The Domestic and Ideational Sources of the European Defence Community's Defeat

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On August 31st 1954, nearly four years after the introduction of the original Pleven plan calling for the establishment of an integrated European Defense Community (EDC), former President of the French Republic Édouard Herriot stood at the podium of the French National Assembly and said:

"What is a country's army? It is not the mathematical addition of its conscripts; rather, it is that country rallying around its flag for the defense of its material and intellectual treasures, for the defense of its liberty and independence. We cannot deny that these feelings, developed by the French revolution, gave the men of the Marne the courage to die under conditions that we cannot forget"[1].

Jacquelyn Davis states that within the current international political context, with the Iraq war acting as a catalyst, France has become the United States' largest critic despite its status as the latter's oldest ally.[2] The EDC, proposed by France in 1950 as a solution to the issue of German rearmament, came to be strongly supported by the American government within a domestic political context in which isolationism was incessantly being proposed by some Republican Congressional actors as a solution to America's Cold War problems[3]. The relevance of an examination of the EDC thus exists within this structure as a potential source of explanatory variables for the animosity existing in contemporary American-French relations. Considered taboo from the end of WWII till the dawn of the 1950s, the issue of rearming Germany returned to the center of Western debates on international security through concerns clearly engendered by realist analysis. George Kennan's doctrine of containment, originally anonymously published in Foreign Affairs as the "X" article, proposed "that the main element of United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies"[4]. The Korean War as well as the Soviet Union's growing attempts at Westward expansion led to the NSC-68 plan, a tangible application of containment doctrine[5].

It is within this framework that France was cornered by structural constraints into proposing the EDC as a solution to German rearmament that would alleviate innate concerns about German militarism while vindicating the support afforded to the latter's rearmament by American policy-makers. Hence, it is clear that the proposal of the EDC was dictated by traditional systemic concerns. However, a primary source examination of the deliberations on the treaty undertaken in the French National Assembly between 1950 and 1954 demonstrates that a realist explanation of France's defeat of its own progeny is unfeasible. A further attempt to explain this phenomenon through the use of Andrew Moravscik's *Liberal Theory of International Relations* is more telling but still incomplete. In reality, explaining France's defeat of the EDC must take three supplementary concerns into question. These independent variables are an ideational conception of French national sovereignty, the desire to maintain the perceived Great Power status that represents an important element of French national identity; as well as the chaos of domestic politics in Fourth Republic France, more specifically the disturbing presence of the Gaullist Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF) party. It is proposed that an examination of France's defeat of the EDC despite strong American pressure for its ratification might shed greater light on the evolution of contemporary American-French animosity.

The Nature of the European Defence Community: Opposition and Support

The original EDC plan was presented by René Pleven in the French National Assembly on the 25th of October 1950. The Pleven Plan proposed the rearmament of Germany in a format that can be seen as a corollary to the European Coal and Steel Community. Its essence was the integration of a portion of the national military forces of all signatories, with incorporation taking place at the sub-divisional level of the combat team (battalion).[6] Furthermore, the formation of supra-national institutions, namely a high authority (commissariat), a council of ministers, a European parliament, and a Court of Justice would represent the first step in the construction of a European political community[7]. After two days of sometimes heated debate, the National Assembly adopted an order of the day, proposed by prominent members of the Républicains Indépendants party, stating its approval of the government's declarations and its unwillingness to allow for the creation of a German army or high command[8]. It is clear that this order of the day represented a realist concern with avoiding both the disruption of the contemporaneous European continental balance of power as well as the resurgence of German economic preponderance and aggressive militarism. Kevin Ruane proposes that this also represented the French assembly's strong desire to preclude German accession to the recently created North Atlantic Treaty, as well as avoid the withdrawal of American forces from the continent and a US policy shift towards a doctrine of peripheral containment[9].

Adding to this, William Hitchcock states that it also represented France's desire, in a time of severe budgetary difficulties, to ensure the maintenance of high levels of American foreign aid to sustain its war in Indochina[10]. Simultaneously, it represented a placation of American worries that a French refusal to allow German rearmament would mean "the loss of the German defense contribution, the undermining of NATO's forward defense strategy, and the risk of a disillusioned West Germany drifting into the Soviet orbit."[11] However, despite these attempts at placation, America did not give an immediate stamp of approval to the Pleven Plan. In a series of 1950 letters from American Secretary of State Dean Acheson to Robert Schuman, the former stated that if the Europeans could work it out "in a practical manner", it might constitute a "sound basis" for future military and economic strength. However, his definition of "practical manner" was not met by the original Pleven Plan which he referred to as "unrealistic and undesirable" and "hastily conceived without serious military advice."[12]

