European Defence and German Defence Cooperation

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Abstract

European Defence Cooperation has in the last few years emerged as one of the most dynamic areas of European integration, with EU Member States increasingly pursuing multilateral security cooperation strategies. Considering Germany's central role in European integration, expectations vis-à-vis Germany to contribute more in the realm of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy to further integrate European defence and promote increasing defence cooperation among its members has also increased. At the same time the election of Donald Trump and 'Brexit' are cause for greater concern regarding the evolution of European defence deepening. The article assesses Germany's role in European Defence Cooperation and in particular the German-French relationship which can serve as a 'defence motor' if both countries strive for more defence integration and a common strategic culture. However, the risk persists that EU defence cooperation can go into reverse gear, as in this intergovernmental policy domain fleeting political will or contingencies of national sovereignty continue to shape policy choices of EU states.

Resumo

A Defesa Europeia e a Cooperação Alemã em Matéria de Defesa

Nos últimos anos, a cooperação europeia no domínio da defesa emergiu como uma das áreas mais dinâmicas da integração europeia, com os Estados-Membros da UE a perseguirem cada vez mais estratégias multilaterais de cooperação em matéria de segurança. Tendo em conta o papel central da Alemanha na integração europeia, as expectativas em relação à Alemanha para contribuir mais no domínio da Política Comum de Segurança e Defesa da UE para integrar ainda mais a defesa europeia e promover uma maior cooperação na defesa também aumentaram. Ao mesmo tempo, a eleição de Donald Trump e 'Brexit' é motivo de maior preocupação com relação à evolução do aprofundamento da defesa na Europa. O artigo avalia o papel da Alemanha na Cooperação Europeia em Defesa e, em particular, a relação franco-alemã que pode servir como um "motor de defesa" se ambos os países lutarem por mais integração de defesa e uma cultura estratégica comum. Contudo, persiste o risco de que a cooperação em matéria de defesa da UE possa entrar em processo de marcha atrás, pois, neste domínio político intergovernamental, a vontade política ou as contingências da soberania nacional continuam a moldar as escolhas políticas dos Estados da UE.

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Introduction

European Defence Cooperation has in the last few years emerged as one of the most dynamic areas of European integration, with EU Member States increasingly pursuing multilateral security cooperation strategies. Considering Germany's central role in European integration, expectations vis-à-vis Germany to contribute more in the realm of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) to further integrate European defence and promote increasing defence cooperation among its members has also increased (Daehnhardt, 2018). Ever since the European Council of December 2013, a renewed impulse was given to the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) and enhanced defence cooperation among EU Member States. Crimea's annexation by Russia, the migration crisis in Northern Africa and the Middle East, 'Brexit', and uncertainty in the transatlantic security partnership were additional external drivers of this revitalization. In the face of an incrementally volatile external environment, and with the impending exit of the United Kingdom from the EU, the security and defense in the EU will decisively depend on Germany and France to jointly further EU defence cooperation.

However, initially Germany did not play a major role in the development of the European Security and Defense, in the late 1990s, when the embryonic role of the EU as an international security actor was defined by the bilateral relationship between France and the United Kingdom, when President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Tony Blair signed the Treaty of Saint Malo in December 1998, laying the foundations for the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). While Germany hoped that the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the ESDP's sucessor, adopted with the Lisbon Treaty, in 2009, would play a more decisive role, where Germany's interests and responsibilities would be nested, it contributed little to its development, leaving the leading role to France and UK which, through bilateral cooperation, and outside the context of the CSDP, signed the Lancaster House Accords in November 2010 on cooperation in defense and security policies. In a broader context, other weaknesses of the CSDP reflected the lack of strategic convergence between the three major Europeans, and the fact that most CSDP civilian and military operations were smaller, often symbolic, missions of strategic capabilities that could not be an alternative to larger-scale NATO military operations. European Union defence integration also remained limited as there were significant operational constraints on European defence capabilities such as intelligence, reconnaissance, strategic and tactical transport, and the protection of forces; the European defense industry remained fragmented and undermined by state protectionism and was characterized by the absence of harmonization and standardized standards (Daehnhardt, 2014). EU defence suffered from duplications and excesses in military capabilities, such as personnel, installations and industrial

