

Reconsidering sovereignty in security and defence cooperation

The case of European ‘great powers’

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Summary

The establishment of integrative commitments between states in the field of security and defence is an underexplored issue in international relations. This article is a case study of Franco-British security and defence cooperation in the Lancaster House Treaties (LHTs). France and Britain created a format for cooperation on their nuclear deterrent which involves integrative commitments. I argue that in order to account for their decision to establish such commitments, we cannot solely rely on rationalist explanations. In order to understand the French and British choice of partners and the scope and depth of commitments the LHTs entails, it is necessary to incorporate an approach that places significance on parallels in states' national roles. The article contributes to the debate on international cooperation by suggesting that a comprehensive approach is necessary in order to account for integration between states in the field of security and defence.

Keywords

Integrative commitments – National roles – Security and defence cooperation – Sovereignty

Introduction

Literature in IR suggests that cooperation between states will be limited in order to not constrain the sovereignty and integrity of states (Hoffman 1966, Menon 2013). However, novel formats of European security and defence cooperation are challenging this assumption. The Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF) and the Benelux countries (Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) have established de facto military integration by integrating their national air forces (Forsberg 2013, Hyde-Price 2018, Maurice 2015). Thus, developments in European security and defence suggest that scholars may need to reconsider the significance placed by states on retaining sovereignty in decisions regarding the establishment of cooperation and integration in the field of security and defence. French and British security and defence cooperation formalised in the 2010 Lancaster House Treaties (LHTs) represents another example of bilateral security and defence cooperation in Europe that involves integration. Historically, France and Britain have a long-term working relationship both at the level of the defence industry and at the political-strategic level (Mayner et. al 2004, Pannier 2013). However, French and British commitment to security and defence cooperation in the LHTs represents a break from the past. Anglo-French cooperation in the LHTs involves integrative commitments through the establishment of facilities required to maintain their nuclear deterrence, which is an unprecedented shift in the bilateral relations between the two states.

Anglo-French security and defence cooperation in the LHTs constitute full-spectrum cooperation, signifying cooperation at all levels involved in national security and defence policy. This includes cooperation on defence procurement, on research, on development of defence capability, military operations, and even cooperation on nuclear weapons and deterrence. The latter part of this cooperation is the most surprising, as it is particularly in the area of nuclear cooperation that France and Britain's mutual commitments challenge the sovereignty of states. Scholars have analysed Anglo-French cooperation in the LHTs (Pannier 2013, Pannier and Schmitt 2014, Ostermann 2015, Pannier 2016, Pannier 2020). However little attention has been given to the scope and depth of commitments between the two states, in particular with respect to the nuclear aspect of their defence cooperation. How did it come to be that agreement on full-spectrum security and defence cooperation, including nuclear cooperation, between France and Britain was possible?

In order to provide a comprehensive account of how such integrative commitments came about, it is necessary to move beyond purely rationalist accounts of European security and defence cooperation. French and British self-understanding as 'great powers' was significant in triggering the establishment of integrative commitments in security and defence cooperation. Yet, integration is rarely triggered by one factor alone. Material and strategic interests are important to consider in any policymaking process regarding the establishment of defence cooperation between states. By developing hypotheses derived from realism (Morgenthau 1993), liberal institutionalism (Moravcsik 1997) and role theory (Holsti 1970, Aggestam 2006) the

paper aims to provide a comprehensive account of what triggered France and Britain to establish integrative commitments on questions concerning national security and defence. The article contributes to the debate on international cooperation by demonstrating that states in fact make integrative commitments in 'high politics', through a case study of Anglo-French security and defence cooperation.

The approach

Research on Anglo-French bilateral defence cooperation has highlighted the significance of material incentives for the establishment of cooperation (Jones 2011, Durnad 2010, Pannier 2013, Pannier 2020). The argument is that bilateral cooperation between France and Britain is the result of rational economic self-interest (ibid). Bilateral defence cooperation was a way for France and Britain to make economic savings through joint defence procurement, pooling and sharing resources and joint military training (Pannier 2016). To be sure, the economic argument is significant for understanding what triggered cooperation between France and Britain. However, a cost-benefit explanation alone is insufficient. There were also significant geopolitical and strategic interests that were important for triggering cooperation between France and Britain. The American 'pivot to Asia' was becoming increasingly apparent in NATO in the decade leading up to the LHTs and it became more important for France and Britain to secure a proficient level of defence autonomously (SDSR 2008, Livre Blanc 2008). In order to fully account for Anglo-French security and defence cooperation such factors must also be taken into consideration. While neorealist perspectives cannot account for the establishment of integration (Waltz 1979), a neoclassical perspective can be applied to study integration because integrative commitments are considered possible (Snyder 1996).

Furthermore, literature on Anglo-French security and defence cooperation has highlighted the significance of state administrations for understanding how defence agreement between France and Britain came about (Pannier 2013: 554). The argument is that defence cooperation is multidimensional, and that interstate cooperation can be explained by investigating state level defence administrations (Pannier 2013 p. 54m1). In this perspective, interstate cooperation in defence is determined by "four sets of factors: the scope and nature of political involvement; the organisational structure of cooperation; actors' cognitive frameworks, including their cultural understanding, personal ties and shared norms; and a material dimension in the form of an individual, material interest to cooperate" (Pannier 2013 p. 541). This insight into bilateral cooperation puts emphasis on important meso-level indicators for how cooperation between states in security and defence is possible. While the role of state administrations is central and a significant area of study in order to understand developments in defence cooperation between states, it still leaves a gap in our understanding of the policymaking process. This article aims to provide an account of the establishment of integrative commitments between states thorough a case study of Franco-British cooperation in the LHTs. The research findings can be used to make theoretical generalisations to other developments within the field of security and defence.

