

## “SHOW US THE WAY FORWARD, ASTÉRIX.”

### EUROPE NEEDS THE FRENCH INVOLVEMENT IN ESDP

Claudia Major<sup>1</sup> - Christian Mölling<sup>2</sup>

#### Introduction<sup>3</sup>

Reading international comments on France in the run up to the 2007 presidential elections, one might be almost frightened by the gloomy picture that is often painted. However, just like the little village in the Astérix Stories, which courageously and intelligently resists the Romans, there is one area where France actually is quite successful. France was one of the driving forces of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which it initiated in 1998 together with the UK, thereby honouring a commitment to European defence cooperation that dates back to the early 1950ies.

In the following, we aim to demonstrate France's unique role in the realm of security and defence cooperation at the European level. We seek to show that France has not only been a *spiritus rector* of the ESDP but also its working horse. France was very committed to the development of ESDP. It has been tremendously successful - through patience as well as

---

<sup>1</sup> University of Birmingham, UK Sciences Po Paris, France

<sup>2</sup> Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH) & Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich, Germany

<sup>3</sup> The authors would like to thank British, French and German officials from MoDs and MFAs who contributed viable insights on a very short notice. Their commitment supported this paper tremendously.



through insistence - in influencing the strategic direction and in establishing the institutions and capabilities for what France wants to be an increasingly autonomous ESDP. Nevertheless, France always acknowledged the major role of NATO as the backbone of European Defence. However successful it was in uploading its preferences to the EU level, France nonetheless had to compromise from time to time on its long term interest in order to achieve cooperative goals with Germany and the United Kingdom. Moreover, the prevailing traditional *leitmotifs* create some ambiguities and the potential need for policy adaptation: e.g. the governmental control over key industries in the armaments sector is a major stumbling block for “more Europe” in defence. We close the analysis by assessing achievements, outlining ambiguities and finally proposing steps to further ESDP development, thereby preparing ‘the day after’ the présidentielles.

Foreign policy issues do not play a major role in the current election campaign. However, the incoming president cannot escape the choices ahead in terms of EU policy. His or her responsibility concern not only the overall success of ESDP. It is particularly about assuring and wisely implementing French interests in EU security policy. Issues like institutional reform, the commitment of EU member states to fulfil their obligations, and the request for a higher engagement of the EU in crisis management are the current challenges to the functioning and credibility of ESDP, that France has to put on the agenda. France takes over the EU Presidency in 2008 – a unique chance to set new benchmarks and consolidate achievements. In the middle of the stalemate and massive challenges it may be time for a new breakout of Astérix putting France back in the role of the spirit and the motor of Europe.

## **1 “Reincarnation through Europe?”<sup>4</sup> French motivations and expectations in the European integration process**

According to Z. Brzezinski “France seeks reincarnation as Europe.”<sup>5</sup> This more or less resumes the French policy approach towards European cooperation in the realm of security and defence. It points to the dilemma between necessary cooperation and the insistence on the predominance of the nation state and its autonomy. It illustrates the French strive for power and influence for both, France and Europe. It shows that the European dimension was always crucial in French security and defence policy, including after the significant modifications in the 1990s, and again after 9/11.

### ***1.1 Leitmotifs of French EU-policy: Autonomy, puissance, leadership***

First, France’s European commitment was intertwined with search of security from Germany. Security and defence issues were thus at the origin of the first propositions for European

---

<sup>4</sup> Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, London 1998, p. 61.

<sup>5</sup> The second part of the quote is not less interesting: “France seeks reincarnation as Europe; Germany hopes for redemption through Europe.” Z. Brzezinski, 1998, p. 61.

cooperation: the 1950 Schuman plan suggested to merge French and German coal and steel industry, which would have made war between the two countries technically impossible. Integration was the mean, but peace and security were the objectives.

Second, France considered European cooperation as an appropriate framework for defending an independent role in world politics. The bipolar world order in the aftermath of WWII, by France often vilified as the 'Yalta system', anchored not only a dominant role for the Soviet Union and the US. It also cemented a loss of importance for France, which was reinforced through the end of its colonial empire, the world wide decreasing importance of the French language, culture and its networks and the desolate economic condition at the end of WWII. Particularly under president de Gaulle (1958-1966), France therefore strived for a "European Europe", that should disengage from the influence of the superpowers, mainly the US. Europe was thus to offer the framework for an increasingly independent French foreign policy and leadership, thus also for the revision of the Yalta system.

Finally, the French commitment for a strong and active Europe resulted also from the awareness that the national state alone has only a limited capacity to act on the world scene. It is only in cooperation, strictly limited to intergovernmental forms though, that France can play the role in international politics it considers due to her. French sovereignty was thus to be reinforced and strengthened through its anchoring in Europe.

In line with these motivations, France was at the origin of several initiatives to strengthen cooperation in the realm of security and defence policy during the Cold War. A first example is the Pleven Plan for a European Army in which German units were to be integrated under European command. Its disastrous failure in 1954 cast a long shadow on European security and defence cooperation: for the years to come, cooperation would be intergovernmental.

Another noticeable attempt was made in the 1960s with the Fouchet plans for an enhanced cooperation in foreign, security and defence policy and beyond. However, in the context of the first UK application for EC membership and Kennedy's call for a new transatlantic partnership, such proposals were understood as a challenge to US leadership and NATO and were finally rejected. France subsequently pushed even more for the Franco-German Elysée Treaty (1963), which, *inter alia*, established cooperation in the realm of foreign, security and military affairs. France's parallel withdrawal from NATO's integrated military structures (1966) reflects its leitmotiv of an autonomous Europe and France world politics. Given that France remained in NATO's political council, the move had more impact upon NATO's political cohesion than on its military strength. It allowed France to achieve a high

level of independence from NATO without greatly jeopardising its own security.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Gaulle's aim was not to disengage France from NATO as such, but from US command.

