



APRIL
2021



Complementarity or Competition?

Franco-British Cooperation and the European Horizon of French Defense Policy

Alice PANNIER

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ISBN: 979-10-373-0347-9

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How to quote this publication:

Alice Pannier, “Complementarity or competition? Franco-British Cooperation and the European Horizon of French Defense Policy”

Focus stratégique, No. 96 bis, Ifri, April 2021.

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Abstract

France and the United Kingdom have, for long, enjoyed a close defense relationship, thanks in part to their analogous strategic cultures. The 2010 Lancaster House treaties built on this proximity to expand cooperation in the fields of nuclear weapons, force projection, interoperability and industrial integration. In spite of genuine progress in the first years following the treaties, the Franco-British strategic partnership has had to face two pitfalls: on the one hand, Brexit and its political consequences for the United Kingdom, and, on the other hand, President Macron's attempt to revive European defense and Franco-German cooperation. The tenth anniversary of Lancaster House should offer the opportunity to rethink the convergence between bilateral cooperation and the resolutely European horizon of French defense policy.

Résumé

La France et le Royaume-Uni bénéficient depuis longtemps d'une étroite coopération de défense, fruit de cultures stratégiques voisines. Cette proximité s'est vue consacrée en 2010 par les accords de Lancaster House qui ont mené à un approfondissement de la coopération dans le domaine nucléaire ainsi qu'en matière de projection de forces, d'interopérabilité ou encore d'intégration industrielle. Malgré de réelles avancées au cours des premières années, ce partenariat stratégique est venu achopper sur un double écueil: le Brexit et ses conséquences politiques d'une part, la volonté de la présidence Macron de relancer la défense européenne *via* une priorité à la relation franco-allemande d'autre part. Le dixième anniversaire de Lancaster House à l'automne 2020 devrait être l'occasion d'une nouvelle réflexion sur la convergence entre la coopération bilatérale et l'horizon résolument européen de la défense française.

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Introduction

The French “Strategic Review of Defense and National Security” of October 2017 identifies “bilateral European cooperation”, “Europe” and the “transatlantic link” as the three elements of collective action in defense in which France must “fully invest”.¹ France is part of a network of bilateral relations that constitute essential links in its defense policy. Due to its special situation within NATO, between 1966 and 2009, France was less involved in multilateral military ties compared to the other member countries of the Alliance’s integrated command.² During this period, defense cooperation “has come to depend to a far greater extent than with our other allies on bilateral arrangements”, which were numerous although “relatively unknown and perhaps undervalued”, the British House of Commons reported in 1991.³ Bilateral defense agreements — on which France does not have a monopoly, since they have multiplied throughout the world since the end of the Cold War⁴ — cover various subsectors such as industrial cooperation, joint arms procurement, exercises, training and education, military education, research and development, and intelligence sharing.

The field of bilateral cooperation in the defense sector can be explained by various factors. Generally speaking, the aim is to pursue common causes more effectively than in a multilateral format.⁵ The success of this type of cooperation can also be assessed by comparing it with action by a single nation: cooperation — even between two parties — must lead to savings and/or technology transfers. Should it be about addressing budgetary and capability constraints or increasing prospects for military exports, bilateral cooperation is designed to serve the national interest of each partner. Given its strategic scope, this type of cooperation ultimately becomes part of thorough diplomatic alliances. Thus, states tend to coordinate their positions in international forums and to develop common

1. “Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale”, Paris, Ministère des Armées, p. 58.

2. H. Beach, “Cooperation Between Conventional Forces in Europe: A British View”, in: Y. Boyer, P. Lellouche and J. Roper (eds.), *Franco-British Defence Cooperation: A New Entente Cordiale?*, London: Routledge, 1988, p. 48.

3. House of Commons Defence Committee, First report, Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, “Anglo-French Defence Cooperation”, 1991, p. 5.

4. B. J. Kinne, “Defence Cooperation Agreements and the Emergence of a Global Security Network”, *International Organization*, Vol. 72, No. 4, 2018, pp. 799-837.

5. K. Hartley and D. Braddon, “Collaborative Projects and the Number of Partner Nations”, *Defence and Peace Economics*, Vol. 25, No. 6, 2014, pp. 535-548.

positions on major foreign policy issues. In Europe more particularly, bilateral cooperation plays a key role in the conduct of defense policies. It constitutes therefore the basic level of multilateral regional cooperation within the European Union or NATO.

In Europe, France's main allies are unquestionably Germany and the United Kingdom (UK). For a long time, the relationship with the latter has been considered as "privileged".⁶ This strategic proximity can be contemplated in the signature in 2010 of a partnership covering a very wide range of defense policies related matters – from facilities linked to nuclear deterrence to the interoperability of armed forces, industrial integration and development, and the procurement of military equipment. One decade on from the Lancaster House treaties, the time has come to review the changes in Franco-British bilateral cooperation in order to consider its results. Have the expectations born of these treaties been met? Both the shock of Brexit since 2016 and the advent of a new French executive in the summer of 2017 have led Paris to work towards strengthening Franco-German ties in the military sector as well as reviving the European Defense framework. Brexit being a reality, what are the prospects for Franco-British cooperation and the relationship between the UK and the European Union? How does Franco-German cooperation differ from its Franco-British counterpart, and can it replace it? Finally, what role does France's other European partners play in the pursuit of its strategic objectives, as a trimming to cooperation with the "Big Two"?

In answering these questions, this study shows that Franco-British defense cooperation is promising in areas not covered by France's other European cooperative efforts. Nevertheless, this specificity cannot compensate for the other constraining factors that strongly limit the ambitions of London and Paris: the existence of other key bilateral cooperation partnerships (Anglo-American and Franco-German); misalignment of requirements and schedules; and disagreements on European policy (of which Brexit is the ultimate manifestation).

By going back to the origins of the Lancaster House treaties and the objectives stated by the French and British governments at the time, it will be possible to analyse the achievements of this bilateral cooperation. To do so, it is necessary to focus on the main areas of cooperation: nuclear deterrence, deployments, interoperability of armed forces, and integration of the missile industry. In this way, it will be possible to examine the limits and failures of Franco-British cooperation since 2010, the most significant of it relating to the naval aviation and aeronautics sectors, as well as the political and institutional issues around "Brexit". Finally, the differences

6. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

between Franco-German and Franco-British defense cooperation will be examined, in order to show how it lies within France's European ambition. Finally, Franco-German and Franco-British defense cooperation could converge and complement each other, for example by including other European partners in French-led operational initiatives.

Franco-British cooperation under the Lancaster House treaties

The Lancaster House treaties are the cornerstone of Franco-British defense cooperation. They emerged from the acknowledgment of similar strategic characteristics, common operational experience, as well as a relative convergence of the major orientations of French and British defense policies since the end of the Cold War. Through the Lancaster House treaties, the bilateral relationship between France and the UK was institutionalized and an ambitious portfolio of cooperative projects was deployed, in sectors as diversified as nuclear power, military deployments, interoperability, defense industry and capabilities.

Origin of the Lancaster House Treaties

Long-standing strategic convergence

Although the defense relationship between France and the UK is long-standing, dating back to the 1904 *Entente Cordiale*, its institutionalization only occurred in 2010 with the Lancaster House treaties, signed in London by David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy. Conversely, Franco-German cooperation was founded in 1963 by the *Élysée Treaty* (renewed, including its military dimension, in January 2019 with the *Aachen Treaty*). While Franco-German cooperation appears to be primarily political and industrial and interwoven with European integration, the logic of Franco-British cooperation is more rooted in a proximity of strategic culture that would “condemn [them] to act as partners”.⁷

France and the UK share many common strategic characteristics: permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC), possessing nuclear weapons, recognized by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), willing to devote significant budgets (by European standards), notably in defense R&D, displaying global ambitions stemming from a

7. J. Howorth, “European Security Institutions 1945-2010: The Weaknesses and Strengths of ‘Brusselization’” in: S. Biscop and R. Whitman (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of European Security*, London: Routledge, 2012, p. 5.

colonial past and, above all, regular experience in the use of armed force in expeditionary operations. A report by the French Senate thus affirmed in 2010 that “the two countries have a very great concordance of views on all major [international] issues”⁸ and jointly initiate 80% of the texts adopted at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).⁹ The political declarations of the successive governments systematically recall these common points, which make of France and the UK “natural partners”.¹⁰

While Franco-British cooperation in military interventions had been practically non-existent since the Suez expedition in 1956,¹¹ the 1990s and 2000s provided France and the UK with numerous opportunities to participate in joint military operations, opening the way to a rapprochement in doing so. Bilateral cooperation proved particularly strong during the Bosnian war. The operations carried out in 1995 by the UN rapid reaction force, composed mainly of French and British forces, highlighted the “synergy of approaches”, the “shared experience” and the “symbiosis” that was manifest at that time between the armed forces of the two countries.¹²

In 2003, the UK also supported France and the EU to secure the success of Europe’s Artemis operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, Franco-British operational cooperation during this period was limited to the multilateral framework: France did not provide any support to the UK in Sierra Leone in 2000, nor did the UK contribute to the French intervention in Ivory Coast in 2003.

Joint participation in the war in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2013 then upheld these strategic links, although the armed forces were deployed on different fronts (Helmand for the British, Kapisa-Surobi for the French). From 2008 onwards, when Nicolas Sarkozy reinforced France’s commitment in Afghanistan as the security situation deteriorated, strategic ties between France and the UK became deeper, especially within the framework of the NATO command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). This decision indeed led to an intensification of exchanges and shared

8. J. de Rohan and D. Reiner, “La coopération bilatérale de défense entre la France et le Royaume-Uni”, Rapport n° 658 (2009-2010), Commission des affaires étrangères, de la défense et des forces armées, Sénat, July 2010, p. 13.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

10. *Ibid.*

11. M. Duval, “The Prospects for Military Cooperation Outside Europe: A French View”, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

12. M. Jay, “France et Royaume-Uni: des relations riches et diversifiées”, *Défense Nationale*, No. 53, 1997, p. 6.

operational feedback. This dynamic further accelerated when France reintegrated the Alliance's integrated command in 2009.¹³

The European dimension of the French-British defense relationship has always been problematic, due to significantly different approaches to defense integration between London and Paris. Yet, the late 1990s and early 2000s were quite fruitful, with a certain alignment of the positions and ambitions. After the war in Bosnia and in the context of the war in Kosovo,¹⁴ Paris and London thus signed in December 1998 the landmark *Saint-Malo Declaration*, according to which “the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises without prejudice to actions by NATO”.¹⁵ The two countries then jointly supported the definition of the EU's capability targets at the Helsinki Summit in 1999, the drafting of the European Security Strategy in 2003, the creation of the European Defense Agency in 2004 (after OCCAr in 1996), and the definition of the European “battlegroup” concept.

Paris and London shared the same desire for an European defense framework centred on military capabilities, for the purpose of achieving operational aims. They also both envisioned a special role for the CSDP in crisis management in Africa.¹⁶ At the Saint-Malo summit, Jacques Chirac and Tony Blair suggested that “without a real understanding between our two countries, the Common Foreign and Security Policy could be achieved, but it would not really be what we want, i.e., an effective policy”.¹⁷ In fact, without the joint impetus of Paris and London — and the support of Berlin and other EU member states for these initiatives — the European Security and Defense Policy could not have developed thusly in the early 2000s.¹⁸

However, France and the UK did disagree on the political and institutional dimension to accompany the capability and operational objectives of the ESDP/CSDP. First of all, London never adopted the

13. Interview with a British liaison officer, EMAT, April 2012.

14. L. Freedman, “Defence” in: A. Seldon, *Blair's Britain: 1997-2007*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 625.

15. The text as adopted in the European Council declaration on strengthening the common European policy on security and defence, Cologne European Council, June 3 and 4, 1999.

16. F. Mérand, *European Defence Policy: Beyond the Nation State*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 125.

17. “Conférence de presse conjointe de MM. J. Chirac, Président de la République, Lionel Jospin, Premier ministre, et Tony Blair, Premier ministre de Grande-Bretagne à Saint-Malo le 4 décembre 1998”, available at: www.vie-publique.fr.

18. P. Schnapper, “Le Royaume-Uni et l'Europe: toujours un malentendu ?”, *Hérodote*, Vol. 2, No. 137, 2010, p. 137.

rhetoric of a European Defense framework. Indeed, London's ambition for ESDP/CSDP has always been bridled by a clearly expressed preference for NATO since the 1990s and the fear of duplication with the Alliance's missions. Consequently, the EU was only seen as a vehicle for military missions, at the low end of the spectrum (conflict prevention and peacekeeping).¹⁹ Moreover, Tony Blair's activism within the EU was motivated by Washington's pressure to encourage Europeans to become actors in their defense — including through the EU — in order to strengthen NATO, not replace it.²⁰ Tony Blair's support for European defense was thus tactical rather than strategic, since it was intended to “continue engagement in Europe of the United States”²¹ while keeping good relations with Washington.²² For example, in the concern of maintaining NATO's pre-eminence, and arguing the need to avoid unnecessary institutional developments, the UK opposed the creation of a permanent European Union operational headquarters. This unwillingness caused strong tensions in Franco-British relations, during the Blair-Chirac period as well as between David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy, even though the latter maintained very fruitful relations on other defense and foreign policy issues.

British support for CSDP, however, was short-lived. The first CFSP/CSDP operations proved to be not very effective, and in the absence of a qualitative or quantitative leap in European capabilities, Tony Blair's enthusiasm quickly turned to frustration.²³ Moreover, the UK became heavily involved in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which took place at a time when the CSDP should have been progressing. For example, the periods 2003-2007 and 2006-2012 were the years in which the UK suffered the most casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁴ Therefore, the Prime Minister gradually disengaged Great Britain from European missions during his second term. The UK's participation in EU operations thus shrank from 1,450 personnel in 2005 to 16 in 2009.²⁵ By disengaging, London only

19. UK Ministry of Defence, “Strategic Defence Review”, Cm 3999, July 1998, p. 16.

20. C. M. O'Donnell, “Britain's Coalition Government and EU Defence Cooperation: Undermining British Interests”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 2, 2011, p. 422.

21. UK Ministry of Defence, “Strategic Defence Review”, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

22. J. Howorth, “The Euro-Atlantic Dilemma: France, Britain, and the ESDP”, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2005, p. 40; UK Ministry of Defence, “Delivering Security in a Changing World: Defence White Paper”, Cm 6041-1, December 2003, p. 8.

