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Franco-British Defence and Security Treaties: Entente While it Lasts?

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ACRONYMS

CASD	Continuous-At-Sea Deterrence
CJEF	Combined Joint Expeditionary Force
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
EDA	European Defence Agency
EEC	European Economic Community
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
LOI	Letter of Intent
PSCD	Permanent Structured Cooperation on Defence
R&T	Research and Technology
SDSR	Strategic Defence and Security Review
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

SUMMARY:

The 2010 Franco-British treaties have the potential to further bilateral strategic rapprochement and serve as a source of inspiration for other joint defence initiatives in Europe but their sustainability will depend on a number of factors. These are:

- The United Kingdom's ability to mitigate its own Eurosceptic fears in the treaties' implementation process;
- France's commitment to implementing the agreed measures and its capacity to leave behind its political and ideological aspirations when dealing with the United Kingdom;
- The support of the United States, based on the understanding that the Franco-British treaties do not clash with its global role but will rather reinforce it;
- A recognition from NATO that the treaties, enabled in part by France's reintegration into NATO Military Command, are most beneficial to the alliance, both as a model for similar cooperation schemes throughout the Euro-Atlantic area and as a contribution mechanism *per se*;
- The European Union's focus on capabilities and its ability to see the treaties as an inspiration for a less politicized Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), possibly via the Permanent Structured Cooperation on Defence (PSCD) or similar flexible mechanisms; and
- The development of a more confident, open and effective partnership between defence industries and governments in Europe.

INTRODUCTION

After signing the Franco-German Elysée Treaty in 1963, President Charles de Gaulle reportedly declared: 'Treaties are like roses and young girls; they last while they last'.¹ In 2003 France and Germany celebrated the 40th anniversary of a fruitful political and economic partnership by signing new cooperation agreements. The history of Franco-British relations since 1945 has arguably been more chaotic. Decades of a latent mutual mistrust were most notably marked by de Gaulle's vetoing of British accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1963 and 1967, and the clash over the invasion of Iraq in 2003, only five years after Prime Minister Tony Blair and President Jacques Chirac had signed the St Malo declaration, which called for the creation of an EU capacity for autonomous decision-making and action, backed up by credible military forces, in order to respond to international crises.

Nonetheless, on 2 November 2010 at Lancaster House in London, the French and British governments signed two cooperation treaties in security and defence for a 50-year period. While the treaties only mark the beginning of a long process towards increased interoperability and cooperation, they clearly consolidate the recent Franco-British rapprochement, which was marked by the close involvement of Whitehall in the preparation of France's 2008 White Paper on Defence and National Security and by the subsequent return of France into NATO's military command, formalized at the NATO Strasbourg-Kehl Summit in April 2009.

France and the United Kingdom have long had reason to cooperate more closely in the security sphere. They are Europe's only nuclear-weapons states, the only EU countries on the United Nations Security Council, and the continent's biggest spenders in security and defence. They have common interests and responsibilities, and face similar threats including terrorism, cyber attack, nuclear proliferation and piracy. The most recent impetus for closer cooperation between the two countries was provided by the global financial crisis and the subsequent economic downturn. The prospect of duplicating resources amidst budget cuts on both sides of the Channel makes little sense for two countries wishing to retain global ambitions.

Given the prominence of economic concerns in bringing about the agreements, what can be expected from Franco-British defence and security cooperation once the countries' economies fully recover? Are the treaties bound to suffer the same destiny as 'roses and young girls', to refer to de Gaulle's words, and vanish as a result of a long and treacherous implementation process? This paper argues that the renewed Franco-British partnership fits within a wider strategic, political, economic and industrial context in both countries, as well as in Europe and the United States. It suggests that the sustainability of the 2010 treaties will largely depend on a set of six conditions:

- The United Kingdom's ability to mitigate its own Eurosceptic fears in the treaties' implementation process;
- France's commitment to implementing the agreed measures and its capacity to leave behind its political and ideological aspirations when dealing with the United Kingdom;
- The support of the United States, based on the understanding that the Franco-British treaties do not clash with its global role but will rather reinforce it;
- A recognition from NATO that the treaties, enabled in part by France's reintegration into NATO Military Command, are most beneficial to the alliance, both as a model for similar cooperation schemes throughout the Euro-Atlantic area and as a contribution mechanism *per se*;
- The European Union's focus on capabilities and its ability to see the treaties as an inspiration for a less politicized Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), possibly via the Permanent Structured Cooperation on Defence (PSCD) or similar flexible mechanisms; and
- The development of a more confident, open and effective partnership between defence industries and governments in Europe.

¹ *The Economist*, 18 March 1972, cited in Antonio Cassese, *International Law* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p.427.

An unprecedented level of cooperation

The 'UK-France Summit 2010 Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation' is composed of an overarching defence co-operation treaty, setting out a framework for cooperation between the two countries; a subordinate treaty related to joint nuclear facilities; a Letter of Intent (LOI) signed by the Defence Ministers and Chiefs of Defence Staff aiming at increasing interoperability between the two countries' armed forces and a package on a number of separate joint initiatives on equipment. Although the declaration is historic and ambitious, more specific measures for enhanced cooperation remain to be implemented as part of the LOI and the joint package.

Military cooperation

The treaties introduce a number of joint programmes, three of which have garnered much attention. The first joint programme is the future deployment of aircraft carriers, which follows naval cooperation in the Gulf of Aden as part of EU and NATO counter-piracy missions since 2008. This programme is based on the assumption that by 2020, the United Kingdom and France are likely to have only one operational carrier each. The two countries aim to have the ability to deploy one carrier for international missions and have the other always at sea, possibly as part of a Franco-British integrated strike group incorporating assets owned by both countries. In the future, warplanes could be stationed on each other's carrier, refuelled by each other's planes and the carriers themselves could be protected by either a French or a British brigade.

