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Master Thesis of International Studies

**The Evolution of NATO and the
European Defense:
A Comparative Analysis on the Strategic Engagement of
France and the United Kingdom towards NATO**

**북대서양조약기구(NATO)의 발전과정과 유럽 방위:
프랑스와 영국의 북대서양조약기구(NATO)와
전략적 관계 비교분석**

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Abstract

The EU-NATO conundrum has a significant impact on the Atlantic security and defense. These two bodies aim at securing the European soil since the creation of NATO in 1949. Over the years, the EU seeks for more autonomy in the security realm, notably with the creation of the CSDP. France and Britain have been the main European powers dealing with the European defense, due to their major contribution to the EU and NATO in terms of military force. France reintegrated the integrated military command structure of NATO in 2009. Therefore, the different policies adopted by the French and the British's succession of governments towards NATO will be analyzed to provide a deeper understanding of the EU-NATO dynamic, from 2009 to 2019. Their commitment and engagement in the organization indeed differs drastically, impacting widely on the Transatlantic Alliance. Therefore, the in-depth analysis of the NATO policy adopted by each government will display the strategic engagement of both countries in the organization, and the aftermath it induces on the investment in the European Defense. This study will offer a better understanding of the French and British position on the European Defense despite their contradictory positions regarding NATO, and America as corollary. This thesis finds its significance in times of Brexit, with France accounting for the sole European member benefitting from substantial military power, including the nuclear weapon, without the UK balancing its aspirations. By examining these two countries' engagement towards NATO in light of their political stance over the past decades, this thesis will provide insights to better assess the prospect of the European Defense.

Keywords: NATO, European Defense, France, United Kingdom, NATO Policy

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Glossary

CARD: Coordinated Annual Review on Defense

CJEF: Combined Joint Expeditionary Force

CFSP: Common Foreign and Security Policy

CSDP: Common Security and Defense Policy

DExEU: Department for Exiting the European Union

DIT: Department for International Trade

DSACEUR: Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe

EII: European Intervention Initiative

EU: European Union

EU BG: European Union Battlegroup

EDA: European Defense Agency

EDF: European Defense Fund

ESS: European Security Strategy

ESDP: European Security and Defense Policy

EUNAVFOR: European Union Naval Force

FCO: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

ISAF: International Security Assistance Force

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NSCR: National Security Capacity Review

NSS: National Security Strategy

OHQ: Operational Headquarters

PESCO: Permanent Structured Cooperation

RAF: Royal Air Force

SACT: Supreme Allied Commander Transformation

SDSR: Strategic Defense and Security Review

TEU: Treaty on European Union

UN: United Nations

VHRJTF: Very High Readiness Joint Task Force

WWII: World War II

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I. Introduction

1. Background

The European Union (the EU) is a complex system constantly evolving and adapting to internal and external factors. The EU is symbolic in many aspects and reflects the ability of states to cooperate and achieve common goals thus it emphasizes the power of joined Member-States. The European Union appears nowadays as an economic power, while promoting liberal values such as equality, individual freedom, along with democracy, peace, and prosperity. Therefore, such a unique system must be safeguarded, and the European Member-States ensure its security through different mechanisms. France, and the United Kingdom stand out as leading powers ensuring the European Security. They both share a special relationship with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the United States as corollary. Yet, France and the United Kingdom's differences in perceptions, and engagement in NATO heavily impact the European Security. France's reintegration in NATO in 2009 is followed by crucial changes of NATO-EU cooperation. Over the past decade, under the French influence, the EU is slowly moving away from its old Transatlantic Alliance and aims at developing its own defensive power, under the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP); while the UK, entering the post-Brexit era, favors its national security by maintaining and relying increasingly on its "special relationship" with the United States. The key role played by the US for the European Union's security, is recently marked by a growing

American Euroscepticism, therefore it appears vital for the EU to take the initiatives to ensure its own security.

2. Significance

The European Union is characterized by its enlargement over the past decades, yet it was hit by the sudden decision of one of its key Member-States to pull out from the EU, on the 23rd of July 2016. Albeit Brexit was a veritable consternation for the EU, the implications of the UK's exit are of greater importance. The European defense and security are the bedrocks for the EU's longevity. It is vital to understand the apparatus of the European Defense and all the mechanisms through which the Member-States ensure the smooth operation of their Union's defense and security. Indeed, a clear understanding of the European system will highlight the key components and actors guaranteeing the stability and reinforcement of the Union. This study appears significant in assessing the potential impact Brexit might have on the European system specifically in relation with NATO thus the European Defense. The EU will undoubtedly suffer from the leave of the UK in the security and defense realm, allowing France to step in.

3. Research Purpose and Research Question

The conducted study aims to compare the French and United Kingdom's engagement in NATO over the past 10 years in regard to the European Security. The European Security faces new threats, such as terrorism, cyberattacks, and the recent loss

of one of its key Member-States may engender greater issues for the European states. France and Britain have been the major European powers dealing with European defense. They both share similar military power, are the only European countries with nuclear weapons and both have strong incentives to remain leaders in the field of the European security. They represent, when added, more than half of the European defense budget. The two nations-states remain the only two countries except the US, with “global power projection capability”.¹ Their incentives to join expeditionary missions, reflect their strong political will and military power. Yet, their disagreement and different perception on certain views remains quite significant. Both founding members of NATO in 1949; their relationship with the Organization differs drastically, impacting their cooperation on the European defense. With the ongoing Brexit, this study may help to assess the future of the Europe’s changing attitude towards NATO, with an eventual remilitarization supported by France.

Such recent changes within the European Union may impact the overall European Defense and its relationship with NATO. Therefore, this study will analyze one main research question that is the following: How does France and the UK’s policy towards NATO differ, and reflect on their investment in the European Defense? Several sub research questions will also be addressed gradually such as: What is the UK and France policy towards NATO? How did it evolve over the past decade since France’s reintegration in NATO? Why do the two countries seem to have a different approach to the Alliance? How did the Anglo-French Cooperation evolve and impact the European

¹ Posen, Barry R. "European Union Security and Defense Policy: Response to Unipolarity?" *Security Studies* 15.2 (2006): 149-86.

security and defense? How do the UK and France's work on a stronger and efficient CSDP? And what is the UK and France's stance on the development of a pro self-defensive Europe?

4. Methodology

a. Analytical framework

The conducted thesis aims at highlighting the relationship of France and the United Kingdom with NATO, in regard to the European security. Therefore, this study is a historical analysis of the European security reflected through the engagement of France and the UK towards NATO, and the dynamic of policy adopted towards the Alliance. To provide an answer to the aforementioned research question, this thesis will assess the history of NATO followed by an in-depth analysis of both France and the UK's policies towards the Alliance over the succession of governments. The degree of engagement that will be mentioned in this study is reflected through the diplomatic response to NATO, thus the political approach and NATO policies applied by the UK and France. Furthermore, this study will examine the European response to the opposite British and French approaches in regard to the European Security, with the introduction of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), commonly opposed to NATO as one of the main European Security actors. The Anglo-French Cooperation will also be investigated to highlight the significance of Anglo-French relations within the EU. Finally, the US-EU relationship will be addressed along with France's eagerness to take

the lead in reshaping the European Defense. Therefore, the Brexit issue will be slightly mentioned to emphasize the changes Europe will undergo with the departure of the UK.

The timeline for this study will be situated between 2009 and 2019. The time scope can be justified by the reintegration of France within NATO under President Nicolas Sarkozy in 2009, delimiting the beginning of the study, postliminary opposed to the Europeanist vision of incumbent French President, Emmanuel Macron.

b. Method

This study is a qualitative analysis, and more specifically a historical discourse analysis. Therefore, the method of analysis will be based on historical archives, along with government's policy statements, official governmental reports and documents, such as White Paper and National Security Strategy or even Security and Defense Strategy Review, keynote speeches, and finally some newspaper articles. France and the UK's budget expenditures within NATO, as well as their personal troops will also be used to reflect their concrete investment within the organization and provide empirical evidence to the study. The adopted policy in regard to NATO will be mentioned depending on the head of the government from both countries. Both countries' diplomatic approaches will then be compared and analyzed using the key indicators aforementioned, indicating then their strategic engagement.

II. Literature Review

The European Union and NATO share a common long lasting and complex history. NATO was created in 1949, as an Alliance based on the collective defense with the famous Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, laying the foundations for the Alliance, that stipulates:

“The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”²

Therefore, it ensures the North Atlantic Area’s security, using political and military means. While NATO’s primary purpose was to protect the EU, the US and Canada against any Soviet Union threats, it evolved over the years. The two bodies are commonly referred to as being mutually reinforcing, and their range of actions broadened. The NATO-EU collaboration is now facing new threats, both internally and externally

² NATO. ‘The North Atlantic Treaty’ March 19, 2019.
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm (Accessed March 24, 2020)

such as cybersecurity, terrorism, Russia and China's growing power, and hybrid threats.³ Member-States are engaged in NATO through different processes, such as the collective defense, the evolutive strategy and the civil and military operations.⁴ The NATO-EU collaboration is the subject of several studies. The EU increasingly works on its autonomous capabilities in the security realm. The European Defense and the implementation of the ESDP (European Security and Defense Policy) in 1998 resulted in the achievement of a long-term goal, giving the EU a defensive and security arm to complement its economic and political institutions. Five years later, although the countries work closely on defense issues, they still see the EU's bond with the Transatlantic Military Alliance of NATO differently, particularly after the US-led war in Iraq. Posen (2006) argues that the EU, after the collapse of the USSR, is free from traditional threats thus slowly develops its own military capabilities. The author defends that the Europeans developed a stronger Europe capable of dealing with security issues, since the EU is not certain the US will constantly show support, in hammering away these issues, along with an increasing lack of trust from the European in their old ally. The introduction of the ESDP reflects the development of a European collective security, allowing the Union to minimize the Soviet threat and maximize its strength facing the US. The scholar emphasizes that the EU is inclined to implement security policies and he introduces the notion of balance of power, with the EU balancing the US power. While no theory will be used in the conducted study, it seems significant to briefly introduce the

³ HybridCoE. "Countering Hybrid Threats", <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/hybrid-threats> (Accessed March 21, 2020)

⁴ Lescurier, Charles. "Au Fait C'est Quoi L'OTAN?" *Le Figaro*, November 20, 2019. <https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/au-fait-c-est-quoi-l-otan-20190408>

theories regarding the EU and the US, representing NATO in the security realm. Posen questions whether the EU will maintain the current NATO bandwagon or evolve towards a more balanced power facing the US. When focusing on France and the UK approach to this balancing theory, Posen stresses France's eagerness to build an independent Europe, capable of defending itself, while the UK favors the bandwagon with NATO, and supported the creation of the ESDP in 1998 not to lose the American interest over Europe. Posen finally argues that the EU is supporting its own collective defense capability; however, the Union is structuring its defense capability and cooperation with NATO simultaneously, thus the author concludes that the EU is counter-balancing the US. Overall, the EU-NATO cooperation is constantly changing and moving towards a more balanced relationship.⁵ The fact remains that two nations specifically spearheaded these changes. The introduction of France and the UK's major role in the EU defense capability is recurrent in previous studies.

France and the UK are major actors in the European Security field thus their relation and policy towards NATO remain significant to oversee the smooth running of security crisis-management and operations directed by NATO. Nevertheless, the relations between NATO-France differs drastically from the NATO-UK ones.

⁵ Posen, Barry R. "European Union Security and Defense Policy: Response to Unipolarity?" *Security Studies* 15.2 (2006): 149-86.

1. Diplomacy and Foreign Policy: differentiation between France and the UK

In order to fully understand the conducted thesis, the nuance between each concept and countries' approach must be defined. While diplomacy can be traced back to the origin of humanity itself, the remnant of primary use of term diplomacy occurred back in the 18th century, with the speeches of Robespierre under the French Revolution. Over the time, several definitions assessed what the nature of diplomacy is, and this thesis will assume that "diplomacy encompasses more than the promotion of peaceful international relations."⁶ Albeit, diplomacy is a common term, used widely and validated by scholars worldwide, one key element of diplomacy is the foreign policy adopted by states towards others. Whereas scholars hold onto their personal definition of foreign policy, Ethier (2010) assesses a general definition that is foreign policy represents "all the principles, orientations, programs, ententes, institutions and actions characterizing a state's relationship with other states."⁷ Nevertheless, several core differences characterize the foreign policy of each state.

France's foreign policy overall aims at maintaining French independence and sovereignty in the international order. Bozo (2012) analyzed the evolution of the French policy since World War II (WWII) and estimates that the French foreign policy is characterized by the contrast of the French ambitions and its limited means to achieve

⁶ Weisbrode, Kenneth. "Diplomacy in Foreign Policy." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. May 24, 2017.

⁷ Éthier, Diane. "Chapitre 3. La politique étrangère des États". In *Introduction aux relations internationales*, 135-198. Montréal: University of Montréal Press, 2010.

such goals. During the post-Cold War era, the foreign policy was emphasized by the French ambition to reinstate its full power at the international scale. The economic and security dependence from the US highly impacted the French foreign policy. Shortly, France's growing willpower to reinforce its independence, military and economically, resulted in the creation of a stronger Europe under the Treaty of Rome of 1957, along with the development of the French weapons program. During the 5th Republic, the French foreign policy continues to strive for building a stronger Europe to maintain France's middle power and balance the US. Most conducted studies stopped at what is considered a "rupture" in the continuity of the French foreign policy, under President Sarkozy. Overall, previous studies conclude that the fundamentals of the French foreign policy were never altered, up until Sarkozy's "rupture", defined by the rapprochement with the US through NATO.⁸This thesis will linger on this specific statement. As a matter of fact, there is more to say than what the political decisions suggest.

The UK's foreign policy evolved differently and is characterized by other factors than the French one and its ambition to reach a certain grandeur internationally. Dutton (2013) emphasizes that the essence of the British foreign policy revolves around three intertwined aspirations. Dutton assesses that under Winston Churchill: "Britain [...] stood uniquely at the intersection of three sources of global power: as the leader of Western Europe; the head of a still great empire and group of self-governing Dominions; and as one half of the supposedly 'Special Relationship' with the United States."⁹ Yet, over the

⁸ Bozo, Frédéric. *"La politique étrangère de la France depuis 1945"*. Paris: Flammarion., 2012.

