

Failed Mediation: Germany and the European Political Union

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Shortly after the six founder members of the European Coal and Steel Community had signed the Treaty of Rome and thereby taken the second step towards a comprehensive integration of Western Europe, they broadened the European agenda by adding a new perspective: the institutionalization of their political cooperation. The ensuing debate on the establishment of a Political Union – continuing, in a first stage, until the spring of 1962, although as from 1961 it was gradually being eclipsed by Great Britain’s application to join the EEC – was marked by the conflicting interests of the parties involved. In particular, the negotiations were influenced by the competing political objectives of the French and US governments as for the European agenda. It was their incompatibility that should be responsible for the failure both of the project as such, and of the German federal government’s attempts at mediation. The Germans were faced with the difficult problem of its two most important partners using the European political arena as a field of competition. This threatened Germany’s good bilateral relations with Paris and Washington. On the one hand, Bonn depended on the USA with respect to its security policy; on the other hand, however, there were compelling economic and political reasons which made it indispensable to maintain good relations with France. This conflict of priorities left the federal government in a political dilemma. Both France and the United States had distinct ideas about the form and the function that a political union should take. These ideas, which corresponded to their respective concepts of Western cooperation within the international bipolar political system, left Bonn with little room to manoeuvre as a mediator.

The French policy on European affairs was the result of two objectives which were fundamental to Charles de Gaulle’s foreign policy. He wanted to make sure that France would both be able to protect itself against any future act of aggression by its German neighbour, and enjoy a revived status as one of the great political powers. De Gaulle was convinced that this was only possible if France broke away from the supremacy of the US government’s security policy and developed an independent political strategy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. The general’s long-term objective in this context was the replacement of the existing bipolar bloc system by a multi-polar system of nations, that is, the establishment of an equilibrium between the USA, the USSR, an independent Western Europe, and further regional powers.¹ De Gaulle’s programme depended to a large degree on an independent

1. M. VAÏSSE, *La grandeur. Politique étrangère du général de Gaulle 1958–1969*, Fayard, Paris, 1998, pp.38–40; E.A. KOŁODZIEJ, *De Gaulle, l’Allemagne et les superpuissances: l’unification allemande et la fin de la guerre froide*, in: INSTITUT CHARLES DE GAULLE (ed.), *De Gaulle en son siècle*, La Documentation française - Plon, Paris, 1992, Vol.5: L’Europe, pp.380–394 (383).

European foreign policy towards the countries of the Eastern bloc, and had as its final aim a pan-European confederation stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals. Assuming that France would not be able to implement such a programme on its own, de Gaulle continued a policy of European integration pursued by the governments of the Fourth Republic. Moreover, he tried to work towards institutionalized cooperation with the European partners to coordinate their security and defence policies. A European Political Union with inter-governmental structures would provide France with a forum outside NATO in which it could try to enlist support for its own strategic interests within a purely European framework. Irrespective of whether France could get its European partners to agree to all these ideas, Western Europe would have to develop its own strategic positions and thus strengthen its independence from the USA. In the long term, Europe would have to be able to define its own priorities in foreign and international affairs – and these priorities might be quite different from those set by Washington.²

However, since the end of the Second World War an emancipated Western Europe had been a concern to US governments. Washington aimed at politically stabilizing its European allies and integrating them as reliable partners into the Western alliance. Europe as a “third power”, independent of the two great powers, would challenge US hegemony in Western Europe and thus pose a risk to US security interests. It was clear, therefore, that any such attempt had to be thwarted. Moreover, Washington had an interest in strengthening the European economies to gain strong commercial partners – a development, which, in time, would also make it possible to share the financial burden of Western defence. The US government believed that promoting European integration was an adequate tool to reach these two goals. In this context, the concept of a Political Union of the Western European states could play an important role, as such a union could control the particular interests of individual states, and thereby promote political unity in Western Europe. In addition, it could make Western Europe a more reliable partner and defuse the ‘German question’ as a possible source of conflict, by integrating the Federal Republic into a stable political structure.³ For the US government it was axiomatic that any political arrangement in Western Europe would have to fulfil three fundamental conditions: (1) NATO had to remain the basis of Western cooperation and the central decision-making body with regard to all questions concerning Western security; (2) political agreements should have no detrimental effects on the existing European communities; (3) sooner or later Great Britain had to be integrated as well.⁴

2. S.A. KOCES, *Autonomy or Power? The Franco-German Relationship and Europe's Strategic Choices, 1955–1995*, Praeger, Westport (CT), 1995, pp.37–38.
3. See, for example, the letter from president Kennedy to Prime minister Macmillan, May 22, 1961; Telegram From the Department of State to the embassy in the United Kingdom, May 23, 1961, in: *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1961–1963, XIII*, Editors Charles S. Sampson, James E. Miller, General Editor Glenn W. LaFantasie, Washington, 1994, pp.20–21 (20).
4. Cf. Circular telegram from the Department of State to certain missions in Europe, June 14, 1963, in: FRUS, 1961–1963, XIII, pp.202–204 (204).