February 1951 marked the beginning of formal negotiations between France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries. Within this context, America began to display greater warmth towards the EDC. An important example of this is NATO Supreme European Commander General Eisenhower's conversion from complete aversion to total support of the treaty. Originally stating that the Pleven Plan would be "more divisive than unifying in its effects because it included every kind of obstacle, difficulty, and fantastic notion that misguided humans could put together,"[13] his discussion of the plan with some of its proponents clearly changed his mind. In a speech delivered in London on July 3rd 1951, he suggested that rapid European integration would bring "miracles for the common good" to all Europeans[14]. The pursuit of intra-European negotiations was cemented by the American Senate's February 1951 decision to increase its total continental European divisional deployment from four to six[15] as well as Dean Acheson's success in securing the approval of the American National Security Council for the EDC proposal in July 1951[16]. The shift in the American perception of the proposed treaty led to its renewed debate in the French Assembly in February 1952 under the premiership of Edgar Faure. Debate began with an introductory allocution by centrist MRP party member and Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman who exhorted the assembly to provide its assent to the treaty:

"Is it not also a very French tradition to come up with ideas that are simultaneously strict yet generous? It is this that makes us, simultaneously, the most traditional and revolutionary country in all of Europe!"[17]

Despite Schuman's pleas, opposition within the assembly had already begun to grow. The Gaullist R.P.F. party provided the most hostile reception to the treaty on the basis of its erosion of national sovereignty. R.P.F. assemblymen Goistard de Monsabert sardonically said:

"To limit within the egg the sovereignty of the fledgling Germans, we are ready to sacrifice our own. To prevent German nationalism from manifesting itself militarily, we are not hesitant to dissolve our own army."[18]

Further opposition on the basis of Germany's purported Eastward irredentism and the treaty's disregard for Soviet attempts at détente came from numerous Communist speakers. Also, a large portion of the divided Socialist party

decried the treaty as militarily ineffective and an affront to the ultimate goal of ensuring complete European disarmament and unification. Prominent Socialist Marcel Maegelen said:

"Our friend Jules Moch said this morning that the proposal reminded him of the empire of Charlemagne. I am, on the other hand, more reminded of the empire of Louis-the-Debonnaire. The head of this empire will be lacking Charlemagne's powerful hand. It is not the proposed institutions that will replace the hand of the emperor at the head of this resurrection."[19]

The end result of the debate, obtained only with Premier Faure's attachment of a confidence motion to the order of the day, was a mandate for negotiators that stipulated the necessity of ensuring full British participation, of ensuring that the treaty would be defined exclusively in defensive terms, the resolution of the issue of the Sarr territory, as well as a guarantee that no German troops would be recruited until the ratification of the treaty by the French Assembly[20].

The result of these negotiations, undertaken within the context of the mandate provided by the Assembly, was May 1952's Treaty of Paris. Signed by the six powers involved, this treaty established a clearly supranational European Defense Community. Most importantly, it was marked by several important divergences from the original Pleven Plan presented in the French National Assembly in 1950. Firstly, rather than simply committing a portion of its armed forces to the supranational institution, the Treaty of Paris stipulated that the entirety of the French army, save for those troops involved exclusively in colonial and other extra-territorial endeavors, would be integrated into the EDC. The basis of this modification was strong opposition from the West German government to any clauses of the treaty that would result in unequal treatment of the member states. If France only committed a portion of its forces while Germany committed its entire military, France would still retain autonomous control over a significant portion of its forces. Such a situation was unacceptable to Adenauer's burgeoning government[21]. A second important divergence was the establishment of the total number of divisions contained within the institution, namely 14 for France and 12 for Germany. This was significant because it meant that the German contribution would represent 1/3 of the total forces rather than the $1/5^{th}$ previously envisioned[22]. Other divergences included integration at the divisional level rather than at that of the combat team (battalion), as well as the subordination of EDC force deployment decision-making power from the institution's own commissariat to the NATO high-command[23].

The Defeat of the European Defence Community

French debate on the results of the Paris negotiations occurred in November 1953. By this time, opposition to the treaty had solidified because of the additional abrogation of sovereignty engendered by the Paris Treaty's provisions. It is important to note that this period was one of great domestic instability for France. On May $21^{st,}$ France's pro-EDC prime-minister, René Mayer, lost a vote of confidence on his financial policy because of the defection of anti-EDC Gaullist RPF members from his governing coalition[24]. After a thirty-six day period without any government in power, relatively obscure Républicains Indépendants member Joseph Laniel assumed the prime-ministership. The arguments presented in the November 1953 debates were similar to those presented in February 1952, save for the more severe criticisms of the renunciation of sovereignty that the EDC was seen to represent. Like in 1952, the government attached a confidence motion to the order of the day it proposed. Problematically for many members of the assembly, this declaration epitomized subjectivity. Stating: "The National Assembly approves the declarations of the government, asks for no additions, and thus gives the order of the day"[25], it was approved by a very slim majority of the assembly.

