

Alistair Cole

political dynamics of the european union

Franco-German Relations



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Political Dynamics of the EU series

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Series Editors' Preface

At the start of the new century, Europe remains in a process of profound transition. The ramifications of the end of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and German unification are still being unravelled. At the same time, the process of European integration has intensified, with the onset of the single European market and the launch of Economic and Monetary Union. The linkage between both sets of developments is provided, of course, by the prospect of the European Union (EU) being enlarged to include many of the eastern states. The EU now looms large over the full continental landscape. The connecting theme of these changes is of the 'Europeanisation' of domestic politics and society.

With this in mind, the emphasis of this new series is very much on the dynamics of the European Union. Together, each of the volumes will analyse and reflect on the implications of such changes for the European integration process in the next decade.

The series also seeks to encourage undergraduate students to reflect theoretically on the implications of these changes. Just how adequate are different analytic frameworks for understanding what is happening in a given area of integration? The series will usefully complement more descriptive and institutionally-based accounts of European integration. At the same time the editors avoid imposing a single theoretical approach on what they recognise to be a wide range of varying experiences across different areas.

In addition to encouraging theoretical reflection, the series seeks to give a strong empirically-grounded content to each volume in the form of brief case studies, which are designed to illustrate important aspects of the phenomenon under investigation. These case studies focus in particular on the theme of power: of where power lies and of how it is exercised.

Finally, the series encourages authors to reflect on scenarios for development in the policy field or issue-area with which they are concerned. In this way, the theoretical and empirical foci of the volumes are brought together.

This third volume in the series extends the coverage to a new dimension of EU politics: that of the relations between national governments. No relationship has been more important to the development of the integration process than that between France and Germany. From Robert Schuman's declaration on 9 May 1950 presaging the European Coal and Steel Community to

the present day, the progress of integration has crucially depended on the understanding established between these two states. The personal relationships of Adenauer and De Gaulle, Brandt and Pompidou, Schmidt and Giscard, Kohl and Mitterrand have underscored the scope for further integration, brokering compromises and overcoming domestic opposition. The bargaining coalitions of EU states have been defined by reference to the Franco-German relationship. Others, like Britain and Italy, have found it difficult to break into this bilateral relationship for very long or with great effect, even when they had the will to do so.

Despite the political significance of the Franco-German relationship for the course taken by the EU, it has received only limited academic study. No doubt the task is a daunting one, requiring expertise on both national systems, foreign relations, and the EU framework. Cole has met the challenge here, by synthesising knowledge gained across these different sub-fields and advancing our analysis of the various contours of Franco-German relations. Students and researchers will find in this volume a lucid exploration and an insightful analysis of the bilateral relationship that is the defining core of the history of European integration. This is a key building-block to a wider understanding of the past, present and future of the EU.

Professor Kenneth Dyson
Professor Kevin Featherstone
University of Bradford

Preface

My research interest in the Franco-German relationship can be dated quite precisely. In November 1991, I was asked by the then recently arrived Professor of German Politics – Eva Kolinsky – to present a paper to the research seminar of the Keele Centre for Modern German Studies on French reactions to German unification. With a great degree of apprehension I agreed. The result was a first insight into the fascinating bilateral relationship apparently occupying the centre of European gravity. Writing the paper coincided with the end-game of the negotiations leading up to the Maastricht summit, and my intellectual interest was naturally fuelled by the unfolding of events during the critical 1991–93 period. The Keele paper eventually became an article in *German Politics* (December 1993). By the time I decided to write a book on the Franco-German relationship another five years had passed. In a very real sense, this book owes its existence to the support of former colleagues at Keele (Eva Kolinsky) and Bradford (Kenneth Dyson and Kevin Featherstone) who encouraged the endeavour and were tolerant with postponed deadlines. I thank them.

