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*The role of the military in political transitions:  
from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present day*

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## Volume I





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# STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN THE COLD WAR: THE GERMAN-FRENCH BRIGADE AND THE EUROCORPS AS FIRST STEPS TOWARDS A EUROPEAN SECURITY STRUCTURE

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## Abstract

This contribution explores the creation of the German-French Brigade (1988) and Eurocorps, both of which understood as milestones in the evolution of European security and defense cooperation during the Cold War. It examines the bilateral initiatives between Germany and France against the backdrop of geopolitical shifts, including the US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and the Reykjavik Summit (1986), which spurred European concerns about their security dependence on the United States. Drawing on unpublished archival material and interviews, the study analyses the strategic, political, and diplomatic dynamics that shaped these military projects, emphasising their significance for both bilateral relations and a broader European integration. The article identifies diverging motives: France viewed the Brigade as a step towards a European defense identity independent of NATO, while Germany sought to reintegrate France into NATO structures and strengthen transatlantic bonds. Both initiatives exemplified a desire to address Cold War uncertainties and forge a European response to global security challenges. Despite these differences, the projects symbolised a commitment to interoperability and European emancipation concerning matters of defense. The article concludes, that the German-French Brigade and Eurocorps represent both the complexities, and aspirations of European security policy in the late 20th century, offering insights into the balancing between national interests and collective European ambitions.

**Keywords:** German-French Brigade, Eurocorps, European defense integration, Cold War security, Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)

## Introduction

German-French collaboration regarding security- and safety strategies has a long tradition, as they were shaped by geopolitical shifts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Especially during the 1980s, a time of steadily increasing international uncertainty and growing tension between the global superpowers of the USA and Soviet Union, did this partnership acquire newfound strength. Against the background of global security measures and the political challenges posed by the Cold War, Germany and France began to reinforce their military cooperation, in order to maintain their shared interests as well as to fortify their role in political order on an international scale.

The founding of the German-French Brigade in 1988 served as a particularly striking occurrence in regard to this newly strengthened collaboration. Its founding was recognized as both an important milestone for the integration of bilateralism in security politics, but also as an important model for a modern European security structure. However, the German-French Brigade was not only considered to be a military project, it also acted as an expression of political aspiration, one that transcended a mere bilateral partnership. It was the Brigade that took a first step towards an enhanced European security- and defense policy, as its actions didn't depend on global powers.

This article focuses on the events and developments during the 1980s, that led to the creation of the German-French Brigade. It moreover sheds light on the political, military and diplomatic dynamics that characterized set process. At the core of this analyses lie the roles of the two main parties, Germany and France as well as the European perspective on the tension between American hegemony and European emancipation in light of global security structures. Additionally, it will examine which specific intentions connected Germany and France to the Brigade and the Eurocorps. What kind of strategic and political goals did they chase with such a collective military initiative? A distinct focus lies thereby on the explicit motives of both parties, regarding both the bilateral cooperation, together with its ambitions for a newly strengthened European security and defense policy. Furthermore, this article will assess to what extent these projects promote European emancipation regarding security and safety as well as which long-term perspectives they enabled for a European integration. Firstly (Chapters 1-4), developments regarding security politics and geopolitics that led to an intensified collaboration between Germany and France in the 1980s will be evaluated. Afterwards (Chapters 5-7), the specific intentions and goals of the two partners in relation

to the founding of the German-French Brigade and Eurocorps as well as their extended purpose on a European scale of security structures, will be analysed. So far, research is based on unpublished file material from Germany and France as well as conducted interviews with former participants of the German-French Brigade.

### **The American SDI-offer: A geopolitical chess move**

The Cold War and the ever-increasing tension between the superpowers USA and the Soviet Union shaped the European security policy during the 1980s. In March of 1983, US President Ronald Reagan's announcement of the development of a missile defense system under the name of Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was the cause for grave concerns across Europe. France and Germany, regarded as the leading nations in western Europe, were confronted with a challenge that not only questioned their own defense strategy, but also their role in the transatlantic confederacy. A fear of an acceleration and expansion of the arms race into space that would worsen the East-West relations took hold. Of even greater concern for the Europeans was that this planned arms program called the atomic shield provided by America into question.<sup>(1)</sup>

On 26 March 1985, the US Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger offered the European alliance a chance to partake in the research of the SDI.<sup>(2)</sup> This missile defense system, which served as a reaction by US President Ronald Reagan towards the nuclear threat of the Soviet Union, was one of the most ambitious and technologically advanced projects instituted by American military strategy. The initial dialog about the participation of European forces on this program was not only meant as an invitation for technological cooperation, it also served as a strategic maneuver by the US to link the American interests closer to the European security policy as well as to strengthen a transatlantic collaboration.<sup>(3)</sup>