Cross-Channel cooperation on aircraft carriers has attracted much criticism in the United Kingdom in the past few months. The British government was at times reported to be considering building two or three aircraft carriers and selling one to France. In early September 2010, only three days after *The Times* reported that France and the United Kingdom would share their respective capabilities, the two countries' defence ministers convened a press conference during which Britain's Liam Fox portrayed the concept as 'utterly unrealistic'.² Yet despite these comments, on 2 November France and the United Kingdom announced an unprecedented level of cooperation on their naval assets. Furthermore, France reportedly offered the use of its Bréguet Atlantique maritime patrol aircraft, as Britain will lose its capability in this sector with the recent cancellation of the Nimrod programme (MRA4) as announced in the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) in October 2010.

The second main area of military cooperation is the future joint deployment of ground troops. The United Kingdom and France announced that they will develop a bi-national rapid reaction force, with training beginning as early as 2011. British and French troops have already operated alongside each other under a multilateral command, such as in the Balkans as part of a UN mission or in DR Congo as part of the Artemis mission under the European Union Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), but the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) represents a higher degree of integration between the two countries' forces. The idea is that a British brigade and a French brigade (each approximately 5,000-strong) will be trained to operate together under a British or French commander. The CJEF would be able to carry out a range of operations, bilaterally or through NATO, the EU or other coalition arrangements.

Thirdly, industrial cooperation is to be enhanced. France and the United Kingdom have reached an agreement on a 10-year plan for the complex weapons sector (i.e. missiles and guided weapons) in order to avoid a duplication of effort, to consolidate a common industrial base and to achieve significant efficiency savings. Specific areas of cooperation include anti-surface missile, cruise missiles, and short-range air defence technologies.

Additionally, Paris and London will increase cooperation on research and technology (R&T) within areas that include satellite communications, unmanned air surveillance systems, naval systems

² 'Navy plans to combine forces with the French: shared aircraft carriers would put jobs at risk', *The Times*, 31 August 2010. <http://www.timesplus.co.uk/tto/news/?login=false&url=http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/defence/article2707712.ece>. 'Liam Fox rejects sharing aircraft carriers with France', BBC News, 3 September 2010. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11176489>.

and complex weapons. In the short term, they will also cooperate more closely on maintenance and training for the A400M fleet, air-to-air refuelling, air transport and maritime mine countermeasures. The two countries have in addition agreed to cooperate more closely on counter-terrorism policies and the resilience of infrastructure against cyber attacks.

Nuclear cooperation

The second treaty deals with nuclear cooperation. Since the early 1960s, France has considered its national nuclear force to be a potent symbol of national independence. The United Kingdom has had a more subtle rationale, based on a dual-track approach; it has sought actively to pursue global nuclear disarmament, while relying on the American nuclear umbrella for protection and retaining a minimum independent nuclear deterrence as a complement. Given this background, nuclear cooperation is undoubtedly a historic leap forward in Franco-British relations.

At Lancaster House, President Nicolas Sarkozy and Prime Minister David Cameron announced new developments that will require an unprecedented level of knowledge-sharing on nuclear weapons. Moreover, joint simulated testing of nuclear warheads will be conducted at new facilities at the Atomic Weapons Research establishment at Aldermaston and at the Valduc centre of the *Commissariat à l'énergie atomique et aux énergies alternatives* in Bourgogne. By 2014, the Aldermaston centre will focus on technology development while technology testing and simulation will be performed in Valduc, with a view to ensuring long-term security and safety of nuclear warheads.

More cooperation should follow, as the United Kingdom and France have agreed to launch a study on the joint development of some aspects of equipment and technology for the next generation of nuclear submarines. In March 2010, some French and British newspapers reported that the two countries could cooperate in the near future on continuous at-sea deterrence (CASD), but this was denied by both governments. In November 2010, Paris and London did not announce any joint submarine patrols and future developments regarding the UK Trident programme will tell whether Franco-British cooperation in this area is a realistic scenario.

THE BRITISH PERSPECTIVE: WHY COOPERATE WITH THE FRENCH?

'There is a long term record of duplicity on the French part when it comes to dealing with their allies (...) France has never and is never likely to share strategic interests with the UK.'

Bernard Jenkin, MP, 2 November 2010³

The words of Bernard Jenkin, a prominent Conservative MP, illustrate the latent mistrust of France's foreign and defence policies in a large part of British political and military circles. 'Can we really trust the French?' has been a rather common reaction to the Franco-British treaties.⁴ The United Kingdom has in fact always been worried about French aspirations for European grandeur and independence. The British debate over France's return into NATO's military command illustrated these concerns recently. At that time many British analysts expressed their concerns over France's aspirations to revive European security via both NATO and the EU.⁵

While both countries aspire to use diplomatic and military tools for international influence, their strategies have been fundamentally different. In this regard, the Suez crisis in 1956 can be described as the turning point for Franco-British relations in the post-war world. As a result of the politically damaging military intervention led by the United Kingdom, France and Israel, London has ever since sought to remain on the right side of the United States, while France has chosen to follow an alternative and more independent path. Britain has opted for high-intensity missions and forces, interoperable with the United States. On the other side of the Channel, France has relied more heavily on strategic assets such as independent nuclear and intelligence policies. It has aspired to create a strong European security and defence architecture that would be autonomous from America. In this regard, France is suspicious about the London's insistence on retaining close ties with its transatlantic partner.

