

## Konrad Adenauer: Western values for the whole Union

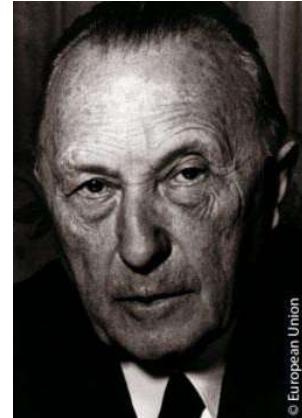
### 1. Who was Adenauer?

Konrad Adenauer was the first Chancellor of the newly formed Federal Republic of Germany from 1949 to 1963 and the most influential politician in both Germany and post-war Europe. Like many in his generation and like Immanuel Kant<sup>1</sup>, Adenauer realised after the First World War that lasting peace could only be achieved by uniting Europe.

#### 1.1. Early years

Konrad Adenauer was born in Cologne the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 1876 into a modest family. He married the daughter of an influential Cologne family and, after completing his law studies, devoted himself to politics, joining the Catholic Zentrum party, the political force of German Catholicism. In Cologne, he showed his ingenuity and creativity during the supply crises of the First World War by organising the supply of food to the city. In 1917, he was elected mayor, becoming the youngest mayor of a German city.

During the Weimar Republic, Adenauer was amongst Germany's most prominent political figures and his numerous achievements at the helm of the city made Colonia the "metropolis of the west". During his tenure, the University was re-established in 1919, the old fortress grounds were restructured and turned into



5.1.1876-19.4.1967

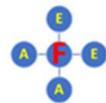


Konrad Adenauer and Emma Weyer  
engagement in July 1902

<sup>1</sup> Kant, Immanuel (1998). *Perpetual Peace*. Tecnos. ISBN 84-309-1176-6.



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a green belt, and the fair was revived. The port on the Rhine was expanded; another bridge was built and numerous industrial companies settled in the city.

The enemies of the Weimar Republic hated him for his federalist and Christian-social convictions. In the late 1920s, the German National Socialist Party, the Nazis, launched a smear campaign against him. In 1931, the first clashes with the Nazis took place. When they covered the bridges over the Rhine with swastikas in the middle of the night, Adenauer ordered the flags to be removed immediately, putting himself in the crosshairs of the SA, the Nazi storm troopers. After coming to power, the Nazis removed



Adenauer and Gussie Zinsser on 25 September 1919 with their three children with E. Weyer: Konrad (1906), Ria (1912) and Max (1910).

no National Socialist past, as mayor of the destroyed city of Cologne. However, a few months later he was fired by the head of the British military government after criticising its occupation policy. From then on, he devoted himself entirely to the CDU, which he had joined shortly after its foundation.



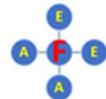
President F. Ebert, Chancellor W. Marx and Cologne Mayor K. Adenauer at the Deutz exhibition grounds at the opening of the Cologne Trade Fair on 11 May 1924.

Adenauer from his post for refusing to shake hands with a National Socialist leader visiting Cologne. In 1933, Adenauer refused to decorate the city with swastikas for Hitler, for which he was dismissed from his post and his bank accounts blocked.

Adenauer and his family survived Nazi tyranny and the war in the small town of Rhöndorf, near Bonn. After the failed uprising against Hitler the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 1944, Adenauer was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp in Cologne, where he soon fell seriously ill. The communist Eugen Zander saved his life by delaying his deportation to Buchenwald. After Germany's surrender, the Americans reappointed Adenauer, who was at the top of a list of politicians with



The Adenauer family in Rhöndorf



## 2. The reconstruction of Europe after the war

After the war, he focused on creating the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) of Germany, with which he hoped to unite German Catholics and Protestants in a single party. In 1949, he became the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). A decisive step to the chancellorship was his appointment as president of the Parliamentary Council, established in 1948 by the Western Allies to draft the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany. In this position, he gained great prestige with the public, and on 15 September 1949, he was appointed Chancellor by the Bundestag.

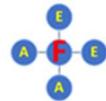
Under his leadership, democracy was rebuilt in Germany. The "Adenauer era" was characterised by a close alliance with the United States, reconciliation with France and contrition for the pain caused to the Jewish people, enabling the return of the Germans to the League of Nations and making them an important part of European integration. The acceptance of those who had been expelled, as well as the construction of an economy based on free competition and the social responsibility of the state, made possible the "German miracle," one of Adenauer's greatest successes.