In addition, Pannier (2016 p. 485) explores how Brexit has impacted Anglo-French security and defence cooperation and argues that despite growing differences with respect to European politics and practical changes in UK armament policy, the bilateral security and defence relationship endures. On a visit to Paris in 2016 in the aftermath of the Brexit vote Theresa May remarked: "The intelligence and security co-operation between our countries is something that will always endure – even after Britain has left the European Union" (May 2016, in Pannier 2016 p. 485). The nuclear commitments made in the LHTs have been reaffirmed since British decision to leave the EU and remain in place today. Thus, accounting for the mechanisms that enabled the establishment of integrative commitments between France and Britain, specifically in the field of nuclear cooperation, is equally pertinent today.

There have been also been discussions in the literature on Anglo-French security and defence cooperation of the significance of France and Britain sharing an identity or beliefs regarding their role on the international stage (Pannier and Schmitt 2014, Harrois 2020, Osterman 2015). However, these observations are empirical in nature and are not accounted for theoretically. Pannier and Schmitt (2014 p. 275) argue that "... in the past decade, France and Britain have converged on two major things: both wish to actively pursue the development of European defence capabilities in a pragmatic fashion, and both wish to use NATO as a power-multiplier, given their strong sense of 'self'" (Pannier and Schmitt 2014: 275). However, it is not clear what is meant by France and Britain's strong sense of 'self'. Investigating this identity and providing theoretical specification to the claim that French and British role understandings were a key factor in enabling integration is a central objective of in this article. Osterman (2015 p. 335) has also employed a constructivist approach, conducting a discourse analysis on parliamentary and executive sources in France and Britain. He makes the point that French and British foreign policy traditions and beliefs changed in the time leading up to the LHTs, allowing a new kind of security and defence cooperation to emerge. However, it is not clear what has changed in France and Britain national identities. Furthermore, Osterman's approach combines material interest and strategic interest with identity and norms in one concept, preventing an analytical distinction between these different set of factors and therefore an assessment of the relative importance of each factor as well as how they interact. To unpack and specify what triggered French and British governments to establish to binding commitments in the field of defence, it is necessary to distinguish between the different factors that facilitated its establishment. The article aims to do precisely this, through the application of three analytically distinct hypotheses derived from realism, liberal institutionalism and constructivism respectively.

To find out why France and Britain established the LHTs, we need to question the importance states place on retaining sovereignty in decisions regarding the establishment of cooperation on questions of defence. In research on European security and defence, it has been argued that interstate cooperation between European states can only go so far due to differences in European states' security cultures (Meyer 2005, Mérand 2008). Literature on security and defence cooperation in the EU has stressed the purely intergovernmental and non-binding nature of such cooperation (Howarth 2001, Menon 2003, Menon 2013). In fact, Menon (2013 p. 2) asserts that EU

involvement in states' core powers remains close to zero. Furthermore, research arguing that the EU has moved beyond cooperation on security and defence has tended to focus on EU institutions (Cross 2013, 2015) or on how the EU has made states act more alike through a process of Europeanisation leading to policy convergence (Tonra 2003, Tonra 2019, Rieker 2005). However, there has been less focus on developments at the individual state level. Missing from the literature therefore are analyses of states' decision to establish integrative commitments. Accordingly, a characterisation of the factors at state level which contribute to the establishment of integrative commitments can improve our understanding of how integration is possible in the field of security and defence.

Integration vs. cooperation

I propose a distinction between two formats of interstate commitments: cooperation and integration. The application of this distinction, which is commonplace in literature on European integration in other fields, such as the single market, can also be useful for understanding developments in the field of security and defence between European states. In order to make a distinction between cooperative commitments and integrative commitments, it is necessary to employ a definition of integration which makes clear how integration differs from cooperation. In determining the degree to which states have move beyond cooperative commitments, I also make use of Sjursen's (2011) criteria, which require an analysis of: "1) the nature of the actors involved in making decisions; 2) the procedures through which decisions are made; 3) the scope and type of powers that are delegated; 4) the *raison d'être* of the cooperative endeavour." (Sjursen 2011, p. 1081–1082). I further specify these as criteria for the specific purposes of the analysis in this article. I thus consider that integration will have occurred if commitments between France and Britain result in one or more of the following outcomes: 1) states are unable to veto decisions, 2) actors aside from those specific to a given state (i.e. another state) are involved in making decisions that affect this state, 3) a transfer of power over a specific issue which cannot be reversed and, 4) situations in which the purpose of commitments is not reducible to the interests or values of a single state. Cooperative commitments do not place constraints on the sovereignty and integrity of states. Examples of cooperation in the field of security and defence commonly include joint procurement, joint military research and military training. Integrative commitments, on the other hand, are commitments that constrain national sovereignty. Other prominent cases of integrative commitments are examples of *de facto* military integration, as is the case of Benelux cooperation and also part of the Nordic defence cooperation between Sweden and Finland (Brøgger 2022).

