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The Franco-German motor before the Eastern enlargement: the causes of its decline

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Abstract

The Franco-German axis has been a transcendent force behind the European integration ever since the early years of the EEC. Nevertheless, since the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the perception of a progressive distancing between France and Germany as far as the EU politics is concerned, has increased. There has not been a definitive break in Franco-German relations. However, the influence of the Franco-German axis in the EU has been reduced in the 90s. Finally, in the Nice IGC (December 2000), the misunderstandings of these two "big" states about their weight in the Council, almost caused the failure to conclude the Treaty of Nice, clearing the way for the Eastern enlargement.

The traditional balance between France and Germany has been eroded. Germany has consolidated its role of leadership in the EU, and above all towards the candidate countries. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the fifth enlargement as one of the causes of the decline of the Franco-German axis as the motor of the process of European integration.

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INTRODUCTION

The Franco-German axis has been a transcendent force behind the European integration ever since the early years of the European Economic Community (EEC). Nevertheless, since the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the perception of a progressive distancing between France and Germany as far as the EU politics is concerned, has increased. The end of the Cold War supposed changes in the international order and at the national level (democratisation of the CEECs and the unification of Germany), thus, the Franco-German relationship and its role as the motor of the European Union (EU) changed as well.

In this sense, the process of enlargement towards the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) has supposed a divergence of views between Germany and France. So, the Franco-German axis has not defended this enlargement as a European policy. The non-joint position of the Franco-German couple on this issue has been consequence of their different perspectives. While Germany had national interests in the CEECs, the French national interests were towards the Mediterranean, and less towards the Eastern Europe. These different views caused the distancing between these two “big” countries, and maybe, the search by them of new allies in order to continue influencing in the EC/EU.

The fifth enlargement includes the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs)¹ and the three Mediterranean ones (Cyprus, Malta and Turkey²). Nevertheless, owing to the weak influence of Cyprus and Malta on the Franco-German relationship, the Mediterranean candidates will not take into account in the present analysis.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the fifth enlargement as one of the causes of the decline of the Franco-German axis as the motor of the process of European integration. However, before analysing the next enlargement, it would be necessary to have a look through the history of European Integration and concretely to the influence of the Franco-German relationship in the EC/EU. Regarding to the next enlargement towards the Central and Eastern European Countries, first, we will analyse the German interests, as well as the French interests, towards these countries. Furthermore, we will examine the Nice Intergovernmental Conference (December 2000) in order to verify if its almost failure was caused by the non Franco-German joint position. Finally, we will try to go further and hypothesise about new alliances with Germany so as to be more legitimate when playing the role of the leadership within the EU.

I. THE FRANCO-GERMAN AXIS AS A REALITY

European integration resulted from two World Wars, where France and Germany had been opposed. The Franco-German reconciliation within the European project was the only solution of four centuries of conflict in Central Europe.

In this sense, Robert Schuman in his Declaration of 9th may 1950, planned by Jean Monnet, affirmed that “the coming together of the nations of Europe requires the elimination of the age-old opposition of France and Germany³”. Thus, it was perceived that the only solution of the Franco-German opposition was through the European integration. It is important to keep in mind that the main reason for the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC) was the definitive end of the Franco-German tensions that had exploded into two World Wars. Hence, the Franco-German axis became one of the pillars of the European project, as well as its motor. However, in this first part of the history of European integration, France played a role of leadership. Until mid-sixties, we can

affirm that the Franco-German motor did not exist *per se*, it was France who assumed the leadership and Germany accepted the French proposals. Nevertheless, it is not possible to say that it was a unilateral leadership, however, France was the country who led the main progress of the European construction.

If during the fifties the Franco-German bilateral relationship had been developed in a multilateral framework, that is Europe and its integration, at the beginnings of the sixties, the leaders of France and Germany, Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer, felt that it was necessary a bilateral treaty of co-operation. In 22 January 1963, France and Germany signed the Treaty on Franco-German Co-operation, or better known as the Elysée Treaty. Although this treaty did not form part of the process of European integration, in some way it did influence and affect the rest of the membership of the European Communities. The regular meetings of two of the considered "big"⁴ countries and the co-ordination of their positions before the EC meetings, gave them a negotiating power and greater capacity of guiding the European project.

However, after the signing of the Treaty but with the resignation of Adenauer, the close Franco-German relationship did not go further, and thus, either the progress on the European integration. Between 1963 and 1974, the European project lived a period of stagnation exemplified in the crisis of the empty chair when de Gaulle abandoned the Council of Ministers from July 1965 to January 1966 or the two vetoes to the entry of the United Kingdom in 1963 and 1967.