The Franco-German relationship is commonly presented as the driving force underpinning European integration. The book tests this central proposition by seeking answers to three principal research questions. To what extent does the Franco-German relationship exercise leadership, joint or otherwise, within and beyond the European Union? Has there been a policy convergence between France and Germany during the past decade? Is there a changing balance within the Franco-German relationship? Through investigating responses to these three interlocking research questions, the book addresses issues involving the dynamics of the Franco-German relationship, the governance of the EU (mainly from a state-centric focus), the properties of the EU policy process, and the direction of change in post-cold war Europe.

The focus of the book is by turns historical, institutional, comparative, policy-oriented and EU-specific. The book starts by setting out the historical evolution of the Franco-German relationship. It then proposes a framework for analysis, which situates the Franco-German relationship within the main paradigms of European integration and comparative politics (neo-realism, historical institutionalism, domestic politics, and the policy process). After

observing the operation of the bilateral relationship between France and Germany, the book considers in some detail whether the Franco-German relationship leads the EU, the underlying assumption of much of the literature. Two policy-specific chapters then elucidate the role of the Franco-German relationship with respect to economic and monetary policy and defence and security policy. The penultimate chapter appraises the evolution of the Franco-German relationship in the new social democratic era, concluding that the dynamics of existing relationships and the importance of distinctive national traditions far outweigh in significance cross-national partisan attachments. Addressing the theoretical paradigms and research questions evoked earlier on, the book concludes that the direction of change is towards a rather weaker steering role for the Franco-German relationship across the whole dimension of EU policy. The EU policy process has a dynamic quality, which is beyond the control of individual member states, or even of the powerful Franco-German relationship. Although France and Germany are much closer on most substantive policy issues in the year 2000 than they were at the end of the 1960s, France is increasingly called upon to conform to the German policy standard.

Many people have assisted in bringing this project to fruition. The debt I owe to Professors Kolinsky, Dyson and Featherstone was alluded to above. I should also like to thank various colleagues for reading part or all of the book: Helen Drake, John Gaffney, Hans Mackenstein and Charlie Lees in particular. I am grateful to Douglas Webber for letting me have access to his book *The Franco-German Relationship in the European Union* (London: Routledge, 2000) before the official publication date. I would like to dedicate the book to my very good friend Peter Truscott, contemporary from student days, and MEP for Hertfordshire for most of the research period. Peter and Svetlana made research trips to Brussels and Strasbourg fun and opened many doors. Thanks. Last, but not least, the book is also dedicated to Caroline, who thought she would never see the end of it. Merci.

CHAPTER 1

The Franco-German relationship in historical perspective

Although other bilateral relationships have assumed great importance, and while other nations have endured lasting conflicts, Franco-German relations underpin the history of modern Western Europe more than any other. The contemporary states of France and Germany share many common historical roots. The precursors of the French – the Franks – were a Germanic tribe. The Carolingian empire of Charlemagne covered much of contemporary France and Germany (Leenhardt and Picht, 1997). Despite sharing certain generic roots, the chronology of state formation contrasted strongly in the two countries. Contemporary France can trace its lineage back to the Capetian monarchy of the tenth century. The French nation slowly expanded from its heartland in the Ile-de-France by a process of gradual territorial accumulation and military conquest. By the seventeenth century, an identifiable central authority had emerged in the form of the absolute monarchy. In spite of the ebb and flow of wars, territorial disputes and military occupations, the contours of contemporary France were largely intact by the late seventeenth century. As late as the early nineteenth century, ‘Germany’ was a disparate collection of enlightened despots (Prussia), imperial dependencies (in the Austro-Hungarian empire) and free states (Leblond, 1997). Although German national consciousness developed strongly during the nineteenth century, Germany was eventually unified in 1871 by force and military subordination. Unification involved the imposition of a Prussian order on the separatist southern states. The German nation state has experienced an uneven existence. It was partially dismembered in 1919 (with the loss of Alsace-Lorraine) and divided in 1949 (the division into west and east German states). When Germany was reunified in 1989, it agreed explicitly to respect the Oder–Neisse border, acknowledging the loss of many former eastern provinces to Poland.