With respect to security and defence cooperation between France and Britain, this paper will assert that the LHTs contains integrative commitments. The 1998 UK Strategic Defence Review had established that there was a "continuing need for Britain to have the capability offered by aircraft carriers" and determined that two large aircraft carriers would be built to replace the current generation of carriers (UK SDSR 1998, pp. 143–144). These two Queen Elizabeth-class carriers were under construction when the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review, published less than a month

before the signing of the LHTs, announced instead that only one carrier would be made operational, while the other would be held in extended readiness. The review even contemplated the sale of one of the carriers, "relying on cooperation with a close ally to provide continuous carrier-strike capability" (UK SDSR 2010, p. 9, pp. 22-23). The UK carrier design was changed to include catapults and arresting gear, enabling the deployment of the carrier-variant of the Joint Strike Fighter instead of the short take-off and vertical landing variant (STOVL) and thus ensuring compatibility with French naval jets. As explained in the 2010 LHT Summit Declaration, this would "ensure that the Royal Navy and the French Navy will work in the closest co-ordination over the next generation" (UK-France Summit Declaration on Defence and Security Co-operation 2010). During the ratification process for the LHTs, the change in carrier group strategy gave rise to discussions regarding sovereignty implications in both houses of the UK parliament. Lord Boyce's question to Lord Astor, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence, in the House of Lords was representative of a persistent line of questioning in which he argued that having only one carrier would "risk our ability to operate independently" and the "ability of the French to operate independently" and that this would lead to a situation in which it would be "difficult to imagine how we might mitigate against this risk in the years to come" (HL 721: 2010). Liam Fox, the Secretary of State for Defence, responding to similar questions in the House of Commons, summed up the government's position by arguing that the change in the number of carriers and the increased cooperation between France and Britain would lead to "greater interoperability", underlined that they would not be able to "force France to do something against their will or vice versa" and reiterated the "hope that we would be able to act together" (HC 517: 2010).

The decision to install catapults and arresting gear was reversed two years later when the related costs and timeline far exceeded initial estimates, and the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review also reversed the decision to only commission one of the carriers into operational use. However, this paper will argue that the subsequent reversal of these decisions, after the signing and ratification of the LHTs, does not detract from the relevance of understanding how the initial decision to pledge such integrative commitments was made possible.

A part of the LHTs that constrains national sovereignty is the nuclear treaty. The possession of a nuclear deterrent is at the centre of French and British military might in international affairs. To maintain this nuclear deterrent while upholding their commitment under the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty of 1996 to not conduct explosive nuclear tests, each country required advanced radiographic and hydrodynamics facilities to perform simulations to verify the safety and performance of their ageing nuclear stockpiles. Rather than duplicating these facilities in each country, Britain and France committed to build and jointly operate a radiographic/hydrodynamic facility in France and a facility in Britain to perform development of the technologies required to underpin the operation of the French facility (Treaty between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the French Republic on Joint Radiographic/Hydrodynamic Facilities 2010). Such facilities take years to design and build, and were due to be commissioned into use in several stages from 2014 until 2022 (Ibid). During the ratification process, members of parliament in both countries argued

that the nuclear treaty would entail a loss of autonomy. In France, there was added concern regarding the implications of the UK's close relationship with the US: "Above all, Minister, you want to implement cooperation on nuclear warheads, by sharing these technologies in joint simulation and modeling laboratories. When we know in this area the dependence of the British on the Americans, we can fear a loss of autonomy of French nuclear deterrence, a concept to which the President of the Republic nevertheless claims to be still very attached" (Mrs Michelle Demessine, National Assembly, May 3, 2011, p.6, authors translation). On the British side, the nuclear treaty was connected to a broader move in the direction of a European defence: "I welcome the Statement and the two agreements, but I really do not like the spin on this and I should like the Minister to address that. The Statement goes on about our national interests and it is all put decoratively. However, the reality is that we are giving up some of our national individuality and we know it. [...] there is an indication that we are moving, however slowly – perhaps over 10, 20 or 30 years – towards a European security defence movement. That is what is happening. This is just like the Tory party of the past when it said that the Single European Act and so on were nothing to do with European emergence. Will the Minister kindly drop the spin and recognise that that is the direction in which he is taking us?" (HL 721: 2010).

While the treaty allows for each country to perform independent work within each facility and does not mandate that all work or data is to be shared, the fact remains that in the case of a discontinuation of the nuclear treaty, neither country would independently possess the facilities or capabilities required to maintain their nuclear deterrence. Thus, the nuclear agreement involves a transfer of power over a specific issue which cannot be reversed. How was this agreement possible?

In the following section, hypotheses will be derived from each of three theoretical traditions to account for the nature of the LHTs, meaning specifically the choice of format (bilateral), the choice of partners (France and Britain) and the depth of commitments (integrative).