World War II made Adenauer a pragmatic focused on pan-European cooperation. He championed the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), proposed on 9 May 1950 by the Schuman Declaration, and the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC), signed in Rome in March 1957. For Adenauer, Franco-German friendship was not just a mean to regaining sovereignty in Germany's domestic and foreign policy, but essential to guarantee a peaceful future for the Europeans.

The economic integration resulting from the *European Coal and Steel Community* (ECSC) was, for Adenauer, an instrument for achieving the higher goal of peace in Europe. In security policy, Adenauer continued to support European integration based on the rearmament of the new Germany and its accession to NATO, a position that earned him much criticism. Together with Schuman and De Gasperi, he promoted the creation of a European army under the *European Defence Community*. Had it been successful, it would have been a major step forward for Europe but the combination of nationalists and Moscow-dependent communists prevented it in the National Assembly in Paris.



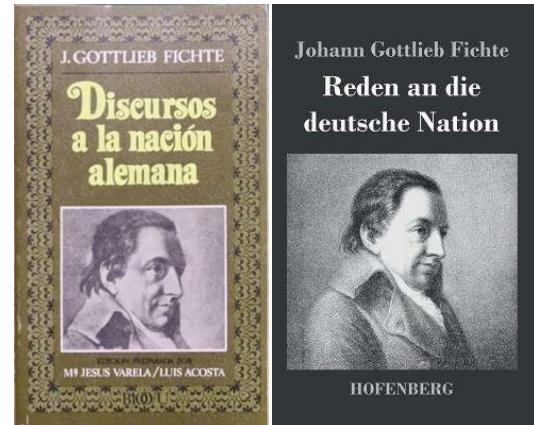
De Gasperi and Adenauer (Roma, 1953).



When he resigned from office in 1963 at the age of 87, Adenauer had paved the way for Germany's better future, both economically and morally. When he died four years later, he was honoured worldwide as the statesman to whom the Germans owed their freedom, welfare and social security.

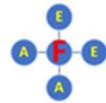
### 3. How would Adenauer have reacted to the resurgence of nationalism?

Etymologically, the word "nation" comes from the Latin *natio*, *nationis*, meaning "birth" or "place of birth." This Latin term was derived from the root *nasci* (to be born), but Rome was never a nation. First it was a kingdom (of the *Rex*), then a republic (a Public Thing or *Res Publica*) and, when it succumbed, an Imperium. The United States Constitution (1787) does not refer to this federation as a "nation". It was the first French Constitution (1791) that coined this term, which was later copied by German nationalists and other nationalists with a *genealogical (gens)* basis. By contrast, China is more of a *civilisation* than a nation.



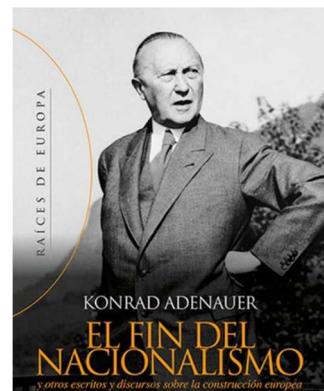
Today, in the first quarter of the 21st century, nationalism is sinking Europe. The Europe that flourished thanks to science after the fall of Constantinople (1453) but that lags today behind the United States and China. Faced with this scenario, Adenauer would have fought against this sterilising nationalism, as he did at the beginning of the 20th century. He would have fought against the nationalism that prevents European civilisation from developing its immense scientific, technical, industrial and economic potential. This potential is essential and vital for reviving a social market economy, as advocated by Konrad Adenauer.