⁹ Dutton, D. J. "British Foreign and Defence Policy since 1945: Challenges and Dilemmas in a Changing World." *The International History Review* 35:2 (2013): 435-36.

years, Britain suffered from a decreasing power and influential role on the international stage, and its foreign policy evolved accordingly. Along with the decolonization process, the UK's relationship with Europe and the US did not reach the expected objective. What then marks the evolution of the British foreign policy is its consistency to support the US, to ensure the British national defense. In regard to Europe, Britain finally joined the European Union in 1973 (formerly called the European Economic Community i.e. ECC) and nimbly balanced its policy towards European countries and the US, to maintain its middle power status along with the “special relationship” with its old American ally. When dealing with further European integration, the British position is marked by its support for intergovernmental cooperation ruling over the EU relations, rather than a federalist system.¹⁰ Self (2010) assesses that there is some continuity in the policy up until the Brown administration (the study being conducted in 2010). Blair's administration revolved around the “special relationship”, the nuclear deterrence, and the UK's engagement in Europe.¹¹ Yet, no recent studies were conducted regarding the contemporary foreign policy adopted by Britain, particularly in recent years, with Theresa May and Boris Johnson political turmoil in the event of UK's retreat. Thusly, this study will highlight the different NATO and EU policy supported by the British government since 2009.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Self, Robert C. “*British Foreign and Defence Policy since 1945: Challenges and Dilemmas in a Changing World.*” London, Macmillan International Higher Education, 2010.

2. Previous studies on the United Kingdom and EU-NATO cooperation

The UK plays an undeniable key role in the EU defense and security realm. Mölling (2018) emphasizes the significant role the UK plays in the European security and defense and analyses its capabilities in the mentioned field. The UK is a leader in the intelligence field, and thus owns more than half of the European intelligence force, while remaining the biggest military power within Europe, characterized by its strong aircraft industry. The UK's budget expenditure in the EU security and defense is roughly 25% of total budget making it the biggest contributor in the defense realm among the EU28.¹² In addition to that, Risso (2015) demonstrates that the UK guaranteed NATO it would reach the targeted 2% of GDP budget investment on the defense field, making it the 5th member of NATO to meet the defense expenditures requirement. While the usefulness of the 2% of GDP asked by NATO is highly discussed in the paper, one could ask oneself, if the UK planned on cutting its budget allocated to the EU defense budget to invest further in NATO. The author emphasizes further the lack of willingness from the UK to be the European leader in the security sphere and mentions a growing feeling of isolationism. The scholar places London as the mediator between NATO and the EU,¹³ thus this thesis will bring clarification on the British position in regard to both bodies, under the governments' succession. The UK and its uncommon function to safeguard the EU are fundamental to put the emphasis on its actions for a pro-defensive Europe. Biscop

¹² Giegerich, Bastian and Mölling, Christian. "The United Kingdom's contribution to European security and defence", *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, February 2018.

¹³ Risso, Linda. "Time to Act: The UK in NATO." *The RUSI Journal* 160:5 (2015): 30-34.

(2012) studied in depth the actual EU defense and the key role of the UK in maintaining the EU security. Biscop's study lays down the fundamentals of the UK's behavior facing NATO and the EU. When introducing the UK relationship with NATO in regard to European security, the scholar mentions that the British view on the EU-NATO alliance is a "zero-sum game". Britain is at the origin of the introduction of the ESDP yet, Biscop emphasizes the nation-state's willingness to promote its national interest throughout the organization, by being able to limit the CSDP (ESDP became CSDP in 2007) scope of operations mainly in the military sector. However, the UK's leadership in the European defense is vital to ensure the function of NATO hand-in-hand with the CSDP. The UK thinks first and foremost of NATO, thus the United States, as the key actor of its national security, while the EU is complementary to NATO, aiming at providing support to the organization. The country disapproved of certain EU initiatives enhancing the European defense capacity, such as the "Chocolate Summit" of 2003, discussing the Operational Headquarters (OHQ) rapidly perceived as a rival to NATO by Britain and the US. Disagreement between the UK and the European defense's evolution on the continent, resulted in the country leaving its leadership position in the EU, circa 2009.¹⁴ If the UK decides to take a step back from the EU, France would take the lead in shaping the European defense policy. The French diplomacy stands out from the crowd for its ambitions regarding the prospects of a greater EU. As a result, this study will attempt to point out the French perspective, such as Kempin (2013) who defines the German perspective towards the British actions for EU security. The same pattern will be used in

¹⁴ Biscop, Sven. "The UK and European Defence: Leading or Leaving?" *International Affairs* 88:6 (2012): 1297-313.

the analysis part of this thesis, since the French perspective on the EU and the role played by the UK may be of great significance for the future of the European security. This scholar emphasizes that France favors its British ally in the security realm. Whether it deals with military operations or EU defense policies, the Anglo-French cooperation remains quite strong. Yet, Kempin argues that France would favor the CSDP to the extent of its cooperation with the UK, in an eventual disengagement of Britain in the EU Security thus the CSDP.¹⁵ While Kempin does not provide any in-depth analysis of the recent behavior of the two powers, this study will bring light to this issue, as the unexpected event of Brexit results in a list of speculations from scholars in regard to the Franco-British cooperation. Brexit mainly, would deeply impact the EU defense system and the engagement of France in the EU and NATO, opposed to its British neighbor. Studies regarding the European future differ drastically, and a detailed analysis and understanding of the role and actions from France and Britain may bring answers regarding the possible European future. Whitman (2016) argues that Brexit would only have a marginal impact on EU security. Indeed, the scholar states that the field is deeply inter-governmental and quite limited in terms of implemented policies. Furthermore, he emphasizes the significance of the UK national interest in the security realm thus the nation maintains a “special relationship” with the US to ensure its national security. An in depth-analysis of the 2015 British NSS along with SDSR (Strategic Defense and Security Review) shows a remoteness from the nation to the EU in terms of defense and

¹⁵ Kempin, Ronja, and Jocelyn Mawdsley. "The UK, the EU and European Security: A German Perspective." *The RUSI Journal* 15:4 (2013): 32-36.

security.¹⁶ It is in consistency with this paper's purpose to expose the UK's rapprochement with NATO, to the detriment of the CSDP thus the EU, and a deeper evaluation of those official documents intend to unveil any stone left unturned. The UK is blocking reforms aiming at reducing nation-states autonomy in terms of foreign policy, thus is not in favor of a single EU foreign policy. The conducted paper will overview the relationship of the UK and France with the CSDP as opposed to their engagement in NATO. Several scholars, such as Whitman (2016) agree on the idea that the UK, notwithstanding being at the origin of the development of the EU defense and security through bilateral cooperation with France, is shifting away from the CSDP. As Whitman mentioned in this conducted study, the British SDSR does not mention the CSDP as an element of national security and defense. The nation-state seems to favor its transatlantic partner through NATO. Therefore, the author emphasizes that the UK may not be considered a leading role on the CSDP due to its distance from the CSDP and decreasing involvement in the development of the EU security and defense.

Studies on the UK policies towards NATO over the past 10 years are scarce and tend to be overlooked for studies regarding the eventual implications of Brexit since 2016, despite NATO remaining at the heart of the British security policy. The conducted study seeks to analyze and provide answers for the gap in the literature review.

¹⁶ Whitman, Richard G. "The UK and EU Foreign and Security Policy: An Optional Extra." *Political Quarterly* 87:2 (2016): 254-61.

3. Previous studies on France and EU-NATO cooperation

France commonly opposes or complements the UK in terms of European defense. While being a founding member of NATO, the country insists on not depending on the US under President Charles de Gaulle. Vaïsse (2009) analyzed chronologically the French political approach to NATO since De Gaulle insisted to reform NATO while disapproving the military integrated system of the Alliance. France was simultaneously developing its nuclear power, despite the American opposition. While NATO engaged in deeper integration, France slowly renounced any further integration within the Organization under De Gaulle, increasingly opposed to the US, whom he viewed as trying to suppress France's autonomy and ruling over Europe. Under his belief of a Europe for European, the French President withdrew from the military integrated organization in 1966. Vaïsse emphasizes that the NATO-EU cooperation then depends on the successive French governments, with some rapprochement under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing for example and distancing under François Mitterrand, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Overall, France and the US played cat and mouse for over four decades, with France working on the development of a European defense. Yet, tragic events such as the Kosovo War, the terrorist act of 9/11 resulting in France sending troops in Afghanistan finally shows a rapprochement between France and the US.¹⁷ France always had a special relationship with the EU, with the idea of a union of states

¹⁷ Vaïsse, Maurice. "La France Et L'OTAN : Une Histoire." *Politique Étrangère* Hiver 74 :4 (2009): 861–872.

first promulgated by French diplomats¹⁸ and invested grandly on the evolution of the Union thus aware of any NATO move. Irondelle and Mérand (2010) talk of a “complex triangular relationship between France’s defense, NATO and European Defense policies”,¹⁹ prior to the normalization of France-NATO relationship. The scholars assess that the return of France to NATO may be justified by several reasons. The first introduction of European defense by French politicians implied an autonomous defensive Europe, separating itself from the US. Yet, France eventually realized that this project appeared more of a personal than global European defense project. Under Chirac, the significance of NATO was increasingly recognized, but the nation managed to convince the UK, fervent partisan of the Transatlantic Alliance, to create the ESDP, and one President later, France sat again next to its NATO Allies. According to Irondelle and Mérand, such decision was predictable since France, despite not being part of the command structure, actively participated in missions, and was one of the top troop contributors to the Alliance in military operations, such as the missions in Afghanistan or Bosnia. In parallel, this major turnaround left a bitter taste in the EU, and emphasized the ESDP institutional weakness.²⁰ However, one should stress that the France-NATO rapprochement implied a conditional strengthening of ESDP. Ghez and Larrabee (2009) analyze the return of France in the military command of NATO, 43 years after its withdrawal. While it may appear as the reconciliation of France with NATO, it reflects the deepening of Franco-American relations along with the EU-US relationship, security-

¹⁸ Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman are referred to as precursors of the EU.

¹⁹ Irondelle, Bastien and Mérand, Frédéric. “France’s return to NATO: the death knell for ESDP?”, *European Security*, 19:1 (2010): 29-43.

²⁰ Ibid.

wise. They emphasize that the origin of the reintegration of the sovereign state can be explained by the European enlargement. It was decisive into influencing France to reconsider its relationship with NATO. While France was never supportive of the US security umbrella on the EU through NATO, the East European countries were favorable to the US involvement in the EU security agenda. The importance of the UK in the European defense capability also forced France to soften its relationship with the US not to lose its valuable military partner. The creation of the ESDP was to be viewed as an added security policy, not opposed to NATO. Yet, overall the reintegration of France within NATO reflects France's objective to strengthen its defense and security policies to later on promote the ESDP. Eastern Member-States prefer to maintain good relationships with the US rather than developing the ESDP inducing the waning of NATO. France sets some limits to this reintegration by forbidding NATO control over the French troops and nuclear weapons that remain under national control. Overall, France's reintegration in NATO under Sarkozy will mark the strengthening of the European defense and allow ESDP to develop rather than hinder it.²¹ This study will explain more clearly the President's stance on NATO, but also the evolution of the NATO policy in the following government, to better understand the overall France's diplomatic strategy, and pinpoint the hidden strategy behind each political move.

Cizel and Von Hlatky's study (2014) will serve as a strong basis for this thesis paper as it overlooks the entire special relationship between France and NATO, up until Hollande took office. The reintegration process engendered a stronger Alliance aiming at

²¹ Ghez, Jeremy, and F. Stephen Larrabee. "France and NATO." *Survival* 51:2 (2009): 77-90.

optimizing its transatlantic cooperation. Yet, while NATO saw some opportunities and a strengthening of its alliance via the reintegration of one of its founding members, France's intentions were part of its strategy. While the country gained a strategic influence on NATO through the process of reintegration, it also maintains its perception of "integration with preferential treatment".²² The paper states the consistent France's refusal to be part of the nuclear deterrence posture within NATO. Scholars' opinion differs when it comes to the role of NATO and CSDP for the European security and defense, revealing the complex structure of such coalitions along with potential lack of transparency from countries' diplomatic tactics.²³

The previous studies mainly focus on the historical evolution of France, NATO and the EU, but tend to omit the significance of French policies towards the Transatlantic Alliance, and their aim.

4. Literature Review's overview and limitations

Most of the conducted studies on NATO, its relationship with France and the UK and the diplomatic strategy adopted by the two nations, do not compare the two countries directly when it comes to their approach towards NATO. A direct opposition would clarify both countries' position and their political aims, whether it concerns their national interest or the European Security interest. This study will consequently oppose two

²² Cizel, Annick, and von Hlatky, Stéfanie "From exceptional to special? A reassessment of France–NATO relations since reintegration", *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*. 12:4 (2014): 353-366.

²³ Ibid.

significant actors of the evolution of NATO and the EU. Additionally, the previous studies were conducted circa 2010 and recent papers are scarce. Yet, this literature gap remains imperative to be covered in order to shed light on the change of the NATO/UK/France complex relationship, and at a greater scale the potential evolution of EU-Transatlantic cooperation. Therefore, this paper aims at providing a better overview of the France, the UK and their Euro-Transatlantic partners, over the last decades.

III. The United Kingdom's policy towards NATO

As previously mentioned in the methodology part, this study aims at analyzing the strategic engagement of the UK towards NATO, through the in-depth analysis of each government since 2009. The policy adopted towards NATO in terms of security and defense will be analyzed and supported by budget expenditures, troops and some key missions in which the country took part as a result of the NATO policy adopted by each government. NATO members are indeed requested to make direct and/or indirect contributions to the organizations. It will be used as a measure to reflect the countries' investment in the organizations under Gordon Brown's administration up to Boris Johnson, and under Sarkozy to Macron. Indirect contributions include equipment, troops supporting military operations and are referred to as national contributions. Direct contributions induce financial investment representing the "common funding arrangement". France and the UK should contribute up to 2% of their national GDP. This fund is then used for NATO civil budget, NATO military budget and its military capabilities.²⁴

1. Historical evolution of UK-NATO cooperation

To state that the UK and NATO have a strong relationship would be an understatement. The UK, as explained previously, is a founding member of NATO.