Thus, France's policy is characterised by two main challenges still valid today. First, how to combine respect for national sovereignty with the creation of a European structure to share political power? Second, how to reconcile the transatlantic partnership with an emerging strategic and political Europe? France's emphasis on independence, together with the rejection of military integration in NATO, allowed France to portray itself as offering an alternative model of foreign policy above the bipolar world and to claim a certain rang in world affairs.<sup>7</sup> Eventually, the Cold War with its bipolar world order – although vilified by France - provided a comfortable setting for French policies.

### **1.2 The new security landscape generates French strategic reorientation (1990es)**

The end of the Cold War substantially altered these settings. The security environment as well as the demands for the organisation and delivery of security and defence changed dramatically and necessitated a strategic reorientation of France's policy.

First, France had to recognize that it was neither in terms of capabilities nor of strategy prepared for the new security challenges. In the early 1990s, Europe witnessed the often violent disintegration of the Soviet Union and other communist countries, mainly Yugoslavia. Particularly the Balkan wars painfully demonstrated that France and the EC/EU were ill prepared to deal with the new security challenges, while also highlighting European dependence on US military might. Besides, the 1991 gulf war revealed the inadequacy of French military for power projection.

Second, French policy makers feared loosing the relatively independent power position that France enjoyed during the Cold War. On the one hand, there was growing concern about the emergence of a uni-polar world dominated by the US.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, traditional French power attributes as the nuclear weapons or the status as WWII ally lost in importance. Moreover, German unification spurred French distrust over a revival of German power and a potential European disintegration.

Hence the urgency of strategic and operative adaptation of French security and defence policy. Recognising that France had neither the position nor the resources to tackle the new challenges on its own, the answer sought was incite national reforms while also increasing European cooperation which should, again, offer a vehicle for French ambitions.

---

<sup>6</sup> Immediately after the decision to withdraw from NATO, France signed a series of agreements, mainly the Ailleret-Lemnitzer and the Valentin-Feber accords, about the nature of French participation alongside its allies in a conflict. See S. Hofmann, R. Kempin, France and the Transatlantic Relationship. Love me, love me not..., SWP Working Paper, March 2007.

<sup>7</sup> A. Menon, From independence to Cooperation: France, NATO and European Security, in: International Affairs, vol. 71, 1/1995, pp. 19-34, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> L. Aggestam, A European foreign policy? Role conceptions and the politics of identity in Britain, France and Germany, Stockholm University Press 2004. p. 96.

A crucial step is the 1994 Livre Blanc which defined the development of a “European defence” as French priority.<sup>9</sup> Externally, this concept was to offer a counterweight in the emerging uni-polar world order. Internally, it was to uphold stability in Europe, marked by an increasing re-nationalisation. Besides, in terms of military engagement, the emphasis was shifted from territorial defence to expeditionary missions, particularly crisis management operations. In parallel, France sought to increase its multilateral commitment in both financial and material terms, for example through participation in peace keeping missions.<sup>10</sup> This offered the opportunity to train French crisis management abilities while also allowing to demonstrate an influence on the international scene.<sup>11</sup>

However, France lacked the appropriate concepts, force structure, equipment and capabilities to successfully operate in the new environments. A fundamental reform of the French armed forces was initiated in 1996/7, with the main changes being a redefinition of the missions, the abandonment of conscription, and the call for increasing capabilities for power projection. Moreover, the new tasks of a professional army required the modernisation of its equipment, thereby pushing for a reform of the French defence industry. This initial reform was followed by the long term reform project modèle d’armée 2015.<sup>12</sup>

Together, these reform steps fundamentally changed French security and defence capabilities. But they also paved the way for an increasing European commitment.

### **1.3 From Maastricht to Cologne – The road to ESDP**

France’s interest in cooperation at the European level was two fold: stabilising Europe as a secure environment and using it as a “force multiplier” of French interest. Both aspects are visible in major steps in CFSP/ESDP development, with France pushing for the development of capabilities and institutions to incarnate European actorness.

In terms of institutional set up, both the Maastricht (1992) and the Amsterdam (1997) Treaties were major achievements. Maastricht consolidated the EC and created CFSP as the 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar in the new tripartite pillar structure. Amsterdam saw the nomination of the High Representative (HR) for CFSP, the “Monsieur PESC” France has lobbied for. Foreign and security policy was now anchored at the EU level and equipped with a nascent leadership structure. Both should enable the EU for an increasing international actorness. Moreover, France succeeded to introduce a reference to a defence dimension in the Maastricht Treaty, which paved the way for the subsequent development of CFSP.

---

<sup>9</sup> Ministère de la Défense, Livre blanc sur la défense 1994, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> A. Ould-Abdallah, Le redéploiement de la puissance militaire et stratégique dans un monde en mutation, in: La revue internationale et stratégique, no 63, printemps 2006, pp. 83-84; P. Rieker, From Common Defence to Comprehensive Security: Towards the Europeanization of French Foreign and Security Policy? In: Security Dialogue, vol. 37, 4/2006, pp. 517-8.

<sup>11</sup> Rieker 2006, pp. 517-8.

<sup>12</sup> B. Irondelle, Europeanisation without the European Union? French Military Reforms 1991–96, in: Journal of European Public Policy, vol. 10, 2/2003, pp. 208–26.

In parallel, France successfully pushed for a stronger role of the Western European Union (WEU), considered at that time the most appropriated European structure to vehicle the EU's development into a security actor. This resulted in the French led initiative for a European Security and Defence Identity in the early 1990s. The main outcome was that NATO forces were made answerable to WEU (FAWEU).<sup>13</sup> In addition, in June 1992, the Petersberg declaration specified the types of military operation the WEU wanted to be able to undertake. They were integrated into the EU with the Amsterdam Treaty (1997).

