

# Introduction

## The United States of Europe and new horizons for European integration<sup>1</sup>

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The Action Committee for the United States of Europe, founded by Jean Monnet, carried the flag of European federalism from its inception in 1955 until its folding in 1975. Despite difficulties with the European integration process, particularly during de Gaulle's leadership of France over more than ten years; Monnet and the Action Committee were able to ensure that most of their ideas were implemented. A great deal of this can be attributed to Monnet's network of political connections that are revealed in the development of the Action Committee. Whether it just be treaty development in the form of Euratom and the European Economic Community (EEC) or the first round of enlargement with Britain's accession, undoubtedly the Action Committee was not only the strongest voice for European integration, carried through its wide representation amongst the member nations, but was also a fortunate arrangement for the whole integration process.

The Action Committee had a serious impact on the European integration process. Despite its inability to turn any of its policy ideas into concrete action, many of these ideas found their way into the European integration process. To a considerable extent, the Action Committee occupied a position of the idea factory of Europe. Where national governments used power to implement necessarily limited national laws, the Action Committee produced ideas which could ultimately only prevail because of their brilliance in providing a brighter future for Europe. The innovative mindset of the Action Committee and the mainly personal links through which they were transmitted into national politics are good examples. In this spirit, this Routledge *Handbook on European Integrations* was written.

Are we ready for a United States of Europe? This question seems almost out of this world, because it is clear that despite the success of the Action Committee, it has not achieved the founding of a United States of Europe. But are we really that far from it? This handbook will show, with the due academic rigour, of course, fields of European integration which have been overlooked. It will show ways of European integration which were not expected, and it will show areas of concrete progress of European integration where no one would have dared to touch on national prerogatives in Monnet's time, such as in the energy sector, as in the chapter by Matus Misik, Peter Plenta, Veronika Oravcová on energy union, as well as by the one by Pamela Barnes on sustainability policies in Europe.

### **Main themes and objectives**

Despite the novel aspect of the topics proposed, the remit of the handbook follows an established academic format. Usual academic standards have been applied when it comes to writing, referencing and review, not least because this handbook should serve as a first point of access to a topic, as a reference of 'truth' in European studies and as a companion to existing scholarship in European studies. That is why we will keep a small number of chapters on the dominant topics in European studies, such as the Eurozone, security or European law.

Novel topics will be added to this canon of dominant topics, such as culture in European integration or new technologies and their impact on European integration. In order to capture the full spread of topics which colleagues in European studies feel have been neglected, the editors made an open call for contributions. We had the great chance to attract authors who have worked extensively in European studies and have developed a certain expertise in under-explored but burgeoning fields. Often such innovation is not well covered in existing literature, simply for the reason of being new. But this is also the hallmark of innovation, which we hope this handbook will bring to the discipline of European studies.

Eventually, this handbook, if we follow the breadcrumbs of innovation, may well lead us to the question of the future of European integration. How shall it be structured, and what shall it contain? What purpose will it serve, and where will it lead the Europeans? These are questions which Jean Monnet posed decades ago in the Action Committee for the United States of Europe. That is why the editors consider it worthwhile going back to these ideas, reconsidering the United States of Europe, in the following, not least because the novel topics considered in this handbook may well push European integration further forward and may one day lead to the United States of Europe Jean Monnet anticipated.

### ***The foundations***

In 1955, Jean Monnet began consulting the leaders of all political parties and the leaders of trade unions in countries that were members of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) excepting Communists and Gaullists, because of their anti-European stance (Brinkley and Hackett, 1991: 57–58; Monnet, 1978: 410). After he resigned as the head of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1955, Monnet realised that without this position and the attached democratic mandate, he would quickly lose his political clout (Monnet, 1978: 408; Hoerber, 2006: 112, 116). Hence, he founded the Action Committee for the United States of Europe and ensured that it would have what he viewed as democratic legitimacy. Monnet achieved this by a political membership taken from all six founding members of the ECSC that represented approximately 60 million voters and 12 million trade union members or, in other words, 67% of the electorate and 70% of organised labour (Statements, 1969: 7). The purpose was to build a consensus amongst these groups for the furthering of European unity and, in the short term, to ensure the successful negotiations and ratification of the Treaties of Rome, that is, Euratom and the EEC, which had started from 1955 in the Messina process (Brinkley and Hackett, 1991: 58). The brilliance of the Action Committee was to create a forum in which there were no records and members would be free from scrutiny and thus able to let ideas rule their imagination. As Monnet put it, members were free from parliamentary responsibility or limits imposed by political correctness.

