The French return to NATO

A reintegration in practice rather than principle

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Abstract

Sarkozy's decision to bring France back into NATOs integrated military structure in 2009 represents in some sense a break with the French exceptionalism. But how deep is this change? This paper examines the extent to which this decision has led to a real integration of France according to different dimensions of integration. In addition, it also aims at revealing the extent to which it represents a continuation or a break with the traditional French approach and the effects of this reintegration on the cooperation between NATO and the EU. The paper attempts to answer these research questions based on an empirical analysis of French political and military practices in NATO. It combines a focus on macro-level foreign policy formulations with a more detailed study of how French officials and representatives communicate and interact on a day-to-day basis (micro-level). The overall assumption is that the higher degree of (real) integration into the military structures of NATO, the more likely it is that this decision also represent a break with the traditional French approach and that it will have a positive effect on the cooperation between the two institutions. The empirical analysis in this paper shows that France has become increasingly integrated into NATO since 2009 on most dimensions except with regards to cultural integration. This indicates that France is more or less fully reintegrated in practice, but perhaps not yet in principle.

1. Introduction

French foreign and security policy has been dominated, since 1945, by the explicit ambition to restore the country's greatness *(la grandeur de la France)*, justified by referring to French 'exceptionalism'. Since the 1950s, this foreign-policy ambition has been maintained, justified and practiced by what we may call a 'Europeanization strategy'. Assuming that France will remain a dominant country within the EC/EU, French politicians, diplomats and bureaucrats have worked to strengthen the processes of integration. All French governments since the 1950s have believed that a French-dominated European integration process would boost not only European but also French influence internationally (Hoffmann 1965, 2000; Maclean and Szarka 2008). French NATO policy has, in fact, been one of the clearest examples that confirm this strategy. Since de Gaulle decided to withdraw France from NATO's integrated military structure in 1966, France has been skeptical to the American dominance within the alliance (Bozo 1996;)

Sarkozy's decision to bring France back into NATOs integrated military structure in 2009 is in some sense a break with this French traditional approach. The questions are then: (1) How and to what extent has this decision led to a *real* integration of France? (2) To what extent does it represent a continuation or a break with the traditional French approach? And finally (3) What are the effects on the cooperation between NATO and the EU?

These questions are interlinked, in the sense that the answer to the first question will have implications for the next two. The overall assumption or working hypothesis is that the higher degree of (real) integration into the military structures of NATO, the more likely it is that this decision also represents a break with the traditional French approach and that it will have a positive effect on the cooperation between the two institutions. On the other hand, if we observe only a limited level of real integration into NATO, then we will assume that the traditional French approach and Europeanisation strategy remains largely unchanged and that there will be few signs of improved cooperation between NATO and the EU. This means that it is the first question that will be investigated in depth, while the other two will be discussed towards the end of the paper.

A special issue of the journal *European Security* from 2010 on the relationship between France and NATO treated some of these questions (Fortmann et al. 2010). The overall conclusion of these studies was that the reintegration did not represent a break with the traditional French Europeanisation strategy. The general finding was that France had been

gradually moving closer to the Integrated Military Structures (IMS) for some time, and that the decision to take the final step was seen as a natural continuation of this process. There were more uncertainty to the effects of the integration, and the actual level of integration was not investigated in any greater detail in these analyses. This paper, by contrast, is an attempt to measure and examine the actual level of integration.

The paper is divided into three parts. First, I present the approach, methods and background. Secondly, I measure the degree to which France has been fully reintegrated in the organization since 2009 according to four different dimensions of integration. Towards the end, in the section that investigates the degree of cultural integration, I also provide some reflections on the character of the reintegration regarding whether it represent a continuity or break with the traditional French approach and its implications for the relationship between the EU and NATO.

2. Approach, Methods and background

2.1 Approach and methods

The paper attempts to answer the research questions presented above based on an analysis of French political and military practices in NATO. By combining a focus on macro-level foreign policy formulations with a more detailed study of how French officials and representatives communicate and interact on a day-to-day basis (micro-level), the paper seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the actual workings of French NATO policy and investigate the extent to which France has become fully reintegrated.

