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Occasional Paper No. 9211
December, 1992

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Old Thinking And The New Europe:
The Persisting Influence of
De Gaulle and Thatcher

David M. Wood

OLD THINKING AND THE NEW EUROPE: THE PERSISTING INFLUENCE OF DE GAULLE AND THATCHER

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In May 1992 French President François Mitterrand and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl reached agreement on the upgrading of the recently formed Franco-German brigade to corps status. The "Eurocorps" will reach full strength by 1995 and will be open to the inclusion of components of armies of other European members of NATO which are also members of Western European Union (WEU). British Prime Minister John Major sought belatedly and unsuccessfully to forestall the Franco-German agreement by suggesting a larger WEU force, including units from all member countries and "earmarked for NATO" (The Economist, May 23, 1992: 51-53). In this initiative Britain was playing its traditional role as surrogate for the United States in the face of French efforts to draw Germany away from its commitment to NATO and its willingness to follow US leadership in security matters (Allen, 1988: 49-50). Chancellor Kohl, in insisting that the Eurocorps would remain tied to NATO, was exhibiting Germany's usual reluctance to make a clear-cut choice between the United States, NATO's leader, and France, which, under General de Gaulle in 1966, had asserted its independence of US hegemony by leaving the NATO command structure.

Today the European security picture is vastly different from what it was in de Gaulle's time, given the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, the end of the Cold War confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact in Central Europe, and the rise of ethno-nationalist armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia and the former USSR. Even today, when the danger to the security of Western Europe seems much more remote and progress in the European Community toward economic and monetary union much more significant than in the de Gaulle era, whenever security issues arise the principal Western European states still revert to their traditional stances vis-à-vis one another and vis-à-vis the erstwhile "hegemon". French security policy positions and the political style of President Mitterrand cannot be fully understood without an understanding of de Gaulle's legacy. It can be predicted that elements of "Gaullism" will continue to guide the declarations and actions of French policymakers in the future, whatever their political color may be.

Although he did not write on a blank slate, Charles de Gaulle was decisive in shaping the French approaches to European political and security questions, elements of which are still visible today. Margaret Thatcher, who, like de Gaulle, was the most significant leader of her country since World War II, had less of an impact on British approaches to the same questions than did de Gaulle on his side or than she herself did on domestic policy matters. However, she did act in such a way as to reassert traditional British policy positions (Smith, 1988: 9-10) and to make it more difficult for her successor to depart from them. Analysts of her policies toward Europe have noted similarities between her defense of state sovereignty and de Gaulle's (Franklin and Wilke, 1990: 11-12; Treverton, 1990, 704). The following discussion compares the approaches to Europe of Charles de Gaulle and Margaret

Thatcher as part of their overall political strategies. The two approaches will be analyzed for similarities and differences, and an assessment will be made of the longer term influence of each leader.

De Gaulle and Thatcher: General Similarities

Charles de Gaulle and Margaret Thatcher were both in power for about 11 years and both experienced a decline in public support preceding their resignations. More important were similarities in their conceptions of leadership. Both insisted upon their own independence of special interests, including in de Gaulle's case, political parties. De Gaulle actually institutionalized this independence, constitutionally distancing the President from parliamentary controls. Thatcher made imperviousness to influence a part of her political style. She denigrated the more malleable leadership styles of her predecessors. Like de Gaulle, she was not adept at building coalitions with European partners (Allen, 1988: 39). Like the General (Kolodziej, 1974: 52, n. 63), she appeared to be quite comfortable in saying "no"; but she is less renowned than he was for the skillful use of silence (Cerny, 1980: 66; Sharp, 1991: 408).

In both cases the intent of a personalized and independent leadership style was to demonstrate to a disenchanted public that the state could be strong and purposeful (Cerny, 1980: 46-47; Gamble, 1988: 31-32). This was designed to reawaken or vindicate national pride that had been frustrated by signs of uncertainty and division among previous leaders. Symbolism was employed toward this end in the public personalities both leaders displayed.

In terms of national power in the international arena, both leaders, having inherited poor cards when they took office, wished to improve their hands. Both directed attention

and resources toward national defense, believing a strong defense, including a nuclear deterrent, to be the ultimate guarantor of national independence (Harrison, 1981: 55-57; Tugendhat and Wallace, 1988: 75-77). Both de Gaulle and Thatcher, albeit from quite different views of political economy, worked to strengthen their nations' economies, recognizing that the estimates of their countries' weight in the eyes of other international actors would be heavily influenced by economic indicators (Hoffmann, et al., 1964: 77; Tugendhat and Wallace 1988: 22-25). Both enjoyed personal authority that could not be transferred to their successors (Tugendhat and Wallace, 1988: 25).

With respect to the European Community, both were consistent, though not completely inflexible, in their opposition to the principle of supranationality. Neither would accept the idea of Europe as providing the social basis for supranationality. There were Frenchmen and Englishmen, not Europeans, in the sense of an integrated society or "identikit" culture (Cerny, 1980: 45-48; The Economist, September 24, 1988: 61). Both preferred intergovernmental cooperation to centralized decisions in the making of EC foreign policy, and both expected that such a framework would optimize their chances of bringing partner states along with them in policies of their own choosing (Grosser, 1982: 188; Allen, 1988: 36, 49). When frustrated in such objectives, both preferred to employ other avenues rather than to yield to the combined preferences of partner states, although de Gaulle was freer from domestic constraints in that respect, and Thatcher's goals for the EC were less ambitious, thus less vulnerable to rebuffs by other governments (George, 1990: 164-165). Both regarded monetary and fiscal policy, as well as external relations, as "high policy" matters to be decided by the principal executive leader, exercising vigilance against

threatened loss of national independence (Wise, 1989: 61-63; Smith 1988: 26-27).