23. C. M. O'Donnell, “Britain's Coalition Government and EU Defence Cooperation”, *op. cit.*, p. 423.

24. Fatalities by year in Iraq and Afghanistan, available at: <http://icasualties.org>.

25. As a comparison, French contributions to EU missions tripled over the same period, from 581 to 1,585. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *Military Balance 2005*, London: Routledge, 2005, pp. 65-66 and 105; IISS, *Military Balance 2007*, London: Routledge, 2007, pp. 142 and 152; IISS, *Military Balance 2008*, London: Routledge, 2008, pp. 122-123 and 161; IISS, *Military Balance 2009*, London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 119-120 and 162.

increased the inefficiency of the ESDP/CSDP, which the British government was already criticizing.

Although the ambition to build a European Defense framework has been at the heart of the French agenda since the end of the Cold War, Nicolas Sarkozy's presidency was marked by French reinvestment in NATO²⁶ — symbolized by France's return to the integrated military structures in 2009. This normalization of relations between France and NATO paved the way for the great rapprochement of 2010 with the UK,²⁷ encouraged by French frustration with the ineffectiveness of the CSDP and the dormancy of the Franco-German defense relationship²⁸ (see below).

Nuclear deterrence at the heart of rapprochement

While the ambitious rapprochement of 2010 was based on an obvious operational and strategic proximity, it would not have resulted in a treaty if it had not included a section on nuclear deterrence — the most sensitive area in which two states can work in concert.

Between the birth of British and French nuclear capabilities (from 1952 and 1960, respectively) and the 1990s, attempts at cooperation in this sector had produced few results. A first strive was made by Charles de Gaulle in 1962, but it failed when the UK opted for the American *Polaris* missile systems.²⁹ From then on, Great Britain pursued a policy of Continuous At Sea Deterrence (CASD), keeping at least one submarine out of four permanently at sea.³⁰ In 1994, the *Polaris* missiles were replaced by the American *Trident* system, still in service today. The British nuclear deterrence is characterized by a very strong industrial and technological dependence on the United-States. For example, the *Trident* missiles,

26. *French White Paper: Defence and National Security*, Paris: Odile Jacob/La Documentation française, 2008, p. 93.

27. Interview with a former advisor to the French president, September 2014.

28. R. Kempin, J. Mawdsley and S. Steinicke, "Turning Away From CSDP? Franco-British Bilateralism in Security and Defence Policy", *Comments, Stiftung für Wissenschaft und Politik* No. 30, November 2010, p. 3; A. Sundberg and T. Ahman, "The Two of Us: Bilateral and Regional Defence Cooperation in Europe", FOI Memo 4149, Swedish Defence Research Agency, October 2012, p. 2; Y. Boyer and A.-M. Le Gloanec, "La coopération franco-allemande en matière de défense: jusqu'où l'Allemagne peut-elle aller?", *Note de la Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique*, June 14, 2007, pp. 4-5; U. Krotz and J. Schild, *Shaping Europe: France, Germany and Embedded Bilateralism From the Élysée Treaty to Twenty-First Century Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 214-215; Interview with a former senior official at French Ministry of Defence, July 2017.

29. M. Duval, "The Prospects for Military Cooperation Outside Europe: A French View", *op. cit.*

30. N. Richie and P. Ingram, "A Progressive Nuclear Policy", *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 155, No. 2, 2010, p. 40.

manufactured by the American firm Lockheed Martin, are supplied to the UK under a lease-purchase arrangement.³¹ The UK also relies on the U.S. for some of the technologies and components needed to manufacture ballistic missiles and nuclear reactors for submarines.³² Since 2008, the Atomic Weapons Establishment, which develops, produces and maintains British nuclear weapons, has been a government-owned-contractor-operated company (GOCO), in which Lockheed Martin holds a 51% stake.³³

Franco-British collaboration did not really get off the ground until the creation of the French-British Joint Nuclear Commission in November 1992.³⁴ Within this framework, 10 officials met three times a year — now once a year — to discuss nuclear policy, doctrine, disarmament, missile defense and non-proliferation.³⁵ Over time, the Commission came to deal with increasingly concrete issues, such as crisis management and principles of nuclear planning.³⁶ In addition, since the 1990s there has been an *Anglo-French Defence Research Group*, which aims to develop French-British cooperation in R&T and innovation in a wide range of dual-use and defense technologies, including nuclear technologies.³⁷ Since its establishment, the group has addressed technical issues related to nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, energetic materials, blast effects and directed energy.³⁸

The proximity between France and the UK in the nuclear field was further strengthened in 1995, in the context of the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.³⁹ Prime Minister John Major was one of the few at the time to support Jacques Chirac during the final French nuclear test campaign in the South Pacific. That same year, the two heads of state and government signed a joint

31. D. Plesch, “A State in Denial: Britain’s WMD Dependency on the United States”, *The Economics of Peace and Security Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2008, p. 43.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Shareholders of the Atomic Weapons Establishment, available at: www.awe.co.uk. A decision to renationalise the AWE was made in November 2020. Following an in-depth review, the Minister of Defence decided that AWE plc would become an “Arms-Length Body”, wholly owned by the Minister of Defence. Available at: <https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk>.

34. M. Butcher, O. Nassauer and S. Young, “Nuclear Futures: Western European Options for Nuclear Risk Reduction”, *Research Report 98.5*, BASIC-BITS, December 1998, paragraph 4.3.

35. J. Howorth and A. Menon (eds.), *The European Union and National Defence Policy*, London-New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 31.

36. B. Tertrais, “Entente nucléaire: Options for UK-French Nuclear Cooperation”, *Commission Discussion Paper n° 3*, BASIC Trident, June 2012, p. 10.

37. UK House of Commons, “Written Answers: Equipment Cooperation”, *Hansard*, Vol. 282, column 76w, July 22, 1996, available at: <https://api.parliament.uk>; C. Chick, “2013 FBC Annual Defence Conference”, Franco-British Council, May 16, 2013, p. 11.

38. M. Butcher, O. Nassauer and S. Young, “Nuclear futures”, *op. cit.*, paragraph 4.5.

39. *Ibid.*, paragraph 4.3.

declaration, known as the *Chequers Declaration*, stating that “the vital interests of either France or the UK could not be threatened without the vital interests of the other also being threatened.”⁴⁰

Since 2008, France and the UK have developed new arrangements allowing them to use (separately) their respective hydrodynamics facilities to test technologies essential to nuclear deterrence, such as submarine propellers, on the basis of annual agreements.⁴¹ However, this association excludes items subject to Anglo-American technology cooperation, such as nuclear propulsion of British ballistic missile submarines. This collaboration was deemed useful for comparative analysis and sharing of best practices, for example regarding acquisitions or security, especially after the accidental collision between two ballistic missile submarines — the British *HMS Vanguard* and the French *Le Triomphant* — in February 2009.⁴²

In this respect, the nuclear sector was a “triggering factor”,⁴³ and was therefore at the heart of the rapprochement process sealed in 2010 by the Lancaster Treaties. Prepared for nearly two years, the treaty took advantage of a window of opportunity linked to the changing of government in London. The new parliamentary majority was supported by the Liberal Democratic Party, which had campaigned for a reassessment of British nuclear policy — with a view to reducing arsenals for both political and budgetary reasons.⁴⁴ In fact, the Liberal Democrats had little influence in the governing coalition from June 2010. But this development stoked French fears that Europe’s only other nuclear power would start to question its deterrent. Moreover, the international context added to France’s concern about finding itself isolated. In 2009, Barack Obama gave a speech encouraging disarmament in which he proclaimed his desire to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in American security strategy.⁴⁵ These two elements underpinned the French aspiration to rapidly thrive cooperation with London on nuclear deterrence.⁴⁶

40. *Ibid.*

41. Interview, Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), UK Ministry of Defence, February 2014

42. *Ibid.*

43. Interview of a former advisor to the French president, September 2014

44. Federal Party of the Liberal Democrats, “Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2010”, undated, p. 65; UK Ministry of Defence, “The Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent”, Cm 6694, December 2006, p. 26; Interview with a representative of Thales UK, February 2014. Savings could be achieved by ending Continuous At Sea Deterrence (by reducing the number of submarines or by choosing alternative types of missiles) and not upgrading the *Trident* missile system.

45. Interview with a former official at the Strategic Affairs Directorate (DAS) of the French Ministry of Defense, April 2014.

46. *Ibid.*

Based on the ties developed since the 1990s, the French and British teams have been able to identify common needs and opportunities for cooperation in the nuclear sector. The proximity to the executive authority of the teams on both sides of the Channel has enabled them to bring these needs back to their respective governments.⁴⁷ Drawing lessons from previous experiences in the field of hydrodynamic testing, where the use of each country's own national infrastructures had hindered cooperation, the experts have called for a real sharing of structures.⁴⁸

Lancaster House: ambitions and governance

The Lancaster House treaties cover areas that go beyond nuclear deterrence issues alone and demonstrate a desire for a broader strategic rapprochement. Indeed, the idea that Paris and London are “condemned”⁴⁹ to be partners carried all the more weight at the time since the capacity of the two countries to exercise “international leadership” seemed increasingly “weakened”.⁵⁰ The Lancaster House treaties, therefore, aimed to protect France and the UK from any loss of strategic status. In fact, French and British defense spending — while still the highest in Europe in 2010 — had gradually decreased since the end of the Cold War, particularly after the financial crisis of 2008. For example, the British *Strategic Defence and Security Review* of October 2010 forecasted an 8% reduction in the overall budget by 2014.⁵¹ The Lancaster House treaties were thus designed for “tangible” cooperation, contributing to maintaining national sovereignty and the French and British armaments industries. The other purpose was a concrete military cooperation, focused on operations and at low cost — or even generating cost savings.⁵²

The Lancaster House agreements signed on November 2, 2010, include two treaties, as well as a letter of intent signed by the two defense ministers and a summit declaration. The first treaty deals

47. Interviews with a representative of Thales UK, February 2014, and with a former advisor to the French president, September 2014

48. Interview, DE&S, UK Ministry of Defence, February 2014, *op. cit.*

49. J. Howorth, “The Euro-Atlantic Dilemma: France, Britain, and the ESDP”, *op. cit.*

50. C. Hill, “Powers of a Kind: The Anomalous Position of France and the UK in World Politics”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 2, 2016, p. 395.

51. C. Mölling and S.-C. Brune, “The Impact of the Financial Crisis on European Defence”, European Parliament, 2011, p. 37. Ultimately, there was a decline of 14.7% between 2009 and 2014 (in constant 2017 dollars) and the defense budget dropped from 2.4% of GDP to 1.9% over this period (*SIPRI Military Expenditure database 1949-2018*, available at: www.sipri.org).

52. Interview with a former official at the Strategic Affairs Directorate (DAS) of the French Ministry of Defense, April 2014.

with cooperation in defense and security matters, and provides a framework for the second treaty on common radiographic and hydrodynamics facilities. In the first treaty, France and the UK commit to address together strategic challenges, to promote peace and security, to improve the effectiveness and interoperability of their armed forces, and to preserve a strong and competitive defense industrial and technological base. The treaty thus includes general provisions enabling the two countries to deploy together in joint operations, develop military activities such as training and exercises, exchange personnel, share information on their political and strategic direction, and jointly purchase military equipment. These provisions are complemented by the Summit's final declaration, which sets out a range of planned joint initiatives, including a dozen weapons programmes (such as the light anti-ship missile project and an assessment of needs and options for the next generation of unmanned combat air systems) as well as the *Combined Joint Expeditionary Force* (CJEF) project as a vehicle for greater interoperability in military doctrine, training and equipment.

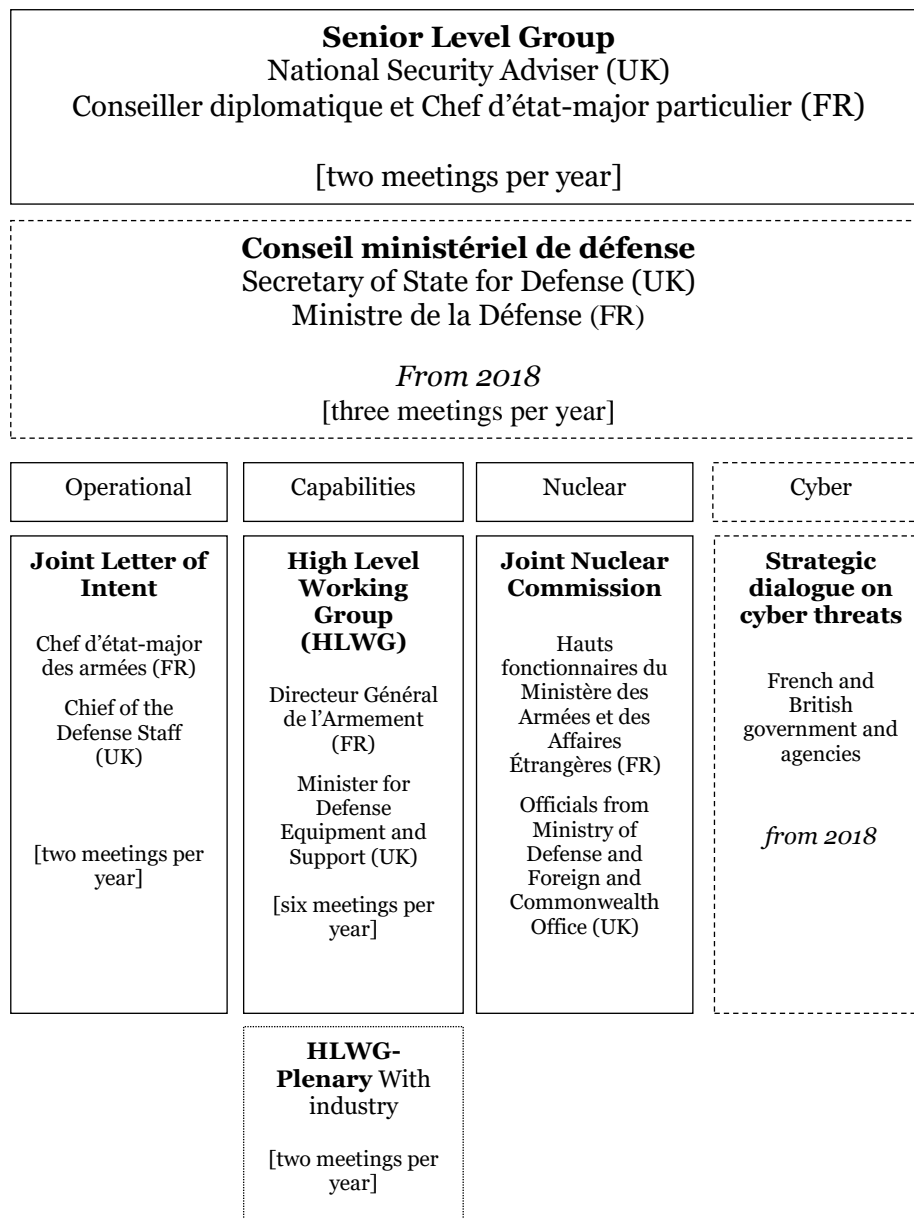
The second treaty, on nuclear cooperation, is a more technical and specific document. It foresees significant advances, such as the development of common simulation infrastructures designed to guarantee the safety and reliability of weapons. The running of these facilities, designed in order to keep separate the activities of the two countries, is nevertheless based on enlarged exchange of classified information regarding nuclear weapons. Despite the sensitivity of the subject matters, the quest for efficiency has led to simplified governance: the French President and the British Prime Minister remain at the head of the relationship, with their security and diplomatic advisers forming the *Senior Level Group*, which defines the priorities for cooperation and oversees implementation. The *High Level Working Group*, which pre-existed the treaty because it was created in 2006, oversees armaments cooperation.⁵³

Since 2006, the HLWG has brought together three to four times a year the French Directorate General of Armaments (DGA) and his British counterpart, regularly accompanied by industry representatives. As for operational cooperation, the Armed Forces Chiefs of Staff have delegated to the Major General of the Defense

53. The HLWG was an initiative of Denis Ranque, at that time Thales CEO, to bring together governments and industry to examine possibilities for cooperation in terms of capabilities. More specifically, industry wanted to set up an informal discussion group to identify obstacles to cooperation, exchange information, encourage open markets and, *in fine*, encourage common programs. Interview with a senior British official, UK Ministry of Defence, April 2012; interview with a senior official, DGA, February 2012.

