



Krasno Analysis 2018

THE BREAKING OF NATIONS: De Gaulle, Monnet, and the Politics of Nationalism in Europe

John Van Oudenaren

In his memoirs, Henry Kissinger, looking back on the wreckage of his 1973 “Year of Europe,” conjures an imaginary dialogue between Jean Monnet and Charles de Gaulle. Monnet, who at age eight-four played a small part in this American diplomatic debacle, is heard calling de Gaulle a “fool,” reproaching him for needlessly frightening the Americans by seeking to “extort” recognition from them of a strong, independent Europe. The United States, Monnet explains, eventually was bound to hand such recognition to Europe, “for free,” if only it continued along the integrationist path laid out by Monnet. De Gaulle counters, calling Monnet a “dreamer” and arguing that “some possessions are meaningless if received as a gift.” Europe needed to seize its independence from the United States. Kissinger concludes that in the end the dispute between the two great antagonists revolves around a distinction without a difference: both were working toward an independent Europe that to some degree would be defined in opposition to the United States, Monnet through his championing of European unity, de Gaulle with his nationalism. The “final paradox,” Kissinger observes, was “that the most nationalistic country in Europe made the largest single contribution to the emergence of a European community.”¹

Nationalism and European Unity

Kissinger was not alone in recognizing the ways in which French nationalism had contributed to European unity. The Dutchman J.H. Huizinga had written almost a decade earlier that de Gaulle was Europe's *Fédérateur malgré lui*, the first founding father "to appeal to Europe's heart."² Monnet himself had tacitly recognized the French president's contributions to a united Europe when he chose to look past the biting attacks on his own person and methods to back de Gaulle's proposals, made to German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in July 1960, for a *Europe des patries* based on an intergovernmental concert of the Six. While the members of Monnet's Action Committee for a United States of Europe were puzzled at their leader's seeming retreat from the holy grail of supranationalism, Monnet concluded that forward movement of *any* kind toward European integration was preferable to stasis. As he wrote in his memoirs, "a confederation will one day lead to federation."³

And yet, all has not worked out as Kissinger predicted with his imaginary dialogue. In today's debates about the crisis of the European Union, de Gaulle figures very little, even though, if there is one thing lacking in the EU of today, surely it must be the "appeal to the heart." "Nationalism" has become a dirty word – the malign force against which Emmanuel Macron, France's current president, tirelessly seeks to mobilize Europe, using not only the bogeyman of Hungary's Victor Orbán, but also Donald Trump.⁴

Historically, nationalism has been an ambiguous term, one that can take on neutral, negative, or positive connotations depending upon circumstances. Revolutions led by nationalists against Ottoman or Russian autocracy generally were seen as advancing the cause of human freedom and "on the side of history," as were the anti-colonial national liberation movements of the last century.⁵ The dictionary strictly defines nationalism in neutral terms, as "loyalty or devotion to a nation," but then adds: "esp: a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing

primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups.”⁶ Although a few commentators and scholars have tried to reclaim nationalism as a positive force, it is this negative definition that now applies overwhelmingly among enlightened opinion in Europe and the United States, one that is all but certain to stick now that Trump has declared himself a “nationalist.”⁷

In opposition to nationalism, Macron and others have embraced both “patriotism” (somewhat confusingly to American audiences) and “cosmopolitanism.”⁸ There are of course true cosmopolitans in Europe; Monnet himself clearly was one, having worked for the League of Nations, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and other international bodies, and lived not only in Paris but in Geneva, Shanghai, New York, London, and Washington.⁹ But much about the cosmopolitanism that Macron invokes is really, one suspects, a “Europeanism” – a nationalism transferred from the nation-state to the pan-European level. Already in 1954 Hannah Arendt predicted that such a nationalism would emerge, and warned against its potential consequences. As an early supporter of the movement to federate the continent, Arendt did not object to European nationalism as such, but for a variety of reasons she believed that such a phenomenon would likely manifest itself at least to some degree as anti-Americanism.

If it is true that each nationalism ... begins with a real or fabricated common enemy, then the current image of America in Europe may well become the beginning of a new pan-European nationalism. Our hope that the emergence of a federated Europe and the dissolution of the present nation-state system will make nationalism itself a thing of the past may be unwarrantedly optimistic.... The widespread and inarticulate anti-American sentiments find their political crystallization point precisely here. Since Europe is apparently no longer willing to see in America whatever it has to hope or to fear from her own future development, it has a tendency to consider the establishment of a European government an act of emancipation from America.¹⁰

Official articulation of this pan-European nationalism goes back to the “Document on European Identity” issued in December 1973 by the foreign ministers of the nine member states of the European Community (EC) in reply, ironically, to Kissinger’s proposal for a “New Atlantic Charter” to conclude his year of Europe.¹¹ In the great

divide between what David Goodhart has memorably called the “Somewheres” and the “Anywheres,” European cosmopolitans are at bottom mostly “Somewheres” whose attachment is to Europe rather than to the nation-state.¹² To their great frustration, however, and despite enormous efforts by the European Commission and other EU bodies to create a sense of European identity, the European elite has failed to carry along the general populations of the individual countries in the transfer of loyalties from the nation-state to Europe.¹³

If the cosmopolitans of Europe are more “nationalistic” than they acknowledge, then it is also the case that de Gaulle, a traditional nationalist often seen as devoted to France and France alone, clearly had a vision that was European. He was, as Huizinga put it, one of Europe’s great “federators.” In his Strasbourg speech of November 23, 1959 in which he laid out the vision he was to pursue as president, he declared that “it is Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals, it is the whole of Europe, that will decide the destiny of the world.”¹⁴ France would lead, but Europe would decide.

