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and Franco-German Linkage

Frederic S. Pearson

THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY POLICY
AND FRANCO-GERMAN LINKAGE

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THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY POLICY
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I

The Gulf crisis has revealed deep fissures in the evolution of European security policy institutions. The thaw in the cold war, which may or may not prove lasting depending upon Western and Soviet reactions to intra-USSR conflicts, occasioned a search for new arrangements to guarantee European security. The main alternative institutions have been the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) structure of 35 nations, which offers the advantage of including at once Eastern/ Western European states and North Atlantic partners, and the Western European Union (WEU) of nine states which offers advantages in representing the NATO wing of the EC and of extending potential joint action even beyond the European theater. The EC itself slowly and grudgingly has developed some concern for security matters, despite negating provisions of the Rome Treaty, mainly through European Political Cooperation (EPC, the foreign policy arm of the Community) and the Single European Act's (SEA) vague wording about technological and industrial (defense production included) cooperation. (See Pearson, 1991)

CSCE cannot provide ready defense preparations and coordination, which NATO related structures such as WEU, theoreticly at least, are able to offer. Yet, WEU cannot provide comprehensiveness. Thus Europe is faced with a structural dilemma, with political consultation and conflict resolution functions devolving on the larger body, strategic consultation, to the extent that it exists, falling to WEU, and defense industrial policy and strategic foreign policy coordination conceivably residing in EC. At EC inter-governmental treaty revision conferences as late as December 1990, for example, a common defense and security "structure" was considered in promoting EPC. (LaFranchi, 1991a, p. 3)

Additionally, however, the Gulf experience has highlighted the persistence of national defense and strategic priorities and intra-EC divergence on such matters. As a joint entity, many have argued that "Europe was absent" from the Gulf scene, with instead the separate and disparate participation of some major and minor European military powers (Britain, France, Italy, and the Netherlands), the near absence of others (Germany, sending only fighter planes and backup personnel to Turkey), and the non-concern or non-cooperation of still others (Belgium's now famous refusal to supply ammunition to Britain). (MacLeod, 1991a, p. 3) During the pre-combat phases of the conflict, the EC responded through EPC with a coordinated sanctions policy and a series of feelers on a negotiated solution. Once the fighting started, however, community initiatives largely ceased, as certain individual members joined

the US-led coalition forces to various degrees, while others such as Germany remained largely preoccupied with domestic constitutional restrictions, public opposition to active participation in the war, and reunification efforts.

Each country's response to the crisis is instructive about prospects for joint European security policy. As noted, Germany like Japan confined itself to economic support and token nods toward military contributions to the Gulf effort. The government also responded to embarrassments about prior arms related exports to Iraq, which violated export laws, regulations, and traditional prohibitions about arming "areas of crisis." Diplomatically, Bonn moved to mend fences with Israel and Syria, while responding to US pressure for financial support of efforts to stabilize access to Middle Eastern oil. Despite vocal anti-war protests, polls showed that the German public came to favor military intervention in the Gulf by a margin of roughly 80%, but not German intervention (by a margin of 75%). (Kiefer, 1991a, p. 3)

As in 1956, the recent Middle East crisis coincided with crackdowns in Moscow's sphere of influence, this time in the Baltics. This also created difficulties for German decision-makers, who had staked much on the development of close, even "special" economic, trade, and political relations with the East. (See Stent, 1990-91, p. 65) Germany's pivotal role in EPC meant that sorting out proper EC relations with Moscow (now denying, now re-instituting food and financial assistance programs) would naturally vie with Gulf policy and US priorities for the attention of EC members, especially those bordering the East.

