
France, Germany and European defence: more pragmatism and less pathos, please

Claudia Major

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Abstract

At the time of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Elysée treaty in January 2013, the Franco-German defence cooperation is not at its best. Even though the bilateral cooperation is intense and has permitted various projects, it does not include all areas and still lacks efficiency. Misunderstandings persist and the network created so far between the two countries has not yet proved sufficient to overcome the differences. The disparities over strategic culture, ambitions on the international scene or the defence industry reveal different priorities of the two countries and, consequently, the agreements are often merely rhetoric. In addition to this, in the current context of economic crisis the two governments' attention is focused elsewhere.

However, in the light of the international developments an improved cooperation seems inevitable. The shift in North Americas' zone of interest towards Asia, and significant cuts in defence budgets in virtually of all European member states result in a considerable weakening of the Continents military capacities. Therefore, the bilateral cooperation is a necessity that has to be revived and improved. The author offers several propositions regarding the political, military and industrial sphere; for example, the creation of an investment pool, of a Franco-German Airwing, of a market place for surplus of military equipment and of regional capacity targets. The cooperation has to be consolidated within the European project in order to enable feasible projects that are mutually desired. This would allow Paris and Berlin but also Europe to maintain credible security and defence capacities.

Table of content

INTRODUCTION	4
THE CURRENT STATE OF FRANCO-GERMAN DEFENCE COOPERATION: ACHIEVEMENTS BUT FAR TOO MUCH BICKERING.....	6
Achievements: The closest allies	6
...but there is no one fits all	7
Structural problems and current impediments for cooperation	9
NECESSITIES FOR COOPERATION – WHY COOPERATE? AND WHY NOW?13	
The silent demilitarisation of Europe requires cooperation ..	13
Europe at home alone – or the impact of the US pivot to Asia.....	15
THE WAY FORWARD: MORE THAN JUST KEEPING IT UP – IMPROVING IT! 18	
Why France and Germany still need the bilateral relationship	18
... but should change the logic of their cooperation: the parameters of a new Franco-German deal.....	20
INITIATIVES TO UNDERPIN THE NEW FRANCO-GERMAN DYNAMIC.....	21
Leading Europe within Europe	21
Leading Europe within NATO	22
Taking the lead in implementing Pooling and Sharing in EU and NATO	23
AND NOW? IN SEARCH OF POLITICAL WILL	26

Introduction

Franco-German defence cooperation is not having its finest hour these days. While this situation has become a more usual than unusual feature over the last years, it is now becoming increasingly visible for three reasons.

Firstly, because in January 2013, France and Germany will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty and are currently looking for both results and new ideas to present at the jubilee. Second, because the Franco-German relationship as a whole is questioned in its role as a motor for European integration in various areas. And third, because the pressure to cooperate in defence matters is growing ever more –however, progress has been rare over the last years; it has been slow and difficult.

While both governments constantly refer to the bilateral relationship as the vital axis of their defence policy, there are few common objectives, only a modest capacity of cooperation, little mutual understanding, and no serious drive for European leadership. However, misunderstandings prevail, as the debates about a mission in Mali in 2012 and the failed merger of EADS and BAE systems in autumn 2012 show.

Yet, the bilateral bickering behind the openly manifested friendship facade is dangerous: both countries have still not understood that the current bilateral stalemate in defence not only damages their own capacity to act, but threatens the political and military basis of European defence and security politics in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) as such. No country alone can deal with Europe's shrinking defence capacities in the aftermath of the financial crisis and the US' pivot to Asia, not to mention ongoing international security risks, for example in the Middle East and Africa. Continuing the current trend of unsatisfactory bilateral cooperation is thus a hazardous and potentially irresponsible option. The two must make a clear decision on whether they want to tackle the challenges together or with someone else - otherwise they will lose their individual military capacity to act, and that of Europe with it.

The 50th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty could offer the opportunity to put aside the bickering, a situation in which both countries have quite comfortably established themselves, and to engage in meaningful cooperation. This article analyses the issues of Franco-German defence cooperation with a particular focus on the

German partner: what has been achieved, what are the problems and what should the two countries consider doing without delay? After more than 50 years of close cooperation, Germany remains for France, or becomes again, the little known and misunderstood partner. It is thus high time to explain how Germany conceives defence, why it acts the way it does, and to assess what France can reasonably expect from Germany in defence cooperation.

This article proposes ways for France and Germany to seize the current window of opportunity for cooperation initiatives and the one that will open after the federal elections in Germany, scheduled for autumn 2013.

The current state of Franco-German defence cooperation: achievements but far too much bickering

Franco-German defence cooperation can pride itself of having achieved a lot since the signature of the Elysée Treaty in 1963. But structural problems and current impediments still lead to frustration and prevent it from turning fully operational.

Achievements: The closest allies ...

The bilateral defence cooperation consists of more areas than usually known. It includes politics, structures, and personnel.¹

Berlin and Paris have established an extensive political network. The highest forum is the 1988 created Franco-German Defence and Security Council. Its task is to jointly develop concepts, to assure coordination on European security issues, to improve the cooperation of the armed forces and to deepen the cooperation of the defence industries.

This political commitment translates on the one hand into numerous personnel exchange programmes: French and German officers accomplish parts of their education and training together, such as at the German Führungsakademie and the French Ecole de Guerre. Civil servants are regularly sent to work in the ministries of the partner country. With the introduction of the combat helicopter Tiger into their armies, France and Germany founded the Franco-German School, which educates French and German pilots and technicians together.