But what does it mean to study foreign policy practices? How does it differ from a more traditional study of foreign policy? As the vast and rapidly growing scholarly literature indicates, there exists no such thing as a single 'theory of practice' but rather a variety of 'theories of practices' (Adler and Pouliot 2011: : 4). The persistence of practices lies 'in both their taken-for-granted quality and their reproduction in structures that are to some extent self-sustaining' (Powell and DiMaggio 1991: : 9). Moreover, established patterns of action are sometimes organized by, and serve to support, the shared implicit understanding of certain arguments as valid in a certain type of discourse, and concerning how things should be done (Schatzki et al. 2001). I will distinguish between two main categories of practices. The first refers simply to "practices as socially meaningful patterns of action which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, reify and act out background

knowledge and discourse in and on the material world" (Adler and Pouliot 2011: : 6). The second type is basic or underlying practices that are more difficult to change, or patterns of social activities that constitute social contexts and orders. This second type is related to Ann Swidlers notion of "anchoring practices". According to her, the power of anchoring practices stems from their encoding of dominant schema, which are never formulated as rules (Swidler 2001). While the anchoring practice in this analysis will be operationalized as the French 'Europeanisation strategy' in NATO, referred to in the introduction, the other practices will be identified through a semi-inductive approach. This means that a neo-institutionalist approach will provide a first categorization of different dynamics of integration and thus a first operationalization of these practices. While the aim of this analysis is empirical and not theoretical, this approach will also show how insights from institutional theory, and different dimensions or dynamics of integration, might be useful to concretize an analysis of state practices in international institutions (here: NATO).

It is perhaps not that common to use the concept of integration when studying international institutions that are consensus-organisations. However, since NATO has an integrated military structure – and that it is into this part of NATO that France has returned, I will argue that it is fruitful to apply this perspective. According to a recognized scholar and representative of 'neo-institutionalism', Johan P. Olsen, integration must be understood 'as a condition [that] consist in some measure of the density and intensity of relations among the constituent units: their interdependence, consistency and structural connectedness' (2007: : 23). These are aspects that also may be applied when investigating the extent to which a member state (here: France) is integrated into an institution (here: NATO). Olsen distinguishes between four dimensions or dynamics of integration in his work: functional integration (degree of interdependence); social integration (degree of contact); political institutional integration (degree of common capacities and resources) and cultural integration (degree of common values and goals) (2007: : 23). In the following, I will study the French practices in NATO, according to these four dimensions, in order to reveal the extent to which France has reintegrated into NATO's military structures.

The analysis in this paper is based on a series of interviews with 20 officials, both in Paris (MOD and MFA) and in Brussels (NATO and the EU) in February 2012. In Brussels I also interviewed a few non-French officials to have a more comprehensive understanding of French reintegration. In addition, I have used different kinds of primary sources that I have

got access to through my contacts. Finally, these sources are supplemented by a study of the existing secondary sources.

2.2 Background: 1990-2009 – a period of 'creeping integration'

It is important to note, however, that in spite of the French 'opt out' from the integrated military structures of the Alliance since 1966, it never ceased to participate in the political and financial aspects of the alliance, This means that France remained seated at the tables where the most important decisions were taken. For instance, it was always in attendance when the North Atlantic Council (NAC) met. In addition, France's leaders never sought, much less desired, a complete break from the military side of the allied house. Already in the late 1960s, France managed to sign two agreements with the allies (the Ailleret-Lemnitzer agreement[1] and Valentin-Feber agreement[2]) enabling a small number of French military assigned liaison officer to NATO's integrated headquarters. Thus, France continued to play a part in both armament cooperation projects and NATO exercises even though it was not fully integrated. French political leaders also envisaged French forces being placed under NATO operational control in case of war in Europe. Joint maneuvers were organized and military issues including nuclear deterrence were discussed. This means that, despite Gaullist rhetoric, France remained militarily more closely linked to its allies than has been imagined also during the Cold War (Fortmann et al. 2010).

Shortly after the ending of the Cold War, the issue of French explicit reintegration in NATO was also opened, and even though it took nearly 20 years to conclude on this issue, a process of so-called 'creeping integration' into NATOs military structures was intensified (Ghez and Larrabee 2009). The first attempt to bring France fully back into NATO took place in the 1990s and must be seen in relation to the establishment of a political union with 'the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence' (EU 1992: : Title V). At that time there was a genuine believe in France that there was a real window of opportunity for finally being able to realize the French ambition of 'Europe de la defence'.