Keeping these differences in mind, why would the United Kingdom cooperate more closely with France? What might appear as a sudden U-turn can in fact be traced back to three developments beginning in the mid-1990s. First, the UK-US relationship is not as special or as close as it once was. The last decade has been defined by intensive military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which have overstretched the British armed forces and arguably damaged the country's credibility as an independent global power. Prime Minister Tony Blair's government in particular was heavily criticized by several foreign policy analysts for putting aside national interests in its quest for influence in Washington.⁶ The subsequent failure of this approach prompted the need for strategic reappraisal. During the last general election campaign, then Conservative Party leader David Cameron and Shadow Foreign Secretary William Hague called for a new kind of transatlantic relations, which the latter described as 'solid but not slavish'.⁷ In the meantime, President Barack Obama shifted US foreign policy priorities away from the Atlantic and towards new bigger economic partners in Asia, particularly India and China.

Secondly, while the United States has shifted away from Europe, France has slowly moved closer to the United Kingdom. This rapprochement was marked by the progressive but full reintegration of France into NATO structures, first via the country's return into NATO Military Committee in 1995 and then with reintegration into the Alliance's Military Command in 2009. In the two years leading

3 'Britain and France sign landmark 50-year defence deal', *The Guardian*, 2 November 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/nov/02/britain-france-landmark-50-year-defence-deal?showallcomments=true>.

4 Former security minister Lord West notably asked, with regard to increasing military cooperation between the two countries: 'Do you want to find British pilots bombing people for a French reason?'. See 'Liam Fox rejects sharing aircraft carriers with France', BBC News, 3 September 2010. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11176489>.

5 For a very interesting analysis of reactions in the United Kingdom over France's full reintegration into NATO, see Christopher Bickerton, "'Oh bugger, they're in the tent now': British responses to French reintegration into NATO", *European Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1, March 2010, pp.113–22.

6 'British political approach to the UK-US relations', in 'Global Security: UK-US Relations', House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 28 March 2010. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmfaff/114/11408.htm>.

7 'William Hague says Britain will pursue "solid but not slavish" relationship with US', *The Guardian*, 14 May 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/may/14/hague-uk-us-clinton-afghanistan>.

up to the latter decision, London had been closely involved in France's strategic review process, resulting in the publication of France's White Paper on Defence and National Security in 2008.

Thirdly, and as previously mentioned, the economic downturn in both countries provided a final impetus needed to bring the United Kingdom and France together. In an age of austerity, cross-Channel cooperation quickly became the best way for them to retain capabilities to match their aspirations. The economic difficulties have proved an opportunity for the United Kingdom to bring France towards a realistic bilateral agreement that would focus on capabilities and exclude a strong multilateral component.

The outcome of the 2010 summit differs greatly from the St Malo declaration, signed on 4 December 1998 by Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac, which marked the beginning of the ESDP. Nonetheless, the United Kingdom and France had different readings of the declaration.⁸ For the British, St Malo was a way to focus on capabilities, after the European failure to deal with crises in the Balkans without a strong American involvement, as well as an opportunity to demonstrate to the United States that Europe was willing to contribute to the global defence and security burden. France, however, intended to revive Europe's ambitions in the security and defence realm and to prove to the United States that Europe could play a bigger and more autonomous role in this domain.

Twelve years later, the EU and other multilateral frameworks are clearly secondary to the 2010 UK-French agreements. For now, David Cameron has managed to overcome wide-ranging eurosceptic opposition within his party and the electorate. In addition to the strategic and political reasons for this rapprochement, the British Prime Minister emphasized the millions of pounds of savings that would be achieved, as part of the government's broader budgetary consolidation plan.⁹ During parliamentary questions following the treaty announcement, Defence Secretary Liam Fox clearly indicated that the treaties did not constitute St Malo II: 'This is not about increasing the defence capabilities of the European Union'.¹⁰ However, it remains unclear whether the implementation of the measures announced in the treaties will circumvent potential obstruction from the more Eurosceptic wing of the Conservative Party.

Sitting side-by-side in St Malo, Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac had different motives in signing the declaration. Even though the 2010 declaration differed greatly from that of 1998, did France's interests and aspirations more closely match the British ones 12 years later? Can the suspicions from some right-wing British figures about France be overcome?

8 Jolyon Howorth, 'Britain, France and the European Defence Initiative', *Survival*, Volume 42, No. 2 (2000), pp. 33–55. <http://www.iiss.org/publications/survival/survival-summaries/year-2000---volume-42/year-2000---issue-2/>.

9 'David Cameron hails "new chapter" in Britain-France military cooperation', *Daily Telegraph*, 4 January 2011. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/industry/defence/8105006/UK-France-defence-David-Cameron-hails-new-military-co-operation-between-Britain-and-France.html>.

10 House of Commons Debate, 2 November 2010, cited in Claire Taylor, 'Franco-British Defence Co-Operation', House of Commons Library report, 8 November 2010, pp. 8–9.

SAINT-MALO AND LONDON: SAME GOAL, DIFFERENT MEANS FOR FRANCE?

'I would like to say, contrary to what might otherwise seem to be the case, that the clocks in France and Britain strike the same hours, precisely.'

Nicolas Sarkozy, 2 November 2010¹¹

During the press conference that followed the formal signature of the 2010 treaties, President Nicolas Sarkozy used this slightly uneasy play on words to indicate that, in spite of the appearances, France and the United Kingdom are today on the same page in terms of their defence interests and priorities. Nonetheless, British political and military commentators have expressed various concerns. On multiple occasions, France has proved to be an unreliable partner to the United Kingdom in the field of defence and security, in tactical, operational and capability areas. Why would the French change their behaviour now? Is France trying to find a more subtle way to create a European army? Given this background, this section analyses French motives for negotiating and signing the treaties. Why did France decide to increase cooperation with the United Kingdom, in spite of persistent strategic divergences over the two countries' relations with the EU and the United States?