With respect to the debate about a European Political Union, it was the first of these conditions which was most likely to create considerable tension. It had been repeatedly emphasized, especially by the smaller member states of the EEC, that priority had to be given to NATO and the whole of the transatlantic alliance, which was regarded as the foundation for security in Western Europe. For these smaller states, Britain was crucial to the overall direction that the Political Union would take with regard to its foreign policy. So the USA had to have influence on the debate about the Union and the political aspects of European integration, and US interests in Europe were efficiently represented by the smaller member states as well as by Italy and Germany's Foreign Office.

For Bonn the difficulty was that it needed to develop a political programme for Europe which would satisfy the interests of both its allies and have a chance of success. The virtually irreconcilable interests of France and the USA forced Bonn into a balancing act. This led to conflicts within the federal cabinet itself. How should decision-making processes be organized within the Union, and what powers should it be given? In other words, what form and what function should the Union have? And even more important, what should its position be concerning NATO? The key players in this process – the chancellor and the Foreign Office – adopted different positions, one being oriented towards French, the other towards US interests. The result was that they reproduced the Franco-American conflict within the German foreign policy decision-making system. Consequently, it seemed that the federal government could no longer serve as a credible mediator between France and the representatives of the transatlantic option. At the same time, the differences of opinion between the parties involved meant that Bonn was unable to develop a coherent policy and pursue its own interests with regard to the political organization of Europe.

In what follows, I will discuss this aspect in more detail using the example of the Franco-German summit in Rambouillet, held in July 1960, and the debate about the Fouchet Plans one year later.

The summit of Rambouillet

After de Gaulle's initiative to establish a tripartite directorate with the USA and Great Britain had failed, the French president made a concrete attempt to establish a closer political cooperation between the Six. He suggested to the Italian president Giovanni Gronchi "an organized European cooperation" including regular meetings of the Foreign ministers and a small secretariat.⁵ During the talks which the six governments held in the following months the policy of the government in Bonn was characterized by a tripartite division of positions within the cabinet. From the start, the ministry of Economy, led by Ludwig Erhard, was one of the main critics of the Political Union. It regarded a political institutionalization of the

5. Conversation en tête-à-tête entre de Gaulle et M. Gronchi dans le train présidentiel italien, 24 juin 1959, in: *Documents Diplomatiques Français* (DDF), 1959/I, Paris, 1994, pp.873–876 (874–875).

cooperation between the Six as an unacceptable limitation of the free development of the community's economies and called for an extended free-trade zone, including Great Britain and further OEEC member states. Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and the Foreign Office agreed in principle to the Union but set different priorities with respect to its institutional set-up: in order to achieve Europe's political unity the chancellor was willing to accept that he would have to make concessions regarding the supranational character of political cooperation, at least in its initial stages. He was convinced that a unified Europe was only conceivable if Germany and France fully agreed on the fundamental issues and therefore was willing to compromise with Paris.

The Foreign Office, on the other hand, put more emphasis on supranational priorities whenever France made an attempt to push for more inter-governmental structures. Here, it could be sure of support from the United States, which, both under president Dwight D. Eisenhower and president John F. Kennedy, used every opportunity to point out its interest in a strong integrated Europe. The outline for a Political Union drafted by the political department in 1959 and sent to Adenauer by Foreign minister Heinrich von Brentano, shows clearly the Foreign Office's emphasis on integration. Deputies, supported by a permanent secretariat, were to meet on a monthly basis in order to prepare conferences of the Foreign ministers which would be held every three months. The authorities of the existing communities were granted the right to make proposals for the agenda of these conferences. They were to be involved in regular consultations and, like the Parliamentary Assembly, were to be informed about the talks.⁶ The plan obviously aimed to link political cooperation with further EC-integration and was therefore incompatible with the French point of view. Given the cautious stance of the Benelux countries, Brentano conceded that "the conditions for a deeper European integration are currently less than favourable". He also added, however, that "this should not lead to abandoning [its] further development".⁷ Furthermore, it was of utmost importance to the German Foreign Office that political cooperation between the Six did not infringe on NATO. It had to be confined

"to the specific questions of the relationship between the [European] communities and their environment and to the further promotion of Europe's integration".

Consultations which went beyond this range of topics should therefore be "brought to the attention of the other allies in NATO and the WEU and, if necessary, put up for discussion".⁸

The plan which president de Gaulle presented to the chancellor during the Franco-German summit in Rambouillet at the end of July 1960, was incompatible

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6. Cf. undated note from the Auswärtiges Amt, attachment to the letter from Foreign minister Brentano to chancellor Adenauer, September 3, 1959; Bundesarchiv (BA), Nachlass Brentano, Vol.157, pp.2-4.
 7. Letter from Foreign minister Brentano to chancellor Adenauer, September 3, 1959; Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA/AA), Ministerbüro, Vol.49.
 8. Note from Legationsrat I. Klasse Obermeyer (Referat 200), September 18, 1959; PA/AA, Referat 201, Vol.369.

