

THE FRANCO-GERMAN TANDEM: BRIDGING THE GAP ON NUCLEAR ISSUES

Emmanuelle MAITRE

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Abstract

The Franco-German couple has long been characterized by divergent trajectories on nuclear matters, and antagonist historical decisions still frame the current relationship. In France, the creation of a national deterrent led to a will to preserve independence, including vis-a-vis NATO, and to uphold the importance of deterrence to maintain security. In Germany, after a late decision to abandon national nuclear ambitions, nuclear weapons were mainly considered through the prism of NATO. Under the influence of major pacifist movements at the end of the Cold War, nuclear weapons became almost taboo. In recent years, however, the two partners have reconciled some of their views on this matter, which could enable them to act in tandem and become more influential in addressing contemporary challenges on strategic stability, arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.

Résumé

Le couple franco-allemand a connu des trajectoires différentes en ce qui concerne les questions nucléaires, avec des décisions historiques antagonistes qui pèsent encore dans les rapports actuels. En France, la création d'une force de dissuasion nationale s'est accompagnée d'une recherche d'autonomie, y compris à l'égard de l'OTAN, et d'une volonté d'affirmer l'importance de la dissuasion dans la préservation des équilibres stratégiques. En Allemagne, après un renoncement tardif à toute ambition nucléaire, le sujet a été abordé dans le cadre de l'OTAN avant que les grands mouvements pacifistes de la fin de la Guerre froide ne provoquent une réticence certaine à reconnaître le rôle de la dissuasion. Les années récentes ont cependant vu un certain rapprochement des positions des deux partenaires qui pourrait leur permettre de travailler de concert et ainsi d'être plus influents dans la résolution des tensions actuelles tant en matière de stabilité stratégique que de maîtrise des armements, de non-prolifération et de désarmement.

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Introduction

Nuclear issues are generally not considered to be a central matter in the relationship between France and Germany. Studies of the tandem generally focus on economic issues, conventional defense cooperation or EU developments. However, this topic has emerged regularly but in an ambiguous way ever since World War II. Over time, the two partners have dealt with these questions alternately through mutual suspicion, cooperation, competition, rapprochement and sometimes misunderstanding.

Bilateral talks on nuclear weapons started right after the war, as both countries had the opportunity to pursue a national deterrent capacity. They made opposite choices, with Germany¹ proceeding under strong political and legal external pressure. As the Soviet threat grew, the two neighbors studied several options: close integration with NATO, European nuclear cooperation, or Germany's rearmament. On each side, the choices made had a bilateral dimension. France's early preoccupations included restraining Germany's fast rise to the status of a major military power, especially a nuclear-armed one. It later considered bilateral cooperation in a military program. In Germany, debates reflected a fear that France, as a nuclear-weapon state, would end up as the only leading power in continental Western Europe.

At the peak of the Cold War, the two countries dealt with nuclear issues in their own way, but always consulted each other. In a few well-known occurrences, Paris and Bonn consulted each other on their respective positions; for instance, on the constitution of the Multilateral Force (MLF) within NATO, and during the Euromissile crisis.

In the final years of the 20th century, the two states followed different paths. In Germany, reunification confirmed the renunciation of any kind of WMD,² and the easing of the Cold War enhanced popular and political support for nuclear disarmament. German authorities expressed

1. In this paragraph and the following ones, "Germany" refers to the Federal Republic of Germany before 1991.

2. Article 3 of the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany — also known as the Two Plus Four Agreement and the Treaty of Moscow, 1990. "*The Governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic reaffirm their renunciation of the manufacture and possession of and control over nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. They declare that the united Germany, too, will abide by these commitments. In particular, rights and obligations arising from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of 1 July 1968 will continue to apply to the united Germany.*"

reservations about nuclear deterrence, provoking some controversy between the two partners, especially in the framework of NATO. France, on the other hand, maintained a much more cautious outlook. French leaders judged that nuclear weapons could be useful to deal with future unforeseen threats, and agreed to the prospect of a world free of nuclear weapons only reluctantly and conditionally. In the field of non-proliferation, however, the two countries managed to adopt common positions, which led to greater efficiency on the international stage.

In recent years, the evolution of the strategic environment occasioned a reconsideration of the role of nuclear weapons in the Euro-Atlantic alliance. At the same time, the disappointing NPT Review Cycle that ended in 2015 and the adoption of the text of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons renewed the debate on how to maintain constructive dialogue on the international level on non-proliferation and disarmament. In both cases, France and Germany have much at stake and their voices are influential.

Studying the French-German tandem on nuclear issues shows some divergence, but also a somewhat unexpected level of convergence. It offers an opportunity to identify topics concerning which dialogue and shared analyses improve mutual understanding, but also help frame consistent and more efficient policies on the international stage.

Opposite choices on the construction of a nuclear deterrent under the Soviet threat

Between tensions and collaboration: the birth of the French “force de frappe” and the emergence of a non-nuclear Federal Republic of Germany

The context in which the French-German relationship emerged in relation to nuclear issues could hardly have been worse. The painful history of three wars between the two countries in less than a century weighed largely on the French Fourth Republic's choice to move ahead on a nuclear military program. When this decision was made public, the authorities justified the move by invoking not only a need to uphold sovereignty and enhance national prestige, but also the security threat posed by the Soviet Union.³ It was shown, however, that the initial decisions that gave a military dimension to the nuclear program stemmed from an attempt to protect the country against a potential resurgence of a hostile Germany. More specifically, Germany's rearmament in 1954 apparently played a role in the choice made by Premier Pierre Mendès-France in favor of a military option.⁴

Surprisingly, distrust of Bonn was at the roots of propositions that at first glance could appear contradictory. They were in fact motivated by the same objective: not letting the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) develop nuclear weapons unilaterally. For instance, the two countries tried to tie their hands mutually by inserting article 107 in Annex II of the Treaty establishing the European Defence Community (EDC). It forbade signatories to hold annually more than 500g of plutonium without the agreement of the other members. Had it been adopted, it would have led to

3. B. Tertrais, “Destruction assurée: The Origins and Development of French Nuclear Strategy, 1945-1981”, in: H. D. Sokolski (ed.), *Getting MAD: Nuclear Mutual Assured Destruction. Its Origins and Practice*, Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004.

4. J. E. C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation, Identity, Emotions and Foreign Policy*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

strong restraints or even prevented the French nuclear program, which was by then still secret.⁵ Following its failure, Paris accepted the agreement of 23 October 1954 on the gradual rearmament of the FRG and its integration within NATO. In doing this, it felt that it could cooperate with its former adversary as it would still preserve its strategic advantage thanks to progress in its own nuclear program, while Bonn was legally committed “not to manufacture in its territory atomic, biological and chemical weapons”.⁶

The failure of the EDC did not, however, mean the end of all cooperation projects between the two countries in the nuclear field. As Germany was banned from launching a national program, it depended on others to build a nuclear deterrent. In 1957 and 1958, Paris, Bonn and Rome discreetly signed the Colomb-Béchar agreement, allowing the construction of a uranium isotope separation plant in Pierrelatte that could be used by the three partners. This breakthrough showed that, on the German side, the commitment not to produce weapons in Germany did not equate to abandoning all hopes of nuclear capacity, and that Chancellor Adenauer’s administration, and in particular Defense Minister Franz-Josef Strauss, viewed positively the constitution of a nuclear arsenal in Europe that would involve Germany, at least indirectly. France’s motivations were probably mixed: cooperating was a way of accelerating its program, making it more efficient and sharing costs at a time when it entertained doubts on the credibility of American extended deterrence. Working closely with its neighbors was also a way of averting Germany launching its own nuclear program.⁷ It is hard to assess whether this trilateral cooperation would have ended up in a nuclear force shared between the three states, or simply a pooling of enriched uranium and joint research projects. General de Gaulle ended it when he returned to power in 1958. This episode is nonetheless proof of an interest on both sides of the Rhine for working together on the European stage to master nuclear technologies.