Hypotheses and indicators

In the classical realist tradition, states are considered self-interested actors that seek to maximise their interests in the context of anarchy (Morgenthau 1993). States, it is argued, follow their first order interests, which concern safeguarding their own national security (Hyde-Price 2008). Neoclassical realism puts emphasis on domestic factors and argues that there are factors in addition to the external environment of states that also impact state behaviour (Carr 1939, Morgenthau 1948). Factors such as new military technology, geopolitics, and regional alliances may influence the way in which the international environment affects state behaviour (Foulon and Meithbauer 2020, p. 1207, Snyder 1996, Ripsman et al. 2016). Following this understanding of states, the paper will consider the following hypothesis derived from realism (H1): France and Britain entered into the LHTs because each believed this was the best way to achieve their national security objectives. Indicators that would substantiate such a claim would be justifications for the LHTs which emphasise changes in the perception

of external threats, changes in existing security alliances and partnerships, perceived weaknesses in the current security setup or shifting security objectives and goals.

Liberal institutionalism expects that states will pursue their economic interests due to their existence in an interdependent world order (Moravcsick 1993, Moravcsick 1997, Schimmelfenning and Moravcsik 2009). The argument presented in the neoliberal tradition is that states determine the expected costs and benefits of a cooperation based on expected "individual and joint gains and losses" as well as "relative gains" (Keohane and Nye 1977 p. 8). Cooperation thus occurs because it is materially beneficial for states. In the context of security and defence cooperation, there are potential economic benefits in joint military procurement, military capability development and maintenance, pooling and sharing of resources and integration of armed forces. The paper will evaluate the following hypothesis derived from the liberal institutional perspective (H2): France and Britain entered into the LHTs because they expected the cost of going alone or alternative cooperative formats to be higher. Indicators that would support this hypothesis are justifications for the LHTs which centre on the expected material benefits or a reduction in costs, such as pressure to generate savings due to budget constraints or cost increases, industrial development opportunities and the relative costs and benefits of different cooperative formats.

Research has demonstrated that distribution of capabilities and rationalist self-interest do not entirely explain the foreign and security policy of a state (Wendt 1992). States' foreign and security policy is also formed on the basis of national roles (Holsti, 1970, Elgström and Smith 2006, Aggestam 2004), identity and culture (Katzenstein 1996) or norms and rules (March and Olsen 1998, Sjursen 2006). Katzenstein et. al (1996) argue that states have strategic cultures constituted and regulated by norms which influence the formation of state's security policy, suggesting that acting in line with a certain identity or role entails corresponding obligations. In Holsti's (1970) account of role concepts, the decisions and actions made by governments (labelled 'role performance') consist of prescriptive and constitutive elements and decisions and actions which demonstrate "policy makers' own conception of their nations role in a region or international system as a whole" (p. 240). The decisions made by governments thus represent the intersection between role conception and role prescription (ibid). In other words, role concepts "bridge the conceptual gap between the general beliefs held in a society and the beliefs of foreign policy decision makers" (Aggestam 2004, p. 14). Material and strategic incentives are not absent from overall role conception. However, norms influence foreign policy decision-makers and subsequently the decisions they make (Holsti 1970, Elgström and Smith 2006, Aggestam 2004, Sjursen 2006). Therefore, adhering to a certain self-perception involves specific obligations. An analysis of the factors underpinning a decision to pursue a course of action reveals not only states' material and strategic interest but also the normative basis of their self-perception. The paper will evaluate the following hypothesis derived from the constructivist perspective (H3): France and Britain entered into the LHTs due to a shared self-understanding of the role they occupy on the international stage. Indicators that would substantiate such a claim would be justifications for the LHTs that do not identify specific policy objectives in pursuit of strategic or material interests, but are premised on an understanding of the appropriate actions corresponding to each country's duties

in international relations and their mutual overlap in carrying out such obligations (March and Olsen 2006). Examples of such duties include maintaining full-spectrum military capabilities, exercising global leadership in international relations, taking an active stance on military interventions and showing a willingness to use military force.

Method and data

The research is qualitative and based on the case study method (George and Bennett 2005). It uses process tracing in a within-case study by examining the merit of different but complementary analytical approaches to analyse a single case (George and Bennett 2005, Bennet and Checkel 2015, Beach and Brun Pedersen 2013). Process tracing is a method used “to make with-in case inferences about the presence/absence of causal mechanisms within a single case study” (Beach and Pedersen 2016 p. 4). The type of process tracing employed in this research follows from the tradition of an analytical form of process-tracing that uses theoretical variables for the purpose of further extrapolating research findings into theoretical generalisations (George and Bennett 2005, p. 211). I have constructed three hypotheses, one derived from each theoretical perspective employed, realism, liberal institutionalism and constructivism respectively and I analyse whether and the extent to which these expectations are substantiated. The study aims to provide a comprehensive account of why France and Britain agreed to binding commitments in the field of security and defence. The findings of the research may allow for theoretical generalisations to other cases of security and defence cooperation where states have made comparable commitments. In order to limit bias that is to some degree unavoidable in qualitative research I have used the method of data triangulation, which is a method of ensuring data reliability by cross-checking data sources and collection techniques in order to provide validity in research findings (Bennet and Checkel 2015). I have also endeavoured to define the scope and ambition of my research clearly and transparently. I have included both the French and British perspective while being clear about the limits of the potential for empirical generalisability of my findings.

