

Lyndon Johnson and Charles de Gaulle: Clash of Personalities or Structural Divergence?

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON, August 27 1908- January 22 1973. Served as a Democratic Congressman and later a Senator from Texas, and then was Senate Majority Leader between 1955 and 1961. Vice President under President John F. Kennedy, and became the 36th President of the United States upon Kennedy's assassination in November 1963. Re-elected in the 1964 presidential election, but chose not to run again in 1968, with Nixon succeeding him as President in January 1969.

He is particularly associated with escalating the war in Vietnam, but also for his domestic achievements in civil rights and welfare policy- the 'Great Society' programs.

CHARLES DE GAULLE, November 22 1890- November 9 1970. Served in the French Army during WWI, and was wounded and later captured. During peacetime he remained in the Army, advocating new theories of tactical warfare. Upon the decision of Petain to seek an armistice in 1940, he moved to England. Formed 'Free French' movement, and, in 1943, the 'French Committee of National Liberation'. In 1944 this became the Provisional Government of France. November 1945 elected head of French government; resigned January 1946. Served as President from 1958 until April 1969.

Known for his strong views on Europe and the place of France in the world, and for his particular style of politics, which often antagonised others.

KEY DATES

1947 US announced Marshall Plan

1949 Foundation of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

1952 European Coal and Steel Community formed

1954 Failure of the European Defence Community

1957 Treaty of Rome establishes the European Economic Community (EEC)

1958 French forces begin to be withdrawn from NATO

1963 French rejection of British membership in the EEC

1964 French recognition of (Communist) China

1965 'Empty chair crisis', as France walked out of Council of Ministers. (Resolved by 1966 Luxembourg Compromise)

1966 French withdrawal of all remaining forces from NATO military command

1966 De Gaulle visit to Moscow

1967 Six-Day War

1967 Harmel Report

1965-1968 Intermittent financial crises in the international system, relating especially to gold and its link to the dollar

AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT

- **Structure and integration of Europe**- How far should Europe integrate and in what ways? How should Germany be reunified? How should 'Europe' be defined? What was France's role in Europe?
- **The US's relationship with Europe**- How far should the US involve itself in Europe? How much responsibility for defence should the US and Europe each take?
- **Management of détente and relations between East and West Europe**- Troop reductions or 'bridge-building'? Should non-proliferation agreements be pursued? Did NATO have a role to play in détente?
- **Military and defence strategy**- 'Flexible response' or 'massive retaliation'? Multilateral forces or multilateral planning? Who should have nuclear capabilities and control of forces?
- **The role, function, and organization of NATO**- What consultation between members should there be, and on what issues? How much attention should NATO pay to political issues, as well as military?
- **Trade and financial matters**- how should trade within Europe and between Europe and the US work? How should the problems with the Bretton Woods system (the relationship between gold and the dollar) be resolved?

QUOTES

"[de Gaulle] had a vision not of a United Europe but of a confederation in which the Europeanness of all participants would be recognized. With this common interest, they would stand as a unit against the rest of the world."

- Charles Bohlen, US Ambassador to France under de Gaulle, writing in 1973.

"I made it a rule for myself and for the US government simply to ignore President de Gaulle's attacks on our policies and the doubts he had raised about the value of our pledges. Nothing he could say would, in my judgement, divert the French people from their friendship with the American people, a friendship firmly rooted in history."

- Lyndon Johnson, in his 1973 memoirs

"We are not joined together by experience or convenience in pursuit of temporary goals. European unity and Atlantic partnership are based on deeply shared values and dangers, and interests, and the wise pursuit of the interest of each will strengthen the connection among all our nations. The United States has no policy for the people of Europe, but we do have a policy toward the people of Europe... We must all seek to assist in increasing the unity of Europe... We must all work to multiply in number and intimacy the ties between North America and Europe. For we shape an Atlantic civilization with an Atlantic destiny."

- Johnson speech at Georgetown University, 1964

"Yes, it is Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals, it is Europe, it is the whole of Europe, that will decide the destiny of the world."

- Charles de Gaulle, in a 1959 speech

"The American interest is not always the French interest. This will be more and more true in the future, which will give Europe a greater and greater weight, and which will therefore contribute to diminishing the relative weight of the US."

- De Gaulle, 1963

BIBLIOGRAPHY (in addition to the session reading list)

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