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**CURRENT EU COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY
AND EURO-ATLANTIC RELATIONS: A FRENCH VIEW**

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1 Introduction

International environment in the first decade of the 21st century is framed by the process of globalisation not only of the market economy, as the economic and financial crisis so clearly showed recently. Globalization's impact is felt at all level of human activity and thus brings new challenges in the international security area. Different states have different approaches towards new security threats and could act in diverse manner while fighting it, according to their particular strategic cultures. For detailed analysis France has been chosen as a European state which plays dominant role in the European security cooperation and has longtime had a specific approach towards U.S.-EU relationship especially in the security area.

As a member state of the European Union, France has always been an advocate of the intergovernmental approach of the integration which enables its members to participate strongly on the decision-making process. Security and defence policy is one of the fields where France has played a dominant role and has been capable to carry through its proposals and to participate on the progress of the policy on the European level. That is why these activities represent an important instrument for France and are narrowly connected to its vision of the European Union as a global player in the political and military affairs.

Some reforms of the French security and defence policy were announced by accepting the new version of the White papers on Defence and national security in the year 2008. France brought the issue of the European defence and security policy during the presidency of the Council of the EU the same year. According to France the adaptation on the age of globalization requires the current EU Common security and defence policy (CSDP) to stand against main security threats, such as terrorism, regional conflicts, diffusion of nuclear weapons, attacks against the information systems, espionage, organized crime, sanitary, technologic and natural risks.

France also possesses one of the most important military capacities in Europe and participates on many missions abroad. Although French intention to build up a viable European defence capacity together with a tight cooperation on the defence industrial base has been in a way a consequence of the long-term negative perception of US military presence on the European continent and of the scepticism towards NATO, the attitude of French leaders has changed recently. The paper will try to focus on main changes and priorities of France in the security area, particularly concerning CSDP and transatlantic relationship, and will try to relate them to the specific French strategic culture.

In view of the fact that the article will be focused on the domain of the EU Common security and defence policy and transatlantic relations from the French perspective, I will examine the French strategic culture together with the analysis of the key elements of the Gaullist defence

policy in the first part. In the second and third part, I will introduce the first steps taken towards the cooperation of the France and other European countries in the security area. Consequently, I will explore the core French priorities related to the future development of the Common security and defence policy, such as the development of the EU defence market, improvement of the defence industrial base and consolidation of the cooperation between EU member states which can lead, as stated by French policymakers, towards more autonomous European defence cooperation. In relation to the French vision, I will then evaluate the current state of transatlantic relations.

2 Defining strategic culture

To answer all predefined questions, the main characteristics of the French defence policy need to be analyzed in the first place. I will try to define the French behavior in the defence and security policy while using the concept of strategic culture. In this regard, I apply the assumption of Alistair Iain Johnston that “different states have different predominant strategic preferences that are rooted in the early or formative experiences of the state, and are influenced to some degree by the philosophical, political, cultural and cognitive characteristics of the state and its elites. Ahistorical or “objective” variables such as technology, polarity, or relative material capabilities are all of secondary importance (Johnston 2005: 34).”

In the Johnston’s article, the strategic culture is defined as “an ideational milieu which limits behavioral choices. From these limits one ought to be able to derive specific predictions about strategic choice. Strategic culture is an integrated system of symbols which acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficiency of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious (Johnston 2005: 45-47)”. Strategic culture is described as a result of the socialization process, where all decision-makers identify themselves with strategic approaches and processes; but they can also influence them.

From that point of view strategic culture as a ‘system of symbols’ comprises two parts: the first includes basic hypotheses about the state of the strategic environment, such as the role of war in human affairs, the nature of the adversary and the threat it poses, and the efficacy of the use of force. ...As for the second part it consists of assumptions at a more operational level about what strategic options are the most efficacious for dealing with the threat environment, as defined by answers to the first three questions. These lower-level assumptions should flow logically from the central paradigm (Johnston 2005: 46-47).

There exist other definitions trying to analyze the term. According to Jack Snyder strategic culture influences importantly strategic decision making and the conceptual frame of strategic

debate (Snyder, 1997: 9). K. Booth writes that strategic culture “has influence on the form in which one state interacts with the others concerning security measures.” As stated by him, “it includes national traditions, habits, values, attitudes, ways of behavior, symbols, approaches and special processes chosen to influence external environment and the ways of solution of problems face to face to threats or to using of force (Booth 1991: 121)”. And finally Colin Gray accentuates mainly behavior of political elites, that is why he defines strategic culture as a sum of thoughts, attitudes, traditions and behaviors which make strategic culture a part of us, of our institutions and of our acts (Gray, 1999).

Karl Lantis, on the other hand, explains it as a sum of fixed (stable) opinions, attitudes and practical procedures while using a force which are typical for a particular society (usually a nation) and are applied during a long-term process. Inseparably, Lantis accentuates a decision making process and behavior of elites who implement strategic goals and take important decisions. He concludes that strategic culture is influenced by key affairs that can gradually change the nature of strategic culture (Lantis 2002: 94-95).

