De Gaulle Smiles: France, the European Union, and NATO

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Considering the highly dynamic political environment in Europe today, it is interesting to imagine how European collective structures might unfold in the years to come. The two most successful of these structures are the European Union and NATO, and clearly a key figure in both of these institutions is France. France's role becomes especially intriguing when examining the French legacy in these institutions. The years 1965-1966 were a turning point for French relations with the EU (then EC) and NATO; France boycotted the EC and withdrew from NATO. The personal politics of Charles de Gaulle are crucial in understanding these two events, as are domestic politics and persistent French attitudes. Of course, all three factors critically impact French politics today as well, and the recent Gaullist victory of Jacques Chirac underscores the need to understand the past—a past that Chirac desires to emulate by following his role model's ideology.

Perhaps greatness is founded only on the level of confrontation.¹

Introduction

There is little need to mention the fact that we live in a world of rapid transformation; the static, Cold War paradigms for political, economic, and security organization are increasingly called into question. The Europeans, who for half of a century were relegated to a passive international role, may now be coming into their own once again. What does this entail in a changing international context? In attempting to

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answer this question, many possibilities emerge, all of which involve
the fates of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty
Organization (NATO). Indeed, the future of these two bodies can no
longer be regarded as separate and distinct, as their destinies are in-
creasingly intertwined.

What lies ahead for these two institutions? In attempting to an-
ter this complex question, various national perspectives must be ex-
named, for they will become increasingly important within the EU
and NATO structures. To understand the context for national behav-
ior, it is vital to understand historic national attitudes regarding these
two institutions, especially that of France, a state that at several times
in its history has complicated the existence of the EU and NATO.

Current French President Jacques Chirac is a Gaullist both in name
and in spirit. Chirac’s formal link to the tenets of Gaullism is apparent
in his membership in the Rally for the Republic (RPR), France’s Gaullist
party. On a deeper level, Chirac demonstrates a very personal link to
the figure of Charles de Gaulle. One instance of this idolization was
evident when Chirac remodeled the presidential office after assuming
leadership to perfectly replicate the style of the room during de Gaulle’s
incumbency. This strong personal attachment to de Gaulle’s persona
is intensified by his lasting cultural legacy, one which continues to de-
fine French policy orientations. Even François Mitterand’s fourteen-
year Socialist presidency, from 1981-1995, could not escape the Gaullist
paradigm. Thus, it is essential to define de Gaulle’s attitudes toward
the EU and NATO, attitudes that very well may influence Chirac as a
decision maker who strives so clearly to emulate his predecessor.

De Gaulle’s behavior in the EU and NATO during the years 1965
and 1966 was highly contentious. During this time France shook the
two institutions with a boycott that led to the Luxembourg Compro-
mise in the European Community (EC, now the EU) and the French
withdrawal from NATO. This article will analyze these two actions
and attempt to use them as a basis for understanding contemporary,
and possibly future, behavior. Further discussion will illustrate how
many present-day situations have underlying dynamics similar to those
of the 1965-1966 period.

Brinkmanship in the European Community

The Luxembourg Compromise, as it has since been described, was the
resolution calling for the French “policy of the empty chair,” which
lasted from June 1965 until January 1966. What caused the French to
effectively boycott the EC in this manner? The turmoil actually began
in early 1965 when the EC Commission decided that the domestic po-
itical situation in France had created an atmosphere conducive to a Commission move for increased powers, thereby giving the EC an "extra layer of supranationality." This action would be accomplished by making future funding of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a very profitable policy for French farmers, contingent upon an increase in the Commission's power. Another key maneuver in the quest to increase EC power would be the introduction of majority voting in the Council of Ministers. This would have profound implications for the rule of unanimity in the Council and the overall power structure of the EC itself. Pro-integrationists desired this move, and assumed that — because of the French presidential elections scheduled for the end of 1965 — de Gaulle and like-minded French officials would be in no position to oppose the measures.

Clearly, these kinds of maneuvers did not please those French officials who were wary of EC authority in the first place. In this increasingly hostile atmosphere, French representatives put pressure on the EC to back down and kill the proposals. France was primarily concerned about the issue of majority voting, as it feared majority voting could potentially diminish France's autonomy, especially its economic autonomy. When the EC refused to retract its proposals, France walked out of EC decision-making structures in July 1965, beginning the notorious "policy of the empty chair."