"From 1974 onwards, the major advances made in the European project were again a result of proposals formulated jointly by France and Germany, and it was from then onwards that it became appropriate to refer to the 'Franco-German engine'⁵. In fact, clearly from 1974 to 1989, the Franco-German relationship developed in a long period of collaboration, not only in the bilateral framework but also within the EC shown in the creation of the European Council (based on a idea of Giscard d'Estaing) or the European Monetary System (EMS). Hence, during this period, France and Germany shared the leadership of the process European integration.

Summing up the period between 1963 and 1989, we can affirm that France and Germany shared the leadership of the European Community. Both countries took profit from this dual leadership as well as the European integration continued its progress.

The fall of the Berlin Wall, 9 November 1989, resulted to be a turning point in the European integration. The unification of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the Democratic Republic of Germany (DRG) culminated in a new Germany that benefited from the progressive fall of its inferiority perception in the EC/EU.

In Bocquet's words:

"Reunification has increased Germany's international influence relative to that of France. This increase is not only a question of statistics (Germany's population is 80 million, France's 58 million; and Germany's projected gross domestic product is significantly higher than that of the other major EU member states), but is also political and juridical: having recovered full national sovereignty, Germany is no longer handicapped by its former status as a divided country⁶".

Indeed, this change of perception was one of the causes of the change in the Franco-German shared leadership. As Bocquet has remarked the recuperation of the full national sovereignty in 1990 signified also, the recuperation of the own discourse in European affairs. That is, Germany has not felt obliged to be the equal partner of France. Hence, the shared leadership lost its balance. In 1990, Germany started to have the strength to behave as a unilateral leader, even if it did not act in this way until mid-nineties. Nonetheless, it was not up to Nice Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) that Germany showed visibly its new role.

Another of the consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall resulted to be the deepening in the political integration apart from the economic integration, already previewed before 1989. Only three months after the unification (3 November 1990), the Intergovernmental Conference on the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the European Political Union (EPU) took place as a demonstration that Germany would continue to bet for the European project as before. Despite the Franco-German joint letter presenting the common proposals before the Maastricht Conference, the divergence on other issues such as the conflict in Yugoslavia proved that the Franco-German axis had lost its balance. In the Amsterdam IGC in 1996, Germany and France presented again a joint position, this time on the enhanced co-operation. Despite this Franco-German co-ordination, we can say, in Pedersen's words, that "the post-Maastricht era also saw a change in the German leadership style within the EU, although to some extent this change reflected a change in the international and European agenda with the new issues of vital importance to Germany coming to the fore"⁷. This change in the German leadership style became more explicit in the Nice IGC, as we will see later.

In this more than fifty years of European integration, there have been four previous enlargements⁸. The more members the EC/EU has, the less capacity of influence the Franco-German axis can exercise. In the fifties and sixties, France and Germany played a significant role, above all France, due to that the main reason of the creation of the ECSC and the EEC was the Franco-German reconciliation. The first enlargement did not cause a substantial change in the Franco-German motor because the new member states were considered as "intergovernmentalists" and thus they were not possible allies. Even though the fact that the United Kingdom joined the EEC did not affect the Franco-German influence in a Europe of 9 members, it did start to influence actively with the enlargement to twelve⁹. The enlargement towards the Mediterranean, that is Greece, Spain and Portugal, gave to France new allies to fight for similar interests. In an EC of twelve members, the considered Mediterranean ones had sufficient votes in the Council of Ministers to veto any decision. In 1995, when the EU grew until fifteen, the South lost this veto power and Germany started to look to the East and its new allies. The fifth enlargement differs substantially from the previous ones. The differences are as in the number of candidate members as in the economic conditions of these candidates. The Franco-German axis will not remain intact from this change of the European Union.

II. GERMANY: THE EXPECTATION OF BEING THE CENTRE OF EUROPE

The reunification of Germany supposed a big challenge in the daily politics of Germany before the European Union, but also before France, its traditional partner in the motor of European integration.

The statement of "German led enlargement"¹⁰ is due to a multiple reasons. "Sources of German interest in the expansion of the Union are unique among EU member states deriving from location, traditional economic and political ties and history"¹¹. Some of these reasons are:

1.-The economic reasons are important at two levels. On the one hand, the state candidates represent an important export market because of the inclusion of such a vast area embracing 100 million consumers, and on the other hand, central Europe can become a profitable site for investment, with comparatively cheap and highly skilled labour¹². In other words, "more than 1/3 of the economic gain that enlargement is expected to bring to the EU is expected to go to Germany"¹³.

2.- The incorporation into the EU and the NATO of Germany's state neighbours will also expand Germany's own security belt. Besides, the possibility of the EU membership for the CEECs will guarantee lasting peace.

3.- The geopolitical aspect is often seen as the main reason for the German push towards the Eastern enlargement because it will make Germany the geographical centre of the EU. If during these 50 years of European integration, Germany was in the West periphery, with the fifth enlargement, it will become the centre of the EU. However, this aspect is related to the second one. Being the centre of the EU and having stability in its borders because the neighbour states are already in the EU are evidently interconnected.