with this. De Gaulle proposed a political organization for Europe which would encompass foreign affairs, economic and cultural aspects as well as the partners' defence strategies. Such an organization would be inter-governmental and include quarterly meetings of the heads of state and government and the ministers concerned. The talks should be prepared by national officials in four committees. He pointed out that the new structures of cooperation should be supplemented by a reform of both the existing communities and NATO, and made clear that he wished to reduce the influence of existing supranational institutions to a bare minimum:

“C'est aux gouvernements qu'il appartient de coopérer d'une manière directe. Quant aux Commissions, elles ne doivent être que subordonnées”.⁹

The chancellor however did not immediately challenge de Gaulle's ideas and one day later agreed to the proposals that de Gaulle presented to him in writing.¹⁰

For, in principle, Adenauer was also personally convinced that it was essential for Western Europe to gain a larger degree of independence within the transatlantic alliance. Unlike de Gaulle, however, he thought it necessary that the EEC member states should not only intensify their cooperation with regard to their foreign policies, but also strengthen the existing structures for deeper integration.¹¹ This was his position only a few weeks before Rambouillet.

The fact that the chancellor failed to push through his point of view at Rambouillet was in part due to flaws in his negotiation tactics. More important, however, Adenauer did not challenge the French position because he regarded good Franco-German relations as an essential precondition for realizing his foreign policy goals. Indeed, in the Berlin Crisis, the federal government depended on France as its most reliable partner. This dependence had been strengthened by de Gaulle's firm stance in the run-up to the failed summit of the Four in Paris in May 1960, in which Adenauer in particular had benefited from de Gaulle's unyielding position. When he himself refused to make concessions to the US and British governments, which were willing to negotiate, he found that he met with considerable domestic resistance – even from members of his cabinet – and had to

9. Entretiens franco-allemands à Rambouillet (29-30 juillet 1960), deuxième tête-à-tête général de Gaulle-chancelier Adenauer, 29 juillet 1960, 16h10; in: DDF, 1960/II, pp.168–173 (171).

Two weeks before the summit of Rambouillet already, de Gaulle had left no doubt vis-à-vis his ministers that he aimed at restricting the influence of the supranational institutions of the Communities: “Le but de cette initiative sera de faire progresser l'Europe vers l'unité, par la coopération des Etats et non par la voie de délégations de pouvoirs accordées à des organes non responsables. Il pourrait ainsi être constitué un secrétariat politique et un secrétariat économique, qui seraient sans doute assez proches de ce que sont les Commissions, mais constitueraient des organes composés de fonctionnaires préparant les décisions des Etats”. Quoted by G.-H. SOUTOU, *Le général de Gaulle et le plan Foucher*, in: INSTITUT CHARLES DE GAULLE (ed.), *De Gaulle en son siècle*, Vol.5: L'Europe, pp.126-143 (128).

10. Entretiens franco-allemands à Rambouillet (29-30 juillet 1960), troisième tête-à-tête général de Gaulle-chancelier Adenauer, 30 juillet 1960, 11h15 à 12h30, in: DDF, 1960/II, pp. 174–176.

11. More specifically, the chancellor was thinking of a fusion of the executive bodies of the three existing communities and a direct election of the European Parliament. Cf. note from ambassador Blankenhorn, June 14, 1960; BA, Nachlass Blankenhorn, Vol.101, sheet 31–35.

turn to de Gaulle for support.¹² The situation was further complicated by Adenauer's own European agenda. Although he regarded the Political Union as the logical continuation of the wider unification process, he was more interested in achieving that goal than in the actual means to be used to get there. In Rambouillet he was even prepared to make surprising concessions regarding the supranational character of the existing communities: Adenauer denied that the EEC and Euratom had a supranational character and complained that both organizations nevertheless behaved as if they possessed such powers. In response to the French demand that NATO be completely reorganized, he merely said that such a demand had to be reconsidered in order to avoid the impression that France and the Federal Republic intended to cut ties with the USA.¹³

The way Adenauer led the negotiations in Rambouillet immediately isolated him at home. The chairman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary party, Heinrich Krone, warned about a "complete turning away from the policy we have pursued so far with regard to Europe". He said he had "grave doubts" about the French plans for reforming NATO, as these would reinforce isolationist tendencies in the USA and thus lead to "a policy in America [which would be] disastrous for European security".¹⁴ Numerous leading politicians of the CDU and CSU clearly rejected any change of Germany's policy on Europe under the influence of de Gaulle. At this stage, Brentano expressly thought about resigning from his office as Foreign minister.¹⁵ Well before Rambouillet, his Foreign Office had noted that de Gaulle was apparently laying "claim to continental leadership";¹⁶ ambassador Herbert Blankenhorn came to the conclusion that the chancellor was not aware of "the possible consequences"¹⁷ of the plans proposed by the French president.

In view of the severe criticism he received both from members of his government and his own party, Adenauer had to concede. Within a few days he changed course and, only a week after the summit in Rambouillet, he told the French Foreign minister, Maurice Couve de Murville, that the core of the European treaty had to remain untouched.¹⁸ He then informed de Gaulle that the wording of the French proposals needed "refinement" in order to avoid "incorrect

12. For the Franco-German relations in the Berlin Crisis, see M. KOOPMANN, *Das schwierige Bündnis. Die deutsch-französischen Beziehungen und die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1958–1965*, Nomos, Baden-Baden, 2000, pp.45–123.