Staff and his British counterpart the supervision of cooperation between the armed forces. Cooperation is based on letters of intent signed by the services since the 1990s, which already provided a framework for activities such as joint exercises, officer exchanges and thematic working groups. The figure above illustrates the governance of Franco-British cooperation in early 2011.

Figure 1: Main elements of governance in Franco-British cooperation



However, the role of defense ministers was strengthened during the Hollande presidency. At the Sandhurst Summit in 2018, this role was institutionalized by the establishment of a Franco-British Defense Ministerial Council. The Council was to meet regularly (three

meetings per year were planned) so as to provide strategic oversight and direction to bilateral defense relations and to allow for enhanced dialogue on defense policy.⁵⁴ The summit was also the time for the first meeting between the heads of five intelligence services (MI5, MI6 and the GCHQ for the UK, and the DGSE and DGSIS for France), in order to enhance the dialogue on new threats.

The achievements of cooperation

Nearly ten years after they were signed, what conclusions can be drawn from the implementation of these agreements with regards to the Franco-British bilateral cooperation? It must be noted that some issues (nuclear, interoperability, industrial integration in missiles) have been more successful than others (deployment and cooperation in naval aviation and aeronautics), and that progress in many areas is still subject to political contingencies.

Nuclear deterrence

The outcomes of Franco-British cooperation since 2010 are hard to assess in the nuclear sector, given its particularly sensitive nature. Nevertheless, the achievements of both partners are largely in line with initial expectations. The overall cooperation programme is called *Teutates* and consists of two components. On the one hand, a radiographic and hydrodynamics installation was to be built and operated jointly in France (“EPURE” project, for *Expérimentations de physique utilisant la radiographie éclair* “Physics experiments using flash radiography”). On the other hand, a joint facility was to be built in the UK, where a joint programme of radiographic and diagnostic technologies was to be conducted (“TDC” project for Technology Development Centre). Both parts of *Teutates* have progressed well since 2010, although on the UK side, the difficulty in estimating the costs associated with this “unique” programme with a low level of maturity has led to delays.⁵⁵ The TDC, located at the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) in Aldermaston, where joint teams are working, has been operational since 2014.⁵⁶ The delays concern the EPURE program. However, the facility is currently under construction on the site of the Military Applications Directorate of the French Atomic

54. E. Macron and T. May, “UK-France Summit Communiqué – Annex on Security and Defence”, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, January 18, 2018, available at: www.gov.uk.

55. S. Lovegrove, “Accounting Officer Assessment for the TEUTATES Programme”, Permanent Secretary, UK Ministry of Defence, February 4, 2019, available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk>.

56. UK Ministry of Defence, “The United Kingdom’s Future Nuclear Deterrent: 2016 Update to Parliament”, 2016, p. 4, available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk>.

Energy Commission (CEA/DAM) in Valduc, and will eventually include three radiographic axes. The first French radiographic machine has been operational since 2014, but the second and third axes – the first one being built by the British and the second in cooperation – will be completed in 2022.⁵⁷

These facilities are designed so that research and simulation activities can be carried out in a national framework to avoid leaks of information, especially when the information belongs to third parties.⁵⁸ Eight years later, this cooperation was described as “consistent and deepening”.⁵⁹ The tone of official statements at bilateral summits has been decidedly positive. For example, the 2014 Franco-British summit reported “excellent progress” and endorsed the approval of national investments in the *Teutates* program. New areas of cooperation have also been identified, including materials and joint research projects at AWE and CEA laser facilities.⁶⁰

This success can be explained in the first place by the fact that the Franco-British military nuclear community comprises a small number of people, who have been meeting regularly within the framework of the joint commission since the 1990s. This tight network of about twenty people is characterized by a great homogeneity of professional profiles.⁶¹ In addition, the effective implementation of cooperation is ensured by “permanent political oversight and a very short reporting loops” towards the executive.⁶²

Moreover, the 2010 “nuclear treaty” was the culmination of a long process that began in 2008. Unlike the conventional treaty, which was hastily negotiated in the summer of 2010, it was the outcome of much more detailed bilateral work. The risks of deadlock at the time of implementation were therefore reduced by taking into

57. Construction of the British storage and assembly facilities at Valduc fell more than two years behind schedule. They were respectively completed in 2018 and 2019, instead of 2016. Similarly, the second axis of the EPURE facility should have been completed in 2019, but commissioning has been postponed to 2022, which means that the last two axes will enter service simultaneously. “Traité entre la République française et le Royaume-Uni de Grande-Bretagne et d’Irlande du Nord relatif à des installations radiographiques et hydrodynamiques communes”; UK Ministry of Defence, “The United Kingdom’s Future Nuclear Deterrent: 2018 Update to Parliament”, 2018, p. 4, available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk>; X. Pintat, J. Lorgeoux, A. Trillard, *and al.*, “La nécessaire modernisation de la dissuasion nucléaire”, Rapport d’information n° 560 (2016-2017), Foreign Affairs, Defense and Armed Forces Commission, May 23, 2017, pp. 55-56.

58. M. Harries, “Britain and France as Nuclear Partners”, *Survival*, Vol. 54, No. 1, 2012, p. 14.

59. Institut Montaigne-Polity Institute de King’s College London, *The UK-France defence and security relationship: How to improve cooperation*, November 2018, p. 24.

60. France-UK summit, “Declaration on Security and Defence”, January 31, 2014.

61. Interview with Cabinet Office, December 2013.

62. Interview with F. Cornut-Gentille, UMP Member of Parliament, member of the Finance Commission, June 2013.

account all the issues related to the project. In the same way, the costs and benefits related to the cooperation were clearly estimated in advance. Budget savings resulting from synergies are estimated at €200 million for France for the period 2015-2020, and €200 to 250 million after 2020, i.e. a total savings of €400 to 450 million for the entire life of the installation.⁶³ However, delays on the British side have limited the amount of savings brought off.⁶⁴

Finally, the 2010 agreement took into account the constraints imposed by Anglo-American nuclear cooperation. Indeed, the British deterrent force being relatively dependant on the U.S., their approval was basically required prior to any Franco-British nuclear cooperation, and particularly prior to launch of the EPURE programme.⁶⁵ If the Anglo-American relationship remains a “glass ceiling” for French-British cooperation, related negotiations at an early stage made it possible to isolate the areas where cooperation could proceed on a purely bilateral basis.⁶⁶ The treaty also provides for the possible participation of other states in the Franco-British program.

Deployments

France and Great Britain also share a quite alike expeditionary strategic culture, which makes their bilateral relationship remarkably “special” in Europe.⁶⁷ Moreover, this strategic culture is based on a similar assessment of their respective strategic interests. Indeed, the 2010 treaty provides for solidarity between the two states, which commit to “deploying together into theatres in which both Parties have agreed to be engaged” and to “supporting, as agreed on a case by case basis, one Party when it is engaged in operations in which the other Party is not part”.⁶⁸ Since 2010, the first scenario has occurred

63. M. X. Pintat, “Projet de loi autorisant la ratification du traité entre la République française et le Royaume-Uni de Grande Bretagne et d’Irlande du nord relatif à des installations radiographiques et hydrodynamiques communes”, Rapport n° 386 (2010-2011), Foreign Affairs and Defense Commission, March 30, 2011, p. 28. As an indication, €450 million represents around 10% of the annual budget for nuclear deterrence for the year 2017. X. Pintat, J. Lorgeoux, A. Trillard, and al., “La nécessaire modernisation de la dissuasion nucléaire”, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

64. S. Bellamy, *An Assessment of Motivations and Consequences of Franco-British Cooperation Since the Lancaster House Treaties of 2010*, Thesis (MPhil), Cambridge, Cambridge University, 2015, pp. 45-46.

65. Interview with Bruno Tertrais, Foundation for Strategic Research (France), March 2015.

66. B. Tertrais, “Entente nucléaire: Options for UK-French Nuclear Cooperation”, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

67. A. Lapsley, Director General Strategy and International, UK Ministry of Defence, March 7, 2019, available at: <https://twitter.com>.

68. Art. 1 of the Defence & Security Co-operation Treaty between the French Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 2010, p. 3.

once in Libya in 2011, and the second scenario also did in Mali and the Central African Republic. Without dwelling on these different interventions, it is worth emphasizing both the extent and the limits of French-British cooperation with regards to deployments.

Only a few months after the signing of the Lancaster House treaties, the political and humanitarian crisis in Libya led Paris and London to test their common strategic views and military resources in calling for military intervention in the name of the “responsibility to protect” civilian populations against the repression of Muammar Gaddafi’s regime. The context was unusual: while the U.S. of Barack Obama first held back, leaving it to Paris and London to build a coalition, the two countries were also isolated in Europe, where they were facing the scepticism of Italy and Germany. Far from taking part to the intervention, Italy and Germany went as far as to abstain from voting in the UN Security Council to authorize a military intervention. It was therefore under a French-British leadership that operations were launched on March 19th, 2011.

However, in the light of the French and British capabilities shortfalls regarding suppression of enemy air defenses, as well as intelligence, airborne battle management (E-3 AWACS aircraft) and inflight refuelling, the need for an American support was significant – the U.S. thus carried out 75% of the strikes in the firsts 10 days. Nevertheless, France and Great Britain still deployed a wide spectrum of maritime, naval aviation and air mobile assets as well as Special Forces.⁶⁹ British and French forces each accounted for about one-fifth of the total number of coalition strikes, with the exception of the air mobile mission in May and June 2011 in which 90% of the strikes were carried out by French helicopters.⁷⁰ While leadership was joint, Libya was an opportunity to take stock of the capacity of France and Great Britain to conduct such missions jointly, both in terms of capabilities and doctrine. Thereupon progress in interoperability has been made thanks to the *Combined Joint Expeditionary Force* (CJEF, see next section).

After the operation in Libya, the UK maintained a strong engagement in Afghanistan, until François Hollande decided to disengage France as soon as he had been elected in 2012. Contrariwise, in 2013 the new President decided to intervene in Mali and the Central African Republic, two countries that are not among the UK’s strategic priorities.⁷¹ This was therefore an opportunity for

69. A. Gilli, “Procurement Lessons From the War in Libya”, *RUSI Defence Systems*, Vol. 15, No. 2, January 2013.

70. House of Commons Defence Committee, “Operations in Libya (vol. I)”, undated, p. 107.

71. Interviews with DGRIS, August 2016 and with FCO, June 2018.

France and Great Britain to implement the second scenario provided for in the Lancaster House treaties: support from one party to an operation conducted by the other. Thus, in response to France's shortage of heavy transport helicopters, ISR assets and large transport aircraft brought to light by Operation Serval in Mali,⁷² the UK provided a C-17 *Globemaster III* strategic airlifter, CH-47 *Chinook* helicopters and a *Sentinel* surveillance aircraft.⁷³ Barring ISR assets, however, the nature and scale of the assistance provided by the UK was not fundamentally different from other European countries such as Germany, Belgium, Denmark or Spain. For comparison, British assistance was lesser than what provided by the U.S.⁷⁴

Compared to France, the British have currently few deployed forces in Africa and the Middle East. Apart from Afghanistan, where London still maintains 1,100 troops, and Iraq, where Operation *Shader* against Daesh mobilized 400 personnel in 2019, other deployments are mainly linked to training missions such as in Mali as part of *Barkhane* operation, or in Nigeria where 50 supervisors work with the local army.⁷⁵

Unlike other European partners, the British do share with France and the U.S. the sense of a special responsibility, being nuclear states and permanent members of the UNSC. This is reflected in other theatres of operations, where the "P3" group (Washington-London-Paris) remains central. Operation *Hamilton* against chemical weapons facilities in Syria in the spring of 2018 – conducted jointly by the three powers, less than a week after the use of chemical weapons by the Al-Assad regime – symbolizes this particular feature. In the summer of 2013, the preparation of a joint operation in Syria after a chemical bombing in Ghouta had already demonstrated the degree of strategic proximity and exchange between the American, British and French armed forces.

French-British naval cooperation has also reached new levels of integration since the signing of the Lancaster House treaties. In 2015, a British frigate joined the French carrier battle group to provide anti-submarine defense for Operation *Chammal*.⁷⁶ This was the first time that a British ship had been fully integrated into the carrier battle

72. A. d'Evry, "L'opération Serval à l'épreuve du doute: vrais succès et fausses leçons", *Focus Stratégique*, No. 59, Ifri, July 2015, p. 37, available at: www.ifri.org.

73. C. Guilloteau and P. Nauche, "Rapport d'information sur l'opération Serval au Mali", Rapport No. 1288, National Defense and Armed Forces Commission, Assemblée Nationale, July 18, 2013, pp. 60-61.

