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Schuman and the dynamics of the new Europe

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Schuman considered Monnet's approach of multiplying European institutions towards a European federation as 'a little too simple if not to say simplistic'¹. Schuman was not a constitutionalist who believed that the ancient states of Europe would come together by politicians writing a European version of a Philadelphia constitution. Nor what we may call a multi-functionalism, like Monnet. Europe would not be built by technicians. (He thought the Monnet-inspired Pleven plan for a European Defence and Political Community was ill-timed and was initially concerned it would threaten the conclusion of the Coal and Steel Community treaty).

A political system 'to replace war with new hope and concord'

Schuman wanted to create a process so that the irreversible advancement on the road to federation was assured. His timetable was very long term. The process would permeate the whole of the European population and change their expectations like leavening in bread, creating a fusion of interests.² But the initial effect would be immediate. The past 45 years of the European Union have amply demonstrated the validity of the process he initiated and described.

Some functionalist and neo-functionalists have concentrated on the dynamics and 'spill-overs' of common markets. Schuman spoke of Europe's 'own internal dynamism'. It was driven by security needs as much as economic. This has deeper, more pervasive effects on political psychology than commerce. The European Coal and Steel Community created a breach in traditional international, political, economic, commercial, trades-union, social and regional policies. Its dynamic effect, although tiny at first, was equivalent to founding a new state.

Europe would be built like any state, such as France, had been in the past: pragmatically, patiently with a sense of the possible, said Schuman. In the case of Europe, the development would be directed to a final objective.³

The Europe Community's social contract was 'the elimination of the age-old antagonism between France and Germany ... and to make it plain that any war between France and Germany becomes, not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible.'⁴ It would protect the west European peoples from themselves. It was to be, said Schuman eight months before his epoch-making announcement, a 'structure like the Atlantic Alliance but for Europe'. Instead of mutual defence, it was based on mutual internal security. The extraordinary bond that now joins the original founding states of the Community contrasts starkly with two millennia of almost continual warfare.

Schuman the politician

Schuman was a highly skilled and realist politician who matured in German-occupied Lorraine where loyalties were highly divided, riven by nationalist, religious, linguistic and industrial disputes and with families divided by frontiers. As a lawyer he became an expert reconciliator and later a trusted French deputy after the first world war. He was largely responsible for drafting the mass of legislation which harmonized different (and sometimes superior) laws and conditions in Alsace-Lorraine with those of France. This constitutional and legislative reconciliation preserved local advantages while cementing unity with France.

During the second world war he spoke of a community of destiny and the need to chain France and Germany together to prevent another war but with similar rights and duties in a union. It was no longer tolerable that the French Lorraine should provide Germany with iron ore and the German Ruhr supply France with coke so that the countries could make armaments to destroy each other.

Schuman was a prime-mover in the creation in 1948-9 of the Council of Europe which was originally conceived also as providing structural change in the government and organisation of Europe, rather than being just a 'talk shop'.

Key aspects of Schuman's thought involve terms like creating 'a new structure' on a European scale, providing a 'progressive application of human solidarity' and 'new expectations' for people. Schuman had been a successful minister of finance and was an expert in the economics of the state but he was convinced that the dynamics behind human cooperation was not driven by economic forces alone.

Schuman spoke often of certain aspects being the foundation of the European building. Timing was crucial to fulfil needs and encourage healthy development and growth of expectations. Furthermore there had to be a synchrony between the foundation of a European framework and that of the German Federal Republic. Positive feedback was essential in the growth of both. In Germany it was essential to provide positive reinforcement of a democratic, European future in the first few months of the new Federal German government.

Schuman clearly had strong ideas about how and when this would happen since he was instrumental with Acheson in stripping a complex of military controls off Germany and hastening the day for the return to civil government.⁵ This, in fact, drastically shortened the time he had to create the real beginning of Europe. It was a dangerous course. In his view if Germany regained its own government without the expectation of a European future, it was likely to return to nationalism, demand German unity (with the return of the eastern zone) and achieve it by playing off the Soviets against the West. Western Germany had 13 million refugees from the east in 1950 (20 per cent of the population). In the northern province of Schleswig-Holstein, where three out of four people were refugees and the unemployment rate was 28 per cent, a diplomat described it as a powder-keg.⁶

A real beginning of a European structure in a peaceful and democratic way would counter the expected return to the old mould of German nationalism and militarism. In 1949-50 both Acheson and Schuman worried about what way Germany would turn in the next ten years. The future was by no means sure.

What would create a new dynamic? In a speech in New York in 1949, Schuman spoke prophetically about France's responsibilities in creating a new European organisation, 'a permanent common structure of which the Council of Europe is only a prefiguration.' This would be based, not on the balance of power politics of Talleyrand and Metternich, but on reconciliation, peace politics and reborn confidence and solidarity.

Schuman emphasis on 'structural interdependence'

The archives now open show that the development of European Union did not proceed from the failure of the Council of Europe to provide the kernel of this structure and then move on to functionalist institutions like the Coal and Steel Community. One of his first actions as Foreign Minister had been to explore the means to create a new structural interdependence between France and Germany. In October 1948 Schuman discussed a range of projects with Adenauer about creating a structural or organisational interdependence between France and Germany ... even before Adenauer became chancellor of the new state. The Saar would be returned to Germany, he said.⁷

The idea of creating a European pool for steel was already proposed in internal Quai d'Orsay documents as early as 1948. The big problems were how could this be introduced given the enormous political, economic, military and commercial interests and opposition involved.

