

CFSP WATCH 2003

NATIONAL REPORT FRANCE

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Any EU member-state, from Germany to Luxemburg, from Greece to France, develops a very ambivalent relation with European unification. Basically the European choice cannot be reduced into a diplomatic one; it is much more: a global choice, through which a sovereign state becomes part of a non-defined whole. The French choice for Europe goes very far: settling a peaceful and cooperative connection with the old enemy, Germany; building up a springboard for a middle-sized power; providing a privileged trade area for a French economy which, for decades, was heavily protected. But there is a price, there is always a price: establishing an equal relationship with Germany, this old enemy crushed in 1945 by the Grand Alliance; agreeing to a ever expanding straitjacket of rules, under supranational institutions scrutiny; constantly negotiating with other states, each one promoting its own vision of a united Europe. For four decades (1950 (European Coal and Steel Community)-1992-93 (European Union)), France has held a dynamic balance between European integration and national autonomy.

For France, between these two extremes, there is, or there was, a middle road: intergovernmentality. Intergovernmentality - joint action without integration - should conciliate European unification and the keeping of a national voice. This approach still drives the French European policy. To some degree, the draft constitutional treaty, voted by the European Convention, can be deciphered as a move forward to reformulate the "right" balance between these two extremes. Intergovernmentality as the miracle solution to accept Europeanization and staying oneself! But, because of many converging factors (the single currency, Enlargement, the new international environment...), can EU afford intergovernmentality? What kind of intergovernmentality can be envisaged in an enlarged Union? These general questions shape all the dimensions of the French stance, particularly about CSFP.

I. Basic views of CFSP/ESDP in France. What are the priorities for your government in CFSP? What are the key issues for your country?

In France, the issues relating to CFSP/ESDP concern a very limited circle of people: governmental officials, diplomats, top military establishment, parliamentarians specialized in these fields and academics studying these questions. CFSP/ESDP are esoteric topics for most of the French. For the French tradition of a republican monarchy (or of a monarchical republic), foreign policy and defence belong to high or noble politics, located above the day-to-day partisan debates. Up to now these areas remain the quasi-exclusive responsibility of the President of the Republic, assisted less by the Prime minister than by the Foreign minister. Moreover the European sphere is watched at as a very technocratic sphere, CFSP being one of the byzantine activities which characterise European construction.

For French officials, foreign policy is intergovernmental by nature and should stay so. This approach comes from the French vision of the state and its external dimension. Basically, from Richelieu to De Gaulle and even to Jacques Chirac, diplomacy is a game between

sovereign and unequal states. States are long living historical beings. France is one of them and, being a person, must keep *her* peculiarity or *her* exceptionality. This vision is not specific to governmental circles but pervades the whole French establishment (particularly the parliamentarians)

The heart of foreign policy -real foreign policy- lies in relations between these cold monsters which are the states. This French tradition is drawing a semi-conscious but strong dividing line between diplomacy and management of international relations. *Diplomacy* is concerned with "big" stakes: war and peace, territorial borders, nations, cultures... Only governments with full legitimacy can decide and act in that sphere. *Management of international relations* covers those huge areas of institutionalised relations (first trade but also "technical" problems, from all kinds of police control to environment). "Technical" problems can be debated and settled by institutions, with independent agencies and voting procedures. "Political" issues are rooted in balance-of-power relations; there states remain the key players, and any decision, any commitment must be reached by agreement not through legal proceedings, but through negotiation and consensus. This dividing line between diplomacy and management of international relations can be read out in the Maastricht pillars, the first one (the European Community) integrating "technical" relations, the second (CFSP) and the third (Justice and Home affairs) covering "political" relations.

This vision puts many questions: how is it possible to dissociate the area creating wealth (trade...) from the political area, which, at the end of the day, needs money? What is the decisive factor: economic relations? Or political ones? Is the dividing line convincing? For instance, are currency or police issues "technical" or "political"?

France wants a strong CFSP but does she believe in such a possibility? Here is one of the French ambivalences towards CSFP.