First, these new treaties represent an opportunity for France to formalize and structure its defence relations with Britain. While France has long cooperated with its main European partners (including Germany, Spain and Italy) within established bilateral frameworks, cross-Channel defence relations were based on ad hoc arrangements until November 2010.

Secondly, the French government claims that these new agreements, portrayed as being the 'anti-St Malo' by a French official, are not specifically driven by political and strategic aspirations but rather by a pragmatic focus on capabilities.¹² In France, the economic downturn and the subsequent reduction of the defence budget have convinced the government of the urgent need to find an alternative way to retain sufficient capabilities and therefore avoid strategic irrelevance.¹³ The French government claims it is aware of its strategic differences with the United Kingdom, particularly on Europe, but it also suggests that they should not prevent the two countries from cooperating on practical matters. As a French defence ministry official points out by way of example, Norway and Finland, despite the divergences in their foreign policy agendas and memberships of multilateral organizations, have successfully cooperated on a number of security and defence issues since the late 1950s.¹⁴

Thirdly, the French government claims that this new bilateral agreement does not contradict France's multilateral partnerships but rather reinforces them. The EU has been greatly criticized for its inability to develop credible defence capabilities, culminating in the recent imbroglio over the A400M. While CSDP remains a long-term priority for France, the renewed bilateral dynamic answers immediate capability concerns. Now that the institutions created by the Lisbon Treaty are set up, France suggests it is time to focus on capabilities. Moreover, the bilateral agreements with the United Kingdom do not exclude other bilateral partnerships, for instance with Germany on training and maintenance tasks within the A400M programme. In a way, in spite of a primary focus on immediate capability concerns, Paris considers the recent agreements with London as a potential opportunity to revitalize CSDP in the long term.

Finally, the Franco-British treaties fit within a new chapter in French defence policy. Since 2007, France has demonstrated more pragmatism in its approach, re-entering NATO Military Command and ending decades of an ambiguous and sometimes obstructive behaviour in European defence.

¹¹ John F. Burns, 'British military expands links to French allies', *New York Times*, 2 November 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/03/world/europe/03britain.html>.

¹² Interview with author, November 2010.

¹³ The French government announced in the summer of 2010 that the defence budget would be reduced by €3.5bn between 2011 and 2013. Clara Marina O'Donnell, 'EU must co-ordinate its defence needs', *The Guardian*, 15 August 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/aug/15/eu-military-spending-joined-up-thinking>.

¹⁴ Interview with author, November 2010.

Arguably by putting ideological aspirations to grandeur aside, France has looked for more flexible mechanisms to pursue its defence purposes.

Although the United Kingdom and France have converging priorities in the security and defence realm, their long-term visions still largely differ. In the future, differences over European security and defence may come to obstruct a strategic partnership between them. France needs to remain honest about its aspirations for CSDP, which should not be viewed as an end in itself. Additionally, it must find ways to convince Britain that its European agenda does not contradict a strengthened Franco-British partnership.

The 2010 treaties have received mixed reactions. In London, France has been criticized by some commentators and politicians for trying to create a European army. In Brussels, France was blamed for trying to destroy CSDP. In fact, it is most likely that Paris will do neither. These treaties should be understood as primarily bottom-up, capability-centred agreements, without grand political aspirations. However, conflicts at a strategic level might emerge in the future if France decides to go back to a more Gaullist approach of seeking grandeur through Europe. The increasing influence within the French government of Foreign Minister Alain Juppé, who adheres to the Gaullist tradition of privileging European relations, and a possible win for the Socialist Party in the 2012 presidential election might progressively pave the way for a more politically-driven, EU-oriented and less pragmatic French defence policy.

VIEWS FROM WASHINGTON: BETWEEN WORRY, INDIFFERENCE AND POLITE SUPPORT

'I think in terms of the relationship we have with Washington, which is obviously a very strong relationship, it is the special relationship, they want European countries like France and Britain to come together and share defence resources so that we actually have greater capabilities [...] So I think this will get a very warm welcome in Washington.'

David Cameron, 2 November 2010¹⁵

Prime Minister David Cameron seemed optimistic that the Franco-British defence treaties would please Britain's US counterparts. Yet reactions in Washington have in fact been rather mixed, ranging from worry to indifference and polite support.

A few days before the publication of the UK Strategy Review, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the United States was worried about the British defence budget cuts: 'It does (worry me), and the reason it does is because I think we do have to have an alliance where there is a commitment to the common defence'.¹⁶ While Washington was relieved to see that the cuts to the defence budget were not as dramatic as expected, it still fears that the Franco-British treaties might serve as an excuse to cut the defence budget even further in the coming years. Furthermore, senior figures in the US defence community have expressed concerns privately about the potential of the Franco-British partnership for generating rivalry against the United States. Ahead of the Lancaster House Summit in November, President Sarkozy indeed indicated that one of the main objectives of the treaties was to group the two countries' defence industries in order to share development costs and help the emergence of European champions able to be 'competitive vis-à-vis the United States'.¹⁷

These concerns were clearly secondary to an overall mild reaction, suggesting indifference and polite support for the treaties. This can be explained by other more urgent matters for the White House, including the impact of the economic crisis in the United States and the aftermath of the mid-term election fiasco for the Democrats.¹⁸ The lack of strong reactions in the United States may also demonstrate that the centre of gravity of foreign policy has drifted away from the Atlantic and towards the Pacific region.

Much has been said about the Anglo-American 'special relationship' over the past decade. Many commentators now agree to criticize the expression, recently described as 'patronizing, confusing and inaccurate' by former UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who argued that relations between the two countries should be rather viewed as 'distinctive and close'.¹⁹

Washington officially indicated that the Franco-British defence treaties mark a salutary renewed focus on capabilities and demonstrate French and British aspirations to remain global contributors in security and defence. They also come in line with American requests for a stronger Europe that would be able to share a larger part of the international security burden within NATO. However, keeping in mind previous disappointments, the United States seems to be asking: Will the United Kingdom and France be able to deliver, not only in terms of capability development, but also with regard to operational commitments?