Other EC members, such as Spain, joined Bonn in voicing reservations about military involvements outside Europe. Partly this related to national foreign policy perspectives--Spain's traditional relationships with North Africa and Germany's unique constitutional provisions, for example. Partly it related as well to long standing European reluctance to countenance NATO actions outside the region. The German debate about crisis assistance to Turkey reflected such concerns, with many on the left arguing that Turkey's assertive attitude toward Iraq negated obligations to defend Turkey if attacked. (Kiefer, 1991a, p. 3)

Even the European states which more readily embraced military action, namely Britain and France, and to a lesser extent Italy and Holland, did so from different perspectives. France and Italy, like Spain, had developed considerable Mediterranean and Arab ties which conceivably would be threatened by participation in a war against a major Arab power, even on the side of other Arab powers. France's North African connections were specifically at stake, at least in the short term, along with the commitment of many influential French elites, including the defense minister, to Iraqi friendship. (See LaFranchi, 1991b, p. 3) This ambivalence was reflected in the concerted French effort to negotiate an Iraqi capitulation before the January 15 UN deadline, and ultimately in Mr. Chevenement's resignation. That France decided to participate

actively in the coalition, and indeed to attack Iraq per se, was probably due mainly to a desire to avoid being left out of its traditionally influential Middle Eastern role and a prominent place at an ultimate peace conference.

Britain, on the other hand, was decidedly behind President Bush's approaches from the very first. Community foot-dragging merely tended to fulfill London's developing sense of suspicion and unease about European priorities, expressed most conspicuously and embarrassingly regarding plans for 1992 during Mrs. Thatcher's last days in office. London still preferred its "special" American relationship, and as the only major European power not particularly dependent on Middle Eastern oil, could afford perhaps a more assertively anti-Iraqi position. British defense sales have been centered quite spectacularly in recent years on Saudi Arabia, so that London, along with another influential oil dealing state, the Netherlands, evidently felt far less cross-pressure than their EC partners in Middle Eastern policy.

Still, however, the leading EC powers were not entirely split on approaches to the crisis. In its proposal for a post-war settlement, for example, the UK suggested EC consideration of joint pre-positioning of military equipment in the Gulf region and of frequent "show the flag" naval and air visits provided that a "sensible" regionally based (i.e., Arab or Islamic) security system could be devised. The British government was at some pains in Parliament to deny desires to revive an "East of Suez" strategic policy, and the EC framework presented a useful foil. (MacLeod, 1991b, p. 1) Correspondingly, although Germany shied away from a full strategic role, preferring to exercise decisive economic and political weight within the Community, during the crisis, and despite talk of stricter arms export enforcement, Bonn moved to send many new weapons supplies to Middle Eastern recipients. These included materiel from former GDR stockpiles, as well as both nominally defensive (poison gas reconnaissance tanks and offers of Patriot missiles) and offensive systems (Leopard tanks and bridge building armor, heavy duty vehicles, signalling equipment, ammunition and protective clothing). (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 1991)

While British leaders push for legitimation of WEU military moves outside Europe, Germany tends to resist on constitutional grounds. But Germany also joins with France in calling for a common Euro-defense policy (joint statement by foreign ministers Dumas and Genscher, see Schroder, 1991), which the UK and Holland resist as undercutting trans-Atlantic cooperation. Bonn and Paris seem to mean developing ties between the EC and the WEU, but London remains suspicious of new EC defense and security roles, even while occasionally also arguing for greater joint defense production and coordination in EC and/or WEU. In addition, German elites, officials and defense contractors, speculate on the acceptability of a NATO-only arms export policy, noting that it would depend on EC-wide arms export regulations to assure uniformity and co-production control (an evident challenge without much prospect of

British or French acceptance). (Buschemann, 1991)

All these contradictions appear to indicate a groping for common action in the midst of persistent suspicions about rival national interests and perspectives, along with the EC's persistent image as a techno-economic giant and a strategic mouse. Resolution of these difficulties is further complicated by an evidently ambivalent American attitude toward an evolving Euro-security voice. The Bush Administration reportedly has reservations even about a more assertive WEU as a so-called bridge between NATO and the EC, since more coordinated European responses could oppose US initiatives; Washington, at least until forced to choose, appears to prefer continued "serial bilateralism" of the type evident in arrangements for the Gulf coalition. WEU itself does not, of course, fully correspond to EC in membership, and both organizations exclude potentially important European states such as Turkey. (Kiefer, 1991b, p. 6)

II

The divergent national perspectives basically are due to foreign policy traditions and attachments which take European powers in many different geo-political directions simultaneously. Britain clearly is the most westward looking of the EC partners, with American ties (as seen for example in the Westlands Helicopter episode) competing with the realization that London's future, as symbolized by the "Chunnel," lies with Europe. Germany is the most eastward oriented, and yet traditionally, though perhaps decreasingly, looks both to Washington and Paris for its legitimacy, protection, and status in the center of Europe. The French opt doggedly for international "autonomy," while at the same time diligently seeking to bind Bonn's considerable techno-power to Western European priorities and broker solutions in the East, as well as to Europe's south in the Middle East.

