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France and the EU: a common global outlook?¹

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Summary -

As France and its new President ponder how to help rejuvenating the European Union while reinserting themselves at the heart of the European integration process, strengthening the EU's foreign policy appears the ideal way forward. Not only do the EU's 27 members face increasing challenges abroad, but France is one of only a handful of European countries whose capabilities could actually sustain a truly global EU diplomacy. However, France will both need to reassure its European partners on the altruistic nature of its world ambitions and ensure a genuinely pluralistic decision-making process when trying to craft common EU policies on matters of external security. Forging a strategic consensus with Britain, the EU's other global power and the foremost representative of its Eurosceptic, Atlanticist wing, would go a long way towards assuaging this fear and reaching that aim.

Introduction

On the night of his election, in his very first victory speech, Nicolas Sarkozy declared that “France is back in Europe”. The new President-elect was fully aware that the country he would soon be heading had been weakened by 15 years of sub-par economic performances and marginalised by its own rejection of the European “Constitution” in 2005. He also knew, though, that the European Union was nevertheless depending on the active participation of France in order to help overcome the crisis that, 50 years after the signing of the Rome

¹ This policy paper was first published as a “Question d'Europe” by the Fondation Robert Schuman [“Le retour de la France en Europe... pour quelle vision de l'Europe dans le monde?”, *Question d'Europe*, n°62, 21/05/2007.]

Treaties, had seemed to take hold of the European integration process. More than ever, France and the EU needed each other to surmount the challenges that each had to face.

Foreign policy is one of the few domains where, according to most observers, joint action between France and its European partners would truly serve everyone's interests. Whether it is the rising violence in North Africa and the Middle East, the mounting crisis with Russia or the consequences of the declining prestige and power of the United States – to say nothing of more transversal threats such as global warming or nuclear proliferation -, Europeans are facing an accelerating degradation in the conditions of their collective security. This situation imposes on the Union and its member States a community of vision and action towards the rest of the world – in other words, a genuine European foreign policy, designed and implemented by Europe's governments, with the help of strengthened and rejuvenated EU institutions².

More perhaps than most of its partners, France has a critical role to play in the re-emergence of Europe on the international scene. It is nevertheless obvious that promoting a truly common European foreign policy will be exceedingly difficult, considering both the sometimes large differences in method and objectives between Europe's governments and the exceptional gravity and complexity of today's global issues. In order to help overcoming these difficulties, France will have to proceed with three critical adjustments over the next few years:

- Dissipate the ambiguities of its traditional European policy;
- Appreciate the reality of the different “geopolitical” visions that characterize its European partners;
- Give priority to fostering a new strategic consensus with the United Kingdom and make this new Entente the basis of any subsequent EU foreign and security policy.

I- France's conflicting visions of Europe

1- Dr Monnet and Mr de Gaulle

France's European ideal fits into a particular vision of the desirable international order. That vision is best defined by the concept of 'balance of power': the good international order would be based upon a mixture of cooperation and peaceful competition between several roughly equal independent powers, whose mutual surveillance would provide a guarantee against any hubristic tendencies and destructive behaviour from any one of them. Accordingly, France's European policy for the past fifty years has aimed at propounding the emergence of a genuine European power, able to assume an independence role on the international scene alongside fellow great powers like China, Russia or indeed the United States.

Nevertheless, this general objective has taken a double form. Indeed, for half a century, France's European policy has relied on the combination of two substantially different European visions. On the one hand, the federalist project of the “Founding Fathers”, Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, implies a fundamental convergence of Member States' interests and aims at creating a political community at the European level, where France's voice certainly remains strong, but where EU policies result from negotiated compromises between all Member States, who accept them, knowing full well that their individual interests will best

2 Cf. Nicole Gnesotto, Giovanni Grevi (ed.), *The New Global Puzzle. What World for the EU in 2025?*, Institute for Security Studies of the European Union, 2006.

be served through the prism of a common European voice. On the other hand, General de Gaulle's great-power vision aims at “leveraging” Europe in order to help France “multiply” its own power, thereby allowing it to continue to defend and promote an essentially unamended version of its age-old national interests. The French political class took care not to remove this ambiguity. If France's leaders, in the 70’s and 80’s, effectively pushed the European project in agreement with the vision of Monnet and Schuman, they never entirely forswore Gaullist rhetoric, at least when they had to defend their policy before their voters.