13. Entretiens franco-allemands à Rambouillet (29–30 juillet 1960), troisième tête-à-tête général de Gaulle-chancelier Adenauer, 30 juillet 1960, 11h15 à 12h30; in: DDF, 1960/II, pp.174–176 (174).

14. Letter from Heinrich Krone to chancellor Adenauer, August 2, 1960; Archiv für Christlich-Demokratische Politik, Nachlass Krone, I-028-006/4.

15. Cf. note from Heinrich Krone, August 1, 1960, in: H. KRONE, *Tagebücher*, Vol.1: 1945–1961, Droste, Düsseldorf, 1995, p.439.

16. Note from Wilhelm Hartlieb, January 12, 1960; PA/AA, Referat 201, Vol.370.

17. Note from Blankenhorn, July 29, 1960, in: H. BLANKENHORN, *Verständnis und Verständigung. Blätter eines politischen Tagebuchs 1949 bis 1979*, Propyläen, Frankfurt am Main, 1980, pp.382–384 (383).

18. Cf. note from permanent secretary van Scherpenberg about the conversation with Couve de Murville on August 6, 1960; BA, Nachlass Blankenhorn, Vol.103, sheet 304–312 (307).

interpretations on the part of the general public".¹⁹ The chancellor had suffered a bitter defeat at home. He had to fall in with the line of the Foreign Office, which made itself advocate of the federalist idea of the Treaty of Rome and did not hesitate to forcefully defend this point of view against French objections, while also underlining the significance of the transatlantic partnership of Western Europe with the USA.

The sudden volte-face of the chancellor was a setback for his policy vis-à-vis France. He was right to start from the conviction that Political Union could only be accomplished jointly with France. As he firmly believed in the relevance of the Union for the security and the stability of the Federal Republic, it was easy for him to link the Union with another important aim of his foreign policy: the indissoluble Franco-German partnership. However, the substantial concessions he made to Paris for the sake of Political Union proposals were not supported by the most important actors of his own government. In 1960, it was his own party which showed him the limits of his scope of action in foreign politics.

After the summit of Rambouillet, and three years before the debate about the preamble of the Franco-German Treaty, there was much evidence that even a chancellor as strong as Konrad Adenauer had to make sure that he was backed by his own political system. Certainly neither Franco-German relations nor the project of the Political Union were really damaged by the summit of Rambouillet and its consequences. But the defeat of Adenauer left no doubt regarding the future positions of Bonn in the ongoing talks about Political Union. There were certain cornerstones of German foreign policy that could not be called into question – not even for the sake of the Franco-German friendship: first, in the field of security, the partnership with the United States within the Atlantic Alliance and, second, economic integration within the European Community. Rambouillet showed for the first time how difficult it was for Bonn to realize a constructive policy between French demands and American claims. But Rambouillet also showed that agreement between all German actors was a crucial prerequisite to German foreign policy in this difficult area of conflict between Paris and Washington in general and to the possible success of any Political Union.

The Fouchet Plans

During the time between the Rambouillet summit and the first Fouchet Plan, presented in October/November 1961, the Six made some progress in their efforts at a Political Union. This success was also due to the fact that after Rambouillet, the German federal government adopted a more consistent position. Without questioning the Franco-German partnership as such – something that Bonn could not have afforded in the light of the Berlin Crisis – the representatives of the Federal

19. Letter from chancellor Adenauer to president de Gaulle, August 15, 1960; Archives Diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Série Cabinet du Ministre, Sous-Série Cabinet Couve de Murville, Vol.295.

Government were now unanimous in their call for an acknowledgment of the *Acquis communautaire* and the priority of NATO in defence issues. In his diary, the head of department in the Foreign Office, Josef Jansen, expressed his concern that the chancellor played the ‘American card’ “so perfectly that I start to worry about Franco-German relations”.²⁰ Especially in the field of security policy, Adenauer was indeed placing far greater emphasis on a close cooperation with the United States. The obligation to cooperate with both the conflicting allies, Paris and Washington, helped him now to take a more distant position vis-à-vis de Gaulle. Shortly after the French president, being angry about the failed summit of Rambouillet, had vigorously criticized the structures of NATO and the European Communities in public, Adenauer met general Lauris Norstad, supreme allied commander of NATO in Europe. Norstad explained to Adenauer his concept of a land based nuclear force of NATO.²¹ The participation of the Western European allies - including the Federal Republic - in the Western nuclear defence seemed to be an answer to Western European politicians and Adenauer, who had been talking about a so-called “lack of credibility” concerning the American nuclear guarantee for Western Europe ever since October 1957, when the Soviets had successfully launched Sputnik.