2.1 Key elements of the French strategic culture

The concept of the strategic culture, as I defined it above, will be used in text while examining characteristic elements of the French security and defence policy. According to Anand Menon, “Gaullist defence policy was not ideologically driven; rather, it was based on a Machiavellian view of the nature of international politics and the duties of the state within an anarchic international system (Menon 1995: 20).” French political and military leaders had always spoken in very realist terms about international relations, stressing the self-help nature of the international system. The need for national independence was in the past simply the belief that reliance on another for security was inconceivable (Menon 1995: 20).

Aside from Anand Menon, there could be also other characteristics of the French foreign and defence policy, the one of Daniel Vernet, describing French presidents, as “the undisputed instigators of foreign and security policy in the Fifth Republic who have become past masters at the art of transforming a weakness into a strength, following the Gaullist maxim, that the weaker you are the more uncompromising you must be (Vernet 1992: 656).” In fact, the Gaullist vision, which has its roots in politics of president De Gaulle, is based on three elements: “its presence within the group of four victors over the Third Reich, and hence a political ascendancy over Germany, its status as a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nation and the possession of a nuclear dissuasion force (Vernet 1992: 656).” In addition to it, the France’s rank is highly important for French policymakers, much like the close relationship with Arab world and with former worldwide colonies.

According to Paul Gallis, the other key characteristic is related to “the efforts to spread French values and views, many rooted in democracy and human rights” (Gallis 2006: 4). For

many years France has emphasized the message of human rights and democracy, especially in relation to developing world. France also prefers to engage most international issues in a multilateral framework. Even though, the independence played a crucial role in the French defence policy, France needed to cooperate with other countries while facing the common threats. France was the founding member of the UN. France also followed up with Germany (RFA) after the signature of Elysée Treaty in 1963. Even after the withdrawal of its commandment from NATO, the Ailleret-Lemnitzer treaties were signed which established a sort of cooperation. Since the end of the Cold War, France has placed a high priority on arms control and non-proliferation. France agreed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1992 and supported its indefinite extension in 1995 (Clarke 2000: 731). After conducting a controversial final series of six nuclear tests on Mururoa in the South Pacific, the French leaders signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1996. France is also an active member of other international organizations such as the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank.

Apart from that France promotes the principles of multipolarity in economic and in political affairs. The system is described “as a system of balance in international affairs, in part a natural outgrowth of trading blocs and regional global differences, in part that is in principled opposition to global domination by one power or bloc (Gallis 2006: 8).” Even though the French officials recognize that the world is partly still ‘unipolar’ especially in military sense, given the U.S. overwhelming military power. However, due to a proliferation of crises around world and to the fact that the U.S.’s interests and priorities have moved in a way beyond Europe, the development by the EU concerning its military forces and institutions can provide complementary forces in the effort to build order and stability.

Moreover, although France suffers lately from the lack of modernized military capacities, with reported personnel strength in 2008 of 250,582 regulars, the French Armed Forces still constitute the largest military in the European Union and the third largest in NATO (Mallet 2008: 82). That is why French decision makers are more willing to use the instruments of hard power than other EU member states. France has actively and heavily participated in both coalitions and unilateral peacekeeping efforts in Africa, the Middle East, and in the Balkans, frequently taking a lead role in these operations. While French policymakers do not reject the use of force, they are highly critical to preemptive action. In other words, they declare that certain criteria must be met for military action to acquire legitimacy.

The environment has changed since the end of the Cold war; and as a result some elements of the Gaullist doctrine have been transformed lately. Apparently, many of them were severely challenged by the breakdown of the communist block, France faced the unification of the Germany, the permanent French seat in the Security Council was contested when the

discussion about the reform of the Security Council arose in the nineties. Moreover, the deterrence itself was called into question by the disappearance of the principal enemy.

The deterrence force was perceived as an active principle and the symbol of the policy of national independence. "Based on the idea of a weak deterrent against strength, it was intended to prevent any aggressor from attacking the national territory (Pascallon 2008: 30)."

The experiences brought after the breakdown of the communism in Eastern Europe underlined the price France had paid in terms of its conventional capabilities by consistently prioritizing nuclear weapons in its defence budgets. France thus increasingly came to lack the military ability to back up its pretensions to a world role. The shifting international landscape called into question the traditional defence policy of the Fifth Republic. In order that military policy could continue to provide the benefits it once had, policy adaptation became a necessity. By the 1990s French officials were referring to European defence cooperation in more far-reaching terms than ever before (Pascallon 2007: 251).