²⁴ NATO. "Funding NATO." NATO, June 11, 2018.
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67655.htm.

Following the organization's establishment, the country distinguished itself from the other members by its strong incentives to get involved in the military operations and decision-making. Ernest Bevin, English statesman, dreamt of a transatlantic union back in 1947 and symbolizes the early steadfast British investment in the transatlantic partnership. He ensured the UK was part of the creative process of NATO and succeeded by becoming one the 12 signatories of the Treaty, representing the UK, on the 9th of April 1949. In 1952, the UK had one of its citizens, Lord Ismay, promoted to the position of the first NATO Secretary General. The UK holds onto this leadership role within the Alliance, with its military contributions, completing its role in the political field of actions. Indeed, British nationals have been designated as the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR) position since 1951 up to current days. The British strong incentives to be part, and recognized by, NATO hides a deeper meaning. Britain attempts to enhance the Anglo-American bilateral relation, or the so-called “special relationship” between the UK and the US. Albeit the Cold War was raging, the UK developed its nuclear capability while supporting NATO’s operations, aware that NATO was a core element of the British Defense. It signed in parallel an agreement to create a multilateral nuclear force along with the US after the Anglo-American Nassau talks in December 1962. While the British nuclear weapons serve the national purpose, with the nuclear deterrence, on a larger scale the nuclear force essentially reinforces NATO.²⁵

²⁵ NATO.” United Kingdom and NATO - 1949.” https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_162351.htm. (Accessed April 15, 2020).

Zyla (2020), in his study regarding the relationship of the UK, European institutions and NATO, pictures a brief history of the UK-NATO relationship, and brings light to the UK behavior towards the Alliance during the Cold War. He narrates the Suez Crisis, and how “for Britain, the Suez crisis was an awakening to the inability of the country to unilaterally exert influence abroad.”²⁶ Thus the country shifted towards the US to better ensure its security. However, the author emphasizes that one could have expected, given the situation, that the UK would turn towards the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) to seek further security integration. Following such events, the “special relationship” with the Great American ally is reinforced. The 1966 French withdrawal from NATO’s command structure strengthened the relationship between the only two countries with nuclear power within NATO, i.e. the UK and the US. The Cold War is marked by the Non-Proliferation Treaty conceived by Britain in the wake of 1968, along with a brand-new NATO’s strategy referred to as a “flexible response”, partly achievable due to the French withdrawal. France would strongly oppose such a drastic change of strategy. Finally, amid the post-cold war era and the 21st century, NATO promoted the Partnership for Peace (PfP). Indeed, NATO enlargement raised security concerns in Russia, and the PfP emphasized the significance of cooperation, transparency and mutual trust, to appease tension on the old continent. The UK sent troops both for the Bosnia War and Kosovo, showing continuous support to the Alliance, and indirectly safeguard the UK-US axis. Furthermore, Britain showed a faultless loyalty to the US during the

²⁶ Zyla, Benjamin. “A Brief History of the U.K.-NATO Relationship” in *The End of European Security Institutions? The EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy and NATO After Brexit*, New York City, Springer, 2020.

9/11 terrorist attack (with NATO invoking Article 5 of collective defense for the first time), and later in time, the Iraq invasion. The historical analysis of the UK-NATO dynamic shine lights on several points that will be further use as basics in the following sub-chapters. The UK-NATO collaboration is as special as the Anglo-American relationship, as both duos are intertwined, and drawing the line between them is challenging.²⁷ The history shows that the UK views NATO as the fundamental institutions guaranteeing its security, thus for Britain, as long as NATO's survival is ensured, Brexit will not jeopardize the UK national security interests.

2. Strengthening ties with NATO: Brown and Cameron's administration

Gordon Brown became Britain's Prime Minister in 2007 and served until 2010. The NATO policy adopted during his term will be briefly explained, followed by the latter Prime Minister David Cameron, and his relationship with NATO and the US, between 2010 and 2016.

a. Gordon Brown

Gordon Brown's term will be addressed quite briefly, as the timeline of this study begins with the year 2009. Yet, Brown's administration played a significant part in shaping the UK-NATO cooperation and thus will be analyzed in the following paragraph. This study will regularly draw a parallel between the UK-NATO relationship and the Anglo-American relationship, in order to provide a general idea of the actions and

²⁷ Ibid.

existing ties between the UK, NATO and the largest contributor to the Alliance thus the US.

While no National Security Strategy (NSS) nor Strategic Defense and Security Review (SDSR) were elaborate under Brown's administration, his involvement in NATO facing the EU enlargement is noticeable through different events. Immediately after Brown's accession to Prime Minister's position, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer went to London to commemorate their future relationship. Thereby, Gordon Brown stressed out his eager commitment to NATO, and put the emphasis on the significance of NATO-ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) operation in Afghanistan²⁸. He honored his word by supporting Obama in his request to NATO members for stronger engagement, especially in procuring Afghan troops.²⁹ Honeyman (2009) analyzed the international policy adopted by Brown up until 2009. Gordon Brown's administration is marked by its strong desire to strengthen international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and/or NATO. Albeit Brown's relationship with his American counterpart ends up being more formal and restricted than with the former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, the "special relationship" is not affected by Britain distancing himself (primarily due to the desire of Britain to bury the events of the Iraq War), since Brown grants importance to international institutions. Gordon Brown wishes to implement reforms within the Transatlantic security body, thus adapting the Organization to the current international world order. Brown primary focus is the

²⁸ NATO. "NATO Secretary General Visits United Kingdom".

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_7646.htm?selectedLocale=en. (Accessed May 14, 2020).

²⁹ Wintour, Patrick. "Nato Will Send 5,000 More Troops to Afghanistan, Says Brown." *The Guardian*, November 25, 2009.

efficiency and durability of elements ensuring the British security interest. His NATO policy outshines the CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy, under which the CSDP is developed) and the government is reticent to get further involved in the feeble European defensive arm.³⁰ Overall, Gordon Brown's NATO policy and his administration's engagement in the organization remain steady both politically and financially. The defense expenditures of the UK in 2009 represented 2.7% of the national GDP thus the country met the requirements set by NATO in terms of common funding. The British troops under NATO reached 195 000 soldiers in 2009,³¹ and Brown worked indeed to hand over the power to Afghan troops, thus taking over NATO troops. Brown wants to improve the Alliance, by all means, and overall bargain with the US decisions within NATO itself. Yet, his policy dynamic characterized by his investment and pro-NATO policy stops with the end of his term, and a series of change are noticeable under the following Prime Minister, David Cameron.

b. David Cameron

David Cameron was designated the British Prime Minister from May 2010 to July 2016. The Brexit referendum accounts for the key event of his administration. Yet, his approach and adopted policy towards NATO brings light to several major decisions he took. Cameron's administration, overall, reflects the continuity of Blair's

³⁰ Honeyman, Victoria. "Gordon Brown and International Policy." *Policy Studies*, 30:1 (2009): 85–100.

³¹ NATO. "Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence (1995-2009)." *Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence*, June 10, 2010.

administration, notably regarding the adopted foreign and international policy. The Anglo-American relations remain, as usual, at the core of the British foreign policy, to safeguard the national security interest, and thereby impacts the British international policy towards NATO. Daddow and Schnapper (2013) assess the conducted foreign policy by David Cameron and describe him as a Conservative Prime Minister honoring the traditions of a “conservative foreign policy”. The British government insists on maintaining the UK bandwagon with the US, and Cameron emphasizes that Britain needs its Great American ally to preserve Britain’s acquired power and achieve global objectives. Such a stance on the US irrevocably impacts the policy towards NATO. Britain indeed favors the Alliance to deal with international affairs. While Cameron’s international policy is governed by the Transatlantic partnership, he is increasingly referred to as a practical Eurosceptic³² by the early time of his term. On the European continent, similar to his predecessor’s decision, the investment in the CFSP is decreasing and limited to civil and military missions that benefit the UK national interest and under no circumstances, overlap with NATO interventions. Cameron is considered an Atlanticist. Therefore, when becoming aware of the seriousness of rising new threats in Europe such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and climate change, he created bilateral relations with powerful European States.³³ He is then not in contradiction with the implemented NATO diplomatic strategy.

³² Alexandre-Collier, Agnès. “Euroscepticism under Margaret Thatcher and David Cameron: From Theory to Practice”, *Observatoire de la société britannique* 17 (2015): 115-133.

³³ Daddow, Olivier and Schnapper, Pauline. “Liberal intervention in the foreign policy thinking of Tony Blair and David Cameron, Cambridge”. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26:2 (2013): 330-349.

Under Cameron, several policy papers were published such as the Strategic Defense and Security Review (SDSR) and NSS (National Security Strategy) of 2010, along with the SDSR and NSS of 2015. The 2010 NSS and SDSR were the first strategic official documents to be published after the Strategic Defense Review of 1998.³⁴ These official documents clarify Cameron's stance on NATO and the several policy objectives. The 2010 SDSR, published the year of Cameron's access to office, highlights several key points. The formulation of new threats towards the UK, such as cyberattacks and terrorism, results in the emphasis on defense and security priorities. Thus, the 2010 and 2015 Review revolve around ensuring British security facing the rise of new threats. Furthermore, the 2010 Review provides a clear understanding of Cameron's position in terms of international policy. In the "Foremost" chapter of the SDSR, in which the country's global ambitions and British military forces are assessed, along with the definition of new threats and commitments to protect the British national security interest, NATO is mentioned in the first paragraphs. It states that the national security and defense are a priority, thus the defense budget will be raised and invested in NATO to reach the NATO 2% target over the following 4 years. Nevertheless, the EU is not mentioned in the same chapter, and appears only in the following sub-chapters.³⁵ The government stresses its intention to make cuts in Armed Forces yet lays down its objective to reach a UK with large-scale influence. The troops stationed in Afghanistan are a recurring subject, stressing their importance. Furthermore, the SDSR indicates five priority areas in dealing

³⁴ Harrois, Thibaud. "Towards 'Global Britain' ? Theresa May and the UK's Role in the World" *Observatoire de la société britannique* 21:1 (2018): 51-73.

³⁵ HM Government, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*, Cm 7948, London: The Stationery Office, 2010.

with alliances and partnerships. Those five areas include the “pre-eminent defense and security relationship with the US”³⁶, followed by “NATO as the bedrock of our defense”³⁷ along with the EU, that should turn to the world. The UK claims his support for the extension NATO’s role, and recalls the crucial role played by Britain in regard to nuclear deterrence, within the Organization. The country aims also at promoting a better EU-NATO cooperation, playing the vital role of mediator between the two actors.³⁸

The 2015 NSS and SDSR are published 5 years after and justifies the advanced arguments regarding Cameron’s policies. In the context of Britain in an uncertain era, the US and NATO are mentioned similarly to the 2010 SDSR. To simply assess the importance given to NATO, the reference to the Organization will be compared to the number of times the CSDP is mentioned within the Review. Among the 96 pages constituting the SDSR, NATO is quoted 38 times, whereas the CSDP is not mentioned a single time.³⁹The National Security Strategy adopted “outlines the international context in which we (the UK) can best pursue our interests: through a commitment to collective security via a rules-based international system and our key alliances, notably with the United States of America (US); through an open global economy that drives wealth creation across the world; and through effective and reformed international institutions including the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), as the anchor of transatlantic

³⁶ Ibid. p.59

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ HM Government, *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom*, Cm 9161, London: The Stationery, 2015.

security”.⁴⁰ Yet, the CSDP is not referred to as a fundamental European body for British national and security interest. No cuts in Armed Forces are mentioned in the 2015 SDSR, and Cameron is undergoing a U-turn in his approach to the defense budget, threatened to lose the crucial US support if the budget allocated to defense continuously decreases.

The Cameron administration remained consistent, from 2010 to 2015, in its approach towards NATO and the US as corollary, in its official documents. As for the former Prime Minister, the policy engaged towards NATO remains constant politically, but also financially, despite the British financial struggle, circa 2008. Indeed, between the “force for good” 1998 SDSR and the 2010 SDSR, the total defense spending increased by 30%. While this appears to be the peak of British globalism, the 2008 economic crisis deeply impacted the nation, allocating revisions of the diplomatic strategy, due to economic struggles. Cameron first faced the controversy of military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the British weight in the international scale, decreased along with its defense budget.⁴¹ The defense budget (that includes spending on military operations) invested by the UK in NATO between 2010 and 2016 decreased from 2.6% to 2.2 % of the British GDP. Nevertheless, despite the diminution of the defense budget, it never went below 2%. The British military personnel decreased continuously over the years, going from 198 000 troops in 2010 to roughly 140 000 troops in 2016, reflecting the cut in the UK Army forces, with an estimated decrease of

⁴⁰ HM Government, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*, Cm 7948, London: The Stationery Office, 2010. p.10

⁴¹ Chalmers, Malcolm. “The 2015 SDSR in Context: From Boom to Bust – and Back Again?”, *RUSI Journal* 161:1 (2016), p. 5.

20% of the British Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force by 2020.⁴² Dorman, Uttley and Wilkinson (2016) analyzed such changes in defense budget. In the 2010 SDSR, Cameron had to tackle the governmental debt, thus mentioning a lot of cuts in several domains including the national defense and security. Yet, despite the decrease in the defense budget, the NATO 2% target is maintained. Several scholars and economists were surprised by Cameron's financial commitment. As for the reasons behind such changes, the authors emphasized that Cameron sensed the recent rapprochement of France with NATO and the growing doubt regarding the UK's global role as security actor. Cameron's willingness to reach the NATO budget requirement can also be explained by his effort to remain consistent with his actions. Indeed, at the NATO Summit of 2014, he publicly blamed other NATO members for not meeting the NATO 2% target. It is crucial for Cameron to support the "special relationship", to consequently safeguard the UK's status quo as the sole bridge between the EU and NATO.⁴³

Overall, David Cameron's administration, due to its length, is the most complex in terms of NATO policy as the Prime Minister tried to express his commitment to the Alliance, notwithstanding political and economic difficulties. The core element of the UK policy is that it constantly needs to maintain a certain balance between the engagement towards NATO, the EU and the US. David Cameron's policy reflects this conundrum perfectly. The balance is surely challenging to keep, and in spite of his effort,

⁴² "David Cameron Dismisses Concerns over UK Defence Cuts". *BBC News*. March 2, 2015. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-31695082>.