When a statesman of goodwill is no longer under public scrutiny – when he can be sure that his words will not be published and that the opponent with whom he is now

co-operating will not quote them, against him later, then, he asking nothing more than to contribute to the common cause, his positive nature encourages agreement.

(Monnet, 1978: 416)

It was under this system that Monnet felt a consensus could be reached and that resolutions could be taken back to each member nation's respective parliament for due legislative process (Statements, 1969: 7).

Monnet was able to rely on his reputation and personal relationships to ensure the quick formation of the Committee with an impressive list of participants. A press communiqué was dispatched on October 13, 1955, listing the members, and their general goals, only a few months after Monnet had begun the recruiting process (Statements, 1969: 9). The first meeting was held on January 18, 1956, and initiated a new phase of cooperation in the movement towards European integration (Statements, 1969: 12). The incredible speed with which he established the Committee and also the general agreement by the newly recruited members on European unification is a testament to his drive for a United States of Europe. This became the basis on which his federalist and supranational programme for a European integration process with increased momentum for European unification was built. The choice of name was no coincidence, and the similarity to the foundation process of the United States of America was very deliberate. Europe should finally make the leap from its division into small national principalities into a viable community which would have the internal power to contribute to a better world (Telò, 2006: 58).

### *Euratom and the EEC*

The first major accomplishment of the Action Committee was its successful contribution to the ratification of the treaties on the European Economic Community and Euratom, 1957/8. The unity of purpose again came from Monnet himself, because the process leading up to the treaties of Rome had started before the Action Committee was even formed. While working to build his Action Committee, Monnet continually worked to advance the process that was taking place at Messina and Venice (Duchêne, 1994: 285). The Spaak Report in June 1956 organised the multitude of ideas during the Messina Process into two major projects: the Common Market and Euratom (Monnet, 1978: 422). The resolutions put forth at the first meeting in January 1956, were, first, the formation of a European Atomic Energy agency to ensure sufficient supplies of nuclear energy and, second, the Common Market for nuclear products in order to provide the supplies needed (Statements, 1969: 14). The Commission, modelled upon the High Authority of the ECSC, would have the necessary powers and would act as an executive organ to ensure proper functioning of the new organisation (Statements, 1969: 14). The Action Committee's proposals regarding atomic energy were aided by a report by Louis Armand, Franz Etzel and Francesco Giordani – French, German and Italian experts on energy, nuclear affairs and the inner workings of the ECSC – dubbed the “Three Wise Men”. They stated in the name of the Action Committee that,

Europe's dependence on the Middle East is bound to increase . . . as the quantity of oil imported from the Middle East increases, there will be a corresponding increase in the political temptation to interfere with the flow of oil from that region. A future stoppage could be an economic calamity for Europe. Excessive dependence of our highly industrialized countries on an unstable region might even lead to serious political trouble throughout the world. It is essential that oil should be a commodity and not a political weapon.



The European economy must be protected against an interruption of oil supplies, by finding alternative sources of energy to limit the further rise in oil imports.

(Monnet, 1978: 424–425)

In the spring and summer of 1956, the Action Committee members passed motions in their respective parliaments requesting governments to move towards progressive energy strategies – clearly favouring the momentum for Euratom (Duchêne, 1994: 294). Competing interests in France and Germany made the negotiations for Euratom difficult at times. France was concerned that Euratom's role would prevent them from developing atomic weapons, while Germany was worried that France's nuclear ambitions were prejudiced unduly against Germany and other nations.<sup>2</sup> By keeping the channels open in the Action Committee, Monnet kept the process going, allowing more time for mutual consideration, which arguably became an important element in the ultimate success of the Treaties of Rome.