On the other hand it translates into bilateral and multilateral military cooperation projects. The most well known are the 1987 created Franco-German Brigade (FGB), and the 2010 European Air

¹See for example Sven Bernhard Gareis and Nina Leonhard, *Die deutsch-französische Militärkooperation: Speerspitze europäischer Streitkräfte?*, in: Deutsch-Französisches Institut (ed.): *Frankreich Jahrbuch 2010*. Wiesbaden, 2011, pp. 177-188.

Transport Command (EATC). The latter coordinates the use of French, German, Dutch, and Belgian military air transport assets, thereby allowing a more efficient exploitation. Launched by France and Germany, the EATC has from the very beginning been conceived as a European project: It is supposed to respond to the lack of European strategic airlift capacities. Other member states have (gradually) joined the project in order to improve their capacities by pooling assets. Thus, EATC demonstrates Franco-German responsibility for Europe's capacity to act.

The FGB is a unique integrated military formation of that size: it consists of about 5500 soldiers from both countries. Its high degree of interoperability allowed the two countries to become acquainted with the behaviour and practice of the partner. It also served as a transmission belt: it has allowed France to remain in tune with NATO standards, thereby helping to prepare its reintegration into the Alliance in 2008.

...but there is no one fits all

Nevertheless, the appearance is deceptive. While the bilateral network is indeed very dense, it does not include all areas, and does not seem to be very efficient.

Firstly, the cooperation of the defence industries seems to be the stepchild of the Franco-German defence cooperation. EADS remains the exception, and it is increasingly considered a difficult case, at least from the German perspective. However, with products like the European military transport aircraft *A400M*, the Franco-German managed company EADS is an important defence equipment producer. Nevertheless, it was also a bone of contention when its CEO attempted to further limit the influence of the state in the company and sought to merge it with BAE Systems in September 2012.² Germany blocked the merger, inter alia because it feared even more French state intervention in the new company.

The short and medium term prospects for cooperation in the defence industries beyond EADS, such as in the naval industry, are weak. This is mainly due to substantially different perceptions on the role the state occupies in business, with France being rather hands on, and Germany preaching the free market without state intervention. Moreover, the defence industries are structured differently. Whereas in Germany small and medium sized companies

² Christian Mölling, *EADS und BAE - eine rüstungspolitische Bruchlandung*, SWP Berlin, « Kurz gesagt », 12.10.2012, <www.swp-berlin.org/de/publikationen/kurz-gesagt/eads-und-bae-eine-ruistungspolitische-bruchlandung.html> (accessed 14.11.2012).

and family businesses prevail, in France big state-controlled or state-nurtured firms mould the defence industries' landscape.

The second shortfall is that Germany and France hardly ever agree when it comes to operations. Even if they both go to the same scene of actions (e.g. Afghanistan), they tend to engage with different mandates and in different areas. This is one of the reasons why the FGB did not intervene in the high intensity scenarios for which it is trained. Another reason is the different planning traditions. Paris complained that while the FGB succeeded in improving the understanding of the two countries, it did not turn into an operational tool.

Moreover, Germany often feels pressured to deploy: when it accepted to lead the EU operation EUFOR RD Congo in 2006, it felt drawn into a French African adventure where it did not really had the chance to say no.³ Subsequently, and seemingly as a matter of principle, Berlin refused to participate in the 2008/09 EU mission EUFOR Chad RCA, although it corresponded to German criteria: cooperation with the UN, multilateral framework, humanitarian action.

Thirdly, despite the intense interaction, misperceptions and clichés persist. Over the last years, there even seems to be a kind of setback, with a reinstitution of traditional stereotypes (the French love Africa and operations in general; the Germans love civilian means, but not military force). The reaction of some German politicians to the EU operation in Mali, to start in 2013, underlines this: they almost automatically warned about being drawn into French adventures, in, of course, Africa.⁴

Yet, cooperation is not about getting rid of differences, but about knowing how to deal with them and how to ease them in political every day life. It is about differentiating between myths and real differences. Here, the network does not seem to support the moderation of well-known differences.

One reason might be that both partners still tend to underestimate the scope of their differences in priorities, strategic cultures or domestic considerations. Instead of speaking out on them, they often prefer sweeping them under the carpet of well-intentioned statements. For decades, both countries have been implicitly expecting that the other would change and come closer to the own principles. Put simply, France thought Germany would get used to apply military force in conflicts, if not as untroubled as France, at least in a more relaxed way. While Germany now engages in operations

³ Peter Schmidt, „Freiwillige vor!“. Führungsrolle wider Willen: die Bundeswehr und ihr Einsatz im Kongo, in: *Internationale Politik*, November 2006, pp. 68-77; Claudia Major, *EU-UN cooperation in military crisis management: the experience of EUFOR RD Congo in 2006*, Paris: EU ISS, Occasional Paper, 72/2008.

⁴ Die Angst der Bundeswehr vor dem Abenteuer Mali, *Die Welt*, 25.10.2012; Soldaten in Sandalen, *Der Spiegel*, 29.10.2012.

like in Afghanistan and has proven to be a serious combat force, it still remains overall reluctant to apply military force. This shows that while habits change, attitudes may prevail: Germany has not (yet?) modified its civilian-means-first approach dating from its occupation by the allies after the Second World War that it had internalised for decades and which has served Berlin well ever since.

Such underestimated differences might also explain why the vast friendship structures do not seem to deliver proportionally to the effort put into them: over the last years, the two states have not succeeded in developing substantial cooperation projects. The relationship seems to be stuck at both the rhetorical level of well-intentioned statements and the administrative level of well-organised processes. Meetings take place, civil servants are exchanged, joint declarations are issued – but with what result?