Ever since the Thirty Years War (1618–48), which reduced Europe to ruins, hegemony within Europe has involved a contest between these two continental European states, and their precursors. From the seventeenth century onwards, France and Germany accumulated divisive memories of

historical affronts. For Germans, the sacking of the Rhineland-Palatinate by Louis XIV at the end of the seventeenth century left a bitter anti-French legacy. For the French, anti-German sentiment was inherent in the creation of the unified Germany from the ashes of French defeat at the hands of the Prussians in 1870. Germanophobia was reinforced by the injury of the lost provinces of Alsace-Lorraine, by the patriotic war of 1914–19, by Nazism and by occupation. In the power politics of continental Europe, nation state interest was perceived as a zero-sum game, a conquest for European supremacy.

Two rival state traditions were anchored in the legacy of the French revolution and its Napoleonic aftermath, and the character of German unification. There were also many similarities between the two nations. The French revolution and German unification each contained within them the aspiration of national unification. Both processes involved an aggressive central authority imposing its will upon recalcitrant or rebellious provinces. Both produced states with continent-wide hegemonic ambitions. Moreover, there was a close linkage between developments in both countries. While German liberals were seduced by the national idea in the French revolution, nationalist reaction to French revolutionary excesses led to the development of the German national idea, notably in Prussia. Prussian troops were vital in the final anti-Napoleonic battles. The exchange of ideas and models continued beyond conflicts: in 1830 and in 1848, German liberals once again looked to France as the country of the Rights of Man and of enlightenment.

Contemporary post-war Franco-German relations have been shaped in reaction to the terrible legacy of three wars within three-quarters of a century. The Franco-Prussian war of 1870 completed the process of the unification of modern Germany. Germany's victory in the open military conflict with France was celebrated by the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine to the second Reich. From 1871 to 1914, Germany emerged as the pre-eminent industrial, economic and military power in continental Europe. German industrial takeoff contrasted with French demographic stagnation. While France was still a predominantly rural country in 1914, Germany had become an industrial locomotive.

The causes of the First World War of 1914–19 are open to contrasting interpretations: explanations include the outcome of great power politics, the legacy of imperialism, the logic of industrialisation and the arms race. The terrible human suffering was not open to doubt. The allied victory was consecrated in the punitive settlement of Versailles (1919), which declared German war guilt, restored Alsace-Lorraine to France and imposed heavy reparations on the losers. The polarisation and fragmentation of the German polity during the Weimar Republic (1919–33) reflected deep divisions within

German society. The social and economic circumstances of Weimar were not propitious to the establishment of a stable liberal democracy. The political institutions of the Weimar Republic never had time to take root. Hyperinflation and unemployment induced a sense of political crisis based on social and economic dislocation, military defeat and failed revolution (in the form of the 1919 Spartacus uprising). The radicalisation of German society occurred to the detriment of liberal democracy. Economic and social crisis gave birth to the rise of political extremism from the mid-1920s onwards, notably during the early 1930s. The emergence of the German Communists (KPD) in the late 1920s was overshadowed by the rise of the NSDAP and Hitler's accession to power in 1933. Analysis of the Nazi experiment lies outside the scope of this book; there is a strong argument that the economic autarky of the Nazi regime was destined to result in war (Milward, 1979), as was its ideological mission and world vision.

The consolidation of liberal democracy in France followed a somewhat less tortuous path than in Germany. Defeat in the Franco-Prussian war discredited the monarchist idea and its adjacent institutions (such as the military). After three decades of divisions between Catholic monarchists and anti-clerical Republicans, of political crises and of civilian/military conflicts, the Republic established itself as the natural form of government for a majority of the French (Cole, 1998a). The Third Republic survived intact throughout the turbulence of the Weimar and Nazi years; it eventually succumbed to foreign invasion in 1940.

