



Andrew Moravcsik, “De Gaulle Between Grain and Grandeur: The Political Economy of French EC Policy, 1958-1970 (Part 1),” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 2, Issue 2 (Spring 2000): 3-43.

_____, “De Gaulle Between Grain and Grandeur: The Political Economy of French EC Policy, 1958-1970 (Part 2),” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 2, Issue 3 (Fall 2000): 4-68.

Responses (in *JCWS* 2.3):

Stanley Hoffmann, “Comment on Moravcsik”: 69-73.

John T.S. Keeler, “A Response to Andrew Moravcsik”: 74-76

Alan S. Milward, “A Comment on the Article by Andrew Moravcsik”: 77-80.

John Gillingham, “A Test Case of Moravcsik’s “Liberal Intergovernmentalist” Approach to European Integration”: 81-86.

Jeffrey Vanke, “Reconstructing De Gaulle”: 87-100

Marc Trachtenberg, “De Gaulle, Moravcsik, and Europe”: 101-116.

Rejoinder (in *JCWS* 2.3):

Andrew Moravcsik, “Beyond Grain and Grandeur: An Answer to Critics and an Agenda for Future Research”: 117-142.

Commentary by **Sean Kennedy**, University of New Brunswick, skennedy@unb.ca
Published by H-Diplo on 9 January 2001

From the perspective of the Cold War, Charles de Gaulle has been alternately praised as the tenacious architect of France’s diplomatic revival, or decried as an ungrateful meddler who needlessly disrupted the Atlantic Alliance. Whatever their perspective, however, most scholars of his foreign policy agree that Gaullist diplomacy was informed by a set of fundamental principles with geopolitics at their core. De Gaulle rejected the bipolar system of the Cold War era, and sought to restore his country’s *_grandeur_*. He accepted European cooperation, but only if it did not compromise his nation’s autonomy and provided a platform for distinctive French interventions in global affairs. Compared to the domestic reforms enacted during his tenure, some commentators have questioned whether the general’s foreign policy had as many durable results, but few of them question its central importance to de Gaulle himself. These are the principle ideas that I, as someone who has taught rather than researched Gaullist foreign policy, emphasize in my classes. After reading the detailed and lucid exchange between Andrew Moravcsik and his interlocutors, I find myself compelled to revise my conception of Gaullist foreign policy - - to an extent.

Moravcsik’s detailed two-part article on de Gaulle’s European policy expands upon the argument presented in his book *_The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht_* (1998). In that work Moravcsik maintains that the fundamental factor in shaping the process of European integration was commercial interest, rather than ideology or geopolitics. His more detailed examination of Gaullist policy is an exploration of the “most difficult test case” of this theory. Since de Gaulle is normally regarded as a leader influenced by strategic considerations,

a reinterpretation of his European policy which highlights the primacy of economic interests would make Moravcsik's general interpretation all the more convincing.

Moravcsik thus begins by suggesting that the copious literature which depicts de Gaulle as "the archetype of the visionary or ideological statesman" is in some respects misguided (Part 1, 3). To be sure, de Gaulle had geopolitical aims, but at least as far as European unity was concerned, "the pursuit of mundane agricultural and industrial interests, combined with domestic economic reforms, constitutes a _predominant influence on and sufficient explanation of French policy_ " during the general's presidency (Part 1, 6). Moravcsik's conclusions rest upon a re-examination of the weight accorded to commercial matters in the discourse of de Gaulle and his colleagues, the coherence of French EEC policy, and the domestic pressures brought to bear upon the leaders of the Fifth Republic.

Moravcsik uses a series of case studies to make his point. First, he points out, despite opposition by some Gaullists to the 1957 Treaty of Rome, once in power the general's government diligently implemented its provisions for a customs union. One rationale behind this accommodating policy was that economic ties would facilitate subsequent political cooperation. But de Gaulle also argued that a customs union would induce French industry to increase its productivity, and would provide a 'preferential area' for the country's agricultural exports. The latter was an especially crucial problem, for French farmers were easily undercut by North American and British Commonwealth producers. Given that a quarter of France's working population was employed in agriculture at the time of de Gaulle's accession to power, a preferential trade agreement was essential. Small wonder, then, Moravcsik concludes, that in speeches and confidential meetings, de Gaulle insisted that economic cooperation - specifically the entrenchment of the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) - was crucial, whereas political cooperation was (merely) desirable. This rigid determination to secure French economic interests within a European framework proved to be far more consistent than de Gaulle's pursuit of his geopolitical goals.