Although it is widely believed that France boycotted all EC activities, France carried out existing EC work that pre-dated July 1, 1965; the French government merely directed its EC functionaries to accept no new work after July 1. The French also continued to attend meetings concerning issues they deemed important during the boycott, yet steadfastly refused to take part in any decision-making. Eventually, both sides decided to talk.

The French arrived at Luxembourg with a full list of demands, chiefly emphasizing their opposition to majority voting. The five EC members, now unified in their opposition to French intransigence, rejected these demands. Talks appeared to be on the verge of collapse. The gravity of the situation led all parties to participate in a second round of negotiations in which the French were more willing to bargain. The famed boycott ended in January 1966 when a French declaration condemning the move to majority voting was "accepted" by the EC members, although it was not legally adopted. This declaration came to be known as the Luxembourg Compromise.

Despite not being legally adopted, the Luxembourg Compromise effectively changed decision making at all levels. The declaration was interpreted as giving veto authority to member states on any question of national interest. In practice, voting could not take place until unani-
amous agreement had been reached among EC member states, and the veto was a rarely exercised action. Perhaps the unfortunate consequence of the Luxembourg Compromise was that it gave tremendous authority to the Council of Ministers. The implicit requirement of unanimous decision making acted to slow EC growth well into the 1980s. No kind of supranationality could be achieved while the EC acted under the Luxembourg Compromise.

**Surprise in NATO**

In addition to effecting change in the EC framework, France also instigated change in the NATO structure when it withdrew from the organization in 1966. This action may not have been as surprising as the French EC boycott, as French-NATO relations had been strained in the years preceding 1966.

The French highly resented the seemingly dogmatic nature of American anti-colonialism. NATO manifested this anti-colonial posture by giving no support to aid France with its colonial problems, namely in Indochina (until 1954) and Algeria (1954-1962). The lack of NATO support for French colonial conflicts led to sharp disputes between France and NATO in the late 1950s. In particular, the 1956 Suez Crisis deepened the rift in Franco-American relations which, in turn, was reflected in NATO. From France’s standpoint, the United States was more interested in anti-colonialist posturing than it was in supporting its most important allies. At every turn in the Suez Crisis, the French saw the United States as having abandoned France. Furthermore, the French ardently believed that the entire crisis had, in fact, been precipitated by the United States when it cut off aid for the Aswan Dam project.

Compounding this international discord were personal considerations. De Gaulle felt that since the outbreak of World War II, there had been — and continued to be — an Anglo-American condominium. France felt that its exclusion from this “special relationship” affected its position in NATO, thereby prompting de Gaulle to propose a “tripartite” arrangement for NATO in 1958. This arrangement would have entailed American, British, and most importantly, French cooperation in coordinating Western security policy. The British and American concessions to this arrangement were minimal, leaving de Gaulle and the French even more convinced that Great Britain and the United States were “conspiring” to deny France its rightful place as a world leader. The tensions over colonial conflicts and the rejection of the tripartite arrangement were somewhat mitigated by the positive relations that de Gaulle and Eisenhower enjoyed as a result of their wartime cama-
raderie. However, the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 raised Franco-American problems to a new level.

Kennedy's vision clashed with de Gaulle's. Kennedy sought firm American leadership in NATO, a view which ran contrary to de Gaulle's conception of France as leader of Europe in a multipolar world system. The Kennedy administration also desired adoption of the doctrine of flexible response, a reformulation of America's nuclear commitment that would affect the NATO defense structure. French underestimation of Kennedy's political strength, as well as the change in the U.S. nuclear commitment, led to even more visible alliance problems. American assistance to Great Britain's nuclear program, coupled with a refusal to similarly support the French nuclear program and the U.S. proposal to station Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles within NATO member states, including France, placed additional strain on alliance patterns. The grounds for conflict had been clearly established.

Against this backdrop of growing tension, a clear warning sign surfaced in 1961. De Gaulle staged a symbolic withdrawal of the French fleet from NATO's Mediterranean command. Although this was not a sizable reduction or rearrangement of NATO power in the Mediterranean, it indicated that by 1961, or perhaps even earlier, de Gaulle was considering the French withdrawal from NATO. The symbolic withdrawal of 1961 may have been the dress rehearsal for the real withdrawal in 1966. In the meantime, however, de Gaulle continued to press for French inclusion in the Anglo-American dominated NATO leadership.