In terms of armament, France pushed for the reform of the defence industry to be able to meet the new equipment requirements. In 1998, it signed the "Letter of Intent" and also co-created the Organisme Conjoint de Cooperation en Matière d'Armement.<sup>14</sup>

In spite of these often successful initiatives, France repeatedly expressed frustration about the little progress made at the EU level. This was mainly due to the lacking overall political will that imposed a pragmatic 'step by step' approach. This obstacle was overcome when the UK under the recently elected prime minister Blair decided to get involved into European defence cooperation.<sup>15</sup> The Franco-British summit in St Malo in 1998 issued a statement urging that the EU "must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed by credible forces, the means to decide to use them and a readiness to do so".<sup>16</sup> The bitter experience of the 1999 Kosovo war again demonstrated the inadequacy of European strategic and operational capacities in spite of the efforts made so far and underlined the urgency of the St Malo declaration. This led to the inception of ESDP at the Cologne summit in 1999, and its subsequent development in Helsinki in December 1999.

This quick overview reveals that France was rather successful in pushing for a European actorness. This continued after the inception of ESDP: in continuity with the 1994 Livre Blanc, the 2001 Defence Strategy and the subsequent military programme bills made the EU a focus of French activities.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> M. Quinlan, *European Defense Cooperation. Asset or threat to NATO?*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001, esp. pp. 16-26.

<sup>14</sup> B. Schmitt (ed), *European armaments cooperation. Core documents*, Chaillot Paper No. 59, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> for further details on the British decision see for example : S. Mayer, *Die Erklärung von St. Malo und die Europäische Sicherheits und Verteidigungspolitik: Bedingungsfaktoren des britischen Strategiewandels 1998*, in: *Journal of European Integration History*, vol 9, 1/2003, pp. 133-56; R. Dover, *The Prime Minister and the Core Executive: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Reading of UK Defence Policy Formulation 1997-2000*, in *BJPIR*, vol 7, 2005, pp. 508-525.

<sup>16</sup> M. Rutten (ed.), *From Saint-Malo to Nice. European defence: core documents*, Chaillot Paper No.47, 2001, pp.8-9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ministère de la Défense: La stratégie de défense de la France, 2001; Loi de programmation militaire 2003-2008 Annexé 2.2.*

## **2 France within EU Security and Defence Policy: Visions and implementation**

France's key objective is to develop the EU into a credible and efficient international actor able to independently shape the security order, and equipped with the necessary military capacities, institutions and strategies.

### **2.1. *Why ESDP? French policy concepts as reification of traditional motifs***

France's commitment to ESDP was consistent with its overall policy approach towards EU cooperation, while also including an adaptation to the new security settings. France conceived of itself as a natural leader of a fledging politico-military Europe. CFSP/ESDP presented in fact a frame in which to embed its international role while also exert leadership in the EU.<sup>18</sup> While it buttresses the EU's global capacity to act, ESDP also offered France the opportunity to follow its national policy goals. The operations e.g. in DR Congo and Macedonia were mainly modelled on French ideas.

France consistently pushes for the improvement of EU capabilities, in order to raise the EU's profile to a power independent from the US, although within NATO. The growing tendency towards a unipolar world order increased the stake: it is about developing the EU into a strong regional power, thereby assuring a multi-polar world order.

Generally, from a French perspective, ESDP was considered a logical step in the ongoing European integration process. France traditionally favoured a political dimension to the EU and saw ESDP as a useful tool for it. However, strengthening a political dimension within the EU does not automatically mean supra-nationalisation. France insists on intergovernmental settings which assure its autonomy while also allowing for flexibility, such as to choose between creating coalitions of the willing or going through the time-consuming bargaining for unanimity. This points to the French preference for an ESDP 'avant garde group' that should allow some key member states to take the lead in ESDP.

Although taming Germany remained a factor in French foreign policy also in the 1990s, the long-standing bilateral cooperation in the EU lessened its importance. Germany became in fact a strong ally in ESDP, as witness the inception of ESDP under German presidency in 1999. More interestingly, ESDP offered the opportunity to get the UK involved at the EU level. Its military strength and experience were considered crucial to EU actorship, just as their atlanticist stance potentially helps to disarm US fears of European free riding.

### **2.2. *What? Capabilities, institutions and operations***

Subsequently, France played a crucial role in shaping ESDPs capabilities, institutions, operations and strategy. An excellent example is the Tervuren declaration, issued at the much-debated "Chocolate summit" in April 2003. None of the issues raised was actually new – it

---

<sup>18</sup> Livre Blanc 1994.

was the context of the Iraq war that made them controversial. The Tervuren declaration outlined the main French goals in ESDP. Most of them are today implemented.

### **Tervuren Declaration (extract) <sup>19</sup>**

In order to give new impetus to the European Security and Defence Policy, we propose that the Convention on the future of the European Union and the Intergovernmental Conference approve the following principles and integrate them into the Constitutional Treaty :

- The possibility of **setting up enhanced cooperation in the field of defence**.
- A **general clause of solidarity and common security** binding all member states [...]
- The possibility for members states [...] [to] **frame [...]an enhanced cooperation**.
- **Reformulating the Petersberg missions**.
- · The creation of a **European Agency for development and acquisition of military capabilities**.
- · The creation of a **European Security and Defence College**
- Moreover, we propose that the Convention should accept the concept of a **European Security and Defence Union (ESDU)**.

#### **2.2.1. Institutions**

France successfully pushed for the inception of permanent ESDP structures within the Council. They were finally agreed upon in Nice (2000). Together with the UK; France insisted on the clear division of military and civilian parts instead of developing an integrated structure. Thus the Council Secretariat hosts the Military staff (EUMS), the DGE VIII (military aspects) and the DGE IX (civilian aspects). The Council structure mirrors this division: the highest permanent working body, the Political and Security Committee (PSC), is supported by both the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CivCom) and the Military Committee (EUMC). This satisfied French expectations for the visibility of military structures. Additionally it allowed full control over the outcomes: PSC, as well as CivCom and EUMC are intergovernmental bodies.

