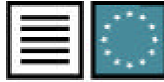

GROUPEMENT D'ÉTUDES ET DE RECHERCHES
NOTRE EUROPE

President: Jacques DELORS

A VIEW FROM OUTSIDE

THE FRANCO-GERMAN COUPLE AS SEEN BY THEIR PARTNERS

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Research and European Issues N°33
April 2004

STUDY AVAILABLE IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH
http://www.notre-europe.asso.fr/Etud33-fr.pdf

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FOREWORD

Couple, axis, tandem or simply partnership: there is no shortage of words to express the central role of Franco-German cooperation in the European integration process.

This role can easily be explained; it lies not merely in the political and economic weight of these two countries but in considerations of a historical nature. From the outset – the launch of the Schuman Plan –, reconciliation between France and Germany was a key motivation. And one of the benefits of the Community method was indeed to lock countries whose prior clashes had bathed Europe in blood into a virtuous circle of cooperation. Franco-German cooperation subsequently earned its credentials by launching proposals that paved the way for a number of the major advances in the European integration process, such as the European Monetary System, closer political cooperation, the Schengen agreements, etc.

But none of this would have been possible had the two countries' joint initiatives not been endorsed by their partners. This support went without saying for the founder members, who had learnt by bitter experience what devastating consequences antagonism between France and Germany could have. And the Member States that joined in subsequent enlargements also came to realise the benefits of letting France and Germany – whose interests were often opposed – find an area of agreement that could prepare the ground for a compromise between all countries.

Can this situation continue after the current enlargement exercise? The answer will naturally depend in part on the value of the proposals that Paris and Berlin will be willing – or able – to put forward. But it will also hinge on how the other governments perceive Franco-German cooperation and the extent to which they will be predisposed in favour of or against these proposals.

In this respect, the diplomatic crisis that surrounded the debate on US intervention in Iraq should give us pause for thought. It demonstrated that the new Member States did not necessarily have the same geostrategic outlook as Paris and Berlin, and that distinct coalitions could emerge as a result. It also showed the aversion that could be felt in certain countries for what they saw – rightly or wrongly – as hegemonic ambitions. One can therefore legitimately wonder whether the Franco-German "couple" will be able to play the same driving role as in the past.

Is this a passing phase or a fundamental change? Should the circle open to include other privileged partners, as happened for the United Kingdom in the area of defence?

We put these questions and others to several specialists in European affairs. Their contributions clearly indicate that there can be no single answer. And the outcome of the recent Spanish elections has reminded us that national positions are not set in stone. Nonetheless, one conclusion stands out clearly from the reflections contained in the following papers. If the Franco-German partnership is to play a driving role, it must demonstrate that it is serving European ambitions rather than the particular interests of the two countries involved.

Notre Europe

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BELGIUM AND THE FRANCO-GERMAN AXIS

Philippe de SCHOUTHEETE

Belgian schoolchildren learn at a very early age that their country was once the scene of many battles. In Antwerp, they are told about the sacking of the city by Farnese's army in 1585; in Brussels about Marshal de Villeroi’s devastating shelling in 1695; in Namur about Louis XIV’s troops laying siege to the citadel; and in Liège about the heroic resistance the forts put up against the German invasion in 1914. For some, the first school outing is to the lion-topped mound marking the Waterloo battlefield, while others are taken to visit what is left of the Yser trenches. They discover medals won by their uncles and grandfathers, either proudly displayed in a glass case or gathering dust in an attic. And they may well be shown the burial place of a relative, for in Flanders many villages have their own military cemetery. For one small locality of Belgium’s Luxembourg province, the memory is of August 1914, when every male more than 15 years old was shot. Inevitably, this age-old ubiquity of war, presented as a regularly recurring source of violence and destruction, has left an indelible mark on the collective psyche.

This probably explains why public opinion and the political class rapidly approved the concept of European integration. This was immediately perceived as a means to achieve lasting reconciliation between our two main neighbours, formerly mutual enemies, and therefore as an assurance of lasting peace. Just a month after Robert Schuman's speech of

May 1950, Paul-Henri Spaak, who was not in the government at that time, expressed his backing for the initiative in newspaper articles. And for the succeeding half century all Belgian governments, whatever the ruling coalition, have supported – and sometimes actively contributed to – the European integration process. The attitude has been so constant and enduring that our partners now take it for granted. This continuity has been – and remains – one of the great strengths of our foreign policy.

The Franco-German axis is one of the early products of this European integration and, as such, enjoys the same favourable attitude on the part of Belgian public opinion. After all, Monnet did collaborate on the initiative with Adenauer and Hallstein before Schuman made his declaration. In the minds of the founding fathers, the essential aim was to achieve Franco-German reconciliation, and that was the spirit in which the initiative was greeted, and welcomed, in Belgium.Indeed, the issue was perceived as being so important that Belgium gave the main protagonists significant room for manoeuvre. Belgium had suffered too much from earlier strife between its neighbours to think of carping about their present good relations.

This favourable bias strengthened further once Belgium became convinced that the novel institutional system designed for the ECSC and replicated, with some adjustments, in the treaty of Rome provided the small countries with appropriate guarantees. The major innovation represented by the Commission, as guardian of the treaties whose exclusive power of initiative allows it to set the agenda, is an effective safeguard against any attempts to take over the system. Likewise, the weight given to the small countries in the distribution of voting rights in the Council and seats in the European Parliament gives

them an influence they never have in international organisations of an intergovernmental nature. In his memoirs, Monnet explains that when drafting his institutional proposals he was anxious to win over and secure the support of the Benelux countries. He succeeded in this. As long as the initiatives of the various parties are set within the institutional framework of the Union treaties (which is generally the case as regards Franco-German proposals), they will get an interested – and sometimes even benevolent – hearing from the Benelux countries. However, those initiatives that fall outside this framework – such as the Fouchet plan, for instance – will run into strong resistance from these three countries. That is a point worth bearing in mind for the future.

This leads us to a third reason for Belgium's relatively relaxed attitude to a Franco-German axis that other countries sometimes perceive as a threat. It is striking to see how much influence the national political systems have on proposals that the Member States put forward in European institutional discussions. Each country instinctively tends to view and define the Union through its own prism: a presidential framework in the case of France, federal arrangements in the case of Germany, and pragmatism and the absence of written rules in the case of the United Kingdom. As a consequence, the Franco-German proposals which make it off the drawing board are already very often the result of a compromise. The combination of a Gaullist legacy on one side and federal tendencies on the other produces mixed, somewhat hybrid, solutions. And experience has shown that these are the only ones that stand any chance of success. Like all recent advances in European integration, they are balanced between supranationalism and intergovernmentalism. Accordingly, they seem acceptable – and sometimes even

desirable – to those countries, such as Belgium, which wish to see steady and regular progress made in the European integration process.

One example should suffice to illustrate this point. Just as the negotiations which were to lead to the Maastricht treaty were starting, the Belgian government issued a memorandum and Mitterrand and Kohl sent a message to the Irish presidency. Both documents indicated what the forthcoming intergovernmental conference should seek to achieve. The Belgian memorandum bears the date of 20 March 1990, while that of the Franco-German letter was 19 April 1990. I can testify that no consultation took place during the drafting of these two documents. Belgium had consulted its Benelux partners, but not Paris nor Bonn. As for the latter two consulting Belgium, the question need not even be asked. Yet if we compare the two documents with the final Maastricht treaty, we can clearly see that they had a considerable influence. If we except monetary union, which had by then been under discussion for almost two years, the two contributions had already sketched out the broad lines of the treaty... in very similar terms". The Belgian paper speaks of "strengthening the efficiency and democratic nature of our institutional mechanism, codifying the principle of subsidiarity and increasing the impact of our external policy. The authors of the Franco-German letter wanted to "strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the Union and make the institutions more efficient, ensure the unity and consistency of its action and define a common foreign and security policy". We get the impression that the signatories of each document could easily have signed the other one as well.

This prompts the following two considerations:

- A pair of nations other than France and Germany would not necessarily enjoy the same benevolent tolerance. For instance, it is unlikely that a Franco-British couple might produce, within the Community framework, proposals that Belgium could easily support.
- This tolerance is based on the idea that substantive objectives and content are more important than considerations relating to national prestige and pride. Such was the firm conviction of Spaak, and it remains, by and large, that of Belgium today. But that view is not universally shared. Proposals are frequently rejected on account of their origin rather than their content. For some countries, the fact that they were not involved in drawing up a proposal is almost sufficient reason to oppose it. This attitude often had disastrous consequences in times when foreign policy was essentially bilateral. It remains just as harmful – yet is relatively widespread – in multilateral foreign policy.