Jean Monnet, De Gaulle and the Liberal International Order

The differences between Monnet and de Gaulle were many and varied, but when it came to Europe they boiled down to a fundamental divergence of views on the value and role of the historic nation-state. While de Gaulle had an almost uncanny ability to drive American politicians to distraction, his nationalism was a good deal less out of step with American and general Western thinking in the 1940s and 1950s than it is today, when “Europe” and the “liberal international order” have displaced the nation-state as the primary focus of enlightened opinion and, increasingly, locus of elite loyalties.

Although one would never know it from the current fetishization of the “seventy-year old” liberal international order, the statesmen who created that order devoted great effort to ensuring that the European nation-states recovered from the economic,

political, and psychological after-effects of World War II – more effort, in fact, than they did to thinking up international institutions to invent and global norms to promulgate.¹⁵ This concern for the vitality of individual countries pervades the rhetoric of the early postwar period. It can be seen, for example, in the report delivered to President Harry S. Truman in November 1947 by the U.S. Committee on Foreign Aid, a body formed to generate bipartisan support for the Marshall Plan. The report declared that the U.S. “position in the world has been based for at least a century on the existence in Europe of a number of strong states committed by tradition and inclination to the democratic concept... the countries of Western Europe must be restored to a position where they may retain full faith in the validity of their traditional approaches to world affairs and again exert their full influence and authority on intellectual life.”¹⁶ The centrality of the nation-state is also reflected in the historiography of the early cold war, as epitomized by the title of Alan Milward’s pioneering *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*, and indeed in the career of Monnet himself, who spent the early postwar period in the French Commissariat General du Plan working for the modernization of France, one of the few times in his life he was employed by the French state.¹⁷

The estrangement between Monnet and de Gaulle dates from the 1950s, when the economic and political situation in Western Europe had stabilized and each man had the opportunity to begin working out his long-term vision for Europe. Beginning with the ECSC and continuing with his Action Committee, Monnet pushed his method of *engrenage*, of progressive involvement in and intertwining of economic structures that would lead, in his view, to political union. These methods were embraced by the American academic community, where “functionalism” provided a theoretical and empirical validation of such methods, and by the Eisenhower administration, where the residual isolationism of the Republican Party and of the president himself (and of his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles) manifested itself in an almost fanatical devotion to the cause of European unity which, once achieved, would allow the United States to withdraw its military forces from Europe.¹⁸

Monnet was in no way anti-American, and his method in fact assigned a huge role to the United States in creating the Europe of his dreams. His basic *modus operandi* was to convince policymakers in Washington that he could “deliver” a united Europe if Washington would do its part by providing moral, political, and material support to the European enterprise. He then would go to European leaders and emphasize that Washington expected them to unite under the auspices of the Six, and press them to make the transfers of power to the supranational institutions in Brussels so as to create the “partner” that Washington was said to want. De Gaulle despised this method of proceeding, and it was this that he has in mind when he says, in Kissinger’s imaginary dialogue, that European unity could not be a “gift” from the Americans.

De Gaulle was also convinced that Monnet’s method would not work. A student of power who had observed firsthand Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Adenauer, and other political leaders in action, he did not believe that the Americans, even if they were naively serious in their devotion to a United States of Europe, for a moment wanted a truly independent continent that was not beholden to the United States for its defense.¹⁹ A “European” defense was in any case an impossibility. As a soldier who had seen more combat than any other wartime or postwar leader, he believed in traditional alliances, but he did not believe that defense organized on any basis other than the national could be effective. As he explained to Eisenhower in connection with his objections to the NATO integrated command, trusting to an “exterior agency” for their security “took way from peoples and the governments, as well as the commanders, the feeling of responsibility of their own defense.”²⁰ Or, as he later told John F. Kennedy, “a government that did not provide for national defence could only have an *apparent* legality....”²¹

This attitude carried over into the civilian sphere. He was skeptical of supranationalism in any form and did not believe that individuals could transcend their national loyalties to become European or international civil servants. His assessment of the first head of the European Commission is telling:

I felt that although Walter Hallstein was a sincere European, he was first and foremost a German who was ambitious for his own country. For in the Europe that he sought to lay the framework in which his country could first of all regain, free of charge, the respectability and equality of rights which the frenzy and defeat of Hitler had cost it, then acquire the preponderant influence which its economic strength no doubt would earn it, and finally ensure that the cause of its frontiers and its unity was backed by a powerful coalition with the doctrine to which, as Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic, he had formerly given his name.²²

As a critique of Hallstein this is perhaps a bit unfair; as a description of the success of German policy over the past sixty years it is not half bad.