74. *Ibid.*

75. IISS, *Military Balance 2019*, *op. cit.*

76. A. Barluet, "Contre-amiral Chaperon: l'engagement de la France à partir du Golfe est un signal", *Le Figaro*, February 23, 2015.

group to replace a French ship in a real operation.⁷⁷ The cooperation between the two navies also extends beyond the Mediterranean, to the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. In February 2016, a British destroyer sailed across the Indian Ocean with the FREMM *Provence* before joining the *Charles de Gaulle* and becoming part of the French carrier battle group off Sri Lanka.⁷⁸ In the South China Sea, France and the UK are the only two European countries carrying out missions to ensure freedom of navigation in the waters claimed as sovereign by several countries in the region, especially China which has established military facilities on some islets. For the first time during the Shangri-La dialogue in Singapore in 2018, Great Britain committed, in ongoing partnership with France, to deploying three ships to the region to conduct operations related to freedom of navigation.⁷⁹ Previously, two helicopters and some 60 British sailors had already twice been embarked on a French helicopter carrier deployed as part of the *Jeanne d'Arc* mission.⁸⁰ However, the prospects for French-British operational cooperation in the naval aviation sector are unlikely to reach the ambitions of 2010, due to the Cameron government's capability choices limiting the interoperability of the carrier battle groups of both countries.

Finally, the French and British have been deployed together on the "eastern flank" as part of the *enhanced Forward Presence* (eFP) implemented by NATO in the Baltic States for reassurance purposes since the Ukrainian crisis. France deployed a battalion as part of the UK-led battlegroup in Estonia in 2017 and 2019 and another battalion as part of the German-led battlegroup in Lithuania in 2018.⁸¹ Generally speaking, the British have — at least politically — invested more in Northern and Eastern Europe than France did, France being more southward looking. Already in 2013, the UK had launched the *Joint Expeditionary Force* project to develop interoperability with Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway. This geographic area therefore presents some opportunities for an increased French-British cooperation, as the majority of these countries, as well as Germany, are now taking part to the European Intervention Initiative.

77. Interview with CPCO, December 2016.

78. News item available at: www.defense.gouv.fr.

79. G. Williamson, speech at IISS Shangri La Dialogue 2018, June 3, 2018, available at: www.iiss.org.

80. Foreign Affairs Commission, Assemblée nationale, "Rapport d'information sur les enjeux stratégiques en mer de Chine méridionale", Rapport No. 1868, April 10, 2019, p. 68.

81. Ministry of the Armed Forces, DICOD, "Mission Lynx", available at: www.defense.gouv.fr.

Interoperability and the joint expeditionary force

Prior to Lancaster House, the French-British bilateral military relationship was satisfactory but the institutional links between armed forces and the opportunities to develop their interoperability were quite limited. To address these shortcomings, the 2010 treaty foresees the establishment of a non-permanent Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF). Employment scenarios in which the French and British would need to enter first into a theatre inevitably involved circumstances that would make U.S. and European partners unwilling to intervene. Cases where a rapid reaction would be required before passing the torch to a multinational operation were also possible. In addition to these potential missions, the CJEF's other rationale was to foster interoperability by increasing the number of joint deployments. With the CJEF, France and the UK moved from a general objective of interoperability to a more concrete project to achieve it, characterized by milestones and continuous political oversight.

Although the launch process was initially very political, the concrete military purpose also justifies the continuation of the project. Since its launch, tangible results have been achieved. In February 2011, the Armed Forces Chiefs of Staff of both countries determined the level of ambition of the French-British force, i.e. its size, nature and general mechanisms. The CJEF will be capable of conducting high-intensity operations, both defensive and offensive, with a view to achieving "initial entry". To support this capability ambition, it needs a command-and-control structure, logistics and support functions, and the ability to employ the rapid reaction forces made available by the two states. The CJEF therefore demands significant resources in all three domains. The naval component will be based on a complete task group organized around a capital ship such as an aircraft carrier, an amphibious helicopter carrier or landing platform dock. The air component is to include an air wing capable of controlling airspace, conducting reconnaissance operations and imposing air supremacy. Finally, the land component is to be composed of at least two battlegroups.⁸²

82. "Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) User Guide", French Ministry of Defense/CICDE and UK Ministry of Defence/DCDC, November 20, 2012, paragraph 103: "a maritime task group based on one or more capital ships, an air wing capable of controlling the skies, conducting reconnaissance operations and imposing air supremacy. The land component, for its part, would involve at least two battlegroups."

Working Groups (WG), assisted by a bi-national secretariat, produced the concept of operations. The work was divided into two main areas: the elaboration of the CJEF concept, its procedures and doctrines; and the exercises to uphold them. In addition, just a few months after the signing of the Lancaster House treaties, the intervention in Libya was the first full-scale test of the interoperability of French and British forces in their air and naval components. First of all, on the military level, the Libyan operation identified gaps in terms of “enablers”, notably concerning command and control (C2) and intelligence, surveillance, targeting and reconnaissance (ISTAR) systems. Moreover, the operation highlighted the lack of assets, both in terms of quality – suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD) – and quantity – stocks of precision munitions.⁸³

Figure 2: Main bilateral exercises for development of the CJEF (2011-2016)

Date	Name of exercise	Validation	Organizer
October 2012	“Corsican Lion”	“Maritime” component	UK
October 2013	“Capable Eagle”	“Air” component	UK
May 2014	“Rochambeau”	“Land” component	France
June 2015	“Griffin Rise”	CJEF initial concept	France
April 2016	“Griffin Strike”	CJEF final concept	UK

In line with this assessment, the work within the CJEF focused on the operational aspects identified as relevant. As of September 2013, there were six main joint WGs and 13 sub-groups, on topics as diverse as medical and logistical support, C2, non-conventional (e.g.

83. D. Cameron and N. Sarkozy, “Joint Declaration at the Summit”, Paris, February 17, 2012.

cyber) targeting, strategic communication or Special Forces. In this regard, the operational concept is a compromise between the maximum resources allocated by decision-makers and forces on the one hand, and the resources identified by the WGs as the minimum necessary to carry out missions successfully on the other hand. The French and British agreed to use NATO's doctrines as much as possible, and to develop new ones only when French and British standards diverged from the Alliance's ones or when they proved unsuitable for the binational framework. Ultimately, the CJEF is composed of an integrated echelon of command, the Combined Joint Task Force. The latter operates under the NATO's system, with a lead nation responsible for planning and executing operations for which it assumes command, as well as providing approximately 70% of personnel; while the partner provides deputy command and approximately 30% of personnel. The CJEF programme of exercises (actual exercises listed below) followed this organization too, alternating French and British command.

From 2011 onwards, France and the UK conducted numerous live exercises and joint forces command post exercises, or staff exercises, some of which being specifically designed to test and validate CJEF procedures. Considering the cost of organizing and conducting live exercises besides resources constraints, most CJEF exercises were not strictly bilateral, but were held simultaneously with regular multilateral exercises — such as NATO's *Joint Warrior* exercises. NATO's scenarios are also used in French-British exercises.

Nevertheless, nine years after the operations in Libya and despite the validation of the CJEF concept in 2016, problems persisted with regard to the interoperability of communications and information systems (CIS).⁸⁴ It was only during the *Rochambeau* exercise in May 2014 that a technological solution was found to connect the British and French CIS systems.⁸⁵ The aim was to automate information exchanges and ensure a common operational picture within the same command post, both on British and French computers. The headquarters commanding the exercise was French at the time, and used mainly French systems. The objective was largely met, but at a high cost in terms of staff, time and money. The exercise led the French and British armies to give preference to the use of one CIS

84. "Partenariat franco-britannique de défense et de sécurité", *op. cit.*, p. 26; interview with International Policy France, UK Ministry of Defence, June 2018.

85. The lessons learned from exercise Rochambeau are taken from C. Pernin, J. P. Hlavka, M. E. Boyer, *et. al.*, *Targeted Interoperability: A New Imperative for Multinational Operations*, Rand, 2019, p. 51.

system only, while ensuring access to the partner's staff via officers trained to both systems.

The French and British forces can also use NATO's CIS systems, but this would require the Alliance approval.⁸⁶ Therefore, this option cannot be the basis of the SIC architecture for CJEF deployments. Moreover, whereas at the 2016 bilateral summit the two countries announced that they were working on a "common SIC architecture", no new declaration has since been issued regarding any major progress in this area.⁸⁷ In addition, beyond the progress made in terms of intelligence exchange, there is currently no joint intelligence gathering project, since cooperation projects regarding satellites have not been successful (see below).⁸⁸ The level of interoperability achieved is thus only sufficient for low-intensity operations and as such the timetable was extended to 2020 in order to continue working on strengthening interoperability for high-intensity scenarios.

At the political and strategic level, the operations in Libya (and to a lesser extent in Mali) permitted to identify difficulties in communication and in coordination between the two partners, when it came to their approach of operational planning particularly in the early days and weeks of the operation. However, CJEF implementation has not included joint work on the political level of "decision making" – where common French and British interests on whose behalf the CJEF is activated are however identified. Although coordination has been deemed better in Syria for example, doubts persist as to the concrete scenarios in which a French-British political alignment would make the CJEF's deployment possible. With this in mind, there is a risk that the CJEF could meet the same fate as the European Union's battlegroups or the NATO Response Force, whose Very High Readiness Component (VJTF) has never been used.⁸⁹

Nevertheless, CJEF preparatory work has led to significant progress in French-British cooperation. Firstly, it has led to open discussions on national strategic priorities, employment scenarios and capability gaps on both sides of the Channel. Secondly, it has

86. "Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) User Guide", *op. cit.*, paragraph 4A-10; interview with French Navy staff, September 2011.

87. D. Cameron and F. Hollande, "UK-France Summit: Annex on Security and Defence", Amiens, March 3, 2016.

88. "Partenariat franco-britannique de défense et de sécurité", *op. cit.*, p. 24.

89. With the exception of rather insignificant deployments to provide disaster support following hurricane Katrina in 2005 and in Pakistan following the earthquake of October 2005, the allies have never made operational use of the NRF. The EU Battlegroups have never been deployed either. J. Ringsmose and S. Rynning, "The NATO Response Force: A Qualified Failure No More?", *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2017, pp. 443-456; Y. Reykers, "EU Battlegroups: High Costs, No Benefits", *Contemporary Security Policy*, No. 38, 2017, pp. 457-470.

enabled the officers involved in the working groups to get to know each other and develop a common professional culture: since 2011, some 100 officers have been involved in the development of the force. Agreeing on procedures and ways of doing things represents a large part of the work – right down to the most trivial aspects such as the format of planning documents or task-tracking spreadsheets – cooperation allowing for convergence around “good practices”. Both bilaterally and in coalitions, this standardization improves responsiveness during exercises and deployments. Insofar as CJEF procedures are largely inspired by NATO’s standards, French-British cooperation has also improved France’s interoperability with NATO, following reintegration.⁹⁰ Finally, while the CJEF is an original project based on the singularities of French and British strategic cultures, the overall approach has served as a model for the European Intervention Initiative project, currently under development (see below).

It should be added that the work within the CJEF and the search for interoperability is reinforced by other forms of cooperation, such as joint training and officer exchanges. France and the UK are pursuing an operational readiness programme for their airborne rapid reaction forces (QRF TAP), involving 16 Air Assault Brigade and the 11th Parachute Brigade. In 2017, the two units engaged together in the NATO *Swift Response* exercise (which took place in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania) and in the *Askari Storm* exercise in Kenya.⁹¹ However, there are still untapped opportunities for sharing training facilities, such as the French CENZUB Centre for training in urban environment, the Anti-Submarine Warfare Centre in Scotland, or even British Army Training Unit Suffield in Canada.⁹²

The network of liaison and exchange officers has also expanded since 2010. There are currently more than 50 exchange officers in both countries.⁹³ While the numbers have not increased significantly since 2010, the numbers of officers in operational structures and in positions of strategic level responsibility did, especially in the offices of the chiefs of staff. In addition, three British officers are permanently integrated into the French command for joint operations (CPOIA) – in charge of planning exercises – while there are neither Germans nor Americans in this structure.⁹⁴ Furthermore, there is a

90. Interview with CPOIA, April 2017.

91. UK Ministry of Defence, “UK Agrees New Military Training Programme With France”, August 31, 2017, available at: www.gov.uk.

92. “Partenariat franco-britannique de défense et de sécurité”, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

93. Interview with DGRIS, August 2016.

94. *Ibid.*

pilot exchange programme for *Rafale* and *Typhoon* combat aircraft and C-130 tactical transports. Finally, French and British exchange officers have participated in combat air missions in Libya and the Levant as part of the coalition against Daesh. The programme has even seen a French officer becoming second in command of the British Army's 1st Division whilst a British officer assumed an equivalent role in the French Army.⁹⁵

Missile industry integration

Capability and industrial issues were undeniably important elements of the 2010 summit declaration. Among the projects announced, the integration of the missile industry (*One Complex Weapons*, OCW) was key.

MBDA was created in December 2001 by the merger of the British company Matra BAE Dynamics — now BAE Systems (37.5%); the French company EADS-Aerospatiale Matra Missiles — now part of Airbus (37.5%); and the Italian-British company Alenia Marconi Systems — now part of Leonardo (25%).⁹⁶ Since the mid-2000s, the complex weapons sector has seen his orders from the French and British governments drop significantly.⁹⁷ However, since this sector does not produce dual-use technologies or purely commercial goods, it only relies on state clients. Within the MBDA Group, the French and British branches are the largest and were the firsts to merge part of their management functions in 2006. In the same year, the British government set up a public-private partnership in the sector with the Team Complex Weapons (TCW) initiative, intending to guarantee an order book to the industry over several years or decades. TCW is chaired by MBDA-UK and by the Ministry of Defence through its military acquisitions agency (Defense Equipment and Support). Other British industrial players are involved aswell (Thales UK, Roxel and QinetiQ). This "mixed" team vouch for a government-industry partnership philosophy in UK and it mirrors the practices of the French missile industry. Meanwhile in 2007, the French and British governments launched an Innovation and Technology Partnership (ITP) in the complex weapons sector, involving the same firms as

95. M. Odell, "French General Given Top UK Army Job", *Financial Times*, February 8, 2016.

96. LFK of Germany was also acquired in June 2005.

97. For example, the 2005 Defence Industrial Strategy predicted a 40% decline in British public investments over the following five years. UK Ministry of Defence, "Defence Industrial Strategy: Defence White Paper", Cm 6697, December 2005, p.102; Defense and Armed Forces Commission, Assemblée Nationale, "Audition de M. Antoine Bouvier, président-directeur général de MBDA, sur la coopération franco-britannique et la filière missile", Report No. 39, May 18, 2011, p. 4.

those taking part in TCW. Governments and industry have coordinated to produce research tailored to capability needs and oriented to the long term.

