

The Empty Chair Crisis & The Luxembourg Compromise

The Empty Chair Crisis occurred in July 1965 when France boycotted EEC meetings to protest against financing of the Common Agricultural Policy and proposals to transition to majority voting, which threatened its national interests. French President Charles de Gaulle opposed the shift towards the more supranational voting system, a move that would reduce France's influence in the EEC. The crisis was resolved in January 1966 with the Luxembourg Compromise, allowing a member state to veto decisions considered vital to its national interests.

This "agreement to disagree" temporarily restored harmony but slowed further European integration by giving significant power to national governments.



Historical - Philosophical

- De Gaulle's absenteeism and dramatic stance underscoring the fragility of European unity and disrupting efforts toward closer cooperation (Van Hecke & Vermeulen, 2023)
- The events of 1965-1966 echoing historical struggles, ex: the 19th-century Concert of Europe balancing national interests with collective action.
- The Luxembourg Compromise - a temporary resolution - a retreat from the ambitious goals of the Treaty of Rome, reinforcement of the primacy of the nation-state. (Deschamps, 2016)

Legal

- Prevalence of the informal Luxembourg Compromise over treaty provisions (Teasdale, 1993).
- Ambiguous legal status of the Luxembourg Compromise; despite unofficial status, used as a precedent. (Bajon, n.d.).
- Member States hold effective veto power until 1982 (Walker, 1982).



Governance

- Tensions between state sovereignty and supranational ambitions led to reshaping the balance of power and a temporary undermining of the Commission's authority (Secretariat-General of the European Commission, 1966).
- A precedent for the management of political disagreements was set, emphasizing the need for consensus and unity above all (Ludlow, 2006).
- The weakening of majority voting slowed European integration.

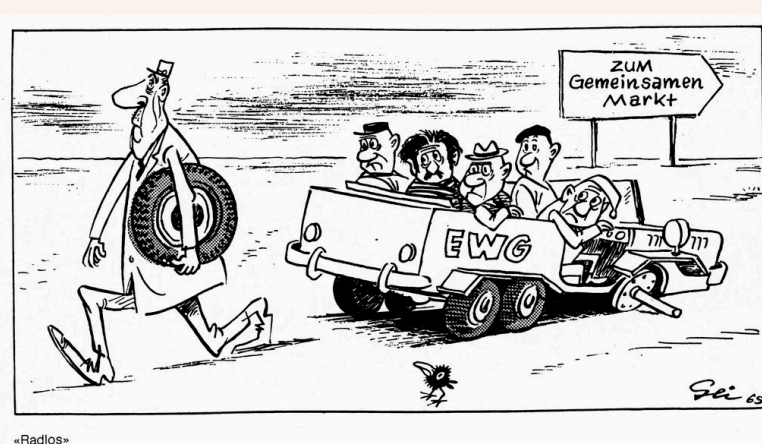
Theoretical

Explained through Liberal Intergovernmental Framework:

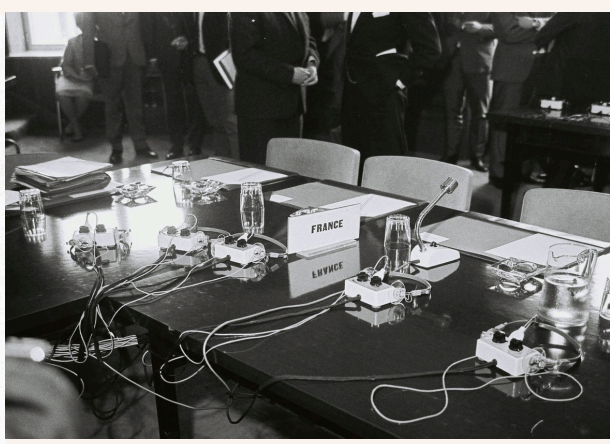
- De Gaulle's will representative of domestic politics. (Teasdale, 1993; Intergovernmental Europe?, 2000)
- Demonstration of the important bargaining power of large Member State slows Integration. (Civitas, 2015)
- Sovereignty remains with Member States in Intergovernmental framework.



Source: (Krier, 1966)



Source: (Geisen, 1983)



Source: (Médiathèque Commission européenne, 1965)



Source: (Faizant, 1965)



Source: (INA, 1965)