⁴³ Dorman, Andrew M., Matthew R. H. Uttley, and Benedict Wilkinson. "The Curious Incident of Mr Cameron and the United Kingdom Defence Budget: A New Legacy?" *The Political Quarterly* 87:1 (2016): 46–53.

his engagement in NATO stands out when compared to the investment in the EU in the fields of defense and security, in an era facing new threats. The organized referendum marking the end of his term, left the world with a Eurosceptic David Cameron played at his own game.

3. Theresa May divided between NATO and the EU

The UK marking event of Brexit in June 2016 affected the British policy that underwent drastic changes. David Cameron resigned after opposing Brexit during the campaigns preceding the actual referendum. Theresa May then became the Prime Minister on the 13th of July 2016 after being Home Secretary in the previous six years, during which she specialized in assessing new threats and determined the adequate British response to protect its citizens.⁴⁴ She brought several changes to the policy adopted towards NATO, reflecting the evolving British engagement in the organization. Theresa May aims at a “Global Britain” following Brexit, by strengthening the Anglo-American “special relationship” and maintaining strong ties with Europe, as she mentioned in her speech on the 17th of January 2017:

“I want us to be a truly Global Britain – the best friend and neighbour to our European partners, but a country that reaches beyond the borders of

⁴⁴ Chalmers, Malcolm. “The UK and the North Atlantic after Brexit”, *Whitehall Papers*, 87:1 (2016): 32-42.

Europe too. A country that gets out into the world to build relationships with old friends and new allies alike.”⁴⁵

In the year following Brexit, the British government focused primarily on the puzzling formulation of a Brexit deal, thus the policy adopted towards NATO is given less importance but is not overlooked. Under May's administration, there was no official NSS nor SDSR, as the elements of the documents published in 2015, remained the common thread of Britain Security Strategy. In March 2018, a National Security Capability Review (NSCR) was published, but it does not revise any fundamental commitment and principles written in the 2015 SDSR.⁴⁶ Yet, Brexit brings along issues that need to be tackled hastily. The country is reducing its international operations as the spending cuts mentioned in the SDSR limit the country's foreign military interventions. Worries whether the UK will financially be able to meet the 2% NATO target also occurred as Brexit may be accompanied by an unstable economy and financial difficulties in a near future. Britain's capacity to discuss foreign and security policy within the Alliance could also be weakened.

Therefore, the policies displayed by May seems limited, yet she played on the diplomatic side to secure her nation's interest. To achieve the political dream of a “Global Britain” in the midst of the Euro-American block, Theresa May needs to choose her NATO policy hastily. Once the NATO policy is clarified, the policy defines the prerequisite to enhanced Britain's bilateral partnership with the US. She began by

⁴⁵ “Theresa May Brexit Speech: Read a Full Transcript of Remarks.” *Time*, January 17, 2017. <https://time.com/4636141/theresa-may-brexit-speech-transcript/>.

⁴⁶ Mills, Claire, Louisa Brooke-Holland, and Nigel Walker. “A Brief Guide to Previous British Defence Reviews,” *House of Commons Library*, February 26, 2020.

meeting President Trump in days following his election, to discuss the forthcoming transformation of NATO and ensure that the American involvement does not fade, for the common sake of the NATO partners. She stated that:

*“On defence and security cooperation, we are united in our recognition of NATO as the bulwark of our collective defence. And today, we’ve reaffirmed our unshakeable commitment to this alliance. Mr. President, I think you said, you confirmed that you’re 100 percent behind NATO. But we’re also discussing the importance of NATO continuing to ensure it is as equipped to fight terrorism and cyber warfare as it is to fight more conventional forms of war.”*⁴⁷

Such assumptions betray a certain despair from Britain’s Prime Minister, who appears anxious as for the nation’s dependency on the US hegemony in the security realm. The UK is a loyal ally, yet the relationship between the two Anglophone nations is subject to changes through a combination of factors resulting from Brexit and Trump’s allegations. Albeit, their undeniable bond, a “Global Britain” based on the Anglo-American dynamic seems laborious to implement. Furthermore, the UK’s ability to support and defend US interest among the EU28 represents the cornerstone of the Anglo-American relationship.⁴⁸ It would thus be at stake if the UK loses its political voice and failed to preserve its strategic position within the Union. Brexit is a major political disruption, raising concerns for the EU, and the UK is put to the test. Therefore, despite a

⁴⁷ The United States Government, The White House, *President Trump and Prime Minister May’s Opening Remarks*. January 27, 2017.

consequent number of politicians emphasizing the great loss of influence that Brexit would bring to Britain on the international stage, Theresa May's standpoint remains clear. In the security realm, NATO remains the main organization the UK would be committed to, and the country opposes the creation of any European Army, as stated by Michael Fallon, the Secretary of State for Defense.⁴⁹ The Prime Minister begins a strategic rapprochement with NATO, motivated by the urge to ensure the British national security after the leave of the EU. May's priorities are revealed through her official statements on NATO, the indispensable role played by the UK in it, and her constant praise of the American administration. The political tactic, despite being unstable, grants Britain a safe seat in the Organization security committee. While the policy adopted by Theresa May vis-à-vis NATO is perspicuous, doubts arise on the US side, thus threatening the very existence of the international coalition. Trump's claims towards NATO, notwithstanding their constant alteration, underscore one key element, that is, the American President does not believe in the Alliance as much as its predecessors. He names it "obsolete"⁵⁰ during his electoral campaign, and later revoke his statement in April 2017, after his election.⁵¹

Trump's frequent U-turns in his declaration and engagement slowly led to May's disenchantment in regard to the ambiguous future of Britain. May's administration hammered away to secure Britain's sake, in vain. Nonetheless, despite Trump's harsh

⁴⁹ Harrois, Thibaud. "Towards 'Global Britain' ? Theresa May and the UK's Role in the World" *Observatoire de la société britannique* 21:1 (2018): 51-73.

⁵⁰ "Trump Worries Nato with 'Obsolete' Comment." *BBC News*, January 16, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-38635181>.

⁵¹ "Trump Says Nato 'No Longer Obsolete'." *BBC News*, April 12, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-39585029>.

comments on Theresa May's persona, in an interview given to the Sun in July 2018⁵², the British Prime Minister stood her ground at the NATO Summit later this year, in approving Trump's request to NATO partners for a rise in the defense expenditure. He openly threatened to pull out of the Alliance, if they do not strive to meet the budget requirements.⁵³ He then seized the occasion, to publicly deplore and discredit Theresa May's effort on the Brexit Deal. The evident conclusion to the Theresa May administration, with the endorsement of a proactive NATO policy, and constant solicitation to the US, is that it was relatively unsuccessful.

However, in practical terms, the weak political management did not impinge on the financial and military investment in NATO. The British budget allocated for defense accounts for 2,11% of the GDP in 2017, followed by 2,13% in 2018. The net increase coincides with the timeline during which Theresa May's began to guarantee and extol Britain's unwavering commitment to NATO. The previous paragraph hence, uncovers the motivations behind her statement, as her target was to prompt the US, ending the potential French threat as substitute for a "partner of choice"⁵⁴ for the Americans.⁵⁵ The military personnel increased as well, yet slightly, with the troop number moving from 156 700 in 2017 to 157 100 in 2018. It demonstrates May's engagement in Afghanistan,

⁵² Dunn, Tom Newton "Donald Trump Told May How to Do Brexit but She Wrecked It - US Trade Deal Is off!" *The Sun*, July 13, 2018. <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/6766531/trump-may-brex-it-us-deal-off/>.

⁵³ Crerar, Pippa. "Trump's Nato Approach Helped Make a Difference, Says May." *The Guardian*, July 16, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/16/trumps-approach-to-nato-summit-made-a-difference-says-may-defence-spending>.

⁵⁴ Watts Joe. "US Pushes Britain to Spend More on Military or Warns France Will Be 'Partner of Choice'." *The Independent*, July 2, 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/uk-military-spending-us-france-partnemr-nato-mod-jim-mattis-gavin-williamson-a8426416.html>

⁵⁵ Ibid.

in her effort to assist NATO troops stationed in Afghanistan. Therefore, 440 British military personnel were sent to Afghanistan in 2018, four years after the withdrawal of combat British troops from the Afghanistan soil.⁵⁶

Overall, Theresa May NATO policy conveys the impression of being quasi in-existent. However, this study pinpoint that a closer look the US-UK axis provide practical information in asserting the policy. May's policy towards NATO is part of a substantial, relatively complex strategy to minimize the plausible negative effect of Brexit on the nation in the security sector. The policy, in the hope of building a "Global Britain", is materialized through a renewed commitment to NATO to ensure the safeguarding of the nation, while upholding its status quo within the EU in the matter of defense. By the end of her term, the appointed objectives were not met. It appears necessary howbeit, to emphasize that her diplomatic strategy was also limited by the two departments created post-Brexit, entitled the Department for Exiting the European Union (DExEU) and the Department for International Trade under the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Hence, Theresa May resigned from her position after the third rejection of her Brexit deal, allowing Boris Johnson to step in as Britain's next Prime Minister on the 24th of July 2019.

4. Boris Johnson's strong support for NATO

The incumbent Prime Minister's policy towards NATO will be analyzed briefly as he is still in the office thus may adopt a different approach in the coming years.

⁵⁶ "Afghanistan: UK to Send 440 More Non-Combat Troops," *BBC News*. July 10, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-44787636>.

Johnson stepped in after Theresa May and, notwithstanding having a different thinking of the world, the concerns regarding Britain remain similar to the ones faced by the former Prime Minister. No official documents allow an in-depth analysis of the policy adopted by Johnson, as no NSS nor SDSR were published up from 2019 until this day. Therefore, the NATO policy analysis conducted in this sub-chapter consists of the diplomatic strategy and engagement adopted by Johnson in his public statements, and oral interventions regarding the EU, NATO, and the Great Britain's national security.

In 2018, prior to the announcement of the extension of incumbent Jens Stoltenberg's term as Secretary General of NATO, Boris Johnson (formerly foreign secretary under May's administration) encouraged David Cameron to take over the position. Indeed, Johnson saw an opportunity for Great Britain to regain UK's prestige, and at the same time, boost its influential power in accessing the Headquarter of the international Alliance, ergo cultivating the NATO-EU cooperation.⁵⁷ Johnson had no properly assessed NATO policy, thence gave UK a chance to safeguard its engagement in the Atlantic Partnership. This political move can be included in the, yet to be seen, political strategy to ensure Britain's position on both sides of the Atlantic.

Following Johnson's access to the office, the NATO Summit of the 3th and 4th of December 2019, held in London, shine lights on several priorities defined by the government. Although the Summit celebrates the 70th anniversary of NATO, Trump's declaration allows the doubt to linger regarding the future of the Alliance. The incumbent

⁵⁷ Pickard, Jim. "Boris Johnson Urges David Cameron to Consider Nato Head Candidacy," *Financial Times*, March 24, 2017. <https://www.ft.com/content/0b71906a-108a-11e7-b030-768954394623>.

Prime Minister, host of the meeting, emphasized the great importance of NATO, and asked for unity between the allies, to preserve “the cornerstone of Euro-Atlantic security”.⁵⁸

Financially speaking, the available data from the NATO website covers the expected 2019 share of the British GDP spent for the Alliance budget. Thusly, under Boris Johnson, the UK once again respects the 2% requirement by spending 2,14 % of the real term British GDP in 2019. The military personnel reach 153 000 troops in 2019, indicating a slight decrease since 2018.

Overall, Boris Johnson faces the same struggle as his predecessor in the post-Brexit era, and avoid any risks, by pushing for a pro-NATO policy. Furthermore, his public declarations reveal a fierce Euroscepticism, far greater than Theresa May’s. In parallel, Johnson expressed his unwavering support for Trump, consequently NATO, and his intention to expand the military spending. Therefore, he announced in February 2020 the launch of a Review on Great Britain foreign and defense policy, whose key areas will determine domestic and international policies. The Review is yet to be published, but his political behavior hints on the probable core content, assessing the UK’s role amidst their old US ally and their long-lasting relationship with the EU.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ “Nato Summit: Divisions Exposed Ahead of Meeting.” *BBC News*, December 3, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50635593>.

⁵⁹ Sabbagh, Dan. “Johnson Unveils Major Review of Foreign and Defence Policy” *The Guardian*. February 25, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/feb/25/johnson-unveils-major-review-of-foreign-and-defence-policy>.

IV. France's policy towards NATO

This chapter will firstly explain the historical complexity of the France and NATO relationship. It will then assess the different NATO policies adopted by the country over the three administrations, from 2009 to 2019.

1. Historical complexity of France-NATO cooperation

Assessing that France and NATO share a complicated relationship would be an understatement. Indeed, since the creation of NATO, France and the Organization's relationship is defined by its substantial intricacy. France signed the North Atlantic Treaty on the 4th of April 1949, that includes the famous Article 5 stipulating the collective defense commitment from the 12 signatories including the UK and the US. Being one of the founding members, France took part in the military command structure of NATO and the Headquarters were even situated in Paris. Over the years, NATO enlargement allowed Germany and several European countries to join the Alliance. Yet, under Charles de Gaulle, France withdrew from NATO integrated military command in 1966. It marks the beginning of a tense relationship between the two, and the US. While France remained committed to the Article 5 of the Treaty, the country also lend the Alliance a hand during the Cold War and participated in many operations during the post Cold War era, such as the crisis management operations, the Kosovo Forces (KFOR) and assisted the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF). Yet, the reasons behind its

withdrawal are multiple and, overall, highlight the French concern about the US presence and involvement in Europe.