In the midst of these traditions, and the Warsaw Pact's disintegration, the Gulf crisis caused reevaluations and perhaps a set of new security policy directions. France, for example, is conducting a defense policy review questioning over-preparation for strategic war in Europe and under-qualification to rival the US and UK in projectable power in regional disputes such as the Gulf war. Preferring seasoned professionals to draftees in combat, Paris could only muster a force of about 14,000 in Arabia, and could not field the array of high technology weapons seen in the British and American arsenals (France has devoted up to one-third of its defense spending in some years to the nuclear deterrent). While disagreement remains about whether the Gulf is indeed the archetypal "crisis of the future," a consensus appears to be growing in Paris that defense and security require the coordinated weight of greater EC cooperation. (Reference to the thought of such French analysts as Frederic Bozo and Francois Heisbourg by LaFranchi, 1991c, p. 3.)

In looking toward WEU for the expression of this coordination,

France and Germany seem to be endorsing greater influence within that body of European heads of state, a rule of ministers, as in the EC itself, with members retaining their strategic autonomy. (LaFranchi, 1991c, p. 3, and 1991a, p. 3.) The French also speak of a series of bilateral relationships, none exclusive, and not simply a "special relationship" with Bonn. In this way, cooperation with the US or UK would not be foreclosed if, as in the Gulf, it was determined necessary, or the lesser of other evils. No European army or revival of the European Defense Community (EDC) is mentioned, although one wonders about the impetus toward Euro-defense budgeting, budgetary or weapon procurement allocations, if such WEU roles were ever developed. In addition, the objections of smaller states, such as Denmark, worried about the dominance of British-French-German military-industrial establishments, would have to be surmounted along with the development of greater trust and congruity of motives among the major European powers themselves.

Such security tinkering, if it were to occur, would in a sense parallel the entire push for SEA as outlined recently by Moravcsik (1991), who argues that moves toward renewed integration in the 1980s were less a product of elite consensus in European institutions, such as the EC Parliament or Commission, than of inter-governmental bargains among the UK, Germany, and France. In this, France and Germany implied the threat to leave Britain out of the "new Europe," at a time of great concern about technological competitiveness. On the issue of commercial integration, which is the essence of SEA, however, France and Germany enjoyed a distinct power advantage over Britain which is in a sense reversed in the military-strategic sector. Thus, the bargaining for defense policy coordination is apt to be far more intense and conflictual than that over the common market.

III

One indicator of the possible direction of such bargaining can perhaps be seen in agreements about the joint Franco-German military brigade and Defense and Security Council through the 1980s. Although the joint brigade's mission remained rather murky after its introduction in 1989, and although only second-line German troops were assigned because of Bonn's primary NATO ties, the symbolism was striking, particularly in its status outside NATO's joint command. The Defense and Security Council, with secretariat in Paris, also was designed to coordinate defense and disarmament policy and further promote joint weapons production. (Feld, 1989, pp. 155-156) These initiatives were a response to international system changes during the 1980s, which seemed to call for the modification and extension of the 1963 Elysee Treaty on Franco-German consultation to focus more specifically on defense and security questions. East-West relations, dominated by Reagan-Gorbachev competition and, finally, understanding, the global economic crisis, and intra-EC developments in connection with SEA. (Schmidt, 1989, pp. 360-364; see also, Weidenfeld, 1988, pp. 3-12.)

