegemony” in various speeches, sometimes mentioning politico-military concerns, his explicit references to the potential for Anglo-American influence in the EC in confidential meetings refer explicitly to US and UK trade policy, not their military policy. The trade conflict between the US and Europe, he observed after voicing one set of criticisms of US-UK influence in Europe, was solely concerned with farm commodities. “It boils down to this,” he says in one cabinet session, “we are both agricultural producers.”⁵⁷

The timing of de Gaulle’s decisions further support an economic interpretation of his motives for remaining in the EU. We can reject the widespread notion that de Gaulle remained in the EC because he sought foreign policy and defense cooperation with Germany to create a European “third force” after the failure of French proposals for a nuclear triumvirate. De Gaulle informally assured Adenauer that he would respect the Treaty of Rome before he sent the September 1958 memo to the

⁵⁵ Peyrefitte, C’était, II/231-232, also 274.

⁵⁶ de Gaulle, Memoirs of Hope, 135, 159, 171, 173, 174-180.

⁵⁷ Peyrefitte, C’était, II/265, also 237, 264-266, 271-274; Jouve, Général, II/283-288.

US and UK proposing a nuclear triumvirate and well before he knew of their rejection. The later events could not have caused the former.⁵⁸

Similarly, the sudden salience of Franco-British disputes in the late 1950s and early 1960s is often presented as evidence of de Gaulle's particular antipathy to the Anglo-Americans, as if opposition to British membership was a Gaullist innovation. Yet there was in fact near total continuity between the Fourth and Fifth Republics; the General's much-maligned Fourth Republic predecessors were just as skeptical as he concerning cooperation with Britain, particularly in agriculture. In the closing days of the Fourth Republic, French officials were already preparing plans to obstruct FTA negotiations with Britain. The parliamentary committee that considered the FTA in the closing days of the Fourth Republic had concluded that the "concrete objections to a free trade area," including declining French influence over EC economic policy, "outweighed the less well-defined political gains" from cooperation with the British.⁵⁹ In the French Assemblée Nationale, a contemporary observer noted, one could not "find a single deputy to support" a FTA with Britain.⁶⁰

The major difference between de Gaulle and his Fourth Republic predecessors lay not in strategy, but in tactics. De Gaulle's stronger domestic position permitted him to devalue the franc and impose budgetary austerity. This led to a swift reversal of the position of French business, not because he imposed his geopolitical vision on business, but because he gave industry what it had wanted all along but thought impossible: a real devaluation of the franc of over 20%. Thus while the General's aims—economic reform and trade liberalization—did not differ from those of many of his predecessors, the power of Fifth Republic presidency and unified support of the center-right

⁵⁸ de Gaulle, *Memoirs*, 177-178; Interview with Baron Snoy et d'Oppuers, July 1987 (Interview 27.38: EC Archives Fiesole), 14; Vaisse, *Grandeur*, 55-56. Frédéric Bozo further undermines the geopolitical explanation when he concludes that de Gaulle did not decide definitively for a geopolitical move toward Germany, rather than the US and UK, until 1962. Frédéric Bozo, *Deux Stratégies pour l'Europe: de Gaulle, les Etats-Unis et l'Alliance Atlantique 1958-1969* (Paris: Plon, 1996), CITE.

⁵⁹ (**) See also Lindberg, *Political Dynamics*, 118-125; Jebb, *Memoirs*, 292ff.

permitted him to realize them more effectively. By 1959, industry, in the midst of a European export boom, had become an enthusiastic supporter of accelerated tariff and quota removal. With both industry and agriculture now supportive of a customs union, but both opposed (the latter implacably) to an FTA arrangement with Britain, de Gaulle supported an acceleration of industrial tariff removal among EEC members and, with the failure of his initial efforts to impose liberal reforms on farmers, retreated to the agricultural policy pursued by his predecessors: he sought to establish a “small European” preferential agricultural arrangement. Over the next eight years, de Gaulle’s major priority with respect to the EC remained the elaboration and implementation of vague treaty clauses on agriculture.⁶¹

Turning from confidential statements and timing to negotiating strategy, we find further evidence of the predominance of economic interests. The major obstacle to the creation of the CAP was the German government, which sought to protect relatively uncompetitive German farmers. The seriousness with which de Gaulle took the CAP is evidenced by the tactical flexibility with which he sought to overcome German opposition. Three aspects of the CAP negotiations during the 1960s demonstrate, as the economic explanation predicts, de Gaulle’s willingness to make geopolitical concessions and run geopolitical risks in order to prevail achieve commercial objectives.

First were his continuous threats to exit the EC if Germany refused to approve the CAP. De Gaulle was unequivocal: “There will be no Common Market without a CAP,” he declared to his Cabinet, “France is only as European as she is agricultural.”⁶² The “core difficulty” with Franco-German relations, he argued, was agriculture.⁶³ To induce Germany to open its highly protected

⁶⁰ (**)

⁶¹ Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*, Chapter Three.

⁶² Peyrefitte, *C’était*, II/265, also 222.

⁶³ Peyrefitte, *C’était*, II/245.

domestic agricultural markets and to abrogate bilateral arrangements with third countries, de Gaulle linked German approval of CAP to French approval for GATT negotiations and EC anti-trust policy. In a deliberate effort to pressure the weak Erhard government, de Gaulle went further, threatening dozens of times in public and private to destroy the EC. When doubts were raised within de Gaulle's Cabinet concerning the credibility of such threats, de Gaulle responded that France could now compete within an industrial FTA, within which most of the expansion up to 1962 took place, and would be free of the supranational baggage of the EC. De Gaulle believed that only a "total error" would lead France to actually have to make good on such threats. Some within the government doubted their credibility, due to the costs to French industrial exports, but de Gaulle responds that various FTA or GATT alternatives could then be exploited. The geopolitical costs appear not to have been considered.⁶⁴ No mention is made of the geopolitical costs of destroying the EC. While de Gaulle repeatedly threatened to withdraw from the EC—to trigger an "explosion," as he put it in cabinet sessions—if the Germans rejected the CAP, we never observe de Gaulle threatening to liquidate the EC or compromise on agriculture in order to secure foreign policy cooperation—as the geopolitical explanation would predict.⁶⁵

Second was de Gaulle's willingness to link CAP to costly other geopolitical threats, yet his consistent unwillingness to risk or trade economic interests to achieve geopolitical goals. In pressing for the CAP, de Gaulle threatened a radical reconsideration of French political-military policy, including suspension or denunciation of the Franco-German Treaty of 1963; a shift of alliances away from Germany toward the Soviet Union; withdrawal of French troops from Germany; as well as the abandonment of political cooperation within the EC, as we just saw.⁶⁶ When his closest advisor asked him what France would do if Germany offered satisfaction on the

⁶⁴ Peyrefitte, *C'était*, II/265-267, also 219-221, 224-225, 231-232, 249, 251-254, 263-267, 271-274, 282. "For the General," Peyrefitte recalls, "the Treaty was not a substitute for the Common Market, but a means to advance it." Peyrefitte, *C'était*, II/232.

⁶⁵ De Gaulle, *Memoirs*, 186, also 182, 185-188. For numerous threats, see Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*, Chapter Three.

CAP but simultaneously joined the MLF—from de Gaulle’s perspective, the worst possible geopolitical outcome, but an attractive economic 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.”⁶⁷ If de Gaulle were supporting integration for geopolitical reasons, it would have made little sense for him to place geopolitical advantages at risk to benefit farmers. To be sure, de Gaulle did occasionally hint at a potential shift in alliances toward Russia if Germany failed to implement the Franco-German treaty, yet he soon dropped this rhetoric; by contrast he consistently threatened radical geopolitical shifts if the CAP was not implemented. In any case, the threat was never carried out.⁶⁸

Third was the willingness of de Gaulle and his Gaullist successor, Georges Pompidou, to accept substantial international constraints French sovereignty—anathema to the Gaullist ideology—to achieve agricultural cooperation. As the Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville noted, his government became “the guardian of the Treaties” when it suited its interests.⁶⁹ 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 and financed in large part by Brussels-based officials. This eventually involved an entire system of value-added taxes centralized in Brussels—in short, supranational taxation. France favored this delegation of sovereignty in order to lock in the CAP against persistent efforts by agricultural officials in Germany (which opposed such concentrations of institutional power in Brussels) to frustrate everyday implementation. Accordingly it was Germany, rhetorically more “federalist,” that most strongly opposed such

⁶⁶ Peyrefitte, *C’était*, II/231-237, 245-261.

⁶⁷ Peyrefitte, *C’était*, II/269. De Gaulle notes that France would then be free to seek alternative alliances in the East.

⁶⁸ Peyrefitte, *C’était*, II/222-223.

⁶⁹ Couve de Murville cited in Leprette, *Un clef*, 118-119.

financial centralization. Pompidou, as we see in more detail below, demanded a permanent centralized financing arrangement to lock in the CAP as a quid pro quo for raising the French veto on British membership in 1969—not least to undermine any future efforts by Britain to undermine the CAP.⁷⁰ In short, neither France nor Germany act as their geopolitical interests and ideology predict; both consistently pursue the interests of powerful domestic producers.

B. The Fouchet Plan: A “Deliberate Deception”

We have seen that de Gaulle’s decisions to remain within the EC and to promote the CAP were dictated primarily by economic interests. Yet most maintain in any case that the EC was secondary to de Gaulle’s more distinctive European foreign policy initiatives, above all the proposal generally taken to be the centerpiece of his geopolitical vision for Europe: the Fouchet Plan. First proposed in 1961 by De Gaulle’s Minister Christian Fouchet, the plan called for a new international organization without supranational institutions to coordinate European foreign and economic policy. In its initial form, it was a narrow arrangement limited to foreign policy—a modest arrangement alongside the EC. Then in January 1962 the proposal was suddenly revised by de Gaulle himself in a much more intransigent, “nationalist” form. The General cut acknowledgments of the Atlantic Alliance and the Treaty of Rome, proposed to supplant the EC in economic affairs, removed references to an “indissoluble union”, reduced any supranational powers, and purged a “revision clause” permitting the institution to be brought back within the EC. Thereafter he remained intransigent, making a few changes but never returning to a draft as forthcoming as his original. The

⁷⁰ On the conflict, Vaisse, Grandeur, 554-556. Precisely the converse occurred in external tariff and competition policy. After France blocked efforts to develop a flexible negotiating position in the GATT, Germany sought greater Commission administrative autonomy from 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 substantive gains. For a test of this argument across five EC decisions, see Moravcsik, Choice for Europe.

negotiations swiftly collapsed, leaving only the possibility for modest bilateral cooperation between France and Germany.⁷¹

The curious history of the Fouchet Plan has confounded historians. Particularly difficult to explain are de Gaulle's apparently self-defeating tactics. In most negotiations, parties begin with extreme positions, then compromise toward a median, whereas the historical record reveals not a single occasion in which de Gaulle credibly signaled willingness to make even the smallest compromise in order to secure agreement on the Fouchet Plan work. And if he truly sought an independent European foreign policy, why did he not link the Fouchet Plan to even the most marginal quid pro quo in other areas, such as direct elections to the European Parliament—in striking contrast, we have already seen, to far more flexible French diplomacy on economic issues? Why, in the years following the abandonment of the Fouchet Plan, did he reject proposals from advisors to resurrect it?⁷²

To explain this paradoxical behavior, those who treat the Fouchet Plan as the genuine centerpiece of Gaullist European policy are forced to advance speculative conjectures that contradict their own portrait of the General as a master diplomat. Some speculate that de Gaulle's intransigence reflected pressure from Prime Minister Debré.⁷³ Others conjecture that de Gaulle suddenly noted details in the first Fouchet Plan he had previously overlooked or fell prey to a miscommunication within the French bureaucracy. Still others attribute the change to de Gaulle's "impetuous" personality or exceptional sense of principle.⁷⁴ A French participant's description of

⁷¹ 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. Georges-Henri Soutou, "Le général de Gaulle et le plan Fouchet," in Institute, De Gaulle Vol. 5, 136-137; Pierre Gerbet, "In Search of Political Union: The Fouchet Plan Negotiations (1960-62)," Roy Pryce, ed., The Dynamics of European Union (London: Routledge, 1987), 121-122; Silj, Europe's, 15-16; Debré, Trois, 440. Jouve, Général, II/441-458.

⁷² Peyrefitte, C'était, II/214-217.

⁷³ Berstein, Republic, 58-60.