15 Prime Minister's Office, 'UK-France Summit press conference', 2 November 2010. <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/11/uk-france-summit-press-conference-56551>.

16 'Hillary Clinton worried over UK defence cuts', BBC News, 15 October 2010. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11548999>.

17 'Paris et Londres vont renforcer leur coopération dans le domaine des armes nucléaires', *Le Monde*, 2 November 2010. http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2010/11/02/paris-et-londres-vont-renforcer-leur-cooperation-dans-le-domaine-des-armes-nucleaires_1434101_3214.html#ens_id=1425593.

18 Joint Chiefs of Staff, 'National Debt poses Security Threat, says Mullen', 26 August 2010 <http://www.jcs.mil/newsarticle.aspx?id=360>.

19 Jack Straw, 'Special or Merely Close? Britain's Relationship with the US in 2010', The Whitehead Lecture, Chatham House, 7 December 2010. <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/events/view/-/id/1782/>.

There is no clear answer to this question yet, just as there is no clear answer on what can be expected from the United States with regard to the Franco-British defence partnership. Two developments will need to be watched carefully. The first is the political evolution of US-UK relations. Britain's coalition government has publicly opted for a more realistic and more autonomous approach towards the United States. However, the relationship is unlikely to change significantly, as revealed by diplomatic cables made public by WikiLeaks. Ahead of the 2010 general election, William Hague reassured the American ambassador to the United Kingdom that a Conservative government would be 'pro-American' and indicated that the entire Conservative leadership were, like him, 'staunchly Atlanticist' and 'children of Thatcher'.²⁰ While the Liberal Democrats' presence in the coalition government may have an effect on the shape and extent of this relationship, the party having argued for a more balanced foreign policy between Washington and Brussels, it is likely to remain at the core of the United Kingdom's foreign and defence policies.²¹

The second development that should be granted full consideration concerns nuclear deterrence. Further cooperation between the United Kingdom and France towards joint nuclear deterrence may require a redefinition of US-UK nuclear relations, the most important pillar of the 'special relationship' alongside intelligence since the 1960s. Moreover, further potential developments in US-Russian talks over nuclear disarmament may have an influence on Britain's nuclear strategy and its nuclear relations with France.

The United States is likely to play a central role in the fate of the Franco-British treaties. For the cross-Channel partnership to be successful and sustainable, Washington needs to recognize and support it. The defence treaties are certainly useful to the United States, which has been calling for more burden-sharing within the transatlantic alliance since the end of the Cold War. France (now a full NATO member) and the United Kingdom, as the world's third and fourth largest spenders in defence, have pledged to focus on capabilities. Washington may be tempted to view this partnership as competition, but it is very unlikely to be the case. The United States needs more Europe, just as much as NATO needs the EU to intervene when the alliance cannot or will not. Therefore, the Franco-British treaties are useful for European defence and should not be opposed, especially since they lack the ideological aspects the United States usually resents.

20 'WikiLeaks cables: Conservatives promised to run "pro-American regime"', *The Guardian*, 3 December 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/dec/03/wikileaks-cables-us-special-relationship>.

21 Nicholas Kitchen, "'Solid, not slavish": UK-US Relations under Cameron and Clegg', *IDEAS Today*, Issue 4, June 2010. http://www2.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/ideasToday/04/04_UK-USRelations.pdf.

WHAT IMPLICATIONS FOR BRUSSELS?

'But where, the question then presses, does this leave the rest of Europe? [W]ill the French now have eyes for anyone other than the British? Will the new cross-Channel entente suck the oxygen out of any other form of European cooperation?'

Nick Witney, former head of the European Defence Agency²²

The UK government has made it clear that the Franco-British treaties have nothing to do with the EU from a London perspective. In fact, the treaties have been characterized as the perfect opposite of the St Malo Treaty, a 'St Malo in reverse'.²³ It is necessary to question the impact this will have on the EU and CSDP, as indicated in the words of the former head of European Defence Agency (EDA), Nick Witney, quoted above. After striving to create a European defence and security policy in 1998, have the United Kingdom and France now opened a new chapter for the EU and NATO?

When the Common Security and Defence Policy was created in the late 1990s in the St Malo declaration signed by Prime Minister Tony Blair and President Jacques Chirac, it declared that the EU should have 'the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises'.²⁴ The agreement was soon followed by the European Council of Cologne (June 1999), which officially created the European Security and Defence Policy. The first decade of ESDP has been marked by a significant number of peacekeeping missions that EU governments have carried out within this framework. Since 2003, 24 missions have been launched.

While the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 rebranded ESDP as the CSDP, the EU has failed on three important accounts. First, the objectives set at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 to enhance the EU's military crisis-management capabilities have been postponed on numerous occasions and have failed to produce sufficiently ambitious results, largely because of political obstacles created by a few member states. Secondly, the EU has never been able to establish an effective and sustainable working relationship with NATO. Given the importance of NATO as the main collective defence organization within Europe, the relations between the alliance and the EU were bound to be of utmost significance. However, political disputes and sovereignty claims have obstructed the overall development of a successful partnership. Thirdly, and as a result of all this, the CSDP missions in general have been largely under-resourced in staff and equipment, reactive rather than proactive, with no clear coordination between civilian and military actors, and without a long-term impact in the areas of intervention.²⁵

The recent signature of the Franco-British treaties received a warm welcome in NATO circles. 'Defence cooperation between NATO allies is always a good idea,' NATO spokesman James Appathurai announced. 'At a time when we need the most value for what we spend on defence, increased cooperation like this makes all the more sense.'²⁶ French and British leaders emphasized the primacy of NATO as 'the fundamental guarantor of Europe's security', demonstrating the unambiguous centrality of NATO in British defence and security policy, and

²² Nick Witney, 'A Strategic Rubicon', European Council on Foreign Relations, 1 November 2010.

http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_a_strategic_rubicon/.