In order to address institutional deficits of the Council's set up and to further develop integrated structures and common instruments at the EU's disposal, France suggested, jointly with Germany, several changes to be made through the Constitutional Treaty.<sup>20</sup> This includes the long cherished idea of a European Foreign Minister and the concept of "structured permanent cooperation". It would allow member states to cooperate more closely

---

<sup>19</sup> Joint Statement of the Heads of State and Government of Germany, France, Luxembourg and Belgium on European Defence, Brussels, 29 April 2003 ("Tervuren Declaration").

<sup>20</sup> Council of European Union Secretariat, Contribution by Mr Dominique de Villepin and Mr Joschka Fischer, members of the Convention, presenting joint Franco-German proposals for the European Convention in the field of European security and defence policy, Brussels, 22 November 2002 (CONV 422/02).



within the ESDP framework, thereby reflecting the French idea of an ESDP avant garde. On the other hand, France did not welcome suggestions to expand the QMV, to enhance parliamentary oversight over ESDP or to increase the Commissions role.<sup>21</sup> All were considered an obstacle to efficiency as well as infringement on national sovereignty.

### **2.2.2. Strategic Direction - the European Security Strategy (ESS)**

Together with Germany and the UK, France was influential in developing a strategic dimension for ESDP. These efforts materialised in the 2003 ESS.<sup>22</sup> Besides strengthening EU strategic actorness through outlining commonly agreed policy principles, the ESS was also considered a vehicle for projecting French positions to the EU level. Particularly in the context of the Iraq war should positions taken at the national level, such as the insistence of multilateralism, gain further strength through the codification at the EU level, thereby being also retrospectively justified. In fact, core elements of the ESS, such as its multilateralism instead of unilateralism, are all in line with the positions defended by the French government during the Iraq crisis.

Beyond these contextual aspects, French commitment to the ESS was driven by the will to further strengthen the EU's foreign policy actorness and enable it to make its own choices in world politics. The ESS was deemed necessary to further European identity, credibility and efficiency in the area of security and defence through offering the EU the strategic vision which has been lacking until now. Through defining a common European stance, the ESS also offers an instrument for redefining the transatlantic relationship and to develop the dialogue with the US based on European terms. Although the ESS stresses the strategic EU-NATO partnership, it should be „effective and balanced“, which is rather representative of French approaches. Finally, when calling for a ‚more capable‘ EU, the ESS insists on the need to further develop military capacities and outlines a more assertive approach with regard to the use of force. This reflects traditional French positions pushing for a military dimension that would enable a certain European autonomy of action, particularly with regard to the US/NATO.

Moreover, the ESS includes French core expectations when, *inter alia*, considering the EU as an inevitable “global player” and calling for worldwide commitment. In fact, the ESS offered for France the opportunity to boost the understanding for power politics in those EU member states that were hesitant and reluctant to it. The possibility to convince partners to commit to more robust missions was deemed higher in a European framework.

---

<sup>21</sup>L. Aggestam: What role for the EU in security and defence? British, French and German views of the ESDP, SIIA papers No. 1 2006, p. 26.

<sup>22</sup>‘A secure Europe in a better world. European Security Strategy’, Brussels, 12 December 2003.

The ESS is however more a political statement than a precise guide for action. France therefore committed to further develop EU strategy in its regional and sectoral dimensions, such as through supporting the EU Strategy for Africa which was initiated by the UK.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.2.3. Capabilities

France is the major provider of military capabilities to EU operations, mainly through assigning national capabilities to the Headline Goal and the Battlegroups, and through providing a Headquarter for EU autonomous operations<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, France has been on the forefront for initiatives to spur new capabilities at the EU level (such as UAVs, Command and Control).<sup>25</sup>

**HHG and BG.** Several initiatives witness the strong French influence within the development of EU capabilities. First, France shaped, together with the UK, the Helsinki Headline Goal in 1999. The EU aimed to deploy 60.000 joint combined forces within 60 days, sustainable for a year. Second, the 2003 Battlegroups (BG) concept, developed jointly with the UK, witness the concern to adapt EU capabilities to recent security developments.<sup>26</sup> Both countries wanted to improve the available capabilities of rapidly deployable European forces in order to share the burden of high intensity operations more equally. Initially, both had an eye on Africa for potential EU operations.<sup>27</sup> However, in order to submit the BG jointly with Germany to increase overall European acceptance, France and the UK had to compromise. They finally omitted to mention Africa as Germany was afraid to get involved in post-colonial business. Nevertheless, for France, the BG offered a precious opportunity to involve the UK in European co-operation.

**CIVMIL Cell and Operations Centre.** A central French idea is to increase ESDP's actorness through equipping it with an EU command and control structure and a permanent headquarter. Therefore France proposed at the Tervuren summit the idea of a standing command structure for EU autonomous operations. This was politically unacceptable to the UK, and perceived as unnecessary duplication. After long and painful negotiations, a joint UK/France/Germany agreement was reached. Building upon this, the European Council agreed, in December 2003, on the creation of Civilian-Military Cell within EUMS and the set-up of an Operation Centre (Ops Centre) facility to improve EU planning capacities. Thus

---

23 Council of the European Union, The EU and Africa: Towards a Strategic Partnership, Brussels, 19 December 2005, December, EU 15961/05.

24 The Centre de planification et de conduite opérationnelles – CPCO.

25 J. de Ponton d'Amécourt, La France, puissance stratégique et militaire dans et grâce à l'Europe, in: La revue internationale et stratégique, no 63, printemps 2006, pp. 87-98.

26 N. Granholm, P. Jonson, EU-Battlegroups in Context. Underlying Dynamics, Military and Political Challenges. FOI-Report—1950 , March 2006; Christian Mölling: EU – Battlegroups, Stand und Probleme der Umsetzung in Deutschland und für die EU, SWP – Diskussionspapier März 2007.

27 Franco British Summit, Declaration: Strengthening European Cooperation in Security and Defence, London, 24. November 2003.