The fate of the Fouchet Plan further illustrates this axiom. Beginning in 1960, the French initiated a consultative process aimed at the creation of a Europe based upon inter-governmental collaboration, rather than the supranational ideas of the EEC Commission. By the spring of 1961, representatives from the Common Market nations were meeting as members of a commission chaired by Christian Fouchet. The meetings, however, ultimately went nowhere, and Moravcsik makes the controversial argument that this was because the Fouchet Plan was an elaborate ploy. The central document upon which he bases this interpretation is a 1960 memorandum drawn up by Alain Peyrefitte (who later became Minister for Education). France could not, according to Peyrefitte, simply appear negative by opposing supranational institutions, as well as British entry into the EEC. Instead, Paris had to articulate a seemingly positive vision of European cooperation so as to reassure the other members of the Common Market and secure the CAP. Only after this was firmly in place could France work towards getting rid of the supranational components of European integration. For Moravcsik, Peyrefitte's memorandum comes close to being a blueprint for subsequent policy; "[a]lmost every major step in French European strategy from 1960 through 1966 ... is foreseen in the Peyrefitte Memorandum...." (Part 1, 40).

If the Fouchet Plan was largely the result of a determination to ensure the CAP, Moravcsik continues, so was de Gaulle's desire to prevent Great Britain from joining the EEC. Claims that the British were kept out because they would threaten France's political dominance within the Community, or because they were too attached to the United States, are misplaced. Once again, the

weight of available records indicates that de Gaulle opposed British entry mainly because the United Kingdom's agricultural trade with the Commonwealth was bound to cause problems for the CAP. A reading of crucial documents, such as the 14 January 1963 speech in which de Gaulle announced France's rejection of British entry, suggests that his concerns were primarily economic in nature. The fact that the French stance was reversed at the end of the 1960s, once the CAP was in place, further bolsters the case for the supremacy of commercial interests.

Just how far Gaullist France would go to ensure a protected market for its agriculture was demonstrated once again, Moravcsik contends, during the 'empty chair' crisis of 1965-66. The imbroglio began when the European Commission's president, Walter Hallstein, proposed an extension of this body's powers - and thus the furthering of supra-nationalist principles - as well as an increased use of qualified majority voting in commercial matters. De Gaulle strongly objected to all of this, but Hallstein believed that the general's position was vulnerable at the time. The deadline for an agreement on permanent financing arrangements for the CAP, which de Gaulle so anxiously sought, was looming. Hallstein also calculated that, in order to avoid upsetting French farmers during the December 1965 presidential election by failing to secure the CAP, de Gaulle would compromise on the question of European institutions. Instead, the French president responded boldly by withdrawing his representative in Brussels and boycotting discussions of new EEC policies. His policy was in some respects successful; under the 'Luxembourg Compromise' of January 1966, the right of an EEC member to veto a policy deemed detrimental to its 'vital interest' was endorsed.

Moravcsik sees some validity in the interpretation of this episode which stresses de Gaulle's determination to thwart supra-nationalism, but reaffirms "the importance of concrete commercial considerations", especially in determining the outcome, if not the origins, of the crisis (Part 2, 40). It is important to note in this regard that while de Gaulle got the Luxembourg Compromise and Hallstein's resignation, he did not secure - nor did he ultimately push very hard for - the major reconfiguration of European institutions which he ostensibly desired. Instead, Moravcsik argues, he was willing to accept limited changes as long as he also secured a veto over CAP financing. The key factor here was the French farm vote. Afraid that de Gaulle would water down the CAP in order to achieve his geopolitical aims, the farmers punished him at the polls, denying him a majority on the first round vote in the presidential elections. Chastened, de Gaulle responded with concessions to agricultural interests, and among these was the Luxembourg Compromise.

For those historians of contemporary France who are first introduced to de Gaulle as a man who seemingly threw rational calculation to the wind in the summer of 1940, the impact of Moravcsik's article is bracing. And for most of the commentators in this forum, his arguments have considerable merit. Alan Milward, for instance, accepts entirely the interpretation of the 'empty chair' crisis. He also predicts that Moravcsik's "argument is very likely in the end to gain most of the territory in dispute", though he concludes his commentary by cautioning that much relevant material remains inaccessible (Part 2, 80). John Gillingham goes even further, suggesting that Moravcsik proves his case "by force of overpowering evidence and logic" (Part 2, 81). Gillingham also comments favorably upon Moravcsik's work on European integration as a whole, concluding that his "liberal integrationist" approach supersedes all others, even if the distinctly anti-liberal CAP provides an odd vantage point from which to test the general interpretation.

Gillingham also maintains that "Moravcsik is careful not to overdraw his portrait", but I suspect that a number of the other commentators would disagree (Part 2, 83). Indeed, the argument that

Moravcsik has given a neglected dimension of Gaullist policy the attention that it deserves, but has overstated his case in doing so, is one made by several authors. Tied to it is the critique that Moravcsik seeks to disentangle geopolitical and economic motivations when in fact it is difficult to do so. Thus, Marc Trachtenberg is rather disquieted when Moravcsik consigns de Gaulle's geopolitical vision to "insignificance" because of the constraints placed upon it (Part 2, 101, quoting Part 1, 6). John Keeler takes issue with Moravcsik's suggestion that de Gaulle simply bowed to the interests of a protectionist agricultural sector. Instead, he argues, the general was determined to see French agriculture modernized, a goal which complemented his quest for *_grandeur_*. Stanley Hoffmann, too, implies that Moravcsik's focus on the economic factors behind de Gaulle's foreign policy is too single-minded, asserting instead that they commingled with other priorities.