De Gaulle and Thatcher: General Differences

Similarities in style should not be overemphasized. Both leaders displayed styles in foreign affairs that fit their respective national diplomatic traditions. De Gaulle epitomized the French belief in the existence of rational solutions to problems discovered through the application of intellect and fitting within a grand design. Application of the design, however, was guided by intuition as well as by intellect, both exercised in mesure (Cerny, 1980: 41-42, 70). Thatcher had less of the traditional British pragmatism than the typical British leader; indeed, her attacks upon her predecessors, especially Edward Heath, were attacks upon their failure to remain true to principle (Riddell, 1983: 22, 44). But her own fidelity to principle was more evident in domestic policy; it is difficult to document a grand design in her foreign policies. With the exception of her stance toward the EC, her foreign policies were in accord with the traditional, pragmatic, lines of British foreign policy, the continuity for which was assured by the Foreign Office (Byrd, 1988: 2). Even in the case of her EC disputes over the budget and over Economic and Monetary Union, she did not deviate from Foreign Office and Treasury policy objectives so much as she did in the vehemence with which she insisted upon them. In this, her intuitions sometimes clashed with the intellects of her advisers (George, 1990: 206-208).

De Gaulle was President during a period when the predominance of the United States in Europe had reached its apogee and was teetering at the brink of decline (Ginsberg, 1989: 265-266). In de Gaulle's version of "rational egoism" (Keohane, 1984: 66-67), France's position in Europe, including both the European Community and the Atlantic Alliance,

should be directed toward the goal of hastening the decline of US hegemony in Europe (Hoffmann, 1974: 301-302). His objection to British membership in the Community and his withdrawal from the Atlantic defense organization (but not from the Alliance) both can be deduced as logical moves emanating from this objective.

By Thatcher's Prime Ministership British diplomacy had for four decades been premised upon Churchill's recognition of the need to maintain a privileged partnership with the United States which would enable Britain to exercise influence over the European policies of the hegemon (Northedge, 1983: 28-29). Originally a pragmatic wartime recognition of Britain's transatlantic dependence in security terms, this cornerstone of British foreign policy was strengthened after World War II by the emergence of the Cold War and by a growing sense of economic dependence. The latter continued for Britain into the 1960s and 1970s, while continental European countries were closing the economic gap, if not reducing their security dependence, on the United States. Prime Minister Thatcher saw no reason to alter traditional British support for US Alliance leadership; indeed, her personal ideological solidarity with Ronald Reagan strengthened it (Sanders, 1989: 179). She may even have believed that her personal influence with Reagan had restored Britain's self-ascribed postwar capacity to interpret for the transatlantic partner what was needed in Europe.

As noted in the previous section, both Thatcher and de Gaulle were committed to strong national defenses, including credible nuclear deterrents. Both led their countries during a period when the credibility of the US nuclear deterrent, especially in the eyes of Western Europeans, was in decline, de Gaulle at the beginning of the time-span and Thatcher at the end. De Gaulle wanted French defense capacities to be independent of NATO and saw

the French nuclear deterrent as an independent reinforcement of the American deterrent, improving the credibility of Western retaliatory intent in Soviet minds, and in French, German, and even American minds as well. When the first French atomic bomb was tested in February 1960, it was already conceived as making realizable de Gaulle's independent nuclear striking force, the force de frappe (Kohl, 1970: 93-106), which has remained separate from NATO coordination and thus has not been subordinate to US-determined NATO strategic doctrine (Howorth, 1990: 207). The intended role of the British nuclear deterrent vis-à-vis the Soviets was a different matter. Under Thatcher, as under her predecessors, deployment of British nuclear weapons has been developed and updated in close partnership with the United States (Vivekanandan, 1991: 413), a double-edged advantage which France was denied (Kohl, 1971: 50-51).

De Gaulle argued that an independent French defense capability would add qualitatively to the psychological effect of the Western defense posture because of the greater credibility of the threat to use it by a European power concerned for defending its own territory. Although it is likely that he believed this to be a valid assumption, the force de frappe was also a key to de Gaulle's assertion of political independence vis-a-vis the United States and to his pretensions to grandeur (Harrison, 1981: 49-57). It might even be argued that de Gaulle's political uses of the French deterrent were of greater importance than the military use, because he calculated that Soviet offensive designs toward Western Europe, apart from West Berlin, were figments of the imagination of NATO strategic designers. For her part, Thatcher believed that strengthening British defenses within NATO would add quantitatively to the aggregate psychological impact of NATO's posture (Sharp, 1991: 403).

In this respect, too, she did not depart, as de Gaulle most emphatically had done, from her country's longer-standing strategic doctrine. Britain had always acted as if it believed in Soviet aggressive predilections. While the British deterrent was "independent" in the sense that Britain could decide for itself whether to use it or not in the face of an uncertain US commitment to the defense of Western Europe, it was not seen as a tool for gaining political ends as ambitious as independence and grandeur. At most, the goal was to gain respect from Washington as an equal interdependent partner in order to continue having influence over US policies toward European security (Sanders, 1989: 242-246).