Paris succeeded in establishing at least the nucleus of a Headquarters' structure. Moreover the Cell is established within the EUMS, thus "surrounded" by the EU military service. In "exchange", also a EU/NATO liaison cell has been established at NATO planning unit SHAPE. The Ops Centre can however only be activated, when no national HQ could be identified and when a joint civil/military response is required.

**European Gendarmerie Force:**<sup>28</sup> France also co-initiated the European Gendarmerie Force, formed by France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain in 2004, to close the gap between military and civilian police forces. Although not strictly speaking an ESDP force, the EDF will be at the disposal of the EU to be deployed for the more demanding scenarios.<sup>29</sup>

**RECAMP:**<sup>30</sup> Since 1997, France supports the development of military capacities for African Armed Forces for peace-keeping. While RECAMP was initially a national contribution to a larger UN programme and coordinated with OAU, it is now becoming increasingly europeanised. It demonstrates how France was able to pursue national preferences through the co-operation in multilateral frameworks.

#### **2.2.4. Armament<sup>31</sup>**

Although France constantly called for the improvement of military equipment in Europe, its overall policy towards EU armaments cooperation is rather ambiguous. France is again caught in the tension between necessary cooperation and insistence on national autonomy. It certainly pushed for intergovernmental armament cooperation. As such, France has also been involved in the foundation of the Lol/Framework Agreement to facilitate the restructuring of the European defence industry.<sup>32</sup> More recently, France promoted the inception of the European Defence Agency (EDA) as the first ESDP wide framework assisting the development of an EU armaments policy. EDA is to assure competitiveness of European companies as well as to ensure European cutting edge knowledge and technology. Furthermore, France expects EDA and the potential creation of a European defence market as a protection against US product.

In fact, in spite of the these cooperation attempts, France staunchly defends its armament industry with protectionist measures, insisting on its defence industrial autonomy and the

---

<sup>28</sup> Ponton d'Amécourt 2006, pp. 87-98.

<sup>29</sup> P. Cornish, G. Edwards, The strategic culture of the European Union: a progress report, in: International Affairs, Vol. 81, 4/2005, pp. 801-20.

<sup>30</sup> Renforcement des Capacités Africaines de Maintien de la Paix.

<sup>31</sup> The contextual parameters for the armaments sector are noteworthy: Until today the armaments sector has been largely organised outside the ESDP framework. Through article 296b TEU a European armaments policy does not exist, factually. The article declares this area as a *domaine réservé* for national policies: member states "...may take measures as it considers necessary... for the protection of the essential security interests... connected with the production or trade of military items..." Therefore the European armaments sector is "dominated" by 27 different national policies.

<sup>32</sup> signed in 1998 and 2000 by major arms producers (France, the UK, Germany, Spain, Italy, Sweden), Schmitt, 2003.

preference for national means. The state still is a major stake holder in French armaments industry and keeps the blocking minority in several firms even where first privatisation steps are made. This allows the government not only to exert political control but also to financially support companies, thereby infringing on market rules. This adherence to national industries and state control is a major hurdle for a European market, such as with regard to common procurement or fair tendership biddings. France has blocked several cross-border mergers as well as cooperative procurement seemingly because the related investment was not given as much to French firms as expected.<sup>33</sup>

### **2.2.5. Operations**

A French stance in ESDP is also perceptible with regard to EU missions. France served as framework nation for the first EU missions: the Operation Concordia in Macedonia and the first autonomous military operation Artemis in DR Congo (both 2003). Serving as framework nation, France was able to influence the set-up for future EU missions, thus establish a French way of 'doing things'.

Suspensions have been raised that EU missions with French involvement took mainly place in regions of French interest, with France being successful in involving the EU into the pursuit of its national interests. This might be reinforced by the certain French preference for missions where whether French leadership is assured (as in Artemis, in 2003). Where this is not granted, France prefers to carry out the mission on its own, as seen in Ivory Coast in 2005 ("Licorne").

Moreover, France is doubtful about the success of predominantly civilian operations and insists on the EU's capacity and reliability in the military domain. This includes demonstrating the EU's autonomous ability to project force, considered crucial if the EU wants to play a more active role in global security.<sup>34</sup> France is nonetheless very active in civilian projects, with a particular focus on security sector reform such as in EUSEC Congo. These endeavours might again be interpreted as taking place in French areas of interest, thus keeping control regarding the developments on the ground. But they certainly also strengthen the EU's international presence and actorness.

### **2.3. *With Whom? – France's key partners***

These achievements certainly reflect a strong French influence on ESDP. However, they have often been reached in cooperation with partners, the most important of which are Germany and the UK.

---

<sup>33</sup> A. Moens, R. Domisiewicz, European and North American Trends in Defence Industry: Problems and Prospects of a Cross-Atlantic Defence Market, April 2001 <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/arms>.

<sup>34</sup> Aggestam 2006, p. 19.

### 2.3.1. Germany

The traditionally strong Franco-German cooperation is comparatively weak in the area of security and defence. This is mainly due to the different strategic cultures of the two countries, with the central difference being of the use of force.<sup>35</sup> Germany remains reluctant towards it, and therefore also towards the deployment of troops in high intensity missions, rather stressing the civilian dimension of ESDP. Germany is moreover a difficult partner when it comes to out of area missions as each deployment of the authorisation from the German parliament. This potentially delays or blocks a deployment.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, Germany is very cautious towards avant garde approaches in ESDP. Stressing principles such as equality, legitimacy and transparency, it considers both enhanced cooperation and increased flexibility as last resort. More generally, and close to the British position, Germany stresses the prevalence of NATO and insists on the complementary character of both structures. Improving European actorness thus does not mean replacing NATO but contrary to strengthen it. Germany thus strongly objects to any attempt that would marginalize NATO or question its primacy.<sup>37</sup>

But in spite of these differences, Germany remained a key partner for France: it was a Franco-German proposal that pushed for CFSP in Maastricht 1992.<sup>38</sup> The Eurocorps, since 1992 composed of troops from France, Germany, Spain, Luxembourg and Belgium, builds on the nucleus of the Franco-German brigade, created already in 1987. The same applies to OCCAR, created in 1996 and drawing upon previous Franco-German cooperation. Moreover, Franco-German cooperation has been one of the driving forces during the convention and the overall reform debates, through suggesting for example a Defence Union.<sup>39</sup> The 2003 chocolate summit also reflects successful Franco-German uploading and agenda setting. Although vilified by the UK, most of the topics have eventually been implemented.

