

## **European Policy of General Charles de Gaulle in the French Public Opinion**

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**Abstract:** General de Gaulle's policy of Construction of Europe can be understood only in the light of his convictions, that reconsideration of 1958, when he returned to power, had inspired his foreign policy. Although the General had not a vision about the Construction of Europe, according to public opinion he was often perceived as a real Europeanist ( in 1965 - 3 of 5 French people considered De Gaulle the champion of European unity, and even in March 1969 half of French people considered him a convinced Europeanist). Talking about institutional evolution after the General de Gaulle has left the power, the thesis he argued on the role of other countries have resumed by other countries and confirmed by facts. In actual Community, the Commission plays an important role of initiative and boost, but the essential decisions become obligations for the states.

**Keywords:** France; General de Gaulle; Construction of Europe; poll; public opinion

French policy during General de Gaulle's period was marked by attempting to set on a communitary Europe, at least economically, *an European ... Europe*, enlarged from the six countries in the East and independency toward the antagonist two blocks.

Affirming a policy on U.S. national-independence namely - French withdrawal from NATO in 1960 - France strengthened its position and attracts sympathy of small states, the USSR and its allies and friendship with China. Despite its success in the nuclear field, France has no means of its policy. The third World Latin American, Arabian or African needn't good words, but factories, industrial products and technology. France does not produce enough, or some, even though other and evolved during its Fifth Republic; the French industry was inferior to German industry, which in 1960 reached a potential three-fold. The economical weakness of the country did not allow de Gaulle too much in his foreign policy, often he succeeded in France than to irritate the U.S. and German industry to open the gate to German industry. The Czech crisis in 1968 strongly emphasized the limits of Gaullist diplomacy, especially in 1969, when President de Gaulle is defeated in a referendum in April 27 and retired to Colombey, although the prestige of France was spread all over the world.

Jean - Marc - Boegner former diplomatic adviser to General de Gaulle and France's representative besides European Communities emphasized in the volume *De Gaulle en son siècle*, that General's policy regarding Construction of Europe can not be understood in light of his beliefs than reconsidering his convictions, even in 1958, when he returned to power, have inspired his foreign policy. At the European policy of the General stood a few principles, which were allowed to mark the European construction process, and predict a *“Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals”*.

General de Gaulle's declaration regarding the existence of *“Two large hegemony”* led after 1945 to escape the influence of France policy prevailing the United States since 1945 and also the European mistrust of NATO and communities. As was true that General de Gaulle fostered an undisguised aversion toward integrating concepts of Supranational and at certain levels have inspired three treaties of the European Communities creating institutions without the control states. This should not be interpreted as an objection in principle to build a Union of Europe but as a goal to be achieved through the free cooperation of states.

For de Gaulle the cooperation between the six states members of the European Community could not become a political reality unless Europe was able to be a real Europe, that it proved over the consequences of its interests and ambitions were own, abandoning the habit of comply with the requirements of order, coming from Washington, or to stay away from politics of the two blocks.

How the heart of divided Europe is Germany, the General had in view to establish relations with the Federal Republic, private relations based on trust, through the personal relationships he has with Chancellor Adenauer. In conception of de Gaulle, France should play a leading role in the world of big business, this involving both voice and action, while it will create a framework of ideas that will attach to promote the Construction of Europe and defending the interests of France in Europe.

Thus, the defending of French economic interests in the European Common Market was provided by general and his ministers, which sometimes even proving intransigence have managed to achieve significant results; the recovery plan in late 1958 put France in implementing the first measures for acceleration of the Customs Union, through which the country put a final to a secular and disastrous protectionism; agricultural policy was a condition for following the Common Market; the inflexibility of Community positions in trade negotiations with GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) which defended the vital interests of industries. If the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1958 already made sample its capacity to solve the principal difficulties in carboniferous and metallurgy, in EURATOM (the European Atomic Energy Community) the General did not want to submitte, to involve, as regards civilian nuclear program and especially the military.

The issue of the UK adheretion to Communities strenghtens the de Gaulle's policy coherence concerning Europe and the contradictions of European partners for France. Permanent, the General considered it had done something so France permanently can get all benefits from the Common Market, in his conception of France saving twice The Common Market from its breakdown.