De Gaulle's "surprise" came in March 1966 when he announced that France would modify the conditions of its participation in the NATO alliance. Negotiations began which resulted in the removal of French headquarters, personnel, and ground and air forces from NATO command. U.S. and Canadian forces were also to evacuate French soil, and NATO headquarters and other installations were to be relocated in neighboring countries. As in the EC boycott, the French did not completely withdraw; a limited level of nuclear cooperation was maintained as a primary area of continuity for French-NATO relations. Indeed, French military planners desired continued cooperation at some level so that they could participate in NATO nuclear exercises and, thus, develop expertise in handling technologies from which the French nuclear program would benefit. More importantly, de Gaulle emphasized that the French commitment to the defense of the West was not in question. In the event of a crisis, de Gaulle proclaimed, France would continue to support its NATO allies. De Gaulle made it clear that NATO's mission itself was not at issue; rather, the French were concerned with the arrangement of the defense structure.
What may have been some additional factors influencing the French decision to leave NATO? Why did the French walk out of the EC for six months? There are several general as well as case-specific possibilities that shed light on these questions. In the case of the French boycott of the EC, some fairly obvious considerations come to mind. It should be noted that de Gaulle never wanted to unequivocally separate France from the EC, as French involvement in the EC at that time had been extremely lucrative for the French economy. De Gaulle and others in the French leadership were concerned that the authority of the EC was growing too quickly into too many areas. The French wanted to slow the EC’s rapid growth by limiting the ability of EC bodies to compete with the authority of national governments. In this the French were successful. They insisted on the continued veto authority through the unanimity principle which hindered the supranational EC institutions from blocking initiatives on a national level. In short, the French were concerned with losing their influence in an expanding EC and wanted to ensure that their national government still exercised control over the French national course.

This desire can be seen in the NATO case as well under the guise of French strategic doctrine. This doctrine, rooted in de Gaulle’s own formulations, advocates a strong stance concerning sovereignty issues. NATO impeded French sovereignty especially in the area of nuclear weapons development, a program to which France was deeply committed. The lack of assistance from the United States only strengthened France’s “loner” posture in terms of its nuclear program. The apex of Gaullist deterrence strategy, the nuclear program was jeopardized by the possibility of integration with NATO command structures. Nuclear considerations were thus very important in understanding the French withdrawal.

The hindrance of French strategic independence was even more resented as it was perceived to result from American attitudes. Franco-American relations are typically tricky; under de Gaulle, they were even more so. De Gaulle fostered many wartime prejudices against the United States, one of the most notable being a 1945 incident in Strasbourg. The United States demanded that the Free French forces abandon Strasbourg, but de Gaulle, fearing for the security of French citizens, refused the order. Although the Americans eventually allowed the French to have their way, this instance underscored a truism for de Gaulle: the United States could not be trusted to take French interests into consideration. It did not help that the United States fostered a
"special relationship" with Great Britain, an eternal focus of Gaullist animosity.

Indeed, de Gaulle’s wartime experiences with Great Britain may have left even more of a negative impact on him than did his experiences with the United States. De Gaulle’s difficulties in obtaining recognition for Free France, his constant squabbles with Winston Churchill over the role of the Free France military, and British conspiracies to oust de Gaulle as head of Free France figured most prominently among de Gaulle’s negative wartime memories. Widespread French mistrust of both the United States and the United Kingdom helps to explain the enmity directed toward the NATO alliance.

The French boycott of the EC and the NATO withdrawal demonstrate one very important aspect in common: the personal role played by Charles de Gaulle. Indeed, when it came to matters that de Gaulle considered "high principle," de Gaulle was "simply unwilling to bargain incessantly and behave like a cooperative friend and ally. Instead, he often used unilateral ultimatums and faits accomplis to dramatize his policies and to instigate a crisis that would resolve an issue in as short a time as possible."6 The French boycott of the EC and the NATO withdrawal illustrate de Gaulle’s personal style of decision making at its best: tough, intransigent, and concise.