²³ European Security and Defence Forum Workshop, 'A New European Security Architecture?', 11 November 2010. <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/events/view/-/id/1611/>.

²⁴ 'Franco-British summit, Joint declaration on European defence', 4 December 1998.

<http://www.atlanticcommunity.org/Saint-Malo%20Declaration%20Text.html>.

²⁵ In this regard, deployability and deployment should be of equal concern with capacity-building itself, as noted by Daniel Korski: 'While there are almost two million military personnel in Europe, less than one-fifth of these are defined as "deployable", and only 4.5 percent were actually deployed in military operations or peacekeeping activities in 2008'. Daniel Korski, 'Player or Pawn', *IP Global*, May 2010. <http://www.ip-global.org/2010/05/01/player-or-pawn/>.

²⁶ David Brunnstrom, 'Analysis – Anglo-French defence deal could hurt Brussels goals', Reuters, 3 November 2010. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE6A251S20101103>.

consolidating France's recent rapprochement with NATO.²⁷ NATO's supportive reactions illustrate the alliance's support for more capabilities and operational commitment from its European members, as demonstrated by the shortcomings in terms of equipment and troop contribution of the Afghan mission in the past years. Moreover, intergovernmental initiatives are generally well accepted within NATO, given the organization's lack of drive towards integration.

Responses in the EU have been more mixed, although initial reactions have been supportive. During a session of the European Parliament in November 2010, Lt Gen. Ton Van Osch, Director General of the EU Military Staff, indicated that the Franco-British treaties were a good example of defence cooperation. He insisted on the need for member states to work together to increase their defence capabilities, especially given the current economic context, citing previous examples of useful bilateral cooperation initiatives between EU members (Germany and the Netherlands and within the Baltic region).²⁸ In the long run, CSDP can clearly benefit from pragmatic dynamics on capabilities coming from a small group of states. This was the idea behind the Permanent Structured Cooperation on Defence (PSCD), introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 to encourage capability development for EU crisis management, via 'those member states whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions'.²⁹ However, disagreements persist over its implementation. Some are keen to make PSCD inclusive of all EU member states, while opponents argue that this would defeat the purpose of a mechanism that should be selective and only open to those countries most willing to contribute troops and equipment to a particular mission. This latter strategy would in fact circumvent political bargaining at an EU-wide level.

Nonetheless, concerns and suspicions have also been voiced within the EU. France and the United Kingdom are, for better or for worse, not like any other member state. The history of the EU is full of examples of obstruction to further integration from both countries. While France has generally been keen to preserve a central role in Brussels' decision-making process, the United Kingdom has used its influence at a lower bureaucratic level to slow down, pause or stop the EU integration process. Additionally, when he was in opposition, Defence Secretary Liam Fox, widely considered an ardent Eurosceptic like other senior figures within Conservative Party, regularly criticized CSDP and made the case for the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EDA.³⁰

Reactions in Berlin have demonstrated Germany's unease over an exclusive Franco-British agreement. Elke Hoff, Defence Policy spokesperson for Germany's Free Democrats (FDP), insisted it was imperative that states worked together across the whole European bloc 'and not just bilaterally'.³¹ Robert Hochbaum, a member of Germany's parliamentary defence policy committee, said it was good that European states were working together, but 'a bit unfortunate the British and the French are doing it without us [...] It's always harder to get involved when two states go on ahead than when joint talks are held from the outset'.³²

After the Lisbon Treaty's long and problematic ratification and implementation process, which was marked by disputes over sovereignty and disagreements about the nominations for the new leadership positions created by the treaty, there is growing disillusion over CSDP in the EU and beyond. The economic crisis has created a strong incentive for member states to do things differently in terms of European security and defence. Its architecture is likely to be influenced by the Franco-British treaties, potentially towards a more à la carte multilateralism that would allow states to resort to different frameworks (including EU, NATO, UN, bilateral, trilateral and ad hoc

27 Prime Minister's Office, 'UK-France Summit 2010 Declaration on Defence and Security Co-Operation', 2 November 2010. <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/statements-and-articles/2010/11/uk%E2%80%93france-summit-2010-declaration-on-defence-and-security-co-operation-56519>.

28 Exchange of views with Lt Gen. Ton Van Osch, Director General, EU Military Staff – European Parliament, Committee on Security and Defence, Brussels, 15 November 2010. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMEeiZFHCYQ>.

29 Lisbon Treaty, Article 42 and 46. <http://www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty/treaty-on-european-union-and-comments/title-5-general-provisions-on-the-unions-external-action-and-specific-provisions/-chapter-2-specific-provisions-on-the-common-foreign-and-security-policy/section-2-provisions-on-the-common-security-and-defence-policy/133-article-46.html>.

30 Interview with Liam Fox, *Defence News*, 13 September 2009. <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=4275063>. George Parker, 'Fox drops pledge to quit EU defence agency', *Financial Times*, 28 November 2010. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b4437810-fb2a-11df-b576-00144feab49a.html#axzz1AB7Hu5ZU>.

