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REPORT



Dr Claire Chick

Head of Defence, Franco-British Council
clairechick@francobritishcouncil.org.uk



www.francobritishdefence.org



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Plenary, 2015 FBC Defence Conference

The fifth Franco-British Council (FBC) Defence Conference took place on 11 and 12 March 2015 at the Résidence de France in London. The annual colloque was hosted by HE Sylvie Bermann, the French Ambassador to the UK, and brought together seventy personalities from senior government, the military, parliament, industry and academia. It benefited in particular from a joint opening presentation by the chef d'état-major de l'armée de l'air and the Chief of the Air Staff.

This gathering took place a few weeks prior to the UK general election. The assessment of the first five years of the defence partnership was the common thread running through the debates with a clear resolve to plan for the future.

Following up on the subjects discussed in 2014 and taking into account subsequent developments, the conference included four round tables which respectively dealt with - the challenge laid down with regard to sharing combat aviation; the alignment of political ambitions and defence budgets; the strategic orientations of Franco-British interoperability; the lessons to be learned from the cooperation between 2010 and 2015. This report offers a cross-analysis of the debates and discussions that took place at these workshops and the plenary sessions.

« The Franco-British Council has established a reputation for raising the right questions at the right time. I would like to extend my thanks to the Co-Presidents and the members of the Council for all the support offered in the area of defence »

Philip Dunne

Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology



HE Sylvie Bermann, Professeur Gilles Kepel

Immediate challenges that must be faced

Terrorism top of the joint agenda

Lost in translation. This sentiment was a genuine concern expressed by many delegates to the Franco-British Council Defence Conference in all the discussions in 2015. The questioning of the international system by non-State players is not an area of concern, this assumption became a factor in the analysis of the theory of international relations a number of years ago. It is the dramatic change in the strategic context and the speed at which things are developing that have been considered to be the markers of an international environment that has become deeply complicated. In the centre of this world map in turmoil, Europe is seen as being particularly exposed, notably on its Eastern and Southern borders where the nature of the safety issues is qualified as extremely serious. The prospect of Libya becoming an active front for jihad has added to the threatening character of terrorism on the shores of the Mediterranean.

« We need to be serious about information and intelligence reform if we want to respond to the threats »

ACM Sir Stuart Peach

Vice Chief of the Defence Staff

Diplomats and the military acknowledge this fact - the ferocity of the Islamic State's aggression and that of the various movements aligned with it makes them uncomfortable and requires of them an ability to adapt that they have not yet acquired. Despite planning efforts, States and international organisations have not yet succeeded in getting to grips with the unpredictable nature of the new dangers. How should we react in an environment experiencing a period of suspicion? How should we deal with the problems of the interactions between the zones of the Middle East and Western immigration? How should we confront the internal challenge of populations suffering an identity crisis who travel to the Syrian-Iraqi battlefield with the aim of destroying Europe? Diplomatic services express surprise at the level of danger of the current conflicts that are confusing traditional strategies.

The question of the need for France and the UK to pool their ideas is raised. Can France and the UK agree on the implementation of a useful and credible approach? The possibility of including terrorism in a revised version of the Lancaster House treaties might make sense. However in greater detail, by pointing out that data processing experts currently represent the greatest threat to Europe's borders, some have drawn attention to the need for urgent bilateral cooperation in the area of information, where everything is still to play for. The explosion of social networks is considered to be particularly worrying and requires a structured approach if we are to deal effectively with the complexity of the attacks. Here, defence circles and academic circles must join forces to compare their expertise and help clarify our understanding of the chessboard, with the immediate benefit of correcting the dissociation between senior government officials and the academic world.

Sharing combat aviation being trialled

The technological challenges that must be met to overcome these new threats have been central to the debate. Closely related to recent news, the major theme of cooperation in the field of combat aviation has brought political, industrial and military decision makers together around the table to discuss the viability of the FCAS (Future Combat Air System) project, the feasibility phase of which was embarked upon by the two governments in November 2014. A particularly sensitive industrial sector, given that it is closely related to the sovereign orientations of each State's foreign and defence policies. As a result of the technological capabilities of the major developed countries, drones are seen as essential due to the diverse nature of the threat. Enthusiasm was high on both

« I would really qualify this FCAS project as historic - it is extremely ambitious and emblematic of our cooperation »

Laurent Collet-Billon
Délégué Général pour
l'Armement

with France, they have the necessary experience to develop exceptional aircrafts and that they are well-placed to launch this cooperation in response to the complexity of the international environment. This represents a major investment as the exercise is not only technological, but also requires coming up with clear operational solutions, with the prospect of economic benefits, including in the area of employment. They consider that the achievements since the Brize Norton summit (January 2014) show the determination of both countries and bear witness to a very encouraging first phase of joint work.

The French were also convinced of this. The first four months of the project were excellent according to the DGA (Délégué Général pour l'Armement), who considered that the results of the feasibility phase will form the backbone of the FCAS roadmap. Described as strategic, this test of cooperation in combat aeronautics was assessed as being a major long-term investment programme. With clear budget justifications, France and the UK are no longer able to develop

sides of the Channel for the first test stage of a complex Franco-British project involving two manufacturers that are fierce competitors on the international level, and which requires a rapprochement despite their very different administrative structures.

The MOD pointed out that the FCAS is a priority, defended within the HLWG - a Franco-British working group on cooperation with regard to equipment. The British consider that,

Joint Franco-British challenges when confronted with the jihadist movement

Since 2005, Europe has been the main target of the "3rd age" of the jihadist movement. The soft underbelly of the West, it is identified as a breeding ground where millions of poorly assimilated Moslems constitute a reserve army for jihad. The phenomenal spread of the virtual world and social networks has helped to disseminate the idea of tearing apart European societies by fostering the rise of the extreme right due to increasing Islamophobia, which itself generates a social divide, civil wars, and even *in fine*, the destruction of Europe.