France has always enjoyed a complex relationship with the rest of the European Union (EU). On the one hand, France's reputation in the EU has been that of a leading pro-integrationist player, a key and influential member of Europe's core. The notion of image seems important here, since it is not at all difficult to detect in current French discourse on Europe a recurrent theme, namely, that of France seeking to claw back its traditional influence in the EU. Once France had embarked upon European community-building, the leaders of the Fifth Republic turned France's European commitment into a virtue and a vehicle for its top foreign policy objectives of rank and greatness, including its priorities in defence and security field, via defiant shows of national sovereignty and independence and constant balancing act between integration and autonomy (Drake 2005: 1).

This self-conflicted need for France to relate successfully to the institutions, policies and emerging norms of the European Community has entailed compromise. Compromise between the national sovereignty at the essence of French national identity, and the transfers of sovereignty required to make the European Communities/Union function, between national pride at France's trappings of independent world status, and the economic and political capability and clout that comes through interdependence with European partners (Aggestam 2004: 10). France compounds this ambiguity as independent nation-state with distinct world vision around which it tries to rally support and as a voice of a collective European diplomacy, the would-be leader of an interdependent common foreign, security and defence policy for Europe.

2.2 Main threats for France and Europe

The environment has been evolving the last two decades and has led to many changes in the political arrangements. The era of globalisation has brought new challenges facing the

planet such as the financial crises, the environmental crises and the geopolitical crises in the Middle East and also a series of highly disruptive events has occurred including natural disasters, nuclear proliferation and the risk of global pandemics. Whereas U.S. policymakers have evaluated the environment as highly dangerous in the first place, and at the start of 21st century they experimented with the exclusive use of force and actively defended unilateralism; France together with other European countries have promoted the vision of the world whose extent of the complexity has increased recently, emphasizing multilateral and collective governance based on consensus and acting in accordance with the European Security Strategy.¹

The French military has, as some of its primary objectives, the defence of national territory, the protection of French interests abroad, and the maintenance of global stability. From these objectives, we can derive major threats.

French White papers indicates security threats that concern France and the rest of the Europe with the same intensity. These threats shape current French defence policy and its strategic attitudes. France and other EU members, too, face new threats which are more diverse, less visible and less predictable. According to the White papers the main threats lie in regional and ethnical conflicts and civil war that can endanger the international stability. From the French perspective the most problematic regions are in Sub-Saharan Africa and certain parts of Asia (Mallet 2008: 44). France as an important military European power has long time been present in several missions on African continent. As said by French president Nicolas Sarkozy “Europe as a whole cannot show the lack of interest to the continent that lies in a close neighborhood (Mallet 2008: 10).” The raisons are connected with social and economic problems of the African countries and the fear of the illegal immigration and security instability on the European side.

There is other important issue that needs to be dealt with – terrorism, especially practiced by jihad groups. The threat coming from terrorist attacks forced French political elites to adopt the White paper of the government on national security facing the terrorism in July 2006. Among other threats, we must also include the diffusion of nuclear weapons, the attacks on informational systems, espionage, and organized crime, natural and sanitary risks.

According to French decision makers the military's traditional focus on territorial defence must be redirected to meet the challenges of a global threat environment. Under the reorganization, the identification and destruction of terrorist networks both in metropolitan France and in francophone Africa will be the primary task of the French military. Redundant

¹ Main thesis of the European security strategy was also interpreted by Nicole Gnesotto: “The democracy cannot be imposed by force, and military power is neither the only not the most important instrument for managing crises, the inclusive dialogue and multilateral negotiation are indispensable in preventing conflicts (Gnesotto 2010: 15).”

military bases will be closed and new weapons systems projects put on hold to finance the restructuring and global deployment of intervention forces.

3 French priorities in EU Common defence and security policy

To understand the role of France in Common defence and security policy and its relationship with NATO we have to glance aside from the definition of French strategic culture and focus on the analysis of the French priorities in the Common defence and security policy.

Many political analyses gave to France credit to become one of the founding countries of the European cooperation in defence area in nineties, together with Germany and Great Britain. The need for cooperation has deeper roots which dated from the cold war. On the French side, there were caused by efforts to reduce the power and influence of NATO on the European continent. At the beginning it was related to the negotiation talks between France, Italy and Germany about an industry consortium which was established to produce a plane for tactical transport "Allianz Transport – TRANSALL" (Pascallon 2008: 183). The European cooperation in defence was at that time based on the Franco-German relations and the couple managed together other viable projects including the construction of middle bunkers in 1958, the Dassault/Dornier Alpha Jet, the establishment of the consortium Airbus industry, the Eurocorps², then there were also attempts to develop an experimental communication satellite and a European spatial agency (Pascallon 2008: 190). These projects served as an example of the efforts of French leaders to search for partners in Europe. Some of them had probably no real effect on the future development and were simply forgotten, but a part of them could by some means shift the European countries to take into account the possibility of the advancement of the European defence cooperation.