output. This situation was problematic as it overloaded EU member states' military budgets without corresponding operational benefits.
Until 'Brexit', then, in the area of security and defense, the Franco-German relationship was seconded by France's preference to continued bilateral relations with United Kingdom. Thus, in EU security and defense policy, the Franco-German relationship was traditionally not determinant, because of Germany's low profile commitment to defense issues and insignificant contribution to the European Union's strategic ambition to become a global actor. The Franco-British cooperation during the NATO intervention in Libya in 2011, in which Germany abstained in the UN Security Council vote, reflected France's operational preference to cooperate with the UK in security and defense issue, even if outside the EU institutional framework.
Following the 'Brexit' vote and the election of US president Donald Trump, however, Germany's role in European defence cooperation has been elevated to a new position, raising the stakes for Berlin to become more actively involved and expecting Germany to play a role in security and defence policy more commensurate with its geo-economic power (Kundnani, 2011). This article addresses the question of Germany's growing role in European defence cooperation and how Berlin ensures a more effective role in an increasingly complex European and transatlantic context. The article is divided into four sections. The first section assesses the security implications of the 'Brexit' vote and the Trump election for European security and defence; the second section looks at Germany's position vis-à-vis European defence cooperation and sketches out potential impediments for an incrementally more active German role. The third section discusses progress achieved by the EU, and Germany and France in particular, regarding the recent further deepening of defence integration. The final section adresses the issue of a lack of a common strategic culture as a hindrance towards effective long-term defence cooperation.

Trump, 'Brexit' and the Implications for European Security

Much of the analysis on European defence cooperation depends on how one defines European defense. If it relates to the European Union's external security environment, then to some extent the EU has already become an important security actor, despite the somewhat smallness of its CSDP missions and operations. Particularly with regard to Northern Africa and the Middle East, it has training and police missions in Mali, Central African Republic, Niger, Somalia, Iraq and Libya, it fights piracy off the coast of Somalia, it combats terrorism in Mali, and it strives to ensure the stability of Europe's borders, particularly on its southern flank, as a result of the mass migration crossing the Mediterranean Sea.
But if the definition of European security and defence cooperation relates to the security relationships among EU Member States then the integration process of

European defence cooperation is much slower, despite important progress. For while the simultaneity of crises has rendered European defence integration more necessary, it has also made Member States more weary of defending their own national interests, which at times coincide and at others diverge from those of other Member States.

The accumulation of European crises in the last decade – the crisis of the Euro, the crisis of migration, the crisis of European populism and the nexus with illiberal democracies – and Russia's assertive security policy in Ukraine since the annexation of Crimeia and the civil war in Syria, all represent, in different forms, disruptive factors which highlight the fragility and potential fragmentation of Europe and illustrate the need for new dynamics in European security. But it is the recent changes in the foreign policies of the United States and the United Kingdom – within the inner circle of transatlantic and European alliances – which are cause for greater concern regarding the evolution of European defence deepening.

First, the unpredictability of the Trump administration's foreign policy suggest the continuation of the United States' global strategic repositioning and a more transactional approach in its alliance policy, with serious implications for European security. President Trump's demand that defence budgets of all NATO Member States allocate two percent of GDP to defense spending by 2024, while not new, suggests, in the terms Trump put it, a new conditionality, that in the event of an armed attack, the US nuclear guarantee would only apply to those states which had attained the stipulated target. Immediately, the transatlantic relationship was rendered more conditional, transactional and potentially temporary. Admittedly, in NATO's recommitment to territorial defence following Russian aggression against Ukraine, in 2014, the Obama and Trump administrations have reinforced the US presence in Eastern Europe by sending a battalion to Poland and by creating the European Deterrence Initiative where the US has increased its budget.

The two percent defence spending increase becomes even more significant, given that Trump has also changed the American position vis-à-vis European integration. It was a continuous security interest for all US post-war administrations to support European integration as a mechanism for stable relations with and in Western Europe and to keep the status quo in transatlantic relations. Breaking with this tradition, Trump is the first American president who openly critizices European integration, and its preferred multilateralist rules-based approach opts for a devaluation of the European Union in US strategy documents and supports 'Brexit' and populist and nationalist anti-EU-movements. This change suggests the reversal of the traditional American position of seeing European integration as supportive of the United States' role as 'Europe's American pacifier' as it was for over 70 years (Joffe, 1984). In particular, the US president's opposition to the European Union is