"Unlike the Al-Qaeda period, which had never really succeeded in recruiting in European societies, we are now faced in France and the UK with a genuine societal phenomenon and public policies must take this into account, not only in the area of security but also in terms of national cohesion. These challenges are complex as our societies are not really prepared for this. But it is a Franco-British challenge as we are the two States that have the greatest imperial legacy in Africa and the Levant. We must examine how to deal with this type of challenge together."

Professor Gilles Kepel,
Sciences Po



Eric Trappier, Guy Griffiths

future combat aviation projects on their own. This is a financial reality that offers a unique opportunity at a time at which the feedback from the most recent operations shows that the two air forces are very close and that their interoperability should be supported. From France's point of view, the FCAS must ensure that the Lancaster House partners remain part of an ever-smaller group of nations that have their own independent and sovereign combat aviation.

Provided that the industries can be relied upon. Efforts to align the aeronautics sector, perfect project design in terms of performance, and cost, flexibility and inventiveness, are not easy objectives to achieve. But to the question "is it time to share combat aviation?" the answer from BAE Systems was clear - "Absolutely". A shared vision of the operating concept, a coherent timetable, and agreed budgets are the three essential conditions for success, the UK company said. Its French partners declared themselves to be highly motivated. For Dassault, this work undertaken upstream at the right time is essential to avoid off-the-shelf purchases. The manufacturer moreover challenged the political decision makers - will they be able to resist over time?

Communication – a firm priority

However, although the common resolve to respond to the new threats involves a commitment to adopt the means required to deal with them, nothing can be achieved if it is not endorsed by the public. But what do French and British citizens want? What do they know about the defence cooperation already in place between the two nations? Communication with the public, already considered as being essential in the past, but which has never been the subject of conclusive developments in any of the annual FBC conferences, was forcefully highlighted in 2015 in a compelling manner. Populations have recently become anxious.

« You should be left in no doubt that there is an ability for these two companies to collaborate despite the fact that we will continue to compete »

Guy Griffiths

Group Managing Director International,
BAE Systems

FCAS feasibility study phase

In November 2014, the national directors of French and British weaponry systems granted six industrialists from the two countries the joint contracts for the FCAS (Future Combat Air System) project feasibility phase. The challenge is to prepare the next generation of combat planes that are to be commissioned by 2030-2035. The feasibility phase lasts two years and has a budget of 120 million pounds. It must show what operational gains are to be achieved by combat drones and confirm that they are both technically feasible and financially achievable. It will test the ability of both nations to converge towards joint technological solutions based on a shared operating concept. In 2016 the governments will have the elements they need to reach a decision with a view to launching the demonstration phase. But the form of the aircraft and the common engine must be chosen as early as the end of 2015.

The unpredictable nature of terrorism that infringes daily life requires an explanation. The concept of security is described as being more palatable than that of defence, and needs to be developed. Here, the language takes on its full meaning and many speakers have encouraged people to reflect on the vocabulary being used. Referring to territorial and individual protection, rather than threat, is reassuring, as a sovereign function of the State that is exercised over both domestic and international affairs.

Members of parliament spoke in promotion of the urgent need for debate with their electorates, particularly in the UK where defence issues are not understood. The British today are sceptical about how public money is spent: they did not back Afghanistan, they think that Libya is a failure, and that the war in Iraq is not going well. So, why spend more money? It is difficult for MPs to argue that the quota of 2% of GDP for security expenditure needs to be



Air Cdre Paul Lyall, députée Patricia Adam, député Gwendal Rouillard

protected, despite the fact that they defended it tooth and nail before their allies at the Wales Summit in September 2014. MPs of both the left and the right confess their guilt and continue with their duty to explain. None of them are against military intervention, but all want to know why their country is involved in conflict management, and on what analysis is it based? National interest? Global security? International development? MPs need to regain the trust of their public at a time when the principle of an operation cannot be taken for granted and needs to be defended each time on a case by case basis. This public debate has not yet taken place in France. But, warns one delegate, France will not be able to avoid it. And, in fact, the *députés* in the *Assemblée Nationale* have also expressed the need to respond to public opinion. Notably, to educate people, to explain that peace does not come free, that there is a price to pay to guarantee security, and that a collective capability in Europe must explain this simple idea at a time when Belgium, host country of the European and Atlantic institutions, is reining in its defence budget.

« The debate has to become public »

Patricia Adam

President of the National
Defence Commission, AN

The specific Franco-British defence cooperation dossier was the subject of intensive discussions. The general public do not know that it exists, and upstream, only a very small number of politicians are aware of the existence of the Lancaster House treaties. There are between five and ten in the *Assemblée Nationale*. It is difficult, therefore, to inform people about the progress made between the two countries since 2010, on the momentum resulting from working groups, and a network that is contracting. People are totally ignorant of the challenges facing the partnership between Paris and London, due

to the lack of communication on the subject. No doubt the first deployment of the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) will send out a strong message regarding the reality of the cooperation, in the same way as the summits between Heads of State and Government are increasing the amount of information provided on the bilateral relation. In the short term, in 2016 the commemorations of the Battle of the Somme will serve to inform opinion. But the idea is to do more to make the information available to a wider audience. Several delegates thus considered that the Franco-British Council had a role to play in explaining the practical aspects of defence cooperation and its contribution to global security. It is recommended that a public event be organised just before or just after the annual conference. Similarly, the FBC could envisage inviting officials who are less convinced by the defence partnership, or less involved, to the annual conference, from, for example, the Ministry of the Interior, the Treasury, or the Ministry for Development...



Général Denis Mercier, Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford

« We are determined to take the CJEF forward and to take that broader friendship into the future »

ACM Sir Andrew Pulford
Chief of the Air Staff

The expeditionary force is ready. For whom?

The RAF and the Armée de l'air - two voices in one

The speeches pronounced side by side by the Chiefs of Staff of the French *Armée de l'air* and the RAF, their Joint Presidency of the workshop on interoperability and their interventions within different discussion bodies clearly demonstrated the close personal relationship developed as a result of a joint high-intensity project. Empathy was expressed between two aviators responsible for activating the Franco-British defence partnership.

