The Case for French Unilateralism

The Controlled Decline of the EU and the Problem of a Supranational Strategy

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Introduction

What would constitute a failure? The question could be asked when it comes to EU security and defence policies. After two decades of trying to pool, share and integrate itself to a 'capacity for autonomous action' the EU still does not have such a capacity in the military realm. The Common Security and Defence Policy remains an institutional and bureaucratic creature, not a military strategic one.

In fairness, success was never likely, given the twin objectives of European defence integration, that is the contradictory goals of furthering the internal peace and gaining an external capacity. One objective pulls towards disarmament, the other towards rearmament. Most EU states are under-funding their defence sectors, while at the same time viewing defence as a matter of sovereignty. No great army has ever been pooled, yes genuine multinational forces have occurred but there has always been a great power at the core, what in contemporary jargon is called a 'framework nation'.

The overall aim of this article is applying what we know about the constraining consensus underpinning European security. Is argued that the EU's efforts towards a military dimension fall short of expectations. Lastly, it will contend that, only France can play the role of Europe's framework nation and that doing so unilaterally has the best chance of delivering in a timely manner. The argument is structured into three parts, beginning with the roots of Europe's defence dependence culture. Section two deals with attempts at multilateral defence and why these have failed. The concluding section turns attention to the potential role of France in more assertive European Union.

This article makes four core claims. One, is that NATO will remain the bedrock of defence and state survival in Europe, the American security guarantees are affordable and reassuring which means the EU will have few other options than to leave defence in a narrow sense to NATO. Two, the CSDP is only suited for selective and limited engagement in issues on the margins of the international agenda. This pre-emptive engagement is imperative and should be continued. Three, over the past decade Europe has lost influence in its near abroad, it has been boxed in. Instability in the shape of terror and migration spills into Europe causing tensions that sap the EU of support and strength. This is likely to continue, unless checked. Four, Europe needs the ability to threaten and – if necessary- deploy overwhelming force. But the multilateralism will not deliver that. Brexit has presented France with the burden and opportunity to build such a force.

European integration in a geopolitical perspective

The President of the European Commission, Walter Hallstein (1958-67), once warned: 'Don't waste time talking about defence. In the first place we don't understand it. In the second place we'll all disagree.'[1] After the failure of the European Defence Community (EDC) in 1954 it was conventional wisdom that promoting integration in the fields of security and defence policy was a fool's errand. Accordingly the Treaty of Rome (1957) did not envision a common foreign and security policy.

American good-will and cooperative policies helped the European states grow into allies rather than satellites, as seen in Communist Eastern Europe. Despite the relatively low military spending, Europe had the autonomy to construct its European Community, concentrating on social stability and economic prowess while leaving much of its defence to NATO– meaning the US. Throughout the Cold War, the drawbacks of dependence on the US were outweighed by the security guarantee embedded in the American commitment to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

The Western European states, despite their military dependency, remained relatively independent - politically and diplomatically. Dan Smith describes American dominance in the Euro-American security partnership as primarily being the ability to control the agenda. The Europeans grew accustomed to letting the US first formulate a position and then lining up for or against it - what defence intellectual Harlan Cleveland called "*Aprés vous, Alphonse*."[2] The

[1] Sampson, A. (1968). The New Europeans. London, Hodder & Stoughton: 192.
[2] Cleveland, H. (1969) "NATO after the Invasion" *Foreign Affairs*, 47 (Jan): 259.

European states also grew accustomed to being able to influence American policies and to the US shouldering much of the defence burden of the NATO.

This is not to say that transatlantic relations were always harmonious. There were heated disagreements not only over matters such as the appropriate level of military contributions or how to organise global security, but also over economic policies towards the Soviets, how to manage the dollar's international role and the global economy in general. The EEC/EC states, moreover, occasionally prevailed or were at least able to bring the US into negotiated settlements

One phase of re-negotiation of the Euro-American bargain came in 1956 with the Hungarian uprising and the Suez crisis that ended any pretence of strategic equality between Europe and America in NATO. The events in Hungary showed that the US commitment to constructing a new European order was limited to Western Europe. The Suez crisis, the same year, signalled the relegation of Europe's two leading powers - France and Great Britain - from the top power league.