In the “Franco-German Agenda 2020” adopted in early 2010, Paris and Berlin formulated objectives in operational, political, and defence industry cooperation, but have struggled to produce results.⁵ A bilateral working group on defence industry issues established in 2009 never really took off.⁶ There is a glimmer of hope though: In 2011 the two engaged in what has subsequently been labelled the “Chantilly Process.”⁷ With more open exchanges, this process succeeded in raising awareness of the partners’ needs and domestic limitations. One result was the unusually meaningful declaration of the Franco-German Security and Defence Council of February 2012.⁸ The next step was a joint declaration in June 2012 specifically on the defence industries’ cooperation.⁹ However, both still await implementation.

Structural problems and current impediments for cooperation

These shortfalls are due to both structural causes and current impediments. A main structural obstacle are the differences in the

⁵ Die Bundesregierung: *Deutsch-Französische Agenda 2020*, <www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2010/02/2010-02-04-deutsch-franzoesische-agenda-2020.html> (accessed 14.11. 2012).

⁶ Andreas Marchetti and Louis-Marie Clouet: *Incertitudes sur la PSDC - Une nécessaire réflexion franco-allemande*, Visions franco-allemandes nr 19, Institut Français des Relations Internationales, Paris, July 2011.

⁷ Named after a town near Paris. Claudia Major, *A new Force to be reckoned with. What France and Germany should do to save European Defense*. IP Journal, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, April 2012.

⁸ Alain Juppé, Guido Westerwelle, Gérard Longuet and Thomas de Maizière: *Deutsch-Französische Erklärung. Für eine stärkere europäische Sicherheit und Verteidigung*, Paris, February 6, 2012.

⁹ Bundesministerium der Verteidigung: *Absichtserklärung über neue Perspektiven für die deutsch-französische Rüstungskooperation*, Paris, 14.06.2012.

strategic cultures of the two countries, that is, the way a country organises its security policy, and mainly how it applies military force. All this is influenced by a country's past and tends to change very slowly.¹⁰

German security policy remains influenced by World War II and the Cold War, with one major effect being that Germany is just developing an independent definition of risks, interests and the utility of the use of force. Until today, the conception of defence is to a great extent driven by external factors and to a lesser extent by internal factors, that is, distinct political will. Three main lines define German defence policy:

- Multilateralism is an objective rather than a means to achieve objectives. The firm commitment to the Western bloc (EU and NATO) and the reassurance of partners remain objectives in themselves. Recent initiatives such as the 2010 one of the Weimar Triangle to strengthen the CSDP¹¹ or the 2012 Schockenhoff-Kiesewetter Paper on European security¹² underline that multilateralism remains the leitmotiv for Germany.
- Non-Military means are preferred to military force. Military operations require a UN-mandate, a multinational framework and authorisation by the Parliament.
- Military thinking focuses on the operational part rather than on the strategic rationale beyond. During the Cold War, the Soviet threat was the very reason for the Bundeswehr's existence. Since its creation, this army has been trained as a force *against* something but not as an instrument *for* something like a national interest in a wider sense.

Several signs imply that Germany might accept that its dominant position in Europe, particularly in economic terms, could come with more responsibilities in the security realm. However, it seems to be a leadership by default more than one by choice: Germany's partners increasingly call for it, Berlin is not volunteering. One indicator is the 2011 Defence Policy Guidelines that seek to outline German defence principles.¹³ Another sign are the attempts by

¹⁰ For strategic culture see Kerry Longhurst: *Germany and the Use of Force*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, p. 17.

¹¹ Claudia Major, Florian Wassenberg, *Warsaw's Ambitious CSDP Agenda*, SWP Comments, C 25/September 2011; Claudia Major, *Viele europäische Soldaten, aber keine europäische Armee*, Genshagener Papiere, forthcoming 2013.

¹² Andreas Schockenhoff, Roderich Kiesewetter, *Impulse für Europas Sicherheitspolitik*, in: *Internationale Politik*, September/October 2012, pp. 88-97.

¹³ Federal Ministry of Defence: *Defence Policy Guidelines. Safeguarding National Interests – Assuming International Responsibility – Shaping Security Together*, Berlin,

defence minister Thomas de Maizières to establish a new discourse on the Bundeswehr. He emphasises that the army is a military organisation rather than an agency for humanitarian action, and claims that it might have to intervene even if German interests are not directly at stake because of its membership in international organisations.¹⁴

A second structural difference concerns the ambitions on the world stage. While France still claims a role as a middle-sized power with active defence related engagement (just think of Libya and the Ivory Coast in 2011, Mali 2013), Germany has few ambitions for an international role. Therefore, Berlin neither shares France's fear of a *déclassement stratégique* nor its understanding of security policy with a global reach. Germany has a far more Eurocentric view, and thus the global perspective has a more frightening taste.

Thirdly, the structures and politics in the defence industry differ considerably. While in France the state still keeps control of major parts of the defence industry, in Germany the defence industry is 100% privately owned. With the exception of EADS, TKMS and Rheinmetall, the bigger players are at least partly owned by families or a small group of associates.¹⁵

German stereotypes on French defence industrial settings are an important showstopper for industrial consolidation: The most crucial issue is the perceived willingness of the French state to intervene in multinational companies and to break international arrangements to serve national interests. Political interference with EADS is constantly mentioned. Examples from the civilian realm support this criticism: the, from a German perspective, unfortunate 2004 Sanofi-Aventis case has its repercussions until today.