But Margaret Thatcher did have a non-traditional view in the realm of domestic policy, if not what could be called a grand design of her own (Kavanagh, 1987: 9-13). It was also a view that contributed to her intransigence on matters of EC policy.

"Thatcherism" sought the removal of the state from the economy in Britain, while strengthening the state's capacity to resist societal forces seeking to use the state to promote their partial interest to the detriment of the national welfare (Gamble, 1988). This led her to approve of the trade liberalizing initiatives of Project 1992, while attempting to bring EC spending under control (George, 1990: 160-162) and guarding against the centralization of state-like powers in the hands of the EC Commission. Limiting the EC's independence accorded with her opposition to centralized state control over the economy generally and to the loss of British state sovereignty in areas, such as monetary policy, where she felt the state should play a role (Allen, 1988: 45-46; Franklin and Wilke, 1990: 11-13). [1] De Gaulle's opposition to an accretion of the Commission's powers was primarily on the grounds of loss of state sovereignty (Kolodziej, 1974: 49-50). To the extent that he held

consistent views regarding the role of the French state in the economy, they accorded with traditional French skepticism about the viability of an unregulated economy, adding an upper-class disdain for laissez faire capitalism (Cerny, 1980: 53). This meant that the French state should play an active role in promoting industrial modernization, economic growth and social reconciliation; but it should be the French state, not a super-state in Brussels.

In fact, de Gaulle's grand design for Europe required a leading role for France as defender of Europe's global interests. A supranational Europe would be a Europe with divided political leadership, ineffectual at the level of international haute politique. His concept of France as European leader lay behind both his 1958 proposal of a joint directorate of Western leaders, the United States, Britain and France, to "function on a worldwide political and strategic level" (quoted in Grosser, 1982: 187), and also his 1963 rejection of British entry into the Community (Hoffmann, 1974: 302-303). For her part, Thatcher wanted only for Britain to remain politically autonomous within Europe. A weak EC would not be a threat to British independence. Whereas de Gaulle saw the United States as the chief threat to France's (and Europe's) independence, Thatcher saw Europe as a potential constraint on Britain's ability to follow interests that largely coincided with those of the United States.

It could be argued that, in adding a free market orientation to a de Gaulle-like defense of state sovereignty within the EC, Mrs. Thatcher contributed to the eventual realization of a Gaullist objective--the attainment of a Europe with a more independent self-identity which would nevertheless be a Europe of sovereign states. Under Thatcher, Britain displayed

"greater willingness to assert national priorities, rather than to assume--as it does in its approach to the international economy--that the operations of the international order are generally favorable to British interests . . ." (Tugendhat and Wallace, 1988: 29, emphasis added). Economic unity would foster close political coordination, but would not lead to the abandonment of each state's capacity to pursue an independent course when it deemed it necessary, a likelihood that would diminish over time as states came to define their interest in common ways. This was Thatcher's conception of the EC that would emerge from implementation of the Single European Act (SEA). In doing her best in the "Euroclerosis" years, 1979-1983, to legitimize the free market/strong state "paradigm" as a substitute for the "Keynesian Welfare State", she provided a reformulation of the basic nature and future orientation of Europe that may have contributed to the psychological regeneration, or renewed "Europhoria" of the latter 1980s.[2]

During the first Thatcher administration (1979-83) there was considerable tension between her approaches to both East and West Europe and those which the Foreign Office had been pursuing. Ideologically and temperamentally, she preferred to take stronger stances against both Soviet and EC initiatives that displeased her, than did the sophisticated and bureaucratic Foreign Office (Smith, 1988: 9). By her second term, the Foreign Office had succeeded in educating her to the value of a more diplomatic style (Allen, 1988: 47-48). This "took" permanently in the case of her position toward the USSR, as is discussed below. As for the EC, the period from 1984 to 1988 represented an era of creative British diplomacy, with Mrs. Thatcher's hostilities kept under control for the most part, and the British playing an effective role in limiting the scope of Project 1992 primarily to initiatives

on which Mrs. Thatcher and the Foreign Office could agree (Allen, 1988: 40-41; Cameron, 1992: 59-63).[3]

Policies toward "Significant Others"

The United States. Where differences between Thatcher and de Gaulle were greatest was in the ways they perceived and behaved toward the three "most significant others" for both of their countries: the United States, the USSR, and the Federal German Republic. In general terms, different stances toward the United States played a major role in producing different stances toward the Soviet Union and West Germany. In de Gaulle's case, the grand strategy subsumed attitudes toward all three. This can be summarized in two words: "grandeur" and "independence". Grandeur for France did not signify pretensions to superpower status. What de Gaulle objected to was the notion that the world had become divided into blocs led by superpowers who would permit France to attain no more than a middle rank in world politics (Hoffmann, 1974: 190). The hegemonic actions of the United States as superpower had "robbed the nation-state of its raison d'être." (Kolodziej, 1974: 42). But the subjective view of France held by the rest of the world and the French themselves could be elevated through inspired statesmanship (Harrison, 1981: 52-54). The subjective nature of grandeur suggests that it would be difficult for French leaders to maintain it in the absence of an inspired statesman. Most important was the capacity of such a statesman to employ nationalistic symbolism to draw together the populace of a divided nation and to leave an enhanced sense of national pride with them after his departure (Cerny, 1980: 80-88).