After Germany's defeat in World War One, the temptation to humiliate the defeated aggressor was strong. The hard-line stance adopted by French premier Poincaré in the Versailles negotiations of 1919 was aimed at dismembering the defeated German Reich and punishing the historic enemy. France recovered control of Alsace-Lorraine and forced heavy war reparations on Germany. Official inter-war French responses to Germany oscillated between hard-line enmity (the Poincaré approach to the Versailles settlement) and attempts to build bridges and to evolve new interdependent relationships (the Briand approach). These alternatives would resurface after the defeat of Nazism in 1945. The Poincaré approach became synonymous with punishing Germany. The Briand approach, on the other hand, signified developing a working partnership between the former enemies and promoting European union. Some German politicians, such as Chancellor Stresemann, also attempted to overcome mutual enmities and to build a new understanding with France. There were areas of common interest. Both Briand and Stresemann sought to protect Europe from the rising US threat. The arguments in favour of closer collaboration bore a striking resemblance to those of the 1950s. Stresemann believed that a multilateral structure, in the form of a European union, would allow a defeated Germany

more influence than any bilateral understanding (Pedersen, 1998). The French premier Briand sought a European union as a means of restraining Germany and embedding Franco-German collaboration (Morgan, 1993). These plans did not withstand the death of Chancellor Stresemann and the rise of German extremism. The idea of European union as a solution to Franco-German conflict proved to be a stubborn one, however. In 1940, former French premier Léon Blum proposed 'the incorporation of the German nation within an International Community sufficiently powerful to re-educate the German nation, to discipline it, if necessary to dominate it' (cited in Rideau, 1975: 82). Whether through coercion or cooperation, there was agreement on the need to control Germany in the interests of lasting peace.

Germany's invasion of France in March 1940 led to an 'armistice' being signed between the victorious German armies and Marshall Pétain. The authoritarian wartime Vichy regime in France maintained an illusion of independence, celebrated by cultivating the symbols of French counter-revolutionary patriotism. This was tolerated in return for collaboration with Nazi war and policy objectives (notably, as demonstrated by the *Rafle d'Hel'Viv* in 1942, the arresting of Jews later sent to concentration camps). Nazi control became more vigorous after November 1942, when the German army occupied the whole of the country (Paxton, 1972). The impact of wartime occupation and collaboration continues to ricochet through contemporary French politics; the importance of the trials of war criminals such as Barbie, Touvier and Papon demonstrates this, as does the wartime record of politicians such as former President Mitterrand (Péan, 1994).

France, Germany and the reconstruction of Western Europe, 1944–58

However many declarations of profound mutual friendship are made, post-war Franco-German relations cannot elude past historical conflicts. While national identities are rooted in distinct historical legacies, however, post-war Franco-German relations have built upon a measure of convergence of ideas and interests, a joint management of political projects and an institutionally embedded existence. The project of European integration has underpinned the bilateral Franco-German relationship. It has also provided a constraining multilateral framework for the conduct of Franco-German relations. It has enabled one state – the Federal Republic of Germany – to recreate a sense of positive identity from a dark collective memory. It has empowered another – France – by allowing it to pretend to the role of a great power. In both cases, the advantages have outweighed the constraints imposed by Community membership.

The triumph of what Morgan (1993: 120) terms the 'Briand' approach was not a foregone conclusion. During the early post-war years, Germany was divided into four occupation zones – the American, the British, the Soviet and the French. France was recognised as a victorious power by the USA, USSR and Britain in the 1946 Potsdam conference. The French government initially adopted a hard-line stance to its former occupier. It was resolutely hostile to the creation of a unified (west) German administration, in contrast to Britain or the USA. It only revised its unyielding position once the emergence of a west German state became inevitable. French strategy bore comparison with that adopted after the First World War. Humiliated by her experience of wartime occupation, the post-war provisional government – headed by resistance leader Charles de Gaulle – adopted a traditional Rhineland strategy designed to keep Germany weak and divided (Morgan, 1991). This involved a bid to split off the Sarre (a German coal-producing area administered by the League of Nations from 1919 to 1933, and by the French from 1945 to 1953) and other western areas from Germany and annex them to France. De Gaulle also proposed the creation of a separate political authority to administer the Ruhr, the heartland of German industrial power. The first French post-war plan, drafted by Jean Monnet, was similar in its desire to punish Germany, advocating the permanent dismemberment of the German state and the dismantling of the German steel industry. Monnet realised the critical importance of economics – France had to limit Germany's capacity to produce steel and coal, the raw materials of military conquest.