revealed mainly in Trump's criticisms of Germany's economic and security policies: Trump accuses Germany of using the EU as a vehicle to safeguard German interests (in a supposedly transactional perspective applied by the US itself), to pursue an unfair trade policy towards the US, to be a defence freerider in NATO and, finally, to open European doors to Syrian refugees (Deutsche Welle, 2017).
There is a causal link the analyst Seth Jones (2007) established between Germany and the US's security interests when he stated that "European security cooperation is inversely related to American power in Europe: the smaller the US military presence in Europe, the greater the impetus for European Union security cooperation to improve the potential security dilemma. It is also correlated with German power: the greater the power of Germany, the greater the impetus for co-operation". Thus there is not only a difficult transatlantic relationship but the dilemma of European security persists, and the role of NATO and the EU in this interaction is reduced: less US and more Germany are two factors serving as impulse for greater European defence cooperation.
Outside the purely transatlantic relationship, Donald Trump's decision, on 8 May 2018, to withdraw the United States unilaterally from the nuclear agreement signed with Iran in 2015, which lifted sanctions in exchange for suspending Tehran's nuclear program, produced additional implications for the transatlantic relationship, with the US reinstating economic sanctions, and the EU announcing that it would maintain its commitment to the agreement with Iran. In September 2018, Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, announced the creation of an independent financial mechanism which circumvents Trumps' warning that the US would target European companies which continued to do business with Iran (Financial Times, 2018*)*. While this does not produce direct consequences for European defence cooperation, it highlights the diminishment of US security interest in Europe.
Trump's policies have significant implications for European defence, for while this growing estrangement can be a catalyst for reinforcing European defense cooperation, the disruption of the US strategic interest will at the same time foster new intra-European divisions as a consequence of a transformed transatlantic relationship. Taken together, these changes in American policy, Jolyon Howorth suggests, make 'the Europeans oscillate between the fear of abandonment and the self-defeating consequences of bandwagoning' (Howorth, 2018, p. 18).
Secondly, uncertainty as to the final outcome of the 'Brexit' negotiations – which could produce a full UK political and strategic dissociation from Europe or an institutional separation only with the continuation of a UK-EU strategic link – also raises serious doubts about the future of European defence, the cohesion of the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance and the potential risk of a division between a European continental axis lead by Germany and France and a Anglo-

Saxonic axis lead by the United States and the United Kingdom (Lain and Nouwens, 2017). While the departure of the EU's strongest military power will weaken EU defence operationally, Germany and France will gain relative weight in EU defence as in a 'post-Brexit' EU both will account for almost half of the EU's combined military spending (Konig and Franke, 2017). The agreement to settle the UK's role in EU military operations could, however, provide for the UK to maintain a significant linkage through the provision of troops, equipment and institutional compromise, including the UK's participation in the Athena mechanism to co-finance the operations (Besch, 2018).

In a way not dissimilar to the changes propelled by Trump, the end of the recurrent UK veto stance on defense issues can serve as a catalyst towards increased European defence cooperation and strengthen the bilateral security and defence cooperation between Berlin and Paris. However, an incremental asymmetry in German-French defense cooperation should not be discarded, with inevitable implications on EU defence integration (Keohane, 2018; Pannier, 2018).

To the surprise of many, one possible domain where Germany has signalled that defence cooperation could be developed with France and the UK is in the realm of nuclear weapons capability (Fisher, 2017). A study published in 2017 by the German Bundestag scientific group concluded that German and European could co-finance the development of foreign nuclear weapons of France and the UK (Deutscher Bundestag, 2017). This would represent a major shift in Germany's decades long security policy.

Germany's Defence Cooperation Capacity

Despite the ongoing momentum for increased European defence integration, there are four weaknesses in the German position which have to be addressed as they may hinder a more engaged German role in the near future.

First, the desolate state of the German armed forces and capacity deficiencies act as an operational brake on deepening German-French defence cooperation, due to the lack of operational readiness of the Bundeswehr troops and because of technical shortcomings in many of Germany's Tornado aircrafts or submarines. The problem is not so much a shortage of financial resources, despite over two decades of defence budget cuts, but rather a misallocation of defense ressources, the irony of which is that the procurement budget for weapons and equipment is often not fully spent. This is mainly due to an over-bureacratized and understaffed Procurement Office and the closing of several manufacturing companies which affects the defence supply chain (Buck, 2018).

Secondly, German domestic politics may increasingly limit the grand coalition government margin of maneuvrability to engage in staedy defence cooperation. Incertainty regarding the future stability of the 'Grand Coalition' survival. Not only

the unusually long five months to form a new government after the September 2017 elections, but also recent domestic debacles, such as the Hans-Georg Maasen affair, over connections of the spy chief with the far-right (Deutsche Welle, 2018), the ousting of Volker Kauder, Merkel's long standing ally, from His role as chief of the CDU parliamentary party (New York Times, 2018) and a continuously disruptive "Alternative fur Deutschland" as the second strongest party according to polls in September 2018 (Handelsblatt, 2018b). Faced with this instability domestic politics may be an increasing brake on Berlin's capability to act decisively towards further European defence cooperation. Although the March 2018 coalition agreement emphasis the role of Germany in NATO and transatlantic relations, in defense of the EU and the Franco-German relationship, uncertainty about the domestic stability of the fourth coalition government renders Defence Minister Von der Leyen's position more difficult, also taking into consideration that the Social Democratic Party is traditionally averse to defence spending increases. Fault lines regarding Germany's transatlantic policy emerged, with the SPD's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas more critical tone, when he suggested that Europe should emerge as a counterweight to the US, while Chancellor Merkel, which finds herself in an overall weakened position, has opposed him (Maas, 2018).