⁷⁴ Soutou, "Général."

the decision as an oversight is typical: “The General...could not resist the temptation to add two or three little touches that looked like nothing at the time.”⁷⁵

Such ad hoc explanations are neither supported by hard evidence nor remotely plausible given what we know about the conduct of foreign policy under de Gaulle. Intervention by Debré this would constitute a unique demonstration of ministerial independence by a man with neither significant political support (he was soon forced to resign) nor a reputation for particular intellectual creativity. Moreover, in contrast to the sometime role of de Gaulle in domestic affairs, where details were often indeed left to ministers, the realm of foreign policy-making under de Gaulle was an extremely centralized “reserved domain” of Presidential activity. Given the attention de Gaulle paid to foreign policy issues and the tight control over policy-making held by a select group of advisors within the Elysée, is implausible that he would “overlook” a proposal that constituted the core of his European strategy and, moreover, would fundamentally revise French foreign policy decision-making. In any case, if errors had occurred—the consequences were immediately apparent to de Gaulle’s negotiators—they could easily have been reversed.⁷⁶ Records of policy-making in 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 subsequently informing his ministers until much later. His verbatim revisions of the second Fouchet Plan are the rule, not the exception. In short, any claim that de Gaulle placed primary importance on geopolitical goals like those embodied in the Fouchet Plan requires that one paint him as somehow irrational because impetuous, uninformed, or distracted.

If we instead accept that de Gaulle was a master tactician and did not make elementary errors, then the assumption that the Fouchet Plan was primarily motivated by geopolitical ideas must be

⁷⁵ Lacouture, De Gaulle, 349.

⁷⁶ For such conjectures, see Lacouture, De Gaulle, 349; Silj, Europe's, 14-16; Soutou, “Général,” who bases his analysis on information from his

called into question. A far simpler explanation of French policy—one much more consistent, as we have seen, with de Gaulle’s own statements—is simply that de Gaulle was not concerned primarily with geopolitical ideas and interests, but with French commercial interests, particularly those of farmers. To be sure, de Gaulle would have preferred that political relations be conducted under an intergovernmental arrangement like the Fouchet Plan, but gave priority to the EC at least as long as the CAP remained incomplete.⁷⁷ From the start, de Gaulle considered it unlikely that others would accept the Fouchet Plan, but considered it useful in any case as a cloak for his opposition to supranational institutions behind a distinctive “European” vision while the CAP was still under negotiation. This, he hoped, would soften opposition to the CAP in Germany and elsewhere while strengthening domestic partisan support in France.

Fortunately we need not speculate about which explanation is correct; hard documentary evidence—critical portions of which are summarized on Table One—strongly supports the commercial interpretation. De Gaulle did have a long-term strategic and tactical plan, which was set forth in a 1960 strategic document drafted by his chief strategist and closest advisor on this issue, Alain Peyrefitte—first deputy, then press spokesman, and then also minister—and in de Gaulle’s confidential instructions to negotiating and cabinet ministers.⁷⁸ The plan, followed to the letter over the subsequent six years, privileged economic, particularly agricultural, interests over de Gaulle’s ideological opposition to supranationalism or desire for joint foreign policy cooperation.

The documentary evidence suggests, more specifically, that de Gaulle and Peyrefitte viewed the Fouchet Plan as a means to disguise the tension between France’s economic interests and de Gaulle’s opposition to supranational institutions. De Gaulle found himself in (what Peyrefitte later termed) a “paradoxical” and vulnerable diplomatic position, namely he supported substantive

father.

⁷⁷ Pierre Maillard, *De Gaulle et l’Europe* (Paris: Tallandier, 1995), 205. This is the way de Gaulle himself expressed it. Jouve, *Général*, 367.

cooperation—a common external tariff and agricultural policy—but opposed supranational institutions. This tension was the central tactical problem facing the French government in the early 1960s. If de Gaulle's opposition to supranational institutions became too clear, he would lead other countries to side with Britain and endanger the delicate ongoing negotiations about the CAP. This diplomatic situation required what Peyrefitte, termed a "prudently audacious" strategy. This extraordinary strategy, which hinted at all the major developments of the EEC from 1960 through 1966, was set forth in confidential documents, negotiating instructions, and Cabinet discussions between 1959 and 1961. All subsequent descriptions of internal deliberations by participants—even those who speculate that de Gaulle was motivated by geopolitics—are consistent with this plan. We know that de Gaulle immediately read and sought to implement the plan. Peyrefitte was rewarded for his foreign policy advice with a remarkably rapid advance from an obscure position within the Assemblée Nationale to a ministry.⁷⁹

The "prudently audacious" set forth in Peyrefitte's memo and de Gaulle's confidential instructions to his ministers rested on three imperatives. The first was to maintain forward progress in areas of importance to it, notably agriculture, the French government must disguise its true goals of undermining supranational institutions by striving "never to appear negative." This was required, Peyrefitte argued, to keep the negotiations moving forward and to avoid triggering counterdemands and obstruction from its allies on economic issues. (If agriculture had not been the dominant concern, de Gaulle could of course have challenged supranational institutions immediately.) Hence France must avoid conveying any inkling of its desire to destroy EC institutions in pursuit of its true

⁷⁸ De Gaulle turned to Peyrefitte for practical strategic counsel at other critical moments in his Presidency. E.g. Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 514.

⁷⁹ Peyrefitte, *C'était*, I/302. Peyrefitte's memoir is corroborated by documents and by Debré, who recalls that the review of French policy was based not on ideology, but pure national interests: avoiding a free trade area without external tariffs, the role of overseas territories; and the establishment of the CAP. Debré, *Trois*, II/432ff. See also Leprette, *Un chef*, 105n; Peyrefitte's articles in *Le monde* (14, 15 and 17 September 1960). For evidence that de Gaulle read and internalized the Peyrefitte memo, see Jouve, *Général*, I/72, II/485-502.

goal: "a British Europe without the British."⁸⁰ Any hint of de Gaulle's plan to destroy EC institutions might place the French at a psychological disadvantage in ongoing CAP negotiations or lead the other five to side with the British. France should instead "seduce" the other five governments away from the EC by proposing more intergovernmental plans—this advice being written less than a year before the first draft of the Fouchet Plan. At best, this may induce other governments to voluntarily renounce the EEC. At least, it would create the illusion of a positive French policy toward Europe in order to assure continued forward motion. Perhaps, the Peyrefitte memo cynically speculated, this policy might even persuade European federalists, who comprised a majority in many national parliaments, that "the President of the Republic had been 'converted' to their principles." For nearly two years, it had the intended effect on none other than Jean Monnet, who supported de Gaulle's plans for foreign policy coordination until the latter's true intentions became clear.⁸¹

The second "prudently audacious" imperative was to block British entry. The British, as we shall see in more detail in the next section, were certain to block agreement on the CAP; hence it was imperative that France block their bid for membership. If the French stalled and made demands in accession negotiations, de Gaulle calculated, British negotiators—tightly constrained at home by agricultural and Commonwealth interests in the Conservative Party—would be forced either to withdraw or to bargain so intransigently that they would be blamed for a collapse of negotiations. The Fouchet Plan would place even greater pressure on Britain. The apparent "deepening" of

⁸⁰ Peyrefitte, *Général*, 498, also 489-496. To appreciate the deception, compare Peyrefitte's articles in *Le Monde* (14, 15, 16 and 17 September 1960), which argue that it would be "illogical to seek a British Europe without the British." (Jouve, *Général*, II/439-440). 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, *The Duel: De Gaulle and Pompidou* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 113.

⁸¹ Jouve, *Général*, II, 489-499, esp. II/498. Also Etienne Burin des Rozières, *Retour aux sources, 1962 l'année décisive* (Paris: Plon, 1986), 51-53.

integration, de Gaulle and his associates reasoned, might force the British to mistakenly "exclude themselves" from a superficially federalist, but actually more "British" arrangement.⁸²

The third imperative was eventually, should the Fouchet Plan fail to induce institutional change, to confront France's European counterparts directly. France would threaten radical action—including withdrawal from Europe—if the Treaty were not revised to remove supranational elements. One could not do this, however, until the EC implemented the CAP and blocked British entry. Accordingly, de Gaulle's confidential negotiating guidelines to Debré in September 1960, within a month after Peyrefitte's memo, instructed him not to challenge the EEC overtly. If the Fouchet Plan succeeded, the EEC would wither away; if it failed, France would confront the other five member governments and "deal directly" with EC institutions when the time was right.⁸³

De Gaulle pursued Peyrefitte's "prudently audacious" plan to the letter for six years, pressing forward on agriculture, disguising his true political intentions through positive proposals, discouraging and ultimately vetoing British entry, and—but only once an agricultural agreement was secure—confronting supranational institutions directly. There is, by contrast, no documentary evidence to support the conjecture advanced first by Miriam Camps and subsequently by most other commentators that de Gaulle's "brutal" negotiating tactics in the Fouchet Plan negotiations, as well as his repeated threats to withdraw from the EC, resulted from his anger or disappointment over geopolitical developments.⁸⁴

De Gaulle's own statements during this period tended to stress primarily the need to realize the common agricultural policy to balance industrial trade liberalization, and mentioned political

⁸² Jouve, *Général*, II, 489-499, esp. II/498.

⁸³ Jouve, *Général*, II, 489-499; Charles de Gaulle, *Lettres, Notes et Carnets* (Paris: Plon, 1980), 398-399; Soutou, "Général," 126-7, 130; Soutou, "1961: le plan Fouchet," *Espoir* 87 (December 1992), 40-55; Ménil, *Who*, 68; Susanne J. Bodenheimer, *Political Union: A Microcosm of European Politics* (Leyden, Sijthoff, 1967), 77-84.

⁸⁴ Camps misinterprets French statements from *Le Monde* (October 22, 1965), cited in Miriam Camps, *European Unification in the Sixties: From the Veto to the Crisis* (New York: McGraw-Hill Books, 1966), 87, 91. Also Ménil, *Who*, 188. Throughout the 1960s de Gaulle offered the Germans no

cooperation as a secondary task to be launched once agricultural issues were resolved. To be sure, de Gaulle spoke of global tasks awaiting a politically unified Europe and occasionally hinted that economic cooperation might not persist if it did not deepen toward political cooperation, but these allusions were more vague and less immediate than his explicit threats to withdraw from the EC if the CAP was not realized.⁸⁵

The lack of evidence for an interpretation of de Gaulle's actions based on geopolitical ideas and interests is clearest if we examine the timing of French policy shifts. Commercial concern about agriculture immediately makes sense of the timing and content apparently counterproductive French negotiating tactics. The second revision of the Fouchet Plan was drafted at a meeting among de Gaulle and a few of his ministers just four hours after the decisive agriculture compromise of January 1962, which assured that the CAP would move forward. By setting forth a more intransigent position, de Gaulle forced other governments to reject it, placing the public onus of the collapse of the negotiations on them and preserving his "pro-European" image. Later in 1962 de Gaulle began moving, as set forth in Peyrefitte's plan, to provoke a conflict with pro-Europeans in France by stating his anti-supranationalist views plainly—though he remained cautious until after the elections of late 1962, the British veto, and the CAP agreements of 1964 and 1965.⁸⁶ Hence de Gaulle did not provoke the "empty chair" crisis for nearly five years, until the CAP was all but complete. This timing is hard to explain unless we assume that de Gaulle placed the continuation of economic negotiations within the EC over immediate pursuit of geopolitical goals within the Fouchet Plan, such as political union and the emasculation of supranational institutions.

more than "reconciliation without equality": his "universalist nationalism" remained incompatible with any form of supranational cooperation, even in foreign policy. Hoffmann, "De Gaulle's," 296-7; Hoffmann, "Obstinate," 388-389.

⁸⁵ Jouve, *Général*, II/263-280.