The capability of their units to intervene at very short notice over the entire range of operations is testament to the flexibility of air power. The unaffected nature of their cooperation - the result of a long experience of interoperability - has benefited in practical terms from the signing of the Lancaster House agreements, and today plays its full role in the reciprocal internal and external security challenges. At the top of the chain of command, the unity of the *board-to-board* strategic committee allows them to treat operational issues in a completely transparent manner, and to speak with a single voice at European and Atlantic conferences such as EURAC and NACS, to put forward proposals and initiate projects. The network of exchange officers, for its part, stimulates the sharing of areas of excellence, and in the field the expertise of the British "Force Protection" with regard to commandos, the know-how of French marksmen in helicopters benefits both partners. The performance of the Franco-British airspace protection operations was also highlighted. The sky police missions (London Olympic Games or more recently, relays of typhoons and *rafales* to intercept Russian bombers

From common culture to integration

"This common culture which is above all a human adventure, is a priority. We are trying to turn it into a force by speaking with one voice in European or Atlantic bodies. And we are keen to take this integration further. This is the meaning of the trip we made together, a first I believe in Africa, when we visited our detachments together, while they were involved in operation. More than just working side by side, it is our aim to eventually deploy joint detachments. This is a realistic aim."

Général d'armée aérienne
Denis Mercier, Chef d'état-major de l'Armée de l'air

"It would not be sufficient for our navies, armies or air forces to co-operate, we also had to be able to co-operate on cross component functions such as intelligence, targeting and ROE. In 2016 Ex GRIFFIN STRIKE will build on that and will include live forces. 10,000 troops will be involved. The aim is that Ex GRIFFIN STRIKE will provide final validation of the concept. Of course, crossing the finishing line in 2016 is not the end of CJEF but merely the beginning of maintaining this genuinely usable and deployable force" Vice-admiral Duncan Potts, Director General Defence Academy

About the CJEF

- A combined force of up to 10,000 that could be deployed at high readiness and would draw on each country's high readiness forces.
- Focused on intervention and first entry operations for short durations up to 90 days. Other allied forces and C2 would follow on.
- There would be an established and exercised C2 architecture at the tactical, operational and strategic levels.
- There would be an agreement on what communications and information systems would be used.

over the Channel), and the mechanisms of reassurance in the context of cross-border co-ordination above the Baltic States are examples of the good working relationship that exists between the two airforces. The British air transport capabilities assigned to Serval, and the Tornados detached to the N'djamena base in 2014 in Chad are other key moments of the partnership.

And the CJEF of course. The rise of the *Combined Joint Expeditionary Force* is the flagship success of the Chiefs of Staff of the Air Forces who consider that the relations between the two operational headquarters – PJHQ and CPCO - have never been so close and are testament to the success of the objectives at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. The command and control of the operations at the interarmies level, at the centre of the CJEF finalisation process has important ramifications for the work of the RAF and the *Armée de l'air*. In 2014, France incorporated British officers for the preparatory exercises for the Nato Response Force. Within the JFACCs (Joint Force Air Component Commanders), the officers of both countries produced a joint air operation concept consistent with the interarmy use of the CJEF. Today, it is a reference document for planning and implementing the air operations of the Franco-British force. The military are ready.



Baroness Tessa Blackstone, Charles Grant

London learns the lessons of the comprehensive approach

Are the decision makers ready as well? Are France and the UK in agreement about how to deploy the Joint Force? What type of operation are they willing to commit to? The start of the French operation Serval in January 2013 could have been done in the bilateral framework of the CJEF. At the request of the Malian President, and in order to respond to the terrorist threat to Bamako, it had been necessary to act quickly, supported by well-trained units. The debate thus raises the question of London's ambitions: is there any divergence of the French and British approaches regarding the engagement of ground troops?

The British response is clear: without the slightest hesitation, if a war were to start, they would go, they would be there. Once their public is informed of the challenges of a conflict, the objectives to be accomplished, the British military forces are ready to leave, in the same way as France did in Mali. However, in the UK, the priority to be given to a comprehensive approach versus a high-intensity military intervention is clearer every day. The annual 2015 FBC gathering provided evidence of their conviction that the military are essential but they cannot do everything. Afghanistan was the key point of a rationale which maintains that London was slow to react, but did nevertheless learn the lessons of this conflict - a strategy must be promoted that preserves human lives, that favours the most stable governance possible, that is in favour of a legal system that acts against corruption, a government based on consensus with a project of education..... This positioning on the lessons to be learned from the intervention in Afghanistan extends to Africa - before sending troops, the roots of the crises need to be dealt with in order to understand how to stabilise a country.

«We did learn lessons in Afghanistan. And this is important we don't reinvent the wheel in any new country in which we intervene »

Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP

As was done in Somalia and Nigeria, the Barkhane operation is also a response to this type of approach with political processes designed to reconstruct Mali (Algiers negotiations). Its significance lies in the fact that it illustrates Franco-British cooperation in the context of an intervention offered to African nations that provides aid and training of military forces. In this approach, the preparation of operations carried out jointly with sovereign African armies and the objective of making them independent, constitute the added value of the Lancaster House partnership.

Uncoordinated strategic priorities

France adheres broadly to the principle of a global approach as defended by the British. But upstream, the question remains as to how to understand the priorities of the two partners. The strategic dialogue faces the difficulty of finding concrete implementations in the theatres of operation. The debate is initiated with a wide range of questions. Joint military action, but to what purpose? Deployment of the CJEF, but based on what scenarios? The findings only date back as far as 2010, the joint force was created in the course of ambitious and extremely successful training programmes, without knowing if over the next five years the political decision makers would agree to the way in which they would be used. The fear of remaining only an exercise or a concept was not absent from the discussions. The Lancaster House treaty added to the confusion by evoking the curious possibility that one of the signatories may need to ask their partner to use force in its name and vice versa.....