Moreover, I have collected and analysed over one hundred official documents. Specially, the 1998, 2003, 2008 and 2010 government white papers on defence and security in France and Britain, official government communications on Anglo-French security and defence cooperation from the Ministry of Defence in Britain, the French Senate and the French ‘Ministère des Armées’ alongside secondary literature. Additionally, I have systematically collected and analysed official transcripts from the House of Commons and Assemblée Nationale from the parliamentary ratification process for the LHTs. I have also conducted ten semi-structured interviews with senior government officials in Britain, France and NATO during 2014-2015. Interviewees were selected based on their knowledge of the process surrounding the establishment of the LHTs. The interviewees have been given anonymity and have been numbered from 1-10 allowing for the possibility to distinguish between them.

Anglo-French security and geopolitical interest?

In announcing the UK-France Defence Treaty in 2010, UK Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Nicolas Sarkozy placed great emphasis on how the treaty would strengthen their respective countries' defence capabilities. The Treaty text acknowledges that France and Britain have overlapping security interests, "bearing in mind that they do not see situations arising in which the vital interests of either Party could be threatened without the vital interests of the other also being threatened" (Treaty between the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland and the French Republic for Defence and Security Co-operation, 2010).

There was a perception in France and Britain that the security environment in Europe was changing during the time leading up to the establishment of the LHTs in 2010. One interviewee points to the US pivot to the East as an important factor for the establishment of the LHTs, citing discussions in the Assemblée Nationale in 2002: "strategically the US pivot to the East was something we had understood a long time ago. Considering the USA will look to the East, the pivot to Asia, was a way of saying NATO would never more be something powerful and efficient" (Interview 6). The argument was that with the US diverting focus and resources to other priorities, there was greater pressure on European states to strengthen European defence. Similar arguments were expressed in Britain. For example, the 1998 Strategic Defence Review White Paper (the last to be published before 2010) was criticised for failing to question the long-term logic of Britain's strong links to US military power and for neglecting the potential impact of changes in US policy for NATO and European security co-operation (SDR 1998, pp. 19-20).

Furthermore, there were important geopolitical changes happening in Europe as a result of the changing posture of Russia under Vladimir Putin's leadership. Putin shocked the world with his speech at the Security Conference in Munich in February 2007, subsequently matching "his words with actions" and leaving structures that had been put into place in order to preserve peace in post-Cold War Europe (Fried and Volker 2022). Furthermore, Russia announced that it would not adhere to the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty and "continued to reject the principle of host-nation consent for its troop presence in Georgia and Moldova, and began ignoring Vienna Convention limits on troop concentrations, exercises and transparency. In 2008, Russia invaded Georgia, trading its peacekeepers in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia for regular military personnel, and driving tanks toward the capital, Tbilisi" (Ibid).

Facing a US with divided attention and an increasingly aggressive Russia on Europe's eastern borders, it became clear that France and Britain's security interests were becoming more alike. The question then arises: why specifically the UK and France, given that the changing geopolitical realities are not specific to these two states alone? While France has typically enjoyed close relations with Germany, with the two countries referring to each other as "special partners" (Pannier & Schmidt 2014, p 283), one interviewee pointed to diverging attitudes towards Russia as an obstacle: "within Germany there is much less suspicion of Russia and that is partly because there is a

better trading partnership, partly because they potentially have a degree of sympathy with Russia's feelings about NATO expansion and the US" (Interview 8). Historically, disparate opinions regarding the importance of NATO and the development of EU security and defence policy had been a roadblock to UK-France security and defence cooperation. However, this changed in the decade leading up to the LHTs, particularly with France's 2009 reintegration into NATO command: "we can note that France and Britain's positions have come closer, while Germany's has not changed much, creating a new gap between Germany and its partners on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)" (Pannier & Schmidt 2014, pp. 274-275).

The above factors provide support for the hypothesis that similar strategic interests were a significant factor for triggering Anglo-French security and defence cooperation in the LHTs, particularly with regard to changes in security partnerships and the perception of external threats. However, there is reason to argue that this alone fails to provide a comprehensive account. Security concerns may have been important, but it is still not obvious from the evidence that France and Britain's security interests would not have been equally well served by a strengthening of defence and security cooperation with Germany and other European states who were observing a shift in US priorities away from Europe as well as a rising threat from Russia. The decision to engage in a bilateral UK-French partnership with integrative commitments rather than a broader multilateral format appears to have been at least partly rooted in an economic cost-benefit rationale, as highlighted by the 2010 British SDSR. Noting in the introduction that the challenge was to deliver a national security strategy "with inherited national security budgets in overdraft; and in the midst of the biggest financial crisis in a generation", it outlined that "we will focus particularly on building new models of practical bilateral cooperation with those countries whose defence and security posture is closest to our own or with whom we cooperate in multinational operations. [...] We will generally favour bilateral equipment collaboration or off-the-shelf purchase, because such arrangements are potentially more straightforward and more fruitful than complex multilateral agreements, which have delivered mixed results for us in the past" (UK SDSR 2010, p. 9, pp. 59-60). At the November 2010 UK-France summit press conference, David Cameron emphasised that the treaty would allow the two countries to "expand our sovereign capability even at a time when resources are tight" while Nicolas Sarkozy remarked "Britain and France, who have taken such a bold decision, who have pooled their capabilities at the service of one and the same policy is a historic event which, furthermore, is going to enable us to make savings" (UK-France Summit Press Conference 2010).