For Chancellor Adenauer, possessing nuclear weapons, or at least, being able to deliver them, could also be a way of showing that Germany was no longer subjected to discriminatory status, and that it was able to play a part in ensuring its own security against the background of numerical inferiority with the USSR.⁸ This explains why the FRG debated the merits of

5. J. Bariety, “La décision de réarmer l’Allemagne, l’échec de la Communauté Européenne de Défense et les accords de Paris du 23 octobre 1954 vus du côté français”, *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire*, Vol. 71, No. 2, 1993.

6. Modified Brussels Treaty, Protocol No. III on the Control of Armaments signed in Paris on 23 October 1954.

7. G.-H. Soutou, “Les accords de 1957 et 1958 : vers une communauté stratégique nucléaire entre la France, l’Allemagne et l’Italie ?”, *Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 1993.

8. A. Lutsch, “In Favor of ‘Effective’ and ‘Non-Discriminatory’ Non-Dissemination Policy. The FRG and the NPT Negotiation Process (1962-1966)” in: R. Popp, L. Horowitz, and A. Wenger (eds.), *Negotiating*

respecting the 1954 Paris commitment, and later, signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that it finally ratified in 1975. Germany was at the time one of the countries pleading for limited duration of the NPT, and one of the major defenders of its “European clause”, an interpretation according to which a federal Europe would inherit the nuclear status of France under the treaty. Meanwhile, and contrary to France, Bonn definitively abandoned the ambition of disposing of its own nuclear force, and decided to play a leading role within NATO and, in particular, in the nuclear plans of the Alliance.⁹

A divergent approach to NATO’s deterrence policy

In this context, Germany increased its participation in NATO’s integrated military structure, especially in the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), even if it initially refused to host Thor and Jupiter nuclear missiles from fear of provoking strong opposition outside its borders. From 1960 on, it agreed, however, to acquire dual-capable aircraft and to station nuclear weapons on some of its airbases, under the arrangement known as “dual key.” By then, France’s decision to go its own way and build its national nuclear deterrent meant that close bilateral deterrence cooperation was no longer an option. Bonn, instead, increased its commitments within NATO, especially on nuclear issues. Several options were debated to give non-nuclear allies more weight in Alliance decision-making, or even establish NATO formally as a fourth nuclear entity. The Multilateral Force (MLF) was the most advanced project in that regard, and was seen in Germany as a step in the right direction, even if still too limited.

While the debate on the MLF reached its peak, France and Germany still had varying views on the opportunity to integrate further European and NATO forces. By the time of the signature of the Elysée Agreement, voices could be heard in both countries against falling entirely into dependence on Washington. On the contrary, some kept working on the idea of a European nuclear force, such as former Defense Minister Franz-Josef Strauss in 1963.¹⁰ This echoed the French position, which at first had welcomed the German participation in the MLF but was by then opposing it, and considered that

the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Origins of the Nuclear Order, CSS Studies in Security and International Relations, New York: Routledge, 2016.

9. J. Mackby and W. Slocombe, “Germany: The Model Case, A Historical Imperative”, in: K. Campbell, R. Einhorn and M. Reiss (eds.), *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices*, Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2004.

10. S. Schrafstetter and S. Twigge, *Avoiding Armageddon, Europe, the United States and the Struggle for Nuclear Nonproliferation, 1945-1970*, Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004, p. 142.

Bonn had to choose between deeper European integration and the MLF.¹¹ Despite some openings from both sides, President de Gaulle never put forward any concrete offer of extending the French deterrent or any proposition to launch formal French-German cooperation.

By 1966, the MLF initiative had progressively been dismissed, but, through the existing instruments (Nuclear Policy Group, dual-capable aircraft), NATO remained the FRG's main channel to participate in strategic deterrence. By 1975, Berlin had finally given up the ambition of national nuclear weapons by ratifying the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). On the other side, France had been following a very different path by leaving NATO's integrated command structure – in particular, all structures dealing with nuclear planning – and by refusing to sign the NPT, criticizing it as the fruit of a US-USSR nuclear duopoly.

During the second part of the Cold War, the two partners still had to take stances on ongoing debates. As Europeans feared a “decoupling” of their interests *vis-a-vis* American security concerns, the two states hinted at the possibility of some level of French assurance in case of a threat to Germany, a proposal later expressed during Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's presidency in 1976 in the notion of “enlarged sanctuarization.”¹² New issues also surfaced. France developed a force of tactical, or “pre-strategic”, nuclear weapons with very short range (the Pluton missile), in accordance with the option of conducting a last-warning nuclear shot envisioned in the doctrine. This move worried Germany, whose leaders dreaded the country being used as a nuclear battlefield. The planned replacement of the Pluton by the Hades, which could reach the Democratic Republic of Germany (DRG), slightly alleviated these fears, as did the commitment by the French authorities that they would consult with their German counterparts if weapons were being launched from or to Germany. That said, Bonn remained fundamentally ill at ease with a system targeting German land, including its Eastern part, since the latter aspired to be reunited at some point, and since its policy was by then to improve its relationship with the DRG.¹³

The two countries also had to compare their perspectives during the Euromissile crisis. Although preoccupied by the Soviet Union's deployment of the SS-20, France was initially rather quiet on the issue of what NATO's response should be. With President Mitterrand's speech in the Bundestag in

11. F. Bozo, *De Gaulle, the United States and the Atlantic Alliance. Two Strategies for Europe*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001, p. 119.

12. A. Adrets, “Les relations franco-allemandes et le fait nucléaire dans une Europe divisée”, *Politique Etrangère*, Vol. 49, No. 3, 1984.

13. D. Yost, “La coopération franco-allemande en matière de Défense”, *Politique Etrangère*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 1988.

1983 (“Pacifists are in the West, missiles in the East”), Paris clearly moved to support its neighbors’ position and the Dual-Track Decision, expressing the idea of European solidarity within NATO.¹⁴

Different assessments at the end of the Cold War

With the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the two partners followed diverging trajectories as NATO’s nuclear deterrence slowly receded to the background. On the one hand, French presidents gradually implied that the vital interests of the country could be extended to European partners, and politicians like then Premier Alain Juppé used the notion of “concerted deterrence.” The idea of mutualizing deterrence at the European level or with Germany popped up in various French fora, for instance in the propositions of the Fondapol, a Paris-based think-tank, during the 2012 Presidential election campaign.¹⁵ On the other hand, however, Berlin showed little enthusiasm for these suggestions, especially in the later years of the 20th century. Public opinion and a majority of political leaders were indeed very critical of the resumption of nuclear testing by Jacques Chirac and did not want to have anything to do with the French program in this context. It is noteworthy that, even in this climate of divergence, a reference to deterrence in a French-German joint document occurred in 1996, in a text signed by Chancellor Kohl and President Chirac during the Nuremberg Summit.¹⁶

Until the mid-2010s, Germany showed little interest in French propositions perceived as difficult to reconcile with efforts in favor of non-proliferation, questionable in terms of international law, and lacking urgency in the post-Cold War strategic environment. The prospects of common work on nuclear deterrence, often studied among experts and sometimes officials until the 1990s, almost disappeared from the discussions afterwards, and the occasional French openness on the issue met at best polite indifference, and even outright hostility.

14. F. Bozo, *Mitterrand, la fin de la Guerre froide et l’unification allemande, de Yalta à Maastricht*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 2005.

15. Fondation pour l’innovation politique (Fondapol), “Pour une Fédération Franco-Allemande”, *12 idées pour 2012*, 2012.

16. Concept commun franco-allemand en matière de sécurité et de défense, Bonn: 16^e Sommet du Conseil Franco-Allemand de Sécurité et de Défense, 1996. “*Nos pays sont prêts à engager un dialogue concernant la fonction de la dissuasion nucléaire dans le contexte de la politique de défense européenne*”.