Some commentators, in particular Trachtenberg and Jeffrey Vanke, also suggest that Moravcsik's interpretation of some of the available evidence is problematic. Trachtenberg, for instance, concedes that in the text of his January 1963 statement explaining France's veto of British EEC membership, de Gaulle referred more to economics than to politics. But he then reasonably suggests that de Gaulle decided to downplay his political motivations when providing a public rationale for his decision. But if for Trachtenberg this simply amounts to Moravcsik taking a valid point too far, Vanke's criticisms are more pointed. Claiming at one point that Moravcsik "has not responsibly represented the published documents", Vanke goes on to challenge on the various case studies (Part 2, 88). In doing so he suggests that de Gaulle accepted the EEC in order to allow eventually for political cooperation under French tutelage, and rejected British membership on geopolitical grounds. To be sure, Vanke concedes that de Gaulle was concerned about CAP financing when he sought to retain national veto rights during the "empty chair" crisis. But he concludes that geopolitics was always the priority for de Gaulle. Even when the general sought to ensure French economic interests he did so for "mercantilist" reasons; for example, agricultural arrangements were sought because they would allow France to remain competitive with West Germany in the international realm.

The tone of Moravcsik's response to these various criticisms is broad-minded. He concedes some errors in interpreting the documentary record, which leads him to qualify some of his comments about the primacy of commercial motivations. He also admits that his interpretation of the Fouchet Plan is more speculative than the other elements of his account, and gives his critics their due for highlighting the probable intertwining of economic and geopolitical motives. But for the most part he stands by his interpretation, reiterating that "commercial concerns are predominant and sufficient to account for de Gaulle's actions" (Part 2, 128). Indeed, he argues, when his critics suggest that de Gaulle promoted France's economic welfare in the service of his quest for *_grandeur_*, they are already departing from what he terms "the classic geopolitical explanation", which highlights de Gaulle's resentment against the "Anglo-Saxons" and his rhetorical nationalism (Part 2, 132).

With respect to the subject of Gaullist policy towards European integration, Moravcsik's interpretation retains some internal tensions. In his response to his critics, he insists that his explication is multi-causal, but this still seems a little hard to square with assertions that "commercial considerations constituted a predominant and sufficient motivation for French policy" (Part 2, 129). A tension also persists between the sections of Moravcsik's work where he implies that de Gaulle acted largely on the basis of commercial *_motives_*, and those - such as during the "empty chair" crisis - where he was instead *_constrained_* by economic and interest group pressures. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the author's reconsideration of the available

evidence is simultaneously probing and stimulating; subsequent scholarship on Gaullist foreign policy will have to take his interpretation fully into account.

In the final section of his response to his critics, Moravcsik rightly indicates that their exchange has implications which extend beyond this particular subject. He suggests that in studying Gaullist foreign policy more work must be done to understand fully the motivations of the general and his colleagues, as well as the various economic and interest group pressures. Elsewhere, Moravcsik also maintains that what might be true of de Gaulle's European policy might not be the case with respect to other aspects of his diplomacy; in other words, his foreign policy might not have been as well-integrated as many observers believe.

These insights, like Moravcsik's general interpretation, are both provocative and worthy of further consideration. But it seems to me that, in addition to considering geographic variations in Gaullist foreign policy, a temporal perspective must also be kept in mind. In this regard it is worth considering de Gaulle's actions as head of the Provisional Government in 1944-46. To be sure, during this critical period economic interests played a major role in shaping foreign policy. France's aggressive stance towards a defeated Germany - which included demands for the detachment of the Rhineland and Allied control over the Ruhr - was intended to ensure security, but also to serve the goal of reconstruction. Nevertheless, when it came to international relations de Gaulle would only go so far in allowing economic concerns to prevail, as his last debate with the political parties before his resignation in January 1946 suggests. By that time the general had already approved three cuts in the military budget; but when the Socialists called for a fourth, contending that only durable economic modernization could truly ensure French *_grandeur_*, he demurred (see Andrew Shennan, *_De Gaulle_* (London: Longman, 1993), 50-51). The episode suggests that de Gaulle was mindful of economic imperatives, but never in isolation. If we move to the 1960s - admittedly a tremendous change in context - we are then led to consider whether he reoriented his foreign policy in recognition of the centrality of commercial interests, or whether, as several of the contributors to this enlightening forum suggest, he always considered a range of factors in determining his course of action.

Copyright © 2001-2004 by H-Diplo, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For other uses contact the H-Diplo Article Discussion Co-ordinator, George Fujii, gfuji@umail.ucsb.edu.