However, if, in the 6-members EEC, French leadership was almost a given, subsequent enlargements could not but dilute “the voice of France”. In today's EU-27, trying to dictate the European agenda from Paris becomes a daily struggle, with unpredictable results. The negative outcome of the 2005 referendum can in fact be understood as a blowback from French voters, suddenly waking up to the reality that France may now find itself in a minority in Europe, especially as long as it insists on defending ideas which its partners have long since rejected. This reality is easier to accept if one believes in the vision of the Founding Fathers. But it is almost unbearable for those who, consciously or not, accept Europe only as a projection of French ideas and interests on a wider, European stage³.

2 – Old Europe, new world

However, the long-standing desire to turn Europe into a genuine, independent power on the world stage is no longer a mere French idiosyncrasy, however. In the past few years, it has gone a long way towards becoming a reality and has certainly become a major topic on the European agenda. The creation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), followed by the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), may only be the first step in what many (in France) hope might become a full-fledged European great power. The explanation for this remarkable evolution lies in the decisions of the EU leaders in the past ten years, but gained considerable momentum following the recent upheavals on the global stage. Two evolutions stand out in particular:

- The internal geographical context in which the process of European integration is inscribed has undergone tremendous alterations in the past few years and has involved two major changes in the nature of the European Union itself: a “qualitative” change which has led the Union since the beginning of the 90s to intervene more frequently in areas hitherto belonging to the national sphere, such as foreign and defence policies; and a “quantitative” change with the sudden reunification of Europe, which in the space a few years has more than doubled the numbers of EU Member States, from 12 in 1994 to 27 today. This “quantitative revolution” must lead to a renewed reflection on the “levels” – as a geographic term – of the EU to understand the scope of change concerned. Since 1989 and its consequences until the enlargement of 2004-2007, the reference scale is “continental” Europe; this raises the issue of the relations between the EU and Russia and Ukraine. Another knotty matter surfaced with the opening of the accession negotiations with Turkey, in October 2005, which in turn has further raised the profile of the EU's “Euro-Mediterranean dimension”, a dimension already made sensitive thanks to widespread public worries concerning terrorism and immigration. Finally, the growing insecurity caused by the destabilisation of ever larger areas of the Middle

3 Cf. Yves Bertoincini et Thierry Chopin, « Le référendum du 29 mai et le malaise culturel français », in *Le Débat*, n°137, November-December 2005.

East and Central Asia, is bringing home to the Europeans the truly global dimension of their security interests⁴.

- The global strategic changes have indeed been equally momentous. 50 years ago, the foreign policy of France and its allies was summed up by the necessity of pushing back the Soviet influence in Europe, within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance. Under these conditions, France's overriding objective was to create a united Europe within the framework of the Atlantic alliance, while others, most notably the British, favoured bypassing the European stage altogether in order to create a truly integrated diplomatic and military transatlantic community, under the benign supervision of the Anglo-American alliances. As long as the Soviet Union lived, strategic realities (most obviously Europe's reliance on America's far superior hard power) tended to favor Britain's designs and to preclude the emergence of a potentially rival European military power.

The world-wide strategic landscape was comprehensively upended with the end of the Cold War and the Soviet retreat from Europe. This historical event could not fail to have profound repercussions on the relations between the Member States of the Union and the United States. On the one hand, many of the EU's new Member States were more than willing to accept NATO's supremacy as the paramount security organisation in Europe and its inevitable corollary, American "leadership" in Europe – irrespective of whether America's leaders still considered Europe as their country's undisputed strategic priority. On the other hand, the disappearance of the Soviet glue could not but erode the Euro-Atlantic solidarity – a reality which became obvious nearly 15 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The political landscape is now characterized by a geostrategic transatlantic divide, under the cumulative impact of the disappearance of the Soviet threat, America's much-increased strategic freedom, divergent geographical tropisms (Europe concentrating on its immediate neighbourhood, while America is increasingly turning towards Asia and the Far East) and the different conceptions of the struggle against Islamic terrorism. Consequently, not only the French vision of a "Europe puissance", striving to become the United States' equal in a multi-polar world, but the British vision of indissoluble "Euro-Atlantic unipolarity" as well, must be thoroughly reconsidered and reappraised.

Nowadays, European governments are facing a requirement: develop the means to defend by themselves their own interests on the global scene and collectively reinforce their political influence on the global stage. In this entirely new strategic context, France's European policy must shed its ambiguity and firmly orientate itself towards this collective European aim, forgoing once and for all its desire for "reincarnation" of the French power at a superior level⁵ and accepting the rigours and rewards of genuine consensus-seeking.