Moreover, from a German perspective, Paris allegedly undermines market-driven solutions by keeping ineffective industries alive through direct subsidies. Here, the case of GIAT/Nexter is usually quoted. As a result, the German defence establishment pictures itself as the victims of French business and policy practice. From a German point of view, industrial consolidation would depend not only on a de facto marginal role of the French state in defence industries but also on countering the negative image and building trust.

A fourth structural impediment is the different functioning of the state. Whereas France is more used to a top-down approach that

27.05.2011; Christian Mölling, Deutsche Verteidigungspolitik. Eckpunkte für eine überfällige Debatte zur militärisch-konzeptionellen Ausrichtung der Bundeswehr, SWP-Aktuell, A 18/March 2012.

¹⁴ Several observers have coined it Bündnispatriotismus „alliance patriotism”. See for example Jochen Bittner, 'Schlanke Bundeswehr', *Die Zeit*, Nr 44, 27.10.2011.

¹⁵ Diehl is a 100% family-led foundation, 25% of Thyssen-Krupp stocks are controlled by a family based foundation, KMW is 100% family-owned and Heckler & Koch is run by associates.

corresponds to its centralised political system and results in quick decision-making, Germany is characterised by a more consensual bottom-up approach. While it might take more time to reach an agreement, its decisions then usually enjoy broad support. However, the different rhythms lead to asynchronies, with one partner waiting for the other to take the decision, or the other feeling pressured to deliver.

The difference is particularly salient when it comes to the armed forces: the French forces are designed as an instrument of the President, with a direct line of command that circumvents the ministry of defence and the Parliament. Contrary, the German chancellor cannot send armed forces to battle without approval by the Parliament. These differences often lead to misunderstandings and incompatible expectations.

In addition to these structural obstacles, recent domestic developments have complicated the relationship. The most important issue is as simple as decisive: Defence issues are not high on the agenda for either country. Instead, it is the financial crisis and its repercussions that absorb the governments' attention and efforts.

This turns into a lack of awareness about the extent of the current defence challenges: While empirical trends point toward a Europe without credible defence in about a decade – due to the financial crisis and growing problems in the defence sector dating from the cold war – political decision-makers still seem unwilling to make the necessary but painful decisions required to avoid such a scenario.¹⁶

Besides, German defence policy is currently in a critical situation: The ongoing defence reform, and in particular the reorganisation of the Ministry of Defence has adsorbed a high amount of the ministry's energy since 2010 and has reduced its working capacity. It may take until 2013 for the new settings to be fully operational. It is difficult to take bold decisions if the settings do not function the way they should.

Finally, elections regularly turn into showstopper: Germany starts preparing for the federal elections in autumn 2013. Once the election campaign has started in early 2013, it is unlikely that the government engages in major projects. The Elysée Jubilee in early 2013 will hence also signify the beginning of a hibernation period for foreign policy in general, which may last until the new German government has settled in late 2013. Given that the French side also put its activities on hold due to its elections in 2012, there is quite a long period of time during which neither government were / is fully operational.

¹⁶ Nick Witney, *How to Stop the Demilitarisation of Europe*, London, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), November 2011, "Policy Brief", 40.

Necessities for cooperation – why cooperate? And why now?

While these reasons certainly explain the current stalemate, it seems to be a luxury in light of the problems the two countries face. Challenges - such as the US pivot to Asia or a re-nationalisation of foreign policy coupled with a concomitant loss of capacity to act of the nation state - require coordinated action. Thus, whilst the rocky cooperation in the last years was annoying but not harmful, it increasingly turns into an irresponsible approach.

The silent demilitarisation of Europe requires cooperation

The first challenge concerns the current silent de-militarisation of Europe. It is the result of two developments: first, the austerity programmes that slash the defence budgets of almost all European states; and second, the incapacity of the states to deal with those cuts.

Even the early consequences of the financial crisis rapidly resulted in the decision of almost every European state to rapidly, drastically, and permanently reduce defence spending to help cut budget deficits. These cuts are rarely accompanied by strategic considerations about interests and risks. Financial resources increasingly determine the military objectives European states pursue, as well as the resources available to underpin their security and defence policies (and by extension those of the EU and NATO): funding becomes a strategic factor in security and defence policy.

Over the next years, large states such as the UK have planned to cut defence budgets by 8 %; most medium-sized states by 10 to 15 % (from the pre-crisis, 2009 level). The largest cuts, up to 30%, have been decided on and partly already implemented by small states such as Bulgaria.¹⁷ Because virtually all European countries spent too little on defence over the past two decades, few have any

¹⁷ Christian Mölling and Sophie-Charlotte Brune: *The impact of the financial crisis on European Defence*, Study, European Parliament, Subcommittee on Security and Defence, April 2011.

spare capacity. Many of the smaller and medium sized countries have gradually hollowed out their armed forces, leaving units weakened and armed with old equipment.

Germany promised to cut 8.3bn euros until 2015, but has put the cuts on hold in 2012. Nevertheless, the reform already led to abandoning conscription, cutting personnel from 250,000 to about 185,000, and stretching, postponing, and reducing procurements. While France has largely maintained its defence spending so far, severe cuts are expected with the military programming law in spring 2013.¹⁸

In the medium term, no European state will be able to protect its defence sector from saving measures, as demands on the public purse in Europe are an enormous long-term burden. The European Commission estimates that EU states will have to dedicate 1% of their gross domestic product (GDP) for the next 20 years to loan repayments alone, if they are to reduce debts to pre-2008 levels.¹⁹

Thus, in theory, European militaries cover a broad spectrum of capacities. In practice, many countries have been reduced to possessing tiny 'bonsai' armies:²⁰ just big enough to preserve the illusion of sovereignty, but incapable of offering serious contributions to EU or NATO operations.