De Gaulle, of course, was not an anomaly, but rather the product of his native French culture. In the boycott and the withdrawal, de Gaulle was motivated by the larger theme, persistent and popular in French thought, of "la gloire." La gloire, which can be loosely translated as "glory," implies much more in the context of French politics. La gloire is the belief that France must be dedicated to projecting its own grandeur at home and abroad. France must have an international standing reflective of its perceived greatness.17 Although most nations manifest some form of nationalism, France has, in many ways, heightened national self-pride into a kind of universalizing doctrine: France must be involved in world affairs because it is great.18 It is not difficult to understand how this concept can extend to encompass the idea that France’s greatness gives the country a unique authority in world affairs.

Both the EC boycott and the NATO withdrawal are clear manifestations of concern for French control, or lack thereof, in international organizations. This leads to a strong emphasis on independence in decision making. During the EC crisis, statesman Georges Pompidou reflected his government’s stance: "What is certain . . . is that we will not agree that the whole French economy should be directed from the outside without the government being able to exercise the responsibility it assumes toward the French people."19 The NATO crisis similarly
showed French concerns for an independent national defense, especially in regard to its burgeoning nuclear weapons program.

**Domestic Factors**

Perhaps the strongest factor influencing French behavior in the two cases, however, was that of domestic politics. In France, a society perpetually rife with internal division, domestic political considerations have an importance of a higher degree than in many other countries. The lessons of the French Revolution, the weaknesses of subsequent republics, and the prevalence of situations akin to or actually constituting civil war have weighed and will continue to weigh on the French leadership. Thus, it is an eternal goal of French leaders to forge societal consensus.

De Gaulle’s maneuvers in 1965 and 1966 were able to fulfill this broad aim of building a consensus. Whether or not one approves of his actions, during the 1965-66 period foreign policy became a key method by which to forge political consensus among the French people. Considering that France very narrowly escaped civil war in 1958 and that the trauma of the Vichy and Free France split continued to resonate, de Gaulle must have been eager to consolidate the confidence of the French public. To the outside observer, the French government’s actions in the EC and NATO appeared erratic and lacking in prudence, as they only succeeded in isolating France’s allies. From a domestic perspective, however, the boycott and the withdrawal could be considered a success.

De Gaulle had effectively brought together French society by playing the foreign policy card. As neither the boycott nor the withdrawal were absolute measures, France was able to remain involved in both institutions. This seemingly ambivalent policy was vital to de Gaulle at a time when strengthened national political institutions were seen to be a priority. After the boycott and withdrawal episodes in 1966, the number of respondents affirmatively answering “Are you satisfied with the role played by France on the international plane?” was the highest it had ever been during de Gaulle’s presidency. His measures were effective in influencing citizens’ appraisals of their country.

This is not to say that the public fully approved of the government’s position. Rather, it was de Gaulle’s methods that were judged to be a success. The fact that 1965 was a presidential election year also complicated the domestic scene, although this clearly weighed less heavily in the NATO issue. However, after being reelected, de Gaulle may have felt confident enough of public support to quickly alter the NATO relationship. The boycott of the EC, however, probably ended more
The end of the Cold War and the resulting policy reevaluations have led many members to doubt NATO’s necessity. The United States has made fairly drastic cuts in its long-term support of the organization. On the other hand, Europeans are not only reevaluating their own priorities concerning NATO, but are also reevaluating the viability of the organization itself. As in the 1960s, the 1990s represent an era of European doubt concerning the U.S. commitment to the region, and thus, NATO’s efficacy. The strength of NATO was and is based largely on this commitment, and without reliable U.S. support, many consider the support of NATO to be a waste of much needed national resources.

In France itself, Gaullism has returned with the election of Jacques Chirac to the presidency in May 1995. How Chirac’s behavior will parallel de Gaulle’s during the events of 1965-1966 remains to be seen. Some positive correlation, however, can already be made. Chirac’s leadership during the international maelstrom provoked by France’s autumn 1995 nuclear testing in the Pacific demonstrates a likeness to some of de Gaulle’s traits. Chirac acted in opposition to the majority of world opinion by asserting France’s freedom of action on the world stage, actions recalling Gaullist-style independence. Only the future will show whether Chirac shares even more in common with his ideological predecessor.

The centrality of foreign policy to the French presidency is another common link between the Chirac and de Gaulle presidencies. As Robin Laird points out,

Foreign policy is an indispensable element of the French political consensus. How a French President deals with foreign affairs in the future may, like de Gaulle’s foreign policy, have ramifications in the functioning of the political system which go far beyond the ostensible intrinsic significance of the issues themselves and may affect the future of French politics in general.