Apart from party politics, the German public remains generally averse to international military interventions. A survey conducted in May 2014 by the Körber Foundation showed that the majority of Germans approved greater international responsibility, but 82% rejected stronger military engagement. Faced with a decision on the use of force, German decision makers are often faced with a difficult trade-off between international gains and domestic losses. In a more recent poll, in 2017, over 70 per cent of Germans consider the security of Germany and its allies the most important role for German involvement in international affairs, but only 32 percent support an increase in defense spending (Körber Stiftung, 2017). In contrast, decisions to intervene militarily and appear as an international crisis manager generally increase the approval rates of French presidents.

Thirdly, Germany continues reluctant to politically lead Europe. While it has actively responded, together with France, to Russia's actions in Ukraine, in 2014, through economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure, Germany's leadership to uphold the rules-based institutional order, stepping up its contribution to European security structures, preparing the European Union as a global actor in a 'post-Brexit' and post-American-led western world has somehow diminished since Angela Merkel's fourth coalition government came into office. While this has in part to do with the difficult post-September 2017 German election negotiations to form a coalition government, neither Chancellor Merkel nor Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen have engaged wholeheartedly with French President Emmanuel Macron's new initiatives to revitalize European integration in 2017, and

thus have fallen short of co-leading the implementation of new initiatives in the security and defence policy.

Fourthly and finally, the persistence of a *sui generis* German strategic culture is more of a hindrance in European defence cooperation than an enabler. The lack of German enthusiasm with assuming a full leadership role in bilateral coordination with Paris is (still) explained by the absence of a common strategic culture between Germany and France: Germany's Europeanism (or embedded multilateralism), and its culture of political and military restraint stands in opposition to France's emphasis on national sovereignty and strategic autonomy. In Germany the idea of strategic autonomy implies military interventionism which post-war Germany rejects with the exception of the use of force for humanitarian, crisis management or stabilization purposes in out of NATO areas.

Even if since 2014, a security policy based on strategic thinking has gradually emerged in Germany corresponding to that of an ordering power in the international system, Berlin remains cautious and hesitant about the use of military force in international operations (Daehnhardt, 2017). In contrast, France's defense policy has never let go of its inherent Gaullism, and during the transatlantic crisis of 2002-2003 over the war in Iraq, the French idea of a '*Europe puissance*' as a counterweight to the United States prevailed in much of the French discourse. France and Germany have also pursued divergent goals regarding military integration. Even if Germany is gradually pulling away from its cautious and hesitant security policy towards a more ambitious security and defence policy, as stipulated in its 2016 White Paper, from the German perspective, an autonomous European intervention force presupposes a legally defined institutional framework in accordance with the democratic legitimacy the Bundestag expects. Ultimately, these changes in Berlin's position vis-à-vis its security policy do not implicitly mean that Germany's approach will become more like France's position. Thus while desirable there is no automatism in an increasingly German-French approach towards European defence cooperation.

German-French Responses: a German-French Defence Motor?

In addressing these shortfalls, both Berlin and Paris accept that a unified Franco-German leadership is the necessary condition for deeper defence integration (Kempin and Kunz, 2017). In all of the EU's more integrationist moments the Franco-German relationship has acted as the indispensable catalyst. In the economic and political realm, fifty-five years ago, in 1963, German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and French President Charles de Gaulle signed the Treaty on Franco-German Cooperation, or Élysée Treaty, which became the foundation for the German-French partnership. On the 25th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty, in 1988, both countries signed the creation the German-French Defense and Security Council

(*Deutsch-Französischer Verteidigungs-und Sicherheitsrat*), a political mechanism meant to harmonize national security policies and promote defense cooperation and military integration in Europe.

Within the bilateral relationship, Germany pursued three objectives. First, the German – French bilateralism allowed for the Federal Republic of Germany to legitimize its post-war foreign policy. Secondly, it paved the way for an enlarged multilateralism in Europe, which became one of the core foreign policy principles of the Bonn Republic. Finally after unification, the bilateral relationship helped dissuade growing fears of a revival of German hegemony. For its part, France followed three objectives. First, to preserve French sovereignty in an intergovernmental Europe of sovereign nations. Secondly, to aspire to a French leading role in Europe in a Europeanized framework where Paris could exercise cooperative restraint and curb possible German ambitions. Finally, as from 1993, France conceived the European Union as a '*Europe puissance*' with autonomous defense capabilities in a multi-polar world and a Common Foreign and Security Policy shaped by French conceptions.

In the field of foreign and security policy, Germany and France have cooperated bilaterally through joint diplomatic efforts to settle the conflicts in Eastern Ukraine (e.g. Normandie format and Minsk agreement, February 2015) and Syria, even if with little practical results. But with 'Brexit' materializing, Berlin and Paris have become the indispensable leaders and the backbone of European defense, representing about 50% of EU military and industrial capabilities after 'Brexit'. Given Germany's high GDP, it is highly unlikely that Germany will meet the 2 per cent clause for defence expenditures by 2024. The proposed increase of 4 billion Euros for 2019 would increase the defence budget to 42.9 billion Euros, and would mostly be allocated to maintenance and procurement (Helwig, 2018, p. 5). Defence Minister Von der Leyen has announced a 1.5% GDP share of defence spending until 2024. For Germany this means that if it applied the 2 per cent clause it would become the EU's strongest military power, a circumstance which many provoke more resistance than approval from neighbouring countries as well as its own public opinion.