⁸⁶ Berstein, *Republic*, 71-80; Williams and Harrison, *Politics*, 51

Even more striking than the timing of tactical moves, however, is the absolute consistency of the “prudently audacious” French policy over this period despite radical geopolitical swings—the proposal and abandonment of the Fouchet Plan and President Kennedy’s proposal and President Johnson’s subsequent abandonment of a Multilateral Force, the US-UK Nassau Agreement of 1962 (explored in more detail below), the emasculation of the Franco-German Treaty, the shift from Adenauer to Erhard, the imposition of a pro-NATO preamble on the Franco-German Treaty of 1963, and the blunt refusal of the Erhard government in Germany to discuss any but the most mundane of issues connected with political union. None of this diverted France from its pursuit of the CAP. This stability, like de Gaulle’s conduct of the Fouchet Plan negotiations, is difficult, perhaps impossible to explain from a geopolitical perspective without a long series of ad hoc, undocumented suppositions about de Gaulle’s state of mind. The modest increase in conflict in the period from 1962 to 1966—as predicted in Peyrefitte’s memo—arose not because of geopolitical pressures, as many have argued, because the moment had come for difficult German concessions on agricultural prices and because, having achieved those concessions, de Gaulle felt better able to challenge supranational institutions.⁸⁷

Again, let me be clear. There is no denying that de Gaulle was motivated in part by geopolitical ideas, in particular in his desire to tempt Germany further away from an Atlanticist toward a European foreign policy arrangement. He clearly hoped to move Europe toward a more intergovernmental and perhaps more plebiscitary form. Yet his efforts to achieve this goal were strictly subordinated to economic interests, above all the realization of the CAP. Whatever de Gaulle might have desired in theory, the Fouchet Plan served in practice primarily as a “deliberate deception” designed to disguise his true economic and institutional motivations. Accordingly, one

⁸⁷ Peyrefitte, *C’était*, II/284-285, 214. De Gaulle’s disappointment with the Elysée Treaty is often cited by geopolitical analyses as a cause of his willingness to threaten breaking up the EC to achieve the CAP. Yet de Gaulle’s explicit threats to withdraw unless the CAP were created date back before it was clear that arrangements for political cooperation in the Franco-German Treaty of 1963 would be limited by an explicit commitment to NATO introduced into the preamble by the Bundestag. cf. Miriam Camps, *European Unification in the Sixties: From the Veto to the Crisis* (New

of his closest colleagues recalled, when the Fouchet Plan collapsed, de Gaulle “did not mourn”; to the contrary, having come to see political cooperation as hampering his ambitions for an independent foreign policy, he let it go.⁸⁸

C. The British Applications for Membership:

“We’ll Just Have to Find New Reasons to Make your Membership Impossible”

From 1958 through early 1969, de Gaulle’s France blocked various free trade area (FTA) proposals advanced by Britain, as well as British entry into the EC. In December 1958, after gaining Adenauer’s support, de Gaulle vetoed British FTA proposals outright, calling on the British—disingenuously, as we shall see—to join the EEC and to accept the same obligations as the other Community partners, particularly regarding the CAP, external tariff and social harmonization. Early in 1960, after forming the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) with Denmark, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Austria and Ireland—a British move aimed almost entirely at exerting pressure on France—Britain and its new partners called for an EFTA-EC agreement. The negotiations were again fruitless, largely due to French obstruction. When Reginald Maudling, the chief British negotiator, asked Robert Marjolin, former head of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), a French negotiator of the Treaty of Rome, and then an EC Commissioner (and himself something of an Atlanticist) what France would do if Britain agreed to all its conditions, he replied: “We [would] just have to think of new reasons which make your membership impossible.”⁸⁹

York: Magraw-Hill Books, 1966), 16, 117.

⁸⁸ Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 350, also 362.

⁸⁹ CITE. Sabine Lee, “Germany and the First Enlargement Negotiations 1961-1963” (unpublished paper 1996), 12, also 3-7; Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 212; Gabriele Brenke, “Europakonzeptionen im Widerstreit: Die Freihandelszonen-Verhandlungen 1956-1958,” *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 42:4 (October 1994), 600-601, 604-621, 626; Balassa, *Organized*, 320ff; Leon N. Lindberg, *The Political Dynamics of European Economic Integration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 142-143, 147-149; Richard Lamb, *The Macmillan Years, 1947-1963: The Emerging Truth* (London: John Massey, 1995), 110, 114-117, 120ff; Griffiths, “The Importance of Fish,” 40; Herbert Schneider, *Großbritanniens Weg nach Europa. Eine Untersuchung über das Verhalten und die Rolle der britischen Handels- und Industrieverbände, Gewerkschaften und Farmerorganisationen*

Little changed when Macmillan announced in mid-1961 the step for which de Gaulle had called, namely a British application for EC membership. De Gaulle immediately reversed his encouraging rhetoric concerning British membership, terming the decision "an unpleasant surprise" and encouraging Britain to withdraw it. Yet he was little concerned, as we have seen, for he initially expected domestic opposition within Britain to block the necessary economic and political concessions on the Commonwealth and agriculture.⁹⁰ The General confidentially affirmed to close advisors his absolute rejection of British membership but noted the need to delay. British ambassadors in Paris sensed this, reporting back to London that de Gaulle would probably wait for elections in November 1962, in which support from pro-EC farmers and centrist parties was required, then impose its veto. De Gaulle, we should seem set against British entry from the start and made little effort to reach agreement.⁹¹

Yet the British persevered. When French officials realized in mid-1962, much to their surprise, that Macmillan was in fact genuinely willing to make all the economic concessions on Commonwealth preferences that France had been requesting, French demands hardened. Pessimistic prognoses were issued in an attempt to force a British withdrawal, thereby transferring the responsibility for the collapse of negotiations onto Britain. A committee was reportedly formed in the Quai d'Orsay to design means of impeding British entry. Seeking to impose a *fait accompli*, the French rapidly sought agreement on agricultural provisions within the EEC directly at variance with British proposals, while misleading the British about their actions. Pierson Dixon, the British ambassador in Paris, viewed this in retrospect as the "end of the negotiations."⁹² The British

zwischen 1955 (Spaak-Komitee) und 1961 (EWG-Beitrittsverhandlungen) (Freiburg/Breisgau: Rombach, 1968), 116; Lieber, British, 76-90; Sir Norman Kipping, Summing Up (London: Hutchinson, 1972), 160.

⁹⁰ CITE. Lamb, Macmillan, 144.

⁹¹ Peyrefitte, C'était, I/303-304; Lacouture, De Gaulle, 355-357.

⁹² Alastair Home, Harold Macmillan Vol. 2 (New York: Viking, 1988), II/257; Macmillan on Dixon, in Lamb, Macmillan, 144, 166, 172-175; Gladwyn Jebb, The Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn (London: Weybright and Talley, 1972), 292-298; Silj, Europe's, 82; Sir Pierson Dixon, Double Diploma: The Life of Sir Pierson Dixon, Don and Diplomat (London: Hutchinson, 1968), 282-3, 292; Christopher Steel, Ambassador in Bonn, cited in Adamhwaite, "Britain," 8, also 3, 9-10; cf. Andrew Roth, Heath and the Heathmen (London: Routledge, 1972), 162. Some argue that Macmillan

continued to make concessions and by December 1962 most participants believed a final agreement was just around the corner; a marathon session scheduled for January 1963 was expected to resolve outstanding issues.⁹³ However, after an unexpectedly successful showing in parliamentary elections, de Gaulle announced a decision to veto at the Cabinet meeting of 17 December 1962, where he ridiculed Macmillan by quoting the famous Edith Piaf song, "Ne pleurez pas Milord. ("Do not cry, my Lord.")—a quotation that soon leaked.⁹⁴ At his celebrated press conference a month later, on 14 January 1963, the General delivered the coup de grace, speaking at length of the reasons why Britain was unready to adopt a "genuinely European" approach.⁹⁵

At the end of the decade, however, Gaullists reversed course. De Gaulle did discourage efforts in 1966-1967 by the Wilson government to apply for membership, but during the final months of his presidency and the first of his successor, his former Prime Minister Georges Pompidou, French policy softened. In 1969, during the last weeks of his presidency, de Gaulle approached the British government about establishing an intergovernmental substitute for the EEC, which he termed the "European Economic Association." Though the negotiations failed due to embarrassing British revelations—the "Soames Affair"—Pompidou maintained the policy. In his first press conference as President on 10 July, Pompidou noted that France had no objection in principle to British membership, a statement that opened the door to successful negotiations concluded in 1973.⁹⁶

How can we best explain this pattern of rejection under during the de Gaulle years, followed by initiatives for closer cooperation under de Gaulle in 1969 and strong move to accept Britain as a member by Pompidou, who felt he had de Gaulle's approval, shortly thereafter? Critical portions of

doubted his ambassadors, exaggerating the willingness of the Germans and Dutch to pressure Paris. Brenke, Europakonzeptionen, 631. Others suggest that Macmillan was pessimistic from the start, expecting a French veto. Kaiser, Using, Peyrefitte, C'était, 299-304; Wolfram Kaiser, "The Bomb and Europe: Britain, France, and the EEC Entry Negotiations, 1961-1963," Journal of European Integration History 1:1 (1995), 85.

⁹³ Willis, France, 299-305; Lamb, Macmillan, 196-197, 202.

⁹⁴ Cogan, Charles de Gaulle, 141; Maillard, De Gaulle, 184-185.

⁹⁵ For a verbatim transcript, see Jouve, Général, II/283-286.

⁹⁶ Philip Ziegler, Wilson: The Authorized Biography (London: Harper/Collins, 1995), 334; Knapp, Gaullism, 417-418; Simon Z. Young, Terms of

the evidence are summarized in Table Two. Surely, the consensus among observers has long held, de Gaulle's hostile attitude toward Britain, more than any other episode, demonstrates the geopolitical basis of his European policy. The "real problem," in the words of the General's most celebrated biographer, was "the participation of Britain in the realization of Charles de Gaulle's grand design, the construction of a Europe of States."⁹⁷ De Gaulle, already souring on Europe due to the demise of the Fouchet Plan, feared that Britain would be a "Trojan Horse" for US geopolitical designs like the MLF, thereby frustrating his vision of an alternative European confederation based on the Fouchet Plan or something similar. Charles Cogan speaks for many analysts when he argues that in vetoing Britain:

De Gaulle's reasoning appears to have been the following: ... He thought he could establish nuclear hegemony over the rest of the continent of Western Europe by virtue of: (1) the suppression of the Multilateral Force, which would have put nuclear weapons in the hands of continental powers, (2) the exclusion of Great Britain, a nuclear power, from a continental grouping by his veto of British entry into the Common Market.⁹⁸

Still others cite de Gaulle's anger at Macmillan's failure to tell him about the Polaris nuclear deal made with the US at Nassau on 21 December and his failure to clearly offer nuclear cooperation—an impression apparently cultivated subsequently by French officials.⁹⁹

Yet such interpretations of de Gaulle's motivations in blocking British accession are based almost entirely upon literary interpretations of de Gaulle's general writings and utterances, or on loose interpretations of what de Gaulle must have had to believe, given his actions vis-à-vis NATO, the Third World, and the superpowers. There is in fact essentially no direct evidence of geopolitical motivations for the veto of Britain. To the contrary, nearly all of de Gaulle's own statements and

Entry: *Britain's Negotiations with the European Community, 1970-1972* (London: Heinemann, 1973), 4-5.

⁹⁷ Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 347.

⁹⁸ Cogan, *Oldest Allies*, 128.

⁹⁹ Berstein, *Republic*, 173.

those of his close associates supports the view that de Gaulle vetoed British membership, despite common geopolitical interests on many issues (not least shared opposition to supranational institutions and concern about Germany) because Britain was certain to block generous financing for the CAP. This would have eliminated the principal advantage for France from the EC customs union vis-à-vis an FTA. Hence France had nothing to lose by pressing to keep the British out. If France let Britain into the EC, Britain and Germany would block the CAP and the EC would become, in essence, an FTA. If France alienated her partners by blocking Britain, she might succeed; if she failed, the only option for the others was to accept British proposals for an FTA, which was no worse—now that French industry increasingly competitive—than letting the British in.

Let us begin with de Gaulle's public statements. The General often spoke about the unpreparedness of Britain to be "truly European" and about conflicts with the "Anglo-Saxons." Metaphors like that of a "Trojan horse" were often invoked.¹⁰⁰ Almost without exception, however, statements by de Gaulle about British commitment to the EC refers explicitly to economic justifications at greater length and in much greater detail than geopolitical ones; in a number of important cases, he dwells exclusively on economic interests—even though one might expect geopolitical concerns to offer a more expedient excuse, the language of "grandeur" and "independence" being popular in France. This is true of de Gaulle's memoirs, in which his explanation of opposition to an FTA and British membership never mentions geopolitical or ideational issues, but instead repeats that "without the common tariff and agricultural preference, there could be no valid European Community."¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Lacouture, De Gaulle, 353; Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Akten 1963, I, Document 94.

¹⁰¹ de Gaulle, Memoirs, 187, also 187-189, 218-220.