Such a hard-line stance was unrealistic and it was thwarted by the Anglo-American alliance. It ran against the logic of Marshall aid, and the imperatives of cold war reconstruction. France could not prevent the USA and UK supporting German economic recovery in their occupation zones, or assisting democratic rebirth. She could appear neither to oppose the return of democracy in Germany nor to forestall any prospect of Franco-German reconciliation. There were many common interests with the former enemy, especially in the areas of security and economic policy. French policy gradually shifted with the development of events in Eastern and Central Europe. American pressures for a united European response to Soviet aggression proved overwhelming. However, it should be stressed that the crystallisation of a west German state and the revival of the German economy occurred in spite of initial French opposition. Even after the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany (1949), France and Germany continued to harbour territorial disputes with each other, notably in relation to the Sarre. Only in 1956 did French premier Mendès-France agree to hold a referendum in the disputed Sarre territory. This took place in 1957 under the government of Auguste Pinay; a large majority voted in favour of being restored to Germany.

The 1950s were a period of a joint Franco-German drive towards closer European integration, accepted by both countries as a precondition of restoring European peace. Having failed to dismember western Germany, French governments resorted to the Briand approach: reaching agreements with Germany in order to bind her to France. This stance was above all associated with Robert Schuman, who took over as foreign affairs minister in 1948. Schuman was convinced that Franco-German reconciliation would serve French interests in post-war Europe (Bonnefous, 1995). The best way of tying down Germany was to bind it to the goal of European integration. Any revival in German power would benefit Europe as a whole and France in particular. Regional integration also fulfilled basic German security needs. European integration would remove borders and create opportunities for the revival of German industry. Moreover it would signal Germany's return to the community of European nations. The first West German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, envisaged a privileged Franco-German partnership, not least to avoid any possibility of a Franco-Russian alliance aimed against Germany. Adenauer considered it to be in Germany's interest to demonstrate its acceptance of a framework of collective security and a process of regional integration. The ultimate objective of German unity could only be achieved with the consent of the main international players.

As demonstrated in the following examples, Franco-German agreement was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for moves to closer European integration in the 1950s.

Europeanising coal and steel

The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) initiative of 1950–51 was a landmark in shifting attitudes towards Franco-German relations. Whereas the first Monnet plan (1946) had sought to dismember Germany in order to guarantee France access to German coal and steel, the Schuman plan (also inspired by Monnet) advocated a European solution (Milward, 1984). Schuman proposed the creation of a single market in coal and steel, which would guarantee France and other countries access to German natural resources, while allowing the Germans to increase energy production. Each signatory country would have access to the others' markets. Internal tariff barriers would be phased out; a common external tariff would be levied. The plan would be implemented and policed by a High Authority with supranational powers, composed of commissioners nominated by each country. The regulation of coal and steel would escape the direct control of national governments. The symbolism was potent – coal and steel provided the raw materials of military conflict, so Europeanising coal and steel would make war impossible.

However this innovative solution also responded to the vital national interests of France and Germany. Dedman (1996: 61) considers the Schuman plan of 1950 to be a 'second French attempt (after the Monnet plan of 1946) to reshape Europe's economic and political environment to suit the needs of the domestic French economy'. Access to German coal and steel would accelerate France's post-war industrial takeoff. The ECSC would rescue Monnet's modernisation plan by guaranteeing access for French industry to German raw materials. Moreover, the plan created a protected market for French steel in southern Germany for a three-year period.