Nor did de Gaulle have much use for what since has come to be called the liberal international order. He and his foreign minister characterized the International Monetary Fund as “an alien and objectionable organization.”²³ He had no particular regard for the legal strictures of the GATT, and he was deeply suspicious of the United Nations for its growing anti-colonialism. France aligned with China and India in opposing both the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963 and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty of 1968.

This “unilateralism,” as a later era would call it, was not, it should be stressed, unique to de Gaulle, although he carried it to an extreme not seen in other European countries. Contrary to contemporary myth-making about the liberal international order, for most of the postwar era Western countries generally took a pragmatic, pick-and-choose policy toward international institutions and global norms. The United States, the initial guardian of those norms, was always ready to set them aside when they clashed with what key nation-states saw as essential for their economic welfare and political stability. This was evident as early as the summer of 1947, when the United States acquiesced in the decision of the British government to suspend the convertibility of the pound, even though the latter was required by IMF rules and had been made a condition of the \$3.75 billion American loan of July 1946.²⁴

The West Europeans were even more skeptical about a global liberal order. The

Six were especially wary of the GATT, the fundamental organizing principle of which – non-discrimination – posed a threat to their plans to build an economic and political bloc based on discrimination in favor of each other as well as a rudimentary a foreign policy based on discrimination vis-à-vis third countries. France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium and Portugal all had difficult experiences in the UN General Assembly over colonialism. West Germany and Italy began their postwar existence stigmatized in the UN Charter as “enemy states.” The UN was an especially sore point for the Federal Republic, which was not even a member of the organization until 1973 and which, along with other West European countries, resented the use by the United States of such UN mechanisms as the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Conference to impose on it, in cooperation with the Soviet Union, a permanent, legally guaranteed non-nuclear status.

France and (West) Germany

Where de Gaulle did differ from his European partners, West Germany in particular, was in his attitude toward European integration. In his account of his first meeting with Adenauer, in September 1958, he writes: “I told Adenauer that from a strictly national point of view France, unlike Germany, had no real need of an organization of Western Europe, since the war had damaged neither her reputation nor her territorial integrity. Nevertheless, she was in favor of a practical and, if possible, political rapprochement of all European States because her aim was general peace and progress. Meanwhile, on condition that her national identity remained unaffected, she was prepared to implement the Treaty of Rome....”²⁵

Such was how de Gaulle explained one the most consequential acts of his presidency: the decision *not* to withdraw from the Treaty of Rome at a time when, with its provisions not yet fully in effect, the economic and political costs of doing so would have been manageable. The rest, as they say, is history. For the next eleven years, the

French president caused difficulties for the European integration process – notably by twice vetoing Britain’s application to join the EC and in the “empty chair” crisis of 1965 – but in the end his objections did little to halt the process that Monnet had launched. De Gaulle’s successor, Georges Pompidou, lifted the French veto on British membership and was the moving force between the Hague summit of December 1969, which set the Community on the course of parallel “widening” and “deepening” that it has pursued ever since.

As a political prophet, de Gaulle was right about most things on which he pronounced: Britain was not European in the same sense as the continental countries and would not make a good Community member. The Soviet Union would not be able to dominate China, an ancient civilization that would make its own way in the world. Soviet communism eventually would fade and the eternal Russian nation would reemerge. Vietnamese nationalism would ensure that the United States came to grief in Southeast Asia. Europe would reap trouble from the Arab nations to its south. If de Gaulle was wrong about anything, it was, ironically, about France, which accomplished great things under his own leadership and that of his successors, but which in the end fell short of his aspirations of economic, technological, and demographic dynamism and thus the leading position in Europe.²⁶

As for Monnet, he was less of a political prophet than de Gaulle, but he was right about one great thing: that once entwined in a Europe built around lasting institutions, the nation-states of the Community would find it very difficult to turn back (as Britain is now discovering in the context of Brexit).

In the years since de Gaulle and Monnet have passed from the scene, France and Germany effectively have reversed the positions they once held with regard to Europe. Whereas de Gaulle had told Adenauer (to be sure with a certain amount of exaggerated bravado) that France did not need Europe, today, in contrast, it is Macron who almost desperately seeks to create a stronger Europe, about which Germany seems more ambivalent. A stronger, more integrated Europe, Macron argues, will

ensure the EU becomes an economic and political power, capable of competing with China and the United States in the emerging multipolar order. France needs to reform and to revitalize its own economic and political structures so as to be a viable partner for Germany in this enterprise.²⁷ (The directionality of Macron's thinking – from the global to the European to the national – most likely would have puzzled de Gaulle, who proceeded in precisely the opposite direction: from the regeneration of France to the rebuilding of Europe to the assertion of Europe's place in the world).

Germany is less committed to such a vision. It has resisted Macron's calls for a separate Eurozone budget, which in any case may not be the silver bullet that solves Europe's problems.²⁸ Chancellor Angela Merkel pays lip service to the European ideal, but in case after case Germany has acted unilaterally in what it perceives to be its own national interests (or, in the case of refugees, national values). Examples include the decision to build the Nord Stream Two pipeline in cooperation with Russia and in opposition to Poland and the European Commission, the unilateral decision of 2015 to admit almost a million Syrian refugees into Germany, and domestic economic policies that have contributed to Germany's massive payments surpluses over the years, with their negative effects on economic growth and debt burdens elsewhere in the EU.