4.- There are psychological reasons, or in other words, there is a feeling of indebtedness to the eastern countries for drawing Germany to its unification in 1990. This gratitude extends, for example, to countries like Poland for its Solidarity movement since 1980 or Hungary that was instrumental in eliminating the Iron Curtain by opening its borders with Austria in 1989¹⁴.

The reunified Germany, with more than 80 million inhabitants, has the opportunity to become the leader of the EU without the support of France. The Franco-German axis has suffered from a distancing in the 90s. In fact, mainly, it has been Germany who perceived the new international order as an opportunity to consolidate its role of leadership in the EU in a unilateral way. The traditional role of shared leadership between France and Germany during the decades of the 70s and the 80s is not yet possible in the post-Cold War period. Despite the increase of economic problems such as unemployment and high inflation, the new Germany discovered a new role in the EU that it had been unthinkable before the reunification. Not only had Germany become an economic power, as explained before, but also the recovered full national sovereignty had made it a political power. "Although officials still referred to the centrality of the Franco-German axis within the EC and the importance of other large members such as Britain, they spoke of a new balance of power within the Community, with Germany placed on a more nearly equal footing"¹⁵. Hence, the balance of power would have definitively been broken and it favoured Germany.

As far as the national interests¹⁶ are concerned, finally Germany is able to defend them without any fear of being accused of not being for the European interests, as it has already taken place since the 90s. The role played by Germany within the EU has been modified due to the reunification, and from the mid-nineties, but definitely as we will see later in the Nice IGC, this "big" member state adopts a position of pro-enlargement because of its economic and business interests in the Eastern Europe.

The German government is more prepared to fight for its national interests within the EU, and less willing to sacrifice long-term reform goals for the sake of its relationship with France. Before the dilemma to take a similar position from France, and thus to take a reticent position to the enlargement, or to pledge its firm commitment to enlarge the EU towards the East, Germany took the second option, influenced by the benefits of this option because of its national interests. Indeed, "while the concrete analysis has identified a coherent and long-term German grand strategy relating to European integration, it has also highlighted the growing tension within Europe's dual core caused first by German unification and subsequently by the ongoing process of geographical enlargement"¹⁷. So, the Franco-German axis, or the dual core in Pedersen's words, suffered from the two processes caused by the end of the Cold War.

At the end of the day, however, the German policy of fixing its priorities looking at the Eastern Europe is not new neither a consequence of the unification. As J.M. Beneyto described, in the 90s, Germany substituted the "Ostpolitik", developed in the seventies and eighties as a policy of opening towards the East, for the "Europapolitik", an European strategy in which Germany would be the main driving force of the enlargement towards the Central and Eastern Europe¹⁸. So, as the national interests are a constant variable, or at least have a little evolution, of the

Foreign Policy of any state, the German national interests towards the Eastern Europe has remained important despite the reunification.

Finally, the words of the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joschka Fischer, shows the German commitment to the Eastern enlargement. "Enlargement is a supreme national interest, especially for Germany. It will be possible to lastingly overcome the risks and temptations objectively inherent in Germany's dimensions and central situation through the enlargement and simultaneous deepening of the EU. (...) Enlargement will bring tremendous benefits for German companies and for employment. (...)¹⁹".

III. FRANCE: A RETURN TO THE DOMESTIC POLITICS

Nevertheless, not only has the increasing distancing between France and Germany been caused by the potential new role of the latter country, but also the different perceptions of France before the future enlargement towards the Central and Eastern Europe has intensified this effect.

Although France, at first, opposed to the Eastern enlargement, it soon became conscious that the enlargement was unavoidable. It can be said that at the beginning of nineties, France took a position of ambiguity in its European policy towards the enlargement. To put it briefly, before the dilemma of enlarging or deepening, the French State fought for the deepening of the EU postponing the enlargement, while Germany was in favour of reconciling both processes. Apart from that, France supported one of the Eastern Candidates, Romania, with which it had longstanding cultural ties. Hence, it means that France had partial interest towards the enlargement. Despite the French support, this country and Bulgaria finally kept out the first wave of enlargement because of their delay in adapting their legislation into the *acquis communautaire*.

In fact, Germany did not cause the progressive distancing between France and Germany unilaterally. France had seen its power been reduced by internal problems. On the one hand, the incapacity of France to exercise an international role as a big power, or in other words, a weak French Foreign Policy decreased its prestige as a European power. If France had headed the beginnings of the European project with, for instance, the proposals of Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, after the end of the Cold War, it was not able to lead unilaterally getting similar results. On the other hand, a long period of cohabitation in domestic politics (more than five years with a Socialist Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, and a Gaullist President, Jacques Chirac, from 1997 to 2002) made it difficult to influence in the EU. In other words, "France is no longer truly Germany's equal. The post-war duo no longer drives Europe. France will certainly not have the main say when the club has nearly doubled in size²⁰".