II- A European superpower?

1- The fallacy of "Europe puissance"

Though the idea of "Europe puissance" had, until recently, seemed to gain few converts (the most obvious exception being Germany's former chancellor, Gerhard Schröder), this idea has been lying at the core of France's European policy from the start, for it encapsulates France's ambition to recover, at a European level, a portion of its former influence. By declaring that

4 Michel Foucher, « L'Union politique européenne : un territoire, des frontières, des horizons », in *Esprit*, November 2006.

5 Cf. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard*, Basic Books, 1997.

the European project constitutes France's "Archimedes' lever", General de Gaulle has perfectly captured this strategy.

The problem is that most members of the EU are far from sharing this ambition – a fact reinforced by the latest enlargement of 2004-2007. Despite their differences, the EU's new Central European members are characterized by a common sensitivity on matters of security, a sensitivity born of their painful experience of finding themselves, throughout the 20th century, the unwilling object of great power rivalries playing themselves above and around them. As a particular consequence, they are significantly more concerned about Russia's schemes in its near abroad than their Western counterparts. Conversely, they have displayed a marked preference for the protection of the United States and a corresponding reluctance to criticize America, even where grounds for criticism have been obvious. From a purely realistic point of view, this attitude is eminently defensible. It is after all America's intervention which brought to an end the war in Bosnia (in 1995) and the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo (in 1999). From the new members' point of view, any serious disagreement between the EU and NATO is virtually inconceivable⁶; there is in fact good reason to believe that the Central European countries would much rather be 'supervised' by the distant United States than by their Western European neighbours; the notion of a European 'directory' does not sit well with them. Ironically from a French point of view, NATO is therefore perceived, not just as a shield against Russia, but also as a balance mechanism between the European States themselves⁷. As far as Foreign and Defence policies are concerned, most European countries are therefore more than willing to put up with America's "protection" and "leadership" - and correspondingly weary of any French and EU move towards weakening that leadership. This attitude, and the profound disagreement with France, were prominently on display during the bitter debates preceding the war in Iraq – debates with might clearly be interpreted as sounding the death knell of "Europe puissance".

Accordingly, French leaders have essentially stopped mentioning "Europe puissance" ever since. The corollary, however, has to be a corresponding change in the discourse on multi-polarity. In French eyes, multi-polarity, being synonymous with balance of power and mutual restraint on the world stage, is perceived as desirable. Yet, although the advent of a multi-polar world is now well under way, its desirable character is still far from obvious. Firstly, one can not very well see in what way a multi-polar world would allow to counterbalance and neutralize unilateralist tendencies. Indeed, a multi-polar world may simply result in a combination of several unilateralism, with each pole pursuing essentially selfish aims: such a configuration might well be the most unstable and dangerous of all. Secondly, and this is a point far from being negligible, the very historic experience of the European States tends to put the balance of power thesis in question; as was recently written by Thérèse Delpech: "When one speaks of multi-polarity in the 21st century, one forgets (...) the European experience where balance of power ultimately failed and resulted into war"⁸. Finally, the thesis in favour of the constitution of a European pole which would balance the other great powers – including the United States - ignores a very powerful reality: the "Atlanticist" vision of a majority of EU Member States, coupled with the "neutral" posture of other Member

6 It is significant that the enlargement of NATO to the East took place before that of the EU. The integration of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic was decided in 1997 and took effect in 1999; Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria were invited to join in 2002.

7 One is reminded of Lord Ismay's sardonic comment in 1949: the purpose of NATO is to « keep the Americans in, the Russians out and the Germans down ». Cf. also Nicole Gnesotto, *La puissance et l'Europe*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 1998.

8 Thérèse Delpech, *L'ensauvagement. Le retour de la barbarie au XXI^e siècle*, Paris, Grasset, 2005, p. 229.

States (Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Sweden). Given these realities, it's hard to see how the EU could steer a multi-polar world in a genuinely cooperative direction.

2 – France's potential contribution to the EU's foreign policy

From this point of view, if we wish that the EU turn itself into a diplomatic and military “global actor”, able to supplement its “normative power”⁹ in order to tackle genuine strategic challenges, this supposes to defend the project on the basis of a strategy that may be organized into three requirements.

- The *first requirement* consists in rethinking the relationship between the European Union and the United States.