« I see that the traditional military approach of our two countries is more different than I had expected: what can we do about it? »

HE Matthew Rycroft

UK permanent Representative to the UN

Is there a need to create a single planning centre? The blockage is not so much at the operational level. It is the international context that is more of a concern. Has the Russian threat, which was not mentioned in the 2010 agreements, raised the need to review the way new strategic situations are apprehended? To envisage a common response to Ukraine? Has the struggle against terrorism, which is absent from the Franco-British partnership roadmap, become the common thread of Western interventions? Do we need to consider a joint response to the Islamist threat? Are there shared interests in Africa? How is it possible to reconcile the French approach, which is military and operational, in Mali and in the Central African Republic, with the priorities that the British put forward with regard to stabilisation and development policies? Do we need to confirm that the two conceptions are different but usefully complementary, and if applicable, beneficial in respect of any response to the diversity of the theatres in Africa?

The sensitive dossier of strategic autonomy is at the heart of these discussions. The result is that the two countries must reach closer agreement in respect of the assessment of the international environment. They must say if the CJEF is solely a force of last resort for managing high-intensity crises, or if its remit may be greater than that originally envisaged. Should it play a dissuasive role in lower-intensity conflicts? Should it be deployed to offer reassurance? What if we need to move forward on a case by case basis, or if we have the aim of achieving a shared strategic framework between France and the UK, or if feedback on certain traumatic operations would clarify the issue of sending ground troops?



HE Peter Ricketts, Rory Stewart MP

The context of the general election and the prospect of a new White Paper on defence have led the UK to adopt a more reserved position. It is France that made a quite lengthy intervention to defend the need for harmonisation of foreign policies, and a common analysis of the regional threats. This was an approach which had already been defended in 2014. According to France, the lack of discussions on the lessons to be learned from Western interventions (American, British, French) is an issue and the history of the strategic failure in Afghanistan is still to be written. London's relationship with Washington is also the subject of direct criticism - is the British choice of very costly, very reduced armed forces focussing on high intensity operations, viable over time? Is it not time to start a Franco-British debate on the US strategy, a central partner for France and the UK? On the choice of theatres of operation, the DGRIS (Direction Générale des Relations Internationales et de la Stratégie) warns against the growing divergence of strategic priorities with Washington and has reacted with caution to the declared enthusiasm of the Americans for the Lancaster House partnership. The reduced will of the US to get involved in crisis management and its pivot towards Pacific islands will not change. France and the UK will find themselves more and more faced with the choice of intervening, at best, with the Americans in a support role, or at worst, without them.

«We will not have growing strategic divergence with the USA but a growing divergence of strategic priorities»

Philippe Errera
Directeur Général DGRIS



Workshop on interoperability

The franco-british agreement could do better

Doubts surrounding the level of political commitment

But would the French and the British go together? As the discussions progressed, the questions focused on the “personal chemistry” between leaders, which was praised in 2014 in the wake of the bilateral Brize Norton summit. In 2015, it is not clear that the “natural” entente between France and the UK, set out in the 2010 texts, is in the best shape. The difficulty of reaching an agreement on the strategic questions casts doubt on the level of political engagement. What has become of the initial aim of optimising the capabilities of the two countries over a wide range of operations, to reinforce the defence industry, to jointly deploy, to secure the viability of the nuclear deterrent, and to display a common determination in the international arena?

The inescapable usefulness of the 2010 treaties has in any case not been discussed. To the question posed by the title of one of the workshops “What if the Lancaster House treaties did not exist?” the response was unanimous - we would have to invent it. France, on both the left and the right, considers that the two countries should not even consider the question, the Lancaster House treaties are essential. The French and the British are close partners in

« We need to have regular re-confirmation of the political will behind this cooperation »

Sir Peter Ricketts

British Ambassador to France

defence matters, the two credible players in Europe, and are today far too connected to call into question the principle of this cooperation, even if progress can only be achieved one step at a time. This is an assessment that resonates with the British, for whom no agreement in the nuclear field would have been possible without a treaty guaranteeing an unrivalled basis of trust of mutual access to sovereign technologies. Similarly, the unique nature of the systematic governance in place on both sides of the Channel was made possible thanks to the roadmap drawn up in 2010. Lancaster House changed the dynamics of the cooperation.

However, the operational fatigue or even depression observed in Europe, at a time of unexpected threats to the South and the East, render the field of observation paradoxical. When every responsible country ought to be raising its strategic ambitions, the defence budgets of the exchequers are being reined in. When the deterioration of the global context ought to be mobilising the Chiefs of Staff, resources are decreasing. France stresses that it has made the difficult choice of maintaining the balance between essential strategic necessities and its financial capabilities by guaranteeing *a minima* its defence budget (LPM 2013), and by confirming a reduction in the decrease in workforce decided for the armies (Council of Defence 11 March 2015). But can France and the UK move in this direction together? Are they willing to anticipate the threat in order to ensure the security of their citizens? Do they both have this political ambition in 2015?

« Lancaster House is a perfect example of the operational benefit that functions independent of political cycles »

Général d'armée aérienne Gratien Maire
Major général des armées

Generals of both countries spoke and laid out what they expect to see. Although the CJEF achieved an exemplary degree of interoperability to counter the threats with the aim of a joint engagement from 2016 onwards, the missing link remains the political will to implement it. This force does not doubt the joint work of the front line personnel, which is excellent at the tactical level and which has always functioned as it should. It does, however, raise questions about the possibility of the decision of a joint deployment being taken. It is the political angle of bilateral interoperability that is being neglected, due to a lack of cohesion in the area of foreign and security policy, a lack of planning towards a shared objective, and a lack of any clear intention on how the expeditionary force will be used. A number of representatives of the two governments did not argue to the contrary - it is the political question for example that is blocking any joint intervention in the Sahel. And the challenge today is how to discover a way to maintain the momentum, to check that the entente between the Elysée and 10 Downing Street will continue over time. For in the domain of political will, the exercise needs to be repeated at regular intervals. Very regular intervals. Nobody has ever claimed that convincing people of the need for a defence partnership could one day be taken for granted.

Equipment in the five-year assessment

The area of armament is also not considered to be an easy aspect of cooperation. But for many participants, the bilateral industrial programmes under way were initiated as a result of the Lancaster House agreement. It contributes to maintaining the existing capabilities whilst at the same time focussing on the development of new ones. It is involved in ensuring that the defence industry remains competitive in the context of a pragmatic partnership that is moving forward.