Actually, the German push towards the Eastern Europe and the shift in the EU centre worried Paris at two levels. First, France was concerned about the continued influence of the Franco-German axis on European events because this founder member state was aware of its unilateral incapacity to play the leadership. And second, France feared that the new balance of power in Europe could relegate it to the fringes of the European arena. In this sense, Jacques Chirac, proposed, in June 2000, "the celebration of a German-Franco Conference per year in order to light the future together²¹". This proposal demonstrates, again, that France was aware of its necessity to remain with Germany in the European construction and the next enlargement.

However, on the contrary, France knew that “its interests in Eastern enlargement were linked to broader security and geopolitical issues which include NATO expansion and relations with Russia”²². This is another of the reasons why France did not oppose firmly to the enlargement, although it would prefer to postpone until the deepening of the EU would be done.

As we have exposed in the first part of the paper, Germany put its attention into the Eastern Europe, and thus into the enlargement. In order to counterweight the German leadership in the East, France turned into the Mediterranean, its traditional region of influence. In Scharping’s words, “The East is to Germany what the South is to France”²³. So, “France has cleverly took advantage of the emergence of the Mediterranean discourse and the regional initiatives so as to revitalise and renew its Foreign Policy”²⁴. Thus, although the weakness of the French leadership in the EU caused by the internal problems, France tried to have the leadership in at least the Mediterranean policy, however, it shared that leadership with Spain as we can notice in the Barcelona Process.

The last results of Eurobarometer of spring 2002²⁵ showed that France and Germany have the worst results in supporting the enlargement, apart from the United Kingdom. France fears that the enlargement would reduce its benefits from the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) and Germany is worried about the economic costs of the enlargement.

IV. THE DECLINE OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN AXIS IN THE NICE IGC?

The Treaty of Amsterdam²⁶ had not solved the necessary institutional reform that the EU needed to be ready for a membership above 25. The EC institutions conceived for six members (the founders members were France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux) could not work in the same manner after the fifth enlargement. The proper reform of the institutions was a “leftover” that needed to be dealt before the enlargement towards the CEECs and the Mediterranean candidates. This meant that it was necessary a new Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) to adapt the EU to the new situation. Thus, in the first semester of 1999, with Germany holding the EU Presidency, the 15 decided to convene an IGC for 2000 in order to solve the institutional issues left open in Amsterdam, issues that apparently required a settlement before the EU could be enlarged. In effect, the 15 convened that in any way, the deepening had to be done before the enlargement. Nevertheless, the contradiction of the national interests among the 15 resulted to be an obstacle in deepening and reforming the European institutions. Thus, finally, Nice has to be understood more as a postponing of the real institutional reforms than an effect towards the deepening.

Even though Pedersen had exposed that “by the late 1990s, the Franco-German axis was still functioning and there seemed as yet little prospect that it would change role from motor to detonator”²⁷, in 2000, and more precisely in the Nice IGC, this axis was not yet possible. First of all, in Nice, there was not a Franco-German joint letter presenting their previous agreements²⁸. Later, the national positions of France and Germany defended during the IGC were completely opposed.

Indeed, Nice represents the first time that Germany showed the chips of its national interests. As Gerhard Schröder stated some days before the Conference, Germany would do an “unlighted defence of our own interests”²⁹. Clearly, during the Nice negotiations, Germany fought for its national interests based in the assumption that nowadays it is the most populated state in the EU. Germany demanded more votes in the Council than France, that meant, a demand of breaking the traditional parity between these founders’ members. During the previous days of the IGC, the different opinions between French and German leaders on the possibility of breaking the Franco-German parity were headlines in the newspapers. While

Germany appealed to the difference in million population between France and Germany, the former searched its arguments in the history of the ECSC, when Konrad Adenauer promised to Jean Monnet that France and Germany would never break the principle of equality in all European institutions as a symbol of “definitive reconciliation”³⁰.

In the end, on the one hand, the Franco-German equality in votes in the Council of the EU was maintained, but on the other, Germany pressed for the triple majority: votes, member states and population. “For a decision to be adopted it must have the agreement of the majority of the total number of the Member States, between 71 and 74% of weighted votes, and if a Member State so requests, 62% of the total EU population³¹”. So, Germany with two other large countries (France, Great Britain or Italy) is the only possibility of vetoing a decision using the population majority. All the other options are possible with the population of four or more member states. Furthermore, the Nice Treaty breaks the Franco-German parity in the European Parliament, as Germany will have the biggest representation with 99 seats. At the end of the Nice IGC, Gerhard Schröder affirmed: “We have succeed in doing what it was possible to do”³², as well as that conflict would have “shaken the Franco-German relationship in a way that we would not have wished³³”. Therefore, finally, Germany preferred to maintain the close relationship or in other words, the formal dual leadership, rather than started a conflict with France.