We should not conclude from this overview that all Franco-German proposals are automatically backed by Belgium. Some of these proposals, because of their content, meet with firm opposition. For instance, the idea, supported by France and Germany during the Convention discussions, to create the post of semi-permanent president of the European Council was rejected with unusual vigour by the Benelux countries in their memorandum of 11 December 2002 (rather a wasted effort since the three countries ended up allowing the arrangement to be included in the draft constitution six months later). But the fact remains that, over the years, Franco-German proposals have

frequently been endorsed by Belgium – or all three Benelux countries – and that they have always been given sympathetic consideration in a way that other groupings could never have taken for granted. The historical and ideological explanations for this state of affairs have been outlined above.

What conclusions should we draw for the future? Firstly, that the favourable bias that has often benefited Franco-German initiatives is not automatically extensible, for it derives from very specific historical and ideological circumstances. It is far from certain, for instance, that it would automatically be extended – as some observers seem to believe – to a triumvirate including the United Kingdom. Secondly, that this bias which seems to apply to Belgium – and, in many cases, to the Benelux countries as a whole – will not necessarily be found in countries which do not share the same geography, history, aspirations for the Union and knowledge of how its institutions actually work. That is not a reason to abandon all hope, but it may be an extra reason to pay particular attention to the scope, timing and diplomatic presentation of initiatives. Good ideas that are properly presented, explained and backed up will always be welcome.

THE FRANCO-GERMAN AXIS: A VIEW FROM LONDON[1]

Matt BROWNE

One could define the traditional British approach to the Franco-German axis as a blend of healthy British scepticism and principled Anglo-Saxon pragmatism. From the outset, Churchill had always been in favour of a united Europe, but viewed this a something for "the Continent", not for the UK. Britain's view towards Europe gradually evolved from one of scepticism to reluctant membership out of economic necessity, with subsequent British governments essentially being the recalcitrant partner (along with Denmark) in the Community and later the Union.

A sea change in mentality took place with the arrival of Tony Blair in Downing Street. Blair has been described as a committed European, and indeed he has continually argued that Britain should play a leading role at the heart of Europe (although his advocacy has declined somewhat recently). This, however, should not be regarded as an endorsement of the European project in its present form: the New Labour message was and is "pro-Europe, pro-Reform".[2] In this vein, the new approach to the Franco-German axis has varied depending on whether it is considered a help or hindrance to this modern European project.

While the UK's attitude towards alliance formation with the European Union, and thus the Franco-German partnership, can be understood in these terms, it must also be contextualised by what one might argue to be the declining importance of France and Germany in the new European Union. To be clear, it is commonly accepted by most British commentators that without the historic agreements between France and Germany

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[1] I would like to thank Roger Liddle, Francois Lafond, Olaf Cramme and Fran Sainsbury for their comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

[2] Peter Mandelson, *"Pro-Europe, Pro-Reform: A progressive vision of Europe"* (Policy Network, 2002)

European integration would never have succeeded. From the Schuman Plan in the early fifties through to Monetary Union in the nineties, it is not simply that where the two have agreed progress has been made. More importantly, Franco-German visions of Europe's future have historically proven difficult for others to resist, even within the UK.

However, three key trends seem to imply that this may no longer be the case. Firstly, as membership has increased there has been a growing divergence of views within the Union – implying that compromises between the "big two" may not necessarily be sufficient to mobilise support from the rest of the Union. Second, the drive of the Franco-German partnership has, more recently, become suspect: the partnership seems to spend more time defending past (sometimes unsustainable) achievements rather than forging new programmes for the future. Third, in many new fields of integration France and Germany will not necessarily be the most important actors in the Union, even if in economic matters and institutional affairs the weight of the partnership may well continue to predominate.

Historically, the Franco-German partnership worked as the motor of European integration because the two countries often took such divergent views that when a compromise between the two was reached it was generally acceptable to the other members. In a European Union with twenty-five members, it is by no means clear that this politics of integration can continue to function in the way it did in a Union of six, nine or twelve. Indeed, in a Union of fifteen it was already questionable whether this system functioned effectively. On the one hand, this is a simple issue of numbers; the more members there are the more complicated decision-making becomes. On the other, there are growing fears of a "*directoire*" emerging, in which a few "core countries" would lead the rest.

The divisions that emerged over the Iraq conflict perhaps best exemplify this growing divergence of views within the Union. As Heather Grabbe and Ulrike Guérot noted[3], when France and Germany "tried to speak for Europe in opposing the US-led war" they

[3] Heather Grabbe and Ulrike Guérot, "The not-so-big three", the Wall Street Journal, 26th February 2004.

were publicly contradicted by the more numerous Atlanticist countries in a letter published in *The Wall Street Journal.*[4]

Iraq marked a crucial shift in German foreign policy.[5] In opposing the war, the Schröder government broke one of Germany's basic foreign policy principles — that is, never to choose between France and the United States. British support for intervention in Iraq was not, however, reducible to its "special relationship" with the United States. While it is clear that Blair considered intervention in Iraq to be both a moral intervention and necessary on grounds of security, it also reflected a more general British view that a stronger European foreign policy must be based on a partnership with the US, not an alternative to the Atlantic alliance. While some in France may view this differently, in an interview with the *Financial Times*, Tony Blair warned against this difference of vision.[6] He stated:

"Some want a so-called multi-polar world where you have different centres of power, [which] I believe will quickly develop into rival centres of power; and others believe, and this is my notion, that we need one polar power which encompasses a strategic partnership between Europe and America".

He added:

"Those people who fear unilateralism in America should realise that the quickest way to get that is to set up a rival polar power to America".

[4] The letter was signed by Jose Maria Aznar (Spain), Jose Manuel Durao Baroso (Portugal), Silvio Berlusconi (Italy), Tony Blair (United Kingdom), Vaclav Havel (Czech Republic), Peter Medgyessy (Hungary), Leszek Miller (Poland) and Anders Fogh Rasmussen (Denmark).

[5] It is, however, noticeable that in recent months the German Chancellor has made a conscious effort to renew his relationship with Washington – visit President Bush early this year.

[6] Financial Times, 28th April 2003

The alliances built with Aznar's Spain, Berlusconi's Italy, as well as many of the new members (notably Poland), were built on these principles. However, Blair's attitude towards these alliances should be clearly distinguished from Aznar's. While Aznar's Atlanticism seemed to reflect a more deep-seated Euroscepticism that also surfaced in his later battle over voting weights at the Intergovernmental Conference, Blair has been keen to maintain relations with France and Germany. Indeed, the recent trilateral Summit between the "big three" can be seen in this light.

While Iraq is an interesting case because it illustrates that there is a broader divergence of views in the Union than previously was the case, one should be careful not to overplay the old-Europe, new-Europe distinction, as many commentators do. Of greater interest is the increased institutionalisation of the Franco-German partnership that has been witnessed in recent times, one which marks a fundamental shift in the nature of this relationship.

The representation of Gerhard Schröder by Jacques Chirac at the EU-Summit in Brussels in mid-October last year is symbolic of the new level of collaboration between the two nations, not to mention the common session of the German and French parliaments in Versailles. Unfortunately, this increased institutionalisation of the Franco-German relationship has occurred at the expense of any real initiatives on their part. While the British are sceptical of this increased institutionalisation, the primary concern is that this partnership is increasingly used to block rather than initiate change. Indeed, since Mitterrand stepped down in 1995, it is difficult to think of a European initiative triggered by the Franco-German partnership. The fundamental problem here appears that while the partnership continues to "faire semblant" leadership in Europe, when one scratches under the surface there is actually very little that the two agree on. Schröder's vision of Europe is not the same as Chirac's. When disputes between the partnership and the Spanish and Poles blocked agreements on the new EU constitution, attempts to mobilise support for a core group around France and Germany fell largely on deaf ears.[7]

[7] Here, one should note that one of the partners radically changed their views on voting rights. After fighting Berlin in the run-up to the Nice Treaty, France more recently has supported Germany's call for its reform through the application of the "double majority" principle for qualified majority voting.

During the last two years, then, the Franco-German axis appears to have become increasingly absent as a motor of integration, with agricultural reform being a notable example. In the summer of 2002, the two countries teamed up to block reform of the Common Agricultural Policy's budget. Franz Fischler, Commissioner for Agriculture, had proposed to completely de-couple EU farm subsidies from agricultural production, a move supported by the UK and other pro-reform countries from Scandinavia and, initially, Germany.

Again, when these initiatives were re-launched the following summer a deal between France and Germany sought to block. On the 10th of June Chirac and Schröder held a joint press conference at which the German Chancellor was keen to stress that the compromise reached between the two countries was a recognition of both the special role agriculture played in France and Germany's overall industrial interests. As the main financial contributor to the CAP, Germany would thus agree to a less drastic reform of farm supports on the condition that France would support Berlin's attempts to block a new take-over code.[8]

Within the UK, this desire to block reform is considered problematic both for the Union and its relations with the wider word. Firstly, the deal on agriculture was assumed likely to jeopardise attempts to re-launch Doha round negotiations at Cancún, as officials from the Cairns Group indicated at the time. Second, but equally as important, the sums that are currently being allocated inefficiently to farm support would, in the British view, be better allocated to the aims of the Lisbon Agenda, in particular to attempts to increase funding in research and development in Europe. Generally speaking, these "Brussels" package-deals appear alien to British policy-makers. It would, for example, be impossible to imagine a situation in which any British government would re-negotiation the British rebate in order to gain CAP reform from the French.

