

**S7 History – 2hr**  
**1954-63 – Peaceful Coexistence? 1**  
**What were the origins of the European Union?**

Edited extract taken from Habibi, Jones-Nerzic, Keys and Smith, *IB History Higher Level Europe Companion* Oxford University Press, 2010

In the immediate post-war years, in the ruined capitals of Western Europe, leaders could look back at the traumatic decades of conflict, depression and political extremism, they could look East to the hostile Soviet Bloc, they could look within their states at the numbers enticed by indigenous communist parties, and they could reflect on their own diminished status. There could be no return to the discredited ways of the past, but each country's way forward would vary according to its unique circumstances. The key partnership in this new Europe was that of the old enemies France and Germany.

For Germany, greater economic and political integration with neighbouring states, in particular France was a strategy for overcoming the destructive legacy of nationalism and hostility and a route towards political rehabilitation and economic recovery. The relationship with France was a key aspect of West Germany's recovery. Adenauer agreed to French proposals to join the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC 1951) in order to co-ordinate production in the coal and steel industries. Politically, the agreement aimed to break the pattern of hostility between France and Germany by identifying and developing areas of mutual interest. The Treaty obliged members (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg) to agree to the principle of supranationality – handing over control of the industries to an international body. For West Germany, being welcomed into an international organisation alongside neighbouring states, the Treaty represented a confirmation of the new state's legitimacy and rehabilitation. As Adenauer remarked, "*Das ist unser Durchbruch*" (*this is our breakthrough*) quoted in T. Judt, [Post War](#), p.127

Adenauer found common ground with his fellow European leaders; the foreign ministers who signed the Treaty all represented Christian Democratic parties. The continental experience of invasion, occupation and liberation fostered a shared determination to work towards unity. The Treaty included the declaration that the ECSC was "a first step in the federation of Europe". In 1957 'the Six' member states took the further step, with the Treaty of Rome, of creating the European Economic Community through which West Germany integrated its economy with its Western European neighbours. The Franco-German partnership was to be the engine of this European project, a relationship in which German economic power was harnessed to French political leadership. Trade between member states grew rapidly to their mutual benefit.

Not all West European states were ready to commit to the process of integration. In particular, Britain's experience of War, undefeated and triumphant, vindicated a confident nationalism and an insular sense of security based on standing apart, some might say aloof, from the troubles of the continent. The proven strength of British ties with the British Commonwealth and with the USA further diminished the appeal of European integration. At an instinctive, emotional, historical level there was a sense that the 'Island Nation' did not quite belong to 'Europe' and so Britain passed up the opportunity to provide leadership. The British attitude was not without reason; economically, Britain relied less on European markets than on its extensive commercial links overseas. In 1947, British exports were greater than the combined exports of 'the Six' who predominantly traded with each other – Britain didn't need Europe to the extent that it was prepared to surrender any degree of sovereignty. Furthermore, the UK Labour Government (1945-51) had no wish to join an organisation that might limit its scope to pursue the development of a socialist 'New Jerusalem' in Britain.

However, Britain's military triumph had come at a heavy price, a quarter of the national wealth had been lost – a greater proportion than any other country, gold reserves were nearly exhausted, and only American loans were preventing economic collapse. Added to this were the costs of maintaining an overseas Empire, policing the defeated countries of Europe and striving to justify 'Great Power' status along side the USA and the Soviet Union. Though the British economy recovered, industrial production rose more slowly than in its European neighbours. 1958 was the crossover year between the War's winners and losers when the German economy became bigger than the British.

	Annual Average Growth Rates 1950-60
UK	2.7%
France	4.6%
Italy	5.8%
Germany	7.8%

Source: H. Young, <a href="#">This Blessed Plot</a> , Overlook Press, New York, 1999, p. 106
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The need to secure long term peace in Europe, both between historic enemies within Western Europe such as France and Germany, and against the Soviet threat was the motivation for the establishment of common

security structures. Western Europe's alliance with the USA was formalised within NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) in 1949, confirming America's military commitment to defend Europe. In the words of the first NATO General Secretary, Lord Ismay, the original purpose of the alliance was "to keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down." However, in 1955 West Germany was accepted into NATO and began to share the burden of defending Western Europe against Soviet communism. The enduring strength of NATO contrasts with failed European attempts at establishing common defence structures and reflects Europe's reliance on American military power. The most notable attempt at creating a Western European military entity – the EDC (European Defence Community) – failed due to concerns about German rearmament, opposition to the idea of ceding military control to an external organisation, and fears that the EDC might diminish America's commitment to European security. The French Government formally rejected the EDC project in 1954. As NATO developed, with the USA's continued security guarantee, the need for an EDC came to be seen as unnecessary duplication.

Western Europe's military weakness was exposed by the humiliation of Suez in 1956. Egypt's General Nasser had asserted Egyptian national control of the strategically vital Suez Canal against British and French wishes. In response, Britain, France and Israel had seized control of the Canal but were forced to withdraw under intense diplomatic and financial pressure from the USA. Suez demonstrated that neither nation could project its power globally without the support of the Superpowers. For France the EEC offered an alternative sphere

A British cartoon of 1963 showing Macmillan (the British Prime Minister) bowling to de Gaulle in a cricket match



"VOILA. THIS IS WHAT YOU CALL 'HIT FOR SIX, NON'"

of influence. For the UK Suez triggered a painful reassessment of Britain's global role. Economic projections were also pessimistic and eventually resulted in an acceptance that Britain could no longer afford to be excluded from 'Europe'. Belatedly, and from a position far weaker than previously, the British Government applied to join the EEC in 1963. France's President Charles De Gaulle rejected the application. The reasons for this infamous "Non" were De Gaulle's concerns that Britain remained too pro-American and lacked commitment to European integration. At a more basic level, Britain's entry might threaten France's leading role in Europe. Both Britain's combination of wounded pride and disdain as well as De Gaulle's vain grandeur were summarised in the British press with the popular metaphor, 'there cannot be two cocks on the dung-hill'. A second British application was rejected by De Gaulle in 1967 citing the weakness of the British economy.

### Key dates in European integration

**1949** – NATO established. The original members were The USA, Canada, the UK, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, Iceland, Italy, Denmark and Portugal.

**1951** – European Coal and Steel Community established. "The Six" (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg) agree to co-ordinate their coal and steel industries.

**1954** – France rejects plans for a European Defence Community.

**1955** – West Germany joins NATO.

**1957** – The Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community (EEC) agreeing to work towards a common market in which members would remove trade barriers and allow the free movement of labour, capital and goods.

**1960** – The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) established offering an alternative European vision. A grouping of peripheral states, the UK, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland formed a free trade area without the EEC's ideals of political integration.

**1963** – UK application to join the EEC rejected following De Gaulle's veto.

1. What were the aims of the founders of the European movement?
2. Give two pieces of evidence for the view that Germany had 'recovered' by 1963?
3. Explain carefully why Britain not a member of the EEC by 1963?
4. What was the EDC and why did it fail?
5. Was European integration more concerned with avoiding the mistakes of the past or fulfilling the vision of a united Europe?