The lack of understanding between France and Germany in the Nice IGC was probably conditioned by other factors. For instance, the fact that France held the EU Presidency during the IGC, and thus the Nice summit as well, could become an inconvenience for the collaboration between France and Germany to present joint positions. As Kirchner points out the state that holds the presidency “plays a crucial role in the agenda-setting if the various levels of Council and acts as a catalyst or consensus former in the EU decision-making.”³⁴ Hence, this state can not form coalitions in order to influence in the final agreements or to impose their national interests to the Union because it represents and defends the Community interests while it has the function of Presidency.

Another possible condition for this misunderstanding is the fact that it did not exist chemistry between Gerhard Schröder and Jacques Chirac. “The personal relationship between today’s political leaders is not what we witnessed in the Köhl and Mitterrand era”³⁵.

Anyway, although these two presented factors conditioned the Treaty of Nice, they did not determine it. As exposed before, the main reason for the incapacity of Nice of being a real deepening, and hence, preparing the EU institutions for the enlargement was the defence of the national interests by each member state, but above all by the “big” ones.

By way of example of the German rapprochement towards the East is the Schröder’s visit to Warsaw. Just before the Nice Council, the Chancellor Schröder visited Poland as a symbol of the close relationship between both countries and as a demonstration of its support for the Polish membership. Not only does Germany believe in the advantages of the Polish-German axis, but also Poland believes that it will gain with the German leadership in the EU, as the Secretary of the Office of the Committee for European integration in Warsaw highlighted during the Schröder’s visit: “The confirmation of Germany’s political will to play a leading role and to set the pace for EU expansion bodes well for Poland”³⁶. This might show how alternative coalitions seem to be possible for Germany in an enlarged Union.

In conclusion, “the summit proceedings showed that the Franco-German ‘couple’ are increasingly living separately. Far from working as a team at Nice, the French and German leaders displayed personal animosity”³⁷. Indeed, Nice did not supposed the definitive breaking of the Franco-German axis, but the clear evidence that the axis will work depending on the issues, and moreover, other new alliances are possible in the EU after the enlargement.

V. A VIEW TO THE FUTURE: OTHER POTENTIAL CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS

Germany did not succeed in breaking the parity with France as far as the number of votes in the Council was concerned. However, the Nice IGC confirmed the German unilateral leadership in the EU, as well as, that the former close relationship between France and Germany had ended. The question now is if Germany will take the role of the unilateral leader or if it will prefer to search new allies in a new EU of 27. Consequently, it is in this point that the enlargement towards the Central and Eastern European Countries has the main effect because it opens Germany to a wide range of possible alliances.

First of all, the fact that the Franco-German axis did not exist in the Nice negotiations, does not mean that a Franco-German good relationship is not possible in the future. It is probable that the referred axis last as a way of influencing on concrete issues, but, in any case, it will not behave so intensely as before. Therefore, future punctual Franco-German agreements will not mean that the long-term Franco-German axis is still alive. On the other side, this paper will not focus on the possible alliances of France because although it is certain that there will exist, probably they will not have the same influence than the German ones.

Secondly, as we have tried to show in this paper, the future entry of the CEECs in the EU will give fresh impetus to Germany because it means the possibility of new allies. At least for the moment, ten of the CEECs will get the membership in 2004 or 2005. In order to be more influential, the CEECs will search the German umbrella. Knowing the historic bonds of friendship and cultural ties between Germany and Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, but above all Poland, it is easy to understand that the strengthening of ties when its neighbours become EU members is possible, and even more, probable. Germany could prefer an strategic axis with these new members than the one it has, or better it had, with France, even if this is still early to prove.

In addition, if this axis became a reality, the German centrality of Europe would be reinforced. But, apart from becoming the centre of Europe, the German language would increase its speakers. That is, the German language could substitute the French in its position as the second language in the EU, after the English that has become the first and the most used language in the European institutions.

Poland is undoubtedly the Eastern state that will have a closer relationship with Germany. Apart from having historic and economic ties, the fact that Poland will be the only new member state with the status of "big" member (in the same conditions as Spain) seems to suggest a greater influence of a potential Polish-German axis.