It would however be exaggerated to deduce a leadership role for the Franco-German couple. It rather points to a Franco-German agenda setting power and ideational export capacity, i.e. an initiating function for multilateral solutions.

---

<sup>35</sup> Strategic cultures is much debated concept. Here, it refers mainly to the unique national norms and preferences defining the use of force. See K. Longhurst, *Germany and the Use of Force: the Evolution of German Security Policy 1990-2003*, Manchester, MUP 2004.

<sup>36</sup> for more details see Mölling 2007.

<sup>37</sup> M. Meimeth, *Deutsche und französische Perspektiven einer Gemeinsamen Europäischer Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik*, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B3-4/2003: 21-30; M. Koopmann, H. Stark, *Zukunftsfähig? Deutsch-Französische Beziehungen und die ESVP*, DGAP Analyse Nr 27, January 2004.

<sup>38</sup> The idea of a Common foreign and security policy has been suggested to the EU presidency in a joint letter by Helmut Kohl and Francois Mitterrand in April 1990.

<sup>39</sup> G. Stuart, V. Knowles, S. Pottebohm, *Zwischen Legitimität und Effizienz: Ergebnisse der Arbeitsgruppen „Einzelstaatliche Parlamente“ und „Verteidigung“ im Konvent*, in: *Integration*, vol 26, 1/2003: 10-16.

### 2.3.2. UK

Although generally considered being an “awkward partner” in Europe, the UK cannot be ignored as partner in ESDP due to its military and political weight and experience.<sup>40</sup> France and the UK cooperate pragmatically in the area of capability improvement, EU missions and armament cooperation. Both countries not only display the most serious capabilities in the EU. They also share a culture of professional military intervention, expeditionary experience, as well as a compatible strategic approach to force projection.<sup>41</sup> Both maintain the right to act unilaterally. They also share the ambitions for the rationalisation and restructuring of the European defence industry. On a bilateral basis both countries agreed to consult on the construction of their aircraft carriers. The UK also supported the French led EU operation Artémis (2003).<sup>42</sup> Besides the St Malo summit, several crucial steps in ESDP development built upon Franco-British initiatives, such as BG concept (2003).<sup>43</sup>

This cooperation however becomes controversial as soon as questions relating to the institutional design and overall finality of ESDP are raised. The UK strictly opposes new institutions that potentially limits flexibility, risks touching upon national resources or questions the primacy of NATO.<sup>44</sup> ESDP should strengthen NATO and improve transatlantic relations.

The UK is not interested in new modes of governance but in effective outcomes implying as little political superstructure as possible. The harsh UK reaction on the 2003 Tervuren summit propositions reflects this position.<sup>45</sup> This points to the main challenge of Franco-British cooperation in ESDP: it is seemingly more about the coincidence of agendas than about a meeting of minds, and builds on a constructive ambiguity. As long as this is not transcended, ideological confrontation over the ultimate shape and objectives of ESDP can give way to pragmatic cooperation on the ground.

### 2.4. *NATO - for a balanced transatlantic relationship*

Despite political rhetoric NATO remains a key partner for France. The relationship does not lack ambiguity though: although France withdrew from NATO's IMS, it assured specific cooperation with NATO such as through the Lemnitzer-Ailleret and Ferber-Valentin

---

<sup>40</sup> S. George, *An Awkward Partner: Britain in the European Community*, Oxford, OUP, 1998.

<sup>41</sup> inter alia President Chirac in a speech celebrating the 100 anniversary of the Entente Cordiale, 5 April 2004: „The United Kingdom and France share the same taste for broad horizons and sense of duty that comes from worldwide responsibilities“. [www.elysee.fr/magazine/fiche/2004/04/05/109046\\_page\\_0.htm](http://www.elysee.fr/magazine/fiche/2004/04/05/109046_page_0.htm).

<sup>42</sup> P. Cornish, ARTEMIS and CORAL British Perspectives on European Union Crisis Management Operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 2003. Centre for Defence Studies, King College London July 2004. p.2.

<sup>43</sup> It has been published at the Le Touquet Summit in 2003. Germany's support was sought and the concept has been finally submitted as trilateral proposal. For further details see Granholm/ Johnsten 2006 and Mölling 2007.

<sup>44</sup> R. Kempin, *Franzoesisch-Britische Zusammenarbeit in der Sicherheitspolitik. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen*. SWP Studie, 7/March 2005; J. Howorth: *France, Britain and the Euro-Atlantic Crisis*, in *Survival*, vol. 45, 4/2003-04, pp. 173-92.

<sup>45</sup> Interview M. Chocraïne 2006, British MoD, London 25. May 2006.

agreements.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, French troops have been deployed in Iraq (1991) and Afghanistan, alongside US troops. Today, France is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest contributor to NATO forces, and the 4<sup>th</sup> biggest contributor to the NATO-budget.

In fact, France clearly recognises NATO's functional dimension: it is not only the necessary defence alliance. It also assures that the transatlantic relationship is based on negotiation and cooperation. Moreover, NATO remains the appropriate framework for major crisis management operations that require a joint transatlantic effort. Here the EU neither displays the capabilities nor the will to become involved. For France, the complementary character of ESDP and NATO is thus evident.