However, this offer proved to be quite challenging for the European participants, especially France, since it transcended a mere military basis. The SDI program offered the European forces the chance to gain access to highly developed technology, but also harboured the risk of growing too dependent on American innovation. France, under the leadership of François Mitterrand, recognized this uncertainty and chose to deny a participation on the SDI.<sup>(4)</sup> This rejection of the American offer wasn't solely one of security political origin, but also represented a geopolitical act, that reflected the strive

1. For any concerns, see also: Archives nationales de France, Pierrefit-sur-Seine (AN), AG/5(4)/CD/161, MRE, Direction des Affaires Politiques, Service des Affaires Stratégiques et du Désarmement, Sous-Direction des Affaires Stratégiques et des Pactes, Note, Réunion du groupe politico-stratégique franco-allemand à Bonn le 13 avril, 27 April 1983.

2. Records of Ministerialdirigent Schauer, 28 March 1985. In: Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (AAPD) 1985, Doc. 82, 432.

3. Archives nationales de France, Pierrefit-sur-Seine (AN), AG/5(4)/EG/71, Hubert Védrine, Note, Initiative de Défense Stratégique, Spring 1985; See : Roland Dumas, *Affaires étrangères, Tome 1 : 1981- 1988*, (Paris : Fayard, 2007), 252.

4. Paul Chaput, *La France face à l'initiative de défense stratégique de Ronald Reagan 1983- 1986*, (Paris : Harmattan, 2014), 192 f.

of France to preserve the technological and military independence of Europe as well as to reinforce a European cooperation in scientific research and development.<sup>(5)</sup>

With France's refusal of the SDI-program came the goal of manifesting Europe as the superior political actor in the global debate of security and technology. Mitterrand and his advisors were aware of the geopolitical and security political implications of SDI, especially regarding the fact, that a European participation in American missile defense systems would undermine European independence and their influence on global disarmament negotiations.

Additionally, the SDI offer posed a considerable challenge for the French doctrine of deterrence, that greatly relied on the autonomy of their national nuclear force. France had built their military strategy around the principle of "force de frappe", a nuclear power deterrence.<sup>(6)</sup> A European contribution to SDI, that potentially could have been integrated into the American missile defense system, would be recognized as a threat for French independence and its ability to design their own security policy autonomously.<sup>(7)</sup> Therefore, France intended to find its own European answer to the technological challenge posed by the Cold War, that allowed European countries to gain more control over their security politics. This inadvertently led to the initiation of the EUREKA-program, which served as a European response to SDI. Its intention was to make Europe technologically competitive and simultaneously preserve its independence.<sup>(8)</sup>

## German-French agreements and the formation of EUREKA

The German reaction to the SDI offer was less explicit than the French one response. Germany was, under the leadership of Chancellor Helmut Kohl, still tightly bound to the transatlantic partnership with the US and hesitated in distancing itself from the American initiative. Kohl expressed his interest of a European component in SDI, however, it was meant as an addition, rather as a competition to the American missile defense system. This attitude was met with criticism from Paris, that intended to find a European answer to SDI, without becoming too dependent on the US.

The bilateral debates between France and Germany about SDI and the questions of a European technological autonomy intensified after the announcement of the American offer. French diplomats, particularly Foreign Minister Roland Dumas and advisor Jacques Attali, attempted to convince their German colleagues about the necessity of

5. Archives nationales de France, Pierrefit-sur-Seine (AN), AG/5(4)/EG/71, Hubert Védrine, Note, Initiative de Défense Stratégique, April 1985.

6. Pierre Mauroy, "La Cohérence d'une politique de défense. Allocution du Premier Ministre le 14 septembre 1981, lors de la séance d'ouverture de la 34ème session de l'INEDN," *Défense nationale* 414 (1981): 21.

7. Meeting between Federal Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand in Baden Baden, 16. January 1986. In: Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (AAPD) 1986, Doc. 10, p. 52.

8. Archives nationales de France, Pierrefit-sur-Seine (AN), AG/5(4)/EG/71, Hubert Védrine, Note, Initiative de Défense Stratégique, April 1985.

a European solution.<sup>(9)</sup> The initiative of Mitterrand and his government consisted of presenting their European partners a collective response to the American proposal and coincidentally reinforce European industrial assets. Ultimately, this led to the founding of EUREKA, which based on the idea of merging European resources, to construct an independent and competitive European security industry. The French approach, that developed itself through a tight cooperation with the Federal Republic of Germany, put their focus on a reinforced European collaboration regarding research and technology.