According to Maurice Vaïsse (2010), France was not in favor of the US taking a stand in Europe, especially on the French national territory through the implementation of US armed forces all over Europe. De Gaulle justified France's withdrawal by the undesired French dependency from the US along with the disapproval of the integrated command system of the Alliance, that prevented France from owning the total control over its defense. Thereafter, the French determination to develop its nuclear power resulted in the country distancing itself from NATO and its over influential member, the US. Overall, the French position can be summarized by the refusal to be under the American subordination and dependence, as it limits the French autonomy in terms of military means; along with France's refusal to let the US exert power over Europe. Vaïsse emphasizes that the withdrawal of France allowed the US to strengthen its position in NATO as a leading member. After President Valerie Giscard D'Estaing claimed that France-NATO cooperation was essential to the European security in 1974, latter President François Mitterrand who expressed his discontentment for De Gaulle withdrawal, supported NATO during his term. While they cooperated during the Cold War, against the Soviet Union, France continues to oppose the American quest for a worldwide NATO, specifically with the unexpected American proposition to include Japan in the Alliance. The post-Cold War era is then defined by the unstable relationship of France with NATO. France is defending a European identity and has doubts regarding the use of NATO, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. François Mitterrand is opened

to a dialogue with the US, and quickly, their different views regarding the future of Europe resulted in stronger discord. Thus, the Americans wanted to maintain their leadership on the European soil, by shaping NATO into a political alliance, France stood its ground, and even launched the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) in 1999. The awaited building of a stronger European identity along with the European Defense was finally initiated. While France took part in the peacekeeping operations through the Combined Joint Task Force (CJFT). President Jacques Chirac concentrated on improving the Franco-US axis, and admitted that NATO survived, and even became stronger through its enlargement.⁶⁰ Jacques Chirac favored the reintegration in NATO. In the diplomatic strategic analysis conducted by Pascal Boniface (2019), President Chirac is pictured as a President that attempted to reintegrate NATO in 1995 yet said “no” to the Americans without hesitation, when he considered that the political approach did not benefit the EU and French common interest. However, he showed an inestimable support to the US, continuing its predecessor's policy, in times of hardship such as the 9/11 traumatizing event.⁶¹ Scholars state that Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, François Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac adopted an American foreign policy characterized by “friend, ally, non-aligned”. Chirac’s two presidential terms paved the way for the future reintegration of the NATO military command under Nicolas Sarkozy’s administration in 2009.

⁶⁰ Vaïsse, Maurice, and Clémence Sebag. “France and NATO: An History.” *Politique étrangère. Institut français des relations internationales*, January 1, 2010.

⁶¹ Boniface, Pascal. “Le Bilan Diplomatique De Jacques Chirac.” *IRIS*, September 26, 2019.

2. Atlanticist policy under Nicolas Sarkozy's administration

Prior to his election on the 16th of May 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy was already referred to as “Sarkozy the American”⁶² due to his openly admitted pro-US stance, against the Gaullist consensus as seen in this previous chapter. Nicolas Sarkozy is characterized by his policy referred to as “politique de rupture”, a policy undermining a “rupture” with the policies adopted by former French presidents, specifically regarding the US and NATO. Sarkozy qualifies the French anti-Americanism as a “cultural cancer” following his presidential victory, while announcing the reintegration of France in the integrated military command structure of NATO.⁶³ This major shift in the international policy adopted by France hides deeper motivations that would impact the whole world dynamic. He justifies such reintegration by the idea that Europe urgently needs NATO facing the rise of new threats. The policy he adopts towards the Alliance puts an end to the “Europe or NATO” dynamic and advocate rather a pro “Europe and NATO” engagement. Sarkozy's stance on NATO emphasizes that France, at long last, does not aim at undermining the partnership.⁶⁴

Despite strong public hostility, Sarkozy defended his idea of a powerful Transatlantic cooperation, along with an improvement of Franco-American dialogue, in

⁶² Ourdan, Remy. “WikiLeaks : Nicolas Sarkozy, ‘L'Américain.’” *Le Monde*, November 30, 2010. https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2010/11/30/wikileaks-nicolas-sarkozy-l-americaain_1447153_3210.html.

⁶³ Leparmentier, Arnaud. “G20, OTAN : Le Pari Diplomatique De Nicolas Sarkozy,” *Le Monde*. March 30, 2009. https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2009/03/30/g20-otan-le-pari-diplomatique-de-nicolas-sarkozy_1174254_3210.html.

⁶⁴ Van Gerner, Lennart. “La Politique Atlantiste De Nicolas Sarkozy : Maintien Du ‘Non-Alignement,’” University of Utrecht, 2011.

the early stage of his Presidency. His NATO engagement and policy are rapidly assessed, notably with the publication of the “White Paper” of 2008, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the President’s supervision. The official document firstly entrenches the significance of the US for France, politically and security-wise, thus puts the emphasis on the reinforcement of their cooperation. On a larger scale, NATO is referred to as complementary to the EU. “There is no competition between NATO and the European Union – the two are complementary: today we need both to come to grips with the threats and crises.”⁶⁵ The White Paper also highlights the changes undergone by NATO since its creation in 1949, such as the reiteration of the significant commitment to the collective defense, or even ongoing development of peacekeeping operations. Therefore, France finds its return in the Alliance needed. The Paper furthermore emphasizes that the French reintegration will “go hand in hand with the reinforcement of the European Union in the area of crisis management and the search for a new balance between Americans and Europeans within NATO.”⁶⁶ The President draws a distinctive parallel between NATO and America. He appraises that the French return as a full NATO Member advocates the renewal of a strategic partnership between the EU and the US, as one side heavily depends on the other in the security realm.

Nevertheless, the adopted policy towards the Organization by Sarkozy hides deeper endeavors. Surprisingly, in the White Paper of 2008, several paragraphs are dedicated to the significance of building a stronger European Defense arm. The policy of

⁶⁵ République Française, Ministère de la Défense, *Le Livre Blanc. Défense et Sécurité Nationale*, June 17, 2008.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

“rupture” does not induce nor justify an “alignment” of France with the US, but quite the opposite. The French President’s ambitions are expressed clearly in the 2008 White Paper, by reading between the lines, and he obviously has the same appetite as his predecessors for a French leading power and independence in the defense sector. The reintegration then undermines a profound desire to defend France’s national interest by using the Alliance. Despite the reintegration, France kept the authority on its nuclear weapons, retained control over of its own troops displayed in military operations, and refused to allow NATO to exert authority over the French troops in peacetime. It bolstered the French strategy that counts on its autonomy, sovereignty and exceptionalism. France is longing for a stronger and more autonomous Europe, and the White Paper states that the nation’s rapprochement with the Atlantic partnership hides intentions to reform it from the core, in an attempt to “Europeanize” it.⁶⁷ Accordingly, Sarkozy, by reintegrating NATO, intends to become leader of the European Defense and subtly persuade the EU28, by befriending the US and adopting a pro-American position, in order to reach the French national security purpose. Therefore, the political move of Sarkozy, albeit surprising, can be interpreted de facto as a “Trojan Horse”, infiltrating the Alliance, trying to enhance its chances to gain influence. Yet, Sarkozy’s motivation was put to light with the Libya Crisis. The Libya crisis shows that Sarkozy is keen on having control and independence from the Americans, prioritizing the core of traditional French foreign policy. As a matter of fact, France wanted the EU to be involved in the operation, under the French and British supervision. Besides the UK’s refusal to bilateral

⁶⁷ Ibid. p.55

partnership to handle the Libyan crisis and the skepticism of several EU members regarding the French ambitions, NATO appeared as the sole player capable of coordinating the Allies and their assets to conduct the military operations.⁶⁸

In terms of financial investment in the Alliance, France remains in the shadow of the UK, but does continue to be one of the major contributors to NATO. Prior to the reintegration, France already contributed to the defense budget and troops. What can be emphasized following France's return in the alliance, is the increase in numbers of personnel at the military command structure.⁶⁹ The allocated defense budget to NATO as a percentage of the real term GDP, reached the 2% required in 2009, and 2010, before stagnating at 1,9 % until 2012.⁷⁰ Overall, the military personnel decreased, moving from 239 000 in 2009 and 219 000 soldiers in 2012. Indeed, the Armed Forces of France decreased over the years, following the White Paper statement of a reduction of the French defense budget.⁷¹ Sarkozy also refused Obama's request to send more French troops in Afghanistan. Therefore, financially and militarily speaking, the NATO return did not encourage a stronger military commitment from the nation, but rather a political one. Once again, the practical evidence echoes Sarkozy's aspiration to gain leverage on NATO members, rather than engaging more thoughtfully in the North Atlantic

⁶⁸ Fahron-Hussey, Claudia. *Military Crisis Management Operations by NATO and the EU: the Decision-Making Process.* Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2018.

⁶⁹ Pernille, Rieker. "The French return to NATO: Reintegration in practice, not in principle". *European Security* 22:3 (2013): 376-394.

⁷⁰ NATO. "Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence." *Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence*, February 24, 2014.

⁷¹ Zecchini, Laurent. "Le Livre Blanc Sur La Défense Revoit à La Baisse Le Format Des Armées." *Le Monde*. June 16, 2008. https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2008/06/16/le-livre-blanc-sur-la-defense-revoit-a-la-baisse-le-format-des-armees_1058685_823448.html.

Organization. As a result, the French strategic political engagement is brought to light quite clearly.

Prior to the end of Sarkozy presidential mandate, the result in regard to France's reintegration was quite uncertain. On one side, the variety and efficiency of military operations were beneficial to France, as cooperation between allies generate more coherence in the conducted missions. Yet, on the other side, the French appetite for decision-making power was not satisfied. The nation could not freely impose its point of view within the Organization nor coming close to the long-awaited launch of a more independent European Defense, guaranteeing Europe a military arm, outside of NATO.⁷² To sum up this sub-chapter, Sarkozy renewed the French engagement towards NATO by adopting a pro-Atlanticist policy, notwithstanding his hidden intentions to gain more influential power, through the Alliance. His policy towards NATO may not have reached the expected aim, but it reopened the dialogue with the 28 other NATO allies.

3. Maintaining the status quo under François Hollande's administration

François Hollande was appointed President on the 15th of May 2012. Prior to his election, he was a fervent advocate of France's independence from NATO and did not support Sarkozy's decision to reintegrate the military structure of the Transatlantic Alliance. Yet, following Hubert Védrine's report on NATO-France relationship, Hollande decided to maintain the status quo. Indeed, the socialist President did not

⁷² Lequesne, Christian. "Nicolas Sarkozy et la Diplomatie de la France" *Revue Des Deux Mondes*, (2011): 85-94.

implement his ideology on the French foreign policy⁷³, especially when dealing with NATO, and at the beginning of his mandate, he decided to keep up with Sarkozy's NATO policy. Hollande's administration emphasizes that the question is not whether France will be more engaged towards NATO, but rather how the country can empower the CSDP. Indeed, the key aspect defining Hollande's term, and accounting in this study for his NATO policy, is not his standpoint on the North Alliance, but whether how he operated and invested in the European Defense force i.e. the CSDP.⁷⁴

The White Paper of 2008 defines the global strategy of defense and security up to 2020. Yet, Hollande decided to publish a White Paper in 2013. One could argue that it reveals Hollande's willingness to restrain Sarkozy's Atlanticist policy, yet an in-depth analysis of the Paper shows the contrary.⁷⁵ The 2013 White Paper dedicates the Chapter 5 (entitled "l'engagement de la France dans l'Alliance Atlantique et dans l'Union européenne"⁷⁶) to the French strategy and engagement towards NATO and the EU. The NATO policy is similar to the one mentioned in the 2008 White Paper, with the emphasis on the complementary character of the EU and the politico-military function of NATO. The Paper also stipulates that the collective defense is the cornerstone of the Alliance, in an era of new threats, and that a strong NATO is beneficial for the French national interest and for Europe in general. Yet, the Paper emphasizes the significance of a

⁷³ Lequesne, Christian. "La politique extérieure de François Hollande : entre interventionnisme libéral et nécessité européenne" *HALSHS* 23 (2014).

⁷⁴ Maulny, Jean-Pierre. "French NATO policy under François Hollande." *Atlcom*, April 2012. https://www.atlcom.nl/upload/Maulny_AP_2012_nr_4.pdf (Accessed May 29, 2020).

⁷⁵ Nils, Andersson. « L'atlantisme, de Sarkozy à Hollande », *La Pensée*, 377:1 (2014) : 35-48.

⁷⁶ Engagement of France in the Transatlantic Alliance and the European Union

protection and support to nations whose desire is autonomy in terms of actions, allowing then, France to preserve its sovereignty above all.⁷⁷

The key difference between Sarkozy and Hollande's administration, is their approach to the European Defense, rather than NATO. Sarkozy's term revolves around the return in NATO, having in mind bigger aspirations for the EU. Hollande, nevertheless, simply settles for the continuity of the hitherto NATO policy adopted and concentrates on the construction of a strong EU defense and security, as part of France's national defense strategy. The work for a secure Europe is set as a priority.⁷⁸ Furthermore, Sten (2017) stresses that France is increasingly pragmatic regarding NATO yet not to the extent of putting at stake or fragilizing EU's safety. The Védrine Report published under Hollande's presidential mandate reflects the eagerness of France to play on both sides; that is completing the return to NATO (in line with Sarkozy's plan) and ensuring the French central role in the EU security realm.⁷⁹ The key events of Hollande's administration are the series of terrorist attacks in 2015, on the French soil. The President does not equivocate and hastily declares France at war with ISIS. He then referred to the Article 42.7 of the Maastricht Treaty (TEU), that is the emergency clause of the EU, stipulating that the EU Member-States should provide military assistance to other EU members, if under attack. Hollande turning to the EU rather than NATO in times of

⁷⁷ République Française, Ministère de la Défense, *Le Livre Blanc. Défense et Sécurité Nationale*, April 29, 2013.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 64

⁷⁹ Rynning, Sten. "The Divide: France, Germany and Political NATO." *International Affairs* 93.2 (2017): 267-89.

threat, highlights incontestably his gradual turn to Europe, as agreed in the 2013 White Paper for a stronger Europe.⁸⁰

Military speaking, Hollande does not call into question the NATO forces, albeit France withdrew its combat forces from Afghanistan. In fact, the country's army is deployed in Mali, Syria, and in the Global Coalition fighting ISIS, and supervise NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VHRJTF). Hollande's term is finally characterized by its political response to the Ukraine crisis, by the renewal of the dialogue with Russia.⁸¹ Such military interventions reflect the interventionist French strategy adopted by the President. Following the Ukrainian crisis, Hollande states during the 2016 NATO Summit in July, that Russia is not "an adversary" nor "a threat", and NATO does not have its word to say in regard to the political relationships between nations on the European continent.⁸² Such stance appears in opposition with Sarkozy, but Hollande focuses primarily on fighting terrorism thus leave the Eastern Europe conflict to others members.