The events of the second half of 1960 clearly show the significance of the Paris, Bonn and Washington triangle for the Federal Republic. The position of the USA was of growing importance because of the conflict between Paris and Bonn, which could not be ignored anymore. After Rambouillet, Washington still did not worry about French criticism of the structures of the European Communities and NATO. The US government regarded de Gaulle’s attacks as exaggerated and counted on the other EEC-members to oppose them. The United States had no reason to react hastily.²² Nevertheless, in the following weeks the American government grew uneasy at continuing attacks by the French president on EEC- and NATO-integration. President Eisenhower took up some central aspects of the Norstad-project as well as of another plan initiated by the State Department (“Bowie-Report”) and informed the chancellor that the United States were going to examine the possibility of multilateral nuclear defence including NATO. This announcement was made only a day before the meeting of Adenauer with the French Prime minister Michel Debré and it was completed by the undisguised threat that Washington would withdraw its troops from Europe if the integrated structures of the alliance was weakened.²³

20. Note from Jansen, February 8, 1961; Archiv für Christlich-Demokratische Politik, Nachlass Jansen, Tagebuch, I-149-008/-1-5.

21. For the meeting of chancellor Adenauer with general Norstad at Lake Como on September 9, 1960, see KOOPMANN, op.cit., pp. 197-198.

22. On August 22, 1960, the State Department wrote to the embassy in France: “Dep[artmen]t does not believe that this situation calls for any basic modification in U.S. policies or for any major U.S. intervention at this time. One reason is that de Gaulle’s move is so patently in direction of French control on Continent that it has already aroused resistance from other Common Market members”. FRUS, 1958-1960, VII/1, pp. 294-296 (296).

23. Cf. Letter from president Eisenhower to chancellor Adenauer, October 6, 1960; BA, Nachlass Blankenhorn, Vol.104, sheet 184-187.

In view of the opposition in Bonn and the increasing pressure from Washington, de Gaulle stepped back. On the one hand he stressed that he had thought Adenauer more European than the chancellor really was. On the other hand, by offering tactical concessions, he now tried to convince him to move closer to French positions. He instructed Debré not to attack the institutions of the Communities directly. De Gaulle assumed that, if political cooperation of the Six could be realized one day, “les Communautés seront *ipso facto* mises à leur place”.²⁴ In contrast to the summit of Rambouillet, however the position of the German side in the talks with Debré was unyielding.²⁵ The change of the German European policy since Rambouillet was obvious: it was the pressure of domestic politics as well as the influence of Washington, on the decision making process in Germany, that put an end to the biased policy of the chancellor. The consequence was a more balanced German position between Paris and Washington.

Considering that de Gaulle now seemed prepared to compromise, the Foreign Office also showed its goodwill. Instead of insisting on an immediate federalist organization of the Political Union, it now accepted a loose political cooperation as a first step since it knew that without France it would be impossible to make any headway. In this phase, the Six made considerable progress, which was reflected in the Bonn Declaration issued in July 1961. It had no talk of reforming NATO or altering the Communities’ existing bodies, nor did the declaration mention that the Political Union should include a defence component – an aspect which had been so important to de Gaulle. Instead, the Six emphasized the significance of their alliance with the USA and expressed their conviction that this would “promote the political unification of Europe and thereby strengthen the Atlantic alliance”.²⁶ This phase, which proved so fruitful for European integration, shows how important it was for the project of a Political Union that Germany had a coherent policy on Europe. However, the Bonn agreement was not to be overestimated. It is true that de Gaulle regarded Political Union as an important means to strengthen Europe’s independence from the USA and he only accepted this tactical compromise to keep negotiations alive. There was no change in his fundamental objectives in European and security policies or in his ideas concerning the structures of international cooperation.²⁷

The Bonn Declaration was followed, in the summer of 1961, by Great Britain’s application to join the EEC. Apart from the deterioration of Britain’s economic situation – starting early in 1961 – there were two other factors which played a crucial role in the timing of the application: first, there was pressure from the Kennedy administration, which, like its predecessors, strongly supported the

24. Directive pour Michel Debré, Premier ministre, September 30, 1960, in: C. DE GAULLE, *Lettres, notes et carnets*, Plon, Paris, 1987, Vol.8, pp.398-399.

25. For the talks in Bonn, October 7/8, 1960, see DDF, 1960/II, pp.467-486.

26. Erklärung der Konferenz der Staats- bzw. Regierungschefs der sechs Mitgliedstaaten der EWG in Bonn vom 18. Juli 1961 über die Verstärkung der europäischen Zusammenarbeit (Bonner Erklärung); in: *Europa-Archiv* (EA), 16/1961, pp.D 469-470.

27. Cf. G.-H. SOUTOU, *op.cit.*, pp.134-135.

programme of European integration and encouraged both Great Britain and the EEC to have London join the community.²⁸ Kennedy left no doubt that the USA supported European integration mainly because it aimed at strengthening Western Europe and integrating Germany firmly within these structures. The second factor was that the Six were obviously making good progress in their talks on the Political Union. By joining the EEC, Great Britain wanted to make sure that it had the option of shaping the Union according to its own – pro-Atlantic – interests. Now the conditions for further talks were clear: the smaller EEC member states wanted to keep the EEC and the Political Union from being dominated by France and Germany and thus argued that London should join the EEC as soon as possible. At the same time, it was to be expected that France would not accept a transatlantic bias of the Union under British influence. Given the growing pressure on the German Federal Government in this situation, the unity of the German position was again in danger.