Since the early 1990s, the EU has developed a coherent political and institutional framework for crafting and implementing Common foreign and security policy, however, defence policy and military affairs were put apart and left entirely in hands of national states. The evolution of European defence and security policy was spurred on by the Kosovo conflict of 1999, which starkly demonstrated that European governments still lacked the military wherewithal to provide for security in their own region (Davis 2010: 58). France again played an important role. Already in 1998, traditional British reluctance to such a plan changed into endorsement after a bilateral declaration of French President Jacques Chirac and the British Prime Minister Tony Blair in Saint Malo, where they stated that "the Union must have the capacity

² Eurocorps, established in 1992, constitutes a multinational army corps within the framework of the Western European Union common defence initiatives. Five countries participate in Eurocorps as "framework nations": Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Spain.

for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises"³.

In the two years since Kosovo, the international security environment has changed dramatically, as a result of two important events – the terrorist attacks of September 2001 and the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. That is why we will closely look on the evolution of the French vision of the Common Defence and Security policy since then and focus on the key priorities that French policymakers want to achieve. According to main characteristics of the French defence policy, France supports the process of defence integration on the four different levels. The first and perhaps most fundamental integration strategy is to develop more compatible vision among European governments and institutions of Europe's future defence needs and the military doctrines and capabilities required to meet them, especially by identifying a shared sense of priorities and clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities. The second defence integration strategy is more cooperative approach by European governments to research, development and procurement for priority military capabilities, to ensure that future European defence investments address the most important military needs. The third integration strategy is pooling of national capabilities to train support and field multinational units. The fourth defence integration strategy involves individual countries opting to develop specialized capabilities that make high-value contributions to collective security (Flournoy-Smith 2005: 27-28). Initially, I will emphasize the French suggestions concerning improvement the intra-European solidarity. In the second part, I will study the French propositions on the development of the EU defence markets and the defence industrial base.

3.1 Building the intra-European solidarity

In order to meet new security challenges, French officials support strengthening of the cooperation between EU member states. Already during the French Presidency of the EU Council in 2008 they have tried to promote several propositions including military and crisis management capabilities and also focusing on matters of training, procurement and research (Margaras 2009: 8). Some bilateral and multilateral initiatives have been already launched among the Armed Forces of European countries, such as the Eurocorps, the Anglo-French air group⁴, the European Amphibious Initiative⁵ and the EU rapid reaction force (ERRF)⁶. Until

³ Franco-British summit, Joint declaration on European defence, Saint-Malo, 4 December 1998 <http://www.atlanticcommunity.org/Saint-Malo%20Declaration%20Text.html>, (cited on 21/07/2010)

⁴ Document concerning cooperation and areas of mutual interest in maritime defence was signed by Ministers in 1996. This covers a very wide range of activity, including operations, and 20 formal Working Groups have been established under the direction of the British and French Chiefs of Naval Staff.

⁵ From Spring 2000, at the instigation of Britain, five European countries, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and France, that get a real ability in the amphibious field, have met to promote the European Amphibious Initiative. This initiative has resulted by December 5, 2000 in the signing of a statement of intent by the defence ministers of the five involved countries. This official paper sets a legal and political framework to the

now, the European defence equipment programmes, research and resources of military forces have been, however, often characterized by inefficiencies, duplicity and by the lack of support from national states. That is why French leaders emphasize three defence policy options which seem fundamental, namely international collaboration (which include significant budget increase in the area of defence), competitiveness and cooperation in building sufficient military capacities in order to provide collective defence benefits to all member states. It is evident that the very first step which has to be taken and thus a priority number one for the French government is to create political condition necessary for a renewed impetus in developing military capabilities.

According the French White papers on Defence policy and National security, it is fundamental that the European forces must be able to deploy rapidly in response to crises within 10 days of a decision to intervene in a crisis. They must be also able to deploy beyond the borders of Europe itself to regions such as Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East. They must be able to conduct multiple, simultaneous operations in order to protect European interests and support European policies in more than one region at a time. Finally, these forces based on the cooperation between member states must be adaptable across the spectrum of operations. Collectively, they must have the capacity to conduct operations ranging from humanitarian assistance to counterterrorism to war fighting. Today's defence requirements go well beyond peacekeeping and nation building, two areas of traditional European comparative advantage (Flournoy-Smith 2005:18-19). Only small portions of Europe's 1, 9 million personnel under arms have, however, the capabilities to meet these requirements. In March 2004, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe testified that only 3-4 % of European forces are 'expeditionary deployable' (Flournoy-Smith 2005:19). Despite Europe's substantial arsenals of advanced fighter aircraft, capable ships and submarines and modern tanks and armored fighting vehicles, most European militaries lack the capabilities they need to be truly expeditionary, such as deployable, strategic lift and deployable logistics. EU are acutely aware of the shortfalls in European military capabilities and has launched initiatives to address them, such as the creation of the European Rapid Reaction in 1999, European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP) in 2001 and development of the EU Battlegroups⁷ in 2005 as a part of the Headline Goal 2010. Additionally, the progress was made on issue such as an Erasmus-style initiative to exchange military officers (Drake 2009: 6). To date,

actions of the EAI. European Amphibious Initiative,

http://www.cdef.terre.defense.gouv.fr/publications/Objdoc/objdoc36/article_us/art4.pdf, 23/07/2010

