Jean Monnet – From the Marshall Plan to the British refusal*

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Abstract

During the last interwar years and the first three years of the Second World War, relations between states considerably deteriorated. In 1943, David Mitrany published at Chatham House, his well-known work "A Working Peace System", in which he expressed his own arguments against the territorial order of future world peace. A new process was needed with three stages: appeasement, reconstruction and reorganization. Furthermore, Monnet found the construction of a supranational entity necessary, which would integrate the common interests of the states, in order to satisfy the needs of the citizens. Monnet's idea transformed into what we now call the Schuman Declaration. The existence of a 'high authority', which would absorb the sovereignty of participant states, determined a blockage in negotiations with Great Britain.

Keywords: David Mitrany, Jean Monnet, Schuman's Declaration, Winston Churchill, Clement Attlee

THE DECADE THAT preceded the Treaty of Rome (1957) and which began with the Marshall Plan can be named the "American monnetism", after the expression used by John Gillingham. (Gilligham 1995: 21-36) These two pillars in European history reveal a roadmap of ideas launched by leaders and politicians influenced by a war which proved the helplessness of states.

In 1947, a year after Winston Churchill had delivered his famous speech at Fulton, George Marshall proposed an economic recovery plan for the European continent. The former British prime minister's approach was the expression of politico-diplomatic wear and tear, which portrayed resignation, looking from the perspective of the facts that were known at that time. Marshall's idea was meant to offer a pragmatic solution, which attempted to harness the lessons of the war in favour of future peace.

On the 18th of April 1948, Jean Monnet sent a letter from the United States to Robert Schuman. Caught in the emotion and ambience, Monnet tried to show that the American government was fully willing to help Europe, but was waiting for the European states to manifest the desire to help themselves. In the aforementioned letter, Monnet reached the following conclusion: "the effort of the Western European countries to be consistent with the circumstances, with the imminent danger and with the American effort must become a genuine European effort that will be possible only under the auspices of a federation" (Monnet, Schuman 1986: 188).

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3(1) 5–11

Over the following years, there were many debates regarding sovereignty, integration, and federalization. Speeches were held, that utilized the same concepts, only with different meaning and in different perspectives. However, the ideas expressed by Monnet, in 1948, were not entirely new. Some notes of Monnet remained, dating back from the summer of 1943, in which he referred to post-war peace. In these notes, he expressed his belief that two major goals were to be reached: (a) re-establishing or establishing the democratic regime in Europe and (b) the economic and political organization of a "European entity" (Monnet 1943).

For the second goal, Monnet argued that:

> "There will be no peace in Europe if the States are reconstituted on the basis of national sovereignty, with all that is entailed in terms of prestige politics and economic protectionism. If the nations of Europe once again adopt defensive positions, huge armies will once again be necessary. Under the future peace treaty, some nations will be allowed to re-arm; others will not. That was tried in 1919; we all know the result. Alliances will be sealed between European nations; we all know what they are worth. The weight of military spending will prevent or delay social reform. Fear will once more be the dominant factor in European reconstruction." (Monnet 1943).

During the last interwar years and the first three years of the Second World War, relations between states considerably deteriorated. Any scheme meant to reconstruct international order could not have been realized, without taking into consideration the nation-states as main players. During this period, federalist projects were in trend, especially those which promoted the idea of a universal federation (Alexandrescu 2010).

Reading the mind of who was later called "Monsieur l'Europe", I found many clues of functionalist influence on his arguments. The same year, in 1943, David Mitrany published at Chatham House, his well-known work "A Working Peace System", in which he expressed his own arguments against the territorial order of future world peace, suggesting instead an interconnected system of international agencies which would have regulated the different areas of international social, economic or political life. Mitrany's work was in fact the result of an ampler analysis which he had done up until 1941 for the British Foreign Office. As he was a part of the institution's Foreign Research and Press Service, he presented to the work group (1941) and to his superiors (1942) a project he had titled "Territorial, Ideological, or Functional International Organization?" Mitrany also affirmed that, from a political standpoint, the Allied powers had to pursue two major goals: (a) resolving the war and (b) organizing peace. If the first goal was realizable through the signing of peace treaties, through which particular issues, such as borders, repairs, and policy measures could be solved, to realize the second goal, the initiative

to organize a new peace system, special administrative accords were necessary, through formal treaties or through any other means considered to be opportune. (Mitrany 1975a: 173-177)

The process had three stages: appeasement, reconstruction and reorganization. The calming action was an urgent issue, albeit spatially and temporally limited, while the reconstruction could be guaranteed through converging the immediate needs with a continuity policy, outlining a long-term plan for development, without considering the material state of the moment. Mitrany argued in favour of a reconstruction and development plan. In the said case, the mission of the planning authority was counselling, coordinating and conducting different reconstruction and international organizing actions. Because of this, his recommendation was to take into account the accumulated experience in different sectors by the international agencies, as it was the case of the International Work Organization or other organizations under the coordination of the Secretariat of the League of Nations (Mitrany 1975a: 179).