During the Cold War, France and Germany perceived nuclear deterrence both as an imperative for their national security against the Warsaw Pact, and an element of national prestige. Due to historical factors, the two countries followed divergent paths: independence on one side and active participation in a nuclear alliance on the other. However, these opposite choices did not mask the common appreciation of the value of nuclear deterrence, which was highly visible in common positions adopted during some Cold War crises. On the other hand, the end of the two-block era was perceived differently in the two countries, with continued attachment to an autonomous nuclear force in France and rising doubts on the value of nuclear weapons in Germany.

Current perspectives on nuclear deterrence: a rapprochement of positions

Evolving perceptions of the international security context in the framework of NATO

Historically, the French-German relationship has been marked not only by clear opposition but also by many shared interests. The evolution of the international security environment confronts the two partners with the same challenges in this domain.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the fear of a major state-led conflict slowly eroded in Europe, and, for the German public opinion as well as some of its leaders, nuclear deterrence became to some extent anachronistic. Some key officials asked for a reduction in the role of nuclear weapons in the security doctrine of the Atlantic Alliance.¹⁷ This trend peaked with former minister Guido Westerwelle's attempt to rid Europe of the B61 gravity bombs stationed on its territory.

While the decline of the role of nuclear weapons and of interstate conflict dominated perceptions during the first years of the century, a new era of tensions between major powers has intensified since the mid-2010s. These tensions oppose mainly the West, trying to preserve the *status quo*, against major challengers such as China and Russia, which claim a bigger role, contest the existing order and demonstrate their military power. In the European theater, relations between the NATO allies and Moscow have soured, especially around regional crises like the conflict in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea by Russia. The nuclear factor is far from absent from this political confrontation, as evidenced by Russian behavior and statements. It is even more obviously visible in the programs to modernize nuclear arsenals on both sides, and the display of dual-use assets on strategic locations along the Russian/NATO border (Russian strategic bomber flights

17. See, for instance, "Fischer Rebuffed by N-Powers", *The Irish Times*, December 9, 1998.

along European coasts, deployment of nuclear-capable Iskander ballistic missiles in Kaliningrad, etc.).

The annexation of Crimea was seen on both sides of the Rhine as a confirmation that Putin's Russia could constitute a threat to European security and should be met with firmness.¹⁸ It also led to a new perception of the role of nuclear weapons in NATO's deterrence strategy. Before this, the German authorities cautioned against nuclear signaling and feared that Russia could interpret strong words and actions as escalatory.¹⁹ Until the 2010s, Germany was reluctant to highlight the role of nuclear weapons in the Alliance strategy, which it did not see as paramount to answer the Alliance's security threats.²⁰ In the background, the German government had to deal with the lack of popularity of nuclear weapons generally, and of those stationed in Germany in particular, which led it to favor the *status quo* without stressing too much the nuclear policy and capabilities of NATO.

With the Chicago Summit of 2012, it appeared that Germany would favor recognition of the role of deterrence in the Alliance.²¹ This position was confirmed at following meetings in Wales and in Warsaw. In this last summit in July 2018, the decision to warn Moscow against nuclear adventurism and the reminder of the Alliance's strategy of defense and deterrence was taken with the support of both France and Germany.²²

Defining what should be the "appropriate mix" of conventional forces, missile defense and nuclear deterrence to support NATO's deterrence and defense posture is a bigger challenge for France and Germany, as they seek to strike a balance between the need to assure the security of the Alliance and convince the Kremlin of their collective resolve to defend all NATO members, without giving Moscow any justification to harden its declaratory policy, acquire new capabilities or initiate new shows of force abroad to affirm its power both domestically and externally. They present nuanced approaches on the best way to reassure worried allies in the face of President Putin's policy without going back on commitments made to Russia in the

18. S. Fischer, "The End of European Bilateralisms: Germany, France, and Russia", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, December 12, 2017.

19. J. Gotkowska, "High on Reassurance, Low on Deterrence – Germany's Stance on Strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank", *OSW Commentary*, July 5, 2016. This was still visible in some comments made after the crisis such as the criticism of NATO's response to Russia, seen as "saber-rattling", by then Foreign Minister Steinmeier in 2016; B. Uhlenbroich, "Steinmeier kritisiert Nato-Manöver in Osteuropa", *Bild*, June 18, 2016.

20. J. W. Davis and U. Jasper, "Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons as a 'Trojan Horse': Explaining Germany's Ambivalent Attitude", *European Security*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2014.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Warsaw Summit Communiqué, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw, July 8-9, 2016, paragraphs 10 and 52.

NATO-Russia Founding Act signed in Paris in 1997, and provoking new tensions.

Shaping the current NATO deterrence mix

Despite these slightly different positions, the two partners noticed that their views were getting closer in recent years. The balance found relatively easily during the NATO Warsaw Summit in 2016 shows that, contrary to previous summits, Paris and Berlin are now globally seeing eye-to-eye on the appropriate response to the Russian threat. After years of unsuccessful efforts and following an evolution of its perception of European security, Germany has more or less given up its ambition of advocating for a diminished role of nuclear weapons in the Alliance posture, and has therefore accepted a nuclear “language” rather consistent with the French view. This shift is visible in official summits and diplomatic meetings, but also appears in public debate. Recently, a few German columnists called for a European or German deterrent,²³ and a representative in parliament ordered a legal review on the legality of Germany financing the French or British deterrent. These calls are not significant by themselves and do not represent seriously considered options, but they could mean that the taboo on nuclear issues is slowly eroding, and that the German public at large is being gradually converted to the idea that nuclear weapons still play a role in strategic affairs.²⁴

On the French side, there is less opposition than before to the deployment of ballistic missile defense within the Alliance, which is clearly defined as being a complementary tool and not a substitute for nuclear deterrence. This shift was perceptible with the adoption of the Warsaw Communiqué.²⁵

In recent stances, Berlin and Paris drew their talking points from the agreed Warsaw communiqué and therefore mentioned the fact that deterrence remained paramount in the current context. This being settled, the two countries seem to be able to talk more calmly; divergences expressed are matters of degree and not of nature (framing of declaratory policies,

23. U. Kühn, T. Volpe and B. Thompson, “Tracking the German Nuclear Debate”, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, September 7, 2017.

24. T. Volpe and U. Kühn, “Germany’s Nuclear Education: Why a Few Elites Are Testing a Taboo”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2017.

25. N. Guibert, “Le sommet de l’OTAN à Varsovie, une étape vers le bouclier antimissile”, *Le Monde*, July 9, 2016.

balance between deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment, strategy and relevant capabilities to prevail in escalation, etc.).

While the lack of resolution of the crisis with Moscow clearly helped this evolution, Russia is not the only reason for the German shift, which is also linked to a change in the domestic balance between supporters of a benevolent foreign policy, multilateralism and disarmament (represented in particular by former foreign minister Guido Westerwelle and a part of the diplomatic corps) and those favoring “realism”, insisting on European and national security, predominant within the Defense Ministry and the Chancellery.²⁶ While German foreign policy traditionally emphasizes the role of multilateralism, the Merkel coalitions have demonstrated since 2012 that such a priority had to be combined with the need to display solidarity within NATO, and that Germany’s interests were better served by taking a leading role in the Alliance, for instance in dealing with Russia, than by contesting the predominant view on the issue of nuclear weapons.²⁷

For France, the re-emergence of a threat in the East was interpreted as a confirmation that arms control and disarmament should be pursued with caution, in close observation of the security context and by keeping in mind that strategic surprises are always possible.²⁸ Moreover, the election in Washington of an unpredictable leader known for his critical positions on NATO also prompted the two partners to work closely together. Beyond their difference of status linked to France’s nuclear deterrent, Paris and Berlin have therefore managed to insist on convergences rather than differences, including on the specific issue of the role of deterrence on the European continent.