*"I believe that the distortion of the idea of the nation state and the growth of nationalist dogmas have been the main obstacle so far. Nationalism makes countries blind (...)"*



*Viewing the state as a divine being was a prevailing idea during the French Revolution. It was precisely then that nationalism emerged, dominating the last century. The thinking of men and nations was clouded by nationalism, which brought nothing but misery.*

*The Napoleonic Wars brought the first great disaster that affected much of humanity. During the Nazi regime, nationalism brought Germany's second great disaster, with tears and blood, destruction and ruin. (...)*



*We also want to prevent nationalism from rising again in Europe.”*

(Speech by Konrad Adenauer, 1955)

#### 4. The current powerlessness

Today's European states live in a dream, a mirage. Since 2000, we are fewer, older, more fragile and powerless. The 1993 White Paper on Competitiveness and Employment, for example, contains plenty of warnings but only three of them refer to the Chinese economy, currently the second largest in the world and vying for the top spot:

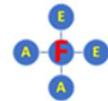
*“Some countries, such as the United States and Japan, have launched major programmes to upgrade their infrastructure, while new industrial powers such as Singapore, Taiwan, parts of China and Argentina are equipping themselves with networks that reflect the latest technological advances. (page 35)*

*“Compared with newly industrialised countries, particularly those that have recently embarked on this path, such as China, the labour cost differential is too great for a significant increase in employment in Europe to be achieved through wage reductions in the manufacturing industry. Only high productivity and quality products will enable Europe to maintain its competitive advantage.” (page 81)*



Strategy that will enable the Community to emerge from recession through sustainable economic development in order to face up to international competition and thus resume growth that generates employment..

[Publications Office of the European Union](https://op.europa.eu/es/publication-detail/-/publication/0d563bc1-f17e-48ab-bb2a-9dd9a31d5004)  
<https://op.europa.eu/es/publication-detail/-/publication/0d563bc1-f17e-48ab-bb2a-9dd9a31d5004>



*“The GATT accession negotiations of countries such as China and Russia will provide an opportunity to obtain clear commitments on market opening.”*  
(page 132)

Well, in less than 32 years everything has changed for the worse because of our arrogance or because of the panic of national leaders to abandon their 'comfort zone', following the old adage of European politics: it doesn't matter if the train is speeding towards the precipice as long as I'm travelling first class on that train. Faced with this challenge, it is clear what K. Adenauer would have done: "Unity. Einheit. A vision of Europe. Federation."

## 5. Why does Europeanism not stand for election?

It is worth asking ourselves why Europeanism, if as it claims it is the solution to many of the problems afflicting Europe, does not stand for election, submit the federal idea to a referendum and thus contribute to this solution. The sooner they do so, the sooner they will acquire the relevance necessary to legitimise their ideas and put them into practice. The founding fathers ruled this out in the 1950s because the corpses of history still had traces of flesh. Now times have changed. Seventy years later, we have our own currency, but we urgently need a deterrent navy, an air and aerospace force, and even a state-of-the-art strategic deterrent. We do not choose when we live; time chooses us, and as a generation, we must show our children that the choice was the right one.

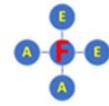
## 6. Conclusion: Konrad Adenauer, a beacon in the storm

Until the Second World War, the foreign policy of European states was marked by the forceful imposition of national interests. Konrad Adenauer, born during the 19th-century imperialism, had a different vision. From early on, his political interests were characterised by his advocacy for a *Europe of homelands*. Following the civilisational rupture caused by the war, Adenauer resumed these patterns of European political understanding, contributing greatly to restoring the external security, sovereignty and equal rights of the Federal Republic of Germany and, furthermore, to making Germany one of the decisive driving forces of European unification.

The name Konrad Adenauer is intrinsically linked to Germany's recovery, rising from the moral, material and political ruins in which it was left by the National



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Socialism. Adenauer saw that a new Germany could only be born out of reconciliation with its neighbours. The first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany pursued without hesitation the priority goal of reconciliation with France, the "historic enemy".

*Curators: UK & Mainland Europe Teams*

*Asociación Federalista Europea (AFE)*

*[eurofoedus@gmail.com](mailto:eurofoedus@gmail.com)*

*Inscrita en el Registro Nacional de Asociaciones,  
Sección 1<sup>a</sup>, nº 117958 (1993)*



*Photo of Robert Schuman's house,  
Scy-Chazelles: Les pères fondateurs  
de l'Europe*

## 7. Sources:

- [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/eu-pioneers/konrad-adenauer\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/eu-pioneers/konrad-adenauer_en)
- <https://www.kas.de/es/web/spanien-und-portugal/statistische-inhalte-/content/konrad-adenauer-biografie>