

CONFERENCE REPORT

France and Germany in the EU – 50 Years after Elysée The couple viewed by their European Partners

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The conference “France and Germany in the EU – 50 years after Elysée. The couple viewed by their European partners” organised within the THESEUS project by the Jean Monnet Chair, University of Cologne, in cooperation with the the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) and the Centre d’études européennes Sciences Po Paris. The event took place on 6 and 7 December 2012 in Brussels at the Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the EU. The conference put the focus on the current development of the role of the Franco-German couple in the EU and the way it is seen by other European states. This topic was discussed in the context of the historical development of the last 50 years since the Elysée treaty, the future of the Eurozone, developments in EU external action, and the future of the EU through the potential for differentiated integration. The conference was opened on Thursday 6th December 2012 with welcome addresses by *Rainer Steffens* (Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the EU), *Jürgen Chr. Regge* (Fritz Thyssen Foundation, Cologne) and *Wolfgang Wessels* (University of Cologne).

The first panel session was chaired by *Hartmut Marhold* (CIFE, Nice) and focussed on the ‘Golden Wedding’ of the 50 years of Franco-German relationship within the framework of European integration. *Alfred Grosser* (Sciences Po Paris) started the discussion by outlining the remarkable historical development of the Franco-German relations after the end of the Second World War. While in 1945, France virtually had no enemy except for Germany, the picture changes completely to the situation a few years later in 1958 at the end of the IV. Republic when Germany became France’s most trusted ally. In this context Franco-German relations were oscillating between friendship with true *Gleichberechtigung* (‘equality’) and a pragmatic alliance. *Grosser* further elaborated on the way the different political leaders of the two countries shaped European integration and gave de Gaulle’s scepticism on accession of the UK to the EU as an example. He cited three main power resources of France in the historical relationship vis-à-vis Germany: France’s authority as one of the four victory powers of the war, its permanent seat in the UN Security Council, and its nuclear capabilities. With the developments in Europe after the end of the Cold War such as the Eastern Enlargement of the EU, new political and geostrategic circumstances for the couple emerge together with new opportunities, e.g. the Weimar triangle cooperation with Poland. *Hartmut Kaelble* (Humboldt University Berlin) focussed in his presentation on the different successes and failures of the Elysée Treaty. On the positive side, the Treaty became the most important symbol in Franco-German relations, even surpassing events like the Schuman speech. The two most practical successes that stemmed from the treaty were the unique regular meetings of both national governments and the institutionalised youth cooperation between the two countries. However, the Treaty failed in many of its original objectives such as leading to common policies towards

external actors or recalibrating the relationship of Europe towards the USA. *Kaelble* emphasised the prominence of the Treaty in the historical memory of the two countries and explained this by the fact that the Treaty does not carry a single message but numerous ones to which everyone can identify to a certain degree. The former Belgian Ambassador to the EU, *Philippe de Schoutheete*, then drew the attention to three reasons that can explain the overall positive Franco-German cooperation in the context of European integration over the last decades. Firstly, the complex historical relations and geographical proximity of the two countries played a large role. Secondly, the role of Jean Monnet was pivotal in the institutional development of the integration project through the establishment of stable institutions and the Community method. Finally, Germany and France, as well as other EU countries, always projected their own political system on European integration. While France projected his presidential system and emphasised a rather intergovernmental method, Germany's federal system led to a promotion of multi-level governance in the EU. The subsequent discussion among the conference participants focused *inter alia* on the role of academic cooperation in Franco-German relations and the possible future tendency of the couple to form a European *directoire*.

The second panel session was chaired by *Renaud Dehousse* (Sciences Po Paris) and involved *Francesco Saraceno* (Observatoire Français des Conjonctures Économiques, Paris), *Brigid Laffan* (University College Dublin) and *Marc Servies* (Deputy Commissioner for Franco-German Cooperation) as discussion panellists. With regard to the Euro crisis, *Francesco Saraceno* argued that Germany is rather doing well, but France, on the contrary, needed to follow Germany and to restore its competitiveness for which he made crucial remarks. The German situation reflecting low unemployment is one democratic way to choose, he argued. But the price Germany pays for it can be seen in increasing poverty, which increased since 2005 by 4 %. With regard to demographics the French population is projected to take over the population of Germany. *Marc Servies* presented the exclusivity of the Franco-German relationship reflected in the important fact that both diplomatic services are part of each other's team and involved in the very heart of policy-making. In symbolic terms there are about 300 French-German associations, 2,200 cities partnerships, 4,300 school partnerships and others. The recent economic crisis has to a certain extent established a new kind of legitimacy of the French-German couple. *Servies* argued that the Franco-German engine was pivotal in reaching compromises among the EU-27. Instruments such as the so-called six-pack, the ESM and the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance are products of the Franco-German compromise. The bilateral meeting in Deauville of Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy showed that both, France and Germany, realized their inability to embark other member states such as Italy. Besides these success stories, differences are still very much present. The current debate about the banking union is one example. The negotiation on the multi-annual financial framework is another one. *Servies* concluded that thanks to the Élysée-Treaty the Franco-German compromise is always something reachable. *Brigid Laffan* referred in her contribution to the fact that 'managing the difference' is an important element in the EU. Especially for smaller member states, procedures and institutions really matter. On the side of the convergences *Laffan* said that both, France and Germany, agreed on the survival of the euro. As regards to divergences, she criticized the 'passive' role of Nicolas Sarkozy whose stronger participation in tackling the Eurozone crisis would have led to earlier intervention. She further stated that the banking union is a positive development, but that it will take some ten years to be in place. Coming back to 'managing diversity' she mentioned that it will be much more difficult in the future for outsiders of the Eurozone to join the club. The extraordinary detachment of the UK and their technical screening process of repatriation is another one the European Union will have to face in the close future. *Laffan* further mentioned an important element for the EU's development, namely the legitimacy of a stronger Euro area. EU institutions will not solve this problem. She outlined that the European Union will never have representation until it starts taxation and concluded that 'no representation without taxation' is a major future issue for the European Union.