This belief opened up for greater French acceptance (at least implicitly) for NATO taking on new tasks beyond article 5. France became a more active ally and Mitterrand endorsed the Alliance's strategic review and agreed (in 1992) to support NATO peacekeeping activities on

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[1] This accord of 1967 set out the terms governing cooperation between France's military unit in Germany and those of the other allies with troops in that country (i.e. USA, UK, Canada, the Netherlands and Belgium)

[2] In 1974, this agreement provided greater flexibility in the potential use of the 1st Army Corps based in France.

a case-to case basis and on a condition that these activities were placed under the responsibility of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. In order to monitor the alliance's growing involvement in the Balkan wars, French representatives also obtained observer status in the Military Committee in 1993. While France had generally been skeptical about enlarging the tasks of the alliance, it now accepted – although reluctantly and probably as a result of France getting greater support for a first move towards a certain Europeanisation of the alliance through the development of a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI).[3] In addition, the North Atlantic Council approved a German-French proposal for the Eurocorps - a multinational unit to be placed under NATO's operational command in a case of a crisis, an initiative that also represented the first serious efforts towards a European defence force since the defeat of the European Defence Community (EDC) in 1954.

The first reintegration efforts, initiated by François Mitterand were continued by Jacques Chirac, as from 1995. Under Chirac, France joined every NATO committee except two (the Defence Planninc Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group). More importantly, France regularly would now agree to deploy forces to NATO operations, such as in Bosnia (IFOR and SFOR), in Kosovo (KFOR) and later in Afghanistan (ISAF). Interestingly, for a period in the 1990's, France had more troops under NATO 'flag' than the USA (Pesme 2010). In spite of these efforts, the reintegration attempt initiated by Mitterrand failed in 1997. In the end, it was clear that the other NATO members, and in particular the US, were not yet ready for what the French perceived as a 'real' Europeanisation of the alliance – a Europeanisation that, according to the French, would have included the creation of a strong and autonomous European pillar within the alliance. The fact that Chirac and his government set as a condition for French reintegration that the strategic command of AFSOUTH, an important regional command headed by a American general, were given to a European (preferably a French) this attempt was deemed to fail.

However, the so-called 'creeping integration' continued, and in the war against Taliban in 2001, the French military was so familiar with the NATO procedures that they used them even when the American forces did not (interview in Paris, February 2012). On top of the French participation in and contribution to various crisis management operations, the French Air Force has repeatedly, since 2007, assured the protection of airspace over Iceland and the

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[3] The 1994 Brussels Summit confirmed that the emergence of ESDI would strengthen the European pillar of the Alliance while reinforcing the transatlantic link and enabling the European allies to take greater responsibility for their common security and defence.

Baltic countries (deRussé Anne-Henry). Finally, France is also the largest single contributor to the NATO Response Force (NRF) (Fortmann et al. 2010) and one of the principals funders of the alliance (Pesme 2010: : 48).

As this 'creeping integration' continued, the French decision to remain outside the NATO military structure made less and less political and military sense. On the one hand, it prevented France from exerting influence within the Alliance in accordance to its contribution to NATO military operations. As Jolyon Howeorth emphasizes: It became ever more absurd for the French permanent representative to NATO not to be able to participate in the key strategic discussions in the Defence Planning Committee (DPC) and only be informed later by the US ambassador on what had been decided in his absence (Howorth 2010: : 16).

The 11th of March 2009 the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, also announced that France was going to return to the integrated military structures of NATO. While the intention was that France would be fully reintegrated, such a process takes time. Already at the time of the reintegration, it was clear that there were going to be a few, but important, limitations to the reintegration: (1) That France's nuclear weapons will remain under national control; (2) That France will maintain control over the sending of French troops in all military operations; (3) That France will not put its troops under NATO control in peacetime (Ghez and Larrabee 2009: : 81). Taking into consideration these limitations, to what extent is France really integrated into NATO's integrated military structures according to established dimensions of integrations? This brings us to the next part of this article, namely the measuring the degree of integration by focusing on French practices.

