

Relations between the United States and the EEC

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After the end of the Second World War, the United States actively encouraged European efforts towards federalisation and economic and political union. President John F. Kennedy reiterated the US commitment to a united Europe in speeches such as his 'great new edifice' speech, made in Philadelphia on American Independence Day (4 July) 1962. In that speech he proposed a special partnership between Europe and the United States in order to defend the community of free nations more effectively. The initiative, which met with a very favourable response from the United Kingdom, was rejected by France, which preferred to develop a national nuclear strike force independent of the United States.

However, as soon as European trade began to provide competition that threatened US economic interests, differences began to arise in the economic sphere. Trade relations between Europe and the USA, conducted under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), were sometimes strained.

In general, though, the European States accepted the role of the United States as the major Western power, if only because of the constraints of the Cold War. However, younger Europeans took an increasingly unsympathetic view of American involvement in Vietnam.