⁶ The ERRF's purpose will be to intervene in crises before they become full-scale wars, and to release NATO from participating in some military interventions. The ERRF may become a useful prescription for controlling political violence

⁷ A newly established Integrated Development Teams, groups of military, technological and industrial actors. First conceived by the French, British and Germans and officially launched at the Brussels Military capabilities Commitment Conference in November 2004. The EU Battlegroups aim to be able to reach the theatre of operations in 15 days and sustain an operation for 30 days (120 with rotation).

however, these efforts have made only limited progress. The persistent gap between requirements and capabilities poses serious obstacles to Europe's ability to conduct out of area missions and to protect and advance its interests in the new security environment.

The problem of the lack of capabilities is also narrowly connected to resource constraints. At the height of the Cold war, European countries spent on average 3, 5 % of GDP on defence. In 2005, they spend an average of 1, 9 %. This average reflects significant differences between individual European countries. Defence spending in Europe has been in decline or relatively flat since 1995 (Flournoy-Smith 2005: 22). While there are some exceptions – most notably, Norway, the Czech Republic, Poland and France – this trend has become well established since the end of the Cold war. The percentage of defense spending that European countries devote to modernization – that is, developing and procuring new capabilities – varies dramatically, with many failing to commit the resources necessary to achieve their stated objectives. In 2002, Portugal spent less than 6 % of its defence budget on modernization, Germany spent more than 12 %, the United Kingdom about 29 %. On average, in 2003 the European members of NATO allocated about 13 % of their defence expenditures to modernization and about 44 % to personnel. The allocation of resources differs from the defence spending of the United States, where more than about one quarter of its military budget goes on modernization and about one third on personnel. The contrast is particularly striking with regard to spending on research and development, where Europe as a whole invests only one-sixth what the United States (Flournoy-Smith 2005: 22). French policy-makers point out the need for increasing the military budget of every EU member state. Given these numbers, the only way that Europe will be able to achieve its desired military capabilities is to spend smarter, not only a bigger amount of euros, on defence. European decision makers need to think more creatively. To spend smarter on defence means primarily developing clearer priorities and a more integrated approach to achieve them.

3.2 More efficiency for EU defence markets and defence industry

French officials suggest changes in defence policy also in other areas. According to them the fragmentation of the European defence market and divergent national policies create nowadays red tape, hamper innovation and competitiveness and, ultimately, weaken the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).⁸ Moreover, two other important issues concerning European defence industrial base arise. First, EU states face challenges in retaining a defence industrial base requiring highly specific assets and human capital, such

⁸Commission proposes new competitive measures for defence industries and markets, http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemshortdetail.cfm?item_id=3228&lang=cs (cited on 09/06/2010)

as nuclear power aircraft carriers and submarines, strategic bombers and modern battle tanks. Gaps in development and production work make it difficult and costly to retain such industries within EU member states (Hartley 2003: 109). The European's plans and programmes for joint fighter, helicopter and transport aircraft already reflect recognition that national budgets are insufficient to buy equipment at affordable prices. Secondly, there exists a challenge of maintaining competition. The French objective has been long time the consolidation of the European defence industry into groups which are powerful, rationalized and competitive at world level, and which can, cost-effectively, satisfy the needs of customers inside and outside Europe. These groups are expected to operate on a par with those in the United States. These new defence groups should be geared towards a Europe-wide defence market, a market which will emerge partly as a result of their creation (Adams-Ashbourne 1999: 35-37).

The other instrument for reinforcing the EU defence markets and industrial base highly promoted by French political actors on the European scene is the establishment of the European Defense Agency (EDA) in the summer 2004. The Agency is intended to be top-down in approach, driving coordination and pressuring EU member states, when necessary, to make capability improvements. It ensures the cooperation in four domains: defence capabilities development, armaments cooperation, the European defence technological and industrial base and defense equipment market and research and technology (Cornish-Edwards 2005: 805). France also hopes that EDA can help to eliminate waste and duplication in the defence budget of the EU member states freeing up resources for collaborative research, development, and procurement. The establishment of EDA could in the future lead to major advances in capabilities for expeditionary, interoperability, efficiency, cost savings and greater coherence in defence planning. In the addition to it, in April 2009, The European Defence Agency and the Organization for Joint Armament Cooperation (OCCAR)⁹ started negotiations on an Administrative Arrangement for their cooperation. The Agency's increasing potential to generate cooperative projects and programmes, and the possible prospect of their management by OCCAR, has created the need to formalize the relationship between the two organizations. This decision reflects EDA's growing output.¹⁰ Unfortunately, the Agency faces cultural challenge – to persuade member states to increase the budget for spending on military research and procurement.