A critical moment in this was the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by Gamal Abdel Nasser on July 26, 1956 (Monnet, 1978: 420). This led the Action Committee in its third session to declare that, "the power supplies of Western Europe determine the progress or decadence of our countries" (Statements, 1969: 18). This action by Nasser led Louis Armand jokingly to declare Nasser as the federator of Europe, because through his threat to European oil supplies, he gave the Euratom project a concrete purpose which eventually carried the European integration process one step further (Monnet, 1978: 422). Monnet identified 'necessity' as the underlying force which brought Europeans together (Monnet, 1978: 422).

The third session of the Action Committee, on the 19–20 of September 1956, called for the formation of a European Common Market for all goods in conjunction with the establishment of peaceful atomic energy usage (Statements, 1969: 14). It is no surprise that the two issues became linked, because the French had reservations about the Common Market and the Germans were hesitant about atomic energy (Monnet, 1978: 422). By ensuring that the two treaties were signed at the same time, Monnet was able to accommodate both parties' interests. Christian Pineau, French foreign minister, described Euratom as a "smokescreen for the Common Market" (Duchêne, 1994: 305). For the German Social Democrats (SPD), the peaceful implications of Euratom allowed them to reconsider their hard-line stance towards European unity (Duchêne, 1994: 306). By placing the emphasis on energy needs, the Europeanists were able to slip the Common Market in through the back door. During the debates, Alain Savary, French Socialist and member of the Action Committee, described the situation as, "the choice [being] not between the Community and the status quo, but between the Community and solitude" (Monnet, 1978: 424). In other words, if France was not willing to join in; they would be at a serious disadvantage compared to those in the Community.

With the treaties signed on March 25, 1957, the Action Committee pushed for urgent ratification. No one needed a reminder, following the failure of the European Defence Community (EDC) in 1954, of the potentially disastrous consequences of delay (Duchêne, 1994: 307–308). The French government held the opinion that minimal debate about the Common Market was best. Guy Mollet, Socialist president of the council, used Pineau's idea of a "smokescreen" and presented Euratom first, featuring the almost undisputable report by the "Three Wise Men" followed by the bill on the Common Market in the *Assemblée Nationale*. The Germans were even more difficult. The Action Committee including the German delegation had called for the ratification by all nations to take place before the summer break. Germany had elections scheduled for September, and Erich Ollenhauer (SPD) was concerned about supporting a European integration policy which had hitherto been predominantly a project of the Conservative government under Konrad Adenauer's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) (Monnet, 1978: 424).

Through his personal relationship with Ollenhauer, Monnet was able to persuade him to vote with the CDU, as the Socialists in France were about to do with the conservative Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP) (Monnet, 1978: 424; Hoerber, 2006: 215, 333). The most surprising aspect of the ratification process is that the Treaties were ratified by all member nations by the end of 1957 and that all members of the Action Committee voted in accordance with their pledge (Monnet, 1978: 426). Surely the consensus achieved could not have been won so quickly without the prior dialogue that the Action Committee provided. In this instance, the Action Committee had clearly proven its worth for the benefit of the European integration process.

### *De Gaulle years I: Monnet vs. De Gaulle*

When de Gaulle came back to power on May 30, 1958, Monnet analysed his speeches regarding a European Confederation from the time when de Gaulle had been provisional leader of France and briefly president of the council, in 1946. It became clear that his ideas were different from Monnet's supranational concept (Bromberger and Bromberger, 1969: 195). However, after his return to power in 1958 and to everyone's surprise, de Gaulle announced that, "France will participate actively in the Organization of the Common Market. The Common Market will be inaugurated by the end of this year, 1958, by a ten percent reduction in all tariffs" (Bromberger and Bromberger, 1969: 199). It had been de Gaulle who was opposed to the ECSC and who had been instrumental in causing the failure of the EDC and was opposed to supranationalism and therefore to all of the early European integration initiatives (Brinkley and Hackett, 1991: 169). Reason for de Gaulle to agree to implement the EEC can be found in the meeting between him and Konrad Adenauer on September 14, 1958. De Gaulle stated three important issues, all of which Adenauer agreed to: first, a French nuclear strike force which would lower dependence on the Americans; second, the maintenance of old institutions until better ones could be designed – ECSC, the EEC and Euratom would be maintained; third, Franco-German cooperation would be the basis for European unity (Brinkley and Hackett, 1991: 170). Monnet was pleased by these results but clearly miscalculated because such bi-lateral talks were badly taken by the other Member States.