Side-by-side adaptation of nuclear deterrence

For France, the future of nuclear deterrence seems quite predictable, as it is hard to imagine how Paris could turn its back on its independent nuclear deterrent, at least in the near future. Discussions could arise on a possible greater role in NATO’s nuclear planning and integration, or on the emergence of a European deterrent. But the most likely scenario is the continuation of the present policy and the modernization of the necessary assets.

26. J. W. Davis and U. Jasper, “Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons as a ‘Trojan Horse’: Explaining Germany’s Ambivalent Attitude”, *op. cit.*

27. R. L. Glatz and M. Zapfe, “Ambitionierte Rahmennation: Deutschland in der Nato”, *SWP-Aktuell*, Vol. 62, 2017.

28. See in particular the *Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale 2017*, Paris: La Documentation Française, 2017, p. 40.

There is more uncertainty across the border, as Germany entertains some ambiguity on the future of its participation in the NATO nuclear mission. The country plays today a major role in the nuclear operations of the Alliance, thanks to its squadron of Tornado dual-capable aircraft, and the stationing of around 20 B61 bombs on the Büchel Airbase in Rhineland-Pfalz.²⁹

However, as its fleet is aging, it has yet to make an official decision on its renewal, although several options have been discussed in the press, in parliament and by members of the German armed forces. Depending on the design of the replacement aircraft, Germany could pursue or halt the nuclear mission. Among the five European states involved in NATO nuclear sharing arrangements, all others have started the process of procuring the F-35. A German decision could be made by the new coalition in 2019 but the attempts to extend the life of the current Tornado fleet for another decade could postpone the debate on participation in the nuclear mission in the medium term.³⁰ At this stage, several options are on the table. The Tornado could be kept operational until a new-generation European fighter is built. This project, dubbed Future Combat Air System (FCAS), is a political priority, announced during the French-German Security and Defense Council of 13 July 2017.³¹ However, the technical difficulties encountered by the fleet make it unlikely that the Tornado would be in a position to play a role in NATO's nuclear sharing mission until 2040-2050, the timeframe when the next-generation weapon system (NGWS) could emerge.³²

Germany could also order a batch of F-35s to fill this mission, a solution that some leaders of the German Air Force prefer, but would probably be costly and jeopardize the European next-gen fighter option.³³ Eurofighters could also be adapted to carry the B61 bomb, but the necessary certification of the aircraft would induce political and industrial challenges.³⁴ If the German preference for continuing its participation in NATO's nuclear mission appears clearly in conversations with officials, and is even implied

29. H. Kristensen, "Upgrades at US Nuclear Bases in Europe Acknowledge Security Risk", Washington: Federation of American Scientists, September 10, 2015.

30. G. Hegmann, "Dieser US-Kampffjet könnte den Tornado ablösen", *Die Welt*, May 17, 2017, available at: www.welt.de/wirtschaft.

31. Relevé de conclusions, Paris: French German Council on Security and Defense, July 13, 2017, available at: www.france-alemagne.fr.

32. M. Gebauer and G. Traufetter, "Deutsche 'Tornados' sind nicht Nato-tauglich", *Spiegel Online*, March 31, 2018.

33. J. Trevithik, "Germany Says the F-35 is the 'Preferred Choice' to Replace its Tornados", *The Drive*, November 8, 2017, available at: www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone.

34. "Deutschland peilt neuen Eurofighter für Tornado-Nachfolge an", *Reuters*, December 11, 2017, available at: <https://de.reuters.com>; Antwort des Parlamentarischen Staatssekretärs Dr. Ralf Brauksiepe vom 11. Dezember 2017, Bundestag; Schriftliche Fragen mit den in der Woche vom 11. Dezember 2017 eingegangenen Antworten der Bundesregierung, 11 Dezember 2017.

by the 2018 Coalition agreement,³⁵ its capacity to do so will be largely determined by the timely decision and political support to procure dual-capable aircraft, a choice that cannot be assumed at this date.

At the same time, Berlin will have to decide if it agrees to the deployment of modernized B61-12 on its territory, in replacement of the older versions. Such a move could be very unpopular. If German current leaders expressed their support for NATO's deterrence policy at the highest level and in international fora, convincing legislators in parliament and the public to fund these two developments, and therefore concretely endorse German participation in the nuclear deterrence mission, could prove more difficult.

While the beginning of the 21st century opened with antagonistic perceptions on the importance of nuclear deterrence to tackle upcoming challenges, the transformation of the security environment as well as internal factors have increasingly led to the sharing of views between the two neighboring countries. This convergence has made it much easier to adopt agreed language on deterrence in the framework of NATO. It has also been observed on the related issue of disarmament, even if nuances remain more perceptible.

35. Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa, Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland, Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land Koalitionsvertrag, zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD 19. Legislaturperiode, 2018, p.148. "As long as nuclear weapons play a deterrent role in the Strategic Concept of NATO, Germany has an interest in participating in strategic discussions and planning processes."

Towards a world free of nuclear weapons? French-German perspectives on disarmament

The Westerwelle era and the rift on disarmament in Europe

For a variety of reasons, the popular pressure against nuclear weapons was stronger in Germany than in France throughout the Cold War. By the beginning of the 1990s, this difference became more pronounced, and a point of opposition in the relationship between the two countries.

In the wake of the popular movements of the 1980s, German public opinion's strongly pacifist and antinuclear preferences were echoed by political leaders, especially in the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Green Party. These views influenced the official positions of the government, which developed a pro-disarmament rhetoric, part of a comprehensive attempt to shape an image of a pacifist and benevolent power. Since the 1990s, Germany has therefore been pushing NATO towards more efforts on arms control and disarmament. It started with clear support for the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 1987.

Later on, several issues fueled disagreement between the two allies. In 1998, Foreign Affairs Minister Joschka Fischer campaigned for the adoption by NATO of a no-first-use policy, a position that found little support among other Alliance members, particularly France.³⁶ In 2010, one of his successors, Guido Westerwelle (Liberal Party), publicly asked for the withdrawal of the non-strategic nuclear weapons stationed on German territory and displayed a clear "antinuclear activism" in preparation for the Lisbon NATO Summit dedicated to redefining the Alliance's nuclear policy. In both cases, France was very critical of Germany's stance. Upstream discussion and preparatory work were not enough to erase the

36. O. Meier, "The German Debate on Tactical Nuclear Weapons", *Recherches & Documents*, No. 2, Paris: Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, 2008.

disagreements between the two and to present a united front.³⁷ Moreover, Berlin strongly supported the deployment of ballistic missile defense in Europe, with the view that it could substitute in the long run for nuclear deterrence – a prospect met with resistance on the other side of the Rhine. In Paris, the German eagerness for a world free of nuclear weapons was perceived as a blow against the legitimacy of nuclear deterrence, within NATO but also outside of it. It was therefore especially difficult to agree on common language during the Lisbon Summit of 2010, where Paris and Berlin appeared as the two extremes in the Alliance nuclear debate.

Diplomacy and the fundamental value of nuclear weapons

Fundamentally, part of the reason why Germany showed itself more ambitious about disarmament was because it shared the view that nuclear disarmament is necessary to convince non-nuclear-weapon states not to proliferate. France, on the other hand, remained skeptical about the link between the former and the latter. Berlin's diplomatic stance was weakened in this regard by the fact that it has been hosting some of NATO's nuclear weapons on its territory for decades, leading many non-nuclear-weapon states to denounce Germany as taking a contradictory stance.³⁸ This approach served, however, as a justification for a more moderate stance in fora dedicated to non-proliferation and disarmament, such as the NPT Review Conferences or, in recent years, the conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. Berlin opposed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and did not participate in the convention leading to its adoption in July 2017. But it spoke clearly in favor of a world free of nuclear weapons and supported this goal; for instance, in the open-ended working group on disarmament in 2016.³⁹ In this framework, it called for concrete initiatives and the implementation of the step-by-step approach, which occasionally put it in an uncomfortable position.