The same is true of de Gaulle's most widely cited justification for the veto, the celebrated press conference of 14 January 1963 where it was announced. Speaking more slowly and clearly than usual in response to a planted question, the General devotes nearly 1500 words to what he termed a "clear" explanation of the veto of British membership. In this response he speaks of Britain's lack of commitment to "Europe" without ever mentioning any disagreement with Anglo-Saxons over security issues, the Fouchet Plan, the Multi-Lateral Force (MLF), political union, or any other non-economic concerns. He dwells instead exclusively on commercial matters, focusing particularly on the contradiction between long-standing British trading patterns and future Treaty of Rome commitments in the "essential" area of agriculture. He notes that British membership is difficult primarily because the Continent is different in economic structure than the "insular, maritime...essentially industrial and commercial and hardly agricultural" Britain. His oft-cited concerns about the US ("the colossal Atlantic area under American dominance") is restricted to concern about overwhelming US "economic" influence and the purported US desire, along with Britain, to promote European trade liberalization without a preferential arrangement for agriculture, which "would completely alter the whole set of arrangements, understandings, compensations, rules that have already been drawn up among the Six...The cohesion of its members...would not last for long." These problems arise because of "peculiarities" of various countries as regards their "economic relations...above all with the United States." It is difficult to imagine a more lucid and direct description of the economic differences between Britain and the Continent in agriculture; by contrast, even when asked directly about the MLF and security problems, de Gaulle makes no mention of the EC.¹⁰²

De Gaulle's statements at closed Cabinet sessions and meetings with close advisors during the critical period from 1961 to 1965 echo these statements, thus offering further support for the

¹⁰² Jouve, *Général*, II/492-498. Some years later, de Gaulle does mention Nassau in a brief allusion to the veto. Jouve, *Général*, II/380-381.

conclusion that agriculture, not geopolitics, accounted for his opposition to British membership. In secret discussions at the Elysée in 1961, de Gaulle stated that British entry would "overturn everything, [leading to] a completely different Common Market." At a closed meeting at the Elysée in 1962, he asserts that his "principal interest" was the defense of the CAP, which would help French agriculture "take off," as had French industry. The source of the dispute with Britain, he explains, lies in economic structure: The transition from agriculture to industry occurred a hundred years ago in Britain, while it is still continuing in France—creating different political imperatives. Britain, he notes, would oppose any plans for a CAP, perhaps in alliance with Germany or even Italy and the Netherlands. (This was quite true; one reason for the British membership bid raised in confidential Whitehall discussions was to do just this. Even if they had been so inclined, the British had no way to provide a credible commitment to permit centralized financing arrangements to be created—decisions that were not taken until the late 1960s.¹⁰³) At the Cabinet meeting of 17 December 1962, where the final decision to veto the British application was taken, the General again stressed agriculture. He emphasized that the one question the British could not answer is why a customs union with the EFTA countries would not simply become an industrial free trade zone. Hours before the 14 January 1963 press conference and then again at a cabinet meeting ten days later, he observed to his closest advisors that the British might well be invited to join after the CAP was irreversibly established. In none of these sessions is there direct mention of geopolitical motivations for the veto.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Agricultural considerations also make the greatest sense of de Gaulle's willingness to encourage an application from pro-NATO Denmark, hardly a country committed to a politically united Europe, but a strong supporter of agricultural cooperation. Wolfram Kaiser, Using Europe, Abusing the Europeans: Britain and European Integration, 1945-63 (London: Macmillan, 1996), 178.

¹⁰⁴ Peyrefitte, C'était, I/302, 332-336; II/224-225. Peyrefitte does note at one point that economic, political (NATO) and nuclear questions were "inextricably mixed." [I/303] De Gaulle notes: "The problem is to get the British into the existing Common Market, not to deal with the Commonwealth," and predicted to Maurice Schumann that the UK would enter, not under a Labour government, but under Heath thereafter. [CITE, 132] See also Silj, Europe's, 87-88; Alfred Grosser, French Foreign Policy under de Gaulle (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 82-4. De Gaulle was quite aware that vetoing the British would anger other governments, but this was of less concern to him the certain British opposition to the CAP. Peyrefitte, C'était, II/219-221.

Turning from de Gaulle to his associates, a comprehensive survey of statements by French government officials reveals not even one direct acknowledgement of geopolitical motivations; all point to commercial motivations. Just before the veto, Foreign Minister Couve de Murville tried to make it clear—to the point of tendentiousness—that the critical issue was not Commonwealth preferences, but "financial regulation" of agriculture.¹⁰⁵ In January 1963, when asked to account for the France veto, he responded:¹⁰⁶

The answer is simple. The entire history of international cooperation in agricultural matters consists of promises [that] put off future transformations...The keystone [is] the financial provision...It is evident that we could not have let a new member enter...without having settled in the most precise manner this essential matter.

He added later: "A new member cannot be admitted into an unfinished club."¹⁰⁷ De Gaulle's Prime Minister and successor, Pompidou, and his Agricultural Minister, Edgar Pisani, maintained subsequently that the veto forestalled an Anglo-German alliance to undermine CAP financing. Pisani quotes the General as saying: "France is not opposed to British entry into the EC, but it refuses to permit such entry to call into question the CAP. When Britain accepts all the rules, everything will be fine."¹⁰⁸ Debré observed later that France had good reason to want Britain for

¹⁰⁵ Home, *Macmillan*, II/429-432, 444-447. See also Hallstein (11 Jan 63 Memo to Carstens and Lahr to Schröder), cited in Bundesrepublik Deutschland, *Akten 1963* I, Document 17, 30; Lamb, *Macmillan*, 168-170. Jouve, *Général*, 180-182, 185-188.

¹⁰⁶ Silj, 89-90.

¹⁰⁷ Dixon, *Double*, 304. Also Couve de Murville, *Politique*, 335.

¹⁰⁸ Pisani, *Général*, 102, also 99-102) Despite a ritualistic claim that de Gaulle was motivated by geopolitical vision. Pompidou is cited in Bodenheimer, *Political*, 127. CHECK. See also Silj, 90ff. Agriculture Minister Pisani's advice was that even if the British accept the CAP, their anti-agricultural preferences will call into question implementation of the 1962 agricultural agreement. Peyrefitte, *C'était*, 157-158, CHECK. See also Jebb, *Memoirs*, 292ff. cf. Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 356-358; Robert Marjolin, *Architect of European Unity: Memoirs, 1911-1986* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), 320, 340, 358, cf. 338-339. There is little reason why these French officials should be misleading; the geopolitical explanation was, after all, more legitimate. Couve, for example, would have every incentive to exaggerate the geopolitical elements, since a decisive role for the Nassau agreement would absolve him of widespread charges of diplomatic duplicity. See Paul-Henri Spaak, *The Continuing Battle: Memoirs of a European* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), 476 ff.

Prate (*Batailles*, 62-63) speculates that political factors were "undoubtedly primary" in de Gaulle's veto of Britain, citing the Nassau agreement, adding that economics, particularly agriculture, had a "great weight." This judgement must be taken seriously, if it is not ironically meant, but it is unsupported by the evidence Prate presents. He did not participate in the decision to veto and, as we shall see below, the Nassau meeting could not have influenced it.

reasons of principle; it would be good to be supported by another ally opposed to transfers of sovereignty, but national interests did not permit it at the time.¹⁰⁹

De Gaulle and his officials advanced the same arguments to their foreign counterparts, including Macmillan and Adenauer. Around the time of the veto, it is true, de Gaulle sometimes mentioned both economic and political concerns regarding Britain in the same breath, but the economic arguments invariably come first and are treated in more detail. In discussions with German leaders he stresses that an "industrial trade arrangement with England could easily be reached," but not within the EC, because "agriculture is a French vital interest and for France to maintain its agriculture with England as a member, England would have to stop being England." Similarly, a GATT agreement could be reached, but the CAP must be maintained.¹¹⁰ German diplomats subsequently conducted an extensive review of the diplomatic record, including over a hundred individual references, and concluded that de Gaulle's primary motivation was to protect the agricultural policy.¹¹¹ British officials themselves agreed that it was in the end the issue of financial regulation of agriculture that was the "sticking point" or "Achilles heel" over which France sought to block formation of an Anglo-German coalition.¹¹² When de Gaulle vetoed Harold Wilson's

¹⁰⁹ Debré, *Mémoires*, 428.

¹¹⁰ Hermann Kusterer, *Der Kanzler und der General* (Stuttgart: Neske, 1995), 318, 350-352.

¹¹¹ Bundesrepublik Deutschland, *Akten 1963* contains much evidence: On 5 December 1962, the head of the political department in the German Foreign Ministry, Dr. Jansen, concluded from discussions in Paris that he was "pretty certain" about de Gaulle's intentions, the concern was the conflict between the EC and the Commonwealth, not the US. [Doc. 21] In his first set of face-to-face discussions with Adenauer following the veto, De Gaulle stressed that for him the "critical point" was the lack of British commitment to a "real Common Market," by which he meant that without a "common external tariff" and "common rules...particularly in agriculture" a European Community based on "economic interests" would collapse. De Gaulle continued to pursue the agricultural issue, until his interlocutor changed the subject. [Doc. 43] In a private meeting with representatives in the National Assembly, de Gaulle observed that the UK was a "Trojan Horse" not for US geopolitical goals, but for US efforts to break into the European market. Public speeches by Couve and de Gaulle conveyed the same message. [Doc. 94] Italian and German officials "agreed" that agriculture was the "key" issue. [Doc. 24] De Gaulle also mentioned in private the need for a Labour government to make the "necessary changes" for membership—a view consistent with a concern about decolonization. [Doc. 32, 39] Both Couve, the French Foreign Minister, and various German officials who were negotiating directly with the French, stated that economics was predominant. [Docs. 60, 77, 94] Only Adenauer, in defending de Gaulle's motivations to third governments, stressed geopolitics. [Doc. 55] See also Kusterer, *Kanzler*, 317ff.

¹¹² Willis, *France*, 299-305. De Gaulle's discussions with Macmillan, cited in detail later in this article, reveal the same pattern: e.g. Record of Macmillan-de Gaulle meeting, 2 June 1962 (PREM 11/3775), 8. Even Macmillan seems to have accepted the primacy of agriculture in retrospect. Home, *Macmillan*, II/428. Also Lamb, *Macmillan*, 196-197, 202.

tentative move toward a membership bid in 1967, Wilson was informed through back channels that it was because Pompidou had raised economic objections.¹¹³

The preeminence of economic interests is mirrored strikingly in the transcripts of bilateral summits between de Gaulle and Macmillan in 1962. These meetings uncovered more areas of geopolitical agreement than disagreement. Again, bits and pieces of these summit discussions are sometimes cited out of context to support geopolitical concerns; taken as a whole, however, these discussions do not support such an interpretation. Each has a similar form: De Gaulle presses Britain on agriculture, while Macmillan resists. Macmillan raises security issues, consistent with the centerpiece of the British strategy, which was from the beginning to offset de Gaulle's fundamental objections (Macmillan appears not to have been sure whether they were economic or geopolitical) with geopolitical, perhaps nuclear, concessions. The two leaders consistently found they had more in common in geopolitical matters than in commercial ones.¹¹⁴

At Chateau de Champs in June 1962, de Gaulle begins the meeting by emphasizing the absolute French imperative to export agricultural goods and insistently raising the issue of Commonwealth imports, which he terms "the most fundamental" issue. Macmillan, hoping that British concessions on defense cooperation will overcome de Gaulle's objections and appearing not to understand the centrality of agriculture to de Gaulle's position, insists on transitional arrangements and hinted several times that Britain would refuse to pay more than its "fair share" for the CAP. He rejects de Gaulle's proposal that Commonwealth imports be limited only to tropical products like cocoa and coffee and reiterates the centrality of beef and wheat exports for the British Commonwealth. Consistent with his strategy of seeking a geopolitical quid pro quo, Macmillan repeatedly tries to

¹¹³ Philip Ziegler, *Wilson: The Authorized Biography* (London: Harper/Collins, 1995), 334.

¹¹⁴ De Gaulle himself portrays the meetings in this way. de Gaulle, *Memoirs*, 217-220.

shift the conversation away from "less important" economic issues, only to have the General repeatedly shift the topic back.¹¹⁵

When, halfway through the session, de Gaulle finally permits the discussion to move on to geopolitics, the two statesmen immediately find themselves in much closer agreement. De Gaulle asserts that his predecessors had created the Common Market for political ends, but that the supranational institutions should be replaced by intergovernmental cooperation among the larger powers of Europe—a position close to Macmillan's. (On supranational institutions, the major French internal strategy document in this period refers to the positions of the two countries as "sisters."¹¹⁶) De Gaulle remarks that for security *vis-à-vis* Russia it would probably be better to have the British in the EC and concedes that "in the last resort" France has more confidence in Britain than in Germany. When the General asks whether Britain was ready to adopt a European attitude on these issues, Macmillan assures him that Britain is prepared to strengthen the European end of the NATO alliance. (At around the same time, Macmillan also declared his public support for the Fouchet Plan.¹¹⁷) Both agree that progress toward political cooperation in Europe was not being made, but in economic areas the major obstacle to British membership was its "many ties outside Europe." Macmillan emerged euphoric with the view that Britain and France had agreed on three major points: that Britain would renounce preferential trading rights with the Commonwealth, that a common agricultural policy was essential for France, and that France and Britain must cooperate on nuclear weapons to form the "backbone of a European defense." Apparently in an effort to disguise the consistency of his motives, de Gaulle later removed from his memoirs nearly all reference to this optimistic dialogue.¹¹⁸ The convergence of interest between Britain and France

¹¹⁵ Record of a Conversation at the Chateau de Champs, 2 June 1962. PREM 11/3775, 7-9. Also Record of a Conversation at the Chateau de Champs, 3 June 1962. PREM 11/3775, 14.

¹¹⁶ Jouve, *Général*, II/492-498.

¹¹⁷ Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 348.