However, the repercussions of the defence cuts go beyond the loss of capacities and personnel. They could threaten the basis of the European defence industrie in 5 to 10 years, as the defence industry will increasingly orient itself toward clients abroad if defence budgets shrink in Europe but rise in the rest of the world. In 20 years, Europe might then also lose its lead in the area of Research & Technology because it risks decreasing its new technologies for defence application.

In the long run, there is thus a real threat of a demilitarised Europe that is incapable of acting on its own. Crisis management operations such as the deployments in Libya in 2011, or in Afghanistan since 2003 would then be nearly impossible, as would territorial defence. Thus, Germany and France, as well as Europe as a whole, risk losing an important instrument from their toolbox.

Proof that this is not a scenario of the distant future but rather one that approaches with *seven league boots* is NATO's 2011 Libya

¹⁸ Camille Grand, France, in: Clara Marina O'Donnell (ed.): *The Implications of Military Spending Cuts for NATO's Largest Members*, Brookings, Analysis Paper, July 2012; Audition de l'amiral Édouard Guillaud, Commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées, 10.10.2012, Compte rendu n° 8: <www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/cr-cdef/12-13/c1213008.asp> (accessed 14.11.2012).

¹⁹ European Commission: Annual Growth Survey, 12.01.2011, <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0011:FIN:EN:PDF>> (accessed 14.11. 2012).

²⁰ Christian Mölling, *Europe Without Defense*, SWP Comments, C 38/November 2011.

intervention. The Europeans had trouble projecting substantial military power to Libya. A number of countries ran out of precision munitions. Italy pulled out its aircraft carrier *Garibaldi* in the midst of the operation. NATO insiders say that 90 per cent of operations needed US military help in one form or another, with communications, reconnaissance, targeting, and precision munitions being particularly in demand.

To cope with the effects of the austerity measures on defence, in 2010 the EU and NATO countries started several projects to increase cooperation, specialisation and prioritisation, which they call Pooling and Sharing (in the EU) and Smart Defence (NATO).²¹ By sharing facilities and services or buying and maintaining the next generation of weapons together, the countries seek to preserve capacities which would otherwise be lost to budget cuts.

However, most countries remain reluctant to seriously engage in pooling and sharing. Although most European states lost the capacity to fight significant wars unilaterally decades ago, they cherish the power to decide independently on when, where and how to use their armies. And they do not entirely trust their partners: if they build joint units with another country, this other country may deny them access in times of trouble. Conversely, governments fear being dragged into an unwanted conflict by their partners. The creation of joint units often costs extra money in the initial stages, before delivering savings later, and defence ministers are reluctant to invest, given that their finance ministers are demanding cuts immediately. Hence, unsurprisingly, many countries choose inaction over collaboration.

Europe at home alone – or the impact of the US pivot to Asia

This inaction becomes more visible when contrasted with the second challenge, namely a greater demand for European commitment for international security. In the future, Europeans will be largely on their own in Europe, not by choice, but because the Americans will have left.²²

The US are themselves hit by the financial crisis. The Pentagon has to save about 487 Bn US-Dollar over the next ten

²¹ Claudia Major, Christian Mölling and Thomas Valasek: *Smart but too cautious: How NATO can improve its fight against austerity*, Policy Brief, Centre for European Reform, May 2012; Christian Mölling, *Pooling und Sharing in EU und Nato*, SWP-Aktuell, A 25/May 2012.

²² François Heisbourg et al.: *All alone? What US retrenchment means for Europe and NATO*, Centre for European Reform, February 2012.

years.²³ The biggest military power hence wants to prioritise its choices. Moreover, Europe is losing strategic importance for the US. From a US perspective, the most important developments in the security, political and economic fields are taking place in Asia²⁴, while Europe has developed from a security consumer to a security provider. As a consequence, the US is reducing its presence in Europe, increasing its footprint in Asia and adapting its military doctrine to the challenges in the China Sea.²⁵

The Americans are hence more determined than ever to see the Europeans take on more military responsibility, particularly in their own backyard. Washington will increasingly ask Europe to lead 'discretionary' wars – those fought not in defence of territory but in defence of human rights. However, the US will of course live up to its obligations under article V (mutual defence) and will return if its strategic interests are at stake, - but there will certainly be fewer wars of choice.

The US considers Europe's security as established and expects her to be autonomous. Europe should be able to guarantee peace on its continent and especially in its close surroundings. Even though Washington has never questioned its obligations regarding article V of the North Atlantic Treaty concerning mutual defence and would certainly live up to its responsibilities, the US administration hopes to see its European allies capable of leading their own missions, especially those on European soil, and those, where US interests are not directly affected.

In military terms, the US may refuse to carry any longer the greatest burden within NATO and to fill in the gaps of European capacities. While the US has made such claims for years without great consequences for Europe, its reluctant and limited military and political commitment to the 2011 Libya campaign has shown that it is now serious about reducing its role.²⁶

At the same time, the world has not become a safer place. While Europe lives indeed in peace, its periphery remains unstable. This applies to the Balkans as much as to the Middle East, North Africa or the Sahel Zone. Russia's president Putin intends to strengthen his country's military but shows little interest in improving the relationship with NATO and the Western world. Risks and threats like terrorism, fragile states and cyber war continue to exist.