Berlin remains therefore under strong popular pressure to appear as a leader on this issue, and has to deploy extended diplomatic efforts and to show its willingness to compromise to try to obtain political successes in multilateral disarmament fora. France does not suffer from this kind of dilemma. Although it emphasizes what it considers an honorable track

37. I. Traynor, "Germany and France in Nuclear Weapons Dispute Ahead of NATO Summit", *The Guardian*, November 18, 2010.

38. U. Kühn, "Can Germany Be Europe's Nuclear Bridge Builder?", *Carnegie Europe*, August 25, 2017.

39. Introductory Statement by H. E. Ambassador Michael Biontino, Permanent Representative of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament, Open Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament Geneva, February 22, 2016.

record on disarmament, it does not acknowledge any connection between the fulfillment of non-proliferation obligations and the reduction of nuclear arsenals worldwide, which in its eyes depends on the security context. Paris has therefore been, on many occasions, less compromising than its neighbor, and decided for instance to boycott the conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

Disarmament: taking into account new factors

Several developments also make possible an increase in French and German cooperation efforts in the field of disarmament. First, both countries fear that the TPNW could be detrimental to the NPT and to international security.⁴⁰ They share, therefore, strategic interests in making sure that the NPT is not damaged and that the non-proliferation regime is not weakened, in particular by pushing for an incremental approach on disarmament and backing concrete measures limiting the development of nuclear weapons.

Bilateral cooperation on this is all the more relevant as the European Union is unable to play a substantial role because of the irreconcilable views of some of its members (France and – for now – the UK on one side, Austria and Ireland on the other). However, taking into account the demand for nuclear disarmament, illustrated by the adoption of the TPNW, is a necessity. Displaying a much closer vision today, the two partners could usefully work together to explain the merits of the step-by-step approach and promote their initiatives in favor of intermediary propositions (Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty – CTBT; Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty – FMCT, etc.), but also their willingness to solve security crises that

40. Treaty banning nuclear weapons – 7 July 2017, Quai d’Orsay French official statement and joint Press Statement from the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations of the United States, United Kingdom and France:

“It is a text unsuited to the international security context [...] Nuclear disarmament is not achieved by decree, it must be built. [...] The next priority stages in nuclear disarmament are the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons, and the swift introduction of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.”

Bericht der Bundesregierung zum Stand der Bemühungen um Rüstungskontrolle, *op. cit.*

“The Federal Government has voted against Resolution A / 71/450 together with a large number of like-minded states. In its eyes, a treaty aiming at the immediate prohibition or proscription of nuclear weapons is unlikely to bring closer the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. A ban that does not involve nuclear-weapon states, does not impose restrictions on the production of fissile material, does not provide for inspection and verification, and ignores the security environment, will remain ineffective. From the point of view of the Federal Government, such an approach cannot lead to real, verifiable and irreversible disarmament. An immediate ban on nuclear weapons would also be incompatible with German security interests, especially with Germany’s obligations in NATO to which the Federal Government is fully committed. In addition, the Federal Government believes that a prohibition treaty without or even against the nuclear-weapon states could pose the risk of weakening the NPT.”

need to be addressed to enable concrete disarmament. Naturally, both should lead to a policy of engagement on these issues within their NPT grouping, the P5 for France and the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) for Germany. However, in view of the difficulties of both groups in finding a new momentum in the NPT review cycle started in 2017,⁴¹ it might also be useful for the two European neighbors to work together on this. The joint effort of a nuclear-weapon state and an “umbrella state” could help bridge the gap between nuclear and non-nuclear states, and go beyond traditional oppositions.

Working together would also help them reduce their isolation on the global stage. For France, but also for other non-nuclear states in NATO, it is necessary to convince European partners that discussions on disarmament need to take into account the strategic environment. Germany, because of its key position within the EU, can be a bridge-builder, and try to negotiate compromises with France – in particular to bring European voices slightly closer. The polarization of the debate, especially since the adoption of the TPNW, makes this mission more difficult since Berlin, as a NATO ally, is no longer perceived as an honest broker. As a result, German diplomacy is pushed almost against its wish towards nuclear weapon states. Like other NATO members, Germany is a key target of abolitionist NGOs that are taking advantage of the lack of popular support for nuclear deterrence. However, a definitive renunciation of a middle way between these two communities would not be consistent in the long run with the German public’s aversion to nuclear weapons and its cultural identity as a proactive state in terms of non-proliferation and disarmament.⁴² It will therefore probably try to find a way to be influential as an intermediary between the promoters of the Ban Treaty and its opponents.

Currently, however, Germany’s lesser support for disarmament is noticeable, and will probably remain visible under the new coalition, which makes the withdrawal of NATO nuclear weapons from Europe conditional on improvement in the global context and does not support the TPNW.⁴³ This shift can be explained by the fact that this issue can no longer be a way of enhancing Germany’s standing abroad and its international influence. This momentary difficulty could be transformed into an opportunity if the

41. A. Berger, “After Adoption: Recommendations for Strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty”, in: S. Shetty and D. Raynova (eds.), *Breakthrough or Breakpoint? Global Perspectives on the Nuclear Ban Treaty, Global Security Special Report*, London: European Leadership Network, 2017.

42. H. Müller, “Germany and WMD Proliferation,” *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2003.

43. *Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa, Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland, Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land Koalitionsvertrag, zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD*, 19. Legislaturperiode, 2018, p. 148. “Successful disarmament talks create the conditions for the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons stationed in Germany and Europe.”

French-German partnership is used within the EU to propose concrete solutions to the crisis of arms control and non-proliferation, while respecting the different views of all European member states. This objective could be better served by a French endeavor to be less antagonistic and more conciliatory with non-nuclear weapon states' demands in general and the supporters of the Prohibition Treaty in particular. Efforts to adopt a gentler tone are supported by some French officials and could make it easier not only for Germany but also for other "umbrella states" and "moderate disarmers" to lead new common initiatives in favor of concrete disarmament – for instance, on verification or alert postures.

Germany's interest in promoting nuclear disarmament is rooted in the special sensitivity of the German public to nuclear issues and an identity concerned with playing a positive role in multilateral fora such as the NPT. This stance leads Berlin to be generally more ambitious than Paris in terms of nuclear disarmament. However, the current impasse of the non-proliferation regime has led to a polarization of stakeholders, and Germany finds it difficult to continue playing the role of bridge-builder it has maintained up to now. On the other side, France has been open to debate and made substantial efforts, but some of its declarations and difficulty in embracing the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons create an image of a highly reluctant disarmer on the international stage. A common effort to revive step-by-step disarmament can only be beneficial to achieving concrete progress on this aspect.

From parallel thinking to fruitful cooperation on sustaining non-proliferation norms

Conflicting interests on non-proliferation

Proliferation is currently a key concern for both Paris and Berlin, and has been so for a number of years. Not only do both states share globally similar perspectives on the risks of nuclear proliferation; they have been actively sustaining the non-proliferation norms and have worked in concert to solve proliferation crises. France and Germany have not always displayed such concern. Until the beginning of the 1990s, both countries were criticized for their lack of rigor in implementing non-proliferation policies.⁴⁴ They were especially reluctant to apply strict export control rules because economic and industrial considerations prevailed over political and security objectives. In Germany, this preference led to a wait-and-see, even at times recalcitrant, approach to the verification mandates of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the adoption of permissive and non-intrusive laws on the export of dual-use items. Beyond the will not to appear as a second-rate country subjected to very inquisitive inspections, this policy was chiefly guided by the objective of promoting the active German nuclear industry.⁴⁵

On the French side also, political discourses contradicted ambitious trade policies, with paradoxically, on some occasions, the fear of losing market share to German competitors. When Paris adopted stricter directives, it first made sure that Berlin was making a similar move. The two neighbors did not hesitate to push for common practices in order to better

44. B. Tertrais, "France and Nuclear Non-Proliferation", in: O. Njølstad (ed.), *Nuclear Proliferation and International Order, Challenges to the Non-Proliferation Treaty*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p. 219; J. Krause, "German Nuclear Export Policy and the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons – Another Sonderweg?", Paper presented to the Conference "Germany and Nuclear Nonproliferation", organized by the Aspen Institute, Berlin and the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, Washington, February 26, 2005.