The THESEUS Award ceremony was the final and concluding part of the first day. *Catherine Day* (Secretary-General of the European Commission) delivered a laudatory speech for the remittal of the Award for Outstanding Research on European Integration 2012 to *Brigid Laffan* (University College Dublin). *Brigid Laffan* received the THESEUS Award for her outstanding academic record in the field of European integration. Her work contributed substantially to the progress of the state of the art and has influenced academic and political debates in Europe. Besides the outstanding prize, the THESEUS Award for Promising Research on European Integration distinguishes each year an excellent piece of work of a junior researcher in the field of European integration, which analyses an on-going challenge for the European Union and its member states. This year the Award went to two young researchers, *Claudia Schrag Sternberg* and *Theresa Kuhn* (both University of Oxford). *Claudia Schrag Sternberg* has been awarded for her publication on “The Struggle for EU Legitimacy: Public Contestation 1950s-2005”, forthcoming at Palgrave, based on her PhD thesis at the University of Cambridge. *Theresa Kuhn* received the Award for her PhD thesis on “Individual transnationalism and EU support. An empirical test of Deutsch’s transactionalist theory” written at the European University Institute, Florence. The thesis empirically tests Karl W. Deutsch’s transactionalist theory in the context of the European Union today.

This panel session was chaired by *Wolf-Ruthart Born* (State Secretary rtd., Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and focused on EU external action and the role of the Franco-German alliance. *Atila Eralp* (Middle East Technical University, Ankara) stated that the French-German leadership is limited in the area of external action and that - as a result of different security cultures - there is more divergence than convergence between the two. Citing Stefan Lehne, he reminded the audience that the decisive voice in the Union’s foreign policy has been the “big three”: Germany, France and the United Kingdom, the latter two acquiring a common position in the field of CFSP more often than France and Germany, as the recent examples of Libya and Syria showed. Moreover, *Eralp* pointed out that the efficiency of the Franco-German leadership is negatively affected by the economic crisis, which has led to a re-nationalisation of all kinds of EU policies, including foreign policy and the European Neighbourhood Policy. For the same reason the EEAS also suffers from a lack of coherence, with High Representative/Vice-President Ashton being unable to provide coordination and a common position among all member states. Nowadays there are more flexible and inclusive foreign policy instruments and mechanisms that are needed on the EU level. While presenting a Turkish policy-makers’ point of view, *Eralp* believed that the Franco-German cooperation is visible in the economic sphere only, and that on the political dimension Ankara prefers working directly bilaterally with Paris or Berlin. Though seen as a positive development, a creation of an institutionalised European diplomacy should not result in a substitute for Turkey’s membership in the EU. The Union needs a more differentiated and inclusive approach to - embracing also candidate countries - integration within the foreign policy area. Nevertheless, Turkey does not wish to be perceived as a marginalised ‘privileged partner’ and therefore does not appreciate the concept of a ‘positive agenda’. It aims at being a full-fledged EU member state. Opening another negotiation chapter in the following months would be a very symbolic and important signal for Ankara, underlined by the fact that 2013 is the 50th anniversary of the association agreement between Turkey and the EU.

Kristi Raik (Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki) explained the complex relation between the EEAS and national diplomacy, underlining the importance of European diplomacy for smaller member states in particular. The EU is in an urgent need of leadership, but it should not neither originate from Berlin, Paris, or London, but from the EU institutions in Brussels. The