In the field of economic reform, one might consider that the Franco-German partnership would be a natural ally for the British. The employment guidelines launched at the

[8] "Paris and Berlin in EU reform deal", Financial Times, 13th June 2003

Luxembourg Summit in 1997 came largely at Lionel Jospin's initiative, and the reform agenda consolidated at Lisbon three years later seemed to provide the grounds for a new social democratic impetus for reform in the Union. However, while this February's trilateral summit declared the need to forge a joint agenda for economic reform, many of the texts seemed to repeat the agenda outlined at Lisbon, developed in collaboration with the Spanish and Portuguese. From a British perspective, it is not so much that a new agenda needs to be agreed, but rather that France and Germany need to concentrate on the reform agenda they have already signed themselves up to by liberalising their own economies and introducing a greater degree of flexibility into their labour markets and reforming their welfare states.

In other areas of economic policy making, Britain can be caricatured as having fundamentally opposing views to France and Germany – taxation and social security being the issues most commonly cited. But, as far as Corporation Tax is concerned, there are those in New Labour circles who feel that harmonisation is both logical, and good for business. As regards the Stability and Growth Pact, the situation is more complicated. When, last year, Paris and Berlin further irritated their partners by asking for the suspension of the Pact's sanctions when they were in breach of its fiscal rules, sympathies about the inflexible nature of the pact were voiced in some British circles. It is no secret that Gordon Brown, the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, is less than enthusiastic about the policy-making framework of the euro, preferring the UK's "golden rule".[9] As yet, however, it remains unclear as to whether France, Germany and the UK will become allies in the reform of the pact. For the British, France and Germany's desire to maintain the Pact for others while ignoring it themselves - while simultaneously

[9] The "golden rule" asserts that: "over the economic cycle, the Government will borrow only to invest and not to fund current spending. It is met when, over the economic cycle, the current budget is in balance or surplus". In the Treasury's view, "the golden rule distinguishes between current spending, which benefits the current generation, and capital spending which benefits both current and future generations. By allowing the current generation to borrow only to fund capital spending, with current spending met by current receipts, the golden rule helps to match the cost and benefits of public spending over time. This is consistent with the Government's objective of generational equity. The golden rule also enhances the efficiency of government spending because it means that growth-enhancing public investment is not sacrificed for current spending. The sustainable investment rule complements the golden rule by ensuring that borrowing for public investment is conducted in a responsible way."

accepting the need for reform - is unbelievable. Britain, though, was notable by its absence when three reform minded countries – Italy, Poland and Spain – wrote a joint letter that criticised France and Germany's behaviour on the Stability Pact.

Part of the problem appears to be not just that the Franco-German axis is discredited or that it has run out of steam, but rather that during the present era of enlargement there seems to be few if any areas where a new project of integration can mobilise support. Possible exceptions to this trend appear to be in the areas of defence and security – where leadership by the large countries seems to have some purchase. Here, the French and British have been the key driving forces, for obvious historical reasons.[10] The two were of course partners in the development of a European Security and Defence Policy at their summit in St. Malo in 1998. In November last year, with the backing of Berlin, an agreement to provide the Union with military planning capabilities was reached.

This is, however, a sensitive area. All parties have been careful not to use the term "headquarters" to avoid any confusion as to whether this new structure could be considered as a rival to NATO, and in November British Foreign Office officials were keen to make clear that these initiatives were being taken with consultation of "key allies" – an obvious reference to Washington.[11] However, while at present this project is the reserve of the "big three" it will not continue to be so exclusively. Indications are that with the arrival of Zapatero in the Moncloa, Spain will be keen to join the initiative.[12] Whether or not Spain does eventually join this initiative, much of Europe seems resolved to the fact that the UK will remain the key player.

Similarly, the Interior Ministers of Britain, France, Germany Spain and Italy also held a breakfast meeting outside of the recent Summit venue to debate anti-terrorist measures. The French Newspaper *Le Figaro* reported Nicolas Sarkozy, at that time the French

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[10] Germany's role is less important here largely because of the nature of its military, in particular the persistence of conscripts rather than a small professional army. However, it should be noted that Germany is still one of the main contributors of troops for peace-keeping missions etc.

[11] Quoted in the International Herald Tribune, "*EU's 'big three' agree on defence*", 29th November 2003.

[12] Nevertheless, there is a common understanding that for the foreseeable future the Union would begin with a select system where only a few countries could participate in a common defence policy.

Minister for Interior, as justifying the "pioneer group" out of the frustration of the lack of progress made during meetings of fifty ministers from twenty-five countries. "With fifty of us" he argued, "it's very difficult to work and to get anything more than just rhetoric". He added "The G5 is not aiming to exclude anyone: it's just a way of making our work easier, this is a big help for everyone".[13] Sarkozy, it appears, seems to share Britian's pragmatism.

The central question, however, remains, do these new "pioneer groups" of the larger member states foreshadow a new politics of decision-making in a Europe of twenty-five. Indications are that there is some sympathy for this view in British government circles. Jack Straw, the British Foreign Secretary stated after February's trilateral summit that: "Associating the UK with the Franco-German motor seems logical, since Europe is going to expand". While this may appear logical, there is a danger that such initiatives could provoke counter-alliances. What is clear, however, is that in participating in such initiatives the UK is keen to ensure that both France and Germany remain involved in common European endeavours, and a pro-reform approach from both will be necessary to advance the Union. The central problem remains finding an efficient decision-making structure in the interest of all, and here France and Germany will be key. If joint initiatives take place at the expense of further institutional reform then all parties will be losers – large and small, new and old alike. Contrary to much popular myth in some parts of Europe, this is not an outcome favoured by the majority in New Labour circles.

[13] Translation cited in "*Big Five Establish Anti-Terror 'Pioneer Group'*", Deutsche Well Online, 22nd March 2004.

THE DANISH ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FRENCH - GERMAN CO-OPERATION[14]

Søren DOSENRODE

To understand the Danish attitude towards the French - German co-operation, it is necessary to have a brief look at Danish foreign policy and especially the Danish attitude towards the EU. On this background, we will look at the Danish perception of the French - German partnership and the Danish attitude towards the future of this co-operation.

The Danes and the EU

In his book on Danish foreign policy from 1965, the Danish foreign Minister Per Hækkerup wrote that Danish foreign policy rested on four pillars of equal importance: the Nordic co-operation, the membership of the UN, membership of NATO, and the European involvement. Today Danish foreign policy de facto rests on 'one and a half perhaps two' pillars: the EU and NATO, where the importance of the Nordic co-operation and the UN have decreased dramatically in importance for Denmark, simultaneously with the growing importance of the Union. Thus, it is relevant to look at the Danish attitude towards the Union and towards NATO. But before that it is worth mentioning the Danish self-perception as a small state. Although one or two scholars have advanced the thesis, that this self-perception has vanished (e.g. Mouritzen 1997), the perception of Denmark as a small - but important - member of the EU is still present in the Government and central administration in Copenhagen. The Danish EU and NATO memberships have

[14] The sources of this brief survey are interviews with high-ranking Danish civil servants, conducted until February 2004, as well as document-studies (both primary as secondary sources). For general studies of Denmark and the EU, I refer to: Dosenrode 1993, Dosenrode 2002, Branner & Kelstrup 2000

been argued for by pointing to Denmark being too small to stand outside, as a way to compensate for her smallness.[15]

What is the Union? The official answer to what the EU is and how it may develop is typical Danish, and has not changed much over the years of membership. The EU has nothing to do with a state or a federation, it is a unique construct, where the member states are the central actors. As to the future, the answer is the same as during the debate before the referendum on the Single European Act in 1986, the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and again in 1993 and the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997: The other member states are not interested in developing the integration further in depth, only in breadth. As the then Danish Prime Minister Schlüter said in 1986 "if you vote 'yes' to the SEA, the Union will be stone dead"[16]… (We will return to the Danish attitude towards the EU below).