The French government continued its attempts to gain legislative approval for the treaty by attempting to convince its allies to ratify what were referred to as additional protocols. The 1954 defeat of French forces at the battle of Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam led to the resignation of the Laniel government. At this time, Républicains Indépendants party-member Pierre Mendès-France successfully formed a legislative majority and assumed the prime-ministership. An element of his coalition-building activity was promising the Gaullist members of his coalition the securing of a number of additional protocols that would make the EDC acceptable to them. During his oration at the August 1954 debates, Mendès-France described his inability to get the other states involved to consent to these, namely: the maintenance of a veto right over any council or commissariat decision for eight years, the nationalization of the budget approval

process, a delay in the implementation of the supra-nationalization of recruitment and promotion, and most importantly, the sole integration of covering forces, in other words, those stationed in Germany. At the same time, Mendès-France ambiguously stated that there were alternatives to resolving the issue of German rearmament other than the EDC[26]. Mendes-France's partial disavowal of the treaty, his refusal to attach a confidence motion to the vote, and the negative reports from all but one of the government's commissions on the subject led to the EDC's defeat by procedural motion on August 31st 1954[27].

Theoretical Linkages and the Defeat of the European Defence Community: Realism

With the realist roots of the EDC proposal in mind, it is imperative to determine if the same type of concerns prompted its defeat. In *Theory of International Politics*, Kenneth Waltz proposes Structural Realism, a systemic theory of state behavior. In short, structural realism proposes that states are undifferentiated unitary rational actors, whose actions are structurally-determined objective responses to changes in the anarchic international system's balance of power[28]. Disregarding the realist premise of inherent distrust between states precluding cooperation, based on both the realist nature of the factors determining the treaty's proposal as well as for the sake of analytical clarity, one can conjecture that realist objections to the treaty would be based on three principal axioms. These are the lack of British participation precluding an effective defense, Soviet moves towards détente making the treaty unnecessary, and the risk of renewed German belligerence through rearmament.

Firstly, many members of the French National Assembly stated the need to include Britain in any construction of a unified Europe. The return to power of Winston Churchill's Conservative party in 1951 lent hope of British accession to France's proponents of the EDC. However, Churchill refused to commit Britain to the plan despite his affirmations of support for it. For example, during a November 1951 visit to Paris, Churchill stated that "Europe would never be strong unless French troops could march to the 'Marseillaise' and Germans to the 'Wacht am Rhein' "[29]. Over the course of negotiations, French officials were only able to obtain a vague English promise that it would maintain a British military presence on the continent[30]. Hence, considering the previous historical necessity of a British contribution to French defense in World Wars I and II, it is possible to consider the lack of British participation as a legitimate independent variable in regards to France's rejection of the EDC. However, this variable is far from sufficient in explaining the rejection. This statement is premised on the fact that a primary source analysis of the French debates on the EDC shows that British participation was a marginal concern for French speakers. In fact, during the four years of debate, no speaker focused his oration solely on the subject of British participation. Rather, it was always a tangential factor in the discussion.

The second potential realist variable for rejection is the Soviet proposals for détente made during the course of the debate on the treaty. Events like the death of Stalin in 1953, as well as occasional and transitory Soviet proposals for the reopening of four-way negotiations on German reunification were brought up repeatedly by Communist orators during the French Assembly's EDC debates. However, William Hitchcock qualifies these as a ruse used by the Soviets to garner the support of France's left-leaning population[31]. Communist speakers such as Maurice Kriegel-Vairimont and François Billoux capitalized on this public opposition by bringing it up during the debates. However, the Soviet détente variable is clearly not a legitimate independent one in the context of the treaty's defeat. Firstly, Philip Williams proposes that the French Communist party often acted as a proxy for the Soviet Union's interests in Fourth Republic France[32]. Secondly, Pierre Mendes-France refused to count any Communist votes in support of the formation of his government[33]. Hence, it is clear that Communist points of view were seen as idiosyncratic and largely ignored during the most important debates on the EDC's fate. Perceptions of Soviet policy as "warming up" during this period must thus be ignored. Finally, the variable of German rearmament leading to renewed German belligerence is clearly illegitimate on the basis of social scientific rigor. The reasoning behind this statement is that it is inherently tautological in this context. It is scientifically unsound to explain the defeat of a solution to a problem using the problem itself as an independent variable. Hence, the threat of renewed German belligerence must also be brushed aside to ensure a sound analysis.