²³ Adam Grissom, *The United States*, in: Clara Marina O'Donnell et al. 2012, pp. 24-29.

²⁴ Hillary Clinton, *America's Pacific Century*, *Foreign Policy*, November 2011.

²⁵ See i.a. *Joint Operational Access Concept*; see also NATO's sea of troubles, *The Economist*, 31.03.2012; Leon Panetta, *The US Rebalance Towards the Asia-Pacific*, Speech at: 11th IISS Asia Security Summit, The Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore, 02.06.2012.

²⁶ Claudia Major, *Mehr Europa in der NATO*, SWP-Aktuell, A 52/September 2012.

It is obvious that these challenges cannot be tackled by one state alone. An increase in European military budgets seems as unlikely as Washington's return to Europe or the disappearance of risks and threats to European security and values. If France and Germany (and Europe) are to retain their military potential and a credible security and defence policy, they will have to work together.

The way forward: More than just keeping it up – Improving it!

It is certain that muddling through and carrying on with the dissatisfactory bilateral relationship of the last years is an increasingly costly and frustrating option: time, personnel, energy, and money could be spent more wisely. The two states have to decide whether their bilateral relationship is the best tool to jointly tackle the current challenges or whether other partners, such as the UK, would be more appropriate.

It is argued here that France and Germany should re-energise their relationship concerning defence. Nevertheless, recognising that there is something rotten in their liaison is the first necessary step to better deal with it in the future. Before proliferating over and over again the same denomination to the friendship and the same appeals to act for Europe, - that is, repeating those ideas that haven't really been effective over the last years – the two should first analyse for what reasons they actually should cooperate, second whether the logic of the relationship should be changed, and third they should seek to develop projects that are meaningful, realisable and desired by both (as compared to only desirable and symbolic).

Why France and Germany still need the bilateral relationship ...

In the future, France and Germany should not cooperate because they have always done so or legacies from World War II. They should only do so if cooperation is the best way out of both countries' defence troubles. Thus, they should move beyond the traditional rhetoric of friendship and spell out the pragmatic need for cooperation.

Several reasons speak in favour of reviving the relationship. Firstly, because the existing close bilateral defence cooperation provides a solid basis. Alternative partnerships have not yet proved to be more reliable or efficient in outcomes. While complementary, they cannot replace this bilateral relationship. This applies to the 2010 Franco-British Lancaster House Treaty as much as to multilateral

endeavours such as the Weimar Triangle, the Ghent Initiative or traditional frames like EU and NATO.²⁷

Secondly, despite political differences, the two countries still share a profoundly pro-European conviction that goes beyond the economic area into the political sphere. Paris and Berlin both firmly support a European political project, to which economic, financial, and security dimensions contribute. This agreement offers a solid long-term basis for cooperation that is not shared by all European partners (think of the UK).

Thirdly, Franco-German cooperation has a better chance of inspiring the rest of Europe than other partnerships. The financial crisis has confirmed this historical evidence: despite their differences, the two countries made Europe move as a whole and the other countries accepted, although often grudgingly, their leadership. By cooperating on defence, the two have better chances than other formations to drag along their fellow Europeans.

Fourthly, far away from any romance, the two simply need each other. Germany and France continue to be the economic, political, and military heavyweights in Europe. If France does not participate in a European initiative, say for Pooling and Sharing, stalemate is more likely than with its participation. Likewise a German opt-out would reduce the political importance of projects, limit their European character and affect their credibility.

Without the political and economic weight of the partner, France will struggle to maintain its military punch and both countries risk losing their political credibility. Germany needs France's support to assume a co-leadership role in Europe because it hesitates to take the blame (and criticism) for tough decisions alone. France needs Germany because it cannot act by itself any longer due to the fact that its capacity to act is decreasing. Berlin is getting even more attractive in view of some estimates according to which it is likely to have the highest defence budget in Europe by 2015/2020. It is thus important for both partners to join forces because they have few credible alternatives.

²⁷ For a summary and a description of recent initiatives see C. Mölling and S.-C. Brune, *The impact of the Financial Crisis on European Defence*, Strasbourg, European Parliament, sub committee for security and defence issues, April 2011, p. 43-51; for Lancaster house : D. Zandee : *Franco-British Defence Cooperation as the Core of European Military Capabilities*, Clingendael Policy Brief, Nr 10, juillet 2012 ; for the Weimar Triangle : C. Major and F. Wassenberg, *Warsaw's Ambitious CSDP Agenda*, Berlin, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, September 2011, « SWP Comments », C25.

... but should change the logic of their cooperation: the parameters of a new Franco-German deal

Acknowledging these reasons for cooperation forms the basis for a new Franco-German deal. The two countries should seek to liberate their relationship from the current normative expectations. They should recognise their differences instead of sugar-coating them, and acknowledge the need to cooperate rather than referring to the pleasure of friendship.

Three basic premises determine the new bilateral logic. First, the two countries' strategic cultures will not change quickly and hence joint Franco-German strategies will be slow to emerge. Germany may be hoping that France develops more of a civilian and multilateral approach like the Nordic countries, or that it will just accept Germany's domestic inhibitions. France may be dreaming of a perfect partner that combines Germany's pro-European credentials with the British strategic culture. But this will not happen any time soon.

Secondly, the two sides will simply not come to an agreement in certain areas (such as the nuclear realm or certain operational aspects) in the near future. But that should not hinder cooperation in other fields. There is no one-fits-all.