### **The diplomatic dimension: EUREKA as an instrument of European emancipation**

EUREKA was not exclusively a technological program, it also served as a political instrument, that supported France's efforts of freeing Europe from American dependencies. EUREKA chased the goal of strengthening the European capacities and counteract the US dominance regarding missile defense systems. The French approach, that was developed through a close collaboration with Germany, laid their efforts on European cooperation in the fields of research and technology. Its focus extended beyond the development of security technologies to include modernisation of the European industry, ensuring it could keep pace with the technological innovations emerging from the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>(10)</sup>

The German reaction to EUREKA and the French endeavour to develop a European answer to SDI was diverse. While Kohl and the German government fundamentally supported a stronger European cooperation, they held on to the necessity of a close collaboration with the US. The German party was prepared to create a "European component" in SDI, although not contradicting American aspirations.<sup>(11)</sup> This technological partnership was a crucial component of German-French negotiations and set the foundation of a future initiatives concerning military and security policies.

In this regard, previous implementations are of vital importance for a central understanding: the American offer of cooperation presented an initial ignition for bilateral and multilateral efforts of coordination of European allies for SDI. Thereby, Mitterrand's intention of forming a joint European answer to respectively decline the American suggestion, and instead concentrate on European projects, became blatant. The accelerated ambition of bilateral cooperation can therefore be retraced to the American offer as well. In their analyses, the German and French ministers of Foreign Affairs and

9. Roland Dumas strategically staged the decision on the American offer as if European independence was irrevocably at stake: it threatened "complete dependence on the USA" and deprived the Europeans of any "possibility of self-assertion towards the Soviet Union". See: Ministerialdirektor Pfeffer, z. Z. Paris an das Auswärtige Amt, 28 February 1985. In: Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (AAPD) 1985, Doc. 53, 290.

10. Archives nationales de France, Pierrefit-sur-Seine (AN), AG/5(4)/EG/71, Hubert Védrine, Note, Initiative de Défense Stratégique, April 1985.

11. Meeting between Federal Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand in Baden Baden, 16 January 1986. In: Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (AAPD) 1986, Doc. 10, 52 f.



Defense concluded, that European interests regarding this question, as well as related to the technological challenges, could be maintained.

### **The Reykjavik-effect and the intensification of consultations**

The events of the summit in Reykjavik in October of 1986 marked an important moment for European security cooperation, since they critically influenced the political landscape of Europe as well as set a new impulse for German-French cooperation. The summit, that featured important discussions about nuclear disarmament between US President Ronald Reagan and the Soviet head of State Mikhail Gorbachev, was a political shock for many western allies, including the European countries.<sup>(12)</sup> The surprising turn of events, that both superpowers fundamentally agreed to a denuclearization in Reykjavik, caused a sudden disbelief in western Europe, as well as profound uncertainty. This feeling was furthermore enhanced by the impression, that Europe increasingly took on the role of a passive observer in international demilitarization, since it wasn't included in any form of decision making.<sup>(13)</sup>

After the summit in Reykjavik, western European nations progressively began to coordinate how to better represent their intentions regarding security politics. The so called "Reykjavik-Effect" led to aggravated gatherings between European allies on expert levels.<sup>(14)</sup> The bilateral consultation between Paris and Bonn began to accelerate, which reflected through a sequence of important meetings, among them the German-French summit in Frankfurt in October 1986 and the consultations in Bonn on 11 November 1986, between the four western European nations Great Britain, Italy, France and the Republic Federation of Germany.<sup>(15)</sup>

The essential question emerging in Europe after the Reykjavik summit was, how the continent could better grasp its own security policy, without completely distancing itself from the US and the NATO. The German Chancellor Helmut Kohl actively advocated an enhanced coordination with France and Great Britain, in order to facilitate a stronger European body regarding security politics. He intended to have a larger influence on American administration through these consultations, especially regarding the process of demilitarisation and the further handling of the SDI-initiative.<sup>(16)</sup>

12. Detlev Preuß, *Umbruch von unten. Die Selbstbefreiung Mittel- und Osteuropas und das Ende der Sowjetunion*, (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2014), 285.

13. Frederike Schotters, *Frankreich und das Ende des Kalten Krieges. Gefühlsstrategien der équipe Mitterrand 1981- 1990*, (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2019) (Studien zur Internationalen Geschichte, Bd. 44), 271-272.

14. Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des affaires étrangères, La Courneuve (ADMAE) 1935-INVA 6652, MAE, TD Diplomatie 28197, Benoit d'Aboville, „Après Reykjavik“ – consultations restreintes entre pays européens, 13 November 1986.

15. Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des affaires étrangères, La Courneuve (ADMAE) 1935-INVA 6652, MAE, Direction des Affaires Politiques, Service des Affaires Stratégiques et du Désarmement, Sous-Direction des Affaires Stratégiques et des Pactes, Note, Le débat stratégique après Reykjavik, 28 November 1986.

16. Jacques Attali, *Verbatim 1986-1991*, (Paris: Fixot, 2011), 198.



## The priority shift: From culture to security and defense

For the French side, specifically the French ambassador Serge Boidevaix, the political shift after the summit in Reykjavik was blatantly obvious. Boidevaix noticed, that the public perception in Germany moved from cultural topics to increasingly security and defense related ones. This was not only a sign of growing unrest in the Federal Republic about the unpredictable political developments after the summit, it also served as a signal for the necessity to deepen the security policy related cooperation, to enhance a European defense strategy.<sup>(17)</sup>

The bilateral military collaboration between France and Germany further intensified due to the Reykjavik-Effect. Not only was this apparent through the increase in meetings between the two nations, it also affected the practical dimension between their partnership, as seen with the promotion of shared officer educational training, the overcoming of language barriers and over all military integration. A first allied military maneuver took place in 1986, followed by other planned movements in 1987, in which French armed forces took part in. These developments underlined the increasing meaning that both countries attributed a shared defense of Europe.<sup>(18)</sup>

## A signal of German-French solidarity

The Reykjavik summit had not only brought concern over the American demilitarization initiative, it also strengthened the solidarity between western European nations, specifically between Germany and France. The German-French cooperation regarding security political questions was deemed as necessary to ensure a European influence in the disarmament movement while simultaneously reinforcing a stronger European identity in the European defense policy. The message that was sent out after Reykjavik across Europe, was that with joined collaboration between the two countries, political and strategic challenges would not only be met, but furthermore enhance European unity.<sup>(19)</sup> Despite the fact, that the NATO nonetheless stood as the guarantor of western European safety, the progress of the bilateral collaboration was interpreted as an important step for a stronger European integration and independence. An important element of this German-French partnership was the idea to link a nuclear and conventional disarmament. This approach found expression in the consultations and strategic votes that occurred between both nations across all levels. Simultaneously,

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17. Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des affaires étrangères, La Courneuve (ADMAE) 1935-INVA 6786, MAE, TD Bonn 1788, Boidevaix, Coopération en matière de sécurité – presse allemande, 25 October 1986.

18. Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des affaires étrangères, La Courneuve (ADMAE) 1935-INVA 6786, Résumé des conversations des Ministres de la Défense à l'occasion des consultations franco-allemandes des 27 et 28 Octobre à Francfort.

19. Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des affaires étrangères, La Courneuve (ADMAE) 1935-INVA 6785, MAE, Coopération franco-allemande en matière de sécurité. Bilan rendu public à l'issue du sommet des 27 et 28 octobre 1986, 29 October 1986.

the awareness about the necessity for a stronger harmony between military concepts and defense cooperation grew frequently.<sup>(20)</sup>

## **The Europeans and their uncertainty towards the US**

The insecurity of European nations, that emerged after the Reykjavik summit, were reflected through the diplomatic efforts to reevaluate their relation to the United States. French diplomats held discussions with representatives of the US administration, to ensure that European states would not again have to face a sudden demilitarisation by America completely unprepared.<sup>(21)</sup> The European concern grew through the understanding, that the American administration increasingly appeared as unpredictable and divided. Such a feeling of uncertainty promoted the willingness to develop a stronger coordination and closer cooperation between the parties of the western alliance.

During that time, US Foreign Minister George Shultz attempted to restore the trust of their European allies through proposing, that the US would continue to hang on to a credible nuclear deterrence and its presence in Europe through American troops.<sup>(22)</sup> However, uncertainty about American politics remained, and many European participants began to question and discuss the necessity of a inherent European security structure.

## **Strategic partnership in uniform: The creation of the German-French Brigade**

On 19 June 1987, Kohl presented the idea of a jointed German-French unit for the very first time.<sup>(23)</sup> Merely a day later did President Mitterrand present this proposal as an important step in the right direction.<sup>(24)</sup> In September 1987, the collaborative large-scale exercise “Kecker Spatz/Moineau Hardi”, in the South of Germany, marked an important milestone in German-French military cooperation. It was the first large bilateral military maneuver between Germany and France that took place in the Federal Republic. On this exercise, the French intervention force “Force d’Action Rapide”, together with other French units (20,000 Soldiers in total) presented their capabilities to act as an operative

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20. Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des affaires étrangères, La Courneuve (ADMAE) 1935-INVA 6785, MAE, Coopération franco-allemande en matière de sécurité. Bilan rendu public à l’issue du sommet des 27 et 28 octobre 1986, 29 October 1986.

21. Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des affaires étrangères, La Courneuve (ADMAE) 1935-INVA 6653, MAE, TD Washington 123/124/125, Margerie, Entretien avec M. Perle, 22 January 1987.

22. Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des affaires étrangères, La Courneuve (ADMAE) 1935-INVA 6653, MAE, TD Washington 302, Margerie, Entretien de M. Shultz avec la délégation de la Commission des Affaires Etrangères de l’Assemblée Nationale conduite par M. Alain Peyrefitte, 11 February 1987.

23. Kohl emphasised that such security cooperation was not directed against the Atlantic Alliance, whose partnership is essential for German security. He added that French nuclear weapons should remain excluded from bilateral cooperation. See: Europa-Archiv, 42 (1987), Line 132.

24. Europa-Archiv, 42 (1987), Line 133.

reserve unit in conjunction with German troops (55,000 in total).<sup>(25)</sup> This drill took place in a proposed area in western Germany, the NATO command area of middle Europe (Central Region). The objective of this practice was, to train the cooperation between west-German and French land- and air forces in accordance with the Atlantic treaty, as well as to gain new insights to improve their military collaboration (Interoperability).

The establishment of a German-French armed forces unit through a Brigade, and the joined defense- and security council, found their first common basis in the declaration for military and security political cooperation from 13 November 1987, during the 50<sup>th</sup> German-French summit in Karlsruhe.<sup>(26)</sup> Shortly afterwards, on the 19 June, both statesmen presented the idea of a

“fully integrated” task force in the form of a “Brigade”. This unit should act as both a “nucleus” to strengthen the European defense, as well as a symbol of a close German-French safety partnership. The long-term goal of this operation would be the collaborated defense of Europe, ideally through the form of a European army.<sup>(27)</sup>

The concept of the German-French Brigade took place during a time in which a German agreements still seemed far away. Its primary task laid in taking over a strategic role in case of a potential assault by the Warsaw Pact (WTO), by acting as a frontline defense.<sup>(28)</sup> The Brigade was focused on conducting reconnaissance, regulating traffic, and securing corridors to ensure a smooth supply and freedom of movement for the French troops to the east. This task was especially relevant, since France resigned from the military structures of the NATO in 1966. In an emergency situation, the Brigade should support the French troops and reinforce the defense of central Europe.<sup>(29)</sup> This cooperation underlined the political will of both nations, to maintain a military partnership, despite apparent differences.<sup>(30)</sup> Therefore, it symbolized the security alliance between Germany and France, which formed during the Cold War as a response to the Soviet threat. The joined military force embodied not only a political will of both parties for

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25. This included soldiers from the mountain division, corps troops and territorial defence, including 15,000 reservists. See: Hans-Günter Behrendt, *Erinnerungsorte der Bundeswehr. Personen, Ereignisse und Institutionen der soldatischen Traditionspflege*, (Berlin: Miles, 2020), 112; Günther Koenig, “Die Strukturen der Deutsch-Französischen Zusammenarbeit auf dem Gebiet der Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik – Rechtsgrundlagen und Entwicklung,” in *Rechtsprobleme einer europäischen Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik*, ed. Christian Tomuschat, (Heidelberg: C. F. Müller 1997), 73.

26. Klaus Dau, “Rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen einer deutsch-französischen Brigade,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Wehrrecht* 31 (1989): 178.

27. Bundesarchiv (BArch), BH 1/21105, “12. Tagung der GE/FR-Arbeitsgruppe Militärische Zusammenarbeit am 02.03. in Paris”.

28. Until 2 October 1990, all West German brigades and divisions were subordinate to NATO within the framework of national and alliance defence.

29. Bundesarchiv (BArch), BW 1/565796, Document of 28 July 1987.

30. BArch, BH 1/21105, “Resumée der GE/FR Zusammenarbeit” (Meeting with army generals on NATO duty on 18 April 1988 in Bonn).

a closer cooperation, it would also serve as a future component for a European defense strategy.<sup>(31)</sup>

The establishment staff, led by the French brigadier Jean Pierre Sengeisen and his German representative colonel Günther Wassenberg, began its work on 3 October 1988, in Böblingen.<sup>(32)</sup> Sengeisen emphasised, that by the time of their commission, on 1 October 1989, the unification of the Brigade, as a requirement for its operative readiness for use, was to be encouraged as soon as possible.<sup>(33)</sup>

The German and French part of the Brigade was roughly even. The binational mix was limited to their staff and staff company, as well as the medical battalion.<sup>(34)</sup> It was designed equipped as a lightly armored and independently operating formation.<sup>(35)</sup>

Nevertheless, it only took a few years to mobilise certain parts of the binational association; firstly in Rajlovac, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and later as a central component of the multinational Brigade in Kabul, Afghanistan. During the second half of the year 2006, the Brigade furthermore provided their contribution to the NATO Response Force (NRF), the quickest taskforce in the alliance.