Where Germany has been most aligned with France has been in taking a tough line toward member states that question or breach EU rules. Rules, of course, have been a part of the European project since the founding of the EC in 1958. Initially, disputes over compliance with Community rules tended to involve narrowly economic – and specifically market-related – matters, such as the failure to transpose European directives into national legislation. As EU competences have increased, however, disputes over Union rules have cut ever more deeply into the economic, political, and social fabric of the member states. The introduction of the euro has meant the conferral on the Union, and specifically the European Commission, of enormous supervisory powers over the economic policies (budgets, taxes, borrowing, and so forth) of the member states in ways that intrude on the traditional prerogatives of national

parliaments and governments. Similarly, the EU's success in defining itself as a community of values with, in effect, a constitution that has not only procedural but substantive norms means that the institutions of the EU have sweeping powers to direct the policies of the member states with regard to such sensitive matters of national policy as the functioning of constitutional and electoral systems, the functioning of the judiciary, freedom of expression, academic freedom, the rights of minorities, policies on immigration, asylum, and refugees, and economic and social rights.²⁹

The vast expansion of EU competences has occurred, moreover, in a Union that is far more diverse in terms of cultural and historical background than was the Community of the Six or even the Union of fifteen, and at a time when Europe is exposed to internal and external shocks equal to or greater than those of at any point since the 1970s. Taken together, the expanded EU competences, the increased heterogeneity of the member states, and the internal and external shocks have meant more and more severe clashes between the EU and member state governments. These clashes have been both a cause and an effect of the rise of populist and nationalist political movements, as such movements have formed in opposition to EU policies but also have sought out conflict with "Brussels" as a way of advancing their political fortunes. Examples include Greece, where the left-wing Syriza party won the January 2015 national elections on a platform calling for rejection of EU-imposed austerity; Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, and the Czech Republic, which refused to go along with an EU plan to redistribute 120,000 refugees from Syria temporarily housed in Greece and Italy; and Italy, where the populist Five Star Movement-League government is openly defying the Commission to implement its electoral program of increased spending on infrastructure and combatting poverty.³⁰

All of these cases involve collisions between competing democratic principles. National governments can claim, for the most part correctly, that their opposition to EU dictation is backed by popular support – by parliaments chosen in recent elections with high levels of participation. EU and centrist politicians such as Macron and Merkel

likewise claim democratic legitimacy, arguing that the European Parliament is also elected (and that it plays a role in the selection of the members of the Commission) and, perhaps more importantly, that the member states have signed on to and thus are treaty bound by the constitutional provisions they now seek to disregard. As in the Brexit debate, the European establishment also argues that voters who choose nationalist and populist courses have been misled by “lies,” implying that populist and nationalist positions, even though they may have “won” in the democratic competition of ideas, are not truly legitimate.³¹

Brexit and the “Breaking of Nations”

Brexit represents a particularly interesting (not to say important) case of the clash between different concepts of democratic legitimacy now playing out in Europe. The United Kingdom is of course seeking to exit the EU altogether, and its situation is not strictly comparable to those of countries trying to remain in the Union while slipping free of some of its demands. But many of the same political dynamics are in play. Anti-EU populism fueled by English nationalism was what resulted in the 52-48 victory for the “Leave” campaign. While some in Europe have argued that the EU should take a generous stance toward Britain and work cooperatively to mitigate Brexit’s negative effects, not only for the Union itself but for Britain as well, this is not the sentiment that has prevailed on the continent. As Timothy Garton Ash reports, the view in Brussels and in national capitals has been that “Britain’s position outside the EU must be seen to be worse than that of anyone inside,” or, as one high-ranking official put it in an interview, “you English must have your noses rubbed in it and discover how cold it is outside.”³²

When it comes to both Brexit and internal EU rules, Brussels and the centrist national capitals appear to be driven by a combination of tactical strength growing out of the strong bargaining position the EU enjoys vis-à-vis any individual member state and strategic weakness arising from a fear that the entire EU enterprise is under attack.

Charles Grant reports from Berlin that the “Germans feel strategically beleaguered and this affects their view of Brexit.” “We are a herbivore power,” he quotes a high German official as explaining, “surrounded by carnivores. In the years after 1989 we assumed that the world was converging towards the liberal, rules-based order that we espouse. But now we see reversal – in China, Russia, Turkey, central Europe and the US.”³³ While no doubt sincerely held, such protestations strike the outside observer as naively oblivious to how Germany also has exercised power, e.g., in its exploitation of that same “liberal, rules-based order” (backed, to be sure, by the very real accomplishments of German industry) to run cumulative current account surpluses of \$3.508 *trillion* over the period from 2004 to 2018, behavior that struggling countries such as Greece and Italy hardly see as that of an economic “herbivore.”³⁴

Where all this is headed is difficult to predict. Fifteen years ago, the EU diplomat Robert Cooper wrote about “the breaking of nations.”³⁵ Cooper argued that the world was dividing into pre-modern, modern, and post-modern polities. The latter, of which the EU was the leading exemplar, were characterized by their commitment to a rules-based order and international institutions, and this made them more effective than the modern nation-states (e.g., China, Russia, and the United States) in taming the violence still emanating from pre-modern parts of the world such as the Middle East, but also in dealing with the pressures that globalization was placing on the autonomy and effectiveness of the nation-state. Such triumphalist thinking was common in Europeanist circles in the early 2000s, and runs through such works as Mark Leonard’s *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century*, and indeed was reflected in the European Security Strategy of 2003, said to have been drafted by Cooper.³⁶

These arguments now seem wildly optimistic. Chaos has persisted and indeed expanded in the pre-modern areas of the world (rather than the EU stabilizing the Middle East, it has been the Middle East that has destabilized Europe), while the modern “nationalists” have doubled down on their commitment to power politics, as evidenced by Russian revisionism, Chinese assertiveness, and Trump’s America First.