Nevertheless, we cannot forget the other big member states, and above all, the United Kingdom. Finally, this big country has learnt that its national foreign policy involves the European Foreign Policy. Although the transatlantic ties are still strong, and September 11th is a good demonstration of it, Europe, and above all the EU, plays an increasing role in the British Foreign Policy. If shortly after the Second World War, Winston Churchill observed that the British Foreign Policy laid in three interlocking circles: Europe, the Empire and the 'special relationship' across the Atlantic, in the 90s and less in the third millennium, these circles are not yet valid³⁸. Europe has been imposed on the other circles, despite the fact that the transatlantic relationship still remains high ranked in the British Foreign Policy. However, what it is still uncertain is if Britain finally will opt to play a crucial role in the EU and if this role can be next to Germany. It seems that Great Britain is abandoning its intergovernmentalist approach whereas Germany is more pro-national interests, and thus, their approaches within the EU are getting closer. A recent proof of it is the letter of the Chancellor Schröder and the Prime Minister Blair to the President of the European Council about the Institutional Reform³⁹ in February 2002. To sum up the potential British-German partnership as an "alliance of necessity" we take Grabbe and Münchau's words:

“The opportunities for the UK and Germany to co-operate at European level are perhaps the best in decades. Germany is less preoccupied with the challenge of unification, and is in the process of ‘normalising’ its foreign policy and military roles. The UK is becoming a less reluctant player in European integration, and is even leading the EU defence”⁴⁰

In conclusion, Germany will play a different role in a EU with 27 or 28 member states. For the moment, the probable alliances within the EU are drawn. The future will tell us if they will become true or rather if the Franco-German motor will be substituted by other axis such as the Polish-German or the British-German ones. Nonetheless, these new alliances will not have the same depth than the Franco-German relationship had in a EC of 6 member states. The number of the membership is crucial to understand the way of influencing not only in the daily politics but also in long-term EU politics such as the Eastern enlargement. Thus, the future EU will probably not have any kind of permanent axis.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The perspectives of Eastern enlargement, among other factors, influenced the progressive distancing between France and Germany during the nineties. Increasingly, the Franco-German axis lost its influence within the EU, and even the bilateral relationship lost the periodicity of its meetings and its joint policies. Nevertheless, this distancing was due to both countries. On the one hand, Germany started to give priority to its national interests, on the other, France resulted not to be the European power that it had been mainly in the fifties but also in the sixties, seventies or even in the eighties.

The main objective of Nice IGC was to prepare the EU before the enlargement towards the CEECs and the Mediterranean candidates. The institutional reform proved that the member states were more worried for its short-term national interests rather than the enlargement as the European long-term interests did.

In this sense, France and Germany played this role as well as they broke definitively the balance of power that resulted from the shared leadership of the EC/EU. “Dual hegemonies create special problems since there will normally be an imbalance of power between the two partners in the hegemonic core”⁴¹. Consequently, the Franco-German motor was not able to persist, and besides, the changing scenario of the nineties accelerated the split of the Franco-German axis. That split was reaffirmed in the lack of agreement between these two big founder member states in the Nice IGC.

The traditional balance between France and Germany has been eroded. Germany has consolidated its role of leadership in the EU, and above all towards the candidate countries. So, the increasing role of Germany was another of the conditions of the decline of the Franco-German motor within the EU.

The enlargement towards the Central and Eastern European Countries has modified the alliances within the EU. If in a EEC of 6 member states, the Franco-German axis was crucial for the daily European Politics, nowadays, with a Europe of 15, it is not yet possible the same influence of that axis, and it focuses on high politics as exemplified in the IGCs. Then, with an EU of 27 or 28 member states, the influence of two of them is difficult and wide coalitions based in similar interests become more probable.

Finally, in 2001 and 2002, Germany has mortgaged the date of the entry of the candidates to the cut of CAP expenditure. Indeed, the biggest net payers to the EU budget, that is the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany, insist on cutting the CAP expenditures, and thus, fighting for a re-negotiation of the CAP and the Structural Funds before the EU enlargement. Perhaps, it seems that at the last moment, Germany does not favour the Eastern enlargement, but it is its defence of national interests that dominates the present scene. The short-term German interests determine, for the moment, the long-term European project: the Eastern enlargement. But not only do these German interests determine the European ones, but they also conditions the long-term own interests based in the business and trade relations with the Central and Eastern European Countries. Nevertheless, sooner or later, the fifth enlargement will become a reality.

Since the Nice IGC until the first semester of 2002, the Franco-German axis, motor or close relationship did not influence the European politics. Moreover, the different opinions in some of the more crucial aspects of the European integration such as the debate on the future of the EU, the enlargement or the reform of the CAP expenditure have increased the feeling that the "Franco-German does not exist any more. It is in crisis"⁴² as affirmed a Minister of Foreign Affairs of one of the Member State of the European Union in Seville summit. However, the last Franco-German summit in Schwerin (East Germany) in 29 July 2002 demonstrated that both countries wish to relaunch the Franco-German close relationship in order to give the last boost to the Eastern enlargement. As Jacques Chirac avowed, "the Franco-German motor is essential for the success of the EU, above all at the moments that important expiry dates are present: the reform of the institutions, the enlargement, the affirmation of the Europe's place in the world."⁴³ It seems that France and Germany want to sign a new Treaty of Elysée in the fortieth Anniversary of it in January 2003. However, the German elections, the lack of agreements in important aspects of the European politics and the different political situation of Germany in 1963 and 2002 may get dark these intentions.