It is obvious that the emergence of a European defence and security policy raises the issue of the rightful place of NATO and the “Euro-Atlantic structures” within the European security architecture. This is a deeply divisive issue, as the battle between “Old Europe” and “New Europe” made all too clear. However, much has happened in the past four years. Recent changes at the top, in Germany, France and the United Kingdom, as well as America's presidential election in 2008, mean that new leaders, untainted by the controversies of the past, now have or will soon have) the opportunity to start afresh. And the willingness of everyone involved to bury the hatchet has already been obvious: whether it is dealing with Iran's nuclear program or restarting the Middle East peace process, there is now a fair amount of common ground between America and both camps in Europe. Beyond that, America's looming disengagement from Iraq will force a drastic reappraisal of American policies in the region, almost certainly including a renouncement to the rhetoric and reality of regime change and a resumption of traditional diplomatic interaction, most obviously with all of Iraq's neighbours. The EU's ability to help its friend along this process of adjustment will be all the more pronounced if its own strategy of re-engagement is already in place by the time America chooses to change course.

Beyond Iraq, three conditions are necessary in order to overcome the different European visions regarding the United States and ensure a stable relation between the two sides of the Atlantic. *One*, Europe's Atlanticist members need to wake up to the fact that America's foreign policy is no longer focused on Europe: already the cornerstone of America's worldwide interests and concerns, the Middle East, together with the Far East, will only grow in stature in the near future. At the same time, Europe is increasingly preoccupied with its own neighbourhood – or rather its two neighbourhoods: the Mediterranean southern rim and Eastern Europe's former Soviet republics. Therefore, however dedicated one may be to the Atlantic alliance, the relations between America and Europe can never regain the intimacy they enjoyed when both had to confront “evil empires” standing at the heart of Europe. *Two*, it is incumbent on the proponents of European strategic autonomy to demonstrate that Europe's Security and Defence Policy will never be used against America and its interests. Anti-American rhetoric (or the appearance of it) has in fact emerged as perhaps the main impediment towards any further progress of the ESDP, and it has to be ditched accordingly. *Three*, everyone involved has to accept that disagreements between America and Europe are bound to recur in the future, as their economic and geopolitical interests, as well as their cultural and ideological attitudes (i.e., on the use of force and the role of international law in

9 The expression is borrowed from Jann Manners, « Normative Power Europe: a Contradiction in Terms? », in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40 (2), 2002.

global relations, or towards nationalism and democracy on the home front¹⁰) will not always coincide. The challenge is therefore to find a way to minimise transatlantic differences without seeking to deny them, while at the same time maximising each and every opportunity for cooperation.

- The *second requirement* consists in redefining the relationship between the European Union and Russia.

Assuming (a very big if) that Europe's currently divided attitudes towards Moscow are bound to be overcome, a united European Union would still face a huge dilemma in its relations with its big Eastern neighbour. It may decide that, notwithstanding the current difficulties, Russia still remains a potential partner on the international scene. In that case, it will have to help some of its Member States (such as Poland, the United Kingdom or Estonia) to settle their various bilateral disagreements with Moscow, while at the same time working towards removing the obstacles which currently prevent the EU-Russia Partnership from fulfilling its potential. In particular, renewed US-EU-Russian negotiations on outstanding strategic issues (such as the fate of Kosovo or the “frozen conflicts” in former Soviet republics or the actual implementation of the US-sponsored missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic) will have to be launched, with everyone accepting the need for mutual concessions and accommodation. Alternatively, Brussels may come to the conclusion that Russia is bound to remain a hostile neighbour, not to say a potential threat. In that case, plans will have to be made for the eventual integration of countries such as the Ukraine, Moldova or Georgia into the EU, as well as for deeper relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan and a more general reorientation of Europe's security infrastructure against Russia.

This fundamental choice is made more difficult by the sheer ambiguity of the West's current relation with Russia, where cooperation and confrontation uneasily coexist, as well as the inscrutable decision-making process in the Kremlin, so that the motivations behind each particular decision are often impossible to ascertain. The contradictions are even more flagrant concerning the general tonality of the declarations, which veer wildly between proclamations of friendship and naked threats, sometimes, within a few days' time. Perhaps Vladimir Putin's successor will succeed in clarifying these ambiguities. In the meantime, the EU's current state of policy, which mostly consists in the addition of the (often mutually contradictory) policies of the various Member States, with the EU-Russia's Four Common Spaces uneasily striving for a (so far elusive) synthesis, only seems to have brought the worst of both worlds. Intra-European divisions have clearly weakened every individual European government's position towards Moscow, while the EU has succeeded in neither gaining a true Partnership, nor in preventing the return of Cold War mentality on both sides. The European governments must then urgently reach an agreement amongst themselves to define, in a realistic way, their demands towards Russia, the concessions they are willing to make in return and the “red lines” which they will deem non-negotiable.