American leaders sided with the communist states to deny the European attempt to occupy the waterway, somewhat hypocritically citing a general opposition to the use of force in international affairs. During the crisis, British Premier Anthony Eden, who had been known as a Eurosceptic, resurrected Churchill's bold proposal from 1940 of a common citizenship for British and French citizens. His French counterpart Guy Mollet proposed a Franco-British union as a way of sealing their alliance.[3]

London declined the offer and bowed out of the conflict faced with mounting American economic pressure. The Suez stand-down not only undermined any pretence of equality in the Euro-American end of the transatlantic bargain, it also drove a wedge between France and Britain. As French historian Frederic Bozo has pointed out, France was unwilling to accept the bargain presented. It would not accept American dictates and took the consequence of doing so by leaving NATO's integrated military structure (and the US protection it provided) in 1966.[4]

[3] Bouolhet, A. (2006) "Londres s'éloigne de Paris sur l'Europe de la Défense", *Le Figaro,* 13.11
[4] Bozo, F. (2001) *Two Strategies for Europe: de Gaulle, the United States and the Atlantic Alliance*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham: 10-23.

The United Kingdom, on the other hand, chose to perceive the relationship with the US as a community of values that would, even if it occasionally would mean eating "humble pie," would make Britain stronger than decoupling would. Following Suez, it has been common to discuss the Euro-American security relationship in the context of primacy: European acceptance of American leadership of the Western bloc in return for US attentiveness to European concerns.

Defence scholar Stanley Sloan calls this a 'defence dependence culture.'[5] While the American engagement was always motivated by more than just strategic considerations, European unease over American dominance was ever coupled with fears of US disengagement. Therefore, the US was invited to stay; first, through requests for economic aid, later, for political support and security guarantees and finally, through a strong US military presence.

Being nuclear powers, France and Britain had in a strategic sense been the most independent of the Western European countries during the Cold War. With Germany wing-clipped, they alone could claim to be global powers in terms of interests, obligations and military capabilities. The 1956 Suez crisis showed that they could no longer sustain their pretension to empire or to global sphere of interest on their own limited resources.

London and Paris drew different lessons from the degradation. To Britain, Suez marked a turning point which underlined the degree to which the US had become indispensable in matters concerning European security. London concluded that little could be achieved without US support. British leaders have since consistently laboured to keep the US engaged in Europe, placing the notion of a "special relationship" at the heart of British security policy.

The French came to much the opposite conclusion summarised by German Chancellor Adenauer in a conversation with the French foreign minister, Christian Pineau: 'France and England, will never be powers comparable to the United States and the Soviet Union. Nor Germany either. There remains to them only one way of playing a decisive role in the world; that is to unite to make Europe…. We have no time to waste : Europe will be your revenge.'[6]

Objections to the American primacy in NATO combined with differences of opinion over the nature of the Soviet threat caused continuous frictions within the Alliance. The disputes eventually led to the French withdrawal from NATO's integrated military structure in 1966. As

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[5] Sloan, S. NATO, *The European Union and the Atlantic Community: The Transatlantic Bargain Challenged.* New York, Rowman & Letterfield: 6.

[6] Author's translation. Pineu, C. (1976) *1956 : Suez*, Paris, Lafont: 191.

President De Gaulle explained to Chancellor Adenauer, 'America only envisages an Alliance on the condition that it commands it.'[7] The relationship between Washington and Paris have since lacked in closeness. The many French attempts at rapprochement were not met by Washington in the spirit of equality, so strongly desired in France. In Paris, many felt that the assumption that subordination guaranteed access or influence in the US was patently false.

This basic lesson was repeated by President Pompidou and Nixon, Giscard and Carter, and more recently, Francois Mitterrand and George Bush the Elder, and Jacques Chirac in his relations with Bill Clinton and George Bush the Younger. It is in this context that the French desire for European autonomy should be understood. While jealously guarding its independent strategic outlook, it must be noted that France subscribed to the overall transatlantic bargain. Paris was consistently in favour of US engagement in Europe in order to counter-balance the Soviets throughout the Cold War, and supported the overall NATO strategy including US nuclear guarantees and the permanent stationing of troops in Europe.

The French lesson was to rely less on the US and more on Europe, and in order to assert leadership in international affairs. France would need to coordinate closely with other European states notably, West Germany. In a sense one might think of it as Germany providing to France what the US provided for Britain in terms of added weight in the intra-European bargain. While Britain imagined itself as bridging the Atlantic, balancing European and Atlantic agendas, Gaullist rhetoric insisted that *Les Anglo-Saxons* would have to choose between Europe and America.