45. H. Müller, "Germany and WMD Proliferation", *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2003.

withstand the pressure from Washington for stricter export controls on dual-use goods and technologies.⁴⁶

The discovery of the extent of the Iraqi military nuclear program in 1991, which had benefited from French help in the late 1970s, was essential in initiating a change of policy in France. Likewise, as late as the 1990s, the media reported that German industrials were involved in infamous proliferation networks active in Pakistan, Iraq, Libya and Iran. These cases raised awareness at the governmental level, and both administrations took action to strengthen their export control mechanisms and eventually subject all their exports to the most stringent non-proliferation directives by the end of the 1990s.⁴⁷

Non-proliferation: a joint recognition leading to common work

The proliferation crises of the early 21st century were an opportunity for the two partners to redefine their policies in this regard. On Iraq, they decided to keep their distance from the counter-proliferation policy favored by the Bush administration and to call for a diplomatic solution of the crisis based on multilateral instruments.⁴⁸ They especially worked together to harmonize their positions and speak with one voice at the UN Security Council where the invasion was debated.⁴⁹ This display of solidarity was also a way to avoid being isolated in relations with Washington. It pushed the two partners to brush aside initial disagreements on the Iraqi crisis and to emphasize their common perception that a military intervention should only occur as a very last resort.⁵⁰

France and Germany's relationships with Iran varied over time, but both countries realized at the beginning of the 2000s that they had an interest in solving the crisis provoked by the revelation of the Iranian clandestine nuclear program, and to preserve the global credibility of the non-proliferation regime. Despite the lesser appeal of sanctions in Germany (in part due to its strong economic ties with Tehran), the two countries have worked jointly within the E3 (France, Germany and the United Kingdom)

46. G.-H. Soutou, "La France et la non-prolifération nucléaire", *Revue historique des armées*, No. 262, 2011.

47. S. Kornelius, "The Evolution of Germany's Nonproliferation Policy" in: *U.S.-European Nonproliferation Perspectives, A Transatlantic Conversation*, Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009.

48. X. Pacreau, "La France et l'Allemagne à travers la crise iraquienne : objectifs et mobiles", *Annuaire Français de Relations Internationales*, Vol. 5, Paris: Centre Thucydide, 2004.

49. "France and Germany Unite Against Iraq War", *The Guardian*, January 22, 2003.

50. C. Demesmay, "France-Allemagne-Russie : Retour sur une alliance atypique", *Synthèse* No. 91, *Fondation Robert Schuman*, 2003.

ever since to enforce multilateral sanctions. The trio, assisted by the EU High Representative for Foreign Policy, also endeavored to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict and prevent military action or even an American attempt to topple the regime.⁵¹ They thus led the negotiations between 2003 and 2006. China, Russia and the United States later joined the talks. The two countries endorsed slightly different methods during the negotiations; Germany tried to play the role of mediator, thanks to its historical good relationship with Iran, while France felt free to exert more pressure in order to obtain a stronger deal. The two countries demonstrated nevertheless that they were following the same goal, which led to the signing of a deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on 14 July 2015. Their slightly different angles, combined with the approaches of the other delegations, gave them a complementary role in the process, which in all likelihood played out in favor of the adoption of a better deal.

That being said, and in spite of joint work in a shared perspective, France and Germany demonstrated slight nuances in the way they dealt with that crisis, and, more globally, similar cases of proliferation at this time, such as North Korea. For Berlin, the P5's possession of nuclear weapons was a hindrance in the diplomatic efforts to convince other states not to proliferate. German discourses therefore highlighted that delays in disarmament emphasized the value of nuclear weapons and could encourage other states to join the nuclear club.⁵²

Unsurprisingly, France held a very different opinion. It noted that, during the 1990s, many efforts were conducted in favor of disarmament in Europe, the United States and Russia, and that at the same time new countries were developing illicit nuclear programs (Iran, North Korea, Libya and Iraq). It was therefore skeptical about the reality of the linkage between the two issues. It was also less convinced than its neighbor of the need to accommodate the non-aligned countries with more efforts on disarmament, being of the mind that their stances are often ideological and that they are insufficiently aware of the real risks of nuclear proliferation.⁵³

Despite this difference of approach, the two states have come closer over the years on these issues and have shared during recent decades the same agenda on non-proliferation. Their active diplomacy in this field included supporting the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban

51. O. Meier, "European Efforts to Solve the Conflict over Iran's Nuclear Programme: How Has the European Union Performed?", *Non-Proliferation Papers*, No. 27, EU Non-Proliferation Consortium, 2013.

52. H. Müller, "Nuclear Weapons and German Interests: An Attempt at Redefinition", *PRIF-Report*, No. 55, Frankfurt: Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, 2000.

53. C. Grand, "France, Nuclear Weapons and Nonproliferation", in: *U.S.-European Nonproliferation Perspectives: A Transatlantic Conversation*, *op. cit.*

Treaty (CTBT) and calling for negotiations in favor of a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons (FMCT).

Proliferation and arms control: promoting a European voice

For many countries, proliferation *per se* has receded to the background of their foreign policy priorities, as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) seemed to solve the Iranian nuclear crisis for at least a decade, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was less and less considered to be primarily a proliferation issue. However, proliferation remains a key preoccupation of France and Germany, and both governments tend to be equally vigilant on the need to make sure that the IAEA safeguards regime is as robust as possible, that export controls worldwide remain relevant, and that the risk of WMD terrorism (through UN Security Council resolution 1540 in particular) is addressed seriously. They thus work together to counter the international apathy on this issue in a productive manner.

After the signature of the JCPOA, France and Germany insisted on the need for the international community to remain mobilized to ensure the implementation of the deal. On this front, France has been slightly more demanding than its partner, as it was during the negotiation phase. Likewise, it has been more vocal in its condemnation of the ongoing Iranian ballistic missile program. Germany was more cautious, and feared in particular that recognizing the need to negotiate limitations on the missile program might legitimize American attempts to dismantle the deal. However, the willingness to show a united approach, especially in dealing with the Trump White House, is stronger than this slight divergence, as was shown by the joint statements made by the two foreign ministers inviting “Iran to go back on its ballistic missile program.”⁵⁴

54. “UPDATE 1-France, Germany Want Iran to Reverse Ballistic Missile Programme”, *Reuters*, December 4, 2017.