Lastly, the relationship is not exclusive but explicitly open to other countries. Other partners might play a larger role in certain areas, such as the UK for France on nuclear issues. Additional bilateral or multilateral agreements can achieve or complement the bilateral cooperation.

Accepting those parameters is the first step towards avoiding deception and unrealistic expectations. The new deal in Franco-German relations would be driven less by abstract claims of friendship than by a pragmatic realisation that without bilateral cooperation, it will be even more difficult to overcome the defence and capacity crisis and meet the global demand for responsibility. Such pragmatism is not negative per se. The idea of Germany, France, and Europe becoming hamstrung by security feuding might be a better motivation than the fading normative idea of Franco-German friendship as the motor of Europe.

Initiatives to underpin the new Franco-German dynamic

Successful projects can convince the two countries of the benefits of bilateral cooperation and can create trust, which is the vital precondition for accepting the ensuing interdependence. Only once the two states again perceive their bilateral relationship as a useful framework will the basis for the necessary (and more sensitive) strategic debates about common objectives and the future of bilateral defence cooperation in EU and NATO be restored. A crucial point is to embed the bilateral relationship in Europe: it is not only about generating benefits for the two countries, but for Europe as a whole.

There is a whole range of topics on which Franco-German leadership can make a difference. These include - to name just a few - dealing with the long-term effects of public debt crisis on defence; possible scenarios for Europe's military forces in 2030; the future of defence institutions (EU / NATO); how to achieve the defence industries' consolidation; and what lessons to be drawn from Afghanistan for pooling and sharing, particularly in the areas of logistics and C4, scenarios of possible operations. Some examples from this list could be turned into Franco-German initiatives right now:

Leading Europe within Europe

The two countries should use the run up to the 2013 EU defence summit to table suggestions to strengthen European defence politically, militarily and industrially. Such an initiative should be orchestrated prior to the summit with the main EU partners and communicated to the High Representative in order to increase its chances to be adopted.

Politically

The two should present a common position on where to take the CSDP geographically, in terms of ambitions, and how to relate it to NATO. A result could be a new level of ambition agreed by all EU member states.

Militarily

The two should translate the political level of ambition into military terms. How many operations of what size for how long is the Union willing (and able) to field, and where? Moreover, building on the 12 projects agreed upon by the European Council in March 2012, they should implement meaningful projects for pooling & sharing (see below). Those should be coordinated with efforts in NATO.

Industrially

The two should aim to provide a political and legal framework for the restructuring and consolidation of the defence industries' landscape in Europe. The core of such an effort could be the definition of a Defence-Industrial Headline Goal 2030. In view of finding common denominators for a coherent approach to armament and policy concerning the defence industries, the two would have to answer the following questions: What industrial and technological base does the EU need? What over- and under-capacities exist and may exist in the future? Which sectors are competitive on the global market? Which dependencies are acceptable inside and outside the EU? What key elements of a defence-industrial policy are needed to provide these capacities? What is the role of the defence industry herein?

Leading Europe within NATO

In parallel, Germany and France should take the lead in coordinating a European response to the US' call for more European responsibility:

Politically

Defining the relationship of the Alliance with the EU and with the US. We currently witness a de-Americanisation of NATO and a concomitant Europeanisation by default. Led by Berlin and Paris, the Europeans in the Alliance should think about whether this is the opportunity

- to develop a fully-fledged European pillar in NATO, in which Europeans would take up both political and military responsibility;
- to engage in a burden-sharing between the Alliance and the EU, that would consist of the EU guaranteeing civilian and low intensity crisis management, while NATO would be responsible for high intensity and defence;
- to think about something radically different: that is, to gradually merge EU and NATO. Such an institutional merger sounds like a chimera.

Nevertheless, the structures of the CSDP were modelled on those of NATO and the representatives to the two military committees are mostly double hatted. Enhanced cooperation can, over time, lead to integration.²⁸

It is up to the Europeans to fill the gaps the US will leave. This includes thinking about the political glue of the Alliance - what do the allies need the Alliance for? It also means recalibrating the Alliances' level of ambition. In view of the reduced capacities, the current objective to field two big and six smaller operations might not be realistic anymore.

Militarily

Suggesting what Europe could offer to the US in terms of capacities and what the US could guarantee if they are not willing to take the lead. The starting point would be to review the European capacities and NATO plans, thereby figuring out what the Alliance can actually do without or with only limited US military support. This includes presenting tangible European projects for Smart Defence (see below).

Taking the lead in implementing Pooling and Sharing in EU and NATO

Paris and Berlin should launch the following initiatives in order to better implement pooling & sharing within the EU and NATO:²⁹

- **Setting up a reinvestment pool.** Defence ministers and their treasuries should agree that those resources that defence ministers save through collaborative projects should remain in a special 'reinvestment pool'. This money would subsidise future joint purchases of equipment. Countries would compete for subsidy from the fund, with priority given to those purchases that address NATO's and EU's most pressing capacity needs. Governments bidding to make use of money in the fund would need to match the contribution out of their own pocket.

To launch the pool, countries would contribute an amount based on their size and economic power. Bigger countries would contribute more under such a

²⁸ This idea has been re-launched by Jolyon Howorth, *CSDP and NATO Post-Libya: Towards the Rubicon?* Egmont Institute, Security Policy Brief, No. 35, July 2012.