There is also some evidence to suggest that the US, actively encouraged the Franco-British estrangement. President Kennedy is quoted in official records as having said 'It is through the multilateral concept that we increase the dependence of the European nations on the United States and tie these nations closer to us. Thus we thwart De Gaulle […].'[8] On another occasion the President is quoted as having said the US had narrowly avoided a disaster which would have occurred if the British had decided to join de Gaulle in a nuclear arrangement.[9]

'What threatens us', Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber wrote of Europe in 1967 'is not a torrent of riches. The war is being fought against us not with dollars, oil, tons of steel or even modern machines, but with creative imagination and a talent for organization.' The American Challenge 'Le Défi Américain', sold more than a million copies.[10] The book captured the mood in Europe at the time – the feeling of being overrun by America.

[7] Author's translation. De Gaulle, C. (10 March, 1966) *Lettres, notes et carnets.* Paris, Plon. (1964-66): 267.

[8] Record of the 508th meeting of the National Security Council, Washington Jan 22, 1963, *Foreign relations, 1961-1963,* Vol VII, footnote 4: 459

[9] Summary Record of the NSC Executive Committee Meeting No. 39, Washington Jan 31, 1963, *Foreign relations, 1961-1963,* Vol VII: 161

[10] Servan-Schreiber, J. J. (1968). *The American challenge*. New York: Atheneum.

A widespread sense of powerlessness and disillusionment gave impetus to a host of counter-cultures spanning a broad array of reformist causes, from ecology movements to New Age religion, multiculturalism, internationalism and peace movements. These movements were united in the belief that international affairs could be, or already had been, fundamentally changed by new ideas and new assumptions.

This spawned a rejection of national interests and national identity among the intellectual elite. Although practices such as peace marches may seem naïve today, many at the time believed that they were in fact changing the world.[11] These years were formative for the generation that made up much of the European political elite during the formative years of the CFSP/CSDP nexus at the turn of the century. As a result, the EU as a whole has been profoundly influenced by liberal internationalism.

A slow train from Saint Malo

So, Europe emerged from the Cold War with, arguably, the cheapest and most credible security guarantees ever issued; It had successfully curbed the propensity for violence among states within Europe and only two states, Britain and France, retained any genuine capacity to intervene militarily beyond the region. It was only in Paris and in London that a capacity for geopolitical thinking was retained. The two differed radically. While France saw the EU as a vehicle for regional autonomy and a place at the high table in a future multipolar world, the British primarily saw it as a means of strengthening the European wing of NATO.

For the EU as a foreign policy actor the 1990s was a decidedly mixed report. The Yugoslav civil wars darkened much of the decade. Although much can be said about the obstacles and impossibilities faced by the EU, the fact remains that Europe failed to rise to the challenge. But in a trend that could perhaps be best summarised as "integration through failure". The European Union's difficulties in adapting to the events of the late 1990s and early 2000s were far from exceptional. Most actors struggled to find their feet, first in the unipolar order that arose from the rubble of the Berlin Wall and again when it became clear that the post-Cold War order was transitional.

The resolve to increase Europe's military capacity was the key ingredient of the 1998 Franco-British Saint Malo Declaration, often referred to as the 'birth certificate' of the CSDP.[12] The goals of the initiative were a mixed lot: To give the EU foreign and security policy a limited but real military capacity for crisis management; to find a use for the Western European Union

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[11] As it later turned out, the Soviet Union was manipulating the pacifist instincts of many Europeans, as illustrated by Andrew, C. (2000). *The Mitrokhin Archive*. London: Penguin, pp. 80–87.

[12] For the text of the Saint-Malo Declaration, see Maartje Rutten, (ed.), 'From Saint-Malo to Nice. European defence: core documents', Chaillot Paper no. 47, WEU-ISS, Paris, 2001, pp.8-9.

(WEU), ideally to fill the institutional gap between the EU and NATO; to bind the member states into the EU by deepening political integration and solidarity; and to give Europe a presence in the world proportionate to the power resources of the members combined.

Reporting the first steps of Prime Minister Tony Blair's 1998 European defence initiative, The Economist spelled out a geopolitical logic that is essential in order to understand the initiative: "Mr. Blair is conscious that in defence matters, Britain, France, and Germany may have little choice but to work together more closely, given America's recent reluctance to commit any more ground troops to Europe's potential war zones." The article went on to conclude "Britain and France, so often at odds over the theology of defence, are now at one in their keenness to hammer out a common European position." [13]

While some obstacles have been overcome, others persist. The lacking compatibility of NATO and the EU has proven more challenging than first anticipated: the CSDP that emerged from the Saint-Malo initiative still lacks operational capacity and the problem of insufficient European military hardware is arguably more acute than at the time when President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Tony Blair met in the French port city.