The Franco-German defence relationship is important for both countries, albeit for different reasons. For Germany, the bilateral relationship has always been at the heart of its European policy and has effectively functioned as a German-French engine to propel further integration. Although this focused mainly on issues related to the economic and monetary integration, there was also a defense component, as exemplified in the Franco-German Brigade, created in 1987. For France, deepening defence cooperation with Berlin remains a priority, given that only Germany has the financial resources to invest in state of the art weapons systems. Examples of German-French military cooperation include armaments cooperation with numerous joint procurement projects and the merger, in 2015, of Germany's Krauss-

Maffai Wegmann and France's Nexter, the two largest tank manufacturers of both countries. In addition, for France, Germany's participation in military operations outside Europe to deal with possible security threats has become important to counter France's military overstretch in Africa, as examplified in Mali, where Germany is part of a UN peacekeeping force and a EU military training mission in support of France's counter terrorism efforts in response to the terror attacks in Paris in November 2015 with about 1,000 troops, and after the French government invoked the EU mutual assistance clause (Article 42 (7), TEU).

In the last two and a half years Germany and France have been active in pushing forward further defence cooperation among EU Member States. Germany's White Paper 2016 on Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr (German Ministry of Defense, 2016) published by the Federal Government on 13 July and the "EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy" served as the basis for furthering German-French defence cooperation. The German-French initiative on "Renewing the CSDP towards a comprehensive, realistic and credible defense in the EU" (German-French Security Initiative, 2016) through the creation of a European Security and Defence Union was jointly presented by Ursula von der Leyen and her French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian on 12 September 2016, and discussed shortly after at the informal meeting of EU Defense Ministers on 26-27 September 2016 in Bratislava. Creating a Security and Defence 'Union' elevates the EU's level of ambition considerably, if by "union a multi-national and integrated defence capacity enabling the EU to engage in high-intensity military and civil–military operations with minimal assistance from the US" is meant, that generates "the type of coordinated and integrated military capacity that currently exists within NATO – but under EU institutional mechanisms and with centralised EU military leadership" (Howorth, 2018, p. 9).

PESCO and the European Intervention Initiative

Advances in European defence cooperation were reinforced by the election of Emmanuel Macron, in May 2017, confirming him as one of the most pro-European and pro-German governments in Paris and a president decided on boosting the European defense and security policy. In June 2017, the EU instituted the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC). However, given that its mandate is limited to non-executive (training and capacity-building) military operations and more robust executive military operations such as EUFOR Althea in Bosnia or EU NAVFOR MED operation Sophia off the coast of Libya are excluded from this new institutional structure, the MPCC only functions as a quasi-operational headquarters.

Also at the EU Council in June 2017 the EU created the European Defence Fund (EDF) to promote research and development of European technology and defense

products to encourage multinational European participation and bridge technology gaps, reduce duplication and acquisition of defense capabilities among EU Member States. While the European Commission steps up its role in defence matters by providing 20 per cent of the funding for research programmes, the total sum allocated by the EDF remains modest. Thus while its constitutes an incentive for Member States to collaborate in creating defence synergies, it will still be up to the national governments to decide whether such a high investment is worthwhile.

Another step towards increased defence cooperation was the creation of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), an intergovernmental mechanism, whose effectiveness is dependent on the Member States' willingness to share their national defence plans and where the European Defense Agency produces biennial reports on the progress made on how member states coordinate joint capability development plans.

But the most significant development was the implementation of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), when 25 Member States signed the treaty and agreed on 17 joint projects. While relevant decisions regarding PESCO should be adopted in the Fall 2018, in terms of capability developments the seventeen projects thus far do not address major capability gaps.

At the EU Council of Ministers on 11 December 2017, 25 Member States joined PESCO. The implementation of PESCO – aimed at fomenting capability synergies – set off to a bad start as it rests on opposing German and French views: while Berlin emphasizes the political integrationist dimension aiming to include the highest number of Member States, Paris focuses on the operational efficiency of the defence cooperation among only the more capable member states (Biscop, 2018). Much of these divergent views are related to the difference in strategic cultures: whereas Germany pursues an inclusive multilateralist approach, France believes that the strategic autonomy it aims for can only be achieved by a smaller and more cohesive group of states, more capable of conducting the sort of military operations that such an autonomy entails, and in the geographical areas such a choice allows for (Major and Mölling, 2018).