31 Brunnstrom, 'Analysis – Anglo-French defence deal could hurt Brussels goals'.

32 Ibid.

arrangements) depending on the context. In the near future, some member states such as Britain, France, Germany and Italy may act in favour of a shift toward more intergovernmentalism in European security and defence at the expense of more supranational structures. This is likely to be viewed as a risk within the recently created European External Action Service (EEAS), which comprises the EU Military Staff, and the EDA, and in smaller member states (notably Netherlands, Belgium, Finland and Poland). However, this more pragmatic and less political approach to European security has the potential to provide Europe with increased capabilities. This will not only depend on previously mentioned policy developments in the United Kingdom, France and the United States, but also on developments within the defence industry in Europe.

INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION: THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAIL

'We have only just started on an extremely difficult journey'

Charles Armitage, aerospace and defence analyst³³

As previously mentioned, the November 2010 treaties call for the collaborative use of several types of military equipment, including aircraft carriers, submarines, drones, transport aircraft and satellite communications. Calling for a renewed focus on capabilities and increased industrial cooperation between France and the United Kingdom, the treaties have been warmly received by the defence industries of both countries. Ian Godden, Chairman of ADS, the UK Aerospace, Defence and Security trade organization, issued a statement on the very day they were signed to indicate that 'the UK-based defence industry welcomes today's treaty'.³⁴ Dassault Aviation and BAE Systems had already supported closer cross-Channel cooperation on the development of a medium-altitude, long-endurance unmanned air surveillance system, more commonly referred to as drone aircraft, and an unmanned combat air vehicle. The treaties will also give further momentum to the development of MBDA, a missile manufacturer and a subsidiary of EADS, BAE Systems and Finmeccanica.

As suggested in Ian Godden's statement, 'the conditions for cooperating with French industry have never been better. Both countries are seeking to sustain capabilities which they could otherwise not afford.' Given the current economic downturn and the resulting constraint on resources, France and the United Kingdom were left with two options in defence procurement: joint development programmes or buying off-the-shelf from the United States. One report recently indicated that the cheapest way for France to acquire unmanned surveillance air systems was to buy the US Predator rather than systems built by European industries such as EADS, Thales and BAE.³⁵ However, more cooperation in defence procurement could make a great deal of sense. Very little common investment exists in Europe at present. In 2008, 76% of all defence investment by EU member states was in national programmes that do not involve international collaboration. The figure is slightly higher with regard to R&T spending: 82%.³⁶

In order to avoid duplications and inefficiencies, a set of procurement solutions exists, including joint acquisition and co-development.³⁷ Joint acquisition can be defined as procuring and operating capabilities jointly, so that no purely national capabilities exist. It is costly in terms of political autonomy so should be reserved for very expensive or specific capabilities. Co-development, whereby a set of defence contractors develop and produce equipment for several customer nations, is perhaps a more applicable solution. While co-development is perceived to create delays and cost overruns, schedule slippage is greatly related to technical complexity rather than to the level of collaboration.

The Franco-British treaties build on years of cooperation projects on military equipment. Past cooperation areas include fast jet aircraft, helicopters and more recently surface-to-air missile systems. In 2006, Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac agreed on the creation of a High Level Bilateral Working Group to examine ways to enhance existing cooperation in armaments programmes. The treaties include an agreement on a 10-year strategic plan for British and French missiles, with the

33 Carola Hoyos, 'Suppliers eye united front against US', *Financial Times*, 2 November 2010. http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/409b92e2-e6be-11df-99b3-00144feab49a,dwp_uuid=bc5ebee8-713c-11de-877c-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1AB9iw7Tw.

34 'Anglo-French defence treaty – UK-based industry comment', ADS News Release, 2 November 2010. http://www.adsgroup.org.uk/community/cms/content/preview/news_item_view.asp?i=21627

35 Carola Hoyos, James Blitz and George Parker, 'Defence groups urge France-UK tie-up', *Financial Times*, 1 November 2010. http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/956555ba-e605-11df-9cdd-00144feabdc0,dwp_uuid=bc5ebee8-713c-11de-877c-00144feabdc0,s01=1.html#axzz1E2O3bATD.

36 Bastian Giegerich, 'Budget Crunch: Implications for European Defence', *Survival*, vol. 52, no. 4, August–September 2010. <http://www.iiss.org/publications/survival/survival-2010/year-2010-issue-4/budget-crunch-implications-for-european-defence/>.

37 Ibid.

aim of having a single European prime contractor in the near future, potentially bringing savings of 30%. This follows the development of MBDA, founded in December 2001 through the merger of Aerospatiale-Matra Missiles (of EADS), Finmeccanica and Matra BAe Dynamics, and which has become Europe's top guided-weapons producer.

Further rapprochement between the UK and French defence industries therefore continues this trend. However, there are reservations on a number of issues. First, historically, Franco-British industrial collaboration in the defence sector has not always been easy. In the 1990s and 2000s, the United Kingdom abandoned a number of programmes, such as the long-range Trigat anti-armour missile, the Trimilcom communication satellite programme and the Horizon frigate programme. These programmes were not purely Franco-British but involved Germany or Italy as well. This time, the governments in Paris and London, at least until now, voluntarily excluded other European partners. It remains to be seen whether this tactic will in fact facilitate the implementation of the measures agreed.

Secondly, the United Kingdom and France diverge in their approaches to the defence industry. As noted by British MP Neil Parish, France has traditionally retained a protectionist attitude towards its defence sector, which is in large part owned by the state, in line with the country's tradition of Colbertian economic policies in which the central government retains a central role.³⁸ France's rationale is that defence markets would not exist without states, given the crucial importance of sovereignty in defence policies. The UK has opted for a different approach to the defence sector, traditionally considering that the defence market does not greatly differ from other markets and should therefore be free.