The leadership of the German-French Brigade was incumbent to the Brigade general, supported by a Colonel as a representative, as well as a Chief of Staff. This administrative position was changed every two years between Germany and France: If one side provides the commander, the position of the Deputy, and that of the Chief of Staff was occupied by the other.<sup>(36)</sup> At the Brigade's side stands a bilateral staff, whose members – Officers and Sergeants – stemmed from a specific key from both countries. A substantial part

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31. Background discussion with retired Major General Helmut Neubauer, on 14 February 2023 in Müllheim.

32. Helmut Kohl originally wanted the brigade to be stationed in Hermeskeil. In the end, Müllheim was chosen due to its proximity to France. See: Background discussion with retired Major General Helmut Neubauer, on 14 February 2023 in Müllheim; Document of 10 September 1990. From the private collection of the former mayor of Müllheim, Hanspeter Sängler.

33. BArch, BW 70/118a, Document of 19 June 1989. The administrative agreements signed on 2 November 1989 by Defence Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg and his French counterpart Jean-Pierre Chevènement set out the framework conditions for the operation, organisation and objectives of the brigade. Article 1 states: 'The establishment of the Franco-German Brigade is intended to provide both states with a large force capable of fighting (you write above that the unit was intended for support tasks) – deployable under the leadership of the brigade commander. The formation of the brigade also pursues the goal of establishing common procedures whenever possible and harmonising the conditions of service and living conditions of the units. The aim is to improve interoperability between the German and French units and to review the principles for the training of formations made up of units of different nationalities. At the same time, the brigade should help to promote mutual familiarisation and make the standardisation of material and equipment more effective'. See Helmut Neubauer, "Die Deutsch-Französische Brigade – Vom politischen Symbol zum einsatzfähigen Großverband," in *Eurokorps und Europäische Einigung*, ed. Ernst Martin, (Bonn: Kunst & Kommunikation, 1996), 353 f.

34. BArch, BH 1/21105, Document of 13 June 1988. This structure has not changed to this day.

35. Manfred Rosenberger, "Die Deutsch-Französische Sicherheitspartnerschaft und ihre Auswirkungen auf multinationale Streitkräftestrukturen," in: *Eurokorps und Europäische Einigung*, ed. Ernst Martin, (Bonn: Kunst & Kommunikation, 1996), 191; Neubauer, *Die Deutsch-Französische Brigade*, 356 f.

36. BArch, BH 1/21105, Document of 13 June 1988.

of the staff's personnel is provided by the mixed national company, while operational command is equipped with equally hybrid supportive battalion. The remaining unions of the Brigade, on the other hand, are exclusively organised nationally. A particularly bilateral connection formed through the national responsibility for the barracks: France is in charge of the property management in Donaueschingen, while German regulations apply in Immendingen.

However, a demanding challenge for this binational union lied within the language rules. During the early '90s, it was common for every soldier of the Brigade to communicate in their native tongue, which required a sufficient understanding of the opposing language.<sup>(37)</sup> With the growing integration into the operative structures of the NATO and EU, the English language steadily gained relevance. Since the middle of the 1990s, English serves as the official working language of the German-French Brigade, while speaking the two partner languages is only necessary for Officers in key positions. During the course of the professionalisation of the French forces and the sinking participation of draftees in Germany, especially in linguistically versed regions like Elsass or Baden-Württemberg, did the language comprehension fall off, particularly in younger companies.<sup>(38)</sup>

Time and time again was it proven that national provisions and the access of single nations to certain components of the Brigade had a higher priority than binational integration.<sup>(39)</sup> Although the administrative regulations from 1989 and 2004 have built a foundation for the alignment of national rules, many differences, like the size of the troops accommodations, were apparent.<sup>(40)</sup> Furthermore, trust in binational agreements was often overshadowed by national decision-making structures. Despite shared training and preparations, the German-French Brigade was not utilised as a closed association abroad; rather, national contingents were assigned to the multinational Brigade, whose leadership authorisation was heavily restricted by national reservations.<sup>(41)</sup>

The arrangement of the German-French Brigade was clear evidence for the efforts of both countries, to promote interoperability and reduce divergent security- and safety

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37. See: BArch, BW 70/118a, Document of 19 June 1989, Appendix F.

38. Heike Abel, et al., "Die Deutsch-Französische Brigade," in: *Handbuch Militär und Sozialwissenschaft*, 2nd ed., ed. Sven Bernhard Gareis, Paul Klein, (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 386-388.