The Danes have turned 'real Europeans' over the years, but there is neither a collective nor an elite vision of a European 'state', so it is neither seen as 'logic' nor 'necessary' to conduct security and defence policy within the EU-frame, as we have the far more effective NATO[17]. There is nothing to pressure the Danish Government to work for a strong European defence[18]. As a matter of fact the entire Danish EC / EU history shows a strong preference for keeping security and defence policy as far away from the EC / EU as possible, as epitomised with the Danish 'Exceptions' from the Maastricht Treaty, which included the right to stay outside any military co-operation.[19] Having a security problem,

[15] The membership of the EU has given the small states a unique role to participate in the shaping of their environment (political and economical). The 'hay-days' of small state influences was in the first years of the EC, where e.g. Joseph Luns was able to oppose and block Charles de Gaulles plans for a 'Europe of the Fatherlands'. But still today the small states enjoy an overly proportionate influence in the EU e.g. when one looks at the amount of votes in the Council of Ministers and the number of MEPs allocated to them.

[16] This argument was used by the pro-European Poul Schlütter in an attempt to make the Euro-sceptical Danes vote in favour of ratifying the SEA in 1986.

[17] But it is also worth noticing that the Iraq-war seam to have influenced the centre - left parties of the opposition to look at a common European defence- and security policy with more favourable eyes as usually.

[18] And the 'famous' Danish exceptions from the EU-treaty also include military co-operation and that of course also limits the government's freedom of action.

[19] E.g. parliamentary debate on Danish EC membership, 1971 (FT 15.5. 1971, 11.11.1971); parliamentary debates on the EC 1976 (FT 6.2.1976), 1984 (FT 28.5.1984), and 1992 (12.5.1992).

as all small states, but lacking the wish and the vision for the EU state, it is, from a small state perspective, more comfortable to have a hegemon far away (the USA), than one close to one self (the EU) (cf. Dosenrode, 1993). Additionally, Danish defence-policy has had an Atlantic outlook since the end of the 1940s, when the failed neutrality was exchanged for the NATO membership.

Momentarily Denmark's perception of her role as a member of both the EU and NATO is that of a 'bridge' between the two, i.e. a typical small state approach (cf. Dosenrode, 1993). In Copenhagen nobody is interested in promoting a development, where the EU should turn out to be an alternative to NATO; co-operation as equal partners 'yes', competitors 'no'. Seen from a Danish perspective it would be most unfortunate, both for Denmark and the EU, if the USA would begin to perceive herself as isolated in the World.[20] That was one of the reasons why Denmark joined the UK and USA, and not France and Germany in the Iraq-crisis.

Goul Andersen has summed up the Danes' attitude towards Europe and tries to look a little into the future (2001/9):

"As a matter of fact, Danes' attitudes towards Europe are also ambivalent: [...], Danes express increasingly positive attitudes towards the standard question of support for the Union; they range high on indicators of European solidarity; they have generally been among the most positive towards the enlargement of the EU; and they are not particularly concerned about nationalist issues such as protection of national language etc. Basic orientations are becoming more and more European, and there is a strong increase in feelings of European identity. It is only when it comes to matters of national vs. European decision-making that the Danes stand out as significantly more nation-orientated than most other nationalities on most (but not all) issues [...]. The reluctance to accept EU or joint decision-making is likely to remain strong even in the years to come. But as far as

[20] Another more pragmatic reason was, that the Danish Government had made its own analysis, and disagreed with the French and German Governments. This is 100% consistent with the Danish emphasis on the strong, sovereign member states in the EU, who work,at least in theory, together in ad hoc coalitions, based on issue and not on permanent alliances.

the more diffuse support for Europe is concerned, there is a long-term trend towards more European orientations."

In conclusion: First, the Danes have been socialised with Europe, and are today as 'good' or 'bad' Europeans as the rest; second, a historically conditioned interlude of 150 years of self-chosen isolation from Europe seems to have ended; third, the Danes are developing a dual loyalty; a loyalty towards Europe and a stronger loyalty towards Denmark. This is, by chance, one of the preconditions which the founding fathers of the American federation considered very important, in order to succeed in building a federation (cf. Madison, Hamilton & Jay (1788) 1987), but also, fourth, that a visionary debate on the Europe of tomorrow is by and large absent in the Danish discourse, and that may be the largest problem in Danish EU policy in the time to come.[21]

On this background we turn to the Danish view of Berlin - Paris co-operation.

The Danish perception of the French - German Partnership: Past, Present and Future

The 'classical French - German partnership' was, seen from a Danish perspective, founded with the initiative to create the European Coal and Steel Community and later the two other Communities and with the Elyse Treaty (1962). Very broadly speaking, the purposes were reconciliation, promotion of a European federation, and creation of the basis for prosperity. Germany needed to get 'in from the cold', and France wanted to link Germany to the West - to put it very much in headlines. France and Germany were roughly equal partners; France was militarily stronger than Germany, but Germany was economically stronger. And until the departure of François Mitterrand and Helmuth Kohl, the leaders of the two countries had shared experiences concerning the Second World War. According to Danish civil servants, a notion of an EC / EU *point of balance* was

[21] Sometimes one gets the feeling, that the Danish opinion makers – basically pro Europeans – have very shortsighted aims, winning the next referendum by all means, forgetting lord Achton's famous dictum: 'you can fool everybody one time, and you can fool somebody all the time, but you cannot fool everybody all the time'. Thus failing to give the European project credibility.

created over the years. France is a 'Latin' country with a partly Mediterranean culture, and slightly protectionist tendencies. Germany is[22] a very liberal country, typically Northern European. When these two countries, representing rather different approaches to the EU, can agree to something, it often strikes a 'point of balance', which lies close to the 'general will' of all the member states.

The reunification of Germany introduced a process of change and is the foundation of today's French - German co-operation. Germany became the undisputedly largest and strongest member state (this was recognised, when she got 12 new MEPs), but with Helmuth Kohl and François Mitterrand at the head of the two states, changes were minor, and the future of the EU was a topic with room for ambitious visions (Maastricht, Amsterdam). After the departure of Helmuth Kohl his successor Gerhard Schröder has ventured into a process of 'normalisation'[23] of Germanys foreign policy, the years of 'mea culpa' concerning the crimes of Nazi-Germany are over, and this will be felt in both the French - German partnership as well as in the EU as a whole (e.g. when negotiating the Unions budget, Germany no longer just pays the bill when a deficit in the budget has to be paid).[24] Still it is worth emphasizing that it is the experience of Danish politicians and civil servants, that the German Government is more open-minded and less arrogant than the other great powers when a small state presents a genuine problem in the Council of Ministers. But this may change if Germany continues to develop a more 'traditional' interest-based foreign policy.

And the partnership of the future? In Copenhagen the vision prevails, that the partnership of the future will include Britain, and it is looked at with confidence[25]. Remembering the

[22] Certain of the Schröder Government's economic actions have given doubt as to whether Germany under the social democratically led Government is turning towards a more protectionist and state governed approach.

[23] Normalisation understood as Germany increasingly conducting foreign policy based on her national interests, as one saw it at the December 2003 summit in Brussels.

[24] This attitude was also signalled clearly during the 2003 IGC, when both the German Chancellor and the Foreign Minister made it clear that they were not willing to keep the old number of votes in the Council of Ministers, as they were the largest member state (and it was also mentioned: the richest). The outcome of the IGC clearly demonstrated that they meant what they said.

[25] The 'big three' began meeting regularly before EU-summits in autumn 2003, and their future was confirmed by a German government spokesman on January 5th, 2004. They meet again in February 2004 in Berlin.

discussion of the 'point of balance' above, the addition of a more active, pro Atlantic state to the partnership will suit Danish interests very well. But the question remains, whether the point of balance struck by the 'Troika', understood as Britain, France and Germany will in fact come close to a 'point of balance' acceptable to an enlarged Union. But, at least, it is likely that Germanys position will be strengthened at the expense of Britain and France, as the new states with perhaps Rumania as an exception, will look to Berlin rather than to Paris when seeking support. Are there alternatives to the Troika, the Quint[26] for instance? In Copenhagen the answer to this is a firm 'no'. Germany is by far the richest of the EU member states and France and Britain are the two states who still - pretend to - have a global role. In short: these three states consider themselves as a special league within the Union, far above Spain, Italy and Poland. Thus the 'Quint' or 'Sixts' will not have any significant bearing. But this does not imply that negotiations will be easier. The inclusion of the Eastern member states, who are not yet socialised to the EU way of doing things, may very well put a larger emphasis on the need of the Troika to work closer together and listen carefully to the new member states (this also adds to Germanys importance), but it is not likely to diminish its influence.

Denmark and the French - German Partnership

Denmark joined the then EC in 1973 and during the first years of membership she looked at the French - German partnership with a certain suspicion. But as the 'dynamics' during the 1970s was rather weak, the importance of the French - German partnership was equally low. Over the years the Danish Governments have come to the following conclusions on the French - German partnership (summary of interviews with civil servants):

[26] In the EU there is an unofficial structure of alliances, sometimes refereed to by Danish civil servants and some EU-civil servants in the following way: The French - German partnership is 'the duo', 'the Troika' (France, Germany, UK), 'the four' (France, Germany, UK, and Italy), 'the Quint' (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and UK).

a) When it works, it is the dynamo for the whole Union. It is in the interest of Denmark, and the other member states that France and Germany are able to work together.

b) The 'point of balance', as mentioned above, has been looked at as a good starting-point for further negotiations,[27] it has not been looked at as a secret directorate.

c) Denmark is a small state. In spite of the partly formal equality of the member states, Denmark has accepted that France, Germany and the United Kingdom are in a class of their own.