The economic benefit of French and British bilateral cooperation

The LHTs were popularly dubbed the "Entente Frugale", and it is well established in the literature that cost-benefit considerations were a major driver for the LHTs (Financial Times 2010, p. 10, Pannier 2013, Pannier 2016, Jones 2011). This view is supported in different official documents, secondary literature as well in the interviews, where three key factors emerge that substantiate the hypothesis that the LHTs were triggered by economic cost-benefit calculations.

Firstly, the 2008-09 global financial crisis placed austerity firmly on the agenda in most sectors of the global economy, and defence was no exception. Evidence suggests that the impact of austerity was significant for defence budgets in France and Britain in the time leading up to the establishment of the LHTs. This becomes clear when comparing the 2008 and 2013 French Livre Blancs on defence and national security. The 2008 Livre Blanc, initiated in 2007, points to the 'rise in global military spending' and commits France to growing defence spending in line with inflation until 2012 followed by a growth in spending of 1% above inflation until 2020 (French White Paper p. 9 and Livre Blanc 2008 p. 29). In contrast, the 2013 Livre Blanc establishes that "The financial crisis that has befallen the world marks a break with the context described in the previous White Paper, forcing many States to amend their security and defence arrangements. It has highlighted the economic aspect of national security: the Nation's independence is threatened if public deficits make it dependent on its creditors. [...] the right balance must be struck [...] so that our defence and security arrangements are consistent with the need for fiscal consolidation" (Livre Blanc 2013, p. 10) The 2010 SDSR makes a very similar point: "The difficult legacy we have inherited has necessitated tough decisions to get our economy back on track. Our national security depends on our economic security and vice versa. So bringing the defence budget back to balance is a vital part of how we tackle the deficit and protect this country's national security" (SDSR 2010, p. 6). The importance of these budgetary pressures as catalysts for the LHTs was a common theme across interviews and transcripts of policy discussions in French and British parliaments in which several MPs and interview participants argued that the tight budgets were a significant factor in the establishment of the LHTs (Interview 1, 3).

"We no longer have any choice but to cooperate, because our resources have become insufficient to maintain our defence effort." (Mrs Patricia Adam, National Assembly Third sitting of Tuesday, May 17, 2011, p.13, authors translation)

Secondly, evidence suggests that an industrial logic concerning the British and French defence industries contributed to the establishment of the LHTs. The British have frequently been criticised for lacking a clear vision in this regard, as pointed out by one interviewee: "while Britain doesn't really have a defence industrial strategy, both France and the US do" (Interviewee 7). The defence industrial strategy, or lack thereof, is naturally linked to partnerships and alliances, as pointed out by Bickerton: "In many ways, the British attachment to NATO and to the special relationship reflects a lack of political imagination. Lying behind it is a preference for cheap and off-the-shelf military equipment, rather than more politically driven European procurement projects that would represent a long-term commitment on the part of the British Government" (Bickerton 2010, p. 119). This arguably changed with the increasing need to support the defence industry: "if the level of the budget is not commensurate with the size of the industry you need to rationalise rather than abandon it, hold on to enough, and then you have to do that in partnership, sharing intellectual property, jobs, work share, etc. [...] And if you are looking for complementary capabilities you need to look for sort of an equal partner and France was an equal partner in terms of industrial capabilities, in terms of the spectrum of capabilities they retain and the nuclear capability as well" (Interview 4). Another interviewee highlighted the same

need from the point of view of the companies operating in the defence sector: “it is very simple in fact. You have something like 10 big companies in Europe, roughly. The biggest are all American or Anglo-American. At the bottom of the spectrum you have new guys, Turkish, Brazilian, Chinese, tomorrow maybe Indians and so on. True Europeans are in the middle. Our analysis is that all these true European companies have to work together one way or the other simply to survive” (Interview 6). The 2010 SDSR supports the argument that the issue was rising in importance in the UK, with the chapter on Alliances announcing an ambition specifically regarding France of “working together to develop a stronger, globally competitive defence industrial and technology base” (2010 SDSR, p61).

The language in the SDSR about favouring bilateral equipment collaboration brings up the third major factor underlined by interviewees. If the LHTs were motivated by material interests, why not involve more states? Would this not increase the scope for cost savings? In practice, there was little support for this – particularly on the British side – after recent experiences with European projects like the A400M also known as Euro Fighter which was a large-scale multilateral procurement project that exceeded costs and were not commissioned in time (Interview 3, 9). One interviewee noted:

“Both in France and Britain we have the experience of the A400M, which is a catastrophe. Both countries were badly burned by that experience” (Interview 9).

While multilateral projects were seen as problematic, France and Britain had more positive experiences with bilateral cooperation: “At that time there was absolutely a multilateral fatigue. [...] The reality was that there had been some really quite deep ties created between the UK and France a decade earlier, perhaps even longer ago [...] This created a foundation, without which we probably wouldn’t have had the LHTs, although this is not so widely known” (Interview 4).

In sum, there is support for the hypothesis that realising economic benefits was a significant motivating factor for entering into the LHTs, as evidenced by justifications pointing to constrained public finances, the increasing focus within France and Britain on ensuring the survival of the defence industry and recent experiences suggesting that a bilateral format was more likely to deliver concrete results. There was an economic logic to the choice of partners based on the overlapping spectrum of capabilities on which to cooperate, including nuclear capability. On the other hand, many of the same economic benefits and savings could have been achieved by reducing the scope of military activities and assuming a less active posture in global security and defence. Instead, France and Britain decided to maintain their ambition levels and enter into a treaty with a depth of integration that gave rise to debates in both countries regarding the preservation of national sovereignty. This paper will argue that in order to present a comprehensive understanding of these trade-offs, one must also consider the significance of France and Britain’s complementary and analogous self-understanding as ‘great powers’.