During his early period as president of the Republic, Monnet was not opposed to de Gaulle's vision of Europe. While he thought de Gaulle's concept was too weak, "it was better than no Europe at all" (Bromberger and Bromberger, 1969: 204). That was what he had feared to be de Gaulle's plans for European integration, based on his earlier fundamental opposition to it during the Fourth Republic. De Gaulle's European idea was beginning to take form. It was in July 1960 that he began to call for a European defence organisation that would exclude Britain and the United States (Bromberger and Bromberger, 1969: 205). Adenauer was reserved, and the majority of the German Parliament, the *Bundestag*, was in favour of the Atlantic alliance, the United States and Britain being the most prominent members (Bromberger and Bromberger, 1969: 206). European security without American participation was unthinkable to most German politicians. Moreover, by 1961, Britain was looking to join the Common Market and was strongly supported by Monnet's Action Committee. Britain's application was a result of President Kennedy's pressure on the British prime minister, Harold Macmillan, nicely captured in Monnet's account that, "there was a 'Monnet effect' on [George] Ball [US Secretary of State] and then a 'Ball effect' on Kennedy and then a 'Kennedy effect' on Macmillan" (Duchêne, 1994: 325). Despite these efforts to bring Britain into the European fold, de Gaulle accused the British of attempting to sabotage the Common Market and eventually vetoed the British application (Brinkley and Hackett, 1991: 169). It was around this time that Walter Hallstein, first president

designate of the Commission, went to the United States and presented to President Kennedy the same plan that Monnet had discussed with him, the essential feature being that the United States and Europe should be accepted as equal powers (Duchêne, 1994: 326–327). Soon after his return, Hallstein met de Gaulle, in November 1961. De Gaulle considered the meeting with Kennedy a provocation and accused Hallstein of trying to be, “the Foreign Minister, the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister of Europe” (Bromberger and Bromberger, 1969: 214). Hallstein came away saying that, “de Gaulle want[s] to destroy European unification” (Bromberger and Bromberger, 1969: 214). Monnet said, “de Gaulle talks of Europe but he does nothing. He is a pessimist. He is willing to accept things as they are instead of trying to change them” (Bromberger and Bromberger, 1969: 214). Obviously, this attitude was not good enough for European enthusiasts who wanted to see European integration progress.

Unfortunately, that was not the end of the story; it was Hallstein who was right about de Gaulle’s destructive potential rather than Monnet about his passivity. In the Fouchet Plans, de Gaulle made the first serious attempt to change the nature of European integration (Bromberger and Bromberger, 1969: 214). The most important change was a shift in emphasis away from supranationalism, that is, the Commission as the central institution, into the direction of intergovernmentalism, which, through the Council of Ministers, would give the nation states the decisive voice in European politics. In his European reform and European defence plans, de Gaulle relied on the support of Adenauer, who was able to water down de Gaulle’s intentions. Particularly in the defence aspects of the plan, the importance of NATO for European defences was not touched. The Action Committee fully agreed with Adenauer’s moderation in that the Atlantic Alliance was essential for the stability of Europe. In the end, the major difference between de Gaulle and Monnet was a Europe dominated by the nation states in de Gaulle’s concept of ‘*Europe des patries*’, as opposed to Monnet’s idea of a Europe which would leave nationalism behind and develop a character of its own with independent institutions to guide it, that is, the classical quarrel of supranationalism versus intergovernmentalism. Monnet’s goal always was equality with the United States; he was sceptical whether this could be achieved through Franco-German domination of the European continent, as de Gaulle advocated, while he was sure that an integrated and united Europe could stand side by side with the United States as an equal.

### ***De Gaulle years II: the “empty-chair” crisis and the Luxembourg compromise***

The “empty-chair” crisis was a result of de Gaulle pulling out the French delegates from the Council of Ministers and all Community meetings on July 6, 1965 (Duchêne, 1994: 331–332). He did this as a result of the planned extended application of qualified majority voting (QMV), which would prevent France from having a veto in Community decisions. He claimed on September 9 that the Commission was “a mostly foreign technocracy destined to trample on democracy in France” (Monnet, 1978: 483). Presidential elections in France contributed to this crisis on the European level, if only by prolonging it. It appeared that there would be no end to this deadlock until the elections in December. Monnet publicly stated,

On December 5, I shall not vote for General de Gaulle. We can no longer have any illusions: the policy practised, explained in the press conference of September 9, and confirmed by France’s persistent absence from Brussels, is leading us down the outdated path of nationalism and inevitably encouraging nationalism in other countries, and in particular in Germany.

