



## France and Germany

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### *The EU as a framework*

The European Community/European Union has turned out to be one of the most formidable instruments for civilizing international relations in Europe, i.e. for overcoming the state of anarchy which formerly characterized the Old Continent and turn it into stable and predictable set of relations based on institutionalized patterns. To borrow from François Duchêne who was the first one to speak of Europe as a civilian actor, it domesticated international relations, “bringing to international problems a sense of common responsibility and structures of contractual politics which have been in the past associated exclusively with ‘home’ and not ‘foreign’, that is alien, affairs”.

As such it has in particular helped former enemies to establish peaceful relations, restored a balance where an asymmetrical relation previously existed...

- in the case of France and Germany, the EC performed several functions:

1) First it replaced the previous system of balance of powers which two world wars had ruined. Certainly other conditions contributed to the emergence of a new system of intra-european relations. At the end of World War II all countries were more or less ruined, France and Germany were equally weak, even if Germany was certainly more so than France. Moreover no state on the European continent could theoretically raise above the other or bid for hegemony since there was a hegemon on the West European continent, the United States. Yet given these circumstances, the European communities provided a framework in which France and Germany established a stable pattern of relations.

2) Second the European Communities fostered solidarity or rather it required a minimum of solidarity as a necessary basis for the redistribution of funds (through the Common Agricultural Policy, the Regional Funds, the Structural funds...) and for the establishment of a community of solidarity that the article 5 of WEU creates (as it specifies that all parties to the treaty will defend one of them if attacked, a provision according to which assistance is made compulsory).

Solidarity is a requirement; as such it does not mean that it necessarily ensues. A demand may not be answered, a requirement may not be fulfilled. Both German and French governments gave their respective societies the mean to foster solidarity between the French and the Germans. With the Elysée Treaty which was signed in 1963, a Franco-German Youth Office was created – cities were also twinned etc.

- in the case of Ireland and Great Britain

1) First, it has served as a model. Trevor Salmon writes that “the European dimension has emerged for a number of different reasons: the idea of the EU as a role model for peaceful cooperation; the notion that economic cooperation may lead to political cooperation, although there are different models that might be followed; the perception that the EU is a neutral forum to assist on economic matters; the European Union’s own strong desire to help progress towards a settlement, a desire more or less accepted by the British and Irish governments; the views of various personalities and parties involved; and the view that, given European integration and globalization, a stage of ‘post modernity’ of the state has been reached” (p. 339). Certain leaders such as John Hume, the leader of SDLP, explicitly referred to the constitution of the EC as a possible solution “by building institution that respect... differences”. In other words, Europe is a model, it has an aim, it conveys values that certain actors are ready to replicate.

2) Second, the European has served as a framework. Irish and British representatives met in the EU framework, got to know each other, talked to each other. It has also been the framework in

which Ireland bloomed, undergoing a formidable economic and social development, one of the most remarkable success stories of the EU in the past years: it allowed Ireland not to depend essentially on Great Britain. The asymmetrical dependency in which Ireland was in relation with Great Britain was severed.

3) Third, the Union served as a payer – as often. Certainly Ireland received more money than Northern Ireland yet Northern Ireland received money from the EU – and from London. Through INTERREG, Northern Ireland was given assistance for cross border cooperation projects pertaining to infrastructures, public services, joint ventures and the safeguard of the environment – in spite of the fact that these projects are sometimes difficult to manage because local and regional structures are too weak (cf. Salmon). Northern Ireland was also granted structural funds channeled the Regional Fund, the European Social Fund, CAP and fishery. Yet the most original contribution of the EU is the “Special Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation”, also called PEACE. It was created in 1994 after the first cease fire was declared by IRA on March 31, 1994: the Commission established a special Task Force to assist Northern Ireland as well as the neighboring Irish counties across the border: stating that it had “a clear interest and a vital role in maintaining the momentum of the peace”, the European Council in Essen in December 1994 adopted the program. The EU subsidizes 75 % of the PEACE program on projects dealing with the economy, social integration, technical assistance managed by local authorities and non governmental organizations or actors (business people, trade unionists ...).

In other words, the EU served and serves as a framework – just as it is a framework in which new democracies may entrench themselves.

### ***The Franco-German motor***

- the reasons why the Franco-German motor could perform its functions in Europe:

For a certain number of years, the Franco-German tandem served the EU well – in return, one might say. The EU served as a framework for the French and the Germans to set up a pattern of stable relations. In return this relationship solidified into a working relationship which gave the EC/EU a series of decisive push. It performed an important function, that of an axis, of a tandem : in particular it promoted the European economic and monetary union at various stages (the ‘Snake’, the European Monetary System, the Economic and Monetary Union...).

This particular role could be accounted for by several reasons:

1) First the two countries were the most important ones in the small community of states that the EC was and together they covered various hues of political cultures, they embodied the North and the South, Protestant and Catholic Europe, a country which laid stress on agriculture and agro-industry and a heavily industrialized country, a centralized one vs. a federal state etc. It was often said that understandings and agreements between the French and the Germans were difficult to achieve but once an agreement was reached on a particular question, all in Europe could rally the Franco-German solution. The two countries built indeed a core Europe.

2) Second, leadership in both countries worked towards this aim. De Gaulle and Adenauer were the first to lead the tandem on the road towards reconciliation, a process which was punctuated by a symbolic display of togetherness (De Gaulle and Adenauer in Reims). Giscard and Schmidt probably shared the most, having deep intellectual affinities: they set the path towards cooperation in the monetary field – and towards a more ‘inter-governmental’ Europe in other areas. Mitterrand and Kohl worked together towards a more united Europe with the Maastricht Treaty. Last Chirac and Schröder relaunched the Franco-German cooperation in 2001-2002 which had been more or less dormant since the two men’s accession to power (Chirac in 1995 and Schröder in 1998). Though a common opposition to the American-led war against Saddam Hussein’s regime, this cooperation however was based more on a ‘negative’ of France’s and Germany’s interests (defense of sectorial interests) than on promoting European integration.

- The very conditions for a Franco-German tandem have changed.

In a wider Europe, the Franco-German relationship cannot function the way it did before. It does not have the legitimacy it was based on (i.e. a historical one: reconciliation, overcoming the past + a legitimacy based on efficiency). Other states, newcomers have another kind of legitimacy, which is based on overcoming communism. In a wider Europe two states alone cannot perform the function of a motor. In Germany, the idea of a European core has almost completely disappeared while in France one of the contenders for power, N. Sarkozy, praised the role that the bigger countries should play.