

General de Gaulle's foreign policy

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When [General de Gaulle](#) returned to power on 1 June 1958, he intended to put France firmly back on the map by equipping it with the resources required for a [policy of independence and grandeur](#). This was his paramount interest as he sought to give a new impetus to European integration.

After having his [plans for the reform of NATO](#) rejected by the Americans and British in 1959 and 1960, General de Gaulle partly focused his international activities on achieving a politically integrated Europe. In July 1960, he discussed his views on [European political union](#) with [Germany's Chancellor Adenauer](#). De Gaulle's objective was to reform the European Communities, with the aim of establishing a Europe of states. To that end, his proposals included regular meetings between ministers, the Heads of State or Government of the Six and senior officials in order to discuss specific political, economic, cultural and defence issues. He also proposed that an advisory assembly, composed of members of the national parliaments, should be created to support such meetings. Essentially, what de Gaulle proposed to Adenauer was none other than a sort of [Franco-German confederation](#) with common citizenship. He counted on the influence of the Franco-German partnership to gain the support of the other European partners for the building of an autonomous Europe. This led to the first Community negotiations, despite the Chancellor's guarded response and the differing views among the Six on the subject of [British participation](#).

On 19 October 1961, [Christian Fouchet](#) submitted to the Study Group an initial draft treaty ([Fouchet Plan I](#)), establishing an indissoluble union of states based on intergovernmental cooperation and respect for the identity of Member States and their peoples.

Fearing French domination of the foreign policy of the Six, France's partners [opposed](#) the draft treaty as submitted. They also rejected any strengthening of the institutions' intergovernmental character, which they regarded as a threat to the independence and supranational nature of the Community bodies. Moreover, the Netherlands was reluctant to further complicate the Common Market enlargement negotiations under way with the United Kingdom or to jeopardise the ongoing discussions between Europe and America on the future of NATO. In the light of this opposition, de Gaulle hardened his stance and abandoned the compromises that the European negotiators had reached. On 18 January 1962, Christian Fouchet accordingly submitted a new version of the plan ([Fouchet Plan II](#)), but France's partners, notably the [Benelux countries](#), once again lambasted and rejected the plan.

[The failure of the Fouchet Plans](#) sparked off a series of crises, characterised by disagreement on the very nature of the European unification process, the powers of the Community institutions, European independence and solidarity with the USA. The Heads of State or Government did not meet again for seven years. This failure did, however, lead to a strengthening of [Franco-German relations](#). De Gaulle supported a Europe of which France and Germany were the main pillars, although he rejected any significant transfer of [sovereignty](#) to a supranational authority. This Franco-German rapprochement culminated in the signing of the [Élysée Treaty](#) on 22 January 1963.