National independence for France was a more tangible objective than grandeur. It

meant a capacity of the French state to judge for itself in each case whether the wishes of a more powerful state, or some collectivity of states, would be in the best interests of France and to align itself with those wishes or not, depending upon the judgment made (Harrison, 1981: 49-51). The existence of a hegemonic power, the United States, in the early postwar period had deprived the French state of such independence, and de Gaulle was determined to recapture it. The Cuban missile crisis convinced him that the United States remained the superior world power in the 1960s (Grosser, 1982: 199). This, along with the ending of the Algerian War, provided him the leeway to steer a course that often clashed with US objectives, including the French exit from the NATO military organization and the development of the independent French nuclear strike force (Kolodziej, 1974: 44-45). He believed that such steps would not diminish the capacity of the United States to protect the vital interests of the Western bloc (ibid.: 185).

Britain's relations with the United States since World War II have exhibited neither grandeur nor independence, and the Thatcher period is no exception to this generalization. Prime Minister Thatcher continued the pursuit of the "special relationship" with the United States, subscribing to the Kennedy view that Britain should bolster the "European pillar" of the Atlantic Alliance (Allen, 1988: 49). This meant that acts of independence were few and far between. But, from the Thatcher point of view, the benefits (most notably US support in the Falklands War) have outweighed what to de Gaulle would have been an unacceptable cost, the existence of an asymmetrical interdependence (Sanders, 1989: 179-180). Again, Mrs. Thatcher was not departing from long-standing habits of British foreign policymakers in according US policy initiatives the benefit of the doubt. In the context of European security,

she was concerned that the US commitment to the defense of Western Europe not be weakened as a reaction to irritating acts of independence by the Europeans (Smith, 1988: 16-17). De Gaulle, for his part, had proceeded under the assumption that, in the long run, US interest in European security would diminish, an assumption which he used to justify his challenge to US hegemony in the 1960s.

The Soviet Union. The very sharp difference between "Gaullist" and "Thatcherite" views of relations with the United States is essential to an understanding of their different ways of approaching the Eastern regional hegemon, the USSR. De Gaulle is generally credited with having been a pioneer in exploring the possibilities of East-West detente. Until the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev to Soviet leadership, Margaret Thatcher was, like Ronald Reagan, a latter-day cold warrior (George, 1990: 144; Sanders, 1989: 193-194.)

De Gaulle's overtures toward the East were primarily in the service of his quest for independence vis-a-vis the United States. He desired a world in which states would be free to form, break and re-form alliances independent of ideological affinities, and he acted as if such a world had returned in his day (Kolodziej, 1974: 39-42). Whether he believed in the reality of such a model is less important than the fact that acting as if he did helped to create perceptions on the part of others that France at least, if no other state, was free to move about in the no-man's land between the two blocs. But when it came time to demonstrate on whose side France really stood, as in the cases of the Khrushchev era crises--Berlin, U-2, and Cuba--de Gaulle sided with his Western allies (Grosser, 1982: 185). Mrs. Thatcher did so not only in crises of East-West relations (Afghanistan, the Korean jetliner), but also in cases where the United States was pitted against Middle Eastern foes--the Iran hostage crisis,

Lebanon, the bombing of Libya (Sanders, 1989: 180-184) and, in the last months before her resignation, the Gulf War. She was, to be exact, less supportive of Reagan's policy of selective economic sanctions in Eastern Europe, and of various US ventures against alleged Soviet surrogates in Central American and the Caribbean (Vivekanandan, 1991: 417; Smith, 1988: 19-23).

In the era of Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, the US and Soviet hegemonies in Europe no longer exist. Just before Gorbachev took the reins of power he visited Britain and impressed Thatcher with his visions of a Soviet Union moving toward political and economic freedom. The harmony between his concept of perestroika and her free market orientation brought from her the acknowledgement that he was "a man with whom we can do business" (George, 1990: 168). As Ronald Reagan's change in thinking about what he had called "the evil empire" came after Margaret Thatcher's, further circumstantial evidence was provided for the British belief in the special influence over US perceptions of Europe that accompanied the special relationship.

Although British foreign policymakers could not have predicted the swiftness with which Eastern European states detached themselves from Soviet influence, they had begun to think in terms of an opening to the East by the NATO states. As the events in Central and Eastern Europe unfolded in 1989-90, Thatcher sought to convince her EC partners that an extension of EC policy competence beyond trade liberalization, e.g., toward full Economic and Monetary Union, would be counterproductive until new relations could be worked out with the USSR and the Eastern European states (Franklin and Wilke, 1990: 12). This accorded with her aversion to considering Britain as part of "Europe", if defined narrowly as

the EC member countries.

It is entirely possible that de Gaulle would, from his different perspective, have wanted to seize similar opportunities in Central and Eastern Europe. He would certainly, like Thatcher, have been cautious about Economic and Monetary Union and opposed to full Political Union or any form of European federalism, although EC widening to include post-Communist European countries might have appeared to him as too confining an approach for France to endorse. His approach would certainly have taken into account the future role that France might play in the region, and he would have paid a great deal of attention to what was happening in Germany.

The Federal Republic. Part of de Gaulle's strategy in seeking greater political independence from the United States involved an effort to make the Federal Republic of Germany likewise more independent. In this he had some encouragement from Konrad Adenauer in his later years as West German Chancellor (Grosser, 1982: 189-190). The "special relationship" between France and West Germany was rendered perfunctory in 1963 when Ludwig Erhard succeeded Adenauer, from which point de Gaulle's chances of exercising positive leadership in Community foreign policymaking were essentially foreclosed (Hanrieder and Auton, 1980: 125-126). However, de Gaulle and Adenauer had succeeded in institutionalizing Franco-German summit meetings. Foreign policy matters continued to be discussed and lower-level cooperative ventures launched.