Independently of the choice that will be made between the two elements of the alternative mentioned above, addressing the authoritarian evolution of the Russian regime and even more the Russian willingness to use energy as an instrument of power in international relations may prove the best way for the EU to defeat the tide of euroscepticism in Central and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, the EU's current ineffectiveness towards Moscow can only legitimize the current scepticism. For France, the choice is once again obvious. Not only is the

10 Cf. Bruno Tertrais, « Europe / Etats-Unis : valeurs communes ou divorce culturel ? », in *Note de la Fondation Robert Schuman*, n°36, 2006 ; and also Thierry Chopin, *L'Amérique et l'Europe : la dérive des continents ?* (Grasset, 2006)

choice of a strong ESDP inconsistent with any hint of a Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis, but the only way for France's leaders to convince their Central European counterparts to subsume their pro-American inclinations under the EU umbrella is for France to similarly “Europeanize” (and mitigate accordingly) its policy towards Moscow.

- The *third requirement* consists in giving up the illusion that the emergence of the EU as a global player could mobilize with equal fervour every European country.

As with most recent developments in the European integration process, further steps towards increased diplomatic and military competences for Europe will likely require several “opting-out” clauses and will most certainly be achieved, if at all, through systematic recourse to “enhanced cooperation” of various sorts. For the foreseeable future, military operations are likely to remain essentially inter-governmental operations, with the EU cast in a primarily supporting role (as was the case in the Congo or Kosovo). Similarly, diplomatic breakthroughs will be left at the initiative of Member States. Both Europe's negotiations with Iran and the European intervention during the Ukrainian revolution of 2004 have followed this pattern. Only then, after a period of trial and error, will the EU as such be able to increase its confidence on the international scene. The trick will be for the Member States to acquire the 'European reflex', national foreign policies being thus gradually subsumed within a European whole. The transition between intergovernmental European initiatives and EU diplomacy might then prove surprisingly smooth.

III – The new Entente: which way for a Franco-British strategic consensus?

1 – The irreplaceable odd couple

It is only taking into consideration these different inevitable elements that the definition of a realistic strategic European vision will become possible and that the definition of the ways and means of a genuine EU foreign policy will become possible. However, this particular goal assumes the possibility of the emergence of a real “strategic consensus”, shared by all European countries, but above all by the most powerful of them, since it is they who, at first, will be called upon to implement, or at the very least supervise, all European foreign and security policies, especially those with a strong military dimension.

The development of this “strategic consensus” requires a compromise between the different visions, past experiences and memories of the nations of Europe. Just as France needs to water down its traditional rhetoric on multi-polarity and “Europe-puissance”, so its more Atlanticist partners (above all the United Kingdom) need to shake down their sceptical and at times obstructionist attitude towards the ESDP and unreservedly support the goal of European strategic autonomy (especially in light of America's increasing detachment from Europe).

The recognition and acceptance of the preceding underlines the fact that a new agreement with the United Kingdom constitutes the keystone of the European and international policy of France. Without a historic compromise between Paris and London, the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance will stay irremediably divided against themselves and no European State will succeed in single-handedly resolving the global challenges faced by all¹¹.

11 Cf. See also Andrew Gamble, *Between Europe and America. The Future of British Politics*, New York, Palgrave – Macmillan, 2003.

While the two countries share important features of a common “great power” (an imperial past, the possession of nuclear weapons, a permanent seat in the Security Council of the United Nations and the acceptance of the need for some measure of force in international relations), the obstacles to this new Entente are well known and remain critical. The British and French visions of European integration and the Atlantic alliance remain at loggerheads, Britain being opposed to any further transfer of sovereignty while favouring subsuming any European identity within a larger Transatlantic community (with Washington and London at the fore). This vision is deeply rooted in history, with the diverse legacies of parliamentary sovereignty, an imperial and maritime outlook and a long-standing divide-and-rule European strategy combining their effects to steer deep apprehension towards a European “superstate”. However, very real interests are also at stake. Anglo-American cooperation in the area of intelligence, exchanges in the area of cutting-edge military technology remain for Britain significant advantages, which could not easily be shared with other partners.