Some delegates who are directly involved were genuinely positive. After all, this cooperation has survived two Defence Ministers in the UK and a change of government in France!

Industries are full of praise. For Thales, there is a before Lancaster and an after Lancaster, as projects started from 2010 onwards. The most recent – MMCM, Maritime Mine Counter Measures contract (signing with the OCCAR which has granted a consortium to Thales and BAE Systems), and the tactical drones systems of starting with Watchkeeper - are the result of the



Louis Gautier, Laurent Collet-Billon



Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach

« We are animated by the spirit of Lancaster »

Pierre-Eric Pommellet
Executive Vice-President
Defence Mission Systems
THALES

Franco-British treaty. The FCAS is, for its part, considered promising, and will be significant for the accumulated trust with regard to the technical data, from stealth technology to high levels of confidentiality. For other manufacturers, the Lancaster House agreement also provides an improved alignment of armaments policies, as Franco-British interoperability is causing a move towards a form of homogenisation of the needs of the two armies in matters of equipment. Thus the CJEF was considered to be not only a federating tool for industry, but also a coordinating tool, which could connect up the operational and technological roadmap, position industry on the tactical trajectory of the forces and produce equipment on the market when needed. For the next five years, the practical operational experience could provide information on the needs of the French and British forces. This was an important argument of stability for the military who regret that they frequently have to make choices based on renunciation.

Others are less enthusiastic, and point out that the programmes undertaken are not ambitious in an admittedly very constrained budgetary context. We need to do more. Have more inspiration and find the next wave to maintain momentum. The discussion evolved around the initial objective of “pooling and sharing” set out in the Franco-British partnership. Equipment pooling works in the missile industry but needs to be improved in the helicopter sector for example. It will be decisive for the success of the FCAS project, even though this is a very sensitive area in terms of sovereignty. In so far as concerns the sharing of capabilities, there is an agreement of opinion on the difficulties encountered. Here too, sovereignty is an issue, and poses the question of the advantages of industrial specialisation between partners to share costs. MBDA spoke to both credit the principle of specialisation and draw attention to the loss of momentum of “greater interdependence”. The enterprise has proved the feasibility of this concept by creating a certain number of centres of excellence, i.e. types of laboratories of Franco-British cooperation designed to remove duplications and redundancies. The joint work is carried out on equipment which is still small-scale but which, in principle, allows the transfer in France of British activities on programmes that were developed solely in the UK, and vice versa. However, in five years, this greater interdependence, included in the Lancaster House treaty as one of the major objectives of the cooperation, has lost some of its visibility. It must be put back on the agenda and at the forefront of the industrial partnership.

Towards a concept of system operation

From the operational point of view, the recommendation was to take account, in time, of the challenges of the future. The launch of the FCAS feasibility study opened up the debate on the challenge of a new operating concept, with the noted involvement of the two Chiefs of Staff of the Air Forces. According to the CEMAA (Chef d'Etat Major

« With BAE Systems I am looking for an active loop between the operational requirement and what technology is able to offer »

Eric Trappier
PDG Dassault Aviation



AVM Edward Stringer, Victor Chavez

Air) and the CAS (Chief of the Air Staff), the future of aviation must take into account a new vision of combat. The prospect of having to make a choice between manned or unmanned aircraft was dismissed from the outset. The two platforms must co-exist within the industrial strategies, as France and the UK have programmes of manned combat aircraft in place until 2040 at least. The challenge is to extend the capabilities, to fully benefit from technology to connect up all the platforms, whether manned or not, with high-grade command and control systems. It is based on this perspective of system that it is necessary to move forward, bringing together platforms that are diverse in nature, and where questions of communication and data connection will be fundamental, and to integrate networks and obtain information. How to unite everything transversally is a technological challenge and very few countries know how to achieve this. But, General Mercier stressed, "if we do not develop these systems, we will be unable to protect our countries tomorrow". The risk being, that at a time when the air arm is increasingly called upon to manage conflicts, technological failures inevitably lead to operational failures.

« We are still on parallel tracks with the FCAS but we urgently need to converge »

Antoine Bouvier
PDG MBDA

In reality, the French and British Chiefs of Staff share the same assessment of capabilities in the context of their *Combined Vision and Strategy*, and are working on these operating concepts of the future based on existing technological demonstrators. An active loop is being put in place on the design of air systems between electronics, airframe and engine manufacturers. This includes when industry players put ideas into practice, and when front line personnel share their needs and expose the complementarity between combats aircraft manned on the ground and those manned in flight. Within this integrated framework, the question of the participation of the missile industry in the systemic discussion was raised. The President of MBDA warned - "I believe that it is the right time to include the armament aspects in the FCAS dossier. If we do not do this, we take the risk of having inconsistencies at the system performance level." Moreover, he explained, we increasingly refer to systems at the level of the missile itself, and the question is no longer so much how to incorporate a missile in a platform but rather how two systems can work together. The future missiles on FCAS will not be developments of current missiles, they will be totally different, and the discussion around optimising their system configuration must be started today. This call to implement the convergence of parallel processes within a single system was supported by the military.



Workshop on strategic ambition and defence budgets

We need you

Paris urges engagement in Africa

"We need a United Kingdom that is ambitious and strategic. This is what it is. This is what it must remain". This appeal by the Quai d'Orsay to the British to rediscover their ambition of power served to reveal a preoccupation shared by all the French delegation present at the 2015 FBC conference. France is worried. France cannot do everything.