German unification is not an outcome that de Gaulle would have welcomed. Although he gave Adenauer moral support at the time the Berlin Wall was erected, he saw the Wall as symbolizing the de facto division of Germany. He hoped for a settlement of the "German

question" that would leave Germany divided and West Germany reconciled to the division (Hanrieder and Auton, 1980: 105). The fact that de Gaulle could not entirely avoid paying lip service to the aim of German unification in order not to alienate the West German government suggests how divergent his scenario for Germany's future was from that in Bonn. Despite having a more productive economy, West Germany remained more passive than France in political terms during the de Gaulle/pre-Willy Brandt years, usually following policy initiatives from Washington, rather than those from Paris.

Margaret Thatcher's views of Germany became publicly perceptible only in the wake of Helmut Kohl's rapid advance toward German unification. Her close Cabinet associate, Nicholas Ridley, was likely expressing her views as well when he called Economic and Monetary Union "a German racket to take over Europe," and complained that France had become Germany's "poodle" (Treverton, 1990: 705; The Economist, July 14, 1990: 61). Within the EC the Thatcher government found the effort to keep France and Germany from uniting against Britain to be a recurrent preoccupation (Moravcsik, 1991: 52-61).

In broader terms, Britain was content to see West Germany continue to play a relatively passive political role during the Thatcher years. By the time Mrs. Thatcher came to power, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's influence was waning, although Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher continued to explore potential openings to the East during the unpromising post-Afghanistan, late Schmidt and early Helmut Kohl period of the early 1980s. Meanwhile, the NATO twin-track policy moved ahead in the face of spirited opposition by the anti-nuclear movements in both West Germany and Britain.

In the Kohl era official West German policies gave Britain little cause for concern

prior to 1989. There were signs that Kohl's occasionally heavy-handed behavior in EC summit meetings (notably in the March 1984 Brussels meeting) irritated Mrs. Thatcher (Taylor, 1989: 7-8), perhaps because it violated her conception of properly deferential German behavior. But it seems evident that his swift moves to effectuate German unification in late 1989 and early 1990 caught her off guard and elicited a very emotional anti-Kohl, perhaps even anti-German, response (New York Times, July 16, 1990: A6). The hostility was returned, if with more circumspection (Frankel, 1990). The emerging Germany appeared to Thatcher to be taking advantage of a sudden vacuum to drive for hegemony within Western and Central Europe, while, after initial objections, President Mitterrand was following Kohl's lead (Comfort, 1991). What was far worse, President Bush quickly accepted Bonn's call for swift unification and was proceeding to treat Germany as if it were now the most favored Western partner. The status of Britain's special relationship with the United States, which had been the rock solid base on which Britain had rested its policies toward both Western and Eastern Europe, appeared suddenly problematic (Sharp, 1991: 396).[4]

By the spring and summer of 1990, Mrs. Thatcher's voice was considerably muted in EC summit meetings and in the Houston conference of the seven leading economic powers (Lewis, 1990; New York Times, July 9, 1990: A8). She appeared to be drifting, while others--especially Kohl and EC Commission President Jacques Delors--had seized the initiative. Then, at the beginning of August, by which time Kohl had accomplished all that was necessary to bring about German unification, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait restored the image of Britain as Washington's most reliable partner (Sharp, 1991: 406). Thatcher

recovered her confidence (New York Times, August 31, 1990: A13) and waded into the late October EC summit in some prepared to do battle with Kohl and Mitterrand (New York Times, November 2, 1990: A3). But the coalition in favor of the one-year delay of the second stage of Economic and Monetary Union had been effectively forged and all she could do was publicly vent her frustration at the evidence of her isolation within the EC-12. A month later she was out of office.

Thatcher's political demise occurred for complex reasons, but her misjudgment regarding her ability to block developments in the EC, when skillful British diplomacy might have limited the damage, appears to have been the final indicator for many of her colleagues that a change of leadership was necessary (Apple, 1990). Perhaps she had staked too much psychic capital in a particular view of the world to be able to assimilate anomalous events such as those that were taking place in Europe. The implications of Gorbachev and his revised interpretation of Soviet security needs was a new element that she had recognized but had been unable to translate into a new intellectual political-security framework to guide Britain's policies.

Their Successors and the Relevance of Their Models Today

De Gaulle's successors, one after the other, through the differences in their personal styles from that of the General, gradually scaled down official French pretensions to grandeur and independence, ending the damage inflicted by de Gaulle's policies to Franco-German relations and to France's role in the EC (Hanrieder and Auton, 1980: 130-134). Yet the weight of opinion among commentators is that there has not been much difference in substance between de Gaulle and his successors, including even François

Mitterrand (Willis, 1982: 9-15; Aldrich and Connell, 1989: 4-5). France remains outside the NATO command structure and maintains its own independent deterrent, it continues to provide military assistance to client regimes in Africa, and it still attempts to distinguish its position on Middle East issues from that of the United States. While Gaullist Georges Pompidou remained faithful to the broad policy lines of his predecessor, albeit with a shrinking resource base with which to maintain the appearances of grandeur, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing was kept partially within those lines by the necessity to appease his Gaullist coalition partners (Howorth, 1990: 207-208). "In transcending Gaullism, François Mitterrand's . . . achievement has been to appear more Gaullist than the General through the shrewd use of declarations and symbols, while quietly discarding a certain amount of Gaullist policy." (Ibid.: 208). For example, while reaffirming his commitment to an independent nuclear deterrent, Mitterrand called for the deployment by NATO of Pershing II and Cruise Missiles, although not, of course, in France. On the other hand, while working within the context of UN and EC efforts to find non-military solutions to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, he employed the symbolism of a dangerous visit to Sarajevo to dramatize the need to open a lifeline to its beleaguered Moslem inhabitants. This gesture, which was apparently not subject to prior consultation, was something that de Gaulle might have done himself.