These new understandings, beginning in 1987, reflected a growing pragmatism on the part of both Bonn and Paris--the latter's sense that it could cooperate with NATO despite the separate command structure (which would be confirmed more clearly in the Gulf than it had been in Chad), and the former's conclusion that it could live with and perhaps even harness a nuclear armed France despite public opposition to nuclear strategy. Terms cited in 1987 included: strengthening NATO without displacing the US role in European security; avoidance of a strict Bonn-Paris axis or exclusive relationship; no necessary return of France to the joint command; and no abandonment of the force de frappe. (Schmidt, 1989, p. 363, quoting M. Worner.) This process has been described as France trying to bind Germany to the West, a task made all the more pertinent by the subsequent reunification, and Germany seeking anchorage in West Europe and the Atlantic relationships, along with winning French power to augment that of NATO. (Yost, 1988a, pp. 841-854)

Among the more notable agreements entailed in the process was a French promise to consult Germany on "pre-strategic" use of nuclear arms under conditions where: (1) there would be a need for quick decision; and (2) German territory would be targeted. But as France upgraded the range of its nuclear missiles, partly in response to German sensibilities about targeting, the actual need for such consultation under the specified terms declined. (Schmidt, 1989, pp. 364-366) They declined even further with the breakup of the Warsaw Pact and new pre-occupations outside Europe.

Thus, although the Council and brigade reflect considerable potential for military coordination at the center of the EC, in reality the machinery promises to remain largely symbolic and marginal for quite some time. In order to wield great strategic weight, it would appear that both partners should be firmly resolved to play an active military role both inside and outside Europe. The Gulf crisis revealed, however, considerable disparity on this score, with Germany remaining set on a commercial, financial, and technological path to power, and France retaining strong military inclinations. However, both states maintain a defense industrial policy geared toward commercial and technological exploits, and it is here, rather than in defense strategy, that they most clearly agree. Thus, coordination of defense production would be a far more likely outcome of the Council's deliberations than coordinated military approaches to crises.

Even joint arms control policy drafts now appear less necessary since major steps toward European arms control have been completed. Precedents for arms control coordination were not particularly good at any rate, given the Genscher-Stoltenberg initiative to Washington regarding short range nuclear talks in 1989 without prior consultation of Paris. (Schmidt, 1989, pp. 368-369) The Franco-German consultative structure indeed has no necessary purview for dealing with specific issues, and much is still left to the "NATO club" or bilateral consultation among the

powers. Initiatives for greater joint European security policy in large part continue to wax and wane in response to the degree of European disillusionment with Washington. When such concerns are not pressing, disparities such as Bonn's aversion to nuclear strategy or the use of force outside Europe come to the fore and impede a genuine EC strategic coalition. (Indeed, nuclear strategy itself has come to seem somewhat superfluous in the "post-cold war" era, and French President Mitterand, unlike President Bush, early on foreswore the use of nuclear weapons in the Gulf crisis.)

V

France and Germany are not the only pairs or groups of EC states to explore defense coordination in recent years. Anglo-German consultations go on quietly, with most interest in preparing joint weapons development. Germany's newly reunited status, and the withdrawal of external forces could lead to a broader agenda, however. In some ways practical coordination has gone further among European partners more prone to military responses. Britain and France have explored possible strategic coordination, even hesitatingly in the nuclear sphere, when US forces in Europe are reduced. But London has been reluctant to change or coordinate targeting or to pursue joint strategic weapons development. Despite talks about British supplies through French territory to meet crises to the south, Paris has remained jealous of its independence of action (there was some friction over British based US planes overflying France in the early Gulf crisis). Nevertheless out of necessity, rules of the road have been developed for simultaneous naval or troop involvements in places like the Middle East. France and Spain, also a state outside the integrated NATO command, established a committee on Mediterranean security problems and discussed Spanish participation in the Franco-German brigade in 1987-88. (See Kirchner, 1989, pp. 4-7.)

Despite these moves, however, a multitude of unresolved issues, ranging from the completion of Euro-market regulations for 1992 and beyond, to an acceptable institutional locus for defense policy coordination, to disagreements about political priorities for defense cooperation inside or outside Europe continue to constrain Europe's joint strategic international responses. Some see in CSCE a potential revival of the 19th century Concert System (Goodby, 1991, pp. 3-6), while others hope to breathe life into the WEU. Still others push for non-provocative defense strategies and arsenals. The Community will continue gradually to take up issues such as defense production technology and common foreign policy positions, but probably will pull up short of joint responses once shots are fired. There remains too much distraction in looking to Washington, to Moscow, and to traditional and disparate Third World clients. Nevertheless in the long run, renewed superpower hostility and more pronounced US-European divergence of policy toward the East or South could once again impel France, Germany, and even Britain to explore the safety in their numbers.

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