3. Measuring French reintegration in NATO

3.1 Increased interdependence

Functional integration is a measure of interdependence and relevance, the degree to which decisions and events in one part of a system have an immediate and direct impact on other parts (Olsen 2007: : 23). In the case of French reintegration in NATO – or France being once again 'a part of the system', there are two aspects of such interdependence. On the one hand, one would expect that France manage to get more influence in the alliance and thus manage to set their footprint on, at least parts of, the development and changes in NATO. On the other hand, if the reintegration is real, one would also expect that French positions and practices would – at least to some degree - be influenced by the positions of the other members in

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NATO. In the Europeanization literature, these two aspects of policy transfer, are often referred to as *uploading* and *downloading* (Bulmer 2005).

As noted in the introduction, France never ceased participating in the political and financial aspects of the alliance, and thus remained seated at the tables where the most important decisions were taken, which is in the North Atlantic Council (NAC). However, the reintegration of France in the integrated military structures of the alliance has enhanced France's presence in the alliance's command chain for operations and thereby made it a full player both in their planning and their execution. This is an important change in the sense that, for many years, France possessed hardly any influence at all upon the alliance's operations, strategy, or doctrine (Pesme 2010). At the same time such integration also means that France more easily will be influenced by the other members. In this section I will measure both the degree of uploading and downloading after the French reintegration in the integrated military structures.

3.1.1 An increase in the French influence (uploading)

Before the reintegration in 2009, France could only have a certain influence towards the end of the process when the documents were discussed in the Military Committee Working Group (MCWG) or at the Executive Working Group (EWG) levels. This means that, until 2009, it had no possibility to make inputs when these documents were drafted at SHAPE, for instance. Consider just how constricted its ties to the alliance's military structure had been: France typically had to rely on the narrowest of channels for intelligence, either via the military units it posted to various NATO headquarters (the heads of which were officially the chief of the defence staff's representative to the commanding officer of the HQ to which the French were assigned), or through the planning cell installed at SHAPE during the Balkans operations, known as the *Equipe Française de Planification*. These were far from satisfactory arrangements, because they permitted France no direct participation in NATO's operational planning. Thus, access to NATO's operational planning (since 2009) have increased France's influence since it will be able to position itself better in respect of the deployment and the use of its own forces on NATO operations (Pesme 2010).

In fact, in the negotiations with NATO, France was accorded a few key positions in the integrated Military Structure. Since September 2009 there is a French general at the head of one of the top two strategic commands, namely the ACT in Norfolk (general Abrial) (Terriff 2010) as well as at the head of one of the three regional commands – the Joint Command

Lisbon (general Stoltz). The strategic command was created in order to promote military reform and thereby close the growing gap between European and American military capabilities. According to Terieff, this is a particularly challenging task in the current context of budgetary constraints. Still, France is well-placed to assume this role, having been at the vanguard of European states in developing and implementing an expeditionary capability since the mid-1990s (Terriff 2010). In addition, it provides France with a certain influence in the alliance that in term may facilitate both a Europeanisation of the alliance and a closer cooperation between NATO and the EU. While the regional joint command Lisbon is perhaps not as important as the one in Naples (AFSOUTH), it means that France, symbolically if nothing else, has done remarkably well out of its reintegration.

In spite of the fact that these changes indicates an increase in the French influence, an internal report published in January 2011 by général Perruche at IRSEM (Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l'Ecole Militaire) – a research institute under the French Ministry of Defence – still argues that there are few signs of increased French influence in NATO since 2009. According to this report, the improved knowledge among the French officers about several issues and dossiers in NATO has not (at the time of the report at least) led to any obvious or notable benefits for France except from the doctrines and concepts that France incorporated and a certain access to the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) market towards which France has doubled its orders in two years. Still, the French share represents only 5 % of the total compared to a 40% share to the USA (Perruche 2011).

In the same report, Cécile Wendling, refers to a few other examples where there have been some signs of French footprints. First, she points to the fact that France has managed to avoid a development, proposed by the US, towards increased use of majority voting over new doctrines – a move that would facilitate the acceptance of these texts that according to the French, most often are drafted by American officials. Not surprisingly, France opposed and the reason why France succeeded in preventing such a decision was, according to Wendling, due to good coordination between the French representatives in the Allied Joint Operation Doctrine (AJOD), in combination with the fact that they managed to get support from other allies, such as Germany, Poland and Hungary (Wendling 2011: : 25). Second, she shows that France has to some extent managed to transfer its financial and budgetary culture and experience and, although to a lesser extent, its culture of organizational change to NATO. This finding is based on her analysis of the extent to which it is possible to talk about a *policy transfer* as *uploading* from France to NATO, which has been facilitated after the reintegration

of France in the integrated military structures and an increased participation of France in the decision making and negotiation forums. Surprisingly, and in spite of these examples her overall conclusion is also that the French influence in NATO after the reintegration, so far, seems to be limited (Wendling 2011: : 26-34).