Perhaps more importantly, the EU itself, by default if not by design, risks becoming a “breaker” of nations rather than their protector. Theresa May’s statement, both plaintive and defiant, that she would not break up her country in response to EU demands over Brexit comes to mind.³⁷ Granted, no one on the continent has much sympathy for Britain, but elsewhere countries have come under great strain as they have struggled to comply with rules and conditions set in Brussels.

Greece is the prime example. Its people and institutions have suffered enormously over a decade in order to stay in the Eurozone. The latest EU austerity deal, under which the debt crisis is officially declared to be over, requires Greece to pay off its debts by running primary budget surpluses until the year 2060. Italy is not far behind, with its infrastructural decay, slow growth and high debts, and a “lost generation” created by a decade of staggeringly high youth unemployment. In the Visegrad countries, the crisis is less economic than cultural and political. While there can be no question that demagogues have exploited the refugee crisis for political gain, the consternation felt in countries with little tradition of inward immigration at being told that to remain good EU members they must take in a certain number of immigrants, mostly Muslims from the Middle East, is nonetheless genuine. People in these countries have seen the failures of integration in Western Europe and say “thanks but no thanks,” without wanting to be called racists.

On the other side of the ledger are the institutions of the EU and the centrist governments, mostly in northern Europe, who insist that rules are rules and who advance various technical arguments, especially with regard to the euro, for their positions. Countries such as Greece and Italy have mainly themselves to blame for their economic plight. They should behave more like Germany, an argument that is true up to a point but that overlooks the fact that if other countries were more like Germany, Germany would lose its massive trade surpluses and could not be Germany.

The real question, however, is where these rules and the institutions and policies they are designed to uphold come from in the first place. Various theories have been

put forward for why the EU continually has had to advance into new policy areas, constantly impinging on the prerogatives of the member states and, in the event of conflict, enforcing its rules over theirs. To some extent progress is built into the very genetic makeup of the Union, in the commitment to building an “ever closer union” contained in the preamble to the original Treaty of Rome. Geopolitics has thrust widening upon Europe, and widening, so European leaders concluded going back to the 1960s, requires deepening. The logic of certain policies also requires constant forward movement: a common market dictates a common currency, which in turn might dictate a fiscal union; the single market dictates the free movement of people, which in turn dictates common policies in the areas of immigration, asylum, citizenship, and so forth. Bureaucratic politics also play a role. Notwithstanding the principle of “subsidiarity,” the European Commission and the other EU institutions almost invariably favor the expansion of Union competences, as new responsibilities bring increased power and prestige vis-à-vis the member states.

Not least, there is the factor of European nationalism, about which Arendt wrote more than sixty years ago. In his recent work *EuroTragedy: A Drama in Nine Acts*, Ashoka Mody writes regarding the euro: “Why did Europeans attempt such a venture that carried no obvious benefits but came with huge risks?”³⁸ The answer, of course, is that there *were* obvious benefits, but that they were more political than economic. As explained in another landmark study of monetary union, the “French, in particular, wanted a globally strong European money to counter the international pre-eminence of the American dollar. The whole of Europe saw the Euro as striking a blow for the continent’s self-sufficiency and esteem in international politics and economics. Never before had a new currency been so replete with hope, so desirous of success in so many fields.”³⁹ Or, as Wim Duisenberg, the first president of the European Central Bank stated, the euro “represents the mutual confidence at the heart of our community. It is the first currency that has not only severed its link to gold, but also its link to the nation-state.”⁴⁰

During the heady days of the early 2000s, there was some talk in Brussels about the EU as a “benign empire.” Michael Emerson, a former EU ambassador to Russia based at the Center for European Policy Studies in Brussels, characterized the EU in these terms and wrote about Union’s “friendly Monroe Doctrine.”⁴¹ The French politician (and future IMF head) Dominique Strauss-Kahn talked about “Europe’s natural sphere of influence,” which he characterized as a “union of all territories from the icebergs of the Arctic north to the sand dunes of the Sahara, with the Mediterranean in their midst.”⁴² More recently, British Euroskeptics have taken to calling the EU an “imperialist” venture.⁴³

If there is truth in these characterizations – whether positive or negative – they have serious implications for the future of Europe. All imperialisms involve political arrangements in which elites reap the benefits – material but especially psychological – that come from a polity’s being able to play a big part on the international stage, while the broad mass of people incur the costs, in blood and treasure, of sustaining the imperial role in the face of inexorable internal and external forces that conspire against it and that in the end bring down every empire. Such is the battle being played out to some degree today in the United States between the nationalist/populist/isolationist forces and the internationalists in both their liberal and neo-conservative variants.⁴⁴