2 – Britain and France: the way forward

The events of the last few years could nevertheless end up altering London's perceptions. The Iraq war has vividly illustrated the dangers of a too unconditional an alignment with America. At the same time, the costs to Britain's diplomatic interests of the Anglo-French rupture in the spring of 2003, which choked the European Union and paralysed the UN Security Council, proved prohibitively high. Britain has tried to avoid a repeat of this scenario ever since – as her decision to join France and Germany in their negotiations with Iran at the end of 2003 clearly attested. Inheriting a complex legacy from Tony Blair, Gordon Brown will have to take steps towards mitigating the consequences of the failure in Iraq and devote particular attention to nurturing London's relations with Berlin and Paris. Trying to preserve the Anglo-Franco-German diplomatic cooperation beyond Iran might be an obvious solution, both simple and potentially decisive. Because of his uncontested legitimacy on the French stage and the credit due to his main themes of the campaign of the European scene, Nicolas Sarkozy today finds himself in an ideal position to suggest this process to his two partners, meanwhile assuring the other members of the Union that they will not be excluded from any future deliberation concerning new common initiatives from Berlin, London, and Paris on the international scene.

For all the obvious difficulties, the conditions for a Franco-British rapprochement clearly exist. European history in the last few years has been marked by two major events: Britain's decision to throw its full weight behind America's invasion of Iraq, regardless of its European partners' opinions; and France's rejection of the constitutional treaty, irrespective of the clearly expressed wish of the rest of Europe. Both were blatantly unilateral moves, both ended up isolating Britain and France from each other and from the European consensus (though in the case of the Iraq, that consensus emerged only in hindsight) and both carried a huge political and diplomatic cost for the two countries. At the same time, these two failures have clearly pointed the way forward. Both Nicolas Sarkozy and Gordon Brown seem to grasp that an understanding between them is no longer a disposable option, but an indispensable means for both of them to regain the initiative and fulfil their global and, yes, domestic ambitions. Only in helping each other will the UK and France regain the full range of their international abilities. Needless to say, such a Franco-British understanding would provide a very powerful basis for any credible EU foreign and defence policy.

The prospects for joint action between France, Britain and the rest of Europe on the international scene are numerous: besides the consolidation of European defence and crisis management capabilities, global warming and development aid to Africa currently stand at the forefront of the global agenda. Other issues could include a common policy toward Russia, a common energy policy, perhaps even a common Middle East strategy. It would remain to convince a weakened and isolated United States to join the conversation with Europe, in order to reach a genuine transatlantic consensus – a prospect with might come to pass after the elections of 2008.

A new Entente would both considerably increase the weight of the European Union on the international scene while meeting the interests of the two powers. For France, the realisation of this prospect hinges on two requirements: that it cease considering the European Union as a means for self-aggrandisement; and that it reaffirm its willingness to strengthen and consolidate the Atlantic alliance. These two inflections are the indispensable prerequisite for a genuine partnership with Britain.

Conclusion

In the context of the globalization of security challenges, only the scale of the enlarged European Union could enable Europe's governments to continue to exercise any meaningful influence on the international scene. Because of its history, geography, diplomatic and strategic characteristics, France should assume a critical role in the implementation of this project. That, however, will require her to adapt her European policy to the requirements of consensus-seeking with its partners and to the global strategic realities, notably Europe's evolving relations with Russia and the United States.

France's European policy is therefore poised for a certain number of changes. In particular, lingering illusions regarding the possible relationship between France and the European Union will have to be dispelled: the EU will never be France writ large, if only because no single country will ever dominate a community of 27. Such psychological adjustment might prove uncomfortable, and it may eventually be carried out in less than perfect good faith. It is, however, an absolute prerequisite if France is ever again to usefully contribute to the growth and success of the European project. It might also provide the shock therapy which will finally free the French from their doubts and *malaise* regarding their own future and that of Europe.

Finally, nearly ten years after the Franco-British Saint-Malo agreement and following the hoped-for adoption of the recently agreed-upon institutional treaty, Britain and France, together with Germany and their 24 partners, should pave the way towards a new European consensus on strategic and international matters. This consensus would both allow each European government to defend its particular national interests with greater effectiveness and increase Europe's ability to steer the most important items of the global agenda in the direction of its own preferences. More than anything else, this outcome would indeed signal the success of France's stated intent to “return to Europe”.