German motivations were rather more complex and political considerations were uppermost. The 1949 Basic Law created a semi-sovereign West German state. The occupation statute prevented the Federal Republic from engaging in an autonomous foreign or defence policy and placed limitations on its foreign trade. To lift these constraints, the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer engaged a strategy of close collaboration with the UK, USA and France. The ECSC provided a good example of Germany gaining influence by strengthening supranational institutions: it allowed Germany to recover full control of its steel industry by removing the obstacles imposed after Potsdam in 1945. Moreover, Adenauer achieved a symbolically important political act by insisting on equal terms for the Federal Republic in the ECSC negotiations. This was a step in the direction of autonomous statehood.

The problem of German rearmament

The question of German security and rearmament caused heightened friction between as well as within both countries. The legacy of German occupation was particularly potent, but so were the threats to Western security by the Soviet colonisation of Central Europe from 1945 to 1948. The onset of the cold war changed the nature of the security problem. Stalin's *de facto* incorporation of the eastern German zone into the USSR's sphere of influence (1948) entrenched the division of Germany into eastern and western German states. The Federal Republic was born in 1949 as the West German state, and as the bulwark against encroaching Stalinism. The Soviet threat increased French dependence on the USA as well, locking governments of the French Fourth Republic into the Western security alliance.

While the case for German rearmament became urgent and pressing after the outbreak of the Korean war in 1950, there was some dispute over the appropriate institutional structures to control the process. The creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949 represented a firm American commitment to the defence of the European continent against Soviet communism. British and American preferences were for German rearmament to be controlled by NATO, the solution eventually adopted.

The process was urgent; the American Secretary of State made clear his wish to see 'German soldiers in uniform by the Autumn of 1951' (Kergoat, 1991: 9). The Atlanticist option was not the only one, however. There were also powerful advocates of a Europeanised solution (Williams, 1964). In principle, France was opposed to rearming Germany. But a rearmed German army in NATO appeared much less palatable than a French-directed force. A European solution would tame Germany, while reducing US influence over the west European continent. The French feared that the NATO option would remove Germany from French control altogether. Initially sceptical, the USA also came around to a European solution as a long-term political response to the German problem.

The French solution to the problem of German rearmament was to create a European Army within the Atlantic Alliance (Dedman, 1996; Williams, 1964). The Pleven plan of 1950 proposed the creation of a European Defence Community (EDC), the core of which would be provided by a European Army. German troops would be rearmed only as units of the European Army, which would sign a cooperation agreement with NATO. French military planners expected German rearmament to be indirectly controlled by France. In the original plan, states would provide troops to the European Army, but would retain national control over units not pledged to the EDC. With 50 000 of 100 000 proposed troops, France would dominate the European Army. From the French perspective, there were close links between the Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Army (EDC). While ECSC had been intended to regulate Germany's re-emergence as an industrial power, the EDC proposals were a means of using supranational mechanisms to control German rearmament.

German Chancellor Adenauer had his own agenda. The EDC provided a second example of a supranational solution that would enhance German sovereignty. Initially hostile to full German rearmament, Adenauer seized an opportunity to consolidate the Federal Republic's role as a normal nation and to enhance its political independence. The German chancellor insisted on West German equality with other countries within collective security structures (within NATO or the EDC) and made German rearmament conditional upon a recovery of full sovereignty and a renegotiation of the status of the three Western occupying powers. Adenauer agreed to the EDC, but demanded French concessions. Under German pressure, the French had to accept *fusion complète*; all national forces were to be fused into a single army from the start. In the 1952 Treaty of Paris, the European Defence Community thus contained provision for a completely supranational European Army.

The Treaty of Paris (1952) went much further than the initial Pleven plan in the direction of a supranational army. There was powerful political