Shortly after signing the ITP partnership, President Sarkozy and Prime Minister Brown announced their willingness to go further by adopting a joint industrial strategy in the field of complex weapons. The aim was to rationalize the sector (mainly MBDA) by integrating the group's French and British subsidiaries. Common capability needs were then identified and Centres of Excellence (CoE) were created to achieve savings of about 30% by 2035 (or €1.9 billion).⁹⁸ The gains are based on economies of scale, greater organizational efficiency, the reuse of some components across multiple programmes and the removal of duplicates. The twelve CoEs are of three types: four specialized centres (where skills are kept by only one of the two countries), four federated centres (partially integrated, with mutual sharing of competences between the two countries), and four national centres (for technologies not concerned by cooperation). The specialized centres have been split so that each country can save both cutting-edge and "standard" technology (actuators and data links for the UK; weapon controllers and test equipment for France⁹⁹). In the end, the six centres of excellence in France will be equivalent to the six centres in the UK, both in terms of quantity (volume of orders, number of employees) and quality (types of technologies).¹⁰⁰

In order to foster cooperation, an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) was signed in September 2015 and came into force in the fall of 2016 and it enabled to overcome the legal obstacles to the integration of the sector.¹⁰¹ The IGA covers the sharing of intellectual property, "global licenses" for exports and the protection of the national interests of both countries by ensuring security of supply and technology transfer.¹⁰² The governments agreed to limit information-sharing restrictions regarding "French eyes" or "UK eyes" documents, replacing them whenever possible with "UK/French Eyes only".¹⁰³ The light anti-ship missile programme (*anti-navire léger*, ANL in

98. Interview with UK Ministry of Defence, 2014.

99. A. Ruello, "Missile franco-britannique: MBDA décroche un contrat de 600 millions d'euros", *Les Échos*, March 27, 2014, available at: www.lesechos.fr.

100. Interview with MBDA France, November 2014.

101. *Ibid.*

102. *Ibid.*; HMG, "Explanatory Memorandum on the Agreement Between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the French Republic Concerning Centers of Excellence Implemented as Part of the "One Complex Weapons" Sector Strategy", December 16, 2015, available at: www.gov.uk.

103. "Agreement [...] Concerning Centers of Excellence Implemented as part of the "One Complex Weapons" Sector Strategy", Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the French Republic, Article 7.

French, and FASGW-H or Sea Venom in English), announced during the Lancaster House treaties, made the integration of the sector real.

The programme represented the first step in implementing “mutual dependency” through technological specialization. It is a single programme (and not two similar programmes like the SCALP-EG and *Storm Shadow* cruise missiles) which paved the way for further development of the CoEs. However, France’s decision on *Sea Venom* was delayed by almost three years, and the programme was several times close to being dropped due to the extension of the life cycles of the French AS15 and British *Sea Skua* programmes. Moreover, while the Royal Navy urgently needed the light anti-ship missile, it was not a priority for French forces due to budget contraction. The arrival of President Hollande in 2012 nonetheless led to a reassessment of President Sarkozy’s strategic choices.¹⁰⁴ In the end, it took three years and a letter from David Cameron to François Hollande in the winter of 2013 for the French president to confirm, the following spring, funding for the anti-ship missile. A joint development and production contract was signed in March 2014 with MBDA (UK) for €600 million.¹⁰⁵ A first development firing of *Sea Venom* was successfully completed in June 2017.

Sea Venom, however, is only one step towards more ambitious capability projects such as the future cruise/anti-ship weapon (FC/ASW).¹⁰⁶ As it takes over the succession to the SCALP-EG/*Storm Shadow* – a key system of the air forces and navies of both countries – this programme should be much more important than the ANL/*Sea Venom*.¹⁰⁷ It is a heavy missile, designed for confrontations on the high seas or for providing deep strike capabilities, penetrating and neutralizing air defense systems and hitting targets at long range. In February 2018, the two defense committees of the French and British lower houses launched a joint inquiry into the FC/ASW programme. The British Parliament presented the joint inquiry as aiming to “demonstrate, and reinforce, the bilateral defense relations” between the two countries.¹⁰⁸ According to the British Embassy in Paris, it was “a positive gesture confirming the commitment of both countries to the [FC/ASW] programme”. Indeed, the meetings were characterized

104. Interviews with French Ministry of Defense and National Assembly, 2013.

105. A. Ruello, “Missile franco-britannique”, *op. cit.*

106. House of Commons Defence Committee, “Future Anti-Ship Missile Systems: Joint inquiry with the Assemblée Nationale’s Standing Committee on National Defence and the Armed Forces”, Thirteenth Report of Session 2017–19, HC1071, available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk>.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

108. “Future Anti-Ship Missile Systems Inquiry Launched With French Defense Committee”, May 23, 2018, available at: www.defense-aerospace.com.

by “much positive chat about maintaining the privileged French-British relationship in defence”.¹⁰⁹ The report advocates that French-British cooperation on FC/ASW continue into the design and production phases on the basis of the following points:

Should the programme not proceed after the concept phase concludes in 2020, either for technological or cost reasons, there could be significant consequences for UK-French cooperation [...]. The strengthening of the French-British industrial and technological defense base, through the increasingly extensive integration of MBDA, has been one of the pillars of the Lancaster House treaties.¹¹⁰

However, before moving towards the design and development phase of the programme in 2020, and then its production in 2024 for entry into service in 2030, the inquiry identified a number of issues to be resolved, especially with regards to the convergence of requirements and schedules of the two countries. As with *Sea Venom*, there are indeed differences in schedules since the UK’s capability requirement take action as of 2023. In addition, the British take note of the importance of “the interoperability of the FC/ASW with other platforms, including those built by other allies”¹¹¹ and the UK will employ F-35 fighters designed by the U.S. company Lockheed Martin. The parliamentary report identifying several deep strike systems available off the shelf from Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, it raises concerns about a British switch to U.S. programmes. To fill the capability gap after 2023, the government is considering a further service life extension for the *Harpoon*, or the off-the-shelf acquisition of interim capabilities.¹¹² However, Downing Street’s response to the parliamentary report suggests that the government will take into account the importance of the FC/ASW programme and the One MBDA project in order to maintain a sovereign industry in the sector and for the French-British relationship.

109. Interview with British Embassy in Paris, July 2018.

110. “Future Anti-Ship Missile Systems: Joint inquiry with the Assemblée Nationale’s Standing Committee on National Defence and the Armed Forces”, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

111. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

112. “Future Anti-Ship Missile Systems: Joint inquiry with the Assemblée Nationale’s Standing Committee on National Defence and the Armed Forces: Government Response to the Committee’s Thirteenth Report”, March 8, 2019. Response available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk>.

France must juggle between London, Berlin and Brussels

French-British cooperation assume segments that no other French cooperation in Europe covers, such as nuclear deterrence, high-intensity operations or, on a capability level, future cruise missiles. However, French-British cooperation has experienced several failures in sectors where pooling or joint acquisition of capabilities could have led to savings and increased interoperability. Moreover, Brexit has created new difficulties linked to uncertainties on the terms and conditions of the “future relationship” between the UK and the European Union, and about British participation in European defense policies and programmes. These limits therefore raise the question of alternatives and complements to French-British collaboration, i.e. the French-German relationship and European integration, as well as cooperation outside the EU.

Brexit: failures and risks

British hesitations on naval aviation

The 2010 declaration especially concerned capacity sharing and joint acquisitions. However, in the light of Brexit, it is an area that comprises the most unsatisfactory issues and the greatest risks. In 2010, an integrated carrier strike group was to be set up, allowing British and French aircrafts to operate from both countries’ carriers.¹¹³ Collaboration involving aircrafts carriers is indeed an old chestnut between France and the UK. Common aircrafts carriers projects in the early 2000s costed France more than €200 million (€112 million as an “entry ticket” into the British programme and €102 million in contracts for studies performed in cooperation¹¹⁴), without any compensation. In 2010, sharing the use of national platforms was an option still under consideration, but this implied compliant capability choices.

When designing the future British aircraft carrier (*Queen Elizabeth* class), London chose a flight deck without a catapult, requiring the

113. UK-France Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation, November 2, 2010.

114. Cour des Comptes, “La coopération franco-britannique en matière de porte-avions: une perte nette pour les finances publiques françaises”, 2014 annual report (t. 1), pp. 137-138.

purchase of the “B” version of the U.S. F-35 designed for short take-off, vertical landing (STOVL). This choice was however incompatible with landing and take-off of the French *Rafale*. The preparation of the Lancaster House treaties and the uncertainties over the future of the F-35B then led the Cameron government to announce a significant development: the adoption of version “C” of the F-35, which involved the use of an electromagnetic catapult. Although it relied on a technology not yet fully mature, this choice still enabled it to be usable by the *Rafale* while giving the UK an F-35 with a longer range. In April 2012, the British government however reverted to its initial choice in favour of the F-35B, because of the prohibitive cost of adapting the platforms to electromagnetic catapults estimated at £1.8 billion.¹¹⁵

The work carried out since 2011 to develop the CJEF indicates that cooperation between the two navies continues. While the initial bilateral ambition was to conduct naval air operations from the platforms of either nation, the British decision limited the possibilities for cooperation on the integration of the platforms of one nation under the command of the other. Because the UK did not have an aircraft carrier between 2014 and 2019, the exercises involved integrating Royal Navy frigates/destroyers into the French carrier strike group. With the arrival of the HMS *Queen Elizabeth* aircraft carrier — from which the F-35Bs made their firsts test flights in late 2019 — each of the two navies will soon be able to command an integrated French-British carrier strike group. The entry into service of a second British aircraft carrier — the *Prince of Wales* whose trials will start in 2021 — will provide Great Britain with a permanent naval aviation capability.

French hesitations in the aeronautical sector

Another key capability issue in French-British cooperation is UAVs, which have proven to be one of the most difficult matters to resolve. The 2010 declaration mentioned several UAV cooperation projects: a tactical UAV project, a MALE (medium altitude long endurance) UAV, and a future combat air system (FCAS).

Regarding tactical UAVs, the project announced in 2012 was about the possible acquisition by France of the British *Watchkeeper* tactical UAV to replace Sagem’s *Sperwer*. France assessed the system between 2012 and 2013, but several factors ultimately led to the abort of the project: the presence of a domestic competitor (the Sagem/Safran *Patroller*); an unsatisfactory performance rating from the French Army; the need for a European call for tenders (in accordance with European directive

115. C. Hoyos, “Aircraft Carriers Will Not Be Reconfigured for French”, *Financial Times*, April 16, 2012, available at: www.ft.com.

2009/81/EC to open public procurement to competition in the defense sector); and the absence of British compensation for a French purchase — after the idea of a “*Watchkeeper* vs. VBCI” deal with the Army was dropped.¹¹⁶ In 2016, the French government finally opted for the new Safran system and acquired 14 *Patroller* aircraft.¹¹⁷

The second UAV project concerned the development of MALE UAVs, whose shortfalls among European forces has been continuously regretted the past two decades. France wanted to make up for time loss in this segment and possibly replace the *Harfang* SIDM which had entered service in 2008. On the eve of Lancaster House, France had several options: join the British *Mantis* programme (BAE Systems), contract Dassault to adapt the Israeli *Heron* system, going on with the cooperation undertaken with Germany and Spain around EADS and the *Talarion* project, or acquire a French version of the American *Reaper*. A memorandum of understanding was finally signed between BAE Systems and Dassault in February 2011 for a project called *Telemos*. As a result, a joint programme team was created at DE&S in the fall, while a risk study contract was announced in early 2012.

The change of government in France resulted however in a reassessment of UAV strategy, leading François Hollande to sign a letter of intent with Angela Merkel in June 2012 integrating a French-German cooperation project on this matter. The launch of Operation *Serval* in Mali the following January increased the urgency of the operational need, and in May 2013, Paris finally opted for an off-the-shelf purchase of 12 American *Reaper* UAVs, what also did the British. Having satisfied short-term needs with this off-the-shelf purchase, France then launched cooperation with Germany, Italy and Spain on the European MALE RPAS programme, with Airbus as prime contractor and Dassault and Leonardo as subcontractors. This programme is expected to generate a capability by the end of the 2020s.¹¹⁸

BAE Systems and Dassault did not continue their cooperation on the MALE UAV, but they did work together on the next generation of combat UAVs: the Future Combat Air System (FCAS) project. A demonstration programme, based on the respective programmes of BAE Systems (*Taranis*) and Dassault (*Neuron*, back then in partnership with Italy and

116. Interviews with DE&S February 2014 and with French Embassy in London, March 2014; M. Cabirol, “Armement: comment la France négocie désormais avec la Grande-Bretagne”, *La Tribune*, February 19, 2014.

117. M. Cabirol, “Pourquoi le Patroller de Safran a gagné face au Watchkeeper de Thales”, *La Tribune*, April 7, 2016, available at: www.latribune.fr.

118. “MALE RPAS: Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft System”, OCCAR, available at: www.occar.int; D. Perry, “European MALE UAV Will Not Arrive Until Late 2020s: OCCAR”, *Flight Global*, August 20, 2019.

Sweden), was announced at the French-British summit in February 2012. BAE Systems and Dassault presented their demonstrator project in November 2013. One year later, a two-year feasibility study contract was signed for €145 million. Meanwhile, the MoUs for FCAS and *Sea Venom* were signed, in a “give-and-take” approach: *Sea Venom* was a priority for the UK, while FCAS was a priority for France.¹¹⁹

In order to ensure a capability by 2030, a new contract was to be signed in 2017. At the March 2016 summit, the French and British governments announced indeed a planned investment of €2 billion.¹²⁰ However, at the January 2018 summit, they settled for waiting for the conclusions of the feasibility study before making any decisions on future plans. Emmanuel Macron, only two months after taking office, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, had meanwhile declared their intention to develop a European combat air system under French-German leadership.¹²¹ Shortly thereafter, the two countries announced a partnership to work on the manned version of a combat aircraft as part of a system of systems project, including a next-generation aircraft (led by Dassault) and unmanned systems (led by Airbus).¹²² In February 2019, France and Germany signed a two-year joint concept study contract.¹²³ On its side, the British government signed a 12-month national contract with BAE Systems to go on working, in partnership with Italy’s Leonardo, on a future combat air system henceforth called *Tempest*.¹²⁴ In July 2018, the UK published a national strategy for the future of combat aviation, in which France is not mentioned once.¹²⁵ In February 2019, Dassault confirmed the end of French-British cooperation on FCAS, whereas a model of a potential French-German prototype was being presented at the Paris Air Show in June 2019.

This setback was primarily due to differing needs and schedules.¹²⁶ With the *Rafale*, France had a “4.5” generation aircraft, while the UK had

119. In December 2013, François Hollande sent a letter to David Cameron concerning FCAS in the same vein as the letter he had received from the latter on the subject of *Sea Venom*.

120. D. Cameron and F. Hollande, “UK-France Summit: Annex on Security and Defence”, *op. cit.*

121. Conseil franco-allemand de défense et de sécurité, “Relevé des conclusions”, July 13, 2017, available at: www.france-allemande.fr.