Chirac must take into account both domestic and international considerations in his choice of foreign policy behavior. He is aware that foreign policy choices can dictate the growth and consolidation of a domestic consensus, a point that is becoming increasingly important in light of recent social unrest.

His presidency shares a more unfortunate element of continuity with the 1965-1966 period: increasingly divisive domestic politics. France is once again sharply fractured, with more fissures appearing in the domestic arena every day. The presidential election was by no means a landslide victory, and consequently, Chirac does not have a
NATO. The EU, on the other hand, might have some difficulties as French and British interests could coalesce to halt further integration. The European path favors France’s relationship with Germany above all else and relies on the Franco-German motor to further European integration. The American and British relationships with France would fall somewhat by the wayside, since these two countries are respectively ambivalent and hostile to the EU. The EU would clearly benefit from this orientation. NATO, however, would not benefit since the Maastricht Treaty calls for increasing convergence of the EU member states on foreign policy and security issues. This path would be the most favorable for the development of the Western European Union (WEU), or some similar structure.

The neo-Gaullist path would entail some level of French independence coupled with a continued reliance on nuclear force. The relationship with Germany would experience increasing rifts, and U.S.-U.K. connections would be met with hostility as well. One could also expect that NATO and the EU would both suffer as a result. In this scenario, France might turn to increased cooperation with Russia as a means of agitating the Anglo-American alliance and subtly pressuring Germany. Which of these paths will be pursued by France in the years to come?

The Atlanticist Path
The impulses for and against the Atlanticist path reflect the ambivalent behavior so common to the French with regards to the EU and NATO. There are many good reasons for France to strengthen ties with the United States, one of which is a strengthened NATO. There is no doubt that the French would like to have a continued American presence on the European continent serving as the last line of defense. French cooperation with the United States and consequent participation in the NATO decision-making structures would reflect the belief that the alliance is the most stable forum in which to connect the United States and Europe in peacetime and in crisis. The Bosnian deployment and the recent French moves to reintegrate in some NATO decision-making structures may be a reflection of these beliefs and serve to strengthen these views.

However, recent moves by France to increase participation in NATO may not be as altruistic as many American policymakers believe. Technology is a vital reason for renewed French interests in the United States and NATO. With the French nuclear program threatened by the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, in addition to a lack of some necessary weapons technology, the French have every reason to encourage improved relations with the United States. Some French decision makers
have directly stated that increased French cooperation in NATO should and will result in increased technology transfers: “The Alliance could make available to the WEU surveillance, logistics, communications and other facilities for operations which the Europeans would be prepared to undertake without the participation of the United States.” Active French participation in NATO could thus facilitate the eventual death of that institution. Suitably equipped with quality American materials, the Europeans could finally launch their own defense operation.

Increased French participation in NATO, however, might not lead to NATO’s demise. Rather, it could contribute to its restructuring. Chirac has stated on many occasions that the French wish to cooperate with the United States and NATO in order to restructure this alliance. In a 1990 address to the Institut des hautes études de défense nationale, Chirac stated, “The United States and France are the only countries that can pretend to share the formidable responsibility of the rebalanced Alliance.” In a February 1993 speech, Chirac continued this theme, stating:

If France wants to play a determining role in the creation of a European defense entity, she must take into account [the] state of mind of her partners and reconsider to a large degree the form of her relations with NATO. It is clear, in effect, that the necessary rebalancing of relations within the Atlantic Alliance, relying on existing European institutions such as the WEU, can only take place from the inside, not against the U.S., but in agreement with her.

The leader of France is thus pro-NATO, but only to the extent that France will be able to work within the institution to achieve other objectives, namely the acquisition of technology and the restructuring of the alliance itself. The Atlanticist path upon which the French seem to have embarked is not supportive of NATO at all in the long term.