Thus in insisting on 'strategic autonomy' France is following up on the EUGS stated goal that the EU should achieve strategic autonomy. But France's idea of strategic autonomy and security cooperation is not limited to the EU alone. On 26 September 2017 President Emmanuel Macron launched the European Intervention Initiative (EII) in his speech at the Sorbonne (Macron, 2017). The EII is meant to join European states that are militarily capable to project operational readiness to engage in operations, if necessary, outside the institutional frameworks of the EU and NATO. Major and Molling (2017) see this as a clear move "away from an EU-centered approach to a European defense approach", due to France's threat perception of Europe's southern neighborhood as the most important challenge for its national

security, its own military overstretch in the outer-Europe area and uncertainty regarding the US's and UK's future security policies.

Despite being proposed three months before the adoption of PESCO, many analysts see Macron's EII as the opposite of Germany's PESCO model as it aims to reinforce operational autonomy, through a core group of states, with the ironic side effect of involving the UK. But it is not clear that the EII will effectively work, as other states may accuse France of selfishly pursuing its own ambitions, particularly in Africa.

With its continuously critical stance regarding military interventions and legal constraints, Germany responded hesitantly but joined the French initiative, in order to avoid a German-French dissent and also because "amidst a strained transatlantic alliance, it became politically very costly for Germany to reject the French offer to join (...) [even if] a European hedging strategy is not pursued lightly" by Berlin (Helwig, 2018, p. 5). On 25 June 2018 Defence Ministers from France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, Denmark and Estonia signed a letter of intent on the EII, "promising to develop a common strategic culture, share analysis and predict problems at problematic points may require intervention and work to coordinate their forces for future operations" and pledging "to consolidate European strategic autonomy and freedom of decision and action".

Macron's initiative posed a challenge to Germany as, on the one hand, the basic idea of an 'intervention force' contradicts Germany's strategic culture and on the other, a force formation outside the PESCO framework would weaken the EU project on which Germany established its political capital. Defense Minister von der Leyen therefore called for the integration of the intervention force into PESCO – a proposal likely to find few supporters in France. Another option would be to 'link the EII and the Framework Concept of Nations (FNC), a German idea of organizing defense cooperation in Europe' (Major and M*ö*lling, 2017). Finally, with regard to third country participation, the European Intervention Force allows for countries like Britain to participate and continue to contribute to the security and defense of Europe even after 'Brexit'.

But European defence cooperation cannot be dissociated from Europe's transatlantic security link with the United States. Germany, together with France will play a crucial role to ensure that enhancing European defence cooperation is done in a way not to antagonise the US and the UK even more than is already the case. PESCO and the European Intervention Initiative have the potential to raise suspicion with Washington and London that the EU states want to opt for strategic autonomy through a European security decoupled from NATO. Whereas PESCO is about developing joint defence capabilities and joint investments, the EII is intended to promote joint military interventions abroad.

In all these initiatives (MPCC, FED, CARD and PESCO), Germany will play a central role in the coming years. Since Germany has become one of the main voices in the CSDP, the concern for a 'Germanization' of European defense characterizes the view of other member states on Berlin initiatives: a focus on institutions rather than military operations. PESCO, CARD and the European Defense Fund are important steps towards a common European defense capability. They aim to maximize the efficiency of defense spending, improve the competitiveness of the European defense industry and adapt the different technologies. The EU is currently far from it. Fragmentation, duplication and protectionism prevail in the European defense industry (Drent and Zandee, 2018). In fact, many Member States maintain uncompetitive arms industries as government-subsidized job creation schemes, or buy off the peg from third countries such as the US. The biggest problem, however, is the low level of defense spending in Europe.

Prospects that defence cooperation between Germany and France may increase: the proposal to examine the joint production of combat aircraft takes place in the context of increased German defense spending. The German government, like all other NATO allies, has committed itself to increasing defense spending in order to reach the level of two per cent of GDP. In 2017, Germany's military spending rose by 3.5 per cent to 44.3 billion dollars, after a 4.2 per cent increase in 2016 (SIPRI, 2018). France is already close to that level; with about 1.8% of GDP in defense, while Germany spends only about 1.2%. The trend since 2016 of increased spending on German defense is likely to continue, which will allow Germany to invest more in military procurement (Buck, 2018).

The German and French Defence Ministers signed an agreement at the Berlin International Air Show, in April 2017, on high-level requirements for a next-generation fighter to be jointly developed by historical rivals, Dassault Aviation and Airbus, to replace the French Rafale and pan-European aircraft Eurofighter/Typhoon. At a German-French Ministerial Council meeting in Paris, on 13 July 2017, Germany and France sent an important signal as they unveiled their intention to develop a joint fighter jet aircraft expected to be operational in 2040 to replace the rival Eurofighter and Rafale jets. According to Reuters (2017), "Paris and Berlin also agreed to set up a cooperation framework for the next model of the Airbus Tiger attack helicopter and for tactical air-to-ground missiles. In addition, they will work together on procuring ground systems including heavy tanks and artillery and said a contract was expected to be signed before 2019 for the military 'Eurodrone' project, which also includes Italy".