With the election of an American president openly hostile to the deal signed by his predecessor, the French and Germans shared the goal to preserve the JCPOA from a unilateral withdrawal of the United States. To this end the two partners were seen joining forces with their British partners to convince US stakeholders not to violate the deal. This lobbying effort included an attempt to convince the Republican administration of the security risks linked to an unraveling of the JCPOA, displaying EU unity by making joint public and private interventions.⁵⁵ When these efforts proved unsuccessful in preventing the US president from announcing in October 2017 that he was not in a position to certify that Iran was living up to its commitment, the three European partners urged Congress, through a joint statement, to refrain from taking “any steps that might undermine the JCPOA.”⁵⁶ Alongside the United Kingdom, France and Germany were active in the later months of 2017 and early 2018 in working on a common European posture, which also included a plan on how to preserve the deal if the United States withdrew from it unilaterally, involving a reflection on how to continue to do business with Iran in the event of new US secondary sanctions and how to convince Iran not to renounce to its commitments.⁵⁷

Despite European efforts, President Trump decided to stop waiving sanctions on Iran on 8 May 2018, which amounted to a unilateral American violation of the 2015 agreement.⁵⁸ The last-minute pleas of President Macron and Chancellor Merkel, who both visited Washington in April 2018, were fruitless in making the US leader change his mind. Following-up on the announcement, France, Germany and the UK published a joint statement regretting the American withdrawal and insisting on Europe’s “continuing commitment to the JCPOA.”⁵⁹ Alongside the EU, they met on 15 May 2018 with Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif to try to convince Iran to stick to its commitments despite the renewal of US sanctions.⁶⁰

55. A. K. Sen, “European Ambassadors Defend Iran Nuclear Deal”, *Atlantic Council*, September 25, 2015.

56. Declaration by the Heads of State and Government of France, Germany and the United Kingdom, London: UK Prime Minister’s Office, October 13, 2017.

57. J. Borger, “Europe’s Governments Look to Bypass Trump to Save Iranian Nuclear Deal”, *The Guardian*, October 4, 2017.

58. “President Donald J. Trump is Ending United States Participation in an Unacceptable Iran Deal”, White House, May 8, 2018, available at: www.whitehouse.gov.

59. Joint statement from Prime Minister May, Chancellor Merkel and President Macron following President Trump’s statement on Iran, London: Prime Minister’s Office, May 8, 2018.

60. M. Pennetier and J. Irish, “Nucléaire : Le chef de la diplomatie iranienne à Bruxelles”, *Reuters*, May 15, 2018.

The two countries have maintained a common approach since then, working with the UK and the EU to enable some trade to be protected from the US sanctions. Several joint declarations have been issued, notably in August 2018⁶¹ and November 2018.⁶² More specifically, Paris and Berlin have worked together to set-up an EU Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), a clearing house that would enable European companies to do business with Iran without fearing US secondary sanctions. According to the press, France or Germany could have agreed to host the SPV, while its director would be an official from the other country.⁶³ Whether a political gesture or a real attempt to salvage some aspects of the JCPOA, the SPV has been put forward by French and German leaders not only as a way to implement their commitment to Iran but also as a way to assert the trade autonomy of the EU.⁶⁴

On North Korea, France and Germany have also developed increasingly similar positions. Until recently, Germany seemed less preoccupied than France, which dealt with it in particular as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. In the early years of the 21st century, France was less keen to promote engagement with Pyongyang, a choice that was illustrated by its choice not to develop an official diplomatic relationship with the DPRK,⁶⁵ contrary to Germany, and by its more limited involvement in trade.⁶⁶ Berlin also seemed less keen on sanctioning the regime. Even during the crisis of summer 2017, Chancellor Merkel talked with more enthusiasm of resuming diplomatic talks, offering Germany as a possible mediator and mentioning the precedent of the JCPOA, a link that was not made by French diplomats.⁶⁷ Germany's diplomats were also more critical of President Trump's escalatory rhetoric, while leading French diplomats cast light on Pyongyang's infringements.⁶⁸ However, the worsening of the crisis on the

61. Déclaration conjointe, Réimposition de sanctions par les États-Unis du fait de leur retrait du Plan d'action global commun, JCPOA, 6 août 2018.

62. Déclaration conjointe de la Haute représentante de l'Union Federica Mogherini, des ministres des Affaires étrangères français Jean-Yves Le Drian, allemand Heiko Maas et britannique Jeremy Hunt, et des ministres des Finances français Bruno Le Maire, allemand Olaf Scholz et britannique Philip Hammond, Bruxelles, 2 novembre 2018.

63. P. Wintour and S. K. Dehghan, "European 'Clearing House' to Bypass US Sanctions Against Iran", *The Guardian*, November 6, 2018.

64. J. Bruntsden and M. Peel, "France Vows to Lead Europe in Defying US on Iran Sanctions", *The Financial Times*, November 7, 2018; "EU stemmt sich gegen Trump", *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, September 25, 2018.

65. M. Fitzpatrick, "North Korean Proliferation Challenges: The Role of the European Union", *Non-Proliferation Papers*, No. 18, EU Non-Proliferation Consortium, 2012.

66. A. Sullivan, "A Closer Look at Which Countries Trade with North Korea", *Deutsche Welle*, September 5, 2017.

67. T. Gutschker, "Merkel: Deutschland kann im Nordkorea-Konflikt vermitteln", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 10, 2017.

68. F. Godement, "North Korea Showdown: Europe Can Only Watch", *Eurasia Review*, August 16, 2017.

peninsula in 2017 convinced the German authorities of the need for a harsher response, and made them lobby alongside French officials to try to persuade their fellow EU member states of the seriousness of the crisis and the need to adopt stricter sanctions and implement the existing ones. In September 2017, the two governments asked the EU Council for additional sanctions following the latest North Korean nuclear test.⁶⁹ In the summer of 2017, as they both criticized the rhetoric used by the Trump administration to communicate with Pyongyang,⁷⁰ they seemed to be clearly interested in enhancing the role of Europe in dealing with the DPRK.⁷¹ With the shift of approach in the White House, this possibility receded as neither Paris nor Berlin were considered as potential partners for negotiations or mediation, unlike Sweden, for instance. The leaders of both countries welcomed the announcement of a Kim-Trump summit, and they appear to be in a period of expectancy until the results of the Trump diplomatic undertaking surface. They remain, however, skeptical of any short-term resolution of the crisis, and called recently for better implementation of the sanctions.⁷²

Other priorities include promoting the entry into force of the CTBT or opening the negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT). Paris and Berlin hold rather similar views on these issues, which are consistent with the EU strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Common work is therefore useful in the framework of the NPT Review process to defend shared positions and be more influential on the international stage. However, the attempt to give new momentum to the non-proliferation regime is thwarted by the increasing gap between NPT members on the question of disarmament.

Regarding arms control, the main issues for the two partners is currently the resolution of disagreement on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Here again, they worked at different paces but reached similar conclusions. France called earlier on NATO to respond to alleged Russian violations, and recognized “serious doubts” about the implementation of the Treaty by Moscow.⁷³ Germany was initially more reserved and until recently expressed its “concern”, without more details.⁷⁴

69. “Germany, France Float New Sanctions after North Korea Nuclear Test”, *Reuters*, September 4, 2017.

70. S. Saeed, “French Minister: ‘Trump Method’ Not the Way to Deal with North Korea”, *Politico*, September 27, 2017.

71. J. Borger, “Merkel Offers German Role in Iran-style Nuclear Talks with North Korea”, *The Guardian*, September 10, 2017.

72. Nations unies - Corée du Nord - Non-prolifération - Intervention du représentant permanent de la France auprès des Nations unies - Conseil de sécurité (New York, 17 septembre 2018).

73. *Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale 2017*, Paris: La Documentation Française, 2017, p.19.

74. Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Alexander S. Neu, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Christine Buchholz, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE; Aktueller

Within the Nuclear Planning Group, Germany in the early stage of the crisis took the lead in asking for moderation. Berlin feared a return to the logic of an arms race between Russia and the West, and was worried about the prospects of developing new intermediate-range ballistic missiles that could be deployed in Europe – a move that would be extremely unpopular and probably impossible to achieve politically. In December 2017, US Secretary of Defense Mattis asked the Allies to adopt stronger language than the formula agreed on in Warsaw in 2016, which calls on Russia to “return to full compliance in a verifiable manner.”⁷⁵ This led to the adoption of a joint declaration by the North Atlantic Council, which recognized a Russian missile system “raising serious concerns.”⁷⁶ With the acceleration of the crisis in Fall 2018, the two partners followed the line of the United States and agreed that the evidence of Russian violation was convincing.⁷⁷ This conclusion enabled the adoption of a new consensus document in NATO. Berlin made a national statement holding the same view.⁷⁸ With the expected demise of the INF Treaty, Paris and Berlin will share interests on the future of strategic stability in Europe. They will also in all likelihood want to make sure that NATO does not suggest the deployment of ground-based systems in Europe, a proposition voiced in Washington⁷⁹ that would probably be unpopular on the continent.