For the moment and to sum up, making a view to the future, we would suggest that Germany will not take a permanent partner in order to influence in the EU. Instead of that and depending on the issue, it will choose the most suitable "big" partner among France, Britain and Poland.

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¹ The Central and Eastern Countries which are EU candidates include: Bulgaria, Czech Rep., Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Rep. and Slovenia.

² Turkey applied for the EC Membership in 14th April 1987. However, the Association Agreement was signed in 12th September 1963 (In 1st December 1964 it entered in force). This agreement included already the possibility of the Turkey's accession in the EC. The EU accepted Turkey as a candidate in the European Council of Helsinki (10-11 December 1999), however, Turkey has not yet started the Accession Negotiations.

³ Pascal Fontaine, *Una nueva idea para Europa. La Declaración Schuman (1959-2000)*. Luxemburgo: Oficina de publicaciones oficiales de las Comunidades Europeas, 2000, 36-37. Taking from Internet, you can find it in the web of Pol Europeu Jean Monnet, Institut Universitari d'Estudis Europeus, UAB: <http://www.uab.es/iuee>, or in the web of the European Union: http://europa.eu.int/abc/symbols/9-may/decl_en.htm

⁴ In the EEC-6, Italy, France and Germany were the "big" members, while Belgium, Luxembourg and Holand were considered to be the "small" ones, taking the population as the reference.

⁵ Bocquet, D. (1997), 'France and Germany: a second wind' in Bocquet, D, Deubner, C. and Quentin, P., *The Future of the Franco-German Relationship: Three views*. London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Discussion Paper 71, pp. 1-14, pag. 5.

⁶ Bocquet, D. (1997), 'France and Germany: a second wind' in Bocquet, D, Deubner, C. and Quentin, P., *The Future of the Franco-German Relationship: Three views*. London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Discussion Paper 71, pp. 1-14, pag. 1

⁷ Pedersen, T. (1998), *Germany, France and the Integration of Europe: a realist interpretation*, London and New York, Pinter, pag. 193.

⁸ The United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark joint the EEC in 1973. The second enlargement took place in 1981 with Greece. Spain and Portugal became new members in 1986. And the fourth enlargement with Sweden, Finland and Austria became a reality in 1995.

⁹ Gerbet, P. (1990), 'Le rôle du couple France-Allemagne dans la création et développement des Communautés Européennes' en Picht R. y Wessels, W. (eds.), *Motor für Europa?*, Europa Union Verlag, Bonn, pag. 93.

¹⁰ Kolankiewicz, G. (1994), 'Consensus and competition in the Eastern enlargement of the European Union', *International Affairs*, vol 70 n° 3, pp. 477-495, pag. 490.

¹¹ Hendriks, G. and Morgan A. (2001), *The Franco-German Axis in European Integration*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, pag. 148.

¹² Freudenstein, R. (1998) 'Poland, Germany and the EU', *International Affairs*, vol. 74, n° 1, pp. 41-54, pag. 47.

¹³ Sjørnsen, H. (2001), *Why expand? The question of justification in the EU's enlargement policy*, ARENA Working Papers WP 01/6, Oslo, pag. 3-4. Data taken from Baldwin, R. E., Francois, J. and Potes, R. (1997), 'The costs and benefits of Eastern Enlargement: the impact on the EU and Central Europe', *Economic Policy*, 24.

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¹⁴ *Ibíd.* 10, pag. 148-149.

¹⁵ Anderson, J. J. y Goodman, J. B. (1993), 'Mars or Minerva? A United Germany in a Post-Cold War Europe' en Keohane, R.O., Nye, J.S. y Hoffmann, S. (ed.), *After the Cold War. International institutions and State Strategies in Europe, 1989-1991*, Cambridge, Massachussets and London, Harvard University Press, pag. 54-55.

¹⁶ We can find a good definition of national interest in Morgenthau, H. J. (1952), 'Another "Great Debate": The Nation Interest of the United States', in *The American Political Science Review*, num.4, December 1952, pag. 972: "Any foreign policy which operates under the standard of the national interest must obviously have some reference to the physical, political, and cultural entity which we call a nation. In a world where a number of sovereign nations compete with and oppose each other for power, the foreign policies of all nations must necessarily refer to their survival as their minimum requirements." For a further information about the national interest of Morgenthau, see: Barbé, E. (1987) 'El papel del Realismo en las Relaciones Internacionales (la teoría de la política internacional de Hans. J. Morgenthau)', *Revista de Estudios Políticos (Nueva Época)*, núm 57, pag 149-176.