122. “Airbus, Dassault to Team up for New Fighter Jet Project”, *Euractiv*, April 26, 2018, available at: www.euractiv.com.

123. Dassault Aviation-Airbus, “Airbus and Dassault Aviation Sign Joint Concept Study Contract for Future Combat Air System”, February 6, 2019, available at: www.airbus.com.

124. D. Perry, “BAE Systems Has Been Awarded a 12-Month Single-Source Contract by the UK to Continue Work on a Future Combat Air System”, *Flight Global*, July 3, 2018.

125. A. Chuter, “Excluded From Cooperative Plans in Europe, UK Sets Groundwork for Future Fighters”, *Defense News*, June 25, 2018, available at: www.defensenews.com; UK Ministry of Defence, “Combat Air Strategy: An Ambitious Vision for the Future”, July 16, 2018.

126. Multiple interviews: DGRIS, August 2016; DGA, May 2017; British company, May 2018; International Policy France, UK Defence Ministry, June 2018; DE&S, June 2018.

just acquired 5th generation F-35s — with a share of development work for BAE Systems — and did not have therefore the same need as the French. The French operational requirement was both more urgent and more critical, since it covered the future of manned aircraft as well as UAVs. These differences were known from the outset: the French-British FCAS demonstrator project was mainly aimed at getting industrial teams to work together on cutting-edge technologies.¹²⁷

However, France and the UK faced difficulties in sharing the necessary information on a bilateral basis. On the British side, doubts persisted about Dassault's use of technologies developed in cooperation under the *Eurofighter* programme for the *Rafale*. It was feared that this problem would repeat with FCAS.¹²⁸ This “founding myth” explains why the British were reluctant to share sensitive technologies with France.¹²⁹ However, because the British benefited from the development of the F-35, they were reportedly more advanced in certain areas¹³⁰, such as stealth.¹³¹

Moreover, both the British and the French had alternative options. For several years, the UK had been receiving “discreet signals” from the U.S. regarding the Northrop Grumman X-47 programme, a combat UAV in the demonstration phase.¹³² More significantly, a German alternative existed for France. Both countries operate aircrafts of a similar generation, the *Rafale* and the *Eurofighter Typhoon*. In February 2019, Germany announced that it didn't consider the F-35 anymore to replace its aging *Tornados*. The *Rafale* and *Eurofighter* were expected to remain operational for at least two decades, after which both countries would face a common need for combat aircrafts.¹³³ The decision to look towards Germany was undeniably part of the rapprochement undertaken with Berlin since 2017. It also met an economic criterion, since in the eyes of France, Berlin was the only one to have “the resources to carry out major next-generation weapons projects”.¹³⁴ In addition, some programmes forming the “system of systems” could benefit from financial support from the European Defense Fund announced in 2017.¹³⁵ However, the launch of the programme with Germany did not stamp out the financial uncertainty. At the end of 2019, Berlin toughly released €75 million for

127. Interview with DGA, January 2013.

128. Interview with International Policy France and UK Ministry of Defence, June 2018.

129. Interview with FCO, June 2018.

130. Interview with International Policy France and UK Ministry of Defence, June 2018.

131. Interview with a French company, May 2019.

132. Interview with DGA, October 2014.

133. S. Roblin, “How Europe's Very Own F-35 Stealth Fighter Style Plane Could Happen or Not”, *The National Interest*, April 15, 2019.

134. P. Taylor, “Emmanuel Macron's Coalition of the Willing”, *Politico*, May 2, 2018.

135. Interviews with French companies, May 2018 and May 2019.

design studies for the airframe and cockpit of the fighter aircraft¹³⁶ — nowhere near the €2 billion envisioned by Paris and London at the Amiens Summit in 2016.¹³⁷

Finally, Brexit clearly had an impact on French-British cooperation in the aviation sector. A representative of the British defense industry reckoned it was “no coincidence” that FCAS was called into question after the Brexit vote. Considering the lack of progress prior to the referendum, the uncertainty surrounding the future of the UK provided a window of opportunity to end the fruitless cooperation.¹³⁸ Indeed, Dassault’s CEO told the press that “British reasons” had led to the suspension of cooperation, because the British “could not find the money and had other priorities”.¹³⁹ The industry supply indeed reportedly turned out to be more expensive than expected.¹⁴⁰ Beyond the financial aspects, French-British political relations deteriorated significantly when Gavin Williamson was Minister of Defence between June 2017 and July 2018: he largely froze relations, denying to sign documents with his French counterpart because of “pollution” regarding the Brexit negotiations.¹⁴¹

Today, BAE Systems and Dassault carry on their cooperation on “technology building blocks”, suggesting that the door is not completely closed to more advanced cooperation. Nothing prevents FCAS — which went from a combat UAV to a “system of systems” called upon to integrate combat aircraft and UAVs of various types — from integrating components developed in a trilateral framework (Germany, Spain, France) along with others resulting from bilateral cooperation.

In addition to these major industrial programmes, other smaller-scale projects have been successfully completed, such as Maritime Mine Countermeasures (MMCM). A call for proposals for the development of a prototype autonomous underwater vehicle was opened in May 2011, and a joint French-British programme team was created in early 2012. In March 2015, a definition and design contract was awarded to Thales Underwater Systems in collaboration with BAE Systems and other partners.¹⁴² The project has since come under OCCAr management. The system, which

136. S. Sprenger, “Germany Scrambles to Secure Funding for Next-Gen Fighter Research Contracts”, *Defense News*, November 14, 2019, available at: www.defensenews.com.

137. “Déclaration franco-britannique sur la sécurité et la défense, le 3 mars 2016”, available at: www.vie-publique.fr.

138. Interviews with British company, May 2018, and with DE&S, June 2018.

139. P. Tran, “UK Was the One to Put the Brakes on Drone Demo Project, Industry Says”, *Defense News*, April 13, 2018, available at: www.defensenews.com. Information confirmed in an interview with a French company, May 2019.

140. Interview with DE&S, June 2018.

141. Interview with French army general staff, October 2019.

142. Thales, “Thales Wins French-UK Mine Countermeasures Contract”, March 27, 2015, available at: www.thalesgroup.com.

includes unmanned surface vehicles, a sonar system and remotely operated underwater vehicles, underwent successful initial testing in 2019 and is scheduled for delivery in 2020. However, other projects such as satellite communications have never been completed.¹⁴³

Brexit

Since 2010, officials on both sides of the Channel have argued that the French-British partnership is so “pragmatic” that it is “immune from politics” and “will resist any cabinet reshuffles, elections or other changes in political circumstances in either country”.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, the years of Brexit negotiations have seen many reassuring statements about the future of defense relations. The day after the June 2016 referendum, the French and British heads of state and government were quick to reaffirm the importance of the bilateral defense relationship and to promise deeper ties, notwithstanding the UK’s place in the Union. When he took office in May 2017, Emmanuel Macron stressed the importance of the bilateral defense relationship and suggested that cooperation would continue.¹⁴⁵ On the British side, shortly after coming to power, Theresa May indicated her intention to “strengthen the wider strategic defense partnership”¹⁴⁶ with France, and stated that the UK would continue to play “a major role in providing for European security and defense [...] through strengthened bilateral relationships”.¹⁴⁷ While there has not yet been a bilateral summit or declaration specifically on defense relations since Boris Johnson took office in July 2019, the two heads of state and government asserted in a meeting in August 2019 that the French-British defense relationship would be maintained and Boris Johnson emphasized on the side by side deployments in the Sahel and Estonia.¹⁴⁸

Various factors did vouch for the continuation of the partnership in the context of Brexit. First of all, since French-British cooperation in defense matters is – in its objectives and in practice – dissociated from Community policy, it cannot be affected by the change in status of the UK.

143. In 2010, 2012 and 2014, the French President and the British Prime Minister had announced their intention to jointly develop and share communications satellites, but cooperation ended at the exploratory study stage. In 2017, the UK awarded Airbus a contract to replace the Skynet 5 satellite system, certain elements of which are close to the end of their service life. “Partenariat franco-britannique de défense et de sécurité”, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

144. B. Tigner and B. Gomis, “Brexit Tests European Security Co-Operation”, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, July 8, 2016.

145. E. Macron and T. May, press conference, Sandhurst, January 18, 2018.

146. T. May, “PM Statement in Paris”, July 2, 2016.

147. “Foreign Policy, Defence and Development: A Future Partnership Paper”, UK government, September 2017, p. 2.

148. “Déclaration conjointe d’Emmanuel Macron et Boris Johnson, Premier ministre du Royaume-Uni”, Paris, August 22, 2019, available at: www.elysee.fr.

While the partnership has experienced slowdowns on capability issues during election periods on both sides of the Channel (2012 in France, 2015 in the UK), in the year prior to the referendum and during the campaign for Brexit, Paris and London decided to broaden their cooperation to new areas such as the fight against terrorism — in the context of the growing dangers in Syria and Iraq and the campaign of attacks in Europe. At the March 2016 summit, Paris and London thus announced, in addition to the €2 billion vow for FCAS, increased collaboration in the areas of intelligence, law enforcement, deradicalization, and border control.¹⁴⁹

More concretely, several agreements signed after the 2016 vote indicate that bilateral activities are not in question: the intergovernmental agreement for the implementation of *One Complex Weapons* was ratified by the French National Assembly in October 2016 (after ratification by the UK in February 2016)¹⁵⁰, a contract launching a concept phase for the FC/ASW programme was announced in March 2017,¹⁵¹ while the European Intervention Initiative, launched in June 2018, includes the UK and is based on the CJEF. In addition, institutional ties were further strengthened with the announcement in January 2018 of the creation of a ministerial defense council, a defense policy dialogue and meetings between the heads of the two countries' intelligence services. A French diplomat emphasizes that the creation of this ministerial council was contemplated as “a means of warding off a curse, faced with the consequences of Brexit”, even though we are aware in France that an “institutional solution” is not sufficient to limit its political and strategic effects.¹⁵²

Despite good intentions and tangible progress, since 2016 Brexit weigh up a great deal of uncertainty about the state of the British economy as well as the legal frameworks for future cooperation with EU countries and the UK's future strategic orientations. Since the referendum, France has been preparing for Brexit, through task forces designed to identify the interests to be defended, particularly in the economic and industrial sphere.¹⁵³ In this respect, Brexit risks creating new rivalries between the French and the British (through the EU), since both could seek to take advantage of the new economic and legal situation. Even before the actual exit of the UK, the negotiations on the future of Europe's Galileo satellite

149. “UK-France Summit Conclusions”, March 3, 2016.

150. “Projet de loi autorisant l'approbation de l'accord entre le Gouvernement de la République française et le Gouvernement du Royaume-Uni de Grande-Bretagne et d'Irlande du Nord concernant les centres d'excellence mis en œuvre dans le cadre de la stratégie de rationalisation du secteur des systèmes de missiles”, National Assembly, undated; “Nouvelles étapes pour la coopération franco-britannique d'armement”, DGA, November 17, 2016, available at: [de pwww.defense.gouv.fr](http://www.defense.gouv.fr).

151. “La France et le Royaume-Uni lancent le projet de futurs missiles de frappe dans la profondeur auprès de MBDA”, MBDA, press release, March 28, 2017.

152. Interview with a French diplomat, January 2019.

153. Interview with DGRIS, August 2016.

navigation programme illustrated these risks, when the repatriation to the Union of activities initially attributed to the British whetted the appetite of French industry.¹⁵⁴ Another ongoing difficulty in French-British cooperation, and which could be emphasized with Brexit, is the persistent competition portrayed by French-German relations on the one hand, and by American-British relations on the other, especially on the industrial issues mentioned above (missiles and aeronautics).

While it is still too early to draw definitive conclusions, some pitfalls in the negotiation of the “future relationship” between the EU and the UK can be identified. At the time of writing, it is unclear whether these negotiations will lead to British participation in the European fora framing the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), and associated programmes, including the recently launched Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and European Defense Fund (EDF).¹⁵⁵ Actually, the launch of PESCO was made possible by Brexit, since the UK had blocked the implementation of PESCO although the Lisbon Treaty provided for it. France and Germany thus seized the opportunity of the UK’s exit to implement this policy¹⁵⁶ (see below). On the other hand, the UK was in favour of the EDF.¹⁵⁷ Given that many defense companies are present in both France and the UK (MBDA, Thales, and Airbus for the most important), it is in London and Paris best interest to have British entities eligible for European funding.

The European Union and the UK have shown themselves open to negotiating an ambitious defense and security relationship.¹⁵⁸ It appears as it stands that the UK may be invited – like any third state – to join PESCO projects on a case-by-case basis. Likewise, it could participate in civil or military operations conducted by the EU, but without being able to influence the European decision-making process. It also seems that British companies will be able to join consortia for projects applying for the European Defense Fund, though companies located outside the EU will not be able to benefit from the funding. In practice, the negotiations on the future relationship have focused on economic aspects and trade agreement

154. Interview with Airbus, May 2018.

155. For an introduction to these various initiatives, see A. Pannier, “Défense européenne: cette fois, c’est la bonne ? Des avancées à concrétiser” in: T. de Montbrial and D. David (eds.) *RAMSES 2019. Les chocs du futur*, Paris: Ifri/Dunod, 2018, pp. 208-211.

156. L. Béraud-Sudreau and A. Pannier, “An ‘Improbable Paris-Berlin-Commission Triangle’: Usages of Europe and the Revival of EU Defense Cooperation After 2016”, *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 2020.

157. Interviews with a former senior official at the DGA, July 2017; and with a French diplomat, June 2018.

158. “Revised Text of the Political Declaration Setting out the Framework for the Future Relationship Between the European Union and the United Kingdom”, European Commission, TF50 (2019) 65 – Commission to EU 27, October 17, 2019.

mainly, and defense and security issues have thus so far been side-lined. However, if the boost hoped for thanks to the EDF by industry does materialize,¹⁵⁹ and the UK finally does not enjoy any privileged status but becomes a third state like any other, the difficulties already encountered by France and the UK will become even greater. This could limit the convergence of choices between the two countries regarding procurement, by reducing the chances of identifying industrial cooperation projects. The Lancaster House treaties could then become “an empty shell in terms of capabilities”.¹⁶⁰ France would subsequently be all the more encouraged to turn to other partners for its capability projects, especially Germany.

The French-German relationship and the European horizon for French defense

The eternal renewal of the French-German relationship

All bilateral relationships experience periods of greater or lesser intensity. These wobbling can be due to changes of government in each country, but could also be explained by the fact that states maintain several privileged relationships simultaneously, what sometimes grounds for flip-flop effect. Thus, to understand how French-British cooperation fits into France’s defense policy, one must take into account the trajectory of French-German military cooperation which, both complementary and competing, does exist in parallel.