Based on the above-mentioned considerations, the following question arises, a question that had been asked by Mitrany, in the context in which the majority of the pacifying plans of the era were considering constituting a federation:

> „Federation seemed indeed the only alternative to a League tried so far for linking together a number of political units by democratic methods. lt would mean an association much closer than was the League, and its advocacy therefore takes it for granted that the League failed because it did not go far enough. In what way would federation go further?" (Mitrany 1975b: 105).

So as not to leave the question unanswered, Mitrany specified that a federal union represents the widening of territorial and administrative base, but will not solve however the potential for offense of the actors of the international system. "We must put our faith not in a protected peace but in a working peace", Mitrany wrote to the UK officials (Mitrany 1975b: 121).

At this time, we find the influence Mitrany had on Monnet's ideas evident. Both authors thought about a durable and functional peace. Monnet's optimism regarding the Marshall plan was obvious, as he had considered it an instrument or opportunity to realize at least a harmonization of European interests.

The most unmanageable feeling is that of fear of an enemy/external danger, especially after a half of a decade long, generalized war. In preventing these old realities, Monnet agreed that two steps had to be taken. The first one was the timeframe between liberating the occupied territories and the peace treaty. The provisional governments had to establish new constitutional order. The transfer of power between former combatants

was affected by the possible dangers which could have derailed the course of post-war reconstruction towards despotism or anthropolatry. In this sense, a permanently informed public opinion was necessary, as was avoiding economic nationalism. The second step took into account the peace conference itself. To this end, Monnet brought to light eight ideas that had to be taken into consideration:

(1) A plan with regard to the political and economic reconstruction of Europe;
(2) Europe's status in relation to the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union;
(3) The regulatory program of the German problem and the movements of the population;
(4) Creating a European inventory of heavy metallurgy;
(5) Monitoring of the aeronautical industry and of the airlines by a European authority;
(6) Associating the United States, Great Britain and the USSR in these systems and controls;
(7) The political and financial organizing of Europe;
(8) Organizing a World Council with European participation. (Monnet 1943).

Concretely, in 1948, at the time when Robert Schuman received the letter from Jean Monnet, in which he referred to the necessity of a European effort, we can grasp a number of major projections referring to the stability of peace. On one hand, the project of George Marshall, whose speech on the 5th of June 1947 focused on the economic wellbeing of Europe, as a source of continental peace, which was only possible through a general support for reconstruction. On the other hand, David Mitrany's functionalist vision is to be kept in mind, in that he recommended organizing the future peace system on the basis of international sectoral arrangements. Simultaneously, Jean Monnet relies on the Marshall project in order to sketch the future organizing of Europe, also utilizing numerous elements found in Mitrany's functionalist approach.

What separates Monnet form Mitrany was the interpretation of functionalism. The first regarded it in the form of integration, while the other considered it a form of cooperation. The state itself was not a goal for Mitrany. For Monnet, however, the effort of a single state was not enough to satisfy the needs of the citizens. More precisely, Mitrany considered the nation-state incapable of solving issues relating to public management, distribution, wellbeing, communication. In order for these to be solved, a transnational sectoral cooperation was necessary. Furthermore, Monnet found the construction of a supranational entity necessary, which would integrate the common interests of the states, in order to satisfy the needs of the citizens.

Monnet's initial project transformed, slowly but surely, into what we now call the Schuman Declaration of the 9th of May 1950. From this moment on, months of negotiations followed, in order to institute the first European community, during which time the European press and the western states' political leaders presented their own arguments for or against the Schuman Plan, with more or less conviction.

The German communists, opponents of the Plan, saw in it the hand of America, which operated through Konrad Adenauer and maybe even through Jean Monnet. According to William Diebold Jr., there was no doubt regarding the fact that a pooling of coal and steel in Western Europe had been discussed in private between American and European officials (Diebold Jr. 1959: 45).

The British press, alike its German counterpart, reported on the lack of clarity of the Schuman Plan: new concepts, new institutions, unclear goals. In the Manchester Guardian's Monday issue of the 19th of February 1951, the analysis provided revealed ambiguities which persisted upon four new institutions which would be created by the new organization: the High Authority, the Council of Ministers, the Court of Justice and the Assembly. What remained unclear was the role of these institutions in relation to the member states (Manchester Guardian 1951).