The Euro and Populism in Europe

It is also a battle that is beginning to play out in the EU. There is no greater example of the struggle being waged than that of the euro – of the economic sufferings the people of Greece and Italy and other countries have had to endure so that the elites of their own countries and of Europe as a whole can sustain the euro, the failure of which would be a devastating political blow to the European project. Leaders such as Macron and European Commission president Juncker resist the nationalist pressures that emanate from the European nation-states and threaten the European project, even as they assert

ever more strongly the idea of the EU as the leading force countering the destructive forces of nationalism operating on the global level. Arendt wrote in 1954 of the temptation for Europe to define itself against the United States. This tendency arguably began to inform European foreign policy in the 1990s, when leaders such as President Jacques Chirac of France, thoroughly sick as they were of the economic and political triumphalism of the Clinton administration, began to weaponize “multilateralism” as a political counterweight to American power.⁴⁵ This tendency flourished during the George W. Bush administration, was somewhat muted during the Obama years, and now has been given free rein with the election of Donald Trump.

European Council president Donald Tusk waited a full eleven days after Trump’s inauguration to write to the members of the European Council to inform them that the United States, along with an “assertive China,” a Russia that was pursuing an “aggressive policy,” and “radical Islam,” was putting the European Union into a “difficult situation.”⁴⁶ Macron subsequently took up this “insulting” (as Trump characterized it) theme, telling audiences that Europe might need a European army to protect itself against China, Russia “and even the United States.”⁴⁷ Tusk listed two other “threats” to the Union: “the rise in anti-EU, nationalist, increasingly xenophobic sentiment in the EU itself,” and “the state of mind of the pro-European elites... a decline of faith in political integration, submission to populist arguments as well as doubt in the fundamental values of liberal democracy....” These then are the enemies of the European project: assertive nationalist powers on the world scene, including the United States, nationalists within, and European elites who might lack the courage and fortitude to stay the course.

Juncker and others insist that there need be no fundamental choice between Europe and the nation. As the Commission president stated in the concluding peroration of his 2018 “state of the union” address (subtitled, tellingly enough, “the hour of European sovereignty”), “to love Europe is to love its nations. To love your nation is to love Europe.”⁴⁸ In the abstract, de Gaulle would not have disagreed with this statement. One can easily hear him saying “to love Europe is to love France; to love France is to

love Europe.” But he would have reacted violently to the idea that the EU, with its supranational ambitions and trappings of statehood, was “Europe.” Moreover, for all his differences over *policy* with American presidents and British prime ministers, one suspects that de Gaulle would have been dismayed by the widening rift between continental Europe and what he called the “Anglo-Saxon” powers. Like Monnet, although less obviously so, he was not anti-American. America was indelibly part of the West, Europe’s “daughter,” as he once phrased it. Americans, he told André Malraux, were “an ardent people, and without meanness.”⁴⁹

In the same set of conversations with Malraux in which he made the latter remark, de Gaulle repeated his familiar line “Europe will be a compact between the States, or nothing.”⁵⁰ Monnet would not have agreed with this assessment. He lived another nine years after de Gaulle’s death, long enough to witness renewed progress toward his own vision of Europe, one in which the Community lurched from crisis to crisis to become ever stronger.⁵¹ Monnet might even have seen opportunity in the travails of today’s Union.

Outlook

It may be that in the end the synthesis that Kissinger posited in his imaginary dialogue between de Gaulle’s nationalism and Monnet’s supranationalism will yet combine to produce a Europe in which the nation-states flourish along with a strengthened, reformed, and “sovereign” EU. It is also possible, however, that irreconcilable principles are at work: that either the EU will break the nation-states or the nation-states will break the EU. If this is indeed the course that Europe is on, political and intellectual leaders will be forced to take sides.

While they would object to the term “break,” today’s Euro-elites – Juncker, Tusk, Macron, and the establishment forces of media and bureaucracy that stand behind them – believe that if they stay the course, it is the former that will materialize. Europe will be

united, stronger, adhering to EU law and principles, taking its place in the multipolar world, rejecting any attempt by the British or others to “cherry pick” its magnificent achievements. The nation-states will not go away, but they will have to knuckle under, as Greece and the United Kingdom are being forced to do and as the Commission is demanding that Hungary, Poland, and Italy do in current policy disputes. Their peoples somehow will adjust, materially and psychologically. As with progressives in the United States, Europeanist circles take comfort from the fact that demography and biology are on their side. It was the old – people who are now rapidly dying off – who most strongly supported Brexit (and who are Orbán’s base in Hungary). The young are more cosmopolitan and devoted to Europe. The “anywheres” eventually will come to outnumber the “somewheres.”

But other outcomes are possible. The nation-states may yet break the EU. This certainly is what de Gaulle would believe were he alive today – in the same way that nationalism broke the Sino-Soviet alliance, destroyed communism in Russia, and beat the United States in Vietnam. From the perspective of the sophisticated discourse that prevails today in Brussels, Washington, and other capitals, such a conclusion is of course unpopular, indeed atavistic. But given de Gaulle’s track record – his being right about all the great political movements that shaped the century in which he lived – it might not be wise to bet against him.