« We cannot go below where we are now. Strategic and military impact of both our countries is the one asset we have »

Etienne de Durand

Directeur du centre des études de sécurité. IFRI

Face with the scale of the challenges, it wants to be able to count on partners who are ready to act. "We need you" the Director of Strategic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed, urging the British to maintain their will to intervene in external operations. The General Secretary of the SGDSN (Secrétariat Général de la Défense et la Sécurité Nationale) spoke to evoke the quality of the Franco-British partnership. In matters of information, joint work in the fight against terrorism is significant, notably to tackle the threat of networks of fighters, and propaganda on the internet. The UK has taken a lead and is providing France with solutions, including in respect of adapting legislation. But what of Africa? France expects cooperative actions in its

mission to neutralise AQMI actions in the Sahel-Saharan strip, and in its operations to contain the threats from Libya and Boko Haram. Even if there are diplomatic and mediation solutions, the French military can not intervene on its own, they must be assisted with European support. The African theatres of operation are complex, they include the air and satellite dimension with a significant lengthening of operations and the indispensable need for ground support. "We need the British alongside us" he continued.

The pressure is also strong from the French Ministry of Defence that fears disengagement and wants the UK to place its influence and resources at the service of collective security. Notably, they want a closer Franco-British partnership



Workshop on strategic ambition and defence budgets

in the Sahel. The sharing of security interests from the perspective of the complementarity of the African theatres is not enough as it creates a form of counter-productive competition. France thus expects its ally to play its full role in the next joint expeditionary force with the intention of deploying over the whole of the spectrum envisaged by the Lancaster House treaty, including European and transatlantic frameworks. This should be with the aim of adapting to the wide range of contexts involved from a bilateral operation to evacuate nationals up to a mission to be the first into Africa.

The Director of the Centre for European Reform (CER) in London was keen to reassure the French, who were also worried that the budgetary prospects might reduce the British defence budget. Surveys carried out in early 2015 show that British public opinion was alarmed at the inadequacy of defence resources. Of course it had a very negative assessment of Tony Blair's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it takes the danger from Russia very seriously. It is clear that political leaders have not made defence an issue in their electoral campaign, with economic and tax questions being considered much more important than security preoccupations. The vote by MPs against intervention in Syria also sent a strong signal on the posture of disengagement adopted by the British in regard to the management of international crises. But the threat posed in Eastern Europe may change things, mobilising political decision makers and "saving" the budget and strategic British ambitions.

Moving lines in European defence...

Europe was not included in the 2015 defence conference programme. Clearly the perspective of the European Council in part devoted to questions of security, the crisis in Ukraine, and the progress of the Islamic State around the Mediterranean justified the treatment of the theme of security for the twenty-eight nations. But the context of the general election in the UK, with the campaign issue of the possible exit of the British from the EU, meant that the debate was postponed. Meanwhile, European defence invited itself to the table.

The context today is more favourable to the progression of European defence. It was the British who defended this idea, in particular by putting forward a change in attitude by the United States. Seventeen years ago, at the time of

the St Malo agreements, Washington was suspicious of British initiatives aimed at a greater autonomy of Europe in defence matters. Today, - assisted by the return of France to NATO - they are much more enthusiastic with regard to the project of the emergence of a European identity, and support Franco-British leadership efforts on the Old Continent. In addition, other positive comments showed that the concordance of the Franco-British and European agendas on the degree of urgency to be accorded to the treatment of the terrorist threat was encouraging as it brought together shared interests and resulted in the initiation of innovative measures. The dossier of the Franco-British partnership in combat aeronautics has, for its part, incited the national armament directors to highlight the subject of the EU by fostering the idea of encouraging the participation of the Europeans. The FCAS project, once effectively guided by France and the UK, must open up to other partners and allow the development of the combat aviation sector at the European level.

France has given its British partners a frank assessment of what was wrong. The budgetary aspect first of all, and the importance in their eyes of the UK abiding by the commitments of the NATO summit with regard to the 2% of GDP so that, together, they are able to encourage their European allies to accept their responsibilities in budgetary matters. The problematic relationship with the European Commission next - on tax incentives for European mutualisation to optimise capabilities and expenditure; on the financing of EU operations, with the use of European funds; on the implementation of a comprehensive approach in Africa, by continuing to reinforce the capabilities of Third Party States in connection with CSDP missions, via the Train and Equip initiative; on a preparatory action in matters of research and development which here too would be achieved with European funds. Can the UK envisage a form of openness in its relations with the EU?

Finally, the question of the expansion of the Lancaster House treaty to include other European countries was raised for the first time. Does the partnership need to be opened up or deepened? The French and the British are not on the same page in respect of their response and acknowledge that after almost five years of cooperation, the debate needs to be set in motion. This was raised with the Netherlands, who were very welcome contributors in Mali, and whose financial efforts demonstrate their involvement in questions of collective security. The context of the crisis in Ukraine means that we should turn towards Poland, which is directly concerned by the territorial issues of Eastern Europe and which is a diligent pupil in the EU class in matters of defence budget. And towards Germany, of course. Here the subject remains sensitive. For although the foreign policy of the German Chancellery is changing significantly - Germany is emerging in the Ukrainian crisis management, Germany is preparing a White Paper - and suggests that it can no longer be excluded from the Franco-British partnership, as a country, it will continue to remain for a long time on the margins of international military operations. Turning towards Germany also raises the question of its armaments industry that does not contribute to the strategic autonomy of the State and is not a component of the defence stance.

S.O.S SDSR, a window to activate the partnership?

The inclination to vagueness in political commitment, the unresolved divergence of strategic priorities, the questions about the prospects for deployment of the CJEF, the launch of the FCAS cooperation in the domain of a sovereign industry; all act as an encouragement to seek incentives, and refers back to the question already raised in 2014 - to what extent will the next UK White Paper provide visibility to the Franco-British defence cooperation? And in very practical terms - can the participation of France in British discussions, the elements of a Franco-British industrial platform in combat aeronautics, and a joint orientation on the operations in Africa form part of the next SDSR (*Strategic Defence and Security Review*)?

The British response is prudent but also gives an insight into the need for the next strategic text to reflect coordination projects more in defence matters. For the MOD, it is important for the SDSR 2016 in turn to open up its books and take account of the reality of the greater globalisation of foreign and security policies. The threat is international, and so must the response be. On the budgetary level, the difficult arbitrage between the function of projecting the forces and that of the internal protection of citizens encourages the Lancaster House partners to deepen their joint reflection. For the House of Commons, the French participation in the SDSR must be acquired in response to the French invitation to the British in 2012. The MOD confirmed that «enriching» conversations have been started with Paris in the context of preparatory work with a desire to take things forward.