At this point, however, the German delegation presented a paper to the Fouchet Committee which had been established at the Paris summit of the Six in February 1961, that was characterized by an inter-governmental approach and met with most of France's wishes. It envisaged regular meetings of the heads of state and government and of the Foreign ministers as well as conferences of the ambassadors, which were to be prepared and supported by a "Standing Committee". This committee would be "set up as an inter-governmental steering committee" by the heads of state and government and was to consist of "leading officials of the six foreign ministries". The proposals put forward by the German delegation were almost indistinguishable from those made by France. This applies not only to their ideas about the structures of cooperation but also to the powers to be granted to the committee:

"Erörterung und Prüfung aller Fragen, die für die Politik der Sechs von gemeinsamem Interesse sind oder in denen ein Mitgliedstaat eine Konsultation im Rahmen der Sechs für geboten hält".²⁹

However, the Foreign Office overestimated France's willingness to compromise. De Gaulle now thought that it was time to take advantage of Bonn's seemingly unlimited support and to press ahead with far-reaching plans aimed at restraining Anglo-American influence in a Europe of the Six. The first Fouchet Plan, presented by France on November 2, 1961, went beyond the Bonn Declaration on a number of important points. Not only did it mention a "common foreign policy"; it also noted explicitly that "the member states would be safer against any aggressive act by [developing] a common defence policy in cooperation

28. In a directive issued on April 20, 1961, the State Department wrote: "The U.S. should make clear its support for the movement toward European integration. The U.K. should not be encouraged to oppose or stay apart from that movement by doubts as to the U.S. attitude or by hopes of a 'special' relation with the U.S. The Six should be encouraged to welcome U.K. association with the Community and not to set the price too high for such association, providing that there is to be no weakening of essential ties among the Six." FRUS, 1961–1963, XIII, pp.285–291 (286–287).

29. Memorandum of the German delegation, September 21, 1961; PA/AA, Referat 201, Vol.372.

with other free nations”. While making reference to defence issues, the text did not mention the United States or the Atlantic alliance.³⁰

The reaction of those concerned with foreign affairs in the federal government made clear that there had been no major change in their general outlook since Rambouillet. The chancellor responded by saying that he would “agree in principle” to the French plan. Although it was less European in spirit than “originally intended”, he conceded that the Political Union could also be realized “at a somewhat slower pace”.³¹ He brushed aside critical questions as to whether de Gaulle’s European programme was directed against the Atlantic alliance and pointed to France’s difficult domestic situation in view of the Algeria Crisis. Adenauer wanted to make progress on the way towards a Political Union, no matter what the costs would be. As in the previous year, he was again willing to compromise and set aside the transatlantic precepts of his own foreign policy. Moreover, he also made concessions to France with regard to a common European agricultural policy.³² Since the economic cooperation of the Six would inevitably lead to political cooperation, Adenauer maintained that a common agricultural policy was “a political question of prime importance”.³³ Adenauer was convinced that political union could only be achieved in cooperation with, but never against, France.

Although the chancellor’s general outlook had not changed since Rambouillet, the events in the aftermath of the 1960 summit now led him to express his views more cautiously. The Foreign Office’s response was equally restrained. At the diplomatic level, however, and especially in the negotiations in the Fouchet Committee, it left no doubt about what its priorities were. In a first analysis of the French plan, the Foreign Office noted that “the idea of integration could, even now, be given more emphasis in the treaty”. In order to achieve this, it suggested that

”the position of the envisaged European Parliament [be] strengthened and a closer link forged to the European communities”.³⁴

Due to the pressure exerted by the German delegation, France presented an amended draft to the Committee. The German side, however, regarded the revised document only as a first step towards a political union “which in our opinion should eventually take the form of a federation”. “In view of NATO’s responsibilities in this area”, the delegation also saw the need for further discussions about a common defence policy and noted that the French draft would have to be amended with regard to these two issues.³⁵ After the new Foreign minister, Gerhard Schröder, had

30. Erster französischer Entwurf vom 2. November 1961 für einen Vertrag über die Gründung einer Union der Europäischen Völker, in: EA, 19/1964, pp.D 466–485.

31. Adenauer on the occasion of the ‘Tea Talk’ held on December 13, 1961, in: R. MORSEY, H.-P. SCHWARZ (eds.), *Adenauer Teegespräche, 1961–1963*, Siedler, Berlin, 1992, pp.42–43.

32. Cf. Entretiens du général de Gaulle et du chancelier Adenauer du 9 décembre 1961; DDF, 1961/II, pp.694–708 (705–706).

33. Adenauer on the occasion of the ‘Tea Talk’ held on December 14, 1961, in: R. MORSEY, H.-P. SCHWARZ (eds.), op.cit., p.58.