big member states, especially France and the UK, continue to have their own global ambitions, using the EU's structure to multiply their powers, and supporting it as long as it does not constrain their interests. This is a reason why the differentiated approach and the "big three" concepts are differently perceived by the member states: some see it as a threat to their sovereignty, others as an opportunity; for some it resulted in a re-nationalisation of policies, for others in an Europeanization of their own diplomatic services. The tensions between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism drive the functioning of the EEAS. The service has still a long way to go before it will be able to involve all Member States and create trust among them. In the following discussion, *Graham Avery* (Honorary Director-General of the European Commission), *Joachim Schild* (University of Trier), *Jaap de Zwaan* (Erasmus University, Rotterdam) and *Wolfgang Wessels*, put emphasis on the themes of potential Turkish accession to the EU, the United States' approach towards the region, Southern Neighbourhood, particularly Libya and Syria, and general EU's involvement in global politics. There were two hypotheses raised; first, that the divergences between Germany and France are the reasons why the Franco-German tandem cannot take the lead of the Union; and second, that in the globalised world of shifting balances, the member states must understand they cannot afford having their own single voice anymore, and that the only way for Europe is to have a common answer to global challenges. According to an envisaged spill-over effect, as reminded by *Wolfgang Wessels*, *communauté d'information* shall transfer into the *communauté de vue* and at the final stage into the *communauté d'action*.

In the second session of the day, a conference roundtable discussed the topic 'Which Future for the EU: Political Union Directoire or Differentiated Integration?' The chair, *Gianni Bonvicini* (Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome) opened the roundtable by asking the panellists three questions. First, what will be the future of the UK in Europe? Secondly, given the current divergences in the relationship of France and Germany, how can the two countries move together again? Finally, does differentiated integration requires a new substantial revision of the EU treaties? The first discussant, *Gérard Grunberg* (Sciences Po Paris), elaborated on the current French perceptions of the relationship to its eastern neighbour. According to him, the relationship of the two countries is imbalanced for some time now. The 'Merkozy' couple in the past was a way to camouflage the fact that it was indeed Germany who took the important decisions in the Euro crisis. There was a change of working method with Hollande, but the new president has not many options given the current economic constraints in France and the EU. Moreover, *Grunberg* pointed out how sceptical the French people are concerning deeper political integration and further transfer of national competences to the EU and reminded the participants of the failed referendum on the constitutional treaty in 2005. Finally, he sees the need to connect the current discussions on economic reforms to the external relations sphere, since no political Union will be possible without a fully implemented CFSP. *William Paterson*, (Aston University, Birmingham) added the British perspective to the roundtable. He underlined the UK's position at the sovereign end of the sovereignty-solidarity continuum of EU integration. The UK governments' primary aim at the moment is to prevent contagion from the Euro crisis and to accommodate EU sceptic voters. He further pointed out the reluctant and at times contradictory attitude of the UK regarding differentiated integration at the EU level. To provide the discussion with academic analysis on the different forms of differentiated integration, *Funda Tekin* (University of Cologne) presented a 'matrix', which outlines various ways of cooperation in Europe. She showed the complexity of the picture reflecting legal constructs such as the fiscal compact, the enabling clause, the upcoming financial transaction tasks and several opt-outs/ and -ins structuring European integration. The EU-internal discussion on differentiation has also an important external dimension, as can be seen by the fact that some non-EU countries participate in specific cooperation frameworks. The final discussant of the roundtable, *Jaap de Zwaan* (Erasmus University Rotterdam), started by opposing the general tendency in the differentiation discussion to focus mainly on the future development of the Eurozone. He argued



instead that people should bear in mind that the EU-27 should remain the central forum for discussion on further integration steps at the European level. Even more so, he proposed that non-EU countries should be offered to join common efforts and gave an inclusion of Turkey in the CFSP as a possible example. As a final point, the discussant pointed out the idea to develop new innovative concepts of EU membership, which could include differentiated integration and responsibilities for applying countries. The general discussion following the roundtable took up this idea and focussed *inter alia* on possible ways to include non-EU members in integration taking into consideration aspects such as the required legal basis and voting rights in the EU institutions.

In his concluding remarks *Jacek Saryusz-Wolski* (Member of the European Parliament) questioned the power and legitimacy of a Franco-German couple. It has been effective in the past but the demand for leadership needs to be reconsidered in the future. In a European Union of 27 and soon 28 member states *Saryusz-Wolski* fostered the need for a strong leadership role of the EU institutions and thus a strong voice from Brussels. With the omnipresent theme of using the opportunity of the crisis for further integration, he highlighted that a '25-2 –Europe' could go on without being blocked. Great Britain will have to decide whether it is 'in' or 'out'. The EU cannot afford to 'waste the crisis', but must get out of the crisis stronger than before. *Wolfgang Wessels* argued that the Franco-German couple can provide leadership also because of their many differences. *Wessels* took up the main results of the conference and underlined that there are two main differences regarding the Franco-German couple. First, there is no leadership and no convergence in the field of Common Foreign and Security Policy. And secondly, there is a lack of a vision of Europe. Referring to Jacques Delors and '*L'Europe sans frontières*' *Wessels* stressed the need for a vision. He further argued that more democracy is essential, especially regarding the economic crisis. With the crisis now, Europe is confronted with the Monnet method again. He concluded that it is important to get out of the crisis as soon as possible and that the Franco-German couple provided effective leadership. However, *Wessels* stressed, informal leadership should not be formalised in a democratic and legitimate European Union.