Both partners are also lobbying for the preservation of other arms-control achievements such as the New Start Treaty, calling on President Trump to extend it.⁸⁰ This goal seems to be more often expressed in Germany, at least publicly, as the Foreign Ministry recognized that Germany’s voice should be heard on this matter.⁸¹ Favoring arms control

Stand des Washingtoner Vertragswerks über nukleare Mittelstrecken-systeme (INF-Verträge), February 22, 2017.

75. Statement by the Secretary General on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, Press Release 113, issued on July 30, 2014.

76. Statement by the North Atlantic Council on the INF Treaty, Press Release 180, issued on December 15, 2017.

77. Statement on the INF Treaty, Press Release 162, issued by the NATO Foreign Ministers, Brussels, December 4, 2018.

78. “USA legen Nato-Partnern Beweise gegen Russland vor”, *Spiegel Online*, November 30, 2018, available at: <http://www.spiegel.de>.

79. “Russian Compliance with the INF Treaty: Background and Issues for Congress”, CRS Report R43832, updated on December 7, 2018.

80. *Bericht der Bundesregierung zum Stand der Bemühungen um Rüstungskontrolle, Abrüstung und Nichtverbreitung sowie über die Entwicklung der Streitkräftepotenziale* (Jahresabrüstungsbericht 2016), Berlin: Deutscher Bundestag, April 18, 2017. “From the point of view of the Federal Government, strategic balance requires that the US and Russia deal with the establishment of a successor regime for strategic nuclear weapons after the implementation deadline of the New START treaty in 2018 and it urges both sides to do so.”

81. Meeting with German Federal Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, Deep Cuts Commission, August 21, 2017. “They [the Deep Cuts Commission members] have called upon us to say that Europe must raise its voice, and must represent its interests more clearly towards Moscow and towards Washington, but

and avoiding all kinds of arms-racing is a clear goal, and is occasionally put forward as a political objective in the internal debate on the opportunity to raise the level of defense spending. Former Foreign Minister Gabriel, as a representative of the SPD, clearly linked it to his party's preference for peaceful approaches rather than the "weaponization" preconized by Chancellor Merkel.⁸² More globally, it is a way for Germany to be seen as a constructive stakeholder on the international stage, compatible with its security obligations but aiming at the reduction of nuclear arsenals.

Within and outside the Alliance's framework, Germany and France have a strong incentive to develop a strategic vision of arms control in Europe and rally their European partners to try to influence American decisions in their interests. This includes acknowledging the difficulties faced at the moment and proposing concrete answers, ranging from diplomatic to military solutions.⁸³ These efforts on nuclear arms control can build on the activism demonstrated in the OSCE in favor of conventional arms control in Europe, launched in 2016 by German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and supported by 13 European countries, including France.⁸⁴ Current Foreign Minister Heiko Maas is following the same ambition, with an announcement made in November 2018 in favor of arms control.⁸⁵ Bilateral cooperation may be very useful in that framework, especially to explore innovative solutions and include emerging technologies.

also within NATO, and again advocate not only the way to upgrading armaments, particularly in the nuclear sector, but also speak from all sides about arms control and nuclear disarmament [...] The German voice must always be a voice for nuclear disarmament and arms control."

82. "Waffen schaffen keine Sicherheit", Beitrag von Außenminister Sigmar Gabriel, *Rheinischen Post*, August 16, 2016.

83. U. Kühn, "Can Germany Be Europe's Nuclear Bridge Builder?", *op. cit.*

84. Ministerial declaration by the foreign ministers of the like-minded group supporting a relaunch of conventional arms control in Europe, Berlin: German Federal Foreign Office, November 25, 2016.

85. H. Maas, "Wir müssen über Abrüstung reden", *Spiegel Online*, November 3, 2018.

To this day, non-proliferation and arms control are clearly not priorities for the Trump White House, in contrast with their pre-eminence under President Obama. In the absence of American leadership, there is an opportunity for the French-German tandem to fill the gap and, through coordinated action and with the EU, advance their priorities in terms of dealing with proliferation crises, revive the non-proliferation regime, and promote the survival of credible arms-control measures. On proliferation, the two countries have followed very similar trajectories, and have a history of successful endeavors in advancing their agenda both within the EU and outside it. Given the current crises, their cooperation is all the more needed to help the European Union take a stand on this issue and promote well-crafted diplomatic solutions to proliferation concerns.

Conclusion

Under the Soviet threat, France and Germany made opposite choices but shared, to an extent, some perspectives on nuclear weapons. For both states, these weapons were fundamental to the security of Western Europe. In spite of antagonistic decisions and a different appreciation of the role of NATO, they demonstrated a joint understanding and willingness to adhere to the tenets of nuclear deterrence, especially during times of tensions such as the Euromissile crisis. Finally, both states were skeptical about the policy of non-proliferation led by Washington and had common interests in avoiding the adoption of rigid international rules. After the end of the Cold War however, France and Germany diverged on a number of nuclear issues, and it seemed wise to avoid the subject altogether so as not to threaten the cooperation between the two countries in other areas. However, they became aware together of the risks of proliferation and tended to adopt a shared view on this danger, enabling them to act together to address the crises of the beginning of the 21st century.

Recent years have brought the two partners much closer and, while official statements still differ to some extent, and although the public in Germany remains skeptical of its governmental position, there is clearly a convergence, which enables closer cooperation. On the one hand, Berlin's vision for a cooperative order in Europe that could do without nuclear deterrence was put in question by Russia's behavior in Ukraine. On the other hand, its decade-long efforts to promote step-by-step disarmament was relegated to the sidelines because of a new approach focusing on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, which led to the adoption of the TPNW. German officials have therefore tended in recent years to adopt positions close to French traditional views. Paris has also made moves towards its Eastern neighbor: it increasingly considers its deterrent as more than a purely national concern,⁸⁶ is more involved in NATO and, though it does not participate in the Alliance's nuclear planning, is consulted on NATO's nuclear policy and has committed to the strengthening of the Alliance's nuclear culture. The two countries' successful partnership in working on proliferation crises such as Iraq and Iran has paved the way for durable common work on this matter. Finally, France's efforts on

86. See for instance the organization of day trips to a French nuclear base (for officials from NATO countries), aiming at reinforcing the knowledge of the French deterrent among allies or the multiplication of strategic dialogue with key European partners.

disarmament and its decision to abandon nuclear testing make it, despite differences in attitudes and wordings, an acceptable partner in the eyes of Berlin to work on step-by-step disarmament.

The deterioration of the security conditions on the European continent, the rising threats linked to these weapons on the global stage and the ideological gap on how to reduce nuclear and security risks that is now dividing the world are compelling reasons to think and work on a bilateral format and consult each other on the challenges ahead. This need is justified as Europe's divisions are systematically exploited; for instance, on the attitude to Moscow or on the resolution of proliferation crises. Decisions made by the new American administration, not always consistent with European interests, spur this new openness to bilateral work. For example, both countries oppose President Trump's decision to violate and withdraw his country from the Iranian nuclear deal. The two partners should therefore pursue the efforts undertaken to understand their respective positions and remain informed about the state of the debate in the neighboring country, while finding new areas of cooperation and anticipating concerted stances in NATO or in the EU. The formalization of a new Elysée Treaty (Treaty of Aachen)⁸⁷ seems a good omen to continue the work achieved in recent years in this direction.

87. Traité entre la République française et la République fédérale d'Allemagne sur la coopération et l'intégration franco-allemandes, January 22, 2019, accessible at: www.elysee.fr.