The Saint-Malo agenda translated into a set of specific questions on institutional cooperation, European cohesion and on capability initiatives. The main story was that the EU sougt to stay out of NATO's main mission i.e. the territorial defence of the allies and focus almost exclusively on the burgeoning 'crisis management' agenda. This comprised a bewildering military and non-military challenges that were united by an assumption that policies would be humanitarian in nature. No efforts were made to define a European 'national interest'; second the EU would engage 'broadly' preferably without military engagement, as was illustrated in the reluctance on behalf of the EU to articulate rules of engagement and third; the EU forces were to be raised on an entirely voluntary basis.

Although the EU initially relied heavily on means provided by NATO, it has over time become more autonomous. One indicator is that it now deploys more staff for longer periods. The demand in the outside world for aggregate European engagement is also on the rise. Since the early 2000s, the European Union has intervened abroad thirty times in three different continents. The operations are noteworthy not only for their complexity and range, but also for the manner in which they are carried out.

The EU has made considerable progress in combining civilian and military assets in crisis management. Operations have ranged in size from the small – 15-man strong – in Guinea Bissau to the 2,500 personnel at the Operation Althea in Bosnia. The recent mission in Kosovo, where the EU has deployed 1,900 law enforcement personnel to work alongside the 16,000-

[13] "Blair's Defence offensive" The Economist, November 14, 1998.

strong NATO military contingent, illustrate that the EU has filled a niche in regional and global security.

Missions display a variety of means and ends: monitoring/surveillance (Balkans, Indonesia, Georgia), border posts (Rafah-Palestine, Moldova-Ukraine), police training and reinforcement (Afghanistan, Bosnia, Congo, Palestine), reform of security forces (Congo, Guinea) and rule of law (Iraq and Kosovo). The missions vary in size, number of participants, duration and intensity of action. The Congo mission was the EU's first autonomous mission.

The Concordia mission transformed over time into a policing mission, Operation Proxima, which began in December 2003 with a one-year mandate. The third of the initial operations was the EU Police Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which started in January 2003 and replaced for the most part the UN International Police Task Force (IPTF). The EUPM was the first mission that mixed the military and civilian crisis management capabilities of the EU including the policing and training elements that had been emphasised in the Feira European Council Conclusions of 2000.[14]

The EU Common Security and Defence Policy missions in the Sahel, the EU Capacity Building Missions (EUCAP) in Mali and Niger, and the EU Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali were established in June 2017.

Security scholar Gülnur Aybet concluded from these missions that the process of creating and implementing the CSDP had come far in a short time, while asking the question whether the missions engaged in reflect the security interests and agendas of the member states.[15] The EU security policy was a leap in the dark. It was constructed under an agreement that the EU should have such a policy, but not what it should be about. It was noted earlier that the CSDP had been profoundly shaped by liberal internationalism, directing focus to crisis management without and defined national interest guiding policy.

The EU has thus found its place as a regional branch of the UN, conducting a myriad of small-scale missions that, for the most part, could have been carried out by a medium sized member state. At the same time the Russian intervention in Ukraine and the Syrian civil war illustrates how the military might of actors which the EU does not control can have a direct impact on European security and cohesion. Russia's intervention in the Syrian civil war was small in scale, but determined enough to effectively win the civil war for Assad's regime, and outcome the EU repeatedly had stated to be unacceptable.

The British, the Americans and the French had come close to launching their own air war in Syria. But the British House of Commons refused to support any strikes. Obama also surprisingly failed to respond to what he had called a red line i.e. that the use of chemical weapons would trigger an intervention. France was left in the lurch. French president François

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[14] Conclusions of the Santa Maria da Feira European Council (19–20 June 2000). Available at: www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/fei1_en.htm *Accessed on 23 June 2009.*

[15] Aybet, G. (2007). The European Security and Defence Policy: Capabilities and Institutions. In Ioannis Stivachtis (Ed.). The State of European Integration. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, p. 9.

Hollande stated at the time that this was "a missed opportunity that could have changed the course of the war".