The acceptance of the role France and Germany have exercised until now, and the resent development, which has included Britain in the club under Tony Blair's leadership, has been welcomed. This is contrary to some other small states. The Netherlands has always been watching the 'Berlin - Paris Axis' with suspicion. This is in diplomatic circles explained as some kind of dissatisfaction because the Netherlands is a very potent small state, but does not want to be regarded as such.[28] The same scepticism in Finland and Sweden is not to be traced back to 'great power ambitions', but both to a Nordic tradition of democratic equality, and probably especially to the short time the two states have been EU members. They seem to exaggerate the importance of the partnership, not having gotten used to see the usefulness of the co-operation and to fear an unwanted directorate.

The Danish attitude towards the (British -) French - German co-operation is consistent both with the Danish foreign-political tradition and the fragmented body called 'small state theory'. Including the British in the French - German co-operation both secures a bridge to the USA, as well as stronger 'Northern European' i.e. intergovernmental influence. From a small state perspective a leading team of three is better than one of two, as it will make it easier to influence the outcome of agreements, as a search of allies will

[27] Although this does not always work. During the IGC, in December 2003 when the Foreign Ministers met, the French and German Foreign Ministers had to accept the fact that only Belgium supported a genuine defence guarantee. The rest, including the United Kingdom, were opposed or reluctant.

[28] This attitude was also visible in the 1980s and 1990s, when the Dutch self-perception was that of a middle power, or as a minimum 'the largest of the small states' (cf. Dosenrode, 1993).

begin,[29] but more important: a point of balance struck by the Troika is more likely to fit Danish interests than one agreed upon by The Two.

Abbreviations:

EC European Community
EU European Union
IGC Inter Governmental Conference (refers to the 2003 IGC in this article)
MEP Member of the European Parliament
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
SEA Single European Act
TF Folketingets Tidende - Minutes of the Danish Parliament, Folketinget
UK United Kingdom
USA United States of America

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[29] Cf. Dosenrode, 1993

THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND FRANCO-GERMAN COOPERATION

Franciszek DRAUS

Franco-German leadership in the European Union is a historical and political fact of European integration. It has existed since the process began. It may have had its ups and downs but it has never been under threat. Indeed, other Member States have often relied on it. Whenever Europe was stuck, heads would instinctively turn towards France and Germany in the expectation of new ideas and initiatives. That is no longer the case today. Since about the beginning of 2003, Franco-German cooperation has been subjected to almost ceaseless criticism from the central and eastern European countries (CEECs), which denounce it as a hegemonic entity within the Union. And even French and German observers have cast doubt on the effectiveness and relevance of this particular brand of cooperation within an enlarged Union.

The CEECs' rejection of Franco-German leadership

It is worth briefly reviewing the attitude of the CEECs towards France and Germany during the 1990s. Throughout that decade, these countries strongly relied on Germany to help them fulfil their hopes of joining the EU. Germany was a steadfast and constant advocate of the Union's enlargement to the east. And these countries regarded Germany as their voice within the European institutions. Their perception of France, on the other hand, was very different. The candidate countries tended to suspect France of holding up, even opposing, enlargement. The Poles were probably those most inclined to see Germany as the new leading light in Europe. Comments from Warsaw frequently presented Berlin as the new capital of Europe and suggested that, in an enlarged Europe, the Paris-Berlin axis could give way to a Berlin-Warsaw axis endorsed by the other new eastern Member States.

Why is Franco-German cooperation – or Franco-German leadership within the European Union – now attracting criticism, that is sometimes bitter, from the CEECs, and Poland in particular? Why does a famous Polish advertising executive who is committed to the EU feel compelled to make such astonishing statements as "We are prepared to share our sovereignty. But not within a European Union dominated by France and Germany. That would be too reminiscent of the times when our country was merely a satellite of the Soviet Union" (1). Why is the Polish Prime Minister warning that "We do not want any hegemony on the part of a State or group of States that might jeopardise the European ideal of equality. We want no exclusive clubs reserved for certain countries, nor solutions amounting to alternatives to NATO" (2). And we could quote many more comments from Poland or other central or eastern European countries that reflect a similar political perception. But rather than attempt to list them all, our purpose here is to identify the rationale behind these attitudes and draw the relevant political conclusions.

Does the CEECs' rejection of Franco-German leadership within the European Union stem from the current political situation or does it reflect a more fundamental attitude, a principled position?

It is true that the CEECs' onslaught on Franco-German cooperation only really began in February 2003, in a context of disagreement about US policy towards Iraq which was driving a wedge between France and Germany on the one hand and the CEECs on the other. It is even likely that this disagreement had a considerable bearing on the CEECs' attitude towards Franco-German initiatives within the Convention.

Yet their rejection of a Franco-German leadership dates back to well before the recent clashes on US policy and the draft constitution. It is rooted in the CEECs' general institutional and political view of European integration. This view is governed by two major principles: solidarity, and equality between the Member States. For the CEECs – and Poland in particular – the two principles are in a way the be-all and end-all of European integration. They are dogmas which rule out not only any notion of leadership but also any discussion of a differentiated organisation of the Union.

The CEECs are also opposed to the Franco-German duo for political reasons. Given their ideas, interests and preferences with respect to the European Union – which are all essentially of a social and economic nature – they have good reason to be wary about any form of Franco-German leadership. For the ideas, interests and preferences of France, Germany and a few other Member States could well take the Union in policy directions that would be bound to disappoint the CEECs. From France's point of view, the purpose of a Franco-German leadership – that could also involve other countries – is not to lead for the sake of leading, but to achieve the ideal of an independent and autonomous Europe. This ideal is clearly present in the French political mind and in the spirit of the treaties and political declarations establishing and justifying the European Union. However, it is neither understood nor accepted by the CEECs.

The most fundamental reason for the CEECs' rejection of Franco-Germany leadership is probably that they do not want the EU to achieve greater political independence and strategic autonomy. Such a development would run counter to their strategic vision, which presupposes and even welcomes US hegemony. It would also have financial consequences. The CEECs would have considerable trouble accepting that the Union should embark upon ambitious technological and military projects in an effort to act as a global player without having allowed them to overcome their social and economic backwardness. In the view of the CEECs, it is by closing the social and economic gap between its rich and poor members that the Union will become more powerful. And this entails increasing the Community's Structural Funds, not strengthening its military capabilities.

In short, what is bringing some CEECs – and especially Poland – to reject out of hand any idea of Franco-German leadership, or of a vanguard fostered and led by these countries, is their own specific view of European integration and their opposition to the process having a political purpose.

However, Franco-German leadership is not being resisted only by the CEECs. It is also prompting doubts on the western side. A number of observers from France and Germany

have recently predicted that the two countries' traditional role in promoting European integration was going to decline sharply, and might even disappear altogether. The general gist of these observations was that the Franco-German axis had had its day and was no longer able to drive the enlarged Union forward (3).

In the same vein, others claim that Franco-German cooperation will lose a lot of its appeal and political relevance within the enlarged Union. It is worth remembering in this connection that the common positions and proposals hammered out by France and Germany in the past were not based on shared views, analyses and interests. On the contrary, they bridged significant divergences. The two countries developed a specific art of working together by looking for possible areas of agreement and identifying the points they had in common. The appeal of Franco-German cooperation lay not only in its method but also in the fact that the divergences that the two countries were seeking to overcome often – if not always – mirrored divergences between the other Member States, some being closer to France while others were closer to Germany. The Franco-German cooperation process could thus truly be said to be achieving a convergence of interests at European level, rather than merely reconciling the national interests of France and Germany. The ability to achieve this convergence of interests existed because the Member States were fairly similar in terms of their level of economic development and social protection, political culture, approach to international politics, etc. This will no longer be the case in the enlarged Union, where the interests and political realities will be much more diverse. France and Germany will naturally be free to continue working together, but the outcome of their cooperation will appear first and foremost to benefit themselves and maybe a few other countries, rather than a majority of States of the "larger Europe". This would probably be seen as confirming the suspicion of hegemony.

But are these sufficient grounds to reject the concept of leadership? That would be tantamount to assuming that a 25-member Union could continue to work like the original six-member Community. In those days, there was a much closer identity between the legal and political equality of Member States, and the concept of leadership was irrelevant.