The first time was in late 1958 when, through the voice of Maurice Couve de Murville, he opposed to the creation of a free trade area, proposed by London, the other five partners declaring in favor of, showing the direction to a Europe under double sign of supranationality and integration. The second time, France intervned in a spectacular way at the press conferences in January 14, 1963 when the General state, *“que l'Angleterre était insulaire, shipping, liée par ses Echanges, plain Marches, son ravitaillement, aux pays les plus diverse lontains ... elle les plus exercise industrielle et une activité essentiellement merchantability, très peu agriculture. Elle, dans son travail, des habitudes et des traditions, marquées très, très originales. In nature, the structure, the juncture propres à l'Angleterre qui Sontea Different Continents for celles des Autres.”*

In a list of impressing difficulties, de Gaulle showed very skeptical, *“On a pu croire parfois que nos amis Anglais en posant leur candidature poure le Marché Commun acceptaient de se transformer eux-mêmes au point d'appliquer toutes les conditions qui sont acceptés et pratiquées par Les Six. Mais la question est de savoir si la Grande Bretagne actuellement peut se placer, avec le continent et comme lui, à l'interior d'un tarif qui soit veritablement commun, renoncer à toute préférence à légard du Commonwealth, cesser de prétendre que son agriculture soit privilégiée ; et encore tenir pour caducs les engagements qu'elle a pris avec les pays qui font partie de sa zone de libre-échange. C'est là toute la question. On ne peut pas dire qu'elle soit actuellement résolue. Est-ce qu'elle le sera un jour? Seule évidemment l'Angleterre peut repondre”*.

Concerning the Fouchet Plan, General de Gaulle considered that it belonged to France and played a leading role in the creation and operation of a political union of Europe, with a capital which should be in Paris and represent the union's political will of Member States to make in an European organization and will be incompatibil to Britain's joining which had links with the United States and the Anglo-Saxon in general. Political Union project failure led to the restriction of privileged relations with Federal Republic of Germany, and tightens the ones made by the Treaty of Elysee, the French-understanding as a incontestable German success. Integration of de Gaulle has daylight and reached the highest degree in Common Agricultural Policy desired by France, and during the time has passed

and that successive adheritions led the European Community 6 to 27 members, and the effects of General de Gaulle's policy were felt in many aspects in building an European Construction.

Conception of a Europe based on cooperation of 1969 did not yield ground, being consolidated by creating the European Council and the importance growth of the President in office of the Council of Ministers in research of the compromise.

This evolution was not counteracted either by universal suffrage election to Parliament or the repeated attempts to make known the Community more nor, ultimately, through greater use among the majority decisions of the Council of Ministers, but the evidence limited need to impose any one of Member States a decision contrary to its interests considered by each very important. On this we can say, "*Luxembourg Compromise*" has in store its validity. Although France's interests were not defended by the same firmness as when General de Gaulle was in power (1958 - 1969), in what was essentially a whole was protected and French cooperation with Germany represents the main pillar of European Treaty Elysee continuing be considerably applied.

In conclusion, we can say that since the general recorded his mark in the manner of managing this "*vast institution*", European Construction, despite its new configuration, the many projects and initiatives, has not undergone a profound change. So, we can affirm that the premises at the basis for European foreign policy of de Gaulle's were a more powerful French state, forming an "*Europe des patries*", which to include Germany, a strong Europe through itself that submitting to self-defense against any hostile intentions or imperial powers. Linchpin of the whole strategy of de Gaulle and at the same time the most important point of his theory have resided on the diplomatic French – German relationship, on France's relations with major world powers, the attitude toward European Community, all resulting in France, U.S. , United Kingdom, Germany, NATO, the EC as the main actors of international relations in recent history.

After the departure of General de Gaulle, European Construction came to a dead end in negotiations on its enlarging and the Common Agricultural Policy; until the creation the European Monetary System in 1979 and the adoption of the Single Act in 1986 has never made any significant decision on. Even after the departure of General de Gaulle, successive Governments in power remained the same, namely the accept for the Common Market Treaty and the adoption of economic policies that keep the economic free – exchange; constant intervention which aimed trade, goods and capital within the Common Market and the common policies especially in agriculture, a policy based on European developments and understanding the unity French – German. General de Gaulle's refusal of the enlarging Community in two rows against British membership delayed the progress of European unity or the contrary allowed the community to strengthen before its enlargement.

De Gaulle's European policy can be generally defined as confederate, he accepted a gradual transfer of authority to the Community institutions, provided that this authority is delegated by governments in a coordinated foreign and defense policy, and that States retain sovereignty at any time, governments remain ultimately responsible for their important decisions. This view was supported by Charles de Gaulle was president the whole time.