However, since the end of 1990ies, particularly the Kosovo war and the "War against Terrorism", France perceives the US and NATO as increasingly reluctant and difficult partners. Hence the increasing importance France attaches to ESDP as an instrument to balance the US influence within NATO, while the long term goal remains a "European defence" as such. In that context the latest rows about a potential rivalry between NATO Reaction Forces and EU Battle Groups reflect a traditional political dissent at the highest level. The same mechanisms can be observed regarding the sharing of secret information between NATO and EU.<sup>47</sup> This frustrating diplomatic ping-pong certainly hinders a political solution, but it remains to be seen whether it will spill over to the operational domain.

### **3. Achievements, ambiguities, and the day after the Présidentielles**

The analysis revealed the success of French policy projection in ESDP. Striking is however the growing tension between the insistence on traditional policy conceptions and the decreasing ability to implement them. What might be necessary is thus a redefinition of French objectives related to ESDP along given facts and new challenges.

#### ***3.1. The French role in ESDP: success, ambiguities and challenges***

The successful French uploading of policy positions to the EU level is evident both in terms of diplomatic achievement and implementation on the ground. The French willingness to take over responsibility, such as in the operation Artemis, reflects its leadership ambition. A comparison of the "shopping list" of Tervuren with the 2007 ESDP settings reveals the extent of the success of French policy. Placing national experts at key positions, suggesting blueprints for policies and structures, taking the lead in missions proved to be, *inter alia*, useful methods to present national preferences.

Maintaining France's rang in the world is to a great extent linked to its capacity to influence the European cooperation process. But not all European partners appreciate this leadership ambition. Although EU officials often admire the successful injection of French national

---

<sup>46</sup> See S. Hofmann, R. Kempin, 2007.

<sup>47</sup> C. Mölling, EU Battle Groups 2007 – where next? In, European Security Review No. 31, December 2006: 7-10.

interests into ESDP, it does not mean that they approve it. In Brussels as well as in EU capitals, French ESDP policy often tastes of selfishness and maximizing national outcomes. This impression is reinforced by the French regional focus on Africa. Other EU member states become increasingly reluctant to join French initiatives in Africa, which are more and more perceived as defending French interests.<sup>48</sup>

So far, France preferred to act in a multinational and intergovernmental framework, which offered the opportunity to multiply national policy performance while the intergovernmental character assured control over mechanisms and outcomes. However, the last decade showed that this pattern was not always successful. Moreover, EU enlargement increased the number of EU members and the diversity of policy objectives and styles, thereby fundamentally changing ESDP settings. In fact, France certainly achieved several policy goals and succeeded in exerting national preferences through ESDP. But it had increasingly to share the control over the processes and to accept compromises over the outcomes. Refusing these compromises and insisting on autonomous action would potentially block any progress in ESDP.

This raises the question of the future of France's ESDP leadership. The analysis reveals that traditional policy motives often either constrain French policy or risks leading, via an anachronistic ideological approach, to a non-realistic position where the negative consequences are shared with all Europeans. One example is the French insistence on state control over its armaments industry and the belief in national self-sufficiency in the defence sector in times of economic and industrial transnationalisation. This causes not only a high monetary price but also blocks progress for ESDP. France seems in fact to be increasingly caught in a dilemma between long-term policy goals and pragmatic policy approaches. It may be too early to judge definitely, but there seems to be a tendency that the long-term goals - French independence, autonomy and leadership - become discriminated by the short term concessions France has to make to achieve them. The idea of "Europe of Defence" still circulates, but it increasingly tastes of a lip service. Does France really possess the resources to offer an European alternative? Committing to this objective would not only further question the French position towards NATO. It would particularly widen the gap to its key partners, UK and Germany, who both insist on the primacy of NATO in European defence. Thus progress in ESDP only happens when France adopts a pragmatic approach, avoiding theological battles over the "finalité" of the EU.

---

<sup>48</sup> France and the European Security and  
F. Terpan, France and the European Security and Defence Policy, Paper presented at the EUSA Biennial  
Conference in Austin, Texas 31 march 2005.



### 3.2. *ESDP and France: Choices for the day after the Présidentielles*

Where do we go from here? Taking over the EU presidency in 2008, France has the unique opportunity to give a new élan to ESDP and injects its ideas into the next steps of ESDP development. In order to rise both, the French profile in ESDP and ESDP as such, France can propose several reforms targeting the national level as well as the European level. Here, the ideas developed in the Constitutional Treaty (CT) on security and defence policy offer an starting point for this reflection. But even before a solution for the CT is found, France should call for practical steps towards strengthening both the HR's authority and resources, and ensuring better co-operation between the various EU bodies.<sup>49</sup> France should commit:

- To integrate the Council's and Commission's foreign policy departments in a single building, as suggested by Leonard and Grant.<sup>50</sup> Legally, an EU diplomatic service cannot happen without treaty change, but in practice staff from the two institutions should work together - alongside seconded national officials - to produce common papers and analysis.
- To reduce the role of the rotating presidency while conferring more authority to the HR. In terms of the EU's external representation, the 'troika' can be successively be replaced by either the HR or the concerned Commissioner.
- To increase the member states commitment in ESDP. The HR cannot run ESDP alone; he needs the members' commitment to turn indifference into attention and action; and EU presence into actorness. Just as the UK and France have put Africa on the agenda, other states can shape strategies of regional or sectoral engagement. In terms of capabilities, national governments need to specify their defence needs based on the EU threat assessment, define the levels of ambitions for participation in EU missions and specify their contributions.<sup>51</sup>
- To reform the soft governance rules in ESDP. So far, the required consensus and unanimity provide legitimacy, but at the cost of reduced effectiveness. How to reconcile leadership and legitimacy? It is worth discussing, as raised by Gross & Giegerich, whether the input into ESDP decisions ought to be a function of a country's contribution.<sup>52</sup>

These proposals do not necessarily require treaty changes. They could however improve the ESDP's effectiveness while also demonstrating French leadership. Beyond these global suggestions, France can engage the debate in particular areas, without however

---

<sup>49</sup> Some of these ideas to follow have already been raised by C. Major/H. Riecke, *Europe's little blue book. More strategic debate in the EU*, Internationale Politik Transatlantic Edition, Nr. 2, 2006, pp. 44-51 and C. Grant, M. Leonard, *How to build a better EU foreign policy*, CER Bulletin, issue 47, April/May 2006.