²⁹ See also Major, Mölling, Valasek 2012.

formula than smaller ones. But the bigger allies would benefit too: if a big country proposes a better project than others, it potentially stands to receive more from the fund than it contributes. And even if subsidies mostly went to the smaller states, the bigger ones would benefit because their investment would allow smaller countries to fight alongside the big ones in future operations. The reverse is also true – without collaboration, the smaller countries will lose some of their capacity to contribute to collective defence, leaving the bigger allies such as France and Germany bearing a disproportionate burden in operations.

- **Combining symbols with synergies: setting up a Franco-German Airwing.** French and German fighter jets – Eurofighter and Rafale – would form the two squadrons of a wing. Such a mixed unit would reflect the reality that already exists in operations (such as in Libya 2011), where small numbers of various types are deployed together. Moreover, it would force the cooperation between pilots and technical support staff in the daily routine and facilitate the logistical harmonisation. Thirdly, an in-depth integration would avoid a German and a French squadron operating next to each other instead of with each other. Contrary to the FGB, this wing would be assigned a permanent task right from the beginning, that is, also in peace times. While one Franco-German squadron is exercising together, the other would secure the European airspace. In a mid-term perspective, the tasks can be enlarged. If required, the squadrons can be re-nationalised. If France wants to deploy its Rafale to an operation that Germany does not support, the German Eurofighters could take over the air policing tasks of the Rafale. From its very inception, the wing should be conceived as a European project. Paris and Berlin should invite other countries to join, be it the UK or Poland in the framework of the Weimar Triangle. In military terms, it would be particularly useful to involve those of the smaller nations, who can already not afford aircrafts anymore, be it by leasing jets or handing over surplus equipment. The experiences that would result from joint training and operations could contribute to the definition of future military requirements, such as for the new generation of fighter jets. In the long run, the opportunity to jointly conceive the next generation of jets would allow the Europeans to overcome the current diversity of models in Europe.

- **Setting up a market place for surplus military equipment.** Many Central European countries

struggle to modernise their ageing, Soviet-era equipment, while West Europeans have ordered too much equipment, such as NH-90 helicopters. Countries with surplus equipment usually hope to export it to Asia or the Middle East but, because budgets everywhere in Europe have shrunk, too many countries now compete for the same export markets. Instead of selling their equipment outside Europe at knock-down rates, countries should consider transferring it to poorer countries, and in exchange, the receiving country should agree to contract service, training and upgrades from the donor country.

By using identical equipment, inter-operability would improve, and the donor country would benefit from maintenance and training contracts. Both donor and recipient countries could benefit by creating joint units around their common equipment, and share the related costs. In the long run, such “modernisation through donation”³⁰ would reduce the number of different types of military equipment in European armies, and encourage the defence manufacturers to consolidate. The initiative of the European Defence Agency to launch a government-to-government online market place (e-quip) for redundant or surplus equipment could be a starting point.

- **Creating regional capacity targets.** Currently, each country unilaterally defines its national defence commitment. Together, these contributions are supposed to amount to a large enough force to fulfil NATO’s or the EU’s ambitions. Regional targets would give the countries more reasons to merge parts of their militaries than the current model. It could be the starting point for a specialisation by design of Europe’s armed forces. A starting point could be a Franco-German-Polish launched Weimar Capacity Goal, in which the Weimar Plus states³¹ agree on equipment, quantity, and procurement strategy for the next years. Other groups, such as the Visegrad Four³², could follow.

³⁰ See Major, Mölling, Valasek 2012.

³¹ The initial Weimar countries France, Germany, Poland plus Italy and Spain (Weimar Plus).

³² The Visegrad Four, also called « V4 », includes Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

And now? In search of political will

These are mostly technical solutions. If implemented, they would nevertheless have a considerable political impact: they would allow France and Germany, and Europe, to keep a credible capacity to act in security and defence matters.

History has shown that diverging positions between the two countries do not have to be a problem as long as political leadership seeks to transform them into a driving force to fuel the process of cooperation. This was the power of the early Franco-German relation in Europe. Indeed, one of the lessons of the current stalemate is the need for leadership to change administrative inertia and the traditional friendship rhetoric, and to use the potential of the bilateral relationship. The decision for a new Franco-German deal has to be made at the highest political level.

France and Germany should use the 50th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty as a milestone towards a new, more realistic cooperation. For an old couple like the Franco-German, overcoming the midlife crisis is of course not easy. But there is indeed much to gain from the relationship if political leaders decide to use it.

Visions franco-allemandes

Publiée depuis 2004, cette collection est consacrée à une analyse croisée de l'évolution politique, économique et sociale de l'Allemagne et de la France contemporaines : politique étrangère, politique intérieure, politique économique et questions de société. Les « Visions franco-allemandes » sont des textes à caractère scientifique et de nature policy oriented. À l'instar des « Notes du Cerfa », les « Visions franco-allemandes » sont accessibles sur le site Internet du Cerfa, où elles peuvent être consultées et téléchargées gratuitement.

Dernières publications du Cerfa

Isabel Schäfer, *Entre idéaux et intérêts : les nouvelles perspectives françaises et allemandes sur le Maghreb*, « Vision franco-allemandes », n° 22, février 2013.

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Stephan Klecha, *La mutation du système des partis allemands: bientôt des pirates à bord ?*, « Note du Cerfa », n° 97, septembre 2012.

Le Cerfa

Le Comité d'études des relations franco-allemandes (Cerfa) a été créé en 1954 par un accord gouvernemental entre la République fédérale d'Allemagne et la France. Le Cerfa bénéficie d'un financement paritaire assuré par le ministère des Affaires étrangères et l'Auswärtiges Amt ; son conseil de direction est constitué d'un nombre égal de personnalités françaises et allemandes.

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