The financial engagement of France towards NATO is decreasing over the years of Hollande's Presidency as it moves from 1.89% of the GDP in 2012, to 1.82% of the GDP in 2013 before stagnating at 1.79% for the last 3 consecutive years of the

⁸⁰ Holehouse, Matthew. "Nato Shunned as France Calls on EU to Destroy Islamic State." *The Telegraph*, November 17, 2015.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/12001700/Nato-shunned-as-France-calls-on-EU-to-destroy-Islamic-State.html>.

⁸¹ NATO, "Joint Press Point with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the President of France, François Hollande - Opening Remarks by the Secretary General." June 3, 2016.

⁸² "Sommet De L'OTAN : La Russie N'est " Pas Un Adversaire, Pas Une Menace ", Selon Hollande". *Le Monde*. July 8, 2016. https://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2016/07/08/la-russie-n-est-pas-un-adversaire-pas-une-menace_4966529_3214.html.

Presidential term. This undermines the cut in the French budget allocated to defense. Hence, the financial engagement to the Alliance fails to meet the NATO 2% pledge. France military personnel remains its core strength, notwithstanding it went from 219 000 in 2012 to 209 000 in 2017, due to a diminution of military troops of 10% as mentioned in the White paper of 2013, in the continuity of Sarkozy's reduction budget plan. Hollande underscores that NATO partners should step behind France in its effort in defense, as East European matters cannot be handled by a France already engaged in Sahel and Middle East, fighting terrorism.

Finally, by the end of his Presidency, Hollande faced Brexit and the election of Trump. Such events might appear relevant for the NATO policy, but they actually do play a critical role, specifically for the French foreign policy. The repercussions of year 2016 events are characterized by a renewal of the CSDP impetus, as France loses its core partner in military field and is threatened by Trump's negative stance on NATO and the EU, immediately after the beginning of his term.⁸³

This sub-chapter can be summarized by Hollande's attempt to maintain the status quo in regard to the NATO policy, apparently in continuity with Sarkozy's strategy. Hence, no policy changes are assessed in regard to the Alliance, but France is slowly redefining and empowering the European security and defense strategy, to build a stronger Europe. To properly ends this sub-chapter, Hollande's speech in a press conference given at the NATO Summit of 2016, in Warsaw perfectly summarize the previous statements:

⁸³ NATO. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010-2017).", June 29, 2017.

*“France also wants the European Union to play an even greater role than today in defending our continent. It’s very important for the EU and NATO to work closely and in full cooperation. (...) This means that we Europeans must contribute more capabilities, more forces, have more rules between us, too, for this dimension of security, protection – border protection, security in the fight against trafficking, and defence against threats which exist outside European Union itself.”*⁸⁴

4. Emmanuel Macron and its pro-European Defense engagement

The awaited significant changes in NATO policy appear under Emmanuel Macron's Presidency, and such a strategic approach reflects deep intentions to reform the basis of French national security strategy along with French military presence and power on the international stage.

Emmanuel Macron was elected on the 7th of May 2017 and is currently in the office. His foreign policy is predominantly oriented towards Europe and he does not leave any grey areas while expressing loud and clear his aspirations. His election campaign paved the way for a pro-Europe engagement as he is entirely committed to the EU and develop a stronger relationship with his German neighbor. Following Macron's election, the national and foreign policy revolved around several key points. He gave strong impetus in counter terrorism, with the introduction of the National

⁸⁴ François Hollande. “NATO Stance ‘Strictly’ Defensive - French President.” *Ministère de l’Europe et des Affaires Étrangères*, June 9, 2016

Counterterrorism Center. He stands out for being a strong advocate of environmental protection, but his attitude in regard to NATO and “l’Europe de la Défense” illustrates his mandate.

First and foremost, his speech of December 2017 at Sorbonne, Paris, pictures a President with an ambitious plan for Europe. International security is the core of his speech, and the President explains that the fundamentals of the EU are jeopardized by new threats. Therefore, the EU cannot rely on the US for its own safety. America indeed, shows a progressive disengagement in regard to the European security. Macron emphasizes the creation of a European autonomous capacity of action, complementary to NATO, along with a common force and common defense budget.⁸⁵ The incumbent President NATO policy differs with the former ones, as he tends to be more driven by the “Gaullo-Mitterrandian”⁸⁶ tradition. Published in 2017, the Strategic Review of Defense and National Security principally introduced the Military Programming Law (enforce from 2019 to 2025) and elaborates the strategic plan to achieve the 2% of GDP for defense budget, following the evolution of the strategic environment.⁸⁷ The Review is aligned with the words spoken by the President in his aforementioned speech, as the reinforcement of the European Defense is at the core of the official document. This initiative intends to reinforce NATO. Post-Brexit, France remains the only European

⁸⁵ Schowk, René. “Les propositions du Président Macron concernant la politique de sécurité internationale: une lecture critique. In: *L’avenir de l’Union européenne. Défis et initiatives*. Genève: University of Genève, 2018.

⁸⁶ Mix of De Gaulle and Mitterrand, referring to the foreign policy principles adopted by France based on military and diplomatic independence.

⁸⁷ “République française, Ministre des Armées, *Revue Stratégique : Une Analyse Lucide Et Volontariste Pour Préparer La Prochaine Loi De Programmation Militaire*, December 4, 2017.

nuclear power, trying to preserve its strategic autonomy, and building a stronger Europe in an era of new threats.⁸⁸ The Review promotes a new approach to defense cooperation, as it states the detachment from the US in regard to EU defense. Therefore, France aims at strengthening the Franco-American axis, Anglo-French bilateral cooperation in terms of defense, while a deepening of the Franco-German cooperation will on work the strengthening the European defense and security.⁸⁹

However, the Review, published in 2017, appears obsolete when directly compared with Macron's claims in an interview given to the Economist, a British newspaper chosen purposely, prior to the NATO Summit of December 2019 held in London, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Alliance. The President claims that NATO is "brain dead", following his participation at two NATO Summits, in which the discussion revolved around finding solutions to diminish the US's financial participation in the Alliance, the US announcement of troops withdrawal from Syria, along with the Turkish offensive in Syria without the consultation of others NATO's Allies.⁹⁰ Macron considers Europe at risk of disappearing if it does not flourish on the international scale, by becoming an influential actor. Indeed, the rising China along with the "Make America Great Again" under Trump's presidency emphasize a shift in the world order. Thereby, Macron's assumption appears in a context of insecurity for the EU, as the continent is struck by Brexit, that unveils its weaknesses. In a bilateral meeting with President Trump

⁸⁸ Ibid.p.10-14

⁸⁹ Ibid. p.61-63

⁹⁰ "OTAN : Emmanuel Macron Se Félicite D'avoir " Réveillé " L'Alliance, En Proie à " Une Déconnexion Criante Et Inacceptable ". *Le Monde*. November 28, 2019. https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2019/11/28/macron-se-felicite-d-avoir-reveille-l-otan-avec-ses-propos-controverses_6020901_3210.html.

at the December NATO Summit, Macron expressed no regret regarding his prior statement on NATO and pointed out that the Alliance is in need of better clarification of its fundamentals, and the threats it is facing, to preserve the long-lasting peace in Europe. He also recognized the financial “overinvestment” of the US that Trump’s ceaselessly allude to in the discussion. Macron states:

“Having less budget exposure of the U.S. means more European investment and more clarity on the European side. I do agree. Being strict and very efficient against terrorist groups means having clear, clear definition of these groups and no ambiguity.”⁹¹

The NATO Summit highlighted Macron’s eagerness to implement his vision of the evolution of NATO, in contradiction with the US stance.

Financially speaking, the engagement towards NATO under Macron’s Presidency, reflected through the percentage of France’s GDP invested in the Organization, does not meet the 2% spent on defense. Indeed, France invested 1.78% of its real term GDP in 2017, followed by an investment of 1.82% in 2018, and reaching 1.84% in 2019. The military personnel engaged in the Alliance remains steady, moving from 208 200 in 2017 to 207 800 in 2019.⁹² Similar to its predecessors, Macron seems politically engaged in NATO, yet, the defense budget fails to meet the NATO target. As always, France’s strength remains its military investment with the significant amount of French military troops, allowing Macron to share his vision and criticism of the Alliance

⁹¹ The United States Government, The White House, *Remarks by President Trump and President Macron of France Before Bilateral Meeting*, December 3, 2019.

⁹² NATO. “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013-2019).” November 29, 2019.

vividly, without fearing a strong backlash. At the end of March 2020, Jens Stoltenberg announced the creation of a NATO expert panel, debating over the future of the Alliance. Emmanuel Macron's designated Hubert Vedrine (former socialist foreign minister), as the French expert participating in the panel. Such choice is not anodyne and appears crucial as Vedrine aligns with Macron's stance on NATO and the EU, grants importance to the French traditional foreign policy, and does not advocate an "Atlanticist policy".⁹³

To sum up, the incumbent French President adopts a strategic NATO policy of influence, pointing out its flaws and expressing his desire of a more autonomous Europe, constantly reiterating though, that the two bodies should not be looked upon as competitors.

The following chapters will analyze chapter III and chapter IV findings and provide explanations and implications of such strategic engagement towards NATO from France and the UK, since 2009.

⁹³ Momtaz, Rym. "Meet Macron's Mr. NATO." *Politico*, April 10, 2020.

V. Analysis of UK and France's strategic engagement in the Transatlantic Organization

1. Distinctive modus operandi in regard to NATO

The UK and France political, military and financial engagement towards NATO will be assessed to further emphasize the strategy adopted by each country, to reach their personal goals. Their strategic engagement will then be compared to their engagement towards the Common Security and Defense Policy, to better shine light on their stance on NATO, and the EU over the years, and explain the insights of their modus operandi.

a. Political engagement

The political engagement of the UK and France differs drastically, as the seeking outcome is different thus the strategy of each country is adapted to reach personal goals. The historical disparities reflect on today's French and British engagement in the Alliance and deeply impacts the current NATO policy adopted.

The UK has been a loyal supporter of NATO since its creation. Therefore, despite the different engagements towards the Alliance throughout the several administrations, what stands out over the years, is the constant commitment to the Transatlantic Organization. The traditional outlines of the British foreign policy are reflecting on the NATO policy adopted by each government. Indeed, several key aspects are recurrent under each administration. Under Cameron, the ever-present reference to

NATO in the official document such as the NSS and SDSR (2010 and 2015 included), seems to represent the only part that does not evolve over the years, as the NATO strategy is continuous. What the UK seeks is the Organization is a tool to safeguard the British security and perpetuate the strong relationship with its American counterpart. The UK, for example, supported the US in their war in Afghanistan, and Iraq (up until their major withdrawal under Cameron) despite the financial difficulties it faced, and the several backlashes throughout the years. Furthermore, Britain shows signs of a growing Euroscepticism and the election of Trump along with the Brexit referendum, engendered serious shifts in the British policy. Theresa May and Boris Johnson take a leap into the unknown and by relying on the traditional allies and diplomatic policy, the two Prime Ministers play it safe. The UK's position in the Alliance as well as within Europe, is threatened and it seems highly important to ensure the Anglo-American axis. Thence, Theresa May and Boris Johnson multiply the praises of NATO and the US, in public statements, NATO Summit speeches and meetings with Donald Trump. Insisting on the continuous British commitment to NATO is set a priority, as both Prime Ministers realize that their nation relies more than it should, on the security player. Britain appears paralyzed by its own diplomatic strategy. Originally, this strategic engagement minimizes the French threat by maintaining Britain's status quo as key middle power and bridge between NATO and the EU. Yet, the UK revises such aspirations downwards and seeks for this strategy to simply offer a foreseeable future for the nation.

The French NATO policy is also deeply marked by the French foreign policy heritage and historical events with the Alliance. While Sarkozy adopted a policy of

“rupture”, complementary to his self-proclaimed Atlanticism, the reintegration of France within NATO hides more intricate reasons. Renewing ties with the Americans was certainly not the primary purpose of such political decision. France is driven by its high expectations for the nation and makes use of NATO to reach them. Aware of its strong political voice, France acquires even more influential power by seating next to the 29 NATO allies⁹⁴. This return allows France to make its voice heard, and possibly convince a majority of countries to align with its aspirations for Europe. Nevertheless, France did not acquire the expected influential power with his return, hence it continuously invested financially and militarily in the Alliance, restoring slowly its power within the Organization. The country conserves its sovereignty and does not hesitate to stand against the Americans, regarding the Afghanistan troops for example. The global structure of the French strategy remains faithful to its historical heritage. Under François Hollande, the French NATO policy is relatively similar and constant, but the French President is focusing its attention on the EU, by slowly working for the development of a stronger defense force. The White Paper of 2013 subtly share the French thriving aspirations for the EU. The official Paper recognizes the significance of NATO for France and Europe, yet by reading between the lines, the country shares its plans for a proactive European security. Hollande’s presidency is finally characterized by an interventionist strategy, expressing French’s strategy to use its military power to influence, if not convince, other EU Member-States of its leadership. Finally, Macron, facing Brexit and a slow disengagement from the US in NATO, does not focus on

⁹⁴ NATO is now constituted of 30 Members with North Macedonia joining NATO in March 2020.