¹¹⁸ Record of 3 June meeting, 11-14, especially 13; 14ff, 17-18; de Gaulle, *Memoirs*, 218-220. On the events and de Gaulle's memoirs, the French

was quite clear to practitioners and commentators alike. The Belgian, Josef Luns, called for the participation of Britain in the Fouchet Plan, remarking: "If we are going to make Europe in the English manner, we might as well do it with England."¹¹⁹ The seasoned observer of French foreign policy, Alfred Grosser, observed later that if de Gaulle had genuinely sought to emasculate supranational institutions, he would have done better to choose London rather than Bonn as his ally.¹²⁰

The summit six months later at Rambouillet revealed the same convergence of geopolitical vision. Analysts have focused on whether or not Macmillan offered nuclear cooperation and have completely overlooked the direct evidence that de Gaulle privileged economic interests over geopolitical ones. De Gaulle concedes that the Fouchet Plan had failed and thus British membership would not further dampen the prospects for European foreign policy cooperation. In the course of the talks, the two reiterate their shared opposition to supranational institutions. Nonetheless, de Gaulle maintains, it is "not possible for Britain to enter tomorrow." The "main problem," Macmillan notes—for the first time acknowledging the centrality of economic interests—is "agriculture." De Gaulle agrees. France, he argues, seeks to establish certain EEC policies; once they are definitively established, Britain and the Scandinavian countries could enter. This, Macmillan observes, is "a most serious statement."¹²¹ Throughout, de Gaulle showed little serious interest in Macmillan's efforts to offer a strategic *quid pro quo*, seeking to avoid the topic in their talks.

The timing of the French veto more clearly confirms the primacy of commercial interests over geopolitics. We may begin by rejecting outright the oft-conjectured causal link between the Anglo-American agreement at Nassau to deploy Polaris missiles on UK submarines and de Gaulle's veto.

ambassador to London, Geoffroy de Courcel, is cited in Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 354.

¹¹⁹ Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 349.

¹²⁰ Alfred Grosser, *La Politique extérieure de la V^e République* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1965), 140.

¹²¹ PRO. Prem 11/4230. On debates about the transcripts of the meeting, Lamb, *Macmillan*, 166, 192-3.

We now know that the General repeatedly hinted that he intended to veto many months in advance and announced the final decision to do so at a Cabinet meeting on 17 December 1962—a few days before the US-UK summit at Nassau and a fully week before the French government had completed its analysis of it. Hence neither the Anglo-American summit nor de Gaulle's sense of "betrayal" by Macmillan could have played any role in his decision—a conclusion uniformly backed by the recollections of French participants. By contrast, an approach focusing on enduring electoral concerns provides a superior explanation of the timing of the veto. Having broken with pro-European parties and survived the parliamentary elections of November 1962 with an unexpectedly strong majority, de Gaulle could now afford the criticism an outright veto was sure to generate—a calculus predicted by the British Ambassador and some French officials some months previously.¹²²

Perhaps the most striking evidence in favor of economic, rather than geopolitical and ideological, motivations is the continuity of French policy over the transition from the Fourth to the Fifth Republic and its change in 1969. Under the Fourth Republic, the satisfaction of agricultural interests had been a necessary condition for ratification of the Rome Treaty. Accordingly, the last governments of the Fourth Republic were completely unwilling to negotiate seriously on any sort of FTA, which they feared would call into question the favorable treatment on agriculture, colonial products, and external tariffs France had obtained in the Treaty of Rome. An FTA enjoyed almost no parliamentary support. When Anglo-EEC negotiations on an FTA opened in the fall of 1957, still under the Fourth Republic, French representatives rejected British suggestions without making counterproposals—just as de Gaulle was to do. De Gaulle, despite a diametrically opposed geopolitical strategy, maintained precisely the same policy as his much-maligned predecessors.

¹²² There is no evidence to support Locator's conjecture that de Gaulle changed his mood due to the proclamation of Kennedy's "grand design," de Gaulle's triumphal tour of West Germany ("which brought his superiority complex to a height"), or the Skybolt crisis—or even difficulties over the details of Commonwealth agriculture, which were on the verge of resolution. Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 354-358. More plausible is Franklin's conjecture that de Gaulle vetoed because Mansholt appeared capable of forging an agricultural agreement. Sir Mark Franklin, "Father of the European Common Agricultural Policy," *Financial Times* (4 July 1995), 3; Couve de Murville, *Politique*, 335; Maillard, *De Gaulle*, 184n.

Similarly, commercial concerns also offer the only plausible explanation of the reversal in Gaullist policy at the end of de Gaulle's reign, leading to a lifting of the French veto. With the CAP out of the way and British industrial firms posing a much diminished threat to their French counterparts, Gaullist opposition to British membership receded. As we have seen, this transition began under de Gaulle with the proposals for closer relations with Britain that led to the "Soames affair." If anyone influenced de Gaulle at this juncture, it was Debré, who had long favored British entry—we have seen above—to bolster opposition to supranational institutions. If any consideration other than the CAP influenced the General at this juncture, it was not a geopolitical issue, but the monetary conflict with Germany in 1968-1969. Upon entering office, Pompidou swiftly moved even further to accommodate the British request for membership, secure in the knowledge that he had the General's support.¹²³

Nor, finally, is it coincidental that in exchange for finally lifting the French veto de Gaulle's handpicked successor, Pompidou, demanded a single non-negotiable concession, precisely the one that de Gaulle had predicted just before announcing his 1963 veto, namely prior agreement on a permanent financing arrangement for the CAP. Britain and France, as internal documents in both countries had long predicted, became natural allies against the extension of supranational institutions and worked together to establish a mechanism for European Political Cooperation. Like direct evidence of motivations, negotiating strategy, and timing, an explanation stressing commercial motivations predicts such a move; an explanation stressing geopolitical motivation can make no sense of it.¹²⁴

¹²³ Vaisse, *Grandeur*, 607ff; Michel Jobert, *Mémoires d'avenir* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1976), 182-183.

¹²⁴ For a more detailed argument, see Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*, Chapter Four.

D. Institutional Reform and the “Empty Chair” Crisis: “A Million-and-a-Half Rural Votes”

We move now the final major episode in de Gaulle’s European policy—the “empty chair” crisis of 1965-66. The road toward crisis began when Commission President Walter Hallstein sought to exploit what he believed to be a transient moment of French diplomatic vulnerability. The issue of a permanent financing arrangement for the CAP stood before the six EC governments. France sought to lock in such financing as securely as possible, without annual renegotiation, but opposed any increase in powers of the Commission and Parliament. This was also the moment when the schedule agreed to in the Treaty of Rome dictated that the EC move from the “second” to the “third” stage by introducing qualified majority voting in transport, agricultural and foreign trade policy. With the first direct presidential elections under the revised constitution of the Fifth Republic scheduled for December 1965, Hallstein expected de Gaulle to seek a swift compromise in order to placate the farm vote. Hence he linked provisions for increased Commission and Parliamentary powers to the proposal for permanent agricultural financing, expecting support from more federalist governments and thereby to secure a side payment from the French.

Hallstein underestimated de Gaulle’s determination and overestimated the other government’s support. The General immediately understood the tactic—the Commission, he said to associates, was “a spider seeking to trap France in its net”—and sought to reverse it by upping the ante.¹²⁵ When the negotiations reached a deadline in the CAP negotiations, the French government did not—as had happened before—continue the search for a compromise solution, but withdrew its permanent representative from Brussels and boycotted any meetings dealing with new EC policies. Commission compromises were rejected; discussion of new EC policies halted. This was not a sudden fit of pique on de Gaulle’s part; as we have seen, it had been foreseen in Peyrefitte’s “prudently audacious” strategy five years previously. Nor was it a negotiating tactic designed to

secure agreement on CAP or simply defeat the Commission proposals. On the eve of the crisis the French cabinet meeting concluded that French proposals on CAP were close to acceptance and that the Commission was already a “big loser,” having seen the rejection of its “absurd” institutional proposals by almost all governments (not least the Germans, whose actions did not match their federalist rhetoric). Indeed, the Commission had been banished from key discussions. Early in the crisis, moreover, de Gaulle rejected a compromise to implement the CAP proposals without any mention of the Commission proposals.¹²⁶

Instead, de Gaulle, still following the “prudently audacious” plan of 1960, sought advantageous political terrain—the CAP was nearly in place, the British veto was behind him, and a weak government ruled Germany—on which to provoke a diplomatic showdown over basic institutional prerogatives in the EC. In de Gaulle’s words, France sought to “profit from the crisis” in order to get “rid of false conceptions...that expose us to the dictates of others” and “replace the Commission with something fundamentally different.” The “empty chair” crisis was nothing short of a bid to reform the EC fundamentally. In internal discussions, de Gaulle mentioned that his fundamental goals were to strip the Commission of its unique power of proposal, to block the transition to majority voting and to fire the current Commission. The French government also demanded that the Commission change its name, refrain from running an information service, abandon accredited diplomatic missions, send no representatives to international organizations, cease criticizing member state policies in public, submit proposals to the Council before publicizing them, end mobilization of domestic groups, and draft vaguer directives. Perhaps most important, France

¹²⁵ Peyrefitte, *C’était*, II/281, 594, 620.

¹²⁶ Peyrefitte, *C’était*, II/289, 293

sought explicit recognition of the right of member states to veto majority votes where "vital interests" were at stake, with each acting as the sole judge of what constitutes its vital interest.¹²⁷

The boycott ended six months later with an agreement that gave de Gaulle relatively little of what he had initially requested. To be sure, the Council was now to be represented alongside the Commission in EC foreign policy and press activities, while some symbolic changes were made in the language of Commission prerogatives. The most important change was agreement on an extra-legal document, the "Luxembourg Compromise," which recognized the disagreement among the Six. It stated that when a particular majority vote threatens the "vital national interest" of a member state, there was informal agreement that discussion should be prolonged and acknowledged that France "considers that...discussion must be continued until unanimous agreement is reached".¹²⁸ In addition, De Gaulle made a scapegoat of Hallstein, forcing him to resign the Presidency.¹²⁹ Yet no formal treaty changes resulted, QMV went forward, and the EC institutions remained—at least on paper—intact.

What were de Gaulle's underlying motivations? Why did he settle for so much less than he had initially sought? It is customary to assert that de Gaulle's willingness to risk electoral embarrassment and diplomatic isolation during the "empty chair" crisis of 1965-66 demonstrates the predominance of nationalist ideas in his thinking. Disillusioned with the collapse of the Fouchet Plan, suspicious of US proposals for an MLF and rebuffed by the Erhard government in Germany, it

¹²⁷ Peyrefitte, *C'était*, II, 292, 1/220, also 1/66-68, II/281-282, 286-292, 296. Concrete planning proceeded steadily through the first half of 1965. Camps, *European*, 104-115; Altiero Spinelli, *The Eurocrats: Conflict and Crisis in the European Community* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), 210-211; John Newhouse, *Collision in Brussels: The Common Market Crisis of 30 June 1965* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967).

¹²⁸ Newhouse, *Collision*, 130-134, 151-153, 156-157, 159-161; Leon N. Lindberg, "Integration as a Source of Stress in the European Community," in Joseph S. Nye, ed., *International Regionalism* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), 267; Émile Noël, "Some Institutional Aspects of the Crisis of the Communities." (Brussels: Unpublished Paper, 15 September 1966).

¹²⁹ Willis, *France*, 361.

is argued, de Gaulle adopted a more “brutal” style of negotiation, which almost led to the collapse of the EC.¹³⁰

There is some truth here. As in the case of the Fouchet Plan, there is no denying that de Gaulle sought to quash the move to supranationalism and there are at least two types of evidence to suggest that this goal stemmed in part from distinctive geopolitical ideas. One is the ambiguity of French material interests. In January 1965, de Gaulle requested an internal French government assessment of the consequences of a transition to QMV, which concluded that it was unlikely to undermine any vital French interest.¹³¹ We do not know precisely what the thinking was, but the judgement does not seem outlandish. The moribund transport policy posed no threat. While QMV in the CAP and GATT might threaten French gains—a point to which we shall return in a moment—it would also place greater pressure on a consistently recalcitrant Germany to accept lower prices, the temporary German exemption in this area notwithstanding. Finally, the overall impact of unanimity voting was limited because the Treaty in any case retained it for the most open-ended decisions. The Treaty dictated that new policies, Treaty amendments harmonization of domestic regulations, fiscal and social policy, new sources of Community funding, association agreements and accession of new members to the EC all required a unanimous vote.

The second type of evidence supporting the importance of geopolitical ideas is the strikingly symbolic nature of the General's public and private rhetoric on the subject. He contemptuously dismissed the vision of Hallstein “decked out in the trappings of sovereignty” and consistently criticized the very idea of governance above the nation-state. He lashed out even at those Commissioners, notably Robert Marjolin, who had sided with the French government. Occasionally—though this was very rare, as compared to the constant references to farming

¹³⁰ Berstein. Republic, 172-173.