34. Note from Legationsrat Lang (Referat 200), November 7, 1961; PA/AA, Referat 201, Vol.373.

taken over, the Foreign Office – together with the other four partners – continued to plead the case for a federalist set-up of the Union in the Fouchet Committee. With respect to the question of the powers that the Union should have, the Foreign Office also gave preferential treatment to the Dutch interests regarding NATO. On the other hand – and in contrast to the Belgian and the Dutch positions – it did not deem it necessary to involve Britain in the negotiations straight away, as London itself had not asked for it.³⁶

More than the chancellor, the Foreign Office thought of itself as a mediator between France and the small EEC member states, and followed a course, which was more pragmatic and geared towards consensus. In this context it can be noticed that the replacement of Heinrich von Brentano as Foreign minister by Gerhard Schröder had no consequences for the position of the Foreign Office. Schröder put more emphasis on the British EEC-membership and on the differences between the German and the French conceptions of Western cooperation, but there was no change regarding the main ideas of European and security policy. Under both ministers, the diplomats of the Foreign Office elaborated concepts of a supranational Union without touching the competences of NATO. It is true that Brentano and Schröder had different ideas regarding the German interest in foreign policy. While Brentano reminded Adenauer that “Franco-German cooperation [was] the basis but not the aim of our European policy”,³⁷ Schröder, in the same context, would have talked about a transatlantic basis of the German foreign policy. Yet, looking at a note from the former confidant of Adenauer, Blankenhorn, of May 1962, one can easily see the coherence and the constancy of the European policy of the Foreign Office. Blankenhorn, in the meantime ambassador in Paris, cautioned against a deterioration of German-British relations and against de Gaulle’s attempts to conclude an exclusive bilateral alliance with Bonn. He did not forget to add that his note was only destined for State secretary Karl Carstens and Foreign minister Schröder (but not at all for chancellor Adenauer).³⁸

In view of the further development of French policy up to the presentation of the second Fouchet Plan on January 18, 1962, it is obvious why the differing positions of the German chancellery and the Foreign Office were significant for the project of the Political Union: together with the other four delegations,³⁹ Germany was openly criticizing France in the Fouchet Committee. Against the background of this completely isolated position, the Direction d’Europe of the Quai d’Orsay, headed by Jean-Marie Soutou, drew up a new plan. The aim of this draft, which had

35. Note from Legationsrat Lang (Referat 200), January 12, 1962; BA, Nachlass Brentano, Vol.166.

36. For the meeting of the Fouchet Committee on November 10, 1961, see circular telegram from French Foreign minister Couve de Murville to certain missions in Western Europe, November 14, 1961; DDF, 1961/II, pp.587–589.

37. Letter from the leader of the CDU/CSU in the Bundestag, von Brentano, to chancellor Adenauer, June 22, 1962; BA, Nachlass Brentano, Vol.159, p.2.

38. Cf. Note from Blankenhorn, May 29, 1962; BA, Nachlass Blankenhorn, Vol.132a, sheet 3-7.

39. For the discussion in the Fouchet Committee about the first Fouchet Plan see G.-H.SOUTOU, *op.cit.*, pp.135-136.

been authorized by Couve de Murville and was presented to the other five partners on January 13, 1962, was clearly to create the basis for a compromise. It sought a common foreign and defence policy, with the explicit goal of strengthening the Atlantic alliance. The communities' existing structures were to be streamlined. At the same time, the draft guaranteed that such a reform would remain within the bounds of the Treaty of Rome. The European Parliament was to gain in status.⁴⁰

In contrast to the Quai d'Orsay, whose diplomats in the Fouchet Committee had to concede to enormous pressure from the Five, de Gaulle could play the Franco-German card, and the course of action taken by the chancellor must have confirmed him in his position. During the Franco-German meeting held in Paris on December 9, 1961, the president and the chancellor were unanimous in their assessment of the European process. Adenauer promised de Gaulle that he would support his position regarding a common EEC agricultural market and refrained from bringing up the delicate question of the Political Union. The fact that Adenauer failed to state his position unambiguously resulted again in de Gaulle's overestimating the chances for a Franco-German alliance within the European process: de Gaulle explained to Adenauer that, if by further reducing customs tariffs towards the end of the year the next phase of the Common Market could be launched, the next step should be the implementation of the Political Union. This would strengthen Europe's position with regard to both the USA and the USSR. If Paris and Bonn agreed on this point, de Gaulle reasoned, the Belgian and Dutch resistance would be of no consequence.⁴¹

It is obvious that de Gaulle did not really want to establish any political union which would have restricted French autonomy in issues of foreign policy and defence. He even would not have accepted such a union if his partners had offered concessions to him, for example on the basis of the Bonn Declaration. Contrary to his own intentions, however, chancellor Adenauer became a kind of pacemaker in the decline of the project of the Union. His European policy was based on the misunderstanding that de Gaulle also regarded the Political Union as an integral part of the process of European integration, as just another step in the process started with the three Communities in the 1950s. In spite of the experiences of Rambouillet, he did not explain to the French president where the Federal Republic set the limits of possible concessions. In this way, he encouraged de Gaulle to believe in the possibility of a common Franco-German front vis-à-vis the transatlantic-oriented smaller EEC-partners.