Dr. John Van Oudenaren is the founding director of the World Digital Library at the Library of Congress (www.wdl.org) and the author of *Uniting Europe: An Introduction to the European Union* (2005).

Published December 9, 2018

by Krasno Global Affairs & Business Council @ UNC-Chapel Hill

The views expressed are the views of the author; they do not necessarily represent the views of the Krasno Global Affairs & Business Council or the Library of Congress.

ENDNOTES:

¹ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), p. 139.

² J. H. Huizinga, "Which Way Europe?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (1965), pp. 487-500.

³ Jean Monnet, *Memoirs*, trans. Richard Mayne (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1978), p. 437.

⁴ See, for example, Peter Baker and Alissa Rubin, "'America First' Draws Rebuke At Ceremony," *New York Times*, November 12, 2018; and David Nakamura, Seung Min Kim and James McAuley, "Macron Denounces Rising Nationalism," *Washington Post*, November 12, 2018.

⁵ The literature on nationalism is, not surprisingly, vast. Major works include Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1945); Anthony Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 2nd edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1983); Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966); Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. London: Verso, 1991.

⁶ *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1963).

⁷ For more positive assessments of nationalism, see Walter Russell Mead, "Macron's Faux Pas on Nationalism," *Wall Street Journal*, November 12, 2018; and Jakub Grygiel, "The Return of Europe's Nation-States," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 5 (2016), pp. 94-101.

⁸ The literature on cosmopolitanism is not large. For the best known (and very positive) treatment, see Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006). Appiah, it is worth noting, endorses the nation-state as the primary mechanism for ensuring the provision of what he calls "basic human entitlements" (pp. 163-164). Macron himself has been fairly sparing in his use of the term, which he invokes far less than that of patriotism. He nonetheless does use the term, e.g.: "If cosmopolitanism makes sense, it is through multilinguisme, and not through the domination of one language over the other, which will result, in a way, in blending many imaginations into one imagination." "Emmanuel Macron Applauds Bilingual Educators as 'Contributing to Civilization'," *Frenchly*, September 21, 2017, <https://frenchly.us/emmanuel-macron-applauds-bilingual-educators-contributing-civilization/>.

⁹ For Monnet's career, see his *Memoirs* and François Duchêne, *Jean Monnet: The First Statesman of Interdependence* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994).

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, "Dream and Nightmare: Anti-American Feeling in Europe," *Commonweal*, September 10, 1954.

¹¹ "Document on the European Identity Published by the Nine Foreign Ministers," Copenhagen, December 14, 1973, *European Political Co-operation* (Bonn: Federal Press and Information Office, 1982), pp. 57-63.

¹² David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (London: C. Hurst, 2017).

¹³ On efforts to build an EU identity, see, for example, Monica Sassatelli, "The Arts, the State, and the EU: Cultural Policy in the Making of Europe," *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (2007), pp. 28-41; and Chris Shore, "Inventing 'People's Europe': Critical Approaches to European Community 'Cultural Policy,'" *Man* (Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland), Vol. 28, No. 4 (1993), pp. 779-800.

¹⁴ Text at <http://www.gaullisme.fr/2010/06/15/leurope-de-latlantique-a-loural/>.

¹⁵ A useful corrective to the tendency of contemporary academics to vastly overstate the amount of time and energy policymakers of the mid-1940s devoted to pondering abstract questions relating to world order and to underestimate the challenges they faced "on the ground" in liberated Europe and Asia is Ian Buruma's *Year Zero: A History of 1945* (New York: Penguin, 1983). Buruma paints a picture of mass starvation and mass rape, of individual soldiers and indeed whole armies being stranded in territories far from their homes, of a near-ubiquitous quest for vengeance of all against all, of ordinary criminality on a massive scale, of the challenges of coping with Holocaust victims and displaced persons, of corruption, of the difficulty of distinguishing between unreconstructed Nazis or Nazi collaborators and mere opportunists who might be used to rebuild broken societies and economies, and much else -- all of which unfolded against the growing and ever-present fear of the communist threat.

¹⁶ "Official Summary of the Report of the President's Committee on Foreign Aid," November 7, 1947, *Documents on American Foreign Relations* (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1939-1953), Vol. 9 (1947), pp. 223-224.

¹⁷ Alan S. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

¹⁸ See Ernst B. Haas, *Beyond the Nation-State: Functionalism and International Organization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964).

¹⁹ André Malraux, *Fallen Oaks: Conversation with De Gaulle*, trans. Irene Clephane (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1972), p. 63.

²⁰ Memorandum of conversation, September 2, 1959, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1993), Vol. 7, part 2, pp. 255-262.

²¹ Malraux, *Fallen Oaks*, p. 61.

²² Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope: Renewal and Endeavor* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971), p. 184.

²³ Maurice Couve de Murville to Walter Heller, quoted in Richard T. Griffiths, “‘Two Souls, One Thought’? The EEC, the United States, and the Management of the International Monetary System,” Douglas Brinkley and Richard T. Griffiths, eds., *John F. Kennedy and Europe* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), p. 195.