The perhaps biggest problem with the multilateral approach to defence is illustrated by the ongoing dispute over export rules. Germany's unwillingness to harmonise its policy on arms exports with its European allies has put the wisdom of multilateral arms manufacturing in doubt. Germany's human rights driven foreign policy has since 2013 led to a number of procuring countries to be blacklisted. Some types of French-made helicopters are grounded in Saudi Arabia due to a lack of spare parts. This puts a larger order of Eurofighter Typhoons into doubt, as these also depend of German parts. French concerns centre on joint projects, notably the Future Combat Air System (includes missiles, jets, satellites and drones) as well as a next-generation tank. Bruno Le Maire, France's finance minister, fears Germany's export rules will render such cooperation "useless".[16]

Today America is turning its military resources and policy attention away from Europe.[17] American attitudes towards the EU over the past two decades have been characterised by a strong sense of ambivalence. The US has been in favour of a greater role for the EU in regional and global security, yet has often opposed specific attempts at common policies.[18] America's conditions for supporting the CSDP were spelled out in Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's warning directed at European leaders not to 'Duplicate' NATO assets, to 'Discriminate' against non-EU NATO members or attempt to 'Decouple' the EU from the transatlantic security architecture.[19] These 'three Ds' were a direct response to the Saint Malo Declaration and permeate the 2003 Berlin Plus agreement concluded between the EU and NATO.

This is of course not to say that the Union needs to carry out large-scale military missions in order to be an effective foreign-policy actor, only that the demand for the sort of crisis management that the EU specialises in is growing – in practice if not in theory. The EU is being pushed to perform the functions of a comprehensive security actor in Europe and beyond. The implication, as Daniel Keohane pointed out in 2008, is that the EU's limited capacities will increasingly be outstripped by rising demand.[20]

The demand in the outside world for aggregate European engagement is also on the rise. The role of the EU in defusing the Ukrainian crisis of 2014 illustrates the point. The EU is being pushed to perform the functions of a comprehensive security actor in Europe and beyond. The implication of this is, as Daniel Keohane recently pointed out, that the EU's limited capacities

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[16] Quoted in The Economist (2019) "Germany's moral qualms about arms sales infuriate its allies." Print edition, Europe, 02.03.
[17] Ivo H. Daalder, 'The End of Atlanticism', *Survival,* vol. 45 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies), pp. 147-66
[18] Esther Brimmer, 'Seeing blue: American visions of the European Union', *Chaillot Paper* no. 105, EUISS, Paris, September 2007.
[19] Madeleine Albright, 'The right balance will secure NATO's future', *Financial Times*, December 1998.
[20] Daniel Keohane (2008, March). The strategic rise of EU defence policy. Issues: EUISS Newsletter 25, 8.

will increasingly be outstripped by rising demand.[21] While the EU will continue to rely on diplomacy and trade in its dealings with the external actors, EU foreign policy will have to include a military component for those cases where achieving strategic and humanitarian objectives means deploying robust armed force.

This shifts focus to the funds and capabilities that are necessary to perform core tasks. While the unit price of military hardware has risen dramatically, European defence budgets have been kept at historic lows. Most European states are today faced with the dilemma of having to shed certain capabilities in order to modernise others.[22] As a result the force catalogues of most European armies look like half-empty bookshelves. This is not just a problem facing small and medium-sized states. Even Britain and France, Europe's strongest military powers, have in their respective defence White Papers both had to owe up to the fact that no single European state can afford to buy, develop and operate every category of armament.[23]

Even without any large-scale engagements the available resources are stretched thin. By comparison to the approximately 4,000 EU troops currently deployed, the African Union has upwards of 40,000 soldiers deployed in five major peacekeeping operations. The UN has 115,000 troops deployed around the globe and NATO deployed 130,000 soldiers in Afghanistan at the height of the operation. This is not to say that the Union needs to carry out large-scale military missions in order to be an effective foreign policy actor, only that the demand for the sort of crisis management that the EU specialises in is growing – in practice if not in theory.