Domestic pressure in France could likely determine which path France will choose. The restructuring of NATO (or rendering it impotent) is a popular domestic issue in France, as France is the European country most vocal in its widespread contempt for U.S. involvement in European defense. NATO, therefore, would be a strategic issue around which to structure a domestic consensus, especially if the message combines anti-American and anti-NATO themes. The possibility of Chirac emerging as an ardent supporter of NATO, in its current structure, is also highly unlikely because of his RPR connections. The Gaullists have traditionally “opposed any ‘alignment’ with U.S. policy as a betrayal of national independence.”
Outside of French domestic politics, yet another factor discourages the possibility that the French will select a truly Atlantic approach. NATO is now involved in a process of self-evaluation. In spite of the deployment of NATO troops to Bosnia, which seems to have breathed some life back into the organization,

reductions in force levels, pursuant to the Conventional Forces in Europe agreement and future accords, will be a critical link in the current transformation of leadership in European security. [But this] will not be the sole cause of change. Drastically lower force levels will reflect significant institutional change and will further catalyze the process of change.52

NATO’s transformation, aggravated by French pressures and other problems, may mark the end of the organization as it exists today. The French see no reason to invest valuable resources in a body that may already be presiding over its own dismantling.

The European Path
With these considerations, then, the emergence of a European defense system seems more probable than a renewed Atlantic alliance. Such a defense system would also facilitate the EU’s institutional growth. With the American-French relationship in long-term decline,53 France will clearly be attracted to this European path, one that is in sharp contrast to the U.S. view of European security arrangements.54 The European path portends a decrease in the quality of the Franco-American relationship and a corresponding increase in the vitality of the Franco-German relationship. Generally speaking, the French have been traditional proponents of European structures, playing a crucial role in the creation of the EU, the WEU, and other European organizations. The concept of la gloire figures prominently into support for the European path because it is a promising means by which France can be master of Europe and influential on the world stage. There is fear in France that the twenty-first century will be dominated by the Asian-Pacific powers of the United States, Russia, China, and Japan.55 This, however, could be averted through effective European organization. Many French analysts feel that Europe could count itself among the world powers if it succeeds in defining the EU as a credible and globally influential entity.56 Credibility would be assured through economic prowess and security coordination. The security issue is, of course, very important in France, since the French see as their historic mission the defense of European security.57 Since 1989 France has, in fact, greatly increased calls for “strategic solidarity of the United Kingdom, France,
An additional important reason that France would continue along a European path is the dependence of the French economy on its defense sector. EU tariffs prohibiting non-EU states from competing with the French defense industry would further induce French cooperation concerning other areas of EU integration. Defense policy could replace the CAP as the most defining issue over the next thirty years. Overall defense cooperation, fostered by Maastricht under the guise of the WEU, would help French defense industries, who were hard hit by contracting markets. General Jeannou Lacaze, a respected French military scholar and strategist, confirms its importance, stating that “European defense cooperation is an urgent necessity. Technological competition is becoming so fierce that it forces us to coordinate our efforts, to overcome our national cleavages, on pain of being condemned to rapid decline.”

In light of the fact that the European path toward monetary union seems to be hurting the French economy of late, there is every reason for other EU members to assist the French government in winning support for expanded EU competency. A unified defense, which implies a unified structure purchasing compatible defense equipment, could be just what the French economy needs to stimulate growth.

This is not to say that rationales for the European path are solely based on economic calculations or raw concerns for power. The bond between France and Germany, while motivated in part by these concerns, is a real one in other respects as well. Serving as the motor for European integration, the Franco-German relationship continues to be popular. According to polls taken in late 1992, 56 percent of French respondents rated Germany as France’s “most dependable ally” and 60 percent evaluated the Franco-German relationship as “unquestionably solid.” Given the strength of this bond, a future European path that involves a strong tie to Germany does not appear to be in doubt. However, the initial impetus for the postwar Franco-German relationship, not to mention European integration itself, evolved from a desire to contain Germany. This motivation continues into the present. French statements concerning newly emerging European security issues often seem aimed at demonstrating that Germany should not be solely concerned with its own defense, as France is willing and able to cooperate with and protect its neighbor.

The Franco-German bond could also be a factor contributing to mutual enmity. Because their relationship was founded on deep suspicion, it could sour if these same suspicions resurface. Without the Franco-German alignment, dreams of enhanced European cooperation will never reach fruition. French wariness may have begun with German unification, which created a country with an “economy and popu-
lation almost twice that of France.” This development clearly de­
stroyed the notion that the Franco-German relationship was one based on equality. Many French perceived the German drive toward reunifi­
cation as somewhat unilateral, especially with regard to EU structures.