¹³¹ (**)

interests—de Gaulle invoked the grandeur of France.¹³² He may have felt what Hoffmann has described as a vague "determination to prevent...a leap into that supranational nirvana where his chances of directly influencing shared European policies might vanish."¹³³

Although this interpretation is plausible and probably in part true, it is worth noting that the small amount of available direct evidence of de Gaulle's own views appears to support the primacy of commercial considerations. Privately, the General was deeply concerned to retain control over votes on CAP financing, GATT negotiations, and any possible FTA negotiations. He consistently complained—as always, stressing agriculture—that QMV might be exploited to undermine carefully negotiated arrangements for net EC financial transfers to French farmers. The logic was simple: Even with progress through 1964, the CAP was not yet safe from reversal through the combined efforts of the Danish, British and US pressure in GATT negotiations. This might, de Gaulle feared, permit the "Americans to inundate the European market with their agricultural commodities."¹³⁴ France therefore had to maintain control over both the CAP and GATT negotiations through a veto. This was also the most commonly cited motivation in de Gaulle's public rhetoric of the period. It is backed by the recollections of many of his associates. By contrast, there is not a single piece of documentary evidence to support the conjecture that the boycott stemmed from de Gaulle's anger over Kennedy's proposals for a Multilateral Force (MLF) or any other geopolitical consideration.¹³⁵ Not by chance, then, did the Kennedy Round conclude a year

¹³² Ménil, Who, 154; Peyrefitte, C'était, II/287-291, 297, 299. The feeling was mutual: Hallstein is said to have claimed that he "had not seen politics like this since Hitler." See also Jouve, Général, II/372.

¹³³ Hoffmann, "De Gaulle's Foreign Policy," 303. Also Françoise de la Serre, "The European Economic Community and the 1965 Crisis," in F. Roy Willis, ed., European Integration (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), 150; Hoffmann, "Obstinate or Obsolete?" 390-391. Bodenheimer is cited as seeing Fouchet Plan as "a pre-emptive strike against an ambitious Commission seeking greater powers" in Charles Pentland, "Political Theories of European Integration: Between Science and Ideology," in D. Lasok and P. Soldatos, eds., The European Communities in Action (Brussels: Bruylant, 1981), 546-569.

¹³⁴ Peyrefitte, C'était, II/263, also II/255, 264-265, 294; Jouve, Général, 361; Lindberg, "Integration," 238.

¹³⁵ (**) cf. Camps, European, 16, 117.

later with an unambiguous victory for France in agriculture—the one area where U.S. pressure for liberalization was rebuffed.¹³⁶

The continuity of policy—in particular the fact that in many ways de Gaulle’s insistence on a veto simply passed the policy of his Fourth Republic predecessors on to his Fifth Republic successors unchanged—further suggests the primacy of economic motivations. Fourth Republic governments had sought to place stronger veto rights in the Treaty of Rome. In December 1957, just after ratification and before de Gaulle entered office, a Quai d’Orsay study had already isolated two means of maintaining de facto unanimity voting after the transition to QMV foreseen for 1966. One was a perpetual veto of the transition to the third stage, the other retention of the national veto on essential questions as a precondition for approving the transition. De Gaulle reviewed these studies, considered both options, and chose one. The first was somewhat more difficult as, having already moved to the second stage in exchange for an initial framework agreement on the CAP, it would be difficult to move back entirely to an intergovernmental option, but de Gaulle nonetheless kept this option in mind.¹³⁷ He thus eventually turned to the second option.

Yet in the end de Gaulle’s motivations in provoking the “empty chair” crisis are not the critical issue. Even if we were to concede that they were in large part ideational, the decisive constraint on French tactics remained French commercial interests. De Gaulle won the battle but lost the war, an irony of which he himself was aware.¹³⁸ What is most striking about the Luxembourg Compromise is how strikingly little of what de Gaulle sought in the crisis he achieved. In every respect except the attainment of a de facto veto over external tariff policy, one commentator notes, “it was a victory for German diplomacy” because it kept France within the EC without major formal reforms.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Vaisse, Grandeur, 559-560.

¹³⁷ Peyrefitte, C’était, II/255.

¹³⁸ Peyrefitte, C’était, II/CITE

¹³⁹ Le Figaro concluded that de Gaulle was “neither victor nor vanquished.” Vaisse, Grandeur, 559.

To be sure, many maintain that the Luxembourg Compromise marked a major victory for de Gaulle and a critical turning point in EC history—a moment when the supranational style of decision-making pursued up to 1966 and desired by France’s partners was stunted. De Gaulle himself boasted that: “The CAP is in place. Hallstein and his Commission have disappeared. Supranationalism is gone. France remains sovereign.”¹⁴⁰ Peyrefitte does speak at one point of “the defense of the France’s national interest coming before electoral interests.”¹⁴¹

Yet this is greatly exaggerated. In fact much of what was agreed in 1966—notably the Luxembourg Compromise—was in the interests of all governments. There was, moreover, nothing particularly Gaullist—or even particularly French—about suspicion toward majority voting without provisions for a veto. Just as de Gaulle was more pragmatic than his image, so the more federalist governments of Germany and others were more cautious than their public rhetoric suggested. While the other five governments opposed de Gaulle in public, each had strong interests in maintaining control over particular provisions of specific policies, for example the Germans and Italians in agriculture and the Dutch in transport. The Erhard government, vulnerable to a vote to lower agricultural support prices and skeptical of supranationalism in principle, had already demanded that a *de facto* veto be granted in agricultural price-setting. It was apparently was not entirely disappointed to see the veto generalized. Had governments sought to employ QMV to impose lower agricultural prices on Germany in the coming decades, there is little doubt that Germany would have refused—as it did in 1985.¹⁴² Ten years later, a prominent EC report revealed that eight of the nine members of the EC, including France, were satisfied with the Luxembourg Compromise.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Peyrefitte, *C’était*, II/620.

¹⁴¹ Peyrefitte, *C’était*, II/594.

¹⁴² Peyrefitte, *C’était*, II/300; Anne Jaumin-Ponsar, *Essai d’interprétation d’une crise* (Brussels: Bruylant, 1970), 99, 113, 132; Lindberg, *Political*, 348. The German government had already set an important precedent on 3 April 1964 by securing Council acquiescence to its unilateral declaration that subsequent changes in cereal prices only be decided by unanimity.

¹⁴³ Marjolin, *Archited*, 356.

The Luxembourg Compromise—an informal agreement to disagree—did somewhat dampen the tendency of countries to employ majority voting in agricultural and foreign trade policy, but it clearly failed to fundamentally divert the course of European integration, as de Gaulle had hoped. According to the Treaty, new policies, notably regulatory harmonization and monetary cooperation, had in any case to be approved unanimously, while attempts to invoke majority voting to impose lower agricultural prices would surely have been blocked or offset domestically by Germany. Rapid movement before 1966 took place under unanimity and, in some cases, without Commission power of proposal. This is not to deny that de Gaulle's geopolitical ideology helped to fuel his disdain for supranational institutions or that de Gaulle did not successfully avoid the supranational trap set by the Commission, but he failed to impose his own agenda. "As regards the long-term issues of the federalist-nationalist conflict," one contemporary commentator noted, "the 1965-66 crisis changed nothing."¹⁴⁴

De Gaulle had sought much more. The French defeat is clear if we compare the outcome to de Gaulle's original proposal for a fully intergovernmental organization to replace the EC or, at the very least, the elimination of qualified majority voting and the Commission's power of initiative. Neither occurred. It is perhaps only a slight exaggeration to argue that "the value of the Luxembourg agreements lay precisely in the fact that they had no juridical value, that the legal regulations remained intact, and that they did not restrict in any way [the EC's] future evolution and functioning." Integration took other legal forms; when the governments were prepared to move ahead, they simply reinstated QMV. De Gaulle himself seems to have agreed with this pessimistic

¹⁴⁴ Lambert, *Britain*, 138; Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*, Chapter Three. Perhaps the strongest argument for the importance of unanimity is the widely cited "joint decision trap" thesis advanced by Fritz Scharpf, in which unanimity voting constrains governments to maintain suboptimal equilibria, yet even Scharpf concedes that there is little evidence that agricultural policy, his primary example, would in fact have been any different with majority voting. Fritz Scharpf, "The Joint-Decision Trap: Lessons from German Federalism and European Integration," *Public Administration* 66 (Autumn 1988), 251. For further critique of Scharpf's thesis, see Elmar Rieger, "Agrarpolitik: Integration durch Gemeinschaftspolitik?" in Markus Jachtenfuchs and Beate Kohler-Koch, eds., *Europäische Integration* (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 1996), 401-428.

assessment of the outcome, for he continued to advance proposals for fundamental institutional reform, finally turning to the British as allies—thereby giving rise in 1969 to the “Soames affair.”¹⁴⁵

The main reason for de Gaulle’s failure was not the overwhelming strength of the diplomatic coalition that opposed him—though the unwillingness of foreign parliaments to ratify any treaty changes and the French fears that the five other Member States would turn to Britain surely played a role—but the weakness of domestic support.¹⁴⁶ Had de Gaulle been concerned only with advancing his geopolitical ideology and had his domestic position been strong, he might have carried out a withdrawal, as occurred in the case of NATO; surely an EC without France would have been questionable. De Gaulle’s position was far weaker than in the NATO crisis of 1966 and his failure to prevail in the “empty chair” crisis was preordained because, despite his flamboyant tactics, he was unwilling to risk withdrawal from the EC and the CAP. The diplomatic tactics employed both by France and its partners betray full knowledge of this decisive fact. Much of what occurred during the second half of 1965 was in fact no more than shadow boxing.

During the crisis the French government never so much as hinted at complete withdrawal; a striking contrast to linkage successfully employed to achieve the CAP, an issue that really might have justified withdrawal, just a few years previously—or the NATO crisis. Top French officials confidentially assured their counterparts from the very beginning of the crisis that France could envisage no alternative to EC membership. When the French Permanent Representative in Brussels departed, his assistant remained to conduct essential ongoing business in writing. French diplomats boycotted meetings on the development of new policies, such as fiscal harmonization, but they remained present on committees concerned with existing policies, such as the CAP, GATT negotiations and even the association of Greece and Turkey. As governments waited for the French

¹⁴⁵ De la Serre, “European,” 148, citing the results of a colloquium in Liège. For a more complex assessment, see Joseph H. H. Weiler, “The Transformation of Europe,” *Yale Law Journal* 100 (1991).

elections, plans were already being discussed to meet immediately thereafter—when the matter was rapidly resolved. At home, the government continued to prepare its budget for the forthcoming reduction in internal EC tariffs, which was carried out on schedule during the boycott. It appears that, far from posing a frontal challenge to economic integration within the EC, de Gaulle exploited its irreversibility to press others for institutional reform.¹⁴⁷

De Gaulle's inability to pull out this stemmed not from geopolitical considerations; European political cooperation was, by this point, dead. It stemmed instead from the domestic pressure of economic interests, led by farmers, whose opposition undermined the credibility of French threats to withdraw from the EC.¹⁴⁸ In the presidential elections of early 1966—the first direct elections under the revised constitution of the Fifth Republic—the normally non-partisan peak farmers group, the FNSEA, recommended that its five million members cast votes against de Gaulle. As a result, the General failed to achieve a first-ballot majority. He received only 44% of the votes, considered embarrassingly low for the man who had proposed the constitution. A pro-European but otherwise unremarkable centrist gained over 15%, disproportionately from rural areas, forcing a run-off with the Left, headed by François Mitterrand. To be sure, de Gaulle triumphed in the second round, but still by a disappointingly small margin, which he attributed to opposition from farmers over the question of Europe.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ On de Gaulle's assessment of the role of foreign parliaments, Peyrefitte, *C'était*, II/620.

¹⁴⁷ Peyrefitte, *C'était*, II/588 and CITES; John Newhouse, *De Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxons* (New York: Viking Press, 1970), 47; Méné, *Who*, 135; Lindberg, "Integration as a Source of Stress," 237-238, 253-256; Newhouse, *Collision*, 119-120, 130-134, 151-153; Lambert, "1965," 210-213; Camps, *Europe*, 72-73; W.G. Jensen, *The Common Market* (London: G.T. Foulis and Co., 1967), 145-147.

¹⁴⁸ In late October, the Five issued a statement, based on an even more explicit secret agreement, defending the basic provisions of the Treaty. They "made no secret of the fact that they were thinking of approaching the British if the French continued their boycott. The Five were close to a decision to begin transacting normal Council business without France when de Gaulle, electorally embarrassed at home and diplomatically isolated abroad, came back to the table. Leon N. Lindberg, and Stuart A. Scheingold, *Europe's Would-Be Polity: Patterns of Change in the European Community* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 246; Newhouse, *Collision*, 127; Camps, *European*, 122; Newhouse, *Collision*, 89-90, 130-134, 151-153, 155; Émile Noël, "Some Institutional Aspects of the Crisis of the Communities." (Lecture before the International Faculty for the Teaching of Comparative Law, Brussels, 15 September 1966); Jaubin-Polmar, *Essai*, 98; Rudolf Lahr, "Die Legende vom 'Luxemburger Kompromiß'", *Europa-Archiv* 38:8 (10 January 1983), 223-232; Robert de Bruin, *Le Pays Bas et l'Intégration Européenne 1957-1967* (Paris: Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, 1978), 720ff, 734, 755.