(Monnet, 1978: 484)



The result in the elections gave de Gaulle his first run-off, which he won narrowly with 54.5% of the vote (O'Neill, 1996: 281). A solution for the empty-chair crisis had to be found, which came to be known as the Luxembourg Compromise.

The strength of the Action Committee during this time is that it was able to contribute to the cohesion amongst the other five Member States. While de Gaulle was able to demonstrate that the Community could not survive without France – which no one had ever questioned – the other five states remained united in strong opposition to de Gaulle and his vision of Europe. The Action Committee was essential in crystallising their position in support of supranational Europe and a somewhat frustrated, somewhat triumphant Monnet pointed out:

If his [de Gaulle's] aim had been to freeze the Community's institutional development and prevent further transfers of sovereignty, he had gained nothing but a little time, which for the Europeans was so much time wasted. What de Gaulle denied them in 1965 they have since acquired as a matter of course.

(Monnet, 1978: 484)

While it may have taken a great deal of time, the measures for QMV were finally put in place in the Single European Act of 1987. The movement towards Europe, and Monnet's supranational vision of it, had been solidly backed by the majority in Europe. Not even de Gaulle was able to prevent this gradualist progression towards Federalism and deeper integration.

### *Britain's accession to the communities*

De Gaulle had managed to thwart Britain's attempts to join the Communities both in 1963 and 1967 by using his veto. In contrast, both times, the British application had the support of the Action Committee (Duchêne, 1994: 331). Neither time, though, were Britain's political parties or trade unions members of the Action Committee. In July 1967, however, the Action Committee met to declare that Britain should become a full member – not just by associate status – of the Community, and by October of the same year all governments, save France, had voted in accordance. The Action Committee was once again in the thick of international agenda-setting, and while de Gaulle was able to prevent Britain's accession in the short term, the issue remained on the international agenda (Monnet, 1978: 489).

In that respect, British membership in the Action Committee became an important issue. As Francois Duchene points out, "The Action Committee had become the keeper of the European conscience. In this it was very successful. There were no defections. On the contrary, recruits joined" (Duchêne, 1994: 332). This included Socialists from Italy, the French Independent Republicans under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and finally, in 1968, the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal party of Britain joined the Action Committee.

In 1969, de Gaulle resigned from office as a consequence of the earlier student and worker protests in 1968 and a failed referendum in 1969 (Duchêne, 1994: 332). This left the door wide open for Britain to enter the European Communities (ECs). While de Gaulle's successor Georges Pompidou had reservations about Britain entering the ECs, he did not have the resolve of de Gaulle and ceded this point. Britain finally joined the ECs on January 1, 1973, along with Ireland and Denmark (Duchêne, 1994: 334). This must be seen as the implementation of another central point of the agenda of the Action Committee. Monnet's account is strong evidence for the influence of the Action Committee during the accession years to the extent that it could defy or rather outlive even the most powerful politically leader in Europe at the time, which de Gaulle undoubtedly was. Brexit has become, of course, another setback to the

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European integration process, and one finds French nationalists and glaring British Brexiteers joining in their claim that de Gaulle was right that Britain should never have joined the ECs (Heath, 2020: 14). This kind of polemic would make the members of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe shudder in disbelief, and you can almost hear Jean Monnet say: "What a waste." Would it have happened had the Action Committee still been in place? Most likely not. John Ryan will consider the case of Brexit in much detail in this book.