Pierre-Eric Pommellet, Paul Kahn, Général Gratien Maire

The launch of the Franco-British cooperation in the sensitive area of combat aviation raised the practical question of the place of industrial strategy in the future White Paper. The MOD explained that exchanges and discussions had been entered into with industrial players on combat aeronautic capabilities, in order to clarify the orientations of the SDSR. For their part, British companies had stressed that their involvement in the debate is expected to throw light on future equipment choices. They drew attention to the French model so that the UK were able to use it as inspiration, and include in turn the armament aspect in the SDSR. The next White Paper will also offer the opportunity in their eyes to show their determination to take up the Franco-British challenge at affordable cost and their argument is aimed at the documentation of a firm commitment to the defence budget, so as to not hinder the development of future programmes, in particular Franco-British programmes. On the FCAS in particular, by explaining that if the investment is significant, *in fine* it would be more costly not to do it. The French, for their part, conceded that they would pay particular attention to the British projects of the SDSR and its orientations, and to the UK's capability and industrial ambitions. As the FCAS adventure will not be continued without a strong political disposition towards mutualisation. Will the Cabinet Office reserve any special consideration for Franco-British defence cooperation by setting it down in writing? Everything is possible, the French did it in 2013. But from there to thinking that it will include a paragraph to engagement in Africa alongside France, nothing is less certain.

« We should include industrial strategy in the SDSR. It is expected »

Paul Kahn
CEO Airbus UK

Conclusion

What was said in 2015

The 2015 Franco-British Council defence conference opened in a tense climate but the conclusions that were reached after two days of joint discussions were not at all negative. The bilateral context marked by the 2010-2015 progress report made this conference special. Both as a first assessment of a unique experience of the application of defence treaties signed for fifty years, and as a projection on the best way to operate for the years ahead, this annual meeting was highly instructive.

As backdrop, the busy timetable of British domestic affairs - following the Scottish referendum, the preparation for the general election, the prospect of the new Defence White Paper - delayed any progress in Franco-British discussions on a range of subjects, at the very time when cooperation requires that both partners be able to express themselves on key dossiers. This has led to forceful exchanges, a new tone, based on frankness, where France understands the domestic debate within the UK, but clearly presents its expectations on the need for the defence partnership to get off the ground, particularly in Africa. The British explained clearly why they do not prioritise the principle of armed intervention, and the military did not hide their impatience when faced with the absence of political will regarding the use of the expeditionary force, and the suppliers showed their determination to ensure cooperation was effective in areas of sovereignty.

Everybody referred to the absolute usefulness of the Lancaster House treaties. Without the treaties the trust accumulated in the nuclear domain, the unity of the joint force, the initiation of armaments programmes and the installation of administrative governance would not have been put in place. The determination of the decision makers to foster rapprochement remains the pivotal element underlying the Franco-British partnership. The Chiefs of Staff of the French Armée de l'air and the RAF, guests of honour at the 2015 conference, enthusiastically described the dividends of this undertaking and how it was indispensable for envisaging large-scale joint dossiers.

This was notable in the context of an international environment that had become extremely complex. Terrorism is the new subject raised by the Lancaster House partners in 2015, and, even if no reply was given to the question on the urgency of mobilisation for Libya, it was taken very seriously. The start of cooperation in combat aeronautics, already referred to in 2014, was related in 2015 to the terrorist threat and the way in which technological performances may be a response to the level of danger represented by the threats. The FCAS thus marked a turning point in bilateral defence cooperation. This was because on the one hand, it initiated the rapprochement between two manufacturers which, since 2010, had still not seen the benefits that will one day be available to them as a result of the Franco-British partnership. On the other hand, it led to a significant discussion on the system operating concept. Finally, this project which lies at the very heart of State sovereignty challenged the political leaders to respond to it.

What needs to be done in 2016

As it turned out, the French and British Ministers of Defence were not present at the meeting in London to speak about the bilateral defence partnership which is now in its fifth year. Defence cooperation is in a healthy state, but no cooperation initiative will be implemented if it does not have political support. Probably, perseverance to set up closer ties between the Ministries of Defence and the Ministries for Foreign Affairs would enhance the process of political consolidation, as the months ahead risk being tricky. In particular in respect of the European question. It will be necessary therefore to ensure that on the one hand, the Franco-British entente is protected from the polluting influences of any disagreements on Europe, and that on the other hand, the prospect of a British exit from the EU does not water down either the bilateral defence partnership, or the chances for driving forward European defence which is close to French hearts. In this effort, time will be quite tight as once France enters its Presidential campaign, the Franco-British clocks will again either stop or at the very least slow down.

The definition of a shared concept on how to use the expeditionary force was certainly considered to be a priority. The



Ann Kenrick, Claire Chick

CJEF, which becomes operational in the spring of 2016, expects to be headed by a political concordat in so far as concerns its strategic orientations. Will the British SDSR be able to attenuate the divergence of priorities between France and the UK? Will it want to commit to confirming a combat aeronautics programme? The pressure is clear on those drawing up the White Paper - much more so than in France in 2013 - as the defence cooperation of Lancaster House has today reached a final stage of maturity that requires decision makers to express their opinion on subjects of national interest.

The Franco-British Council must continue to contribute to the edifice of defence cooperation. This is in any case the result of the recommendations of a number of personalities according to whom, to drive the partnership forward and not leave it open to caricature, the FBC must communicate more frequently on the current situation of the bilateral relation,

continue to benefit from academic insights, diversify the circle of reflection by opening it up to senior officials who are less involved or less convinced, or again, organise a public event on the margins of the Annual Conference, which would contribute to the process of rapprochement. Symbols are not always good trend indicators. But if the CJEF were to parade on the Champs-Élysées in July 2016, the benefit could be twofold – it could have an impact on opinions regarding the reality of Franco-British defence and could send a signal on the political determination to implement it.