"The end of the superpower confrontation has left France with no fence to sit on, no new alignments to exploit, no obvious need for expensive parts of its nuclear arsenal." (The Economist, November 23, 1991: Survey France, p. 4). France is now promoting EC defense cooperation, is playing a leading role in steering the EC-12 toward Economic and

Monetary Union and Political Union and did, after all, join in the US-led military coalition in the Gulf War. It is very difficult to imagine General de Gaulle steering such courses (*ibid.*: p. 12). They would not have been compatible with his belief that grandeur and independence require acts of differentiation, and it seems especially likely that he would have perceived that the collapse of Soviet hegemony in the East had removed whatever inhibitions he had felt against taking independent positions in crisis situations. By contrast, the current French government reacted to early signs of a revolution in East-West relations with extreme caution, perhaps because of the feared effect it would have on Germany's commitments to Western Europe.

Indeed, it appears that French foreign policy today has become less adventuresome and certainly less productive in areas outside of Western Europe itself, with the possible exception of Francophonic Africa (Howorth, 1990: 213-214). Most notably, France has deferred with reservations to the United States in the Middle East. The Franco-German link has become indispensable in a way it never was for de Gaulle. An effort to assert a positive EC leadership role for France has occurred under all three of de Gaulle's successors: under Pompidou with the package of innovations accompanying the acceptance of British entry, under Giscard with his support for the European Monetary System and direct elections of the European Parliament, and under Mitterrand, in his strong support for the Single European Act, Economic and Monetary Union, the European Social Charter and EC coordination of high tech policies to reduce dependence on the United States and Japan in areas such as telecommunications and computer technology (Moravcsik, 1991: 54-57; Wise, 1989: 55-63). Under Mitterrand the French government's commitment to the Common

Agricultural Policy (CAP) and its support for the French farm sector has diminished, permitting a reduction in CAP's share of the EC budget and a diversion of EC funds toward the recent Mediterranean entrants to Community membership (Moravcsik, 1991: 55-56). In the 1988 presidential election campaign, Mitterrand and his Gaullist opponent, Jacques Chirac, vied with each other in avowing their European credentials (Howorth, 1990: 211).

Notwithstanding instances in which Mitterrand has come onto the stage "playing de Gaulle," the General's style appears to be non-reproducible for France today. The decline of bipolarism has opened up the potential for the new Russian state, and for China, Japan and a possibly united Europe to steer courses that are intended to be for each of them independent of all the others. The "New World Order" may be a very fluid one with elusive, transitory alliance patterns. For the moment at least, NATO provides a structural stability that none of the full members seems to be in a hurry to set aside. But France is seeking to edge fellow EC members in the direction of making the EC, in some guise or another, the inheritor of NATO's military/security role, sans the United States. Mitterrand has even hinted at a "Europeanization" of French defense policy, which could mean a willingness to give up strictly independent French control of de Gaulle's force de frappe (The Economist, January 18, 1992: 48).

The post-Thatcher British government has shown few signs as yet of changing the Thatcherite course--only the Thatcherite style. But the style was never as central to Mrs. Thatcher's foreign policy as it was to de Gaulle's, or for that matter as it was to her domestic policy. The government of John Major, with Douglas Hurd kept on as his Foreign Secretary, continues its efforts to protect British sovereignty in EC councils and to follow the

US lead, while maintaining an input into US deliberations (Vivekanandan, 1991: 416-417). Departures from the substance of Mrs. Thatcher's foreign policy, should they occur, would simultaneously be departures from the traditional lines of British foreign policy, which has remained reasonably constant throughout a very volatile period.

Although Margaret Thatcher did not elaborate a personalized doctrine for British foreign and defense policies, it should be repeated that the doctrine she virtually embodied in domestic policy, "Thatcherism", has implications for international affairs, which her diplomatic actions often seemed to recognize. She clearly believed that a free domestic market cannot be viable unless open to outside competition, which depends upon a world in which barriers to trade have largely been removed. State intervention in the domestic economy and state restriction of external trade are synonymous in Thatcherite thinking. The same applies to EC intervention and trade restriction (Sharp, 1991: 407). She distributed her criticisms of trade restrictive policies evenhandedly among Japan, the United States and her EC partners (Allen, 1988: 48-49). Mrs. Thatcher's successors have shown fidelity to her economic policy principles in continuing to support free trade within the EC and the opening of a larger European Economic Area of the 18 EC and EFTA members.

The liberal British position on external trade contrasts with the traditionally more protectionist French approach that has sought to counter adverse market forces in guiding the destinies of French industry and agriculture. On this score the British have, on occasion, shown the capacity to form temporary coalitions with the Germans, whose social market approach has at times been steered in a decidedly liberal direction, as under former Chancellor Ludwig Erhard. Although it may be necessary for Prime Minister Major to await

the departure of Chancellor Kohl from the scene, the increasing German misgivings about EMU, especially concerning the eventual replacement of the D-Mark by the ECU, might weaken the alliance with Paris much sooner, especially in view of the resignation of Francophile Hans-Dietrich Genscher as German Foreign Minister. Uneasiness over being drawn by France into an ill-defined military arrangement external to NATO and subject to strong US criticism could further loosen Germany's inclination to go along with French initiatives (The Economist, May 23, 1992, 52). Skillful diplomacy by John Major could bring about a realignment among the "big three" of the EC that could slow the progress toward European Union while restoring some of the relevance of NATO for the post-Cold War Europe.