The conclusions in these internal studies are also confirmed by my interviews undertaken both in Paris (MOD and MFA) and Brussels (NATO and EU). There is, in fact, a general impression among the French officals that the reintegration has provided France with somewhat increased influence, but that this influence has its limits in an organization that is still to a large extent dominated by the USA. One official in the French Ministry of Defence showed how in the preparation to the Chicago summit, American national documents are just made into NATO documents without almost any change, but. According to him, this is something that most allies accept, while the French officials have orders of following this very carefully and react if there is something that is not in Europe's or French interests (interview in MOD/Paris in February 2012). While there is still a distrust in France towards the close coordination between some allies – especially the bilateral intelligence cooperation between the US and the UK – there is a certain optimism in France that the reintegration in NATO may facilitate a closer cooperation and understanding between France and its European allies (and perhaps especially the Brits) and that in time they will be as convinced as the French for the need to strengthen the European pillar (Interviews with French officials in Paris and Brussels, February 2012). So far, however, there are little signs of such a development and it is too early to say whether or not this strategy will succeed in the future.

Interestingly, there seem to be a gap between the French factual and perceived influence that indicates perhaps that the French aspirations are somewhat higher in the sense that they have to manage more profound changes in NATO before they consider it as a notable influence. So what about the other aspect of interdependence – namely NATO's influence on France? This will be the topic of the next subsection.

3.1.2 Towards a 'NATOization' of France (downloading)

As argued in a report by Anne-Henry de Russé, full participation in NATO does not have any influence on the sovereignty of France over its deterrent force, whose use ultimately remains in the hands of the President of the Republic (deRussé Anne-Henry). This means that there are important limits to the extent to what France is being influenced. Still, there are evidences of a certain NATOization or downloading. Interestingly this process already started before the

reintegration and under the period of the so-called 'creeping integration' in the 1990s (see page 3-6). It is argued that the historical relations between France and NATO shows that shared operational experience (since the mid-1990s) has been at least as important as membership in the integrated structures.

The reintegration has of course also an effect in the sense that it has resulted in a more open, flexible and positive attitude by the French towards the process of transformation in NATO, a process to which France often has been perceived as a brake (Wendling 2011). In addition, it is likely that the rapid increase in the number of French military personnel with advanced knowledge of NATO's doctrine, concepts and methods of functioning will have an impact on France. While it is too early to say for sure, this knowledge can, in turn, be transferred to national structures that have to deal with similar challenges (Pesme 2010).

The French officials that I interviewed also confirmed this. They emphasised that France had become more flexible and pragmatic in their behavior in NATO. The French traditional position on treating NATO as primarily a military alliance has been toned down, and France has become one of the principal contributors to NATO's crisis management operations. On the other hand, they emphasized that there are important limits to this kind of NATOization. For instance, there is a continued French opposition to the *comprehensive approach* - an approach that recognizes that military means, although essential, are not enough on their own to meet the many complex challenges to Euro-Atlantic and international security. This opposition is very much in line with the traditional French skepticism in developing the civilian capacities in NATO (more on this on page 19-20). So, while there is more pragmatism also in relations to the main tasks or the identity of the alliance than earlier and that the French has become more focused on finding a way that the strengthening of NATO can contribute to a strengthening of the EU instead of opposing just for the sake of it, there is still some fundamentals in the French approach that remains unchanged (interviews in NATO HQ in February 2012).

Interestingly, the French officials also fear an increased NATOization. In the internal report issued by IRSEM, general Perruche argues, for instance, that France might experience a cultural influence from NATO and emphasizes that France must be ready to "resist the temptation to reduce its national defence budget that seem to be spreading like a disease in NATO once the members feel the American security guarantee" (my translationPerruche 2011: : 9). Likewise, Cécile Wendling, in the same report, refer to parts of the French political

establishment who fears that the reintegration will result in what she refers to as a 'Stockholm syndrome' of French officers, indicating that they may get socialized to the extent that they forget that they serve both NATO *and* France (Wendling 2011: : 24).