While these joint capability development projects ensure bilateral defence cooperation between Germany and France, it will only promote real European defence cooperation if they will not remain exclusive bilateral endeavours and are at a more developed stage opened to other member states joining in (Koenig and Walter-

Franke, 2017, p. 13). The importance of such a project, as some commentators have noted, is that it "is seen as a key indicator for how – and if – Europeans can manage a truly large-scale project, especially given industry rivalries that lie beneath the often lofty diplomatic language" (Defense News, 2018).

As for defence spending, Germany and France currently spend roughly the same with defense – about 40 billion euros per year. Germany has a larger population and a larger GDP. To achieve the two percent spending target, for France this would mean an increase of about five billion euros per year. For Germany, this would mean an increase of about 25 billion euros per year – a great addition of resources that even Germany admits will be tricky to spend wisely. The other part of the two percent target is a 20 percent goal in acquiring important equipment as well as in research and development. France goes beyond this goal: they spend about 24% of their defense spending on equipment and related items. Germany is about 14%. As Germany's overall spending increases, the proportion that is devoted to the acquisition is also likely to increase. But France is disillusioned with the German government's inability to do more to increase the defense budget to over the current 1.2 per cent of GDP, given its large fiscal surplus and its commitment to move towards NATO's defense spending target of 2% of gross domestic product. Thus it is likely that "bilateral defense cooperation between Paris and Berlin will remain complicated and underwhelming" (Kunz, 2018, p. 2).

The Lacking Common European Strategic Culture

Although often trivialized, one of the biggest problems in the security and defense relationship between Germany and France remains the lack of a shared strategic culture. While France and the United Kingdom share the same strategic culture and a history of projection of military force outside Europe, Germany remains clinged to a strategic culture of military reluctance and hesitancy (*kultur der zuruckhaltung*) that makes Franco-German cooperation in defence more difficult. As Koenig and Walter-Franke have argued:

> "Contrasting views on the legitimate use of force also shape diverging preferences for the EU's role. With its interventionist culture, France views the EU as a multiplier in terms of legitimacy and capacity. It has long pressed for Europe's defence, as well as for the EU's strategic autonomy vis-à-vis the United States. While not opposing the idea of a stronger European defence policy, Germany has advocated a comprehensive approach to security at national and EU level and insisted less on strategic autonomy from the United States. These differences in strategic culture are firmly rooted in their respective political systems. Under the German Constitution, the Armed Forces can only be used for defense purposes or in the context of multilateral operations. Whether the EU qualifies under the second is still subject to legal controversy. In addition, the Bundestag must approve any armed intervention by the Bundeswehr. In France, the president decides on the deployment of the armed forces. Since 2008, Bundestag

> approval is mandatory, but only if an operation is extended beyond four months from the initial decision. Between 1991 and 2016, the Bundestag voted twelve times more in military engagement than the National Assembly." (Koenig and Walter-Franke, 2017, p. 8).

German-French differences in strategic culture also act as an obstacle to Franco-German security and defense cooperation as they often raise mutual suspicion: Germans are weary of France's continuing interventionism in Africa which they see as serving the French national interest only, while the French do not understand that Berlin continues to abstain from siding with its allies when they launch airstrikes in Libya, in 2011, for humanitarian reasons or in Syria, in 2017, against a chemical weapons facility. Divergent positions vis-à-vis the arms export policies of Germany and France have led Germany's more restrictive arms export rules to countries at war to hinder the sale of jointly produced weaponry, such as the jointly produced helicopters to the Gulf states. In addition, "Paris' visions of strategic autonomy for Europe include a strong and solid industrial base of its own in armaments and high technology (…) and government ownership or government influence on the defence industry has always been a distinctive characteristic of France's security policy" (Puhl, 2018, p. 3). Thus French policy "prefers dealing with a competitive private sector, holding government influence to a low level. This always affected and still affects the status and organisation of armaments policy in both countries, which, after all, have to take the decisions on the procurement and maintenance of military equipment" (Puhl, 2018, p. 3).

Ultimately, for any Franco-German initiative to succeed with long lasting impact, each country would need to make concessions vis-à-vis the other, and for that to occur, as Jean-Marie Guéhenno (2016) has argued, France has to become more German and Germany has to become more French. President Emmanuel Macron's lament that EU needs a 'common strategic culture in Europe', as he put it in his Sorbonne speech, addresses the issue, but it is likely that Germany will not strive to change its own strategic culture to become more French, nor does Macron's concept, or his European Intervention Initiative imply that France's strategic culture would become more German. However, as Daniel Keohane (2018) has argued, EU military cooperation should be understood "more in the context of its utility for national defense policies across Europe, and less through its relationship with NATO or its role in European integration", as European military cooperation "is mainly driven by the merging of national defense policies in various different ways rather than by the efforts of European (or transatlantic) institutions".