²⁴ Richard N. Gardner, *Sterling-Dollar Diplomacy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), pp. 188-207.

²⁵ De Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope*, p. 177.

²⁶ De Gaulle’s political thought is outlined in the studies and documentation assembled by the Institut Charles de Gaulle in *De Gaulle en son siècle* (Paris: Plon, 1992), esp. Vol. 4 and 5. See also his wartime and postwar *Memoirs*, the conversations with Malraux, and the authoritative biography, Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 3 vols. (Paris: Le Seuil, 1965-1970).

²⁷ Ronald Tiersky, “Macron’s World: How the New President Is Remaking France,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (2018), pp. 87-96; and Macron’s interview with *Der Spiegel*, October 13, 2017, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/interview-with-french-president-emmanuel-macron-a-1172745.html>.

²⁸ For recent but modest progress in this area, see the two governments’ “Proposal on the architecture of a Eurozone Budget within the Framework of the European Union,” November 16, 2018.

²⁹ These are all areas listed in the request by the European Parliament to the Council of the EU to act against Hungary under Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), the first time this provision has ever been invoked. The de facto constitution consists of the TEU and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (known as “the Treaties”) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Article 6 of the TEU stipulates that the charter “shall have the same legal value as the Treaties.” See the consolidated versions of the treaties in *Official Journal of the European Union*, Vol. 59, C 202, June 7, 2016.

³⁰ On Greece, see William Drozdiak, *Fractured Continent: Europe’s Crises and the Fate of the West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017), pp. 190-209. For the refugee issue, see Paul Lenvai,

Orbán: Europe's New Strongman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), and Shehab Khan, "EU launches legal proceedings against Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic over handling of the refugee crisis," *The Independent*, June 14, 2017; on Italy, see Rachel Donado, "The EU Has Rejected Italy's Budget. That's Just What Rome Wanted," *The Atlantic*, October 23, 2018.

³¹ The conservative writer Christopher Caldwell takes this argument a step further, and contends that the conflict is not between two conceptions of democracy, but between democracy and liberalism, and that Western elites that opt for the latter are fundamentally undemocratic. See his "What Is Populism?" *Claremont Review of Books*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (2018), pp. 8-12.

³² Timothy Garton Ash, "Europe is fed up with Brexit, but its door is still open to Britain," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), November 16, 2018.

³³ Charles Grant, "Merkel Is Going But Germany Won't Shift Its Stance on Brexit," *The Guardian*, October 30, 2018.

³⁴ Current account data are from Heribert Dieter, "Stubbornly Germany First: Options for Reducing the World's Largest Current Account Surplus," *SWP Comment*, No. 48, November 2018.

³⁵ Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003).

³⁶ Mark Leonard, *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), esp. pp. 145-146.

³⁷ William Booth, "Theresa May Asks for a Little Respect from Europe in Brexit Talks," *Washington Post*, September 21, 2018.

³⁸ Ashoka Mody, *EuroTragedy: A Drama in Nine Acts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

³⁹ David Marsh, *The Euro: The Politics of the New Global Currency* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 8.

⁴⁰ Quoted in *ibid*, p. 1.

⁴¹ Michael Emerson, *The Wider Europe as the European Union's Friendly Monroe Doctrine*, CEPS Policy Brief 27, October 2002; Emerson et al, *The Elephant and the Bear: The European Union, Russia and Their Near Abroads* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2001).

⁴² Dominique Strauss-Kahn, "What Borders for Europe?" *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Fall 2004.

⁴³ Nicholas Farrell, "The Italian crisis," *Spectator USA*, November 29, 2018, <https://spectator.us/next-italian-crisis/>.

⁴⁴ This is a major theme of Stephen M. Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2018). For earlier works along this line, see also Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), and Michael Mandelbaum, *Mission Failure: America and the World in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁴⁵ See Chirac's speech of November 4, 1999, which followed the Senate's rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Jacques Chirac, "La France dans un monde multipolaire," *Politique Etrangère*, no. 4 (1999), pp. 803-813. Use of multilateralism as a counterweight to American power is discussed in John Van Oudenaren, "Transatlantic Bipolarity and the End of Multilateralism," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 120, No. 1 (2005), pp. 1-32.

⁴⁶ Tusk letter to the 27 EU heads of state or government on the future of the EU before the Malta summit, January 31, 2017, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/01/31/tusk-letter-future-europe/>.

⁴⁷ Steve Holland, Luke Baker, "Trump, Macron agree on defense after 'insulting' European army spat," Reuters, November 9, 2018.

⁴⁸ Jean-Claude Juncker, "State of the Union, 2018: The Hour of European Sovereignty," September 12, 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/state-union-speeches/state-union-2018_en.

⁴⁹ Speech of February 14, 1965: "Il s'agit que l'Europe, mère de la civilisation modern, s'établisse de l'Atlantique à l'Oural dans la concorde et la coopération en vue du développement de ses immenses ressources et de manière à jouer, conjointement avec l'Amérique, sa fille, la role qui lui revient." Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et Messages* (Paris: Plon, 1970), Vol. 4, p. 341; Malraux, *Fallen Oaks*, p. 54.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 109.

⁵¹ Monnet, *Memoirs*, p. 417.