¹⁷ Pedersen, T. (1998), *Germany, France and the Integration of Europe: a realist interpretation*, London and New York, Pinter, pag. 197.

¹⁸ Beneyto, J.M. (2001), *Alemania y la ampliación al Este: ¿Hacia una Comunidad de intereses?*, Madrid, Instituto de Estudios Europeos de la Universidad San Pablo-CEU, Polo europeo Jean Monnet, nº 2-2001, pag. 8.

¹⁹ Fischer, J. (2000), *From Confederacy to Federation – Thoughts on the finality of European integration*. Speech by Joschka Fischer at the Humboldt University in Berlin, 12 May 2000. This speech, where Fischer exposes his ideas about an European Federation, opened the debate on the future of Europe.

²⁰ "Charlemagne: A big-country directorate for Europe?", *The Economist*, 23 March 2002.

²¹ Chirac, J. (2000), *Notre Europe*, Discours de M. Jacques Chirac Président de la République devant le Bundestag, Reichstag, Berlin, 27 June 2000.

²² Hendriks, G. and Morgan A. (2001), *The Franco-German Axis in European Integration*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, pag. 150.

²³ Scharping, R. (1994), *Aussen-Politik*, 1, quoted by Hendriks, G. and Morgan A. (2001), *The Franco-German Axis in European Integration*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, pag. 152.

²⁴ Chérigui, H., *La politique méditerranéenne de la France: un instrument de leadership dans l'espace régional* in Henry, J.R. and Groc, G. (2000), *Politiques Méditerranéennes entre logiques étatiques et espace civil: una réflexion franco-allemande*, Paris and Aix-en-Provence, édition Karthala et Iremam, pag. 174.

²⁵ Eurobarometer 57, spring 2002. It is available in:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index.htm

²⁶ The Treaty of Amsterdam was signed 2nd October 1997 and entered in forced 1st May 1999.

²⁷ Pedersen, Thomas (1998), *Germany, France and the Integration of Europe: a realist interpretation*, London and New York, Pinter, pag. 204. However, Pedersen borrowed the

expression 'detonator' from Hellen Wallace in Morgan, R. and Bray, C. (ed.) (1984), *Partners and Rivals in Western Europe: Britain, France and Germany*, Aldershot, Gower.

²⁸ A good example of the Franco-German agreements previous to the IGCs is the joint letter, dated on April, 19th, 1990, to the President of the European Council demanding an acceleration of the political construction and an achievement of the Economic Monetary Union (EMU), in order to prepare the Maastricht IGC.

²⁹ "L'Allemagne, puissante et fragile", *Le Monde*, 9 December 2000.

³⁰ "Dejà Adenauer en 1951...", *Le Monde*, 2 December 2000. "Chirac y Schröder se reúnen hoy en busca de un consenso que evite el fracaso de Niza", *El País*, 2 December 2000.

³¹ Yataganas, X.A. (2001), *The Treaty of Nice. The Sharing of Power and the Institutional Balance in the European Union – A Continental Perspective.*, Harvard Jean Monnet Working Paper 01/01, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, pag. 40.

³² *Agence Europe*, num. 7861, 11-12 December 2000, pag. 7.

³³ "Le Sommet de Nice, nouvelle étape vers l'Europe des vingt – huit", *Le Monde*, 12 December 2000.

³⁴ Kirchner, E.J. (1992), *Decision-making in the European Community. The Council Presidency and European Integration*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, pag. 7.

³⁵ Kinkel, K., *German-French Relation and the Future of the EU*, Conference, Institut Français des Relations Internationales, 23 October 2001.
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³⁶ "Beyond Reconciliation", *The Warsaw Voice*, December 17, 2000, No. 51 (634),
<http://www.warsawvoice.pl/v634/News03.html>

³⁷ Lippert, B., Hugues, K., Grabbe, H. and Becker, P. (2001), *British and German Interests in EU Enlargement*, London and New York, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, pag. 119.

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³⁹ Letter from German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and British Prime Minister Tony Blair to the President of the European Council, José María Aznar, regarding institutional reform, Stockholm, 23 February, 2002. Web page of the Spanish Presidency (1st Semester 2002):
<http://www.ue2002.es>

⁴⁰ Grabbe, H. and Münchau, W. (2001), *Germany and Britain: an Alliance of Necessity*, London, Centre for European Reform, pag. 2. <http://www.cer.org.uk>

⁴¹ Pedersen, T. (1998), *Germany, France and the Integration of Europe: a realist interpretation*, London and New York, Pinter, pag. 59.

⁴² "Paris et Berlin se rapprochent sur fond de désaccords", *Le Monde*, 30 July 2002.

⁴³ "Paris et Berlin déterminés à régler leurs différends", *Le Monde*, 30 July 2002.