This, of course, feeds on the lingering suspicions regarding Germany’s “true nature,” a topic which has become an increasingly popular French concern. During the Maastricht referendum in France, anti-German sentiments abounded. No French politician will lose an election by haranguing the Germans. In a speech intended to show positive feelings for Germany, Chirac himself stated that “if Germany must be ‘balanced,’ this will be done first and foremost by the economic recovery of France and not by the game of European institutions that would be unable to hide our weaknesses.” This speech was in no way a vote of confidence in the future path toward Germany, or toward the EU more generally. With new problems raised by EMU and Chirac’s unwavering pledge to follow through with EU-mandated reforms, it is easy to see how public opinion about Germany could be channeled in a different direction. Germany lacks the energy to de­
vote to France as well. A unified Germany, “freed from past constraints and under great new demands, may be obliged to place other foreign policy priorities above its traditional relationship with France, which could conceivably trigger French efforts to obstruct German goals.”

If the Franco-German relationship unhinges, the European path for French foreign policy will be called into question.

The Neo-Gaullist Path
The remaining option would be a neo-Gaullist path which would in­
volve an independent France, loosely bound to NATO and, perhaps; directly trying to thwart NATO activities. This independent France would also effectively halt further integration with the EU. No formal European security framework would exist. The interesting rela­
tionship that would emerge in the neo-Gaullist path is that between France and Russia. Enhanced Franco-Russian relations is supported by de Gaulle’s idea of a Europe stretching “from the Atlantic to the Urals.” The greatest factor encouraging a neo-Gaullist path is the Gaullist president currently in office. If there were not, however, the policies of de Gaulle would still be influential due to the durable quality of Gaullist philosophy in French politics. Even Mitterand, a Social­
ist, followed the precedent of other French leaders by basing his poli­
cies on the formulations of General de Gaulle. As the historical record shows, the adoption of de Gaulle’s policies signifies difficulties for both the EU and NATO. France’s historic conflict with cooperative arrange­ments is characterized by de Gaulle’s statement: “It is not necessary to
be integrated to be allied."  

Gaullist policy formulations are highly supportive of a Franco-Russian relationship. Provided that Russia remains relatively stable and does not experience a resurgence of Communist or ultra-nationalist leadership, neo-Gaullist France would encourage Franco-Russian cooperation. To an extent, this has already transpired, and a clear Paris-Moscow connection is emerging. Both France and Russia express common notions concerning German unification and are highly supportive of the efforts of the Conference on Security Cooperation in Europe, two important orientations which may give new momentum to this relationship. Common interests over the future of Germany are an especially important factor in the forging of a Franco-Russian bond. The Russian connection would serve to keep the Germans subtly in line by acting as a brake on undesired German actions, thus establishing Russia as a key player in the shifting structure and content of the emerging European order.

This, of course, may not happen. In assessing the current Gaullist leadership, it is possible to overestimate the strength of ties to past Gaullist ideologies. Neo-Gaullists may not be as independent or contentious as their inspirator. The neo-Gaullist route is also contingent on Russia’s future political stability. Without a stable, democratized Russia, the neo-Gaullist path will no longer be considered an effective policy option. Some French policymakers are already hesitant about solidifying relations with Russia given that Russian planning so far continues to parallel the Soviet planning style. The neo-Gaullist path also presents a difficult paradox: French alignment with Russia, a larger and potentially more powerful state, might preclude the emergence of French gloire on the new world scene. This is not a tolerable prospect for grandeur-seeking neo-Gaullists.

The Conjunction of Choice and Chance

One prediction that emerges from all these considerations is that France’s relations with NATO and the EU will be burdened by difficult issues. Similar to the situation in 1965-1966, both institutions will be faced with French demands concerning their structures, and negotiations regarding these issues will undoubtedly be tense. Domestic politics will continue to play a profound role in shaping French foreign policy, especially as it concerns the EU and NATO.

This is not to say that France alone determines the existence of these two institutions. France is only one of many actors; however, with the open, multilateral nature of both NATO and the EU, one member’s difficulties and objections are quickly another’s. The ripple
effect in EU public opinion concerning the 1995 strikes has brought debate over European Monetary Union to the fore throughout the continent. For this reason, it is crucial to determine the various members' views of both institutions in order to ascertain potential outcomes at both the national and institutional levels.