While the French officials seem aware of the 'danger' of NATOization, many of them referred to the same two examples where France has actually changed its traditional position as a consequence of the reintegration. The two examples referred to were the following: (1) the French opposition to the Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) project; and (2) the French opposition in the anti-missile defence shield issue (interviews in Paris and Brussels in February 2012). In both issues there are evidences of a change in the French practices, but it is still unclear whether they also examples of a break with its anchoring practice.

Concerning the first example, France did actually decide to support the investment in the NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) project after having opposed for almost two years. The AGS is a project that aims at providing NATO with five unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV/Global Hawks) and the associated command control base station that will give commanders a comprehensive picture of the situation on the ground. NATO's operation in Libya, for instance, showed how important such a capability is. The French opposition to this project must be seen in relation to its general opposition to developing common assets in NATO. This change in the French position was referred to by several officials as an example of downloading (interview with French officials in Brussels and Paris in February 2012). But there is also another side of this story. In fact, primarily from non-French officials in NATO, I also learned, that this change was a result of a compromise where France instead of contributing on the financial side of the project, rather offered an asset contribution (Heron UAV) that in the end would actually support French national defence industry (here represented by Dassault). In addition, it is also argued that France, through this project, would get access to US technology in this area that in the future also might be of useful in the development of an independent European defence capacity (interview with non-French NATO officials in NATO HQ).

The other example of France being influenced by NATO, emphasized by several of the French officials interviewed was the French turn in the Missile Defence Project (interviews in Paris and Brussels, February 2012). After having opposed this initiative for many years, France decided to support it in 2010 at the Lisbon summit. The main reason behind the French previous opposition to this project was based on a fear that a missile defense shield would

challenge France's freedom of action with respect to choosing its national defense strategy (the nuclear strategy or the 'force de frappe'). France has a very strong nuclear posture which allows the concepts of first-strike and nuclear retaliation against conventional attacks. According to interviews with French officials, the French still see nuclear weapons as guarantors of peace in the world (interviews in Paris and Brussels, February 2012). This was also stated in the White Book on Defence from 2008 (MinistèredelaDéfence 2008: : 69). According to interviews, the French see missile defense and deterrence as two very separate matters. However, they see the strong likelihood that those who want to work towards a "global zero" will use missile defense as a reason to call for nuclear disarmament. The French see their nuclear arms as essential for peace, and are cautious of any developments that could incur reductions in the French arsenal. Two declarations from the French political leadership in 2010 showed the two sides of the French discourse. On the one hand, the French defence minister, Hervé Morin, has called an Missile Defence strategy an "error," stating "if we build a missile defense system, isn't that saying that we have no confidence in deterrence? If you regard yourself as respected, why would you set up such a system?" (quoted inZamecnik 2010: : 33). On the other hand, Sarkozy expressed his interest in using missile defense to increase France's freedom of action with respect to preserving its national security: "So as to preserve our freedom of action, missile defense capabilities against a limited attack could be a useful complement to nuclear deterrence, without of course substituting it" (quoted inZamecnik 2010: : 33).

When France finally decided to support this initiative, it must, therefore be seen as an example of downloading. The French political leadership, and in particular Sarkozy, had realized that it could not prevent this project from being set up. Once this was recognized, it was important for France to make sure that the system developed inside NATO. If not, NATO (and now also France) would lose all prospects of having control over the system (interviews in Paris and Brussels, February 2012). As a French parliamentary report on this issue says, "the alternative is the following: either NATO seriously studies the question and proposes a response for the fight against ballistic missiles, or the United States engages totally, by a succession of bilateral agreements, and is able to offer a missile defense umbrella to all of Europe and the countries of NATO." (quoted inZamecnik 2010: : 33). If this happens, France would lose all influence in this field, both due to their lack of control over a system that covers their territory and the inevitable death it would cause to its most developed defense industry.

This indicates that the change in the French position is not only linked to the French reintegration, but also a reaction to a change in the American approach with President Obama who decided to make this into a multilateral project within NATO. Still, a the fact that France was part of NATO's integrated military structure made it easier to support it since France would have some influence over the development of the project. The result might also be increased interdependence in the sense that, if the system ever will be used, it will necessarily be under an American chain of command, which in the end might threaten the French independent nuclear policy (interviews in Paris and Brussels, February 2012).