⁹ Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement (Organization for Joint Armament Cooperation), established by an Administrative Arrangement on 12th November 1996 by the Defence Ministers of France, Germany, Italy and the UK. Its aim is to provide more effective and efficient arrangements for the management of certain existing and future collaborative armament programmes. OCCAR at a glance, <http://www.occar-ea.org/>, (cited on 09/06/2010)

¹⁰ EDA and OCCAR to Negotiate Cooperation Arrangement, <http://www.eda.europa.eu/newsitem.aspx?id=460>, (cited on 09/06/2010)

4 France and Euro-Atlantic relationship

French interests in the building tight cooperation in the security field between EU members are closely related to the state of the current Euro-Atlantic relations. In some way, we could say that French vision of the European common security and its priorities are defined vis-à-vis the understanding of transatlantic relationship by French leaders.

“France’s transatlantic relations are open to considerable interpretation, depending on which side of the Atlantic one is situated. Gaullism’s legacy of a desire for international clout explains why contemporary French policy towards the European Union still, on balance, prioritizes Europe’s function as an international actor that can guarantee a modicum of French presence on the world stage; it is why France is never hesitant to speak on Europe’s behalf (Drake 2005: 10-11).”

France also adopted a largely negative attitude as NATO tried to adapt. Although willing to discard some of the Gaullist doctrines that had for so long dictated policy, it retained wariness towards NATO born out of distrust of America motives. The view on the U.S.-EU relationship has evolved last decade due to the changes brought mainly by globalisation process. On one hand the role of the United States as a world leader has decreased slowly, on the other, several new threats have emerged which leave the space for deepen Euro-Atlantic cooperation, not only on the NATO-EU basis. In this respect, French officials must reconsider their view on the cooperation and look over the possible future advantages that may come for France and for whole EU in case of its deepening and complementarity (Chopin 2007: 5).

4.1 Towards the EU autonomous defence policy?

French perception of the NATO has been long time influenced by the Gaullist approach and principles, influenced by the idea of independence and autonomous decision-making about French defence policy. It mirrored also problems in the relationship with the United States which have escalated after the intervention in Iraq in 2003. NATO remained a useful institution for France, despite its opposition to US policy.¹¹ But it is clear that the French conception of Common defence and security policy was for the EU ultimately to be able to plan and conduct its own operations across the full spectrum without recourse to NATO. In 2003 president Chirac stressed: “We believe that there are a number of operations which can be carried out. We have talked about Macedonia, Africa and more generally speaking, the Balkans. There are operations which need to be carried by us. They have to be prepared, properly led and operated.... It gives extra efficiency and extra character to the European

¹¹ Even though, France withdrew from NATO’s integrated command structure in 1966, it has retained a seat on the North Atlantic Council (the Alliance’s political decision-making body) and participated in range of NATO military operations.

Union.”¹² French officials also opposed in the long term proposals for NATO operations outside the Treaty area in Europe and operations beyond Europe.¹³ Moreover, the French government pursued the idea of a core-group of amenable European countries forging ahead with close defence cooperation. This according to French leaders may diminish the potential for discord between the countries. On the other hand, it could limit the scale of military operations they can take on. At a meeting in April 2003, France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg set out proposals for the establishment of a European Security and Defence Union. Given the deeply held opposition of the governments involved to the Anglo-US policy on Iraq, the move was widely seen as reflecting a desire to distance the participants from the Anglo-US worldview.

As Stephen Blackwell relates, the four-nation summit “called for ‘new steps’ in the process of European defence integration, the most significant concrete measure being the establishment of a European command and military planning centre. There was also agreement on the setting up of six other entities: a brigade-size rapid reaction force, a European strategic command, a coordinated EU response to chemical and biological weapons threats, an EU first aid and support team, tactical training centers and deployable joint headquarters. Other more long-term goals included a mutual defence clauses (included firstly in the draft European constitution and nowadays a part of the Lisbon treaty) and further moves towards better European coordination procurement (Payne 2003: 25).

Clearly the French conception had potential to generate an alliance of countries prepared to pool more of their sovereignty in foreign and defence. However their ability to impact upon the status quo, with NATO as the primary security institution for Europe, should not be over-estimated, the four members of the fast-track defence initiative were those European governments most clearly opposed to US policy on Iraq. They were not as united on other issues.

With the election of the new French president Nicolas Sarkozy in May 2007, some changes connected to the relationship with the US and NATO were expected. French willingness to reconsider the presence in the NATO signaled the change in the French attitude towards NATO. On the other hand France supported new arrangements included in the Lisbon treaty, such as the post of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the creation of the EU diplomatic corps, the changes in the functioning of the European Defence Agency and two clauses concerning the mutual defence and solidarity

¹² Philip Webster, Trusting each other is the only way, Chirac says, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article1025570.ece>, (cited on 10/06/2010)

¹³ Their view was changed in the nineties due to the crises in the former Yugoslavia; and then after the September 11 attacks.

among member states, especially in the fight against terrorism and the principle of structured permanent cooperation.