The French-German relationship in defense seems indeed doomed to eternal renewal. Almost systematically, newly elected French presidents have started their term of office with the announcement of a “revival” of French-German defense cooperation. The constantly renewed desire to strengthen this cooperation can be explained by several factors: the density of societal, economic and organizational ties; the symbolic and strategic importance of this relationship within the European Union (with the feeling, reinforced by Brexit, that nothing within the Union can stand in the way of the common will of Paris and Berlin); the old French ambition inherited from General de Gaulle of a continental alternative to NATO’s “Atlanticism”; frustrations in the face of the failures of French-British defense cooperation, etc.

159. Interview with Airbus, May 2018.

160. Interview with DE&S, June 2018.

Unlike cooperation with London, French-German relations almost always include an European dimension, even with regards to defense, and even though these subjects have always been among the thorniest on the bilateral agenda.¹⁶¹ Without going back over the history of the French-German defense relationship, it is worth recalling that its achievements include:

- political structures, such as the French-German Defense and Security Council, created by the 1988 additional protocol to the Élysée Treaty;
- operational cooperation, such as the French-German Brigade, created in 1989 and bringing together approximately 5,000 men and women divided into six national regiments or battalions;
- industrial programmes, such as the C-160 *Transall* tactical transport aircraft, conceived in 1957 and put into service in 1965, and the *Tiger* attack helicopter and its training school.¹⁶²

French-German cooperation knows a sensitively higher degree of industrial integration than French-British cooperation, particularly in the aeronautical field. Indeed, Paris and Berlin have long fostered synergies and then concentrations, giving birth to Airbus in 1999. Other sectors are still being merged and joint ventured, as for instance the alliance forged in 2015 between the two land defense manufacturers Nexter and Krauss-Maffei (KMW).

In spite of these achievements, as of the 1990s, French-German military cooperation has been put to the test by the differences in strategic culture between the two countries. For example, while the BFA allowed common social activities between French and German armed forces, its operational use was rare and constrained. While in 2010 the brigade headquarters and some national elements of the brigade were deployed to Afghanistan, they were never used for binational operations.¹⁶³ This phenomenon can be explained primarily by national geographic distribution (the French being deployed in the provinces of Kapisa and Surobi, the Germans in Mazar-e-Sharif), but also by differences in the rules of engagement. Similarly, the integration of Tiger's pilots into the school

161. B. Kunz and R. Kempin, "The Treaty of Aachen. New Impetus for Franco-German Defense Cooperation?", *Éditoriaux de l'Ifri*, Ifri, January 2019, available at: www.ifri.org.

162. D. Colard, "Du couple franco-allemand au partenariat Paris-Berlin", *Arès*, Vol. 22, No. 57, 2006, p. 39; C. Pajon, *La Coopération militaire franco-allemande au concret: Cultures, structures et acteurs*, Paris, C2SD, 2006, pp. 28-30; U. Krotz, *Flying Tiger: International Relations Theory and the Politics of Advanced Weapons Production*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

163. C. Pajon, *La Coopération militaire franco-allemande au concret, op. cit.*, pp. 28-30.

turned out to be limited by the language barrier, material specifications and doctrine.¹⁶⁴

Finally, while the treaty provided for a common decision-making process on foreign and defense policy, deep divergences in interests persisted.¹⁶⁵ Doubts began to arise in the early 1990s, at a time when the defense doctrines and military resources of France and Germany seemed to be going their separate ways.¹⁶⁶ In the early 2000s however, renewed cooperation appeared possible when the two countries signed an agreement to share intelligence from their national satellite systems¹⁶⁷ and the foreign policies of President Chirac and Chancellor Schröder lined up against the U.S. decision to invade Iraq.¹⁶⁸

But the outlook began to differ again in 2006 over UNIFIL's mandate in Lebanon and over the rules of engagement in Afghanistan the following year. While Paris was taking increasing tactical risks on the ground, the need for successive German governments to maintain Bundestag support imposed very binding rules of engagement on the Bundeswehr that did keep it far from combat.¹⁶⁹ These constraints greatly harmed the image of the German forces among its French partners. Similarly, German willingness to contribute alongside France to European peace operations — notably EUFOR in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2006 — quickly faltered in the face of what was interpreted by Berlin as a French attempt to instrumentalize the mission for a policy of influence. The same happened in 2008 with EUFOR-Chad.¹⁷⁰ Finally, the weak German defense budget¹⁷¹ and Berlin's sluggishness in carrying out the professionalization of the

164. *Ibid.*

165. U. Krotz and J. Schild, *Shaping Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

166. A. Sauder, "Les changements de la politique de défense française et la coopération franco-allemande", *Politique étrangère*, Vol. 61, No. 3, 1996, p. 583.

167. Y. Boyer and A.-M. Le Gloannec, "La coopération franco-allemande en matière de défense", *op. cit.*, p. 2.

168. D. Colard, "Du couple franco-allemand au partenariat Paris-Berlin", *op. cit.*, p. 43.

169. D. P. Auerswald and S. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014, pp. 145-149.

170. K. Tobias, "Interventions françaises en Afrique: la fin de l'euphémisation ?", *Politique étrangère*, Vol. 77, No. 2, 2012, pp. 415-426; O. Schmitt, "Strategic Users of Culture: German Decisions for Military Action", *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2012, p. 73.

171. Between 2000 and 2010, the German defense budget represented, on average, 1.4% of GDP, i.e. around €33.9 billion vs €45.5 billion for France. The figures are taken from SIPRI's *Military Expenditure Database*, *op. cit.*. The amounts in constant 2011 dollars (\$48.5 and \$75 billion) have been converted to euros using the average exchange rates for 2011. In 2019, military expenditure was €42.7 billion for France vs €41.9 billion for Germany, according to *Military Balance 2019*, London: Routledge, 2019, pp. 105-110. The figures used correspond to defense expenditure (not including pensions) as defined by NATO.

Bundeswehr fuelled a feeling of frustration on the French side,¹⁷² which greatly facilitated the major French-British rapprochement of 2010.

The latest French-German revival and the return of the EU

The French-German relationship has been given a new lease of life during the last two presidential terms. On the one hand, the German strategic culture seems to be gradually evolving towards a more proactive approach — and therefore closer to that of France — with regards to out-of-area interventions and the use of force. While institutional control mechanisms remain, the multiplication of terrorist attacks in Europe, Russia's attitude after the Ukrainian crisis of 2014, the experience gained in Afghanistan, the "migration crisis" of 2015, pressure from the allies, and the arrival of Ursula von der Leyen at the head of the German Ministry of Defence at the end of 2014, have contributed to consolidating the "Munich consensus"¹⁷³ by which Germany intends to assume greater responsibility on the international scene. This context has encouraged a new French-German rapprochement, which has resulted in greater bilateral cooperation at the operational and industrial levels, as well as in a revival of European defence initiatives.

The change in German attitude was endorsed in the 2016 German Defence *White Paper* and welcomed by Paris. German decisions to contribute to multinational operations in Mali and Syria (with non-kinetic assets), and to send Special Forces for training missions in Niger and Cameroon are part of this logic.¹⁷⁴ In the aftermath of the November 2015 attacks, reacting to France's call for solidarity under Article 42.7¹⁷⁵ of the Lisbon Treaty, Germany contributed to the UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA) by sending 640 personnel in 2017 (380 in early 2020), making it the leading European contingent.¹⁷⁶ German helicopters, UAVs

172. Y. Boyer and A.-M. Le Gloannec, "La coopération franco-allemande en matière de défense", *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

173. The term "Munich consensus" comes from the speeches by members of the German government at the Munich Security Conference in February 2014 proposing a more ambitious German foreign and security policy. B. Kunz, "Le Livre blanc allemand 2016: la consolidation du 'consensus de Munich' et des questions qui persistent", *Notes du Cerfa*, No. 134, Ifri, October 2016, available at: www.ifri.org.

174. T. Koepf, "L'Allemagne à la recherche d'une stratégie africaine", *Notes du Cerfa*, No. 119, Ifri, January 2015, p. 9, available at: www.ifri.org; F. Kelly, "German Parliament Extends Africa Military Missions", *The Defence Post*, May 10, 2019, available at: www.thedefensepost.com.

175. Article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union is a mutual defense clause that can be invoked in the event of armed aggression on the territory of a member state. The French invocation was the first time this clause had been used.

176. United Nations Peacekeeping, "Troop and Police Contributors", available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org>; "Mali: deux Casques bleus allemands meurent dans un crash d'hélicoptère", *L'Express*, July 26, 2017.

and transport aircraft have helped to support MINUSMA, the European training mission (EUTM Mali) and, occasionally, *Barkhane*.¹⁷⁷ In December 2015, the Bundestag authorized the deployment in Iraq and Syria of *Tornado* aircraft for reconnaissance missions (but not strikes) and A310 MRTTs for inflight refuelling. The French request for support after the November 2015 attacks was followed by a rapid decision by the Bundestag in favour of a “strong German response”. This reactivity was made possible by the strong feeling of French-German solidarity and France’s invocation of Article 42.7.¹⁷⁸ After the Bundestag had approved German participation in the strikes against Daesh in Syria at the end of 2015, a German frigate also joined the French carrier strike group for anti-submarine warfare and intelligence gathering missions.¹⁷⁹ At the same time, German observers were deployed on board French ships in the South China Sea, what is evidence of their joint commitment to respecting the law of the sea.¹⁸⁰

Bilateral cooperation also intensified at the industrial and capability levels. In 2018, Nexter and KMW unveiled a prototype battle tank, the *European Main Battle Tank* (EMBT), which combines the chassis of a *Leopard 2A7* tank and the turret of a *Leclerc*. Also stemming from this relationship, one can mention France’s decision to replace the FAMAS assault rifle produced in France with the HK-416 manufactured by the German company Heckler & Koch. Finally, the FCAS project described above took on a key role in bilateral industrial cooperation between Paris and Berlin.

To complete the revival of French-German relations, Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel signed the Treaty of Aachen “on French-German cooperation and integration” in January 2019. While not particularly focused on defense and security, the treaty does, however, mention the need to reach an agreement on the sensitive issue of arms exports. Since the Cold War, France has been active in supporting defense industry exports. This support was further strengthened during the mandates of Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande, meanwhile oversight mechanisms were being simplified.¹⁸¹

177. French Ministry of Defense, “Barkhane: la base aérienne de Niamey accueille deux avions allemands en soutien de la MINUSMA”, May 24, 2016, available at: www.defense.gouv.fr.

178. Interview with a French diplomat, June 2017.

179. French Ministry of Defense, “Chammal: Coopération franco-britannique entre la FREMM Provence et le HMS Defender”, February 10, 2016, available at: www.defense.gouv.fr; V. Groizeleau, “La frégate allemande Augsburg rallie le groupe aéronaval français”, *Mer et Marine*, December 4, 2015.

180. F. Parly, Speech at IISS Shangri La Dialogue 2018, June 3, 2018, available at: www.iiss.org.

181. L. Béraud Sudreau, “La politique française de soutien aux exportations d’armement: raisons et limites d’un succès”, *Focus Stratégique*, No. 73, Ifri, 2017, p. 14, p. 22, available at: www.ifri.org.

Germany is also one of the world's leading arms exporters. However, Germany's export support strategy has traditionally been "low key", in line with the principles established by the federal government and due to a public opinion especially opposed to arms sales.¹⁸² In addition, about half of its exports goes to countries that are members of the Atlantic Alliance.¹⁸³ In June 2019, Germany decided to ban the export of small arms to non-EU and non-NATO countries and henceforth includes a post-delivery inspection clause in its contracts.¹⁸⁴ Following the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi in 2018, the governing coalition announced suspending exports to Saudi Arabia.¹⁸⁵

In response to pressure from the French and British governments and industry¹⁸⁶ among others, Article 4(3) of the French-German Treaty of 2019 states that "the two states will develop a common approach on arms exports with regard to joint projects". In October 2019, France and Germany agreed that Berlin would allow exports provided that the level of German equipment or components does not exceed 20% of the total system in question.¹⁸⁷ This clause was essential for further French-German cooperation within the FCAS framework. From now on, Germany wants to transfer the control of arms exports to Brussels, in order to avoid the constraints linked to the national debate.¹⁸⁸

The second aspect of the French-German revival is European and is part of the window of opportunity created by the Brexit and giving fresh momentum to the European Defense framework. On the German side, the *Defense White Paper* published in July 2016 was intended to be proactive in this area: it called for the launch of permanent structured cooperation and a civil-military planning capability, and for strengthening the R&D capabilities of the defense industry, and it suggested the drafting of a European white paper.¹⁸⁹ This German desire is naturally explained by the deterioration of the European security environment mentioned above, but also by the emergence from 2014 of the leadership of Jean-Claude Juncker and Federica Mogherini, who both had an ambitious agenda for European

182. G. Winter, "La politique industrielle de défense de l'Allemagne: l'État pris dans un jeu de perles de verre", *Note de la Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique*, No. 18, September 16, 2019, p. 10.

183. N. Martin and B. Knight, "German Arms Exports Shoot to Record High, Hungary Biggest Buyer", DW, December 27, 2019, available at: www.dw.com.

184. *Ibid.*; "L'Allemagne restreint ses exportations d'armes", *Le Figaro*, June 26, 2019.

185. Responding to this decision, Airbus CEO Tom Enders declared in February 2019 that he was ready to remove all German components from systems destined for export. "Airbus Eyes Warplane With No German Parts After Saudi Arms Ban", *Middle East Monitor*, February 2019.

186. "Germany Wants to Extend Saudi Arms Export Halt Despite UK-French Pressure", *Middle East Monitor*, February 25, 2019.

187. M. Cabirol, "Exportations d'armes: l'Allemagne et la France proches d'une signature?", *La Tribune*, September 30, 2019.