39. Even during the planning of the installation, one was aware of certain problems that would pose challenges to integration, e.g. language problems, military culture, eating habits, etc. See: BArch, BH 1/21105, Document of 13 July 1988.

40. Several interviewees reported some irritations and uncertainties that prevailed at the time of commissioning, e.g. with regard to firing and safety regulations. For example, joint/mixed guard duty was not feasible due to the different legal provisions. See: Background discussion with retired sergeant major Thomas Walz on 15 February 2023 in Müllheim; BArch, BW 1/565797, Document of 18 January 1989.

41. Georg Nachtsheim, "Deutsch-Französische Brigade – Ein Strukturmodell künftiger europäischer Streitkräfte?" in *Europäische Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik*, ed. Werner Hoyer, Gerd F. Kaldrack, (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2000), 70. In addition to joint training phases, it must be noted that the training of soldiers is still predominantly national in character today. See: BArch, BW 70/118a, Document of 19 June 1989, Appendix B.

policies. It furthermore intended to underline the role of the Federal Republic and France as a driving force of European integration in political affairs regarding security and defense.

### **The role of Germany and France in the founding of the Eurocorps**

The initiative for the founding of the Eurocorps immediately followed the goal of integrating the existing German-French cooperation into the European context. This was furthermore demonstrated by the fact, that this initiative came into effect prior to the negotiations about the EU-treaty from the 7 February 1992, where both France and Germany stood up for the development of an independent European security and defense identity. An anchoring of joined security policies, as well as operations abroad (GASP), meant to support this idea.<sup>(42)</sup>

On 14 October 1991, a message from the former chairmen of the European council, Dutch Prime minister Ruud Lubber, offered Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand comprehensive offers to further develop the political union and its security policy.<sup>(43)</sup> With this incentive, they aimed to utilise the GASP as a central subject of the prospective European treaty. They deemed it necessary to strengthen a European responsibility regarding security and defense and intended to concretise this attitude through institutionalised steps.<sup>(44)</sup>

The strive of both statesmen specified the goals of the WEU, to bind them tightly into a European agreement process.<sup>(45)</sup> Thereby, the role of the WEU as an integral part of European integration was to be reinforced. The initiative emphasised the necessity to develop an autonomous European security- and defense identity, as well as to assume a more crucial role in questions regarding European defense. A gradual expansion of the WEU as a defensive component of the EU laid at the core of its intention. Moreover, all associates of the union, who were also members of the NATO, got invited to join the WEU.<sup>(46)</sup>

The Kohl-Mitterrand-initiative aimed to establish a clear and organised connection between the WEU and EU, to realise the WEU's design. To achieve this, a military planning- and coordination staff was appointed, that focused on a wide array of tasks.

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42. Philipp Wassenberg, *Das Eurokorps. Sicherheitsrechtliches Umfeld und völkerrechtliche Bedeutung eines multinationalen Großverbands*, (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1999) (= Publications of the Europa-Institut of Saarland University - Law, 23), 133.

43. Axel Sauder, *Souveränität und Integration Französische und deutsche Konzeptionen europäischer Sicherheit nach dem Ende des Kalten Krieges 1990- 1993*, (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995), 219.

44. Holher H. Mey, "A View from Germany – Eurocorps and Transatlantic Security Relations," *Comparative Strategy* 12 (1993): 96.

45. "Anlage zur Botschaft zur gemeinsamen europäischen Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik", Bulletin of the Federal Government 117 (1991), Nr. 117, 930.

46. BArch, N 854/9 (1), Document "Europäisches Korps", without date, 1–2.

A substantial part of that force was to form military units, that were commanded by the WEU.<sup>(47)</sup>

Despite the message being called as a contribution to a common European foreign- and security policy prior to the negotiations of the EU-treaty, its core concern laid elsewhere. Mainly, the formation of a new military union was of interest. The cooperation with the WEU and the NATO was already extensively discussed during the negotiations about the political union, as well as the economic- and currency union since the 14 December, 1990.<sup>(48)</sup>

For the design of the GASP, a mere German-French collaborative effort would not have been necessary, if it had disturbed the other EG-members. With its initiative, Kohl, and even more so Mitterrand, intended to inform the EG and NATO about their plans of creating a greater collective association, that transcended the German-French Brigade. However, during the negotiations regarding the EU-treaty, this idea remained unattended.<sup>(49)</sup>

Both statesmen did not mean to abort their dialogs about their initiative with the members of the union. Although the idea to extend the German-French Brigade by instituting a European corps was purely of German and French origin, all other allies were to participate in the design of a European force.<sup>(50)</sup>

A joint army corps meant to served as a foundation for a multilingual European body.<sup>(51)</sup> Despite Bonn and Paris finding a fast and common compromise for the development of the Eurocorps, their motives differed substantially. In Bonn, the corps was understood as a means for France to regain their strength in the NATO.<sup>(52)</sup> Meanwhile, Paris viewed it as a step to create an independent European defensive core, possibly without the participation of the United States.<sup>(53)</sup>

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47. Hartmut Bühl, "Europäische Verteidigungsidentität – Das Eurokorps als ein erster militärischer Ansatz," in *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 32 (1994): 612.