France, even after the political change, still advances the idea of more autonomous defence policy among EU member states, this time the criticism of NATO is less strong than it used to be, by stating that there are too many crises and a shortage of capable forces in Europe and the United States to manage them. French policymakers are advocating the creation of the EU planning cell. In reality, however, the impact of the planning cell is likely to be limited by British participation and input. With British participation, the new planning cell may be limited to planning for operations that could, in any case, be prepared and conducted by national headquarters. For larger operations, the EU would still have to turn to NATO planning facilities¹⁴ – although in reality operations on this scale are rendered largely academic by the continued paucity of European capabilities. There were other measures taken in order to improve the EU flexible response to possible crises – the creation of battle groups. Those forces are also available to NATO (Cornish-Edwards 2001:590-591).

Another factor exists which plays an important role in current view of the French officials towards Euro-Atlantic relationship. According to Paul Gallis “some French officials did not want the United States exercising strong leadership in the alliance when Washington appeared to be giving Europe diminished priority after the Cold war (Gallis 2006: 14).

France opposed to the United States in several other issues. Firstly from the view of French policymakers, the divergence between vision of EU security policy and U.S. administration could be found in the debate concerning the involvement in the region of the Middle East. There is a great political sensitivity in France to any issue that involves the Muslim world due to 5 to 6 millions of Muslim populations who is actually present in France. The perception is highly shared by other European countries bordering the Mediterranean. Middle East as a neighboring region and its political development strongly affects affairs of the EU. As an example, EU states including France were extremely critical of the Bush Administration who strongly favors Israel and supports its aggressive policy towards the Palestinians. Secondly, there is a disagreement about next step concerning the stabilization of Afghanistan. Whereas France has increased its participation in combat operations since mid-2008, and French decision-makers support a general NATO policy in Afghanistan, unlike the U.S. officials, they believe that ISAF’s mission and the U.S. led mission (Operation enduring freedom) must not be confused (Gallis 2006:16). And finally already during the summit in June 2004, France and other European countries opposed to sending a NATO force to Iraq.

¹⁴ As it was reaffirmed by arrangements called ‘Berlin Plus’ in 2003. The EU planning cell under which the EU will consider undertaking operations only if NATO as a whole has decided not to be engaged (Gallis 2006: 13)

4.2 Advantages of the Euro-Atlantic security cooperation

On the other hand there are several advantages. NATO provides another useful forum, in addition to the UN Security Council, where France can engage opponents of its policy choice and demonstrate the breadth of support for its position. In NATO, the consensus principles is very powerful tool for the French, akin to their veto in the Security Council in that it allows global influence disproportionate to their military and economic power. France might gain more from engaging actively with NATO – principally by rejoining the Defence Planning Group – than from marginalizing the Alliance. If the goal of French foreign policy is to promote multipolarity in the international system, it makes more sense to increase the range of forums in which France can have an impact (Payne 2003: 9). Moreover, developing a more autonomous variant of CSDP as a substitute to NATO will not offer France the same opportunities for engaging and constraining US foreign policy as does NATO. The US is not part of EU and the disparity in military capabilities is such that the EU force will not be able to offset the military posture of the US anywhere except on the margins of Europe.

More importantly, considering the advantages for all European allies, as Leo Michel stresses, NATO has performed the vital job by promoting intra-European as well as transatlantic collaboration regarding threat assessments, political-military strategy, defense planning, equipment standards an interoperability and training and exercises (Michel 2009: 3). In addition to it, many Europeans states prefer to preserve the political-military links with NATO so that they can reinforce by bilateral ties the relationship with the United States. NATO also provided a means for engaging and promoting constructive reform in central Europe and in the future points further east. For the new members and candidates NATO serves a deeply important, if symbolic, role: it signifies membership of the ‘west’. It also allows these countries to hedge against institutional uncertainties of the EU’s development, by providing a forum in which they have an equal say in decision-making.

From this perspective France will not be able in the long-term to carry through its priority concerning an autonomous Common defence and security policy. CSDP can fulfill a valuable role, differentiated from NATO. NATO would continue to provide a forum for interaction and interoperability between European and American armed forces, but the EU could make a complementary contribution in promoting integration and military reform among European countries. CSDP can provide a spur to the stuttering process of procurement consolidation. We can already witness the NATO-EU cooperation in practice for example in Kosovo or in Afghanistan. About 14 000 NATO Kosovo forces works well with the EU’s rule of law mission that counts approximatively 1900 international police officers, judiciary stuff an custom officers. In Afghanistan, there are some 200 European police trainers and mentors working in close relation with the much larger U.S. led training coalition (Michel 2009: 10).

