

The international context: the Suez Crisis (1956) and the Hungarian Uprising (1956)

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The international climate in the 1950s, over and above any immediate economic considerations, particularly highlighted the pressing need to revive the European integration process. The declaration on the nationalisation of the Suez Canal in July 1956 and Soviet intervention in Hungary in November 1956 were forceful reminders to the ‘founding fathers’ of Europe that the lone European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) did not carry much weight when faced with threats arising from international events. [The intervention of Soviet troops in Budapest](#) on 4 November 1956 served as a powerful demonstration of the ever-present Soviet threat and drove home the importance for the countries of Western Europe to continue on the path of integration.

- [Cartoon by Behrendt on Soviet military intervention in Hungary \(1956\)](#)
- [Account by Robert Rothschild: the Soviet intervention in Hungary \(Rome, 27 March 1987\)](#)

[The Suez Crisis](#) had also left its mark on the international community. The major world powers (the United States and the USSR) were highly critical of the action taken by France and the United Kingdom in the Suez Canal region. The USSR threatened Paris and London with nuclear reprisals while the United States, despite being a traditional ally of the European powers, complained that it had not been consulted beforehand. It did not appreciate this kind of neo-colonial gunboat diplomacy at all, and exerted enormous financial pressure on the United Kingdom through the United Nations. France was diplomatically humiliated and was powerless against the United States and the Soviet Union; once again, a united Europe appeared the best way for France to continue to play a major role on the international stage. German Chancellor Konard Adenauer also refused to hide his disappointment at the US attitude.

But the diplomatic and military failure that resulted from the Suez Crisis also demonstrated [the energy dependence of Western Europe](#) and the need to retain access to foreign reserves of raw materials.

The only means of guaranteeing peace and prosperity seemed to be to build a stronger Europe.

- [Interview with Jean François-Poncet: the international background to the Val Duchesse negotiations \(Paris, 16 March 2007\)](#)