France and Britain: maintaining their status as 'great powers'?

At press conference announcing the establishment of the LHTs, Sarkozy described the LHTs as "something really quite big, bold and radical" (Ibid). The nuclear treaty commits France and Britain to building and jointly operating radiographic/hydrodynamic facilities and to cooperate, including through the sharing of relevant classified information, in the areas of safety and security of nuclear weapons, stockpile certification and counter-nuclear or -radiological terrorism (House of Commons SN/IA/5750 2010). Britain and France retain the ability to conduct independent work solely for national use, and there are provisions for each party to withdraw from the treaty before the intended period of 50 years (Ibid). As such, during the ratification processes it was frequently asserted that the treaty did not restrict either country's independence or sovereignty.

However, the core feature of the treaty is that France and Britain avoid duplicating the necessary investments required to maintain their respective nuclear deterrence. This constitutes integration because it involves a transfer of power over a specific issue in two significant ways. Firstly, the facilities in question were built at huge cost and were estimated to take 12 years to bring to completion. Any reversal of the decision to jointly build and operate these facilities would involve substantial additional costs and a likely lead time of at least a decade to establish the required facilities and capabilities in each country. During this time, neither state would independently possess the required facilities to adequately maintain its nuclear deterrent. There is also a real question of how such additional costs would be financed, with the ratification debates in both countries reflecting the critical need for the savings generated by the nuclear cooperation. Secondly, the nuclear treaty entails a pooling of research and development efforts that in the long term restricts each country's ability to independently maintain its nuclear deterrence. While nuclear cooperation had been a part of the British 'special relationship' with the US for over half a century, the French had never before entertained collaboration or outside dependence in any aspect of their nuclear deterrence. The implications of this sharing of research and development were underlined during the debate in the Assemblée Nationale prior to the adoption of the bill ratifying the nuclear Treaty, where Jean-Jacques Candelier argued that "It is also a question of considering the rapprochement of our industries and the fusion, in the long term, of the means of research and development on certain programs. Cooperation on nuclear research, by sharing these technologies in joint simulation and modelling laboratories, raises fears of the total end of our national autonomy, even if I am assured the contrary." Patricia Adam agreed that the cooperation would involve deeply sensitive technology sharing, but argued that it was necessary: "Through this agreement, we will share some of our most sensitive and best protected infrastructures. We will equitably distribute the costs necessary to finance the nuclear research and simulation sector. We may even offer it a new future through the intellectual exchange it will stimulate between the scientists of our two countries. We should be happy about that. The credibility and sustainability of our deterrent capability depend on it." (Assemblée Nationale 2011, author's translation). Thus, the nuclear treaty is an example of an integrative commitment that has implications for national sovereignty. A senior government advisor who was close to the negotiation

process of the LHTs noted: “Of the two treaties, the second one is the main one, the one on nuclear facility sharing. That is the real treaty; the other one is a consequence of the nuclear treaty. [...] This design, this cooperation is completely new and unique. The LHTs is a case of real integration between the country that is the most pro-European defence and the country that is the most anti-European defence. [...] All these ideological differences were left outside the negotiation room. [...] Whether or not the industrial projects succeed is dependent on continued political will. On the nuclear facilities side however, there is no going back” (Interview 9).

In order to account for this depth of commitment, it is necessary to understand how France and Britain’s actions were influenced by their understanding of their roles as global powers and the corresponding obligations such a role entails. In 2010, President Sarkozy pointed to the two countries’ shared values in relation to the question of sovereignty: “You know, ladies and gentlemen, that in France sovereignty is as touchy an issue as it is in Britain, but together we will be stronger. Together we will do better. Together we will better defend the values that we share that are our values. [...] This does not mean that I forget the links between Paris and Berlin [...] but if you, my British friends, had to face a major crisis, could you imagine France simply sitting there, its arms crossed and saying, ‘This is none of our business?’” (UK-France Summit press conference, 2010). The reference to Germany is of particular note. A potential partnership between these three states has often been “seen as the key that would unlock the way to real progresses for European defence” (Pannier & Schmitt, 2014). France and Germany formalised defence cooperation in the 1963 Elysée Treaty and often refer to each other as special partners, while the 2008 Livre Blanc noted that “Franco-German co-operation played an historical role indeed in the building up European defence” (2008 Livre Blanc (English version) p. 82). On a general basis, it is not obvious that France and Britain share a greater similarity of values than either of these countries share with Germany. However, with respect to security and defence specifically, there is a clear and unique (at least in a European context) overlap between France and Britain in the position that they seek to occupy in the international system and the importance they attach to maintaining this role in the context of constrained national budgets.