Claire Chick, July 2015



Les délégués à la conférence de défense 2015 du CFB

Participants 2015

Patricia ADAM

Députée, Présidente de la Commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées, Assemblée Nationale

Colonel Philippe ADAM

Questions euro-atlantiques
DGRIS

Rt Hon James ARBUTHNOT MP

Conservative MP for North East Hampshire
HOC

Hugh BAYLEY MP

President of the Nato Parliamentary Assembly

SE Sylvie BERMANN

French Ambassador to the UK

Baroness Tessa BLACKSTONE

Chair, Franco-British Council, British section

Prof. Christian de BOISSIEU

Président du Conseil franco-britannique, section française

Ian BOND

Director of foreign policy
Centre for European Reform

Antoine BOUVIER

Président-Directeur Général
MBDA

Victor CHAVEZ

CEO Thales UK

Dr Claire CHICK

Head of Defence
Franco-British Council

Vernon COAKER MP

Shadow defence Secretary
HOC

Laurent COLLET-BILLON

Délégué Général pour l'Armement
DGA

Anne-Marie COUDERC

Vice-Présidente du Conseil franco-britannique

Général de corps d'armée Bernard de COURRÈGES D'USTOU

Directeur de l'IHEDN et de l'Enseignement militaire supérieur

Olivier DARRASON

Président
CEIS

Hélène DUCHÊNE

Directrice des affaires stratégiques, de sécurité et du désarmement
Quai d'Orsay

Philip DUNNE MP

Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology
MOD

Étienne de DURAND

Directeur du Centre des études de sécurité
IFRI

Philippe ERRERA

Directeur général des relations internationales et de la stratégie
DGRIS

Philippe ESPER

Président du Cercle Européen de la Défense

SE Jean-Louis FALCONI

Directeur des affaires internationales, stratégiques et technologiques
SGDSN

Rt Hon Michael FALLON MP

Secretary of State for Defence
MOD

Tom FILLINGHAM

Director FCAS
BAE Systems

Nicolas FOURNIER

Attaché d'Armement
Ambassade de France au Royaume-Uni

Sir Simon FRASER

Permanent Under Secretary and Head of the Diplomatic Service
FCO

Louis GAUTIER

Secrétaire général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale
SGDSN

Étienne de GONNEVILLE

Sous-Directeur des Affaires Stratégiques
Quai d'Orsay

Nicole GNESOTTO

Présidente du conseil d'administration
IHEDN

Charles GRANT

Director, Centre for European Reform

Bernard GRAY

Chief of Defence Materiel
MOD

Guy GRIFFITHS

Group Managing Director International
BAE Systems

Thibault HARROIS

Doctorant - Univ Paris III

Dai HAVARD MP

Member of the Defence select committee
HOC

Air Marshal Sir Stephen HILLIER

Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Capability)

Marc HOWYAN

Directeur de l'unité de management « Avions de combat »
DGA

Charles HUGHES

Business Development and Strategy Director, Marshall
Aerospace

Will JESSETT

Director for Strategic planning
MOD

Rear Admiral Clive JOHNSTONE

Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (Policy)

Ben JONES
PhD Researcher, King's College

Paul KAHN
CEO, Airbus UK

Professeur Gilles KEPEL
Sciences Po

Ann KENRICK
Secretary General
Franco-British Council

Général de division Maurice de LANGLOIS
Directeur du domaine Politiques de défense comparées
Irsem, école militaire

Caroline LAURENT
Directrice de la stratégie
DGA

Jean-Yves LE DRIAN
Ministre de la défense

Richard LINDSAY
Head of Security Policy
FCO

Air Cdre Paul LYALL
Defence Attaché
British embassy

Général d'armée aérienne Gratien MAIRE
Major général des armées

Olivier MARTIN
Secrétaire Général, MBDA

Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER
Chef d'état-major de l'Armée de l'Air

Julian MILLER
Deputy National Security Adviser, Defence and Nuclear
Cabinet office

Colonel Patrice MORAND
Air Attaché, French Embassy, London

Capitaine de vaisseau François MOUCHEBOEUF
Naval Attaché, French Embassy London

Colonel Frédéric PARISOT
Etat-major particulier du Président de la République

Ketan PATEL
Security Policy & Operations
International Policy France, MOD

Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart PEACH
Vice Chief of the Defence Staff

Arnaud de PELLEGARS
Conseiller du Secrétaire Général
SGDSN

Pierre-Eric POMMELLET
Directeur Général Adjoint Systèmes de Mission de Défense
THALES

Vice Admiral Duncan POTTS
Director General
Defence Academy

Général d'armée Benoit PUGA
Chef d'Etat Major particulier
Cabinet du Président de la République

Air Chief Marshal Andrew PULFORD
Chief of the Air Staff
MOD

Général d'armée Christian QUESNOT
Ancien Chef de l'Etat-major particulier du Président de la
République

François REVARDEAUX
Conseiller Affaires stratégiques et Asie Pacifique Cabinet du
Président de la République

Sir Peter RICKETTS
British Ambassador to France

Gwendal ROUILLARD
Député socialiste du Morbihan
Assemblée Nationale

Matthew RYCROFT
UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations
New York

Contre-Amiral Henri SCHRICKE
Attaché de défense
Ambassade de France au Royaume-Uni

Rt Hon Rory STEWART MP
Chair of the Defence select committee
House of Commons

Robert STODDART
President of Customer Business - Defence
Rolls Royce

AVM Edward STRINGER
ACDS (Operations) - Designate

Vincent THOMASSIER
Sous-directeur Europe Occidentale et Amérique du Nord
DGA

Jean-Jacques TILLON
Vice-Président Europe
Dassault Aviation

Général de corps d'armée Olivier TRAMOND
Contrôleur général des armées en mission extraordinaire

Eric TRAPPIER
Président-Directeur-Général
Dassault Aviation

Steve WADEY
Managing Director
MBDA UK

Peter WATKINS
DG Security Policy
MOD

Stephen WILLMER
International Policy France-Team Leader
MOD

Paul WYATT
Head of Defence Strategy & Priorities
MOD



Design: eleonore.pironneau@gmail.com