¹⁴⁹ Peyrefitte, *C'était*, II/612-613. Jaumin-Ponsar, *Essai*, 104-105, 124, points out that de Gaulle's election rhetoric was strikingly pro-EEC, defending West European cooperation on economic grounds against those who called for an opening to Eastern Europe and the USSR.

De Gaulle and his advisors were painfully aware of the political irony: A policy designed in large part to defend farm interests was interpreted by farm groups as a threat. It led de Gaulle to bitterly criticize “demagogues” among agricultural groups. At first depressed and despondent, de Gaulle first considered resignation, then did what had to be done. At Peyrefitte’s suggestion, he restrained his anti-supranational rhetoric. In a rare admission of error, he told his cabinet ministers that he had wrongly treated the first round as a referendum rather than an election; he made it a major priority thereafter to restore interest group support, not least by bolstering support for farmers. He turned more activities over to his prime minister.¹⁵⁰ Within a few months named Edgar Faure to be Minister of Agriculture with “a very precise aim: to bring back to the majority the million-and-a-half rural votes.” Faure quickly raised milk and beef prices, as well as removing a tax on wheat, while de Gaulle returned to the negotiating table in Brussels.¹⁵¹ If de Gaulle’s goals were “audacious,” his tactics remained “prudent.” The modesty of the achievement, as compared to the sweeping ambition of de Gaulle’s initial hopes, reflected his willingness to jettison central elements of the Gaullist vision to satisfy the narrowest and most self-interested of domestic interest groups—groups that de Gaulle had, upon entering office, tried and failed to defeat domestically. It was, as the Belgian federalist Paul-Henri Spaak noted later, the “revenge” of the other five member governments for the “humiliating” veto of Britain in 1963.¹⁵² All this marked a major turning point in de Gaulle’s mode of governance.

¹⁵⁰ Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 514-523; Peyrefitte, *C'était*, II/612.

¹⁵¹ (**) Newhouse, *Collision*, 127; Lindberg, “Integration,” 239-245; François Duchêne, *Jean Monnet: The First Statesman of Interdependence* (New York: Norton, 1995), 27; François-Henri de Virieu, *La fin d'une agriculture* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1967), 46, cited in William F. Averyt, Jr., *Agropolitics in the European Community: Interest Groups and the CAP* (New York: Praeger, 1977), 56-57, 64; “Agricultural Decisions of July 1966,” *Common Market* 6:11 (November 1966), 239; Edmund Neville-Rolfe, *The Politics of Agriculture in the European Community* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1984), 370.

¹⁵² Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 361. Also Camps, *Europe*, 2-3; Williams and Harrison, *Politics*, 342-346; Peyrefitte, *C'était*, II/CITE.

III. BROADER IMPLICATIONS: REGIONAL INTEGRATION, IDEOLOGY, AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

The price of wheat, not the grandeur of France, was the vital national interest behind de Gaulle's European policy. We have seen that preponderance of direct evidence—critical portions of which are summarized in Tables One and Two—confirms that the most powerful and persistent motivation behind de Gaulle's European policy was commercial interest, in particular the promotion of French agriculture, not the realization of geopolitical interests and ideas. This is not to deny that de Gaulle sought geopolitical goals, but he treated them, rhetorically and tactically, as secondary.¹⁵³ Not only is the evidence for a geopolitical explanation scarce, but to explain anomalies, proponents have been forced into *ad hoc* assertions that de Gaulle was myopic, irrational, or impotent. Such accounts not only undermine the general explanation advanced by those who focus on de Gaulle's leadership, nearly all of whom stress the steadfast vision and tactical genius behind Gaullist politics, but are contradicted at every turn by the available evidence. There is, moreover, good reason to believe that much of the evidence that appears to support a geopolitical interpretation of French policy was part of a "deliberate deception" designed to "seduce" contemporaries into overlooking the narrow commercial interests underlying French policy. De Gaulle, as Stanley Hoffmann has brilliantly observed, excelled at such theatrics. He fooled not only the French public and some of his own ministers, but generations of biographers and foreign policy commentators. For the most part, we have seen, de Gaulle pursued the same ends with the same means as other French statesmen would have—and his predecessors and successors in fact did. The most places where his policy appears to have been distinctive—above all his ability to impose the 1958 economic stabilization package

¹⁵³ E. g., Jouve, *Général*, II/346.

required to support trade liberalization—his contribution reflected not so much a distinctive geopolitical vision but more effective domestic governance.

These findings have three broader implications, which concern, respectively, our understanding of European integration, general theories of the role of ideas and individual leaders in foreign policy-making, and the proper use of historical and social scientific methods in qualitative research.

A. European Integration: The Primacy of Political Economy

For those concerned with regional integration, as well as the sources of international economic cooperation more generally, the relative importance of geopolitical and economic motivations is a critical theoretical issue. Ever since the debate between neo-functionalists and their critics in the early 1960s, there have been two basic explanations of the fundamental national interests and motivations underlying European integration. One stresses geopolitical interest and ideas. In this view, European governments that supported integration have been primarily concerned with perceived security externalities, which reflected either objective threats or subjective perceptions of national prestige. The EC was designed to strengthen Western cohesion against the Soviet threat, to prevent yet another Franco-German conflict by linking the restoration of West German sovereignty to a firm commitment to integration, to enhance the global prestige of European governments *vis-à-vis* both superpowers or to advance a federalist vision of governance “beyond the nation-state” *vis-à-vis* more old-fashioned “nationalist” or Realist conceptions of the nation-state. Opposition to European integration was a function of nationalism, extremist ideology, divergent colonial legacies, and idiosyncratic geopolitical perspectives and political traditions.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ (**)

The great majority of historical and social scientific analyses of European integration stress geopolitical interests and ideas. This lies at the core of nearly all historical analyses of European integration, of the dominant Realist interpretation of the stability of the post-World War II balance of power in Europe, and of most contemporary commentaries about European integration.¹⁵⁵ Even neo-functionalists, who stress the ultimate preeminence of economic interest, concede to their foremost critics, notably Stanley Hoffmann, both that initial decisions to integrate are taken for geopolitical reasons and that “dramatic-political actors” motivated by nationalism or geopolitical concerns could economic integration for long periods of time.¹⁵⁶ This consensual support for the geopolitical explanation of European integration is based in large part on the received wisdom about de Gaulle’s policies.

The second explanation stresses the interest of governments in promoting the economic welfare of their citizens and, above all, powerful domestic producer groups. In this view, the EU has been designed primarily to increase export opportunities for industrialists and farmers, to modernize the economies of European governments, to coordinate effective regulation of environmental and other externalities, and the stabilize the macroeconomic performance of its member states. The EC captured the gains from rapidly rising intra-sectoral trade in agriculture, trade diversion in agriculture and regulatory policy coordination. This remains a minority view, but has substantial support among economists, economic historians and scholars in international political economy.¹⁵⁷

This analysis challenges this consensus at its strongest point. Commercial interests, we have seen, were dominant, even in those cases where it has long appeared that geopolitical interests and ideology were strongest. De Gaulle’s European policy is, moreover, what Harry Eckstein termed a

¹⁵⁵ (**)

¹⁵⁶ (**)

“crucial case.”¹⁵⁸ If it can be shown that de Gaulle was not motivated by geopolitical goals—or was not successful in realizing those goals—there is good reason to expect economic explanations to perform well in explaining the motivations of other European leaders. A more detailed discussion of European integration, which would put de Gaulle’s policies in the context of major EC decisions from 1955 to 1991, would take us beyond the scope of this essay. This issue is treated in more detail in the book from which this article is excerpted. It suffices here to note here that such an analysis, like the analysis in this article, supports a revision of much of the received wisdom about the history of European integration.¹⁵⁹

B. Ideas and Democratic Foreign Policy: A Skeptical Note and a General Proposition

The role of ideas in foreign policy-making has recently reemerged as a central focus of scholarly inquiry. Thirty years ago “idealism” was juxtaposed against “realism” of foreign policy.¹⁶⁰ There has subsequently been a steady stream of studies of the role of individual leaders and visionary ideas in foreign policy—a literature in which de Gaulle plays a prominent role.¹⁶¹ In recent years these arguments have been resurrected by “constructivist” and liberal analyses of foreign policy, which seek to explain foreign policy by reference to variation in the “identity” and “ideas” of societal actors and national leaders.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ Alan S. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (London: Routledge, 1993); ; Andrew Moravcsik, “Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Governmentalist Approach,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 31:4 (December 1993), 473-524; Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*.

¹⁵⁸ Eckstein, “Case Study.”

¹⁵⁹ Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*.

¹⁶⁰ Robert E. Osgood, *Ideas and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953); E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939* (London: Macmillan, 1946); Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* 3 ed. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1960).

¹⁶¹ Gabriel Sheffer, ed. *Innovative Leaders in International Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Glenn Paige, *The Scientific Study of Political Leadership* (New York: Free Press, 1977); Alexander George and Juliette George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House* (New York: Dover, 1964); Yeun Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹⁶² Peter Katzenstein, ed. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); David Halloran Lumsdaine, *Moral Vision in International Politics: The Foreign Aid Regime 1949-1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993);

Here, as in the case of geopolitical explanations of European integration, de Gaulle's foreign policy constitutes a "crucial" case. The General is consistently cited as the modern example par excellence of the visionary statesmen, a nationalist for whom idiosyncratic understandings of "grandeur," "sovereignty," and "prestige" were the primary ends of policy, and living embodiment of the continuing relevance of a voluntaristic, anti-technocratic view toward foreign policy-making. De Gaulle 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 has enjoyed greater independence from domestic partisan constraints, broader executive prerogatives or a deeper commitment to distinctive geopolitical ideas.¹⁶³

Yet the case of de Gaulle's European policy suggests that even the most of independent democratic politicians is a democratic politician nonetheless, decisively limited by the need to generate support from influential constituencies. Where de Gaulle could carry the day with mass ideological appeals, he was able to fashion an idiosyncratic ideologically-grounded foreign policy; where he faced organized interests, he failed to do this.¹⁶⁴ De Gaulle's biographers and commentators concede this point in principle. Hoffmann has observed:

His leadership, clearly, was not equally innovative in all domains....In foreign affairs, where elites were divided, the public more indifferent than enthusiastic, he moved whenever he thought that his actions would succeed [whereas] when effective innovation required not mere acquiescence by an undifferentiated public but the active cooperation of the groups the reform would affect, he refrained from trying to get his ideas realized, [as] in the whole domain of

Robert W. McElroy, *Morality and American Foreign Policy: The Role of Ethics in International Affairs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane, eds. *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

¹⁶³ Stanley Hoffmann, "Mitterrand's Foreign Policy, or Gaullism by any other Name," in George Ross, Stanley Hoffmann and Sylvia Malzacher, eds., *The Mitterrand Experiment: Continuity and Change in Modern France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 294-305. edited by 294-305; Gordon, *Certain*.

¹⁶⁴ Philip Cerny, *Politics of Grandeur*, 10, argues that "the concept of grandeur was...to create a new and deeper sense of national unity that would enable the traditional cleavages in French political life to be overcome by reinforcing the consensus around a strengthened and dynamic state that incarnated the national interest."

business-worker relations...From the start, he was more concerned with, and at ease in, security and foreign affairs.¹⁶⁵

Hoffmann's analysis is insightful and correct, but the conclusion about European integration that follows from it is the opposite of the one Hoffmann himself drew. Hoffmann treats de Gaulle's European policy as foreign policy or "high politics"; yet Hoffmann's own criteria suggest that it should be viewed in fact as a "domestic" or "low politics" issue.

This distinction is critical. Viewed from the perspective of general theories of comparative foreign policy, this suggests the existence of clear limits on conduct of an ideationally- or ideologically-based foreign policy in a modern democracy. Even the most institutionally insulated and electorally powerful among democratic politicians finds it nearly impossible to pursue policies that impose heavy losses on concentrated groups in order to achieve diffuse ideational goals, no matter how strongly the latter are held. In contrast to the General's policies toward NATO, the Soviet Union, the Third World, Quebec, or even nuclear weapons—in each of which the role of concentrated economic interests was either marginal or, as with the arms and nuclear industries, supportive of the policy in question—the EC was primarily an economic organization. EC policies mobilized strong, consistent pressure powerful economic interest groups utterly impervious to the ideological or plebiscatory appeals that were the political basis of Gaullist rule. These groups predated de Gaulle and they would outlive him. From this perspective, the weaknesses of de Gaulle's European policy resulted primarily from his difficulty in accepting that European integration was not foreign policy. The greatest failures of de Gaulle's European policy, as the aftermath of the 1965 elections demonstrates, were attributable to his inability to transform issues of primary concern to industrialists and farmers into issues decided by a direct relationship between public opinion and the presidency. Where strong geopolitical and strong economic imperatives were

¹⁶⁵ Hoffmann, "De Gaulle as an Innovative Leader," 70.

both at stake, the latter prevailed.¹⁶⁶ Hence considerations of “high politics” triumphed in nuclear and alliance politics, whereas considerations of “low politics” triumphed in trade and regulatory policy.

