From the Cold War to the European Union. The Development of the EU and the Franco-German cooperation

Current Trends on European Politics
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Lecture themes

- Overview of European integration history from the Second World War to the Present: main phases and turning points
- Franco-German cooperation: historical background and development points in the 20th century
- France and Germany as drivers of European integration
- Current trends in relations within the EU
Questions

• Why have European states agreed to give supranational institutions ever wider powers to control their external economic relations and, to a large degree, their internal economic policies?

• Why has the European states system and international cooperation taken the – partly supranational, partly intergovernmental – form it has?

• How is it possible that European nation-states have simultaneously entrenched and strengthened their 'state capacity' and surrendered and shared sovereignty on the EC/EU-level? (A. Milward: The European Rescue of the Nation State)
Five Big Bargains: ”Fits and Starts” of integration

1. Treaties of Rome 1955-58
2. Consolidation of the Common Market 1958-66
3. Toward monetary integration 1969-83
4. The Single European Act 1984-88
5. German reunification, Economic and Monetary Union, the Maastricht Treaty and subsequent enlargement 1989-1991
6. Eurocrisis and its consequences 2010-2012
7. Integration and Disintegration 2016-2020?
Phases in EU history: an alternative periodization

- Setting up of the first institutions and the logic of the founding agreements
- Crisis in 1965 and the resulting institutional changes
- Proposals of the Hague Conference in 1969 and their outcomes in the early 1970s
- Rising intergovernmentalism and the Paris Summit of December 1974
- Fulfilling the single market starting in 1984: the progress towards the Maastricht Treaty
- Maastricht Treaty 1993 and its context
- Enlargement 2004 and 2007/2013
- Eurocrisis 2010-2013/15
Eurocrisis: the low point of Franco-German cooperation 2010-2012

• Different views of the fiscal policy response to the economic crisis (austerity vs stimulus)

• Fundamentally divergent views of the economic governance of the EMU (since 1988-1991)

• Fears and stereotypes: ”German Europe”, ”Weak France”

• Too highly set expectations for Merkel-Sarkozy cooperation
Erbfeind vs Rapprochement narratives

- *The Erbfeind* (hereditary enemy) narrative and *Renconciliation and Cooperation* narrative

- Talbot Imlay (H-Net Review 22 November 2017):
  - “The two narratives are co-dependent. The one does not exist without the other – not only for scholars but also for historical actors. If apprehensions of conflict between the two countries infused calls for rapprochement with a dramatic urgency, the elusive nature of rapprochement, which was always more of an ideal than a practical program, meant that the possibility of renewed tensions never entirely vanished.”
Historical background and steps

• Aristide Briand – Gustav Streseman collaboration until 1929

• 1931: Joint Commission of Franco-German cooperation
  • Conan Fischer, *A Vision of Europe: Franco-German Relations during the Great Depression 1929-1932* (OUP, 2017)

• 1940s: Recovery and Retribution, France’s hawkish policies towards Germany 1945-1949
1940s and 1950s

• European Recovery Program 1947-52 and the beginning of multilateral cooperation in Western Europe involving West Germany
  • Marshall Plan, i.e. European Recovery Program 1948-1952, European Coal and Steel Community 1952, European Economic Community 1958

• 1950-52: The Schuman Plan ECSC:
  • France’s initiative, U-turn in attitudes towards West Germany

• 1955-58 onwards: The Rome Treaty and its implementation
  • the establishment of the Charles de Gaulle – Konrad Adenauer relationship
Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer (Bad Godesberg summit 19 July 1961)
GDP growth 1950s

B. Eichengreen 2007, p. 91
GDP growth 1960-1973


Figure 7.1. The starting point and growth in the 1960s. Source: Maddison (2001). Note: Gross domestic product per capita is expressed in 1990 U.S. dollars.
Practical policies and a sense of joint responsibility

A limited transfer of competences (sovereignty)

Gradual movement towards loosely defined final goals

Using economic means to achieve political integration

Consensual decision-making among elites

Institutional structures emerge as side products

The main goal is integration as a peace project

The core: Franco-German partnership

The ’Monnet-method’ (Wessels, 2001)
1960s and 1980s: consolidation

- Élysée Treaty January 1963: a friendship treaty, symbolic, emphasis on diplomacy and culture, not without significance
- After The Hague Summit: 1973 enlargement
- A European currency framework EMS 1979: Not a compromise, largely a W. German design
- End of the Cold War and German reunification 1989-1990
- Maastricht Treaty 1988-1993: A Franco-German ”agreement to disagree” (Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, 2017)
1970s: Giscard d’Estaing and Helmut Schmidt
1980s and early 1900s: Francois Mitterand and Helmut Kohl at Verdun, September 1984
Other countries

• Other member states: often a crucial role in bargaining and establishing compromises between France and Germany
• United Kingdom: A traditional balancer for BOTH countries
• USA: Usually closer to FRG than to France, often in the background influencing German positions and policy towards French initiatives
Current trends

• Since the low-point of 2010-2012 Franco-German relations remained difficult 2012-2017
  • A highly asymmetric situation with a weak French political leadership and economy and stronger economy and political leadership in Germany
• Now (2018) high (probably too high) expectations for a restoration of the Franco-German partnership
• Still: the odds have improved considerably for a Franco-German compromise over the development of EMU and other policy areas in the EU