A few words of the EU approach to security. In embracing a 'holistic' the EU's attempts to integrate security and development initiatives the Union has found itself dependent on the assistance of African governments –which has shown that EU institutions remain frequently unable to adequately monitor the programmes they oversee.[24] Moreover, it would seem that the EU navigate more closely to political pressure from member states than to local needs, with predictable results. The EU also has a track record of creating oversized bureaucracies.[25]

In order to try and remedy this the EU has put its faith in Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). It is a framework for participating member states on concrete projects in defence

[21] Daniel Keohane, 'The strategic rise of EU defence policy', *Issues*, EUISS Newsletter no. 25, March 2008, p. 8.
[22] For more on this topic, see Daniel Keohane (ed.), 'Towards a European Defence Market', *Chaillot Paper* no. 113, EUISS, Paris, November 2008.
[23] Présidence de la Republique, 'The French White Paper on defence and national security', 2008, p. 7. Available at: http://www.ambafrance-ca.org/IMG/pdf/Livre_blanc_Press_kit_english_version.pdf; Claire Taylor, 'The Defence White Paper' (London: House of Commons Library, 2004), p. 11. Available at: http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2004/rp04-071.pdf.
[24] Norheim-Martinsen, P. M., & University of Cambridge,. (2010). Beyond intergovernmentalism: An analysis of the European Union as a strategic actor.
[25] Lebovich, A., & European Council on Foreign Relations,. (2018). *Halting ambition: EU migration and security policy in the Sahel*.

and security. 25 EU-members have agreed to binding commitments in the PESCO framework. So far 34 projects are in various stages of completion. The cooperating states join forces on tasks ranging from military training and exercises to capability development and procurement and also in the ever more important area of cyber defence. It is too early to say whether this, latest instalment of an agenda that has been introduced in part under a ranger of acronyms in the past, will prove fruitful this time. Chances are that it will be declared a partial success by the academic coterie, while actually failing to deliver the capabilities it was meant to deliver.

This brings us to a unique trait of the CSDP. How can so little progress have received such positive reviews? Put bluntly, it is because the golden rule of social science has been broken: The object of research should not finance the scholarship. Most of European security studies are funded directly or indirectly by the EU. This is not to indicate any direct pressure on behalf of the EU or indeed lacking morals on behalf of the scholarly community. Rather it is the case of the old saying 'who pays the fiddler, calls the tune'. Scholars – rightly or wrongly- assume that too negative assessment of the EU can lead to a funding drought further down the line. That is the main reason why the EUs military dimension is treated with indifference and scorn by the great powers while being praised for all its progress in academic texts.

In sum: NATO remains the principal agency for European security. Focus in the alliance is on doing what is necessary to keep the Americans engaged to look after the survival-interests of its members. The EU has built up a crisis management capacity that does great work at the low end. The problem is that the 'Jugoslav' challenge is back. These are security risks that are dangerous for Europe, but not grave enough for the US to engage and too large for the CFSDP to handle. While the EU will continue to rely on diplomacy and trade in its dealings with external actors, its foreign policy will have to include a military component for cases where achieving strategic and humanitarian objectives means deploying a robust armed force.

The case for French unilateralism

Trends in international affairs rarely move in the same direction. In the case of European security cooperation we are now witnessing a contradictory trend where the 'supply' forces for European political integration has been dealt a blow by Britain leaving the European Union, while at the same time «demand» factors for EU foreign policies appear to be moving in the opposite direction.

The paradox is captured in a Eurobarometer 2019 opinion poll that showed 75 percent of the respondents answered that they would like to see more defence and foreign affairs decisions made jointly within the European Union. This figure should be taken with some caution since the statement offers something without suggesting a price. It nevertheless is a testimony to

the added value of the defence dimension to the EU project in a world that seems, if not more dangerous, then at least less stable than before.

The resolve to increase Europe's military capacity was the key ingredient of the 1998 Franco-British Saint Malo initiative, often referred to as the 'birth certificate' of the CSDP.[26] This debate was, in turn, inextricably linked to imbalances in Euro-American security cooperation. Over the past ten years this debate has moved rapidly. As things stand, the Americans expect Europe to handle security and stability in its near abroad. The relevant question is no longer the appropriate level of Europe's contribution to a US global strategy, or indeed Europe's place in the world, but rather whether the EU can prosper without hard power.

Brexit has threatened to remove one of the two credible military actors in European defence from the equation. Spearheaded by the French president, Emmanuel Macron, nine EU member states have agreed to establish a European military force for rapid deployment, an initiative which has won the backing of Britain. It remains, however, to see if this will work in practice. It would, *prima facie,* seem unlikely that Britain would invest its scarce military resources in what essentially is an EU venture after a very difficult divorce with the EU. The truth is that only one state in the EU now possesses the strategic culture to play the role of the European framework nation.