### *Meeting of minds*

Perhaps one of the most important achievements of the Action Committee was its function as a forum for continual dialogue. This facilitated the development of ideas and communications between a great number of Europhiles and organisations, such as political parties and trade unions. However, there was no regular dialogue between the heads of states or governments. Following the accession of Britain to the ECs, relations between the leaders of the Nine were good. However, in 1974, Pompidou died; Willy Brandt resigned; and Edward Heath, who had arguably been the most Europhile British prime minister, lost the general election. This meant a change of guard in the three biggest Member States: Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in France, Helmut Schmidt in Germany and Harold Wilson in Britain (Duchêne, 1994: 336). In September 1974, Monnet was able to convince Giscard of the importance of regular meetings between the heads of EC governments. In December of the same year, Giscard made three proposals, all of which had been earlier promoted by the Action Committee: first, direct elections for the European Parliament; second, the establishment of qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers; and third, to hold summits of the "European Council", that is, the heads of state in government, on a regular basis (Duchêne, 1994: 336–337). QMV was eventually put to more widespread use from the Single European Act in 1987. Summits of the heads of ECs governments were held regularly and turned into an important, if still informal, organ of the Communities. And shortly after Monnet's death in 1979, the first general elections for the European Parliament were held. These are further important agenda points of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe which were implemented, demonstrating that this organisation substantially contributed to the shaping of the European integration process.

### *Conclusions*

Essentially, the Action Committee for the United States of Europe was Jean Monnet, and it has been shown that he put enormous effort into shaping European integration and that the Action Committee was his tool in later years. The original development of the Action Committee itself, the continuing dialogue amongst the Member States, the expansion to new Member States and both the success and failure of Action Committee initiatives have led to the face of Europe as it exists today, and this is part of the legacy of Jean Monnet. The Action Committee must therefore be seen as successful, even if its concrete successes are not always readily apparent. Despite many difficulties, which have been analysed under the headings on de Gaulle, it appears that Pierre Drouin's comments in *Le Monde* in 1961 are just as valid today as they were then: "Experience has proved that most of the ideas launched by the Action Committee, although they may sometimes take a long time to make their way, eventually end up, in one form or another, in the realm of reality" (Monnet, 1978: 428).

In recent years, all major academic publishing houses have produced handbooks on European integration. Such publications serve as the main reference point for both junior European



studies students and established academic researchers alike, introducing them to new fields through a broad introduction to the key issues at stake and the academic literature to date. Handbooks traditionally serve as a first point of access to a number of key topics in European studies and as a companion on existing scholarship in European studies.

European studies is too big to put it into one book. Generations of editors have been confronted with the dilemma of which policy areas and institutions to include and which to leave out. Nonetheless, over time, handbooks have tended to focus on the largest and most influential institutions and bodies as well as the most political and highly funded policy areas. In turn, a number of key issues have arguably been neglected, considered of secondary importance by those scholars dominant in the discipline.

This handbook seeks to remedy the situation by covering a number of key areas that are usually neglected and excluded. The aim is to complement existing handbooks and therefore to add to the introductory and 'companion' literature on European integration. While the editors accept the state of the art in European studies, the proposed handbook seeks to broaden the scope of study in the field, and we invite readers to consider both the importance of other neglected topics but also the potential for further research.

The purpose of this book is to show these neglected areas and their importance for the European integration process while highlighting the progress that has been made in classical areas of EU politics. But it does not stop there. In the conclusion, we will take stock of what we have seen in the book and whether that makes up more than we Europeans see as real at this moment. Could Monnet's political objective of a United States of Europe come true by bringing together all the goodwilled people of Europe in order to make the great leap towards that United States of Europe? There is a reason for hope.

## Notes

- 1 This introduction is based in its core contents on a previous publication: Hoerber (2010) 'Behind the Scenes: Jean Monnet and the Action Committee for the United States of Europe', co-authored with Michael Western; *Jean Monnet Foundation*, Paris, see Website
- 2 The crucial issue was the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear power. It was initially considered an essential binding obligation on all future Member States, not least to prevent the impression that Euratom could become a threat to the Soviet Union. This objective was contested by France, which had plans for setting up a nuclear strike force of its own. In connection with French nuclear tests in the Sahara, this was considered a precarious situation, in that several states, including the Federal Republic, had already declared that they would not produce nuclear weapons. Only the civil use of nuclear power was allowed to West Germany under the Western European Union (WEU). If the solely peaceful use of nuclear components was not laid down in the Treaty, it would be impossible to guarantee that plutonium produced in a civil reactor in Germany would not be used for military purposes in another Member State, such as France. This could leave Germany in breach of its obligations under WEU.

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