<sup>50</sup> C. Grant, M. Leonard, 2006.

<sup>51</sup> W. van Eekelen, *From words to deeds. The continuing debate on European Security*, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, and Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Geneva, 2006, p. 292.

<sup>52</sup> Giegerich, E. Gross, *Squaring the Circle? Leadership and Legitimacy in European Security and Defence Cooperation*, in: *International Politics*, vol. 43, 3/ 2006, pp. 500-9.

transcending the constructive ambiguity so highly valued by the UK. Here, we chose some areas without pretending to touch upon all:

**Strategic direction:** France should encourage the further development of regional and sectoral strategies. The painful debate in 2006 about the EU's commitment in the DRC proved that regional strategy is not sufficiently developed regarding the operational capabilities crisis management. France should push for a further discussion of the EU's priorities and criteria for regional stability missions.

**Operations:** The French focus on ESDP as a vehicle for a military role of the EU tends to overlook the civilian reality and the increasingly comprehensive character of EU missions. The 2006 mission in DRC had to cooperate with the EUSEC mission, the EU Commission, the UN and NGOs. Even military missions will have to operate among civilians; and successful stabilisation involves contact with the local population. France can assure the effective management of this civilian – military interface, such as through further implementing the EU concept of civil-military coordination.<sup>53</sup>

**Capabilities:** France attaches particular importance to the BG concept as the only EU framework for defence cooperation and capability development. In terms of further developing the concept, France has two options: to increase the number of available BG as well as their specialisation for certain types of operations (amphibious, desert, mountain, urban); or to further the development of the overall Military Rapid Reaction Concept. This should also allow to generate more troops to deliver EU follow on forces to take over after a rapid response.

A French key objective is the creation of a standing European Headquarters (HQ). This step has been prepared by the CivMil Cell and the Ops Centre, although their purposes still needs to be defined. This will happen - via normative power of practice – with its first use. The only chance to persuade the UK to accept a standing EU HQ would be, ironically, to demonstrate the consequences of its non existence. This could e.g. take place if an urgent military mission pops up while all three fully fledged EU assigned OHQ (Paris, Northwood and Potsdam) and SHAPE cannot be used.

**Armaments:** Despite privatisation attempts, the building of national champions and the state kept blocking minority questions France commitments towards a European defence market. It may imply an enormous policy shift, but France has re-orientate its armaments policy from national protectionism and state dirigisme to the creation of a European framework for an emerging EU defence market. To the extent Europe becomes reality in terms of transnational

---

<sup>53</sup> European Council Secretariat: Civil Military Co-ordination, (CMCO) CI 14457/03, Brussels. 2003; Markus Reinhardt: Zivil-militärische Beziehungen im Rahmen der ESVP, Diskussionspapier, SWP 2006.

production lines and industrial cooperation, private corporations, that freely move their parts and services in the EU will emerge.

Complementary to the internal dimension of the market the export regulations should be harmonised to prevent discrimination along national legislation. Therefore the Code of Conduct on Arms Export should be made legally binding. France should also consider to accept a certain role of the Commission in this area. The defence market's internal dimension is comparable to a EU internal market. Herein the Commission has not only the competence but also the experience how to implement a rather fair market framework.

**Partners:** Progress in ESDP is impossible without Germany and Britain. Even if “structured cooperation” would allow more “coalition of the willing”, any attempt to marginalize one of these partner would put ESDP on hold. Given the absence of common long term perspectives, a pragmatic approach for cooperation in ESDP needs to be found. France should sensibly develop this triangle into a kind of informal but EU wide accepted leadership structure. Middle sized countries such as Spain, or Poland might object to it because they are not part of it. Smaller countries might object out of the fear to loose influence. Nonetheless, the strength of the big three is that they represent a broad coalition of interests within the EU: “Britain is more global and Atlanticist, France keener on an “autonomous” Europe and Germany embodies the virtue of the European Union as a civilian power”. No other group of EU states is in the position to represent such a wide range of positions.<sup>54</sup>

The main function of this directorate would be less a motor for ESDP than of a consensus generator to tackle thorny topics and generate Euro-Atlantic agreement. A distribution of tasks might therefore be necessary, where the Franco-German couple generates ideas - including some well dosed provocations - while a Franco-German-British trio - acceptable across Europe and the Atlantic - serves as balancing decision making instance. The particular task for Germany might consists in mediating between France and the UK: just as in 2003 when Germany was essential in disarming some of the Chocolate summit proposals. More precisely, such a directorate could helps to ease relations within NATO. The alliance is an indispensable partner in developing EU capabilities through the NRF, and the only serious framework for larger high intensity operations. However, the relationship with the US may only improve after the US presidential elections in 2008. Its coincides with the French EU presidency, thereby offering the chance to exert European leadership. Moreover, successful “EU-3” engagements such as in Iran and the Middle East may help the EU gaining more credibility and influence. What has to be avoided however, is to develop a concurrent framework that takes up positions not in line or even not agreed with the rest of EU member states.

---

<sup>54</sup> G. Andréani, C. Bertram, C. Grant, Europe's Military revolution, CER, London 2001, p. 89.

## **Conclusion**

These recommendations are partly in stark contrast to the traditional French policy preferences, such as when suggesting an increased role for the Commission. In fact, the incoming president would first have to decide on the role he/she wishes France to play in ESDP. Progress in ESDP and French leadership seems to be increasingly compromised if some basic parameters are not modified. Either France accepts to redefine its objectives and instruments in ESDP or it has to concede serious modifications in the institutional set up and competences in ESDP and the EU as a whole to ensure progress. The easiest though most disappointing and potentially dangerous option is to leave things as they are. Is this a real option? Certainly not one *digne* of Asterix.