Europe finds itself in a difficult situation where Member States are expected to be able to conduct both territorial defence and out-of-area operations at a time when few are able to effectively carry out either of these tasks effectively. In this situation the pooling of resources in order to acquire major new capabilities amounts to making a virtue of necessity. Joint efforts such as the Eurofighter and the A-400M transport aircraft have had mixed results, questioning the received wisdom that development and procurement will likely continue to grow in importance.[27] Similarly, pooling of resources such as the multinational EU Battlegroups and the proposed multinational naval flotillas are a reflection of a 'procedural' approach to security and defence.

In late 2018, President Emmanuel Macron made the case for a European army able to protect Europe against China, Russia and the United States. The choice of including America on the list of potential adversaries caused much consternation. This diverted attention away from the key message conveyed. Macron wrote in an op-ed in European newspapers: "A treaty on defence and security should define our fundamental obligations in association with NATO and

[26] For the text of the Saint-Malo Declaration, see Maartje Rutten, (ed.), 'From Saint-Malo to Nice. European defence: core documents', *Chaillot Paper* no. 47, WEU-ISS, Paris, 2001, pp.8-9.
[27] Burkard Schmitt, 'Defence procurement in the European Union: the current debate', Report of an EUISS Task Force, EUISS, Paris, May 2005.

our European allies: increased defence spending, a truly operational mutual defence clause, and a European security council, with the UK on board, to prepare our collective decisions."[28]

Given the discourse in European studies, this is no-doubt the right prescription: more money, a stronger mandate and a Anglo-French-British triumvirate to give leadership and guidance. Unfortunately there is very little in the two decades of experience that this wager will deliver any better than in the past. Some EU members will join the efforts so as to slow them down, others will use it as a venue for abrogation, persistently delivering less than expected. Finally to assume that the British will invest their newfound foreign policy independence in a pact with two countries that did so little to make Brexit possible, is unlikely. Even if the president's initiative is politically wise, but strategically naïve, the sense of urgency driving the initiative is timely.

Pernille Rieker states "that with the election of President Donald Trump we are witnessing the return of an American isolationism that is dangerous, and that Europe needs to wake up to and take the necessary steps to prepare to defend itself, if not against the US, then against the consequences of American foreign policy".[29] She asserts that the president's ambitious plans for European defence remain popular in France. The Eurobarometer data from 2014–2018 indicate that the French remain positive towards a more pronounced EU role in both foreign, security and defence policy. In France there is an understanding that anti-terrorism policy, border protection and migration policy has a military component. Much like the French government the public opinion seems rather pragmatic as to how to achieve these ambitions.

The best – and quickest – way for Europe to gain a war-fighting capacity is for France to go it alone. NATO will continue with the responsibility for article 5 and the CSDP will continue its crisis management operations, but France should give the EU a capacity for atones action, backed by credible military force. There are several reasons for this. One is that the French way of war is different to most European states, and the question of interoperability remains a permanent challenge. A French force would work in a way a patchwork force simply would not. A second reason is that this would give France the leading position it covets in the EU.

A second reason is that in spite of strategic convergence between Germany and France, deep differences in terms of political culture persist. Not all EU member states are eager to see the Franco-German lead towards a defence union succeed. The German reluctance to even discuss military engagement makes Europe's richest country unlikely to play any significant role in the defence ventures they cautiously have supported. There simply is no strategic culture in Germany that would allow that country to play any active role in building or using any EU force. The current disputes over export regulations highlights this point. That said,

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[28] Emmanuel Macron (2019) "Dear Europe, Brexit is a lesson for all of us: it's time for renewal", *The Guardian*, 4 Mar 2019

[29]Pernille Rieker (2018) France and European defence: Continuity in long-term objectives, change in strategy, FIIA briefing paper.

Germany will have to help pay for a French EU-army. France would have to spend 3-4 per cent of GDP on defence, which it cannot afford.

It would doubtless require a 'De Gaulle-attitude' on behalf of the French leadership to ask for such subsidies, but the current agenda is rich in unresolved questions for horse trading.
The most important reason why France should consider a unilateral move, is that the multilateral approach has failed to deliver and it will likely to continue to fail to deliver military might on a scale displayed by Russia in Syria or NATO in Libya. The entire argument presented here is premised on the EU needing such a force in order to guard itself from instability in the near abroad spilling into Europe. France understands this, while its European partners hesitate, preferring to hope that someone else will redress imbalances on their behalf.