The enlarged Union will require not just leadership but strong leadership, coming from both a group of highly committed States and a leaner and more efficient Commission. On the face of it, there is no reason why that Union could not accept the leadership of, say, Poland or the CEECs as a whole. But first it would be necessary to explain what that leadership would consist of, what its economic, political and strategic justification and objectives would be, and what specific resources it would draw on.

Another important point should be made in this connection. The Franco-German leadership, as it has emerged since cooperation between France and Germany was revived in the middle of the 1980s, was mainly based on questions of political integration, i.e. strategic and foreign policy issues and democratisation of the institutions. The possibility that the enlarged Union will be able to pursue these two specific aspects of European integration, with or without leadership, now seems open to question, and even unlikely. The new majority of Member States will have other preferences and priorities, that will essentially be of a social and economic nature.

The CEECs and the concept of Franco-German union

Franco-German union was the subject of much discussion in 2003, but not always from the same point of view.

On the 40th anniversary of the Élysée Treaty, in January 2003, the stress was first and foremost on Franco-German leadership within an enlarged Union. Franco-German cooperation was presented as a force for innovation. In their joint declaration of 22 January 2003, France and Germany declared they "are aware that they exercise a historic joint responsibility to support and pursue the building of Europe. Their ambition is to continue their role of initiating proposals, without imposing anything, and so giving a lead to their partners."

Against a background of disagreement within Europe about US policy on Iraq, some saw Franco-German union as a first and indispensable step towards enabling the Union to counterbalance the United States (4).

As it became increasingly likely that the intergovernmental conference would fail to adopt the draft constitution, Franco-German union was mentioned as a possible – or even necessary – prospect allowing a "vanguard" or "pioneer group", also including other States, to move forward and increase the level of political and strategic integration (5).

Because it became the subject of so much discussion, and for such diverse purposes, the very idea of Franco-German union was greatly undermined. What had been an honourable idea was turned into an instrument of controversy. Firstly, to oppose the United States on the question of Iraq. Secondly, to put pressure on Poland and Spain on the question of the draft constitution. In both cases, the concept of Franco-German union was used for short-term political ends of the moment.

Is a Franco-German vanguard a vision of a political Utopia, or merely an intellectual diversion for well-meaning idealists? Can France and Germany accept it?

France has shown interest in a scheme of this kind for some time, but has put forward no formal proposal as yet. Germany, for its part, has neither endorsed nor rejected the idea. Looking at recent trends in the French and German political minds and sensitivities, we can detect some favourable factors. On the German side, there has been a degree of intellectual and political emancipation with respect to both Germany's relations with the United States and its – traditionally rather continental – vision of Europe. That trend has been apparent for a few years now. Germany is gradually coming of age in political and strategic terms. And this – contrary to what some observers are saying – is not a threat but rather an opportunity for Europe. On the French side, too, there has been an intellectual shift that is bound to strengthen the probability of Franco-German union. The French are beginning to think of Europe's independence and autonomy as values *per se*, rather than as a means to oppose or counterbalance the United States. In short, Germany

is distancing itself from its traditional Bismarkian outlook and taking a place on the world stage in strategic terms, while France is reviewing its traditional anti-Americanism and defining its strategic ambitions in an increasingly realistic manner. For both Germany and France, the Iraq question seems to have acted as a kind of strategic purgatory from which neither country has yet emerged.

There are also factors pleading against Franco-German union and the emergence of a pro-integration vanguard. On the German side, we must mention the surprising concept of Germany as power protecting the small States, and in particular the CEECs, within the enlarged Union. The idea has been spreading in Germany (and, strange as it may seem, in some eastern European countries) since the early 1990s. It is difficult to estimate exactly how much influence it is having on German government policy. The idea is surprising because it defines Germany's place in Europe as being not with the large Member States but at the head of the small ones. This obviously sits uneasily with any idea of Franco-German union. It also entails the risk that a double hegemony might emerge, of Germany in eastern Europe and of the eastern European coalition led by Germany within the enlarged Union. This would bring back the demons of the past – the very ones Germany says it wants to put to rest through its commitment to European integration. In this respect, Germany seems to have gone down the wrong track by failing to acknowledge where its real interests lie. The political and strategic place of Germany has not changed since 1945, despite German unification and the enlargement of the Union to the east. It is still today where it was yesterday, that is to say in the west, next to France.

In France as well, there are factors working against the concept of Franco-German union, including what are sometimes dogmatic conceptions of national sovereignty and reservations about the federalisation and democratisation of European policy.

What attitude would the CEECs have towards such a union? Today, it seems to be fundamentally negative. However, it would be an intellectual and political mistake to think that these countries' political attitudes are set in stone. A country's historical perception and interests are political factors that can and do vary. The main source of the

intellectual and political reservations these countries have today seems to be the fact that the European integration process lacks a clear political purpose. There is no compelling long-term political goal. It is probably here that the fundamental origin of their fears of more structured Franco-German cooperation is to be found.

Notes:

1. Comments by A. Michnik reported in *Le Monde*, 8 June 2003.

2. Statement by L. Miller, the Polish Prime Minister, reported by *Le Figaro*, 4 October 2003.

3. See Anne-Marie Gloannec, "*Le pire des scénarios pour l'Europe*", *Le Figaro*, 17 March 2003; L. Cohen-Tanugi, "*Europe: solder les comptes de la crise irakienne*", *in Le Monde*, 24 October 2003; H. Stark, "*Paris, Berlin et Londres, vers l'émergence d'un directoire européen*", *in Politique étrangère* 4/2002, Paris, pp. 967-982; S. Martens, "*Pour un nouveau prisme d'analyse de l'entente franco-allemande"*, *in La revue internationale et stratégique* 48/2002-2003, Paris, pp. 13-21; J. Schild, "*Les relations franco-allemandes dans une Europe élargie: la fin d'une époque?*", *in La revue internationale et stratégique*, *op.cit.* pp. 31-42

4. By way of example: F. Heisbourg, "*Irak: la montée des enchères*", *Le Monde*, 28 February 2003; and C. Bertram and F. Heisbourg, "*Retour au noyau dur*", *Le Figaro*, 19 March 2003.

5. The debate was started by a series of articles published in *Le Monde* on 13 November 2003.

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THE FRANCO-GERMAN AXIS SEEN FROM SPAIN

Carlos CLOSA

The attitude of Spanish government circles regarding the Franco-German axis can be summed up in two words: mistrust and rivalry. It represents a change from the Spanish governments' traditional endorsement of Franco-German ideas and support for these two countries' leadership in the integration process. There are structural reasons underpinning this change of heart – and specifically the EU's new profile following enlargement and the shift of its centre of gravity eastwards, and the unipolar world resulting from the United States' more assertive policy after the attacks of 11 September 2001. This created a favourable environment for a redefinition of Spanish policy which was also prompted by an internal factor: the change in government ideology. The conservatives have developed a less idealistic and more pragmatic vision of the EU and the integration process since 1996, along with a growing nationalist ambition to establish the country as a medium-sized power.

The Spanish perception of the Franco-German axis is firmly rooted in this context. However, this perception does not stem from a specific analysis of the axis itself, but rather from the assessment of the individual positions of each of the two countries with respect to European policy in general and to specific EU policies in particular. In this context, rivalry with and criticism of France is consistent with the traditional attitude of the Spanish nationalist right, which has used France as a negative and anti-Spanish point of reference. On the other hand, the rampant anti-German feeling in government and pro-government circles is a new phenomenon, more commonly found in other countries (such as the United Kingdom), which, to a certain extent, reflects the structural change that has occurred in the Union and in Spain within the Union. Following on from this differentiated perception, the axis itself is seen as a synthesis of the individual interests of each country, thus leading to a pragmatic analysis whereby European interests

do not necessarily have to coincide with those defined by the Franco-German axis and, in fact, can be very different.

Disagreements (in recent times) with Germany have been plentiful. The first acute clashes occurred in the discussions on Agenda 2000 (during which the future of the Cohesion Fund was called into question further to pressure from the net contributors led by Germany), and continued during the debates leading to the European Convention. Many pro-government commentators and senior government officials (implicitly) suggested that the interests driving the constitutional process were specifically German and – more importantly – detrimental to Spain. In particular, proposals for a new sharing of responsibilities were viewed as an attempt to renationalise structural policies (funds) which were of crucial importance to Spain. The institutional proposals that France and Germany submitted to the Convention – in particular the voting rights within the Council derived from new formulas to define the qualified majority – were perceived as manoeuvres to give a formal status to Germany's domination of the EU. And the confrontation has spilled over into macroeconomic policy. When the current government came into office in 1996, Spain was struggling to join the third phase of economic and monetary union. In Germany (and in other countries), criticism of the fiscal policy of the PIGS (Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain) bordered on contempt. This deeply upset Aznar. Eight years later, he has become a champion of financial orthodoxy and of its main formal instrument in the EU – the stability pact – to such an extent that he is now openly criticising Germany's fiscal laxity and even giving it lectures on budgetary rectitude. Germany's response that Spain's growth is primarily due to EU handouts has been dismissed by Spanish officials, on the strength of a variety of statistics.