Furthermore, evidence suggests that the aspiration to a global leadership role was central to the joint Franco-British declaration in 2010: “The UK and France are natural partners in security and defence. As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, NATO Allies, European Union Members, and Nuclear Weapons States, we share many common interests and responsibilities. We are proud of our outstanding and experienced armed forces and our advanced defence industries. We are determined to act as leaders in security and defence” (UK-France Summit Declaration on Defence and Security Co-operation 2010). The idea that France and Britain were ‘natural partners’ was a recurring theme during the interviews. One interviewee pointed out that this was one of the main conclusions of the 2010 UK SDSR: “It made it clear that the French armed forces stood out as natural partners – they are the only country in Europe that has a full range of capabilities. The US, China and Russia can act on their own” (Interview 2). Another interviewee underlined the uniqueness and potential impact of the partnership: “These two countries are identical

in terms of budget and historical military activities, they are very similar, former leading countries and they are the two countries in Europe who can really, truly initiate European defence policy – and in the LHTs this is very heavy. I mean the spectrum is huge, there is a potential for a serious political impact of these two countries on the EU, on NATO, there is no other similarity in Europe. Other countries are either big countries with lots of money but no willingness to commit to defence – Germany – or there is no political will to maintain a role on the international stage. When you look at France and Britain going to Libya in 2011, France going to Mali, where is a similar country in Europe with a strong political will to play a role on the international stage? None. It is only France and Britain” (Interview 3). While Britain also enjoys a very close relationship with the US, it was pointed out that the Franco-British relationship was on a more equal footing: “In cooperation with the US, the UK is definitely a junior partner. Whereas cooperation with France is equal. There are a lot of similarities, a lot of joint sympathies” (Interview 8).

Connected to the French and British self-understanding as 'great powers' I found evidence suggesting it was important that France and Britain shared a willingness to send troops into battle. Interviewees in both France and Britain pointed to this as a key factor (Interview 6, 8). One interviewee noted the following:

“It is interesting because if you look politically, you know France and Germany would be a closer match. But militarily it is completely different. One of the things you would expect if you were to have one big EU defence force, you would expect that the three biggest players would be Britain, France and Germany. However, the German attitude towards military intervention is so different that it makes it impossible. [...] Could the LHTs be expanded to include more countries? At the moment it is very much a hypothetical question, because you would need somebody who has a similar attitude towards interventionism and I don't think there is anyone in the EU who has that.” (Interview 8)

Taken together, the evidence provides support for the constructivist hypothesis that France and Britain's self-understanding as 'great powers' was a significant factor in the establishment of the LHTs. Faced with a greater need to balance budgets in the wake of the financial crisis, one path could have been to downscale global ambitions. Instead, France and Britain looked for ways to collaborate to maintain their activity and global ambitions on the international stage. In both official documents and interviews, justifications point to these actions as necessary and appropriate considering their perceived need to occupy global leadership roles. This is consistent with French and British national identities historically (Mayner et. al 2004). Furthermore, the existence of France and Britain overlapping role conceptions provide support for the argument that shared self-perceptions was a significant factor that enabled the establishment of integrative commitments the LHTs. However, it should be noted that while the evidence supports the constructivist hypothesis for France and Britain's actions in combination with the factors identified in connection with the rationalist perspectives, that is not to say that role conceptions alone can explain the integrative commitments in LHTs. It is not clear from the evidence that Britain would have looked to France in the same way if the US had not been perceived to be shifting

its focus, nor that France and Britain would have chosen to share nuclear infrastructure absent the economic pressures in the wake of the financial crisis.

Conclusion

The case of Anglo-French security and defence cooperation confirms that states decide to establish integration in the 'high politics' realm of security and defence, thereby constraining national sovereignty. This conclusion is important because it suggests it is necessary to reconsider the emphasis placed on concern for sovereignty in developments in European security and defence cooperation. Further, a broadening of the theoretical approach is required to account for integrative developments in European security and defence cooperation.

Evidence suggests that integrative commitments between France and Britain came about due to a combination of factors. In the lead-up to the establishment of the LHTs in 2010, it became clear that French and British security and geopolitical interests were in many ways aligned. However, Russia's more aggressive posture under Vladimir Putin's leadership coupled with the American 'pivot to Asia' was true for other European states in NATO as well. Thus, in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of how agreement between France and Britain on integrative commitments was possible, factors other than security interests must also be taken into account. Furthermore, evidence also suggests that France and Britain perceived the LHTs as economically beneficial, as a means to counter decreasing defence spending as a result of austerity policy. There was also a recognition, particularly in Britain, that bilateral cooperation had the potential to secure economic benefits where previous experiences with larger scale projects had failed. Instead of seeing their role on the global stage diminish as a result of decreasing defence spending, France and Britain decided to integrate their ability to maintain their nuclear deterrent through the establishment of shared facilities. In analysing official documents, secondary literature and interviews with senior government officials it became evident that France and Britain have complimentary self-understandings as 'great powers'. The perceived obligations required to adhere such a role were crucial for enabling the establishment of integrative commitments between France and Britain on their nuclear deterrent. However, while it is true to say that there is support for the constructivist hypothesis, that is not to suggest that it alone explains the LHTs or that role conceptions were the primary explanatory factor for the choice of format, partners and integrative commitments in the LHTs. There is evidentiary support for each of the hypotheses, while none of them alone presents a compelling case to fully explain why Britain and France established defence integration. Rather, a key contribution of the article is to demonstrate that in order to fully account for integration between states in the field of security and defence, it is necessary to consider states' role conceptions.

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