The official rhetoric is well known. For France, a united Europe provides a springboard, which she can use to get back power, and influence she does not have anymore. Europe as a multiplier of power! This Europe could become an independent or an autonomous actor, a centre of power balancing the other great powers and first the United States.

For France, this political Europe must be an intergovernmental one. States keep political legitimacy: national elections mobilize peoples, when European Parliament elections are still meeting indifference, with very low turnouts. European states are shaped by very long histories which make them the only true geopolitical actors. At the same time, France is aware of the extreme diversity of these states. Most of them don't dream of high politics. How could Europe rally them around great initiatives? Behind this diversity of situations and of aspirations, another tension is looming: is a European foreign policy possible with the great setting up the step and the small providing money or troops?

In that landscape, the "directoire" stands out as a solution, but this solution cannot be materialized. For a country nostalgic of its lost power, two complementary moves can contribute to overcome the feeling of decline: 1) to be a member of the best clubs (for France, the United Nations Security Council, the G7...); 2) to create its own club. For more than twenty years (1950-1972), the European Communities can be analyzed as French or Franco-German clubs. With enlargements, the club is becoming less and less Franco-German and more and more diverse. For France, this evolution pushes towards something like a new restricted and informal club inside the biggest club. Many catchwords are used: hard core,

pioneering group, *avant-garde*, *directoire*... Soon questions are crowding out: for which goals? With whom? Which type of procedures or institutions? What to do with the outsiders?

To a certain extent this *directoire* already exists through bilateral channels (first France-Germany, but also France-Britain...). Can these bilateral mechanisms be geared up into a more complex (trilateral, quadrilateral) system? For France, as confirmed by the Trilateral Summit in Berlin (Blair-Chirac-Schroeder, February 18, 2004), EU must be fed by informal networking. Communautarian rules are too mechanical, too egalitarian, and too bureaucratic; they cannot integrate the member states *de facto* inequalities (in weight, political and military burden, international role).

II. French Perceptions and Positions with regard to CFSP/ESDP issues

Concerning success and/or failure of CFSP/ESDP, French officials seem to make a distinction between European issues (Balkans) and non-European ones (September 11th, Iraq, nuclear proliferation).

European issues must and can become the privileged field of CFSP/ESDP. Common interests are obvious and massive. Operations, combining political negotiations, police-checking and sometimes military action, can associate European states' different experiences. The scale of these operations is reasonable, stimulating a joint apprenticeship of intervention.

For non-European issues, France certainly wants to have her own way. First, France holds her own tools: her UNSC permanent seat; her nuclear deterrence; and her links with African countries. Second, from a French viewpoint, the European Union (EU) is not a full geopolitical actor. EU is short of historical background, of diplomatic knowledge. Foreign policy takes root into a very deep humus, merging history, geography, culture and politics. Now EU has neither political legitimacy nor governmental efficiency to promote a true foreign policy. For terrorism (September 11th), weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or any other high politics issue, France is not ready to give up her own voice. The European states display so many divisions. Up to now EU has not got the clout which could make it one of the main global players. In these areas France believes in intergovernmentality. *For French officials, one of the best examples of an efficient Europe is given by the joint approach towards Iran on nuclear issues.* The trio (France, Germany and Britain) has included heavyweights, having a long training in these problems. Diplomatic steps were discreet, aiming not at dictating but at convincing. So Europe should produce a specific style (of course, wholly different of the US style): quiet, persuasive, and attentive to cultural sensitivities.

About NATO, the French approach is well established: if NATO remains a basic pillar of European security, a European Defence identity must and can take shape. For France, a balance can be reached out between the Atlantic link and an autonomous Europe. Transatlantic relations are slowly and irrevocably changing. For the US, Europe is no more the future battlefield in case of war; Europe matters less by itself than as a stability magnet pulling its whole neighbourhood, from Morocco to Russia, out of poverty.

The American umbrella over Europe is shrinking, the US becoming more and more the *de facto* world policeman. The meaning of such an umbrella radically changes in a world where nuclear weapons are less and less controlled by a club of established powers. What is at stake

to-day is less keeping balance-of-power than preventing proliferation (this proliferation being more and more a reality). Besides, some parts of the European landscape are changing. For the first time, Britain, under Tony Blair's premiership, seems accepting to be a full European country (if he succeeds in convincing a reluctant British people). Germany is slowly moving towards a more modern vision of what is defence in a post East-West world.