188. G. Winter, "La politique industrielle de défense de l'Allemagne" *op. cit.*, p. 10.

189. B. Kunz, "Le Livre blanc allemand 2016", *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

defense.¹⁹⁰ The French presidential election of 2017 acknowledged the power of these European dynamics. Indeed, the leadership of Emmanuel Macron has made it possible to overcome the scepticism regarding the CSDP, which had prevailed since Sarkozy's five-year term.¹⁹¹ The choice of Philippe Étienne as diplomatic advisor to the President¹⁹², as well as the speech delivered at the Sorbonne on September 26, 2017, revealed the scope of the French President's ambitions for European defense. Confirming the trend, French "Strategic Review of Defense and National Security" published in October 2017 ranks the UK behind Germany in the list of France's main partners.¹⁹³

However, the concrete objectives of Paris and Berlin regarding the revival of the European defense framework are not quite the same. On the French side, the ambition to work towards "European strategic autonomy" and the presidential positions on the European army and NATO created divisions both at the European level and in Germany. Likewise, Paris' support for the idea of strengthening the role of Article 42.7 of the TEU¹⁹⁴ seemed to significantly diminish NATO's role. On the German side, the aim was rather to transfer the promotion of defense policy to the European level in order to get round the difficulties of the national debate and the constraints imposed by public opinion.¹⁹⁵ Thus, by aiming expectations at the European level, the German government can more easily lift the veto of public opinion with regard to increasing the role of the Bundeswehr and raising defense budgets — while avoiding being perceived as yielding to the pressures of a very unpopular Trump administration.¹⁹⁶ More specifically, French and German visions of PESCO also diverged.¹⁹⁷ The Lisbon Treaty provides for differentiated cooperation, including a vanguard of member states capable of carrying out the most demanding military missions, such as force projection in the context of high-intensity combat. While Paris wanted to implement these provisions, Berlin preferred a political statement, a common horizon to mobilize the 27. Indeed, the German

190. L. Béraud-Sudreau and A. Pannier, "An 'Improbable Paris-Berlin-Commission Triangle'", *op. cit.*

191. Interview with a former senior official at the French Ministry of Defense (DGA), July 2017.

192. Philippe Étienne is the former French ambassador in Berlin and former permanent representative of France at the EU.

193. See "Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale", *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.

194. Interview with a French diplomat, June 2017, and with N. Tocci, Advisor to HR/VP F. Mogherini, July 2017.

195. N. Koenig and M. Walter-Franke, "France and Germany: Spearheading a European Security and Defense Union?", *Policy Paper*, No. 202, Institut Jacques Delors, July 2017, p. 8.

196. Interviews with German diplomats, June and October 2019; German Ministry of Defense, September 2017. Germany's objective is to reach 1.5% of GDP dedicated to military expenditure by 2025, compared with 1.2% in 2016. SIPRI, *Military Expenditure Database*, *op. cit.*; L. Lagneau, "Otan: l'Allemagne va finalement augmenter son budget militaire de 4 milliards d'euros en 2019", *Opex 360*, July 6, 2018, available at: www.opex360.com.

197. Interview with a French diplomat, June 2017.

motivation “was not primarily to increase the EU’s defence capabilities to act, but to maintain and even strengthen the EU as the central political framework in times of centrifugal tendencies”.¹⁹⁸ The German vision finally prevailed in Brussels, hence the modular functioning of PESCO.

Despite these disagreements in principle, France and Germany have been involved together in a number of PESCO projects, particularly in the area of capabilities and “enablers”: the MALE UAV project; secure radio communication system; integrated information and decision system for command and control, including intelligence, surveillance and logistics; radio navigation system using Galileo; modernization of the *Tiger* helicopter; European medical command, etc. While these projects are likely to have structural ramifications for the strategic autonomy of the continent, the French perception of the first series of PESCO projects has been lukewarm: it includes projects that either would have existed anyway, or are national initiatives that could result duplication more than Europeanization.¹⁹⁹

Beyond the London-Berlin dilemma: rethinking defense cooperation

Brexit, the persistence of threats in Europe and neighbouring regions, and the relative disengagement of the U.S. are encouraging Paris to foster cooperation with London and Berlin, to strengthen ties with other European partners, and to rethink the articulation of these defence cooperation efforts in order to find ways to make them converge.

The biggest challenges are on the industry and capability side. While the Future Combat Air System (FCAS) was originally one of the flagship projects of the Lancaster House treaties, it has become one of its most notable failures. Is it then possible to make converge the different programmes? Some do believe that the British may wish to join the manned version of the Next Generation Fighter (NGF). In addition, combat UAVs could be developed based on the work performed by Dassault and BAE Systems on the French-British FCAS, since the technologies developed under that programme will be necessary for today’s FCAS.²⁰⁰ However, the success of this convergence is far from guaranteed. Even if the British government were to agree to a cooperative solution that would provide activities for BAE Systems, it would not accept it under any conditions other than its own, nor as a “junior partner”. These conditions

198. C. Major and C. Möling, “PeSCo: The German Perspective”, *AERES Group Policy Paper*, No. 36, February 2019, p. 3.

199. O. De France, “PeSCo: The French Perspective”, *AERES Group Policy Paper*, No. 37, February 2019.

200. Interviews with Airbus representative, May 2018; and with a French company, May 2019.

would prevent BAE Systems from joining a French-German programme where leadership is already divided between Dassault (fighter aircraft) and Airbus (systems of systems).²⁰¹

While the idea of pursuing convergence of the FCAS programmes is tempting, this ambition is also extremely difficult to implement. Convergence around operational cooperation is proving to be easier. For instance, Paris has brought together London and Berlin, as well as other partners, in the European Intervention Initiative (Ei2). After a solo start, operations in Mali and the CAR²⁰² received significant support from allies. The lessons learned from these experiences demonstrate the need for a pedagogical approach to limit misunderstandings and reticence from European allies, but they also underline the importance not only of Germany and the UK but also of other European partners very active in the Sahel.²⁰³ The continued dependence on American military aid in these theatres has also encouraged Paris to raise European awareness of the risk of U.S. disengagement from zones that are a priority for France (mainly the Levant and the Sahel).

The objective of the IEI is to promote exchanges between the most “willing and able” Europeans in the fields of forward thinking, scenario planning, operational feedback and doctrine.²⁰⁴ The Letter of Intent for the Ei2 was signed on June 25, 2018 by France, the UK, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.²⁰⁵ Since then, Finland, Italy, Norway and Sweden have joined the initiative.²⁰⁶ With a small secretariat in Paris, the Ei2’s initial aim is to “open up the French Army” to European partners by sharing information “based on a reciprocal effort”.²⁰⁷ French priorities in Africa should initially be the focus, but the Ei2 can, in principle, deal with any topic that participants wish to address. The aim is to help them collectively prepare for any type of mission, both at

201. Interviews with International Policy France, UK Ministry of Defence, June 2018; and with a British company, May 2018; and with a French company, May 2019.

202. S. Tisdall, “France’s Lonely Intervention in Mali”, *The Guardian*, January 14, 2013, available at: www.theguardian.com; J.-Y. Haine, “L’endiguement renforcé: les politiques de sécurité de la France et des États-Unis en Afrique”, *Notes de l’Ifri*, Ifri, February 2016, p. 5, available at: www.ifri.org; A. Arefi, “Centrafrique: l’alarmante solitude de la France”, *Le Point*, December 12, 2013.

203. In early 2018, for example, Spain was already providing one-third of tactical air transport for French forces in the Sahel for Operation Barkhane. Interview with DGRIS, February 2, 2018.

204. Presentation by a French government representative at a meeting organized by the German Marshall Fund, Paris, 2018.

205. Ministries of Defense of Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK, “Letter of Intent Concerning the Development of the European Intervention Initiative (EI2)”, June 25, 2018.

206. O-R. Bel, “Can Macron’s European Intervention Initiative Make the Europeans Battle-Ready?”, *War on the Rocks*, October 2, 2019, available at: <https://warontherocks.com>.

207. Presentation by a French government representative at a meeting organized by the German Marshall Fund, Paris, 2018.

the top end of the spectrum and for lower-intensity missions — such as humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, or non-combatant evacuation operations.²⁰⁸

The Ei2 nevertheless impinges on bilateral relations with Germany and the UK. In order to involve the latter in European military cooperation despite Brexit, London was the first capital to be reached out to when the project was launched²⁰⁹, and some were even considering “Franco-British leadership within the initiative”.²¹⁰ While the Ei2 does not replace or supplant the CJEF, it builds on the lessons learned from the CJEF to open it up to other nations.²¹¹ Germany is, of course, also involved in the Ei2. Although the German government is manifestly uncomfortable with the notion of “intervention” and is aware of the risks of duplication with PESCO, it was unthinkable for both Paris and Berlin that Germany would not participate. Above all, France hopes that German participation in the IEI will bring about a convergence of practices and encourage Germany to reform its decision-making process on the use of force — a challenge that some in Germany would like to see taken on.²¹²

Beyond London and Berlin, Emmanuel Macron’s policy took into account the need to ensure better coordination between France and its partners, for the purpose of future military interventions. As a sign of the liveness of cooperation between Paris and its partners, eight European nations launched a European Maritime Surveillance Mission in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH) in early 2020, bringing together Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Denmark, and commanded from the French base in Abu Dhabi (UAE).²¹³ All these countries, except Greece, are members of the Ei2. The UK, meanwhile, preferred to join the coalition led by Washington.²¹⁴ In the same vein, to support *Barkhane*, Paris is in the process of setting up a multinational operation comprising Special Forces — Operation *Takuba* — which should integrate Estonian, Norwegian, Swedish and Czech

208. Presentation by General B. Toujouse, Armed Forces Staff, Ministry of the Armed Forces, at the Center for a New American Security, Washington DC, October 3, 2018.

209. Interview with British Embassy in Paris, May 2017.

210. Presentation by General B. Toujouse, *op. cit.*

211. Presentation by General B. Toujouse, *op. cit.*, and by a French government representative at a meeting organized by the German Marshall Fund, Paris, 2018, *op. cit.*

212. Presentation by a representative of the Ministry of the Armed Forces at a meeting organized by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, 2018.

213. “Mission européenne de surveillance maritime dans le détroit d’Ormuz (EMASOH) : déclaration politique de l’Allemagne, de la Belgique, du Danemark, de la France, de la Grèce, de l’Italie, des Pays-Bas, et du Portugal”, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, undated, available at: www.diplomatie.gouv.fr.

214. A. Helou, “Allies Shoulder for Influence in the Gulf Region as Naval Security Remains Top Priority”, *Defense News*, March 16, 2020, available at: www.defensenews.com.

elements.²¹⁵ Both London and Berlin have refused to participate, but it is possible that London could participate without any public announcement.²¹⁶

These examples reveal that, while the European dimension is logically integrated into French-German cooperation, cooperation with London remains largely dissociated from collective European efforts, despite the desires of Paris. On the other hand, although cooperation with Germany is progressing, recent operations illustrate Berlin's persistent reluctance to deploy troops and kinetic assets in zones of instability around Europe. In comparison, cooperation with France's other partners is getting more intense, even if it is mostly on a smaller scale.

215. L. Lagneau, "Sahel/Barkhane: la Suède confirme son intention de participer au groupement de forces spéciales "Takuba"", *Opex360*, March 16, 2020, available at: www.opex360.com; J.-D. Merchet, "Sahel: la Task-Force Takuba progresse... très lentement", *L'Opinion*, March 5, 2020, available at: www.lopinion.fr.

216. Following the Pau summit, Angela Merkel announced that she was not considering the use of additional German forces. J.-D. Merchet, "Sahel: la Task-Force Takuba progresse... très lentement", *op. cit.*; N. Gros-Veyrede, "Plusieurs pays européens s'engagent ou songent à s'engager au Mali (opération Takuba)", *Bruxelles2*, November 13, 2019, available at: www.bruxelles2.eu; "Frankreich stockt Sahel-Kampftruppen gegen Dschihadisten auf", *Die Welt*, January 14, 2020, available at: www.welt.de.

Conclusion

“France’s defense policy has always had a European perspective. While bilateral cooperation efforts were carried on previously, the desire to find military partners resulted in joint efforts with London and Berlin in the 1990s. The aim was to develop a common European security and defense policy, through joint deployments to theatres of operations and through collaboration on capabilities. Subsequently, the mixed results of the ESDP in the 2000s and the stagnation of the defense relationship with Berlin contrasted with the French and British experiences of deployments to joint theatres of operations. The operational rapprochement with London then seemed all the more natural since it confirmed similar strategic characteristics, especially the possession of nuclear weapons and a permanent seat on the UNSC. The effects of the 2008 financial crisis on defense budgets only increased the need to find economically efficient avenues for cooperation. At the same time, France’s return to NATO’s integrated military structures helped allay London’s doubts about French intentions towards the Alliance. These various factors led Paris and London to initiate a significant rapprochement in all aspects of defense policies, within the framework of the Lancaster House treaties.

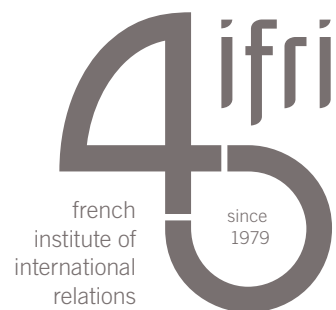
Ten years after these treaties were signed, some successes are undeniable, including the construction of joint nuclear infrastructures; the integration of the missile industry around MBDA (the next major milestone will be the effective launch of the FC/ASW programme); increased interoperability between armed forces thanks to the Joint Expeditionary Force project, which is due to be validated in 2020; and joint operational deployments, first in Libya, then in the Levant, the Sahel, the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. Nevertheless, French-British defense cooperation has also experienced significant failures in both the naval aviation and aeronautics sectors.

Cooperation between Paris and Berlin undoubtedly benefited from the failure of the initial French-British FCAS project, but it has mostly gained momentum since 2014 and the Germans taking heed of the need for increased investment in their foreign and defense policy. In a degraded security context in Europe, and following the British vote on Brexit, ties between France and Germany were rebuilt around a revival of European integration in defense, involving several

concrete progresses (EDF, PESCO), whose implementation is however not without difficulties.

French-British cooperation, like French-German cooperation, has its limits. In the first case, divergences on the role of NATO and the European Union in the continent's security persist, and seem even thornier in the light of Brexit. Moreover, Brexit raises many doubts about the future state of the British economy and the strategic orientations of London — which might be tempted to turn more towards Washington in the future. On the German side, the evolution of the strategic culture, after a phase of French optimism around the “Munich consensus”, is proving to be slow. This review therefore underlines the significant advantages for France from having partnerships with other European countries, particularly within the framework of the European Intervention Initiative, reflected by current or future deployments in the Strait of Hormuz and in the Sahel with the *Takuba* task force.

The tenth anniversary of the Lancaster House treaties in the fall of 2020 should be the occasion for a bilateral summit to breathe new life into now limited French-British cooperation, particularly on major capability issues. To achieve such revival, French and British political decision-makers will have to reaffirm their commitment to the bilateral defense relationship, validate the completion of the CJEF, launch the FC/ASW programme and pave the way for new subjects of cooperation. Cyber defense, space strategy, artificial intelligence, and hybrid threats are all issues that have come to the fore over the past decade and could further enhance French-British cooperation. London, finally, will have to show its goodwill at this summit, which could have repercussions at the European level, at a time when the future relationship between the UK and the European Union is being negotiated.



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