In 1959, Diebold Jr. expressed his thoughts on the speed in which the Schuman Plan had transformed, in merely a year, into a Treaty, which was merely awaiting parliamentary ratification from the six signing states. He attributed this dynamic to the ambiguities in finding the language which will cover a variety of circumstances (Diebold Jr. 1959: 47). Nevertheless, the author remained surprised with regard to the reduced number of principles accompanying the implementing norms. Moreover, the norms themselves were labelled to be "questionable". What is certain, is the fact that in nine years from the debut of negotiations these were not published in 'Les Travaux Préparatoires', and in their absence, I find the commentaries and suspicions created around the subject to be justified.

Viewed through the lens of the era, the French initiative surprised not only the British, but also a few French diplomats on mission, where they had to argue and advocate for the new Plan. This was the situation of René Massigli, the French ambassador in London. A scene which is reminiscent of Ch. Dickens novels, presents the French high diplomat in search of a chair when reading Schuman's project. Reserved by nature, the British Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ervin Bevin, supposedly told Massigli: "when we will see the proposal in detail, we shall of course examine it attentively, but in the mean time I cannot comment on the subject" (Foreign Office 1950).

Jean Monnet travelled to London in order to discuss the Schuman Plan with British officials. Taking into consideration the British reaction, two reasons can be detected concerning the reserved attitude of Her Majesty's government. On the one hand, it regards the specific ambiguity employed by Jean Monnet in presenting the Plan, some even accusing that Monnet and his counsellors each described different and contradicting plans. On the other hand, the British government had been presented with a communiqué which had already been approved by the West-German government. (Diebold Jr. 1959: 49)

Beyond these initial explanations, those which followed in the form of memorandum

exchanges highlighted the other arguments which consolidated the British position. The island press allowed these opinions to be seen ever more clearly. The existence of a 'high authority', which would absorb the sovereignty of participant states, determined a blockage in negotiations with Great Britain. The dispute between Labourists and Conservatives in the House of Commons focused on the opportunity to participate in negotiations.

In any case, the diplomatic language did not seem to abandon the British Labourist Prime Minister Clement Attlee, who, on the 11th of May 1950 declared his admiration for the striving of the French initiative to offer a solution to "a severe European issue". Beyond this eulogy, the head of the British Cabinet underlined that the proposition from Paris was to have "long term implications on the future economic structure of the participant countries", because of which a thorough study was in order (Foreign Office 1950).

Following the debates in the British Parliament in the months of May and June of 1950, a heated debate ignited between the Labourist Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, and the leader of the opposition, Winston Churchill. In his intervention on the 13th of June 1950, in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister mentioned that following his discussions with Jean Monnet, it was evident that the plan proposed by the French government lacked a methodology, and the opinions which he himself presented at negotiations frequently differed, leaving room for interpretation (Hansard 1950a). A few weeks later, Churchill claimed, that if he had been asked: "Would you agree to a supra-national authority which has the power to tell Great Britain not to cut any more coal or make any more steel, but to grow tomatoes instead?" his answer would have been, without hesitation, a negative one, „[b]ut why not be there to give the answer?" (Hansard 1950b). It seems that Churchill had not yet lost his sense of orientation amidst the dynamics of European politics. However, his interventions can be understood in view of the ambitions of the opposition in the parliamentary battle.

What remains is the fact that in the long duration of the history of post-war European construction, functionalist thinking has known readjustment and remodelling, depending on the pressures of the moment in which it was affirmed. The middle of last century was truly the time of functionalist thinking, competing with the harsh realism upheld by the lessons of war. Furthermore, without Jean Monnet's initiative and his vast network of personal relations with political and financial European leaders, Western Europe would have remained in the strict logic of territorialism and sovereignty both in political and economic perspectives. Monnet's approach was unusual for the European cabinets. His negotiation always lingering on the boundary of ambiguity and rejection has managed to offer the continent a Treaty which had been signed by six states. It remained to be seen whether it would be sufficient for initiating the construction of the new European community, which had been much complained about between 1950 and 1951.

Coming back to the phrase utilized by John Gillingham, we can refer to an "American monnetism" between 1947 and 1957, for without the Marshall Plan and without Jean Monnet's initiative, the Schuman Plan would not have existed, alike the entire integrative process caused by it. After all, Charles de Gaulle again, after becoming the head of the French government, in 1958, offered an argument to support the aforementioned interpretation in saying that "we are no longer in the era in which Mr. Monnet gave the orders". (Duchêne 1994: 315)

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