Among the concessions which Prime Minister Major succeeded in gaining during the December 1991 Maastricht Treaty negotiations was an acknowledgement, basically by France, that any future development of a European defense area under the auspices of the emerging European Union must be compatible with the North Atlantic Treaty obligations of member states (The Economist, December 14, 1991: 52). One can argue either way as to whether Britain or France gained the greater ground on this issue. Essentially, the question of how European states will organize their defenses in the future remains open until Germany throws its weight decisively on the British (NATO) or the French (EC) side. It is an irony of recent political upheavals in Europe that it is the British government, following traditional lines of British foreign policy, as faithfully interpreted by Margaret Thatcher and her successor, that is most consistently pursuing and defending Charles de Gaulle's concept of a Europe in which, while seeking coordinate action, states retain the option to pursue their own

objectives independently.

Conclusion

Seen in broader historical perspective, Charles de Gaulle and Margaret Thatcher both reached back a century or more for their visions of a future Europe and how to achieve it. Each provided a general argument about how to gain and maintain international peace and security. As a conservative nationalist in the Bismarckian tradition, de Gaulle believed that a stable international equilibrium could best be achieved in Europe if there were several strong but relatively equal states capable of forming, dissolving and re-forming temporary coalitions to maintain a balance of power. Comparing Otto von Bismarck to Adolf Hitler, de Gaulle once observed that Bismarck "knew when to stop." (Quoted in Cerny, 1980: 36). The objective of the strong state should be to assure international stability by acting in order to prevent the emergence of a hegemony, not to achieve one for itself.

For Margaret Thatcher, liberal principles of political economy as old as Adam Smith provided the appropriate guide to achieving international political stability. Britain needed a strong state, in her estimation, in order, not only to defend British political interests, but also to have the freedom to embrace the ubiquitous international economic interdependence of her day, not to engage in self-defeating efforts to protect the national economy from forces beyond the control of even the most powerful state (Tugendhat and Wallace, 1988: 24, 32). The answer for an individual economy is what it was for Britain in the mid-19th century, to show bold leadership in engaging freely the new world economic order. From this point of view, closer economic ties with European partners are for the best, so long as they do not result in the legendary "Fortress Europe."

In 1984, shortly before his death and a half-decade before the collapse of communism in East Central Europe, the British historian Hugh Seton-Watson wrote: "Let us stop thinking of the Soviet colonial empire as permanent, and stop speaking of the EEC's neo-Carolingian empire as Europe." (Seton-Watson, 1985: 14) He meant that Europe as a geographic-cultural concept not only included Britain but extended eastward at least to the western boundaries of the then Soviet Union. Within this eastern extension lived peoples who thought of themselves as Europeans, sharing a common history with Europeans to their west as well as with their fellow nationals. The release of ethno-nationalism in parts of this area would not have surprised Charles de Gaulle, but he too thought of these peoples as Europeans. Margaret Thatcher does not consider herself a European in most senses of the word, but she understands the national aspirations that are being expressed by Slovenes and Slovaks, and she would agree with Seton-Watson to this extent: that if "Europe" must be defined to include Britain, it should also include Central and Eastern Europe. But, in operating from models that emphasize state sovereignty over cooperative internationalism, Gaullism and Thatcherism provide little that is useful to guide today's European leaders in coping with ethno-nationalist excesses.

The Europe that faces the present successors of de Gaulle and Thatcher is a Europe without hegemons, one in which France has failed to capture the initiative that de Gaulle would have expected of it in the present conditions of fluidity and uncertainty, and in which Britain must reexamine political stances premised upon the "Atlantic pillar" and the "special relationship." It is also one that contains an ambivalent candidate for hegemony, united Germany. In the absence of a true EC political union with the capacity to steer a coherent

and independent foreign policy to the formulation of which Germany, Britain and France contribute with rough equality, it would seem that neither Gaullist "neorealism" nor Thatcherite "neoliberalism" provides much guidance for dealing with the dangerous turbulence that is presently occurring in Central and Eastern Europe. This is all the more true because the continued influence of their thinking in their own countries inhibits the movements of the governments of those countries in dealing with the emerging problems of Central and Eastern Europe. The struggling states of that region have seen the European Community as the appropriate source of economic and technical assistance and, in some cases, of possible political guidance. Such hopes are reminiscent of those that Western Europe pinned on the United States as the emerging hegemon after World War II (Remington, 1991: 383). In that period, trade played a decisive role in restoring Western Europe to strength, but only after an initial period of dollar-assisted reconstruction. The problem with the current emphasis on moving to market economies in Central and Eastern Europe, to be achieved through following IMF austerity plans, is that it prescribes measures whose short-run consequences are counterproductive when taking into consideration the immense political uncertainties in the regions. Thatcherism has contributed to a mind-set that prevails throughout the EC and inhibits a creative collective approach to the crisis.