The disagreements with France are not as profound in terms of substance but are of greater symbolic significance in relation to the Franco-German axis. The first confrontations emerged when France failed to support the economic liberalisation programme presented by the Spanish EU presidency in 2002. However, the event that profoundly influenced the government's perception was the French reaction to the occupation by Morocco of Parsley Island, a rock under Spanish sovereignty located off

the Moroccan coast. According to Spanish diplomats, France's attitude was not merely ambiguous but even became openly supportive to Morocco when the Spanish government decided to recover the rock by force. This fact played a decisive role in confirming Aznar's natural Euroscepticism, a marked reorientation towards the United States (which did take the Spanish side) and a growing suspicion of France. And as was the case with Germany, the lack of French fiscal discipline was perceived as threatening the growth and stability of the entire euro zone and the absence of structural reform was criticised in government circles. France's positions during the Convention and subsequent summit in Brussels further accentuated Spanish misgivings. Spanish diplomats have been unable to understand why France changed its stance on the voting parity with Germany after having so adamantly defended it in Nice. Worse still, Spain sees the French government and, in particular, the French president as the real obstacles to a compromise on the constitution (contrary to international public opinion, which seems to consider that the Spanish government is the main culprit).

Spain's perception of the Franco-German axis developed against the background of its disagreements with the two countries. This perception is uninfluenced by idealistic conceptions (such as seeing an agreement between France and Germany as a compromise between extremes – intergovernmentalism and federalism – that benefits a majority of Member States), and is instead firmly based on utilitarian realism: the relation exists because it satisfies the practical interests of both partners. Accordingly, their deal on the future of the common agricultural policy is seen as typical of the way they seek mutual benefits without involving the other EU members. However, the Spanish government circles do make a subtle distinction between the two countries. While the proposals on the shaping of the EU have obvious benefits for Germany in the medium to long term, the same is not true of France. This conclusion stems in particular from the issue of voting rights in the Council and, more specifically, the fact that France is prepared to give up its parity with Germany. While enlargement and the constitution are seen as processes which benefit Germany and are consistent with its position in the new EU, some observers in Spanish government circles believe that France is not comfortable with this new state of affairs and is hanging on to the Franco-German axis as the last remnant of a bygone

Europe (the "small Europe") in which it was the point of reference. This view of things suggests that France is going through a kind of "existential crisis" brought about by its inability to find its place in the new Europe, and that Germany is exploiting these circumstances to shape the EU to its advantage.

Against this backdrop, Spanish policy in relation to the Franco-German axis rests on a single premise: their proposals reflect the interests of both countries but represent only one of the possible options for Europe, in particular with respect to the constitutional debate. France and Germany are defending "their" Europe, resulting from the combination of their specific priorities. Putting forward alternative views is both possible and desirable. The leadership of the Franco-German axis should not be regarded as an intrinsic factor of the EU. Not only that, it could even become something of a *directoire* (a word repeatedly used by Spain). This explains why the Spanish government took the initiative of putting forward new proposals for the EU (the Lisbon strategy and the fight against terrorism) and, above all, of forging new alliances as alternatives to the Franco-German tandem. Aznar's close relations with Blair (and therefore the United Kingdom's close relations with Spain) initially developed around the liberalisation programme of the Lisbon agenda, but it was the Iraq war that really boosted the Spanish government's hopes for a "new axis" within the EU. In contrast to the cautious attitude of France and Germany within the United Nations, the Spanish government adopted an aggressive stance. It initiated the much publicised "letter of eight" which supported the United States and, indirectly but in a manner that verged on contempt, criticised France and Germany for their weakness. The Spanish government also welcomed Donald Rumsfeld's comments on "old Europe", positioning itself as the leader *in pectore* of the "new Europe". Citing the analogy of the fight against terrorism on its own territory, the Spanish government considered that a determined attitude towards terrorism at global level was necessary and that the Europeans, whose peace and security were safeguarded by the United States, should support the American plans unreservedly. Paradoxically, the Spanish government's position on this issue ran counter to the majority public opinion, which was opposed to the war and was much closer to the views of France and Germany.

The clash on Iraq coincided with the European Convention, an exercise which provided the Spanish government with another forum within which to create *ad hoc* groups and alliances to counter Franco-German dominance. The United Kingdom, Poland and Italy were occasional allies, and the Spanish representatives even managed to get ten countries to sign a document supporting the institutional arrangements agreed in Nice. The most recent example of a group of Member States headed by Spain is the group of 6 Member States which recently signed a letter calling for the stability pact to be respected.

Spain's prime motivation in seeking to establish its leadership and create coalitions is to counterbalance the Franco-German axis and put forward alternative suggestions. This strategy reflects Spain's perception of itself as a large EU country whose interests differ from the Franco-German axis. Paradoxically, however, its "defensive" and "anti-domination" stance is very close to positions adopted by the small countries. And the success of this strategy is far from clear. Neither Italy nor, above all, the United Kingdom have turned out to be consistent and reliable allies. In particular, the United Kingdom's *rapprochement* with the Franco-German axis has caused some perplexity and has deprived Spain of a much-needed partner. A degree of collaboration remains with Poland, but this is not likely to last in the medium term. Therefore, although Spain (or its government) has chosen to view the Franco-German axis firstly as an obstacle to achieving Spanish priorities and secondly as a competitor in the struggle for leadership within the EU, it seems obvious that its position is more the result of wishful thinking than of sound analysis based on fact.

This explains why the dominant approach is to consider each initiative of the Franco-German axis on the basis of the specific interests involved. Thus Spain expressed no opposition in principle to closer cooperation initiatives, provided they are voluntary and open to new participants (indeed, Spanish senior officials point out that Spain has taken part in all such initiatives to date). However, the successive Spanish governments (since the 1990s) have rejected exclusive initiatives such as the creation of a hard core (strongly criticised by government officials who are scathing about the proposal's credibility, particularly as regards Germany).

It is worth wondering whether the attitude to the Franco-German axis over the last few years reflects a short-term policy prompted by current circumstances and the ideological options of the conservative government or whether, on the contrary, it is set to strengthen and become a structural element. Some behaviours and attitudes (such as the pronounced rivalry and even antagonism) are undoubtedly related to current events and can be expected to become more moderate in future. However, there can also be no doubt that Spain's status as a medium-sized country in the enlarged Union will compel any government to react against an axis seeking to behave like a *directoire*. It is therefore likely that disagreements will continue to emerge in future, albeit on a lesser scale.

This paper was finalised on 7 March 2004, four days before the attacks of 11 March and one week before the elections which resulted in an almost totally unexpected political turnaround. The analysis remains valid, but now belongs to the past. The new socialist government has already signalled its intention to improve relations with the Franco-German axis, restore balance in Europe and, implicitly, review its alliance with the United States[30]. Although it is still too early to assess the new Spanish policy, we can expect that, beyond this significant and profound change in attitude, objective difficulties will remain in the relations with France and Spain (such as probable opposing stances in the discussion on the Union's financial perspective, for instance). Be that as it may, the possibility of a "New Europe" along the lines traced by the previous government appears to have vanished.

[30] An outline of the positions of the new government, presented by the next Foreign Affairs Minister, M. A. Moratinos, during a conference, can be found on the internet (*Una nueva política exterior para España* (ARI) ARI No. 37/2004 (15.3.2004) http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/analisis/434.asp)

A VISION NOT A POLICY: BUSH ADMINISTRATION VIEWS ON THE FRANCO-GERMAN COUPLE

Jeremy SHAPIRO

On February 27, 2004, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of Germany visited President George W. Bush at the White House. The President and the Chancellor discussed a wide range of issues, from the value of the U.S. dollar to German participation in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and Iraq, to an ambitious, even visionary, plan to promote democracy in the greater Middle East. They emerged from the meeting all smiles, to all appearances the best of friends.

What a difference a year makes. Bush and Schröder had barely spoken since the summer of 2002 when Chancellor Schröder not only declared his opposition to any American-led war in Iraq, but also ran for reelection on what the Bush administration considered an explicitly anti-American platform. Bush felt that Schröder had betrayed promises he made in the spring of 2002, not hesitating in private conversations to call the German Chancellor a "liar" and refusing to speak to him during the crisis. As the war in Iraq approached in January 2003, Schröder and his French counterpart President Jacques Chirac capitalized on their mutual opposition to the war in Iraq and the widespread popularity that position enjoyed in European public opinion to reinvigorate the close Franco-German relationship and to reassert their leadership position in Europe. This effort was followed up in April 2003 by another common effort, joined by Belgium and Luxembourg, to establish a European defense headquarters that would be independent of NATO.