In the future, as I have already mentioned above in case of two operations, it is highly probably that in case of CSDP and NATO, both organizations need to find ways how to cooperate – not only in practice, the pragmatic dialogue should be deepened at senior levels between Washington and Brussels, too. Both must ensure transparency, avoid contradictions and develop new capabilities. Several steps could be taken, including more frequent and better structured meetings between NATO's North Atlantic Council and the EU's Political and Security Committee and hence improve their common consultations.

Cooperation already exists in the nonmilitary areas related to the national security, such as intelligence, counterterrorism¹⁵ and emergency response to civil disaster, too. As Leo Michel suggests in his paper "U.S. interests are better served by a more capable, responsive and cooperative French defense and national security structure that encourages fellow Europeans, through deeds as well as rhetoric, to increase their military capabilities and make them available for NATO as well as EU missions (Michel 2009: 12)." The fact that France has reentered the NATO command structures can have not only impact on the cooperation between French officers and their Americans counterparts, but it could also serve as a vital mechanism for intra-European cooperation. Moreover, it could facilitate an expanded strategic dialogue with the United States on the several subjects, including nuclear deterrence and its relationship to non-proliferation and missile defence. French officials may also reconsider to join the body where nuclear issues are discussed in NATO and may involve in restructuring the existing Nuclear Planning Group and thus help to sustain a European consensus on the need for a nuclear component as part of a broader NATO deterrence and defense strategy.

In the globalized world, however, military force seems less important than it used to be. Although NATO is still perceived as a fundamental pillar with the United States, but it is no longer the only one. The latter problems of greatest concern to both sides of the Atlantic cover issues such as illegal immigration, extremism, transnational crime, critical infrastructure protection, nuclear proliferation, the economic and financial networks of international terrorist groups or environmental security (Gnesotto 2010: 16). The US and EU need to seek for the way to better cooperate with each other and to achieve positive outcome. That is why both sides advocate a more developed U.S.-EU relationship. French government must be more realistic considering their capabilities and vision of autonomous European defense.

On the other hand, the time where all European allies defined and positioned themselves with reference to America in order to maximize their security and thus tried to forge strong bilateral ties have passed. The globalisation process has changed the role of the United

¹⁵ Bilateral cooperation between the United States and France in law-enforcement efforts to combat terrorism since September 11 has improved and remained strong until now. France historically has had extensive experience with terrorism since 1960s, i.e. in 1994 French police thwarted a hijacking at the Marseille airport.

States, the European countries no longer see the United States as the one partner they cannot do without. While the Euro-Atlantic relationship remains important, the Europeans must look for other strong partnership. The United States will have to accept that Europe is taking this new responsibility, and allow for the possibility of difference of views between partners who share the same agenda.

5 Conclusion

In the paper, I have tried to identify the fundamental principles of the French security culture and apply it to the context of the Common defence and security policy and transatlantic relationship. French attempts to participate in the evolution of the European defence cooperation are without doubts important and represent a logical shift from its traditional independent defence and security policy in the era of globalization. Already in the early nineties, French decision makers understood that France lost its prestigious position based on possession of nuclear weapons and the permanent seat in the Security Council of United Nations.

Although France managed to modernize its military forces and still preserve its position as one of the militarily strongest state in the European Union. The priority goal for French political leaders becomes a cooperation of EU member states in the defence and security policy so that the EU develops into the global player in the political and military affairs. In the paper, I have described several priorities including the efficient EU defence market, development of the industrial base or building intra-EU solidarity. France is very persistent in its proposal, they appeared in the White papers of the French national security and defence policy and they were also proclaimed during the French presidency of the Council of the EU. However, in the EU composed of 27 countries, the French activities are less visible than its representatives wish them to be. The lesser impact of the French priorities on the development of the Common defence and security policy reflects its weakened position among the EU member states. The possibility to push ahead its proposal is much more complicated and slow, the former firm relationship with Germany turned out to be unstable as Germany shows more courage to act alone. France remains obsessed with its position in the world. But now, it has transferred to the European Union the ambitions it once cherished for itself, but without any certainty that its partners share its concerns.

It is probably one of the reasons for reintegration of France in the structures of NATO in 2009. France must accept that 21 from 27 EU member states take also part in NATO structures. French presence within NATO decision-making organizations during the crucial debates over the future of European security could help to tip the balance in favor of a true Europeanization of defence structures. While the French dream of an autonomous European defence identity may thus have been undermined, France has yet to accept publicly that it

must participate without reservation in NATO in order to regain its full influence. At the same time, French leaders will need to support better cooperation with the United States in other fields of security (not only in NATO), instead of fighting it. Especially, as the environment evolve due to the globalisation process, they must try to find pragmatic approaches and must realize that only those ones could be win-win solutions in the long run.

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