The Chinese curse “May you live in interesting times” seems to be proving true. From 1965 to 1995, the world has changed drastically. This is no longer a bipolar world in which states like France have little control over the future. The international order is now one of contentious flux; states such as France can and will alter international institutions and, thus, history. The French, with their lack of fear for confrontation, are perfectly suited for activity in such a world, whatever path they choose. De Gaulle must still be smiling.

Notes

2 This is not to say that history repeats itself over and over again. Rather, it is assumed that political actors from a given culture manifest certain identifiable traits over time, in addition to consistently valuing some issues over others.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 102.
6 Ibid., 362.
7 Michael Harrison and Mark McDonough, Negotiations on the French Withdrawal from NATO (Washington: Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute, 1987), 9.
9 Ibid., 1.
10 De Gaulle's view had its origins in his wartime experiences with the United States and Great Britain. The influence of de Gaulle's impressions of World War II will be discussed in greater detail below.
11 Ibid., 4.
12 Ibid., 10.
13 Ibid., 6.
16 Harrison and McDonough, 45. The authors continue, stating that this is a “distinctive French pattern of negotiating behavior, which was most obvious during the Gaullist era but remains a feature of French style in international diplomacy.” The significance of this, especially now that a Gaullist is again in the presidency, may have
great impact on future French discussions within the EU and NATO. This will be discussed further below.


18 One example of this is France’s bill of rights, entitled “The Universal Rights of Man.” As in the United States, a strong French policy motive is seen as the global, civilizing mission of France.

19 Camps, 79-80.


21 Ibid., 90.

22 This is not to say that there was complete support in France for de Gaulle. Rather, as is the case with many political leaderships, foreign policy was used to deflect criticism of domestic issues, such as educational reform. To understand the strength of the foreign policy consensus, note how little certain issues change from leadership to leadership. An ambivalence toward the “Anglo-American” powers continues to exist, as does the primacy of nuclear policy. Generally speaking, foreign policy is one area around which French political life, so characterized by division, seems to agree.

23 Ibid., 262.

24 This lies in marked contrast to the current situation in which a growing number of French credit the EU with their lack of prosperity, as the mass strikes in late 1995 suggest.

25 Camps, 98.


27 Camps, 83. This is, again, an interesting inversion of the present-day situation in which the French leadership seems to be fairly pro-EU, while the populace is generally unsupportive of further integration.

28 Ibid., 86.

29 Lacouture, 361.

30 The recent Bosnia deployment represents an anomaly, since over the last few years the United States has forced cuts within the NATO structure. These cuts are part of a larger scaleback that has occurred within the U.S. military. Current and future force levels for Europe are envisioned at approximately 100,000 troops. Whether future cuts will alter this allocation of troops is unknown.


32 Cerny, 55. It should be noted that Chirac did reduce the number of nuclear tests after an outcry of international opinion. Although many foreign policy maneuvers are merely designed for domestic impact, it should also be noted that Chirac’s nuclear policies were generally supported by a wide array of French citizens, as evidenced by numerous polls. Foreign policy again appears as a consensus builder within a divided French society.


34 For an interesting discussion of this and other social phenomenon in France, see Hans Koning’s “A French Mirror” in the December 1995 issue of Atlantic Monthly.


36 This information is found on the French government’s world wide web site at http://www.diplomatiefr/frmonde/poletr.html; translation mine.

37 Ibid., emphasis mine.
Ibid. French negotiating style has not changed much over the decades either, as intensely confrontational negotiation continues to be a trademark of French actors. These are simply possible models for future action and are not intended to precisely predict future alignments.


The French consistently back this idea; it will be addressed again in the discussion of the European path.

Posner, 3; emphasis mine.

Philip Gordon, France, Germany, and the Western Alliance (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 86; emphasis mine.


This does not preclude short-term commitments with the United States by any means.

Posner, 11.

De Rose, 13.

Ibid.


Yost, 40.


Gordon, 89.

Yost, 57.


During the campaign for France's Maastricht referendum in 1992, one popular sentiment expressed was "Don't give citizenship rights to the perpetrators of Oradour-sur-Glane," a notorious German atrocity of World War II.

Gordon, 88.

Ibid., 101.

However, this is not to suggest that the EU would be dismantled. Rather, everything that was developed until Maastricht would remain in place.

Lacouture, 362.

Posner, 75.

Ibid., 21.

Additionally, trade opportunities play no small part in the French pursuit of the
Russian connection.
72 Posner, 2-3.
77 Yost, 53.