A large dose of common-sense skepticism about ideational explanations of foreign policy is thus warranted. This conclusion challenges claims about the importance of individuals and their ideas—claims at once sweeping and underspecified—held both by many traditional diplomatic historians and by recent “constructivist” analyses of foreign policy-making. Some of the latter stress as a matter of meta-theoretical dogma that variation in ideational “identities” must precede variation in material “interests.” This analysis provides solid empirical support for more measured analysis of the role of ideas in foreign policy, which limit their impact to cases in which material interests are weak or uncertain.¹⁶⁷ Further research in this area might begin from the distinction between “high” and “low” above. Concretely, we should expect to see more ideological statecraft where states are either undemocratic or where the issues in question do not directly confront the interests of concentrated groups. Finally, this finding challenges the tendency, of which Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz are the foremost exponents, to think of security affairs as the most “deterministic” realm of world politics, the issue-area most constrained by “systemic” factors.¹⁶⁸ This analysis suggests that the diffuse “public goods” quality of security threats means they are more prone to ideological redefinition, whereas economic interests tend to be more sharply and strongly defined.

¹⁶⁶ However, for evidence that even in at least one narrow area of defense policy, when economic and geopolitical imperatives did clash in defense policy, economic ones prevailed. Andrew Moravcsik, “Armaments among Allies: Franco-German Weapons Cooperation, 1975-1985.” In Peter Evans, Harold Jacobson and Robert Putnam, eds., *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 128-168.

¹⁶⁷ Goldstein and Keohane, “Introduction,” in Goldstein and Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy*.

C. The Methodology of Case-Study Analysis: Primary Sources and Qualitative Methods

This study suggests, finally, the decisive importance of adherence to rigorous methodological standards when conducting qualitative or case-study research. Many have called recently for more intense interchange between historians and political scientists. Historian Gordon Craig succinctly summarizes its optimistic spirit when he asserts that political scientists would “profit from the fidelity to *milieu et moment*” and the greater use of primary sources, while historians might learn “analytical techniques employed by their partners new questions to ask [and] new ways to test the validity of their hypotheses.”¹⁶⁹ From the side of political science, there have been recent calls for “analytic narratives,” that is, “accounts that respect the specifics of time and place but within a framework that both disciplines the detail and appropriates it for purposes that transcend the particular story.”¹⁷⁰

Yet there remains considerable ambiguity about what, if anything, this means for the practical conduct of empirical research. Much is also being written on qualitative case study methods, yet few demonstrations that rigorous methods actually matter. This study demonstrates that such debate is not simply methodological abstraction; choices of method have decisive empirical implications. This case suggests that the application of rigorous methods can generate a significant historical revision even in the face of an enormous, uniform literature. Biographers and foreign policy

¹⁶⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979); Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, (**); Lipson WP article (**).

¹⁶⁹ Gordon Craig, “Presidential Address,” in *American Historical Review* 88:1 (February 1983), CITE. Scholars increasingly concede that the underlying explanatory purposes of the two fields are similar and the techniques they employ complementary. See “Symposium [on Diplomatic History and International Relations Theory,” *International Security* 22:1 (Summer 1997). Recent work on qualitative methods reformulate social scientific techniques for use in case studies, but say little about the “craft” of case study writing, in particular the use of historical techniques for selecting and interpreting sources. See Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Andrew Bennett and Alexander George, “Developing and Using Typological Theories in Case Study Research,” (Paper presented at the 38th Annual Convention of the International Studies Convention, 18-22 March 1997).

¹⁷⁰ Margaret Levi, “Producing an Analytic Narrative,” 4. “Analytic narratives,” as employed by Levi and her collaborators, refers to the use of case studies to test general deductive propositions by seeking to explain previously unexplained variation within the case. This is consistent with other writings on qualitative methods, though the use of game theory in most of the analyses by Levi et al. is incidental to the basic methodological point. The other implications of this method drawn below—the explicit use of competing hypotheses and the importance of primary sources—are my own additions and are not elaborated by these analysts. IS. See, for example, Ian Lustick, “History, Historiography and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias,” *American Political Science Review* 90:3 (September 1996), 605-618;

analysts have overlooked the primacy of commercial concerns in de Gaulle's foreign policy in large part because they have employed faulty methodology.

In this regard, de Gaulle's foreign policy toward Europe is again a "crucial case," since it is hard to imagine a scholarly consensus deeper than the one supporting a geopolitical and ideological interpretation of the General's actions. Why, after thirty years, do nearly all writers on Gaullist policy toward Europe remain in the thrall of the General's seduction? Why does this study come to a revisionist conclusion? And why, the reader might well ask, should this study be considered more reliable than the existing scholarly consensus?

The most fundamental difference between this study and the existing literature on de Gaulle is methodological. Any attempt to revise a historical consensus must stake its claim to be taken seriously on the presentation of new primary data or the use of more objective and rigorous methods to analyze it. This study advances both claims. The existing literature, I have argued, tends both to rely on public and secondary sources and tends to impose a priori an unwarranted biographical and philosophical unity on de Gaulle's foreign policy.

We know from the first section of this essay that a prima facie case can be made for the predominance of either economic or geopolitical motivations. Yet amid the thousands of books and articles on de Gaulle, only a handful systematically evaluate the relative importance of economic interest or issue-specific motivations in his European policy. Instead such "pragmatic" concerns are mentioned, if at all, as secondary or background concerns. In short, a reader basing his or her judgement on the secondary literature alone—despite its enormous size—would have no way of objectively evaluating the relative importance of economic and geopolitical factors in French European policy. Hence neither any single study nor all studies taken together present a balanced portrayal of the man and his policies; all simply seek to reconstruct a particular geopolitical vision.

Aside from being misleading, one-sided imaginative reconstructions of this kind are unfalsifiable. If any act can be explained either as a principled action or as a tactical exception, and no alternative views are considered, by what objective standards can the reader judge the adequacy of the interpretation? Such analysis is neither rigorous nor replicable.

An approach based on the imaginative reconstruction of the ideas of a theatrical statesman is particularly prone to reflect the preconceived notions of the analyst. This has encouraged selective citation and interpretation of evidence about de Gaulle to an unusual extent. Half sentences from prominent documents that refer explicitly and exclusively to economic interests are persistently cited out of all context in favor of a geopolitical and ideological interpretation. I have repeatedly noted selective presentation of the two most commonly cited sources on de Gaulle's EC policy, namely his memoirs and his press conference of 14 January 1963. Even most associates and ministers remain deliberately vague, as does Couve de Murville, or themselves openly engage in imaginative reconstruction, as does Pisani.¹⁷¹ Many documents that cast a unique light on de Gaulle's policies are almost never cited; Peyrefitte's strategy document, for example, available in printed form since the mid-1960s, has to my knowledge been mentioned in only two relatively obscure commentaries.¹⁷²

The three methodological principles employed here—collection of a more representative and more reliable sample of primary data, consideration of a full range of competing theories, and derivation of competing hypotheses—offer good reason to expect that the results of this study are more reliable than those of existing studies. At the very least, the theory, evidence and interpretation are thereby rendered more transparent and thus more easily replicable.

¹⁷¹ Hence there is a striking divergence even within ministerial memoirs, which tend to speculate openly that the General must have been motivated primarily by geopolitical ideas, yet provide evidence to the contrary. E.g. Pisani, cited above (**).

¹⁷² Silj, *Europe's*; Jouve, *Général*.

This methodological discussion suggests general lessons for scholars those who seek to ground reliable historical generalizations in qualitative analyses of case studies about world politics. Social scientists (and in this case, historians as well) must accept the careful historian's practice of grounding inferences explicitly in a comprehensive reading of confidential primary sources. Despite its unparalleled size, the state of scholarship on de Gaulle demonstrates why, as Ian Lustick has noted, it is dangerous for political scientists to base their analysis on selected secondary sources. But, moreover, this study challenges Lustick's preferred alternative, namely to rest analyses on an unbiased or comprehensive reading of available secondary sources.¹⁷³ At best, those who rely on them are condemned to repeat the wisdom of historians; at worst, they are condemned to repeat their errors. The case of de Gaulle suggests that even two thousand nearly unanimous commentators might provide a biased, if not erroneous, explanation of a major historical episode. *For political scientists, there is no reliable alternative to primary source research.*

For their part, historians must accept, as Gordon Craig recommends in the citation above, the social scientific practice of stating competing theories and hypotheses explicitly. In a case like de Gaulle's foreign policy, only a clear a priori statement of standards for confirmation and disconfirmation protect the reader against an exaggerated or one-sided interpretation. Many narratives appear convincing but are nonetheless misleading if not incorrect. Without adherence to methodological principles drawn from both history (e.g. the use of primary evidence) and social science (e.g. explicit consideration of alternative theories and hypotheses), social scientists and historians are condemned to repeat the conventional wisdom, right or wrong.

¹⁷³ Lustick, "History," 605-618.

This methodological lesson is particularly important for those who stress the role of “ideas” in world politics—whether traditional security studies specialists or modern “constructivists.” Some constructivists have recently proposed that theoretical claims about ideas be subjected to looser, less rigorously “positivistic” testing procedures than those about material causes.¹⁷⁴ Some examine only the immediate justifications offered by statesmen. This study demonstrates a contrary, more commonsensical view is more appropriate: namely ideational claims should be subjected to particularly intensive testing, especially when material interests offer a plausible alternative explanation. The reason is obvious: It is generally much easier to alter one’s geopolitical ideas to suit economic interests than the reverse—as de Gaulle’s “deliberate deception” demonstrates. Whereas de Gaulle initially tried and failed to induce a shift in the fundamental structure of French agriculture to fit his ideas, it was much easier for him to craft new ideational claims or, more precisely, to exploit the ambiguities in Gaullist ideology to justify new policies. Statesmen routinely pepper their speeches vague symbolic appeals, many of which are disingenuous, others of which are sincere yet not decisive. Those who invoke either federalist or Gaullist ideology to explain positions on European integration typically ignore malleability of such ideas. In the decade before 1958, we have seen, the Gaullists were successively strongly federalist, critical of federalism, silent, favorable again, then ended up supporting a rather centralized agricultural policy.¹⁷⁵ Symbols can be important, but they must always be weighed against the real cost of realizing them.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas Banchoff, “Conceptual Approaches to German Policy in Europe: Making Sense of Continuity,” Working Paper Series No. 7.9 (University of California Berkeley: Center for German and European Studies, April 1996); ADD CITES.

¹⁷⁵ The same is true of federalists in France, who were centered in the party of Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, the Mouvement Populaire Républicain (MRP), which did not become pro-European until 1948-1949. See Berstein, Mayeur, and Milza, Le MRP.

IV. CONCLUSION

The secret of de Gaulle's popularity among historians and commentators is identical to the secret of his popularity with the French public: he appeals to their literary sense, their desire to tell a compelling, heroic story. For thirty years a consensus among historians and commentators has recapitulated with remarkable uniformity the public image deliberately crafted by an extraordinarily theatrical statesman. Historical revision grounded in primary sources and careful social scientific methods suggests that this account is largely incorrect. De Gaulle was first and foremost a democratic politician seeking the same things as other French politicians: economic welfare for his constituents. His was an "audacious" policy, but one conducted with "prudence," which took the form of a constant awareness, sometimes imposed by his closest associates, of the need to meet the underlying demands of powerful domestic economic interest groups; to disguise the nature and increase the legitimacy of this policy, de Gaulle sought to "seduce" French public and elites with an ideology that was in part "deliberate deception" and in part honest expression of his world view. Yet throughout—in striking contrast to his policies toward NATO, nuclear weapons, and at least his rhetoric concerning superpowers and the Third World—geopolitical interests and ideology were secondary. If he differed from his predecessors and successors, it was in the domestic means he employed to realize these goals, not the goals themselves.

This conclusion is supported by the great preponderance of direct evidence available to us today. Whether we examine de Gaulle's public rhetoric, confidential evidence of the expressed motivations of decision-makers, the timing of policy changes, the nature of negotiating tactics, or the nature of domestic pressures, the conclusion is clear. By contrast, the evidence suggesting the importance of geopolitical interest and ideology is almost entirely speculative. It is grounded in imaginative reconstructions resting on de Gaulle's general public statements about foreign policy, not his specific statements, in public and above all in private, concerning the EC.

There nonetheless remains much more to be said about French policy toward Europe under de Gaulle, not least because primary documents from this period has only begun to be made available to scholars. (Though persistent rumors have it that many have already been destroyed.) In this regard, the most important consequence of employing more rigorous qualitative methods is not, therefore, that the findings are necessarily conclusive, but that they are fair, even generous, to potential critics. More rigorous methods ease the critic's task by rendering more transparent the analyst's choice of the fundamental theoretical issue at stake, the derivation of hypotheses employed to explore it, the data selected to evaluate it, and the nature of causal inference from that data. New theories and new data can more easily be assembled to challenge this interpretation. This explanation of de Gaulle's policy toward European integration is thus intended not to foreclose future debate, but to renew it.

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