48. Wassenberg, *Das Eurokorps*, 135.

49. Bulletin of the Federal Government 117 (1991), 931.

50. Bulletin of the Federal Government 117 (1991), 931. The Franco-German Brigade was to be subordinated to the corps on 1 October 1993 as a "light, mobile element". BArch, N 854/9 (1), Document "Europäisches Korps", without date, 2.

51. Karl-Heinz Kamp, "Ein Spaltpilz für das Atlantische Bündnis? Das deutsch-französische 'Eurokorps,'" in: *Europa-Archiv*, 47 (1992): 446. The plans initially raised concerns in the US and the UK about the future of NATO. Chancellor Kohl tried to allay these concerns by, among other things, supporting the NATO's use of the Eurocorps. See: Gunther Hellmann, et al., "De-Europeanization by Default? Germany's EU Policy in Defense and Asylum," in: *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1 (2005): 154-160.

52. Karen Donfried, "The Franco-German Eurocorps: Implications for die U.S. Security role in Europe" (Congressional Research Service [CRS] Report for Congress), Washington 22 October 1992, 7.

53. Christoph Neßhöver and Holger Schrader, "Frankreich auf dem Weg zu einer 'Multilateralisierung' seiner Deutschlandpolitik?" in: *Die verhinderte Großmacht. Frankreichs Sicherheitspolitik nach dem Ende des Ost-West-Konflikts*, ed. Hanns Maull, et al., (Opladen: Leske/Budrich, 1997), 76-78.



Therefore, the Eurocorps did not actually act as a sign for a French approach to the NATO, it rather served as an instrument of promoting a European merging regarding defensive measures, that meant to support a joint European defense identity within the GASP. Another important aspect was the symbolic value of those military unions. This was especially interesting for Helmut Kohl, since it underlined the changing character of a united Germany and its obligation for a European cooperation. While the German-French Brigade mainly served as a symbol for the growing German-French friendship, with a character of transcription, the Eurocorps should specifically help to build a new European defensive identity. The founding nations therefore not only intended an intensification of the German-French collaboration, they also meant to provide a beginning for the development of a Europe's new security identity. Thereby, especially the German side understood, that multilateral military structures required an adjustment of national equipment- and operating standards.<sup>(54)</sup>

## Conclusion

The development of bilateral cooperation regarding security and safety relations between Paris and Bonn during the years 1987 and 1988 must also be put into the context of the Reykjavik-effect of European emancipation. How the previous chapter has displayed, François Mitterrand gave Helmut Kohl the prospect of an alternative future, in which the creation of Europe as the third model of order handled the uncertainty of the American protective shield. Therein, he meant to transform the upset trust of the American safety guarantee into a stronger European engagement by the Republic Federation of Germany. The German-French collaboration in security political related matters in 1987 and 1988 were, on the one hand, stimulated by the experience of Reykjavik and, on the other hand, was nurtured by the German-French solidarity background from the past. It managed to tie to the cooperation of the recent years, that immediately found a new dynamic after the American offer of cooperation. The developments around the SDI-program, the Reykjavik-summit and the intensive consultations between France and Germany led to a change of paradigms in European security strategy. The German-French Brigade and the Eurocorps, who emerged through these discussions and efforts, were a specific outcome of reinforced collaboration, as well as a symbol for the wish of a stronger European independence concerning safety issued. Not only did they showcase the intention of both countries to deepen their military cooperation, but they also illustrated the necessity of producing a European answer to the geopolitical challenged of the Cold War. However, both nations followed different intentions. The French goal was to strengthen the European security identity, as well as the role of France as a confident actor in global defense relations. Compared to that, Germany, through the Brigade, strived to slowly reintroduce France to the structures of the NATO.

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54. Gert Wessels and Günter Winzen, "Interoperabilität und Ausrüstung," in: *Eurokorps und Europäische Einigung*, ed. Ernst Martin, (Bonn: Kunst & Kommunikation, 1996), 385–386.

This approach should not only bind them to the NATO regarding politics and military, it also intended to reinforce the transatlantic cooperation, without endangering the European dimension.

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