Theoretical Linkages and the Defeat of the European Defence Community: Constructivism

However, an examination of the French Assembly debates on the EDC demonstrates that these factors were

subsumed by the key independent variable that is France's particular and highly salient ideational conception of national sovereignty. The four years of debate on the treaty are thoroughly permeated with orators mentioning the indivisible nature of the French Republic and the hideous offense to this that the EDC represents. The perceived affront to French sovereignty is two-fold. Jules Moch, reporting for the Foreign Affairs Commission on August 28th 1945, illustrated the first dimension of this abrogation. Ratifying the EDC would not only deprive France of its national army but also preclude its ability to control its own military budget, nominate its own officers and adequately maintain order in its overseas territories[34]. The other dimension of this perceived detraction is related to the loss of an intangible – that of the unique character of France's sovereignty, determined by such historical forces as the French Revolution and the Résistance during WWII. The most powerful oration of this dimension can be seen in the speech by former president Édouard Herriot that closed the August 1954 debates. Discussing the additional protocols forced upon Mendes-France's government by the RPF, Hérriot said: "Yes, for us, it is not a question of details, of comma placement, or of added sentences. For us, it is the question of France's life or death".[35]

Hence, the principal independent variable explaining France's rejection of its own EDC proposal was a concern with the maintenance of national sovereignty, in both its practical and ideational forms. While the treaty was prompted by structural-level realist concerns, the reasons for its defeat are found at the domestic and ideational levels of analysis. While France proposed the EDC as a way of precluding the perceived dangers of German rearmament, the loss of sovereignty implied by the results of the negotiations with its potential partners overrode the gains to be made through the maintenance of control over the German military.

A second important independent variable discovered through primary source analysis is France's desire to maintain its great-power status. Throughout the debates, members of the Républicains Indépendants, the Français Indépendants, the Républicain Radical et Radical-Socialiste, and the RPF, painted a portrait of the EDC as an institution that would severely undermine France's great-power status. From the substance of the debates, it appears that, despite France's defeat in the two World Wars, it maintained a conception of itself as representing, along with the U.S., England, and the U.S.S.R., one of the global system's great powers. The sentiment of the French assembly in regards to this issue is clearly demonstrated by Communist speaker Jacques Duclos' discourse despite the generally idiosyncratic nature of Communist interventions:

"We are here not to please Mr. Eisenhower and Adenauer. We are to defend France, and to stand tall against those who want to make our nation a humiliated satellite of the Nazi irredentists and their transatlantic masters."[36]

In other words, French legislators feared that their ability to make autonomous foreign policy decisions regarding systemic issues would be precluded through the subordination of their military sovereignty to a supranational institution. A corollary to this would necessarily be the loss of the great-power status so fundamental to French identity.

Finally, the presence of the RPF in the French National Assembly was clearly a disruptive force during the period in which the EDC was discussed. The 1951 National Assembly elections, the first in which the RPF participated, were marked by a high degree of success for the Gaullists. The 21.7% of the popular vote that they won gave them 106 seats and made them the largest bloc in parliament. Considering that these new parliamentarians were fiercely loyal to De Gaulle and that the latter had a strong distaste for the institutions of Fourth Republic France, it is not surprising that the Gaullists and Communists formed an unholy alliance to wreak havoc in the Assembly so as to undermine the system with the goal of achieving its eventual collapse[37]. A powerful example of this havoc-wreaking occurred in March 1952. At this time, several Gaullist deputies violated the orders of De Gaulle and voted to support the candidature of Vichy-era collaborator Antoine Pinay for the prime-ministership. While this led to De Gaulle repudiating his followers and the subsequent dissolution of the RPF, ex-RPF members continued to act in line with the Gaullist policy that they had followed under the RPF. Because of its dependence on the RPF members, Pinay's government could not adequately negotiate the modalities of the EDC[38]. Hence, the third and final independent variable garnered through the examination of the French parliamentary debates on the EDC is the disruption caused by the RPF.

Conclusion

As it has been demonstrated above, it is impossible to provide a monolithic realist explanation for France's defeat of its own EDC proposal. Rather, it is necessary to delve into the constructivist realm of identity and historical determinism to fully understand the treaty's defeat. The disruptive presence of the RPF, France's commitment to the maintenance of its great-power status, as well as a fixation with both the practical and ideational elements of national sovereignty, determined France's rejection of the treaty despite strong realist imperatives for its ratification. A corollary to this argument is that the contemporary animosity in American-French relations may be explained by this focus on sovereignty and national prestige. Events that occurred between the defeat of the EDC and the Iraq war, such as France's withdrawal from the NATO integrated command and its development of a nuclear "force de frappe" might be further manifestations of these predominant French characteristics. Hence, it may be possible that the strong focus on prestige and national sovereignty engendered by America's contemporary status as the global hegemon may be intrinsically oppositional to France's similar ideationally-dictated proclivities. Hence, while analysts such as Davis may see the current level of Franco-American animosity as being at its apex, it is possible that the above-mentioned variables will engender a perpetuation of this state of affairs.

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