In Schuman's private collection of news clippings there is a copy of a Newsweek article of January 24 1949 featuring Schuman and his Germany policy, Toward a French-German Alliance? The details indicate it was a non-attributable interview with Schuman himself.

It begins with an extract of a Le Monde article, which appears to be 'inspired' by the Quai d'Orsay. The problem of the Ruhr can only be solved in the framework of Europe, it says. France can try to paralyze Germany or rebuild Europe; one excludes the other. There is only one solution, it continued, and that is to render a Franco-German war unthinkable, by the development of such tight bonds between continental nations that a European conflict would become just as inconceivable as a Franco-British or Anglo-American war is today. The Newsweek article also quotes Schuman's interview with the German agency Sudena. He said that hatred and vengeance had been removed from French policy towards Germany with a speed that would have been thought impossible after the first world war.

The new International Ruhr Authority would only be acceptable to Germans, Newsweek continues, if it were extended to Lorraine ore, Saar coal and Belgian and Luxembourg heavy industry. 'French officials freely discuss putting French coal mines under international control similar to that regulating the Ruhr. But they seek a political solution first. It is in this phase that Foreign Minister Schuman has - particularly in the opinion of the Americans - shown himself sensible and farsighted in dealing with Germany. He has made several trips to the Reich ... '

Why did Schuman focus on coal and steel? Rather than defence against potential German aggression, Schuman's emphasis was on security and building trust. The Ruhr was his research field for an antibiotic against war.⁹ He also wanted a 'polyvalent' solution for several problems: economic, political, and moral. Some other reasons:

1. Politically, the Marshall Plan showed that arriving at common European viewpoints proved elusive.
2. A divide appeared with British insistence on not creating an effective European structure immediately, while in Schuman's view such a new organisation was essential for internal European security. Schuman was reluctant to move without the British, but would have gone alone without them on the Council of Europe if in fact a compromise had not been found. He used a pragmatic method on coal and steel, hoping the British would join.
3. Economically, discussions on generalised customs unions with Italy and the Benelux countries showed they got bogged down in impossible detail and complications.
4. Psychologically, a long drawn out discussion would not provide the strong dynamic to turn the future of Germany away from its traditional path of development.
5. German nationalism was rising again. It is important to recall that the younger generation of Germans had never really experienced democracy. 'Wars have ravaged hearts and minds more ruinously than material devastation,' he said in 1949.¹⁰

For Schuman the state should at least satisfy five basic human needs: protecting the population from destruction, providing for its physical and moral well-being, and encouraging its intellectual and spiritual development.¹¹ Preventing war in a new security system responded to the most basic of human needs. Coal and steel were considered essential elements of the armaments industry. 'Of capital importance,' wrote Schuman about the Coal and Steel Community, 'was the political objective which was to put a definitive end to Franco-German antagonism.'¹² Britain was less concerned with internal European security and consequently was little attracted to the idea. In very simplified schematic form, European preoccupations are summarized in the table below.

Conclusions

Schuman's policy was to reinforce democracy and a European ideal in Germany by a positive and healthy development of the state (in contrast to the mistakes he had witnessed in the 1920s). His European policy was strongly based on France and Germany and the prevention of a new antagonism. His method on taking over the Quai d'Orsay in 1948 was to prepare a security system based on primary arms industries that would make war impossible and reinforce organisational interdependence of European states to create a long-term dynamic of unity in many fields.

France	Germany	Britain
Effects of war	Devastation, post-war	Devastation, Victory, world

divisions, lack of security	demoralisation, lack of security, division of country, refugees.	prestige. Reinforcement of island security, importance of Empire/Commonwealth. Impoverishment
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Political concerns 1945-50	Communism, Gaullism, overthrow of state?; Soviet military invasion? blockade, German unity? Saar, Ruhr	Allied occupation. Lack of state apparatus, democratic tradition; Berlin US and USSR	Class problems, nationalisation of industries, junior member Big 3 with
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Expected dynamic	Authoritarian? Immobilisme?	Democratic? Authoritarian? Invasion? Return to world power status? Defence /NATO	Democratic? Empire into Commonwealth.	Socialism. Turn
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Economic concerns	Inflation, devaluation Dollar shortage (Marshall Plan) Reforming economic system	Black market Dollar shortage Industrial dismantling Creating an economic system (Erhard)	Black market Devaluation Dollar shortage	Rationing
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US policy perspective	From dragging partner for European policy. state to economic power-house	From dragging partner on German aggression; from pastoral (Morgenthau) power.	Front line state against Soviet partner in US European policy; collapse as world power.	From potential leader in Europe to dragging
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Schuman's action 1947-8; 2. Foreign Minister 1948-53	Resist authoritarianism, reinforce democracy disputes, provide European solution	Reinforce democracy, end territorial Try to draw GB into European beginning and expectation: 1 fusion of interests, 2. Council of Europe; 3 ECSC
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