Since the chancellor again did not contradict de Gaulle, it is not surprising that the president now took the offensive at the level of the Six. After the successful conclusion of the EEC negotiations on a common agricultural market, de Gaulle presented an amended version of the draft of January 13 to the other five partners.

40. Cf. G.-H. Soutou, *L'alliance incertaine. Les rapports politico-stratégiques franco-allemands, 1954–1996*, Fayard, Paris, 1996, p.189.

41. Entretiens du général de Gaulle et du chancelier Adenauer du 9 décembre 1961; DDF, 1961/II, pp.694–708 (706).

In his new draft he returned to the proposals made at Rambouillet: references to the Atlantic alliance were deleted; the Union was also to be responsible for economic issues (a clear attack on the existing communities); and there was no mention of a guarantee of the Communities' structures established by the Treaty of Rome.⁴²

At this stage, the Foreign Office pressed the chancellor, who was himself surprised by the anti-American and anti-Community tone of de Gaulle's position,⁴³ not to follow the line taken by France. The Office concluded that de Gaulle had not, after all, modified his foreign policy since Rambouillet. Adenauer's half-hearted attempts at persuading de Gaulle to give in had proved ineffective. While Adenauer had shown his willingness to make concessions, the president had responded with uncompromising proposals in the Fouchet Committee.⁴⁴ Therefore, the Foreign Office's policy towards Paris became unyielding again. By rejecting the second Fouchet Plan, the German delegation was instrumental in completely isolating the French delegation in the Committee. The Foreign Office held on to the political course which it had followed since the beginning of the debate about the Political Union and which was based on keeping the balance in the cooperation with Paris and Washington.

When the conference of the Foreign ministers, held in Luxembourg on April 17, 1962, failed, the project of a political union was abandoned. At first glance, it may seem that it was the hard line of the Netherlands and Belgium which led to the failure of the negotiations, as both made the establishment of the Political Union conditional upon London's joining the EEC. In reality, however, the 'British question' was merely a welcome excuse in order to abandon the project of a political union altogether. Aside from Belgium and the Netherlands, Italy was also hesitant. All three parties were well aware of de Gaulle's manoeuvre at the beginning of the year when he revised the second Fouchet Plan, drawn up in his own foreign ministry, and returned to the proposals he had made at Rambouillet in the summer of 1960, distancing himself once again from the Atlantic alliance. All things considered, it was the legitimate doubt about de Gaulle's willingness to compromise, which led the participants to finally abandon the project of Political Union.

The development of the debate on the European Political Union showed that the Federal Republic failed to come up to scratch in its role as mediator between the two dominating positions on the European process. As both sides were unwilling to compromise, it was impossible to bridge the gap between the American approach of a transatlantic cooperation with a politically stable Europe embedded in NATO, and French efforts to overcome American hegemony on the European continent. The conflict between the key players, France and the USA – the latter represented, as it were, by the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and, of course, Great Britain – had a

42. Cf. Zweiter französischer Entwurf eines Vertrags über die Gründung einer Union der Europäischen Völker vom 18. Januar 1962, in: EA, 19/1964, pp.D 466–485.

43. Cf. note from ambassador Blankenhorn, February 12, 1962; BA, Nachlass Blankenhorn, Vol. 128b, sheet 13–14.

44. Cf. KOOPMANN, op.cit., pp.170–173.

considerable impact on the Federal Republic's foreign policy decisions, which basically reproduced the conflicting views.

The need to find a balance between the two positions led Germany to follow an ambiguous policy, and the government's key players in the field of foreign affairs were unable to agree on a common position towards their partners. It is true that both the chancellor and the Foreign Office wanted institutionalized political cooperation between the EEC member states. They disagreed, however, on how to achieve it. The differences of opinion resulted from the participants' particular orientation to one of the two dominant conceptions of how security and economic cooperation should be organized in Europe and were to a large degree reflected in the extent to which they were willing, or unwilling, to make concessions to Paris. The conflict between Bonn's two most important partners – mirrored and continued within the German political system – had the effect that the federal government was not able to contribute constructively to the European process. Furthermore, its indecisiveness led Bonn to move away from its goal of a politically strong Europe. Nonetheless, the government's weak policy with regard to the European process was not the main reason for the failure of the project. In the end, the decisive factor was the incompatibility of ideas about the role of the USA in Europe and, in this context, of the structure of NATO, i.e. the power relationships within the alliance. Once France had managed to push through its economic interests by securing a common agricultural market, there was no reason left for de Gaulle to make any concessions to his partners. Moreover, the policy of the chancellor must have made the French president believe that, no matter what happened, he could still hope for preferential treatment from Bonn. Consequently, there was no risk involved, and he simply dropped the project of a Political Union. The federal government had nothing to counter the conflict of its two most important allies. It therefore failed as a mediator and had to accept, at least for the time being, that it would not be able to achieve the goal it had set itself in the European process.