But ultimately, Europe will only begin to be taken seriously as a security actor when it begins to develop new operational capabilities and "the ability to protect European interests with European troops, including, where appropriate, intervention" (Leonard and Röttgen, 2018). Otherwise, as Hans Kundnani argues, "whether,

given that the EU has not evolved into a full political union or becoming independent of the United States in security terms, the new doubt about the security guarantee could lead to a process of disintegration' the EU itself" (Kundnani, 2017, p. 2). Thus in the long term it seems plausible that "the end state will have to be some form of highly coordinated, multi-national, joint and tightly integrated defence capacity enabling the EU to engage in high intensity military (and civil-military) operations with minimal assistance from the US" (Howorth, 2018, pp. 7-8).

Concluding Remarks

European defence cooperation has in the last few years undergone a new dynamism, with new institutional structures set in place and with the promise for EU Member States to proceed with deepening defence integration through creating joint procurement initiatives, initiating permanent structured cooperation and agreeing to a European defense initiative. While these measures aim to respond to growing external challenges, much will depend on the member states continuous political willingness to put the projects into effective practice. This is particularly pressing with regard to the case of Germany, whose role in European defense in a post-transatlantic and 'post-Brexit' environment while becoming more visible remains constrained by a series of domestic constraints. Germany's Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen has steered the country in the direction of an increase of Germany's defense expenditures and armed forces modernisation, but the dire straits in which the Bundeswehr finds itself as well as the over-bureacratized procurement process raise doubts as to how effective Germany's role will be in the medium term (Mölling and Schutz, 2018). In addition, Germany's position vis-à-vis deepening defence integration rests on an inclusive approach which aims to politically have the largest possible number of Member States aboard, which may slow down the integration process as a whole. Ultimately, European defence cooperation will only function effectively if Germany works closely together with France, if they strive to develop a new approach towards a common strategic culture and if both are willing to propose new institutional structures to operationalise the EU's intended strategic autonomy. This could entail the pursuit of a European Security Council, a European Security Advisor and the creation of the post of a European Defence Minister, with the intent of fomenting trust-creating synergies among Member States as well as facilitate the all complex EU-NATO relationship (e.g. maritime cooperation in the Mediterrannean is essential).

Over the last five years, since the European Council in December 2013, the European Union has managed to galvanize the ambition to make the EU a credible security actor – at least at the level of efforts to create synergies for new projects and mechanisms such as PESCO, or structures such as the European Defense Fund. In the pursuit of genuine 'strategic autonomy' as envisaged by the EUGS, the EU

needs a clearly articulated strategy that ensures better coordination between the EU and NATO processes – by harmonizing, for example, the CARD and NATO planning processes to avoid duplication, by outlining objectives in the Southern and Eastern neighborhoods, and by reviewing of EU-NATO relations if the EU aims to progressively, as some suggest, take the lead in NATO (Howorth, 2018).

Whether or not 'Brexit' will lead the EU to greater defence integration and European strategic autonomy, and enable the EU to tackle more security-related challenges, for example in the Middle East, more effectively is not certain. Much will continue to depend on the Member States willingness to subordinate national interests to greater defence integration and, whether there is agreement as to the EU stabilization priorization role in its immediate neighbourhood.

European defence cooperation thus seems to be on the right track. But with the weakening of the Anglo-Saxon security link in the Western liberal order, following the UK's disengagement from the EU and the US's reduced commitment towards the European security guarantee, the reforms the EU Member States decide upon and the European Commission pursues in European defence need to be based on a long term strategy which implements strategic autonomy and consolidates a European perspective of a post-Atlantic world order. This need not be over-ambitious but be seen as defence cooperation 'as good as it gets', based on bilateral and multilateral compromises whereby most if not all Member States feel that they are pulling from the same string. This is where Germany's role as an 'embedded multilateralist', and compromise-seeking security actor could play a more decisive role in European defence cooperation.

Despite the enormous changes in Germany's exernal strategic environment, there is no viable alternative for Germany's security and defence policy than through the EU. This is not to be done at the expense of weakening NATO, as the German government recognizes but through strengthening European defence integration.

Ultimately, Germany can indicate it wishes to develop military capabilities like a fighter jet or a tank under the heading of PESCO, but at a later stage decide to do it outside the PESCO framework. In other words, while the much praised flexibility is a necessary mechanism towards greater EU defence cooperation and effective EU military capacity, it can just as well go into reverse gear, as any Member State, in this intergovernmental policy domain, can always allege fleeting political will or contingencies of national sovereignty. Germany, while arguably the most 'europeanised' of the bigger Member States, is no exception to this.

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