In the event, most European nations remained largely hostile to French and German efforts to assert leadership in Europe. Indeed, the December 2003 Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), which was intended to approve a constitutional treaty for an enlarging

Europe, collapsed in large part over the issue of whether the large countries, particularly France and Germany, would be able to impose their visions of Europe on the rest. Spain and Poland, both of which had sided with the Americans over Iraq, simply refused to accept a plan for a new weighted voting system in the Council of Ministers that would give more relative power to larger states like France and Germany. The collapse of the IGC does not mean, however, that the debate over which vision of Europe will prevail has been settled. Furious negotiations continue and the question of which precise form the European constitutional treaty will take, or even whether Europe will have a constitution, remains unanswered.

A Tradition of Silence

At this moment of decision for Europe, the United States remains largely silent on issues of European construction. Such silence is nothing new. The official policy of the United States has long been that the United States supports a Europe that is whole and free and a European Union that can serve as an effective partner for the United States on a wide range of critical issues from preventing the proliferation of WMD to expanding trade to fighting terrorism. The United States has only rarely taken positions on the internal workings of the European construction, despite the substantial leverage the United States enjoys with many European governments. If Franco-German initiatives served as the motor that moved the European Union toward, for example, a common agricultural policy or a single currency that mattered little to the United States. It is, according to one senior Bush administration official, “not the institutions that drive us, it is the results.”

American indifference to internal EU debates has never reflected a belief that such debates are irrelevant to American interests. Rather, it reflected a realistic appreciation that United States as a outsider has a limited ability to positively influence such debates. More important, it reflected an abiding belief that the basic tenets of the transatlantic alliance would be protected not only by the shared values of the Atlanticist countries within the EU, but also more specifically by the German half of the Franco-German motor.

This essentially passive American support for European integration and enlargement is so long-standing that one often forgets how odd it is from an historical perspective. In essence, the United States is encouraging the creation of a political entity that will have the power, and therefore the will, to oppose American policy and to force the United States into difficult compromises. This dynamic has already taken place in those areas of European policy that are most unified—trade and competition policy—and there is little reason to believe that if Europe should achieve similar unity in other issue areas that the results would be any different. The notion of an "effective Europe partner" that the United States officially wants necessarily entails a Europe that can and does oppose U.S. policy on important issues. During the Cold War, this historical oddity was explained by the need to strengthen Europe in the face of the Soviet threat. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, it has become an increasingly difficult proposition to maintain.

Thus, while the Bush administration has not abandoned the traditional U.S. position on European integration, it has taken a more instrumental view of Europe than its predecessors. This could be seen in the President's first trip to Europe in June 2001; he did not go to London or Paris as American Presidents have traditionally done. Rather, the President began his trip in Spain, had his first state visit in Poland, and ended the trip by meeting the President of Russia in Slovenia. As Bush's National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice asserted at the time, "this is not the average, normal American President's first tour to Europe. There are messages in the locations he has chosen, there are messages in the way he is talking about this Europe."

One such message was that the United States would not accept that premise that support for an expanded EU meant the United States could not maintain bilateral relations with the nations of Europe across a range of issues. The administration takes no ideological position on whether to engage on any particular issue at the European level or at the bilateral level. In this sense, the Bush administration feels it can hardly be more integrationist than the Europeans. It will engage with whichever level can deliver coherent and effective cooperation. At present, on most issues outside of trade and competition policy, that means engaging bilaterally, but the EU itself has been a useful

partner on other specific issues. Thus, for example, the President's Greater Middle East initiative specifically envisioned partnering with the EU on issues of regional development in the Mediterranean basin.

This instrumental view, therefore, represents a fairly subtle shift in policy. The vitriolic French and German response to U.S. policy in Iraq certainly did call into question the assumption that core American interests would be protected in a politically unified Europe, particularly one driven by Franco-German cooperation. Nonetheless, it would be a serious error—one made often by pundits on both sides of the Atlantic—to assume that these doubts have already resulted in a concerted U.S. policy of hostility toward European integration. The United States government has not secretly decided to attempt to "disaggregate" Europe, nor has it decided to attempt to empower alternatives to the Franco-German motor in the European construction.

An Absence of Decision

Indeed, it is safe to say that the United States government has not "decided" anything on this issue. It is perhaps one of the most fundamental rule of American governance that complex foreign policy issues are not decided until they are starkly posed. The array of pressing issues the United States faces today in hotspots throughout the world means that the issue of European integration is of fairly low priority. In the absence of the need for immediate decisions, there remain serious divides within the U.S. government on what the U.S. position should be and few incentives to resolve those divides.

Perhaps surprisingly, the essence of these divides do not revolve around the French. There is now fairly widespread agreement within the U.S. government, even within the relatively less anti-French State Department, that the Chirac government is attempting to build a counterweight to U.S. power in Europe. Indeed, this view, while strongly reinforced by the crisis over Iraq and subsequent events, had numerous adherents well before the Bush administration entered office.

Rather, the current divide is over whether that French policy has any chance of success and thus whether it represents any real threat to American interests. French efforts to speak for Europe during the Iraq crisis were originally met with widespread derision in the United States. While 15 members of the expanded EU signed symbolic letters supporting the American position in Iraq, only three other EU countries (Belgium, Germany and Luxembourg) were willing to take active measures to support the French position. As any number of visiting British, Spanish, and Polish officials averred, this was a convincing demonstration that Europeans preferred even arrogant American leadership to its Franco-German alternative. Russia, France's main ally on the Iraq issue within the UN Security Council, was viewed as unreliable and self-absorbed. Under such circumstances, U.S. diplomats tended to believe, and many still believe, that no actions were necessary to forestall French efforts.

This position, however, always seemed overly optimistic to those European experts within the U.S. government conditioned to think in terms of worst-case analyses, particularly at the Pentagon and the National Security Council. Most European governments supported the United States against the will of their publics, indeed over 80% of Europeans opposed the war when it began. Such situations are not sustainable in democracies. The revelations that the United States government, at best, exaggerated the case for war in Iraq has not helped European governments to defend their support of the American position in the court of public opinion. Unless circumstances change, Chancellor Schröder's electoral strategy—running an election campaign against the United States—will become an increasingly attractive option for European politicians. The surprise outcome of the Spanish election, and the resulting shift in Spanish policy toward the United States, convincingly demonstrated just how vulnerable the U.S. position in Europe has become.

Even the support of America's staunchest ally in Europe: the United Kingdom no longer seems certain. At a trilateral summit in Berlin in November 2003, France, Germany, and Britain negotiated an agreement on the shape of an independent European Security and Defense Policy not so different in substance from the one proposed in April 2003 during

the height of the Iraq crisis. In April, both U.S. and UK officials publicly condemned the initiative as a violation of the "Berlin Plus" agreements defining the relationship between NATO and an independent EU force. In December, the United Kingdom joined a very similar arrangement and the Americans remained obtrusively silent. Neither country's assessment of the agreement's compatibility with Berlin Plus had changed. Rather, British Prime Minister Tony Blair now sees it as essential to his political survival to demonstrate that he supports a European construction that is capable of independent action. He specifically asked President Bush not to allow criticism of the initiative from his administration, asserting that the survival of the British government was at stake.

On one hand, Bush's acquiescence to Blair's request shows that an anti-American Franco-German axis is not on the top of the list of American worries. It placed a clear second to Bush's desire to support Blair's government, the survival of which has already been demonstrated to be far behind American concerns in Iraq and the Middle East. On the other hand, American officials, who spent over two years painstakingly negotiating the Berlin Plus agreements, have noticed that what was laughable in April, was essentially achieved in December. France and Germany once again demonstrated that, when united, they retain a substantial and often surprising capacity to move Europe. They have moreover apparently forged a new partnership with a British government under threat domestically. That partnership has begun to move beyond defense issues and may permanently change the dynamics of the European construction just at the moment when the decision-making rules for an expanded EU are being written. The new government in Spain, conceivable changes in Italy, and the slow "Europeanization" of the new member states may further alter the equation.

All of which brings us back to Bush's friendly meeting with Schröder on February 27. Given their unwillingness to sacrifice any other policy priorities to European concerns, the Bush administration's most coherent answer to all of this is to continue to focus on improving bilateral relations. This is perhaps more a vision than a policy. It reflects essentially a faith that a continuation of America's traditionally solid bilateral relationships with a variety of European governments, will automatically constrain any

anti-American drift on the European level. To the extent that the United States has had a reaction to the recent resurgence of Franco-German cooperation, the reaction reflects this pre-existing bias for bilateralism. The idea is that solidifying the U.S.-German relationship will ensure that an isolated France can do less harm. The administration has learned from recent events that bullying both France and Germany simultaneously only increases Franco-German solidarity with one another, thus enhancing their effectiveness in the European construction. In this context, repairing Bush's personal relationship with Schröder, as well as with other European leaders, represents the closest thing the Bush administration has, or wants, to an active policy on European integration.

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