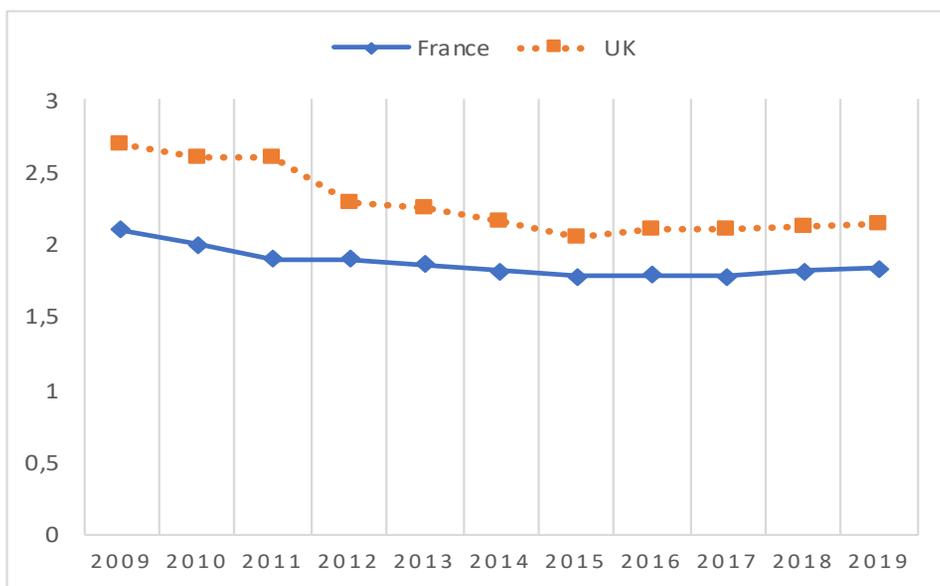
deepening the ties with the Organization, but rather states loud and clear his aims at developing a stronger European Defense. The political engagement in NATO is not weakened, since it was not necessarily active under Hollande, although Macron's several negative statements about the Alliance raises concerns as for the future function of NATO.

b. Financial and military engagement

While the overall budget expenditures by NATO members increased continuously since 2015, with nine NATO Members meeting the 2% budget requirement in 2019, France does not account for one of these 9 nations.⁹⁵ The budget allocated to defense by the UK and France are compared in **Figure 1**. The detailed data on defense expenditures of each NATO Members, published by NATO on its official website, were gathered and used to create the following graph.

⁹⁵ NATO, "NATO Secretary General Announces Increased Defence Spending by Allies." November 29, 2019.

Figure 1: France and the UK's Defense Expenditures as share of the GDP (in%)

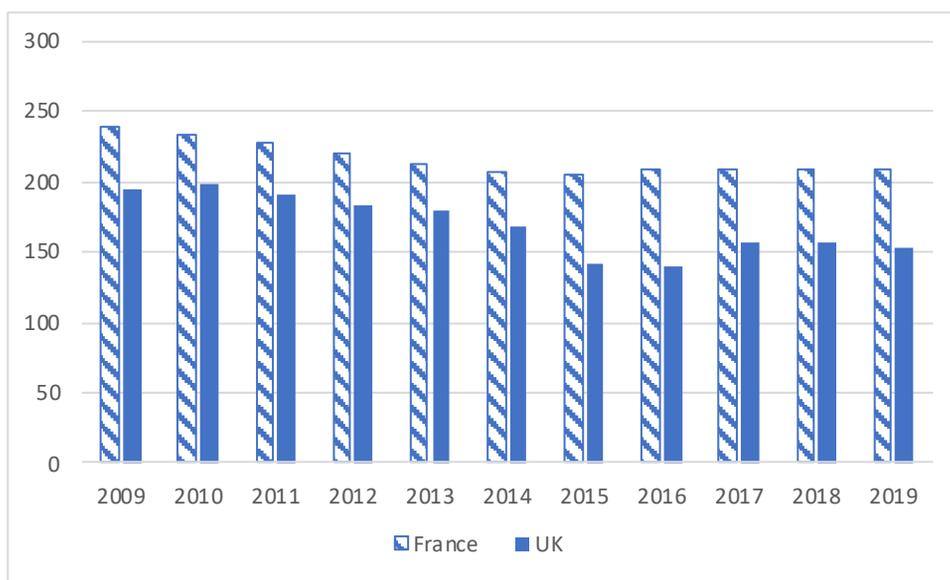


The **Figure 1.** shows the UK's substantial and steady financial engagement in NATO. The dotted-line, accounting for the UK, is slightly decreasing over the years, but never crosses the solid-line, in other words, France. The dotted line does not go under 2% and this constant participation in the NATO budget characterized the British investment. It reflects a comprehensive strategy. Indeed, the UK plays on this contribution to preserve its relationship with NATO and stands by the US when criticizing other NATO allies' lack of financial commitment. While the UK never failed to meet the budget requirement of NATO, France falls behind, by reaching only the 2% requirement in 2009,

and 2010, as seen on the graph. The solid line then starts to decrease before stagnating from 2016. However, France remains the 3rd largest spenders in NATO (after the US, and the UK), notwithstanding appearing pale in comparison, next to the UK, on the graph.

Yet, the direct comparison of the Military Personnel that France and the UK invest in the Alliance, shows a trend reversal. Hence **Figure 2.** shows a direct comparison of the Military Personnel of France and the UK in NATO. As for the previous figure, the data were collected on the official NATO website.

Figure 2: France and the UK's Military Personnel (in thousands)



When compared to the financial engagement, the data displayed on **Figure 2.** indicate a reversed effect. Such disparities of number of troops can be explained by Britain and France's domestic military capabilities, as France's military capacity in terms of troops is higher than its northern neighbor. However, it can also reflect the adopted strategy to influence NATO partners. Calmels (2020) is assessing the different types of plausible strategies adopted by NATO allies. She states that France and the UK endorse formal strategies, used during meetings such as negotiations, in which the two nations express their influential power via blocking negotiations, raising threats, acting as a mediator or even trying to bargain.⁹⁶ Hence, one key formal strategy for France is the use of human resources. Indeed, the military personnel invested allows the country to have access to information, thus implementing its vision, especially since Andre Lanata is the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), a position that is traditionally occupied by US officers.⁹⁷ France is undeniably an influential ally among NATO, and its military contributions and engagement is a crucial tactic, part of a bigger strategy of influence. The UK, on the other hand, shows a strong decrease in Military troops sent to NATO, specifically in 2015 and 2016. The instability that prevailed in the UK during the period prior and post Brexit, resulted in cuts in the military personnel invested in NATO. The nation did not fear any criticism from NATO as it entirely relies on its historically strong financial commitment to the Alliance, and its proximity and bilateral relationship with the US.

⁹⁶ Calmels, Christelle. "La France à l'OTAN : un allié influent? ", *Diploweb.com: la revue géopolitique*, 29 mars 2020. <https://www.diploweb.com/La-France-a-l-OTAN-un-allie-influent.html>

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Political, financial, and military engagement of France and the UK towards NATO hide a certain strategy, in order to reach specific objectives. The UK tends to favor Euro-Atlantic cooperation in the security realm, as it serves best their national security interest. It invests financially in the Organization to safeguard its power and exert a hold on the decision-making. On the contrary, France's appetite for grandeur and independence from the US, led the nation to distance itself from NATO, while pushing for a more defensive Europe. Yet, to gradually expand its sphere of influence, the country actively invests its military personnel. One could ask whether the stronger engagement of the UK towards NATO reflects a disengagement in the European sphere thus the CSDP, and vice-versa with France. Therefore, the next sub-chapters will briefly analyze the British and French investment in the European Defense, through the CSDP, and the Anglo-French cooperation.

2. Investment in the European Defense

The UK and France' strategic engagement towards the Transatlantic Alliance differ, both politically and financially as aforementioned. Therefore, one could ask if such disparities affect the engagement of both nations in the European Defense. The investment in the EU Defense will then be analyzed through the involvement of France and the UK in the CSDP, and their role and actions as the two major European powers actively engaged in safeguarding Europe.

a. Involvement in the CSDP

France and the UK are referred to as “founding fathers” of the ESDP (now called CSDP since the Lisbon Treaty of 2009), with the historic Saint-Malo declaration of 1998. The EU defense policies heralded in the Maastricht Treaty (TEU) were activated with this agreement between Jacques Chirac and Tony Blair, to achieve the European ambitions of a greater defense efficiency. The CSDP defines the EU’s key role in preserving the international security and preventing conflicts with the deployment of civil and military missions. Thus Member-States can voluntarily engage in civil or military operations on behalf of the reinforcement of international security.⁹⁸ Therefore, the CSDP is regularly compared, even opposed, to NATO, as their purpose appears similar. Yet, the very impetus for the CSDP is motivated by contradictory intentions from France and the UK. In 1998, Prime Minister Tony Blair sought to launch the CSDP, motivated by the fear of an eventual American withdrawal from NATO, in the event of a Europe relying excessively on the body. France, on the contrary, saw in the CSDP the opportunity to get a hold of the executive power, whereas diminishing its reliance on the Americans. In both cases, the CSDP appears as a means to reach the countries’ national and common interests, beyond its original purpose of improving the European defense.

⁹⁸ “Qu’est ce que la PSDC ?” *Ministère de l’Europe et des Affaires Étrangères*. <https://ue.delegfrance.org/qu-est-ce-que-la-psdc-3652>. (Accessed June 16, 2020).

Over the years, the British engagement towards the CSDP faded away, and the country moved from “leader to laggard” (Whitman, 2016).⁹⁹ Indeed, albeit Britain originated the CSDP, it never introduced the CSDP as a fundamental body of its national security, while opposingly emphasizing its pledge to NATO.¹⁰⁰ Britain’s key ambition is to achieve an adequate influence in regard to regional and international security. The UK engaged in the European Naval Force operations (EUNAVFOR) in 2008 and encouraged the establishment of the EU Battlegroup (EU BG) yet its commitment to the CSDP is moderate. Moreover, the military contributions to the CSDP’s operations over the years appear relatively low when compared to the UK military capabilities.¹⁰¹ Simultaneously, the succession of Prime Ministers multiply the meeting and public appearance on the other side of the Atlantic. Promulgating one institution results in undermining the other one in the British strategy. Instead of encouraging the CSDP integration, Britain favored bilateral talks with the EU28 and signed several bilateral agreements with specific Member-States, such as France. Over the past decade, the UK then adopted a restrictive position in regard to the CSDP and tends to block any initiatives to improve the body, such as the creation of a military EU operational headquarters, or the increase in role and budget of the European Defense Agency (EDA). Furthermore, post-Brexit, Britain renewed the dialogue with the EU, solely intending to discuss a future bilateral trade

⁹⁹ Whitman, Richard G. “The UK and EU Foreign and Security Policy: An Optional Extra,” *The Political Quarterly* 87:2 (2016): 254-261.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Chappell, Laura, Jocelyn Mawdsley, and Petar Petrov. “The National Priorities of Germany, France and the UK Enabling or Constraining a Joined-Up EU Strategy?” In *The EU, Strategy and Security Policy: Regional and Strategic Challenges*, London: Routledge, 2016.

agreement with the EU.¹⁰² Overall, the UK's investment in the CSDP diminished as the European Defense policy appears as a threat to NATO, for London.

France's stance on the CSDP is increasingly opposed to its British neighbor. In terms of security, France adopts a pragmatic approach, as the nation opts for the solution which benefits the most its national interests. The reintegration of NATO acted upon this pragmatism as France acknowledged the restraints and hurdles of the CSDP. The Libyan crisis emphasized such a stance. Yet, France's ambitions for the CSDP coincide with its plan for a stronger European defense arm. The French military contributions to the CSDP operations are the highest among EU Member-States and are accompanied by a substantial amount of French personnel in high authorities of the European Defense institutions. Some Member-States highly criticized such a dominant French presence, since the CSDP appeared as a tool for the French government to implement its personnel strategy. Furthermore, the country is reinvigorated with the election of Emmanuel Macron, despite Britain's exit. It can be demonstrated by the significant launches made post-referendum. Indeed, by 2017, the old continent initiated the EU Military Headquarters, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Defense Fund (EDF), and finally the Coordinated Annual Review on Defense (CARD), in the continuity of the 2016 EU Global Strategy document, as part of the European Security Strategy (ESS).

¹⁰² Howorth, Jolyon. "EU Defence Cooperation after Brexit: What Role for the UK in the Future EU Defence Arrangements?" *European View* 16:2 (2017): 191–200.

Thence, we notice an opposite engagement towards the CSDP from France and the UK, when compared to their engagement towards NATO. Such strategic stance on the CSDP brings clarification on the reasons behind the British rapprochement and French disengagement towards NATO over the past decade. The next sub-chapter will focus on the Anglo-French cooperation, and examine the Paris-London axis, thus their position regarding the security and defense environment.

b. The Anglo-French Cooperation

In 2010, France and the UK signed the Lancaster House Treaties, strengthening the Anglo-French cooperation in the security realm, by allowing the two nations to spend and act together in the defense sector, in an effort to reinforce the collective defense security. The creation of the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF), and the bilateral agreement on nuclear deterrence are the key elements of the Lancaster House Treaties.¹⁰³ These Treaties are signed by Nicolas Sarkozy and David Cameron, one year after France's reintegration in NATO military command. It then appears as France and the UK favor bilateral cooperation rather than the multilateralism represented by the CSFP, at the time. This surprising bilateral accord reinforces the bond between the two allies, and is of great significance for both nations, as it lends them consequent clout in Europe. These Treaties emphasize the countries' willingness to maintain their middle power, reach common military ambitions and secure their key role played on the

¹⁰³ British Ministry of Defence. "UK-France Defence Co-Operation Treaty Announced," November 2, 2010.

international scale. This Franco-British agreement provides a better understanding of France and the UK diplomatic strategy. Indeed, it reflects the British intentions to opt for bilateral cooperation among EU28, rather than the CSDP, to support NATO initiatives. France, on the other side, seeks in such cooperation to reach its large-scale ambitions for the safeguarding of Europe, as it unites the two strongest European military powers.¹⁰⁴ Both countries remain clear in regard to their personal benefit from such cooperation. Scholars states the uniqueness of this partnership, and when scrutinizing the time of the event, this diplomatic tactic seems to be part of a bigger plan, for both nations.

Scholars argue that Brexit will not alter such cooperation as the Lancaster House Treaties account for bilateral agreements. As a matter of fact, it allows the UK to edge nearer to its goal of “Global Britain” with the deployment of its troops abroad to maintain a certain impact on the EU defense realm. On the French side, France does not lose its primary military ally, and gains an influential status within the EU as the sole military power, possessing nuclear weapons along with a consequent and active army. France emphasized that Brexit would not alter the Franco-British cooperation with the UK, as this strategic partnership is highly significant for both nations. Indeed, the Lancaster House Treaties are not related to any European institutions, thus Brexit has no direct nor indirect effect on the cooperation. Yet, France’s credibility within the European border might be undermined, since the bilateral relationship is not between two EU Members-States, resulting in a slowed down progress on the path to leadership. As a

¹⁰⁴ Whitman, Richard G. “The UK and EU Foreign and Security Policy: An Optional Extra,” *The Political Quarterly* 87:2 (2016): 254-261.

fervent and staunch advocate of the European Union, France might seek other partnerships in the defense field, such as Germany.¹⁰⁵

3. Implications and prospects for the European Defense: death knell of NATO?

In order to better understand the implications and prospects for the European Defense, the relationship between the US and the EU will be examined, since it plays a significant role in the undergoing evolutions witnessed on the European continent. Then, the major role played by France in further improving the European Defense will be analyzed, providing more explanations as for its recent distancing from NATO.

a. The US-EU conundrum

Behind the evolution of the EU-NATO cooperation, the impact and the role played by the US is highly consequential. America often hides behind high international authorities. As a consequence, the superpower pulls the strings, more often than not. Indeed, as the major contributor to NATO, the strategy and the approach adopted by the US towards the EU and its expectations from the old continent, shapes the Transatlantic security.