Thirdly, in line with both countries' political orientations and despite the beginning of a restructuring process in the past decade, the structures of UK and French defence industries still differ widely. While France's industrial relations are more oriented towards Europe, the UK industries retain strong ties with the US market. BAE Systems is now for the most part based in America, where it generated more than half of its revenues in 2009, most notably thanks to the Typhoon and F35 programmes.³⁹

The Franco-British treaties were criticized for largely overlooking the European defence industry. While bilateral cooperation seems like a natural path for programmes such as nuclear weapons or aircraft carriers, it can be argued that a call for tenders at the EU level for drone aircraft, submarines, A400M, satellite communications and R&T could have been fairer and more useful. In particular, EADS, which has a large part of its manufacturing base for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in Germany, was sidelined from the Dassault-BAE joint project of drones in 2010.

Given the difficulties encountered in defence procurement in the past decade, the Franco-British treaties can nonetheless be seen as a first salutary step towards more joint action in European defence procurement. Increased openness and transparency in the defence industry will be needed in the near future for the treaties to become an inspiration for European security and defence cooperation, and help develop similar initiatives across Europe.

38 House of Commons debate, 2 November 2010, p. 17.

<http://www.parliament.uk/briefingpapers/commons/lib/research/briefings/snias-05750.pdf>.

39 BAE Systems, Annual Report 2009. www.bae-systems-annual-report-2009.production.investis.com/strategy/market-review/homemarkets.

CONCLUSION

'France has no friends, only interests.'

Charles de Gaulle

'We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.'

Lord Palmerston

Given the scale of the current economic crisis and the subsequent budget cuts being implemented on both sides of the Channel, the United Kingdom and France have converged with the November 2010 treaties on a bilateral agreement focused on capabilities. Nonetheless, the two countries have interests that still differ in important respects. France retains global ambitions for a CSDP that should complement NATO, while the United Kingdom remains largely Eurosceptic, especially in the security and defence realm, and thus wishes to deal only with European states on a bilateral basis or through NATO. Furthermore, France traditionally aspires to grand political projects, while the Britain's preference for a bottom-up approach leads it to focus more on pragmatic and concrete developments. Needless to say, both countries are also confined to seeking short-term achievements for electoral purposes.

The Franco-British treaties, although signed for a 50-year period, focus on the short-term need for capabilities. A number of crucial questions therefore remain. What will happen when the British and French economies recover? Will the two countries' strategic differences re-emerge? Will they return to old habits of more protectionism and nationalism in the defence realm? Will both governments gradually abandon the increased financial imperative in defence spending recently induced by budgetary austerity?

Political obstacles ahead

Because of the lack of integration at a strategic level, the fate of the treaties may in the end largely depend on political short-term interests in both countries and developments in Europe and the United States, as strategic differences between London and Paris re-emerge.

In the United Kingdom, the more eurosceptic wing of the Conservative Party may in the short term drive a reluctance to engage fully with the agreed measures. From the other end of the political spectrum, the then Shadow Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper welcomed the Franco-British defence treaties but added that the Labour Party was concerned about the government's pursuit of its bilateral agenda at the expense of multilateral forms of cooperation, including the EU.⁴⁰

In France, a number of developments might jeopardize the treaties. First, government reshuffles since the treaties were signed – which saw Alain Juppé replacing Hervé Morin as Defence Minister in November 2010 just after the summit, and then to the appointment of Gérard Longuet when Juppé became Foreign Minister in February 2011 – could slow down the implementation process. Secondly, campaigning for the 2012 presidential election, which will intensify in the second half of 2011, is likely to shift the French government towards more pressing domestic issues. Thirdly, the election of a Socialist president could lead to a stronger focus on multilateral frameworks at the expense of bilateral ones.

⁴⁰ Yvette Cooper, 'Coalition foreign policy – an assessment and Labour's approach to opposition', Speech at Chatham House, 13 December 2010. <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/events/view/-/id/1803/>.

Other obstacles lie in the lack of solid support from the United States and potential obstructions from other EU members that feel left behind by the Franco-British treaties.

Suggestions for a brighter future in Franco-British cooperation

In the short term, all actors involved in the implementation process for the Franco-British defence treaties must take responsibility for achieving the goals agreed upon. It is time for both countries to learn the lessons of St Malo and focus on the delivery of results. A dual-track approach should therefore be pursued in order to revive European security as a whole in the long term as well, in an ambitious yet realistic way.

In the first track, French officials should acknowledge most British Conservatives' reluctance to initiate or take part in EU projects, yet aim to convince them of the urgent need for a more pragmatic and intergovernmental approach within the Union, through the PSCD or a similar mechanism, including important EU and non-EU European partners such as Germany, Italy, Poland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland and Norway. In the second track, the EU must take advantage of the Franco-British treaties and adopt a more focused, realistic and yet strategic approach in defence and security. Despite previous notable bureaucratic struggles and much-criticized failures of equipment programmes, the EU still holds tremendous potential that should not be overlooked, and a reconciled strategic partnership between France and the United Kingdom should become its security and defence engine.

The United States also has a crucial role to play in making the case for the treaties and other examples of bilateral cooperation that would benefit both NATO and the EU, and which should be promoted as complementary structures in crisis management in the near future, as part of a more comprehensive approach in this field. In this regard, the EU should take the opportunity of the signing of the Franco-British treaties to reactivate the CSDP process in a more realistic manner. In addition, a more transparent and open process of competition in defence procurement should be put in place in Europe.

For better or for worse, the United Kingdom and France are part of a broader strategic environment. Security threats and challenges for both countries are increasingly complex, interconnected and international. Responses should therefore not be confined to one or two countries alone but integrated within a more inclusive and comprehensive approach. While the Franco-British defence treaties are sensible, their ability to last more than 'while they last' will depend on the capacity of all actors involved to tie them to a broader strategic vision for international security.

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