The Yugoslav crisis that escalated to military conflict, then civil war following the June 1991 Slovenian and Croatian declarations of independence from the Yugoslav federation, has provided the European Community and its leading member states with an unwelcome opportunity to test their evolving conceptions of post-Cold War European security priorities. On August 7, 1991, the EC foreign ministers met in The Hague to

consider their Balkan options. The main opposing positions had been set forth by the German and French governments during the previous month: Germany had advocated recognition of Slovenia and Croatia as sovereign states, while France had opposed this and countered with a proposal that forces of the Western European Union be deployed in Croatia to stop the fighting between Serbs and Croats to make it possible for negotiations to take place between the belligerents aimed at keeping some sort of Yugoslavia together. It was well-known that German business interests were better established in Slovenia and Croatia than in Serbia (New York Times, June 28, 1991: A10) and that France had historic ties with Serbia, indeed that Germany and France had historically been differently positioned in conflicts between Serbs and Croats. The Dutch, who held the Presidency of the EC Council during the second half of 1991, believed that, while hostilities continued, it would be premature to give Slovenia and Croatia diplomatic recognition, and that it would also be a mistake for the EC to do anything more on the ground in Yugoslavia than to continue seeking a sustainable cease-fire. In this the Dutch were supported by Britain and most of the other EC members. The Hague Declaration that emerged warned Serbia that if it continued to violate EC mediated cease-fires, the 12 would impose economic sanctions against Serbia, but not against Slovenia or Croatia. In issuing this warning it tilted toward the German position, but not to the extent of according the two breakaway republics diplomatic recognition (The Economist, August 19, 1992: 37-38).

While the August 1991 compromise could be interpreted as the result of a Franco-British alliance which thwarted Germany's desire to recognize Slovenia and Croatia, it is not clear that the German position at that time had hardened against Serbia to the extent

it did shortly thereafter (New York Times, August 8, 1991: A8). During the fall, as the EC sought in vain to gain a viable cease-fire, German public opinion was moving strongly in favor of recognition of Croatia, bringing the Kohl government along with it. Finally, on December 16, 1991, Foreign Minister Genscher declared to his EC colleagues that Germany would recognize Slovenia and Croatia on its own if the EC could not do so collectively. The others gave in at that point, and the two breakaway republics were recognized by Bonn's January 15, 1992 deadline (The Economist, December 21, 1992: 57). In the meantime, progress was being made, now under UN as well as EC auspices, to achieve a stable cease-fire agreement.

In 1992, attention has turned away from still unsettled Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where a more complex conflict has been drawing the EC further and further into its vortex. This time Germany, less involved in the new area of conflict, and now concerned about the influx of the growing number of refugees, has maintained a relatively low profile. Having taken over the EC Council Presidency for the latter half of 1992, Britain now finds itself uncomfortably in the middle, whereas President Mitterrand has found new opportunity for displaying a de Gaulle-like flair for the dramatic maneuver while leaving French options open.

The crisis in the Balkans provides little scope for any of the former European Great Powers to achieve some of their former grandeur. This seems to have been recognized in the Croatian phase by Britain and France and in the more recent phase by Germany. In various ways all three have shown an understanding that collective responses as members of the EC, of Western European Union, of the Conference on European Security and

Cooperation, and (in the case of Britain and France) of the UN Security Council, is the most prudent and perhaps ultimately the most effective way to proceed. The lowest common denominator of agreement has been produced among EC governments wearing their joint foreign and defense policymaking hats. While France has been brought into the consensus that Serbia is the party principally to blame, this has not given Germany a free hand to throw its weight around in the Balkans, nor has the German government appeared to want it. The end of the Cold War has clearly not freed the formerly middle-ranked powers of Europe to stride purposely, each on its own, about the European stage. Charles de Gaulle had more freedom to do so back in the time when the Cold War lines were clearly drawn. But de Gaulle, after all, had a game plan. Its principal objective, to rid Europe of the hegemons, seems to have been realized.

ENDNOTES

[1] Although the above formulation seeks to minimize the appearance of a contradiction between "the free market and the strong state," Thatcher's former Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, was not so careful: "In a way, 'state sovereignty' and the market are proving opposites in the late twentieth century--the one is undermining the other--even though it is interesting to note, one sometimes finds conservatives defending both." (Howe, 1990: 677).

[2] Recently there has been some scholarly recognition of the importance of a sea change in the economic thinking of EC members that occurred during the early 1980s, stimulated by the success, attributed to supply side Reaganomics, in bringing down US inflation and, eventually, unemployment, and the somewhat later success of the more orthodox Thatcher government following monetarist principles. The sea change influenced the thinking of other governments, notably the French, at the time convergence on the Single European Act occurred (1984-85). See Tsoukalis, 1991: 48-49; Cameron, 1992: 56-59.

[3] These included the internal market itself, the institutional changes in the EC budgetary process designed especially to bring agricultural spending under tighter control and the strengthening of the machinery for intergovernmental coordination of foreign policies, known in EC parlance as "European political cooperation". The period ended with Mrs. Thatcher's October 1988 Bruges speech castigating Jacques Delors and the EC Commission for its

efforts to extend Project 1992 beyond these limits to the achievement of Economic and Monetary Union and a greater emphasis upon the "social charter" (Cronin, 1991: 365-366).

[4] Tugendhat and Wallace (1988: 30) had predicted before the 1988 US presidential election: "It is unlikely that any new president, Republican or Democrat, will establish as close a personal relationship with Mrs. Thatcher, or with any potential successor as British Prime Minister [as the Reagan-Thatcher relationship]."

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