### **The French Public Opinion regarding European Policy of de Gaulle**

Results of the poll made by SOFRES on de Gaulle Centenary occasion were put in priority order the following issues: the French are aware that General de Gaulle's priority was France and not Europe, the French had seen in de Gaulle a good European; the General lasting influenced the European politics of France. When people were asked by SOFRES concerning the main preoccupations of General de Gaulle in his foreign policy, the French answers were as follows: the greatness of France (53% of French) national-independence (42%), fighting for peace (32%), refusal American and Soviet blocks (26%), construction of Europe (22%).

The hierarchy of General de Gaulle preoccupations as the French saw in 1990 was the construction of Europe and helping the developing of countries (9%) and affirmation of historical personalities from

Eastern Europe (1%). As outlined in the polls, Europe in the French view, it was not a primary concern of de Gaulle, this being confirmed by a question regarding General's priorities. Starting from a general priority list the respondents were asked to quote two priorities. Construction of Europe are located in position 4 of 9, with 16% after independence of France (58%), French unit (31%), France's world role (33%), but respecting the Authority policy before economical development, society modernization, employees participation in business life, aid the developing states.

*Analyzing these results, it can be concluded that French are very aware about the fact that General de Gaulle put domestic policy ahead of foreign policy. They are aware that for de Gaulle, Europe is located near France or rather it and not conceive without removing its national independence, whose aim is independence and France greatness. However, despite this very nationalistic vision of General de Gaulle, the French argued that the De Gaulle was a good European”.*

According to the survey made by FIG in 1990 general was a good European for French 82%, 12% thought the opposite, and 6% did not decide on that question. According to French, *General de Gaulle's priority was not Europe, but France* his European being policy perceived as important because, as was part of the general heritage along with its policy and institutions of Fifth Republic. According SOFRES, 47% of French (for the 32%) estimated that policy of building Europe (1990) was quite a nearby (12%) or fairly closely (35%) of General de Gaulle's views, he launching a government policy of its way is followed even nowadays.

*In other words, it is quite clear that the perception of French, 20 years after the death of General, de Gaulle's European policy he took it was considered a good and lasting government policy subordinated to national interest of France.*

### **Public Reaction to the three Moments of the EU**

To the question, “Do you think General De Gaulle decided a supporter of European Union?” i.e. “*that if the EU is good?*”, “*Swing to 'yes'* is compared with that to high, ‘no’”.

From June 1962 until March 1969, between 49% and 66% of French made from General de Gaulle, “a supporter of Europe's union (on average 55%), against - about 20% with a contrary view. Within this broad support, and attempts have noted significant lowering: the Conflict after the conference in 1962, the resignation of government ministers MRP Pompidou, given the refusal of Great Britain, leading to a 'gap' in support, 49% of 'yes' with regard to European good image are significantly higher than 23% of 'no'.

Crisis of Common Agricultural Policy in June 1965 and Policy of "empty chair" adjustable by Luxembourg Compromise, 25 January 1966, have dented gradually the image of good European for General de Gaulle.

*There's no doubt that General de Gaulle remains a good European for French, even many years after his death.*

General de Gaulle outlook on Europe, and European Europe, reflects a Europe without being atlantist, but was not a Europe as homeland – i.e.: not asupranational Europe, opposed to that of MRP, the majority of the membership had French adhesion.

FIG question - if you tend that is better to tend to one “*Unit Europe*” independent from the United States or the United States closely tied surveys as follows:

	Independent Europe to the USA	Atlantist Europe
march 1963	46%	26%
february 1964	41%	20%
june 1965	39%	22%
may 1967	49%	23%
decembre 1969	51%	22%

Analyzing one of these percentages, we can say that European Europe, independent to the U.S., and as General de Gaulle wanted was sustained by French public opinion. As other polls showed, 2 of 3 French felt Europeans, and only 1 in 3 have the feeling that he belonged at Atlantic at the time.

Also, the French prefer one Homeland Europe, which to defend the independence of France and the United States of Europe. To a FIFG question, in October 1965, "Which of the following opinions are closest the moment?" responded was it clear how France not to give up their national-independence, even for the unification of Europe. In present, France should participate in the unification of Europe but protecting his own national independence; France there should engaged in the unification of Europe, because, national independence is a principle surpassed."

A minority of 13% believed that France had no give up to their national independence, even for the unification of Europe, there should not build Europe that if the national-independence is affected so.

A percentage of 46% rule that France should participate in the unification of Europe, protecting its national independence, in other words - a Europe which leaves a large part of national independence in the way of its organization.

**In conclusion**, it is clear that, de Gaulle when he defined his conception of Europe, the French wanted, and indeed general, to reconcile their nationalism with European construction, which leads to note that there is a profound agreement gaulliene conception about the French in Europe.

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