For France, Enlargement cannot be a truly positive factor for CFSP/ESDP. French officials know that Eastern Enlargement must be carried out. But puzzlement is prevailing about it. Institutional mechanisms have not been truly adapted. Financial consequences have not been really assessed. For CFSP/ESDP, all is becoming harder. The new members are numerous, small (but Poland), poor. Their history is not truly encouraging. These countries cannot quickly recover from their central challenge: how surviving and asserting some freedom between strong and conflicting imperial ambitions (Germany, Russia)? The way out has been the search for a faraway and not too rapacious protector or, more cleverly, for two protectors, cancelling each other out (NATO and EU being both complementary and competing).

In the French mind, European construction has lived a golden age, the 1950s-1960s. Then the European club belonged to the happy few, to those who shared a European faith. The French was the *lingua franca*. This age is over. But, as in any club, there are still old and new members. The oldest ones have the duty to preserve what has been created. These members have learned to live together. They can disagree, but time passing by, they have coalesced into a sort of family. Their disagreements deserve more tact, more respect than the new members' negative opposition. EU should find a balance between democracy (all the member states being equal) and more elusive realities: in any group, newcomers, joining something which already exists, cannot ignore what has been accomplished.

III. European Convention: EU external relations

France has backed the draft constitutional treaty. But was this backing enthusiastic? For France, it is clear that EU needs a constitutional framework. From that viewpoint, the draft constitutional treaty is the best possible text, reaching a subtle balance between conflicting aims: respect of the member states' rights and European cohesion; supranationality and intergovernmentality. Moreover, like most other member states, France prefers ambiguity: EU must remain a "non identified object". But can EU move forward with this ambiguity? Enlargement makes a federal scheme more difficult and more necessary. French officials feel the problem: can an intergovernmental Union stay manageable with twenty-five or more member states? Maybe the draft constitutional treaty falls short of an efficient political Union...

The French position is clearly established in "*The Franco-German Contribution to the European Convention on EU Institutional Architecture*" (January 14, 2003, *Europe Documents* n° 2311, January 17, 2003).

The EU external dimension is specific, distinct from the internal one. EU, as an international actor, concerns the heart of the member states.

Foreign and defence policies must be debated and decided by intergovernmental mechanisms. These policies are not "integrated". The member states remain the first actors in those fields.

EU, even reshaped by a constitutional treaty, stays organized around two different fields: the supranational, the intergovernmental.

The EU must speak with one voice. This voice must be based on a strong legitimacy, provided only by those who, in their own states, embody their peoples. It is why the person in charge of foreign affairs has to be chosen by the European Council.

Concerning decision-making, France stays devoted to intergovernmentality: any major decision must be adopted by unanimous agreement or, at least, by consensus (no open opposition against the decision). *But, on this point, French stance is flexible.* France would negotiate on many trade-offs: unanimity for initial decisions; qualified majority for implementation (implementing areas being very broad). Time has passed by: pure intergovernmentality can be diluted or adapted into a mixed intergovernmentality.

France, wanting to make EU an international actor, supports European crisis management capacities, both intellectual and operational. All that can produce a European team spirit must be developed: European planning staffs or/and think tanks; joint operations...

For France, EU is and must be a security community. The European choice (joining EU) is a global choice. For instance, like any other member state, neutral countries (Ireland, Austria, Finland and Sweden), when they join EU, accept a new destiny; bringing about the giving up of neutrality. At the same time, France remains convinced that security and defence can unite only the willing. Like police or currency affairs, security and defence must be led on a pragmatic basis, involving only those wanting to be involved. In those areas, what matters is the will to work together. Informal institutional mechanisms (*ad hoc* meetings, *à la carte* operations) must be created, flexible connections being established with formal mechanisms.

IV. Mapping of Activities in CFSP-related Research: French Experts on CFSP/ESDP

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