The relationship between the US and the EU is beyond complex and constantly evolving. Over the past decades, the US gave mixed signals to the EU authorities. Indeed,

¹⁰⁵ Maulny, Jean-Pierre. "The French/UK Defence Relationship," *IRIS*. June 22, 2016. <https://www.iris-france.org/78591-the-frenchuk-defence-relationship/>.

America calls the EU to increase its defense capability to better support NATO, whereas it fears that the continent becomes too autonomous and a capable security player, threatening the very existence of NATO.¹⁰⁶ With the election of President Donald Trump in December 2016, the US-EU relationship took a new radical turn. Trump's strong allegations coupled with the numerous insinuations on the EU, emphasized an increasing Euroscepticism from the US, as the President perceives the EU as a free rider. The American critics towards the launch of EDF and PESCO in 2017 seems unjustified on the European side, as such initiatives should reflect the European effort to share the burden and responsibilities with NATO.¹⁰⁷ The EU is highly concerned regarding the US constant back and forth allegations in regard to their commitment for the European defense projects. Trump managed to simultaneously pressure EU partners to invest further in the Transatlantic Alliance, while hardly believing in the mechanisms and fundamentals of the Transatlantic Organization itself. Furthermore, the consequent issues and disagreement between the two players, in major areas such as trade, nuclear deterrence (with the Iran nuclear deal) and climate change (with the Paris agreement withdrawal) leads to a convoluted situation.¹⁰⁸ The US-China rivalry is also deeply impacting the EU's position as the old continent tends to avoid ending in the middle of such economic and geopolitical tensions. The Sino-European relationship is deteriorating over the years, and the EU is trapped between the two superpowers' clash, whereas

¹⁰⁶ Shevin-Coetzee, Michelle. "Resetting the US-EU Defense Relationship, ". *Berlin Policy Journal*. October 31, 2019. <https://berlinpolicyjournal.com/resetting-the-us-eu-defense-relationship/>.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Valášek, Tomáš, and Erik Brattberg. "EU Defense Cooperation: Progress Amid Transatlantic Concerns." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, November 21, 2019.

NATO is increasingly paying attention to the rise of China. Therefore, the EU focuses then on developing its autonomous force despite critics from the US, and conditional support from China.¹⁰⁹

In June 2020, resulting from a Franco-German initiatives, the EU is aiming for further defense effort and integration in response to the ongoing US-China rivalry.¹¹⁰ This event introduces the last sub-chapter of this analysis that will focus on the key role played by France in shaping the European Defense and the new security partner it seeks in Germany, post-Brexit.

b. France as leader of the European Defense

In its strategic engagement towards NATO and the CSDP, France stands out for its fierce position on the promotion of an autonomous, non-US dependent, and successful European Defense. France's vision for the EU is highly influenced by the traditional core of the French domestic and international policy. The country is defined by its "strategic autonomy". France emphasizes its intention to become an international player by stressing out its nuclear power, projection power and even warfare in the intelligence field. France is at the origin of the term "l'Europe de la Défense"¹¹¹. Nevertheless, after the reintegration of France in NATO, resulting in the adoption of a pragmatic approach by France as mentioned previously, "l'Europe de la Défense" impeded, as France sought

¹⁰⁹ Esteban, Mario, Miguel Otero-Iglesias, Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova, *Et al.* "Europe in the Face of US-China Rivalry," *Ifri*, January 23, 2020.

¹¹⁰ Wintour, Patrick. "EU to Discuss Greater Defence Cooperation in Face of US-China Tensions," *The Guardian*, June 15, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/15/eu-discuss-greater-defence-cooperation-us-china-tensions>.

¹¹¹ Literally translated "The Europe of Defense".

the best outcome to benefit and ensure its own security purpose. Therefore, prone to several criticisms from French scholars and diplomats, Sarkozy claimed that the return to NATO is aligned with a strategic plan for EU's best interest, which remains the priority for the nation, as it would help diminish other allies' apprehension for "l'Europe de la Défense". Consequently, as France slowly distances itself from NATO, without questioning its necessity, "l'Europe de la Défense" resurfaces, under François Hollande.¹¹² In 2013, the European Council reviewed the eventual improvement of defense policies and endeavored to reach a stronger cooperative behavior between the EU28. In 2016, the publication of a "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe: A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy", is aligned with the European dynamic searching to build up a stronger security arm. It is following the election of President Donald Trump, that France assumes its leadership role and picks up the pace. Macron launches new European Defense initiatives as he states that the EU cannot rely on its US partner anymore. He is rapidly expressing his personal enthusiasm for a European army and exposes himself to criticism from both sides of the Atlantic. It remains crucial to state that such "European Army" does not aim at replacing NATO, but rather act as complementary to the body. France's idea of European Army is substantiated by the gathering of EU Member-States troops under one sole army, to prevent or tackle external conflicts.¹¹³ Brexit then plays a significant part in the reshaping of the EU. Indeed, with the UK leaving, France appears as the sole European Member-

¹¹² Kunz B. "Defending Europe? A Stocktaking of French and German Visions for European Defense", *IRSEM* 41 (2015).

¹¹³ Valášek, Tomáš, and Erik Brattberg. "EU Defense Cooperation: Progress Amid Transatlantic Concerns." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, November 21, 2019.

States possessing nuclear weapons, is the first European army (in numbers of troops) and accounts for the biggest military power in the EU. In addition to that, the nation is increasingly interventionist, opposed to the UK and the US in the recent years.

To achieve such Europeanist projects, France finds in Germany an ad hoc partner and debuted the formulation of a Paris-Berlin axis. Germany agreed with France on its incriminating statement on the US insisting on its unreliability. Historically, and in the field of strategy and foreign policy, France and Germany do not share a common vision. France prefers military solutions to tackle issues, opposing the German diplomatic approach to solve international conflicts. Yet, both countries agreed to further integrate the European defense, and in 2017, the launch of PESCO, allowing Members-States to collaborate in the defense sector, is the first concrete result of the Franco-German relationship. PESCO is open to any Member-States, as Germany emphasized the importance of a united, non-exclusive Europe, despite the weak military capabilities of certain countries.¹¹⁴ The 2016 German White Paper underlines the country's recent improvement in participating in international security, through the deployment of military forces. Albeit the relatively slow establishment to reach these goals, the shift in the German engagement might have triggered a butterfly effect among Europe. All the more so as it appears as an element of surprise, since Germany always expressed its reticence when dealing with military power, due to its historical past. Such changes will benefit France and its multiple projects for the EU.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p13

Hence, with Brexit, France is seizing a once in a lifetime opportunity to reshape EU's defense to its own image. Well aware that such initiatives can be blocked by other Member-States, France is taking the leadership progressively, taking advantage of its exceptional role and power among other EU28. The country recognizes the need of its German neighbor's support to achieve its ambitions; and Germany appears as a partner supporting the initiatives but knows when to put a halt when France appears too insistent. However, the death knell of NATO, being replaced by the CSDP is highly unprobeable in the coming years. NATO is not endangered by Europe itself, but rather by the US detachment and unstable political position in regard to the Organization.

VI. Conclusion

This study was conducted to provide answers in regard to the NATO policy adopted by France and the UK over the succession of government for both countries since 2009 up to 2019. The historical analysis, accompanied by the scrutiny of official governmental paper in extenso, public statements, and NATO defense expenditures provide the necessary tools to understand the NATO strategies adopted by Presidents and Prime Ministers. The findings of this thesis emphasize that the NATO policy adopted by both countries differ drastically and on a larger extent, seems relatively opposite.

The past and current British NATO policy is contingent on the traditional core of the British foreign policy. Over the years, the UK reiterates its unwavering commitment to the Alliance. The “special relationship” deteriorate gradually, yet, Britain remains a staunch American ally. Indeed, NATO, besides prevailing as the cornerstone of the British national security, appears as a tool for the nation to safeguard and reinforce the “special relationship” with its Great American ally. From Gordon Brown, up to Boris Johnson, the British NATO policy is characterized by its stable financial engagement with Britain constantly meeting of the 2% of the GDP NATO target for the defense budget, even in time of crisis. The financial investment supports Britain’s political engagement. The aftermath of Brexit deeply impacted the British NATO policy, as the event is accompanied by the election of Trump, and his constant shifting position in regard to NATO. The UK then redoubles its effort to enact its security strategy. The

British national security interest appears at stake as the European defense institutions do not protect the country anymore. The NATO strategic engagement can be further emphasized by an increasing rapprochement to the Alliance, to safeguard Britain, and preserve its role of middle power and Euro-Atlantic bridge.

Whereas France, adopts a radically different strategy in its engagement towards NATO. The NATO-French historical disparities constantly affect the balance between the two actors over the past decades. France is characterized by its strong advocacy for the French sovereignty and independence from the US. The return to NATO integrated military command structure displays a policy of rupture from the “Gaullo-Mitterrandian” traditional policy. Yet, the reintegration hides deeper French ambitions. Originally, the harsh French stance on the US created a general distrust from some pro-US European Member-States, towards France. The political decision to return to NATO improves France’s image in Europe. Furthermore, France hopes to strengthen its influence on NATO allies in the decision-making, but not only, as it aims to implement its own vision on the Alliance. In the following administrations, the engagement towards NATO appears to fade away, as the country works to further integrate the EU. The country’s financial contributions do not meet the 2% NATO target, but France maintains its influential power through its high military engagement (number of troops deployed in various operations) exceeding the UK in this regard.

In the recent years, Britain is shaken by the election of Trump, and the Brexit. Simultaneously, Europeanist Macron brings France’s ambition in light. Using its position in NATO and its military power in the EU, France shares its willingness to work for a

stronger European Defense. The US growing Euroscepticism takes the projects to the next level. When compared to their investment in the CSDP, Britain and France's engagement are in total opposition. The findings of this thesis then emphasize a steady commitment from the UK to NATO, while the country's investment in the European Defense and more specifically the CSDP is diminishing over the years. Such a strategy is aligned with growing Euroscepticism from Britain. On the contrary, France's NATO policy is marked by a slow disinterest from the Alliance as it represents more of a tool for France to reach its ideas of grandeur for the EU. The sovereign state is focusing on the further improvement of the CSDP and the launch of several initiatives post-Brexit. Thus, despite the emphasis on the complementarity of NATO and the CSDP, France and the UK view the two bodies as opposite since engaging in one, result in distancing from the other.

Overall, the prospects for NATO and the EU seems blurred. NATO's viability depends highly on the US decisions for the Transatlantic Organization. The EU is increasingly developing a France-led defense sector, reinforced by the recent Paris-Berlin axis. The UK may still play a vital role for Europe, as France needs its military capabilities, notwithstanding Brexit. Furthermore, both countries do not reconsider the significance of the Anglo-French cooperation, and the recent French implementation of the European Intervention Initiative (EII) in 2018, with the UK being one of its members, reinforce this bond. While Britain will weigh on the European defense through NATO and the several bilateral agreements it shares with EU Member-States, it is in Britain's best interest to not only work on its relationship with the US, but also with France, since

the country decided to orient its policy to the European continent, and not only the European Union itself.

This thesis is limited by its time scope as Emmanuel Macron, and Boris Johnson are incumbent President and Prime Minister. Therefore, their NATO strategic engagement might be subject to changes in the coming years. Brexit is an on-going process, limiting the political introspection, and prospect for the UK. Finally, the findings rely highly on the analysis of White Papers, official statements, thus the study is limited when such materials are missing, i.e. during Theresa May, and Boris Johnson administration.

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Abstract in Korean

국문초록

유럽연합(EU)과 북대서양조약기구(NATO)의 역학관계는 대서양 안보와 방위를 좌지우지한다. 북대서양조약기구는 처음 출범한 1949년 이래로 본 기구는 유럽의 안보 수립에 목표를 두고 있다. 유럽연합은 수년 간 유럽은 안보 자치권을 주장해왔고 그에 따라 공동안보방위정책(CSDP)을 설립했다. 프랑스와 영국은 유럽지역에 막강한 영향력을 행사하는 강국으로써 각각 유럽연합과 북대서양조약기구에 병력 증강을 도모하며 유럽의 방위에 가장 힘써왔다. 프랑스의 경우 2009년 북대서양조약기구의 군사지휘권에 다시 재가입했다. 따라서 2009년을 기점으로 십년 동안의 유럽연합과 북대서양조약기구의 전략적 관계를 연구하기 위해 프랑스의 정책과 영국 정부의 정책을 분석하고자 한다. 상반되는 북대서양조약기구에 대한 양국의 전략적 관계와 입장은 대서양동맹에 지대한 영향을 미친다. 각 정부의 북대서양조약기구 전략적 정책의 심층 분석은 양국과 북대서양조약기구의 전략적 관계 및 유럽연합 안보를 위한 양국의 기여도를 잘 입증한다. 본 논문은 상반되는 북대서양조약기구 정책과 궁극적으로 미국에 대한 입장에도 불구하고 유럽방위를 위해 프랑스와 영국의 정책 연구에 목적을 둔다. 본 논문은 브렉시트(Brexit) 이후의 영국과 그로 인해 유럽연합의 유일한 핵무기 포함 군사력을 보유한 강국으로 발돋움한 프랑스의 북대서양조약기구 전략적 관계 및 정책을 분석하며 궁극적으로 유럽의 방위를 전망하고자 한다.

키워드: 북대서양조약기구, 유럽 방위, 프랑스, 영국, 북대서양조약기구 정책