In addition, the Franco-British defence pact and the French role in the Libya crisis may also be interpreted as examples of downloading. First, the bilateral treaty between France and the UK that was signed in December 2010 – only one and a half year after French reintegration. In the interviews, it was argued that this treaty would not have been possible without the French reintegration and that it is an example that will increase the interdependence between France and the UK. However, there were different interpretations of the meaning of this treaty. While some interpreted it as an example of France being influenced by NATO – and a move away from its traditional European approach, others saw it as a first step towards something that in time may facilitate a European defence capacity.

Second, the French willingness to take initiative and leadership in the alliance, like in the Libya crisis, was also referred to, by some, as an example of Natoization. However, it must also be taken into the account that France was initially opposed to this being a NATO operation and that the French position only changed when it was clear that there was no other option. Rather, it seems like the French was not only positive about NATO's role in the conflict. According to some French officials, the Libya operation clearly shows that there is less coherence and interdependence in the alliance than what used to be the case in the 1990s, referring to the fact that only a minority of the allies actually participated in this operation (interviews in Paris and Brussels, February 2012). Still, the fact that France accepted to take the lead in a NATO operation is interesting.

This shows that there are some examples of a certain Natoization of the French approach, even though there are certain limits to this dynamic. In fact, while the complete integration of France into NATO so far has been instructive for French military thinking - and that it has led to some degree of increased pragmatism and change in the traditional positions, the French military culture remains largely independent of US and NATO military culture (deRussé

Anne-Henry). The French national forces are still strongly marked by colonial wars and remain 'expeditionary'. For instance, at the time of the Libya crisis France was also engaged elsewhere (in Afghanistan, in Ivory Coast, in Haiti and in Lebanon) and currently there is approximately 36000 French troops deployed in foreign territory. Due to this expeditionary approach, it is crucial for France to keep an independent strategic thinking. According to French officials this explains why there are certain limits to the extent to which France is – an probably will be – influenced by NATO (interviews in Paris in February 2012).

As the analysis in this section has shown, there are signs of both a certain increase in the French influence in NATO (uploading) as well as evidence of France being influenced by NATO (downloading). The first is especially linked to the fact that France now may take part in the preparation of dossiers and with French generals in key positions an increase in influence is evident. Interestingly, the general impression among the French officials is still that this influence has its limits in an organization that is still so largely dominated by the USA. The examples referred to above, however, indicates a rather substantial increase in the French influence. Concerning the second aspect, namely the extent to which France has been the object of downloading or a NATOization since 2009, the answer is less obvious. While the French practices in NATO is characterized by greater pragmatism than earlier, the examples that have been referred to as cases of NATOization in my interviews are – such as the change in the French positions in the AGS project or the Missile Defence system – are not one dimensional. Concerning the former, France have got a few important industrial contracts in return and in the latter the context has changed quite substantially. Still, the change in the French position in the Missile defence issue may be seen as an example of NATOization in the sense that it challenges the traditional French nuclear defence strategy. However, there are other examples that indicate a certain degree of downloading, and that is the Franco-British defence pact, which would probably not have been possible without French reintegration and the French acceptance of using NATO in the French led military operation towards Libya. So, the overall conclusion must be that there are examples of increased interdependence. However, the fact that several French officials actually 'fear' a greater NATOization over time is an interesting observation and may indicate that there is likely to be increased interdependence in the future.

3.2 Towards an increase in the level of participation

Social integration refers to connectedness and a measure of linkages, such as contacts, communication and trading (Olsen 2007: : 23). The question is therefore to what extent France has reached a high level of social integration, operationalized in terms of contact, networks and participation. If France is to be seen as fully reintegrated into NATO, we would expect a high degree of social integration.

Due to the so-called 'creeping integration' that has been going on since the early1990's with among other things a return to the Military Committee as an observer in 1993 and fully as from December 1995, the only committee that France actually had not joined before the summer of 2009 was the Defence Planning Committee as well as the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG). During this period, France also played a part both in armament cooperation and NATO exercises through its liaison officers to NATO's headquarters. This contact smoothed the path for a harmonization of doctrines and greater interoperability. In addition, France was also a member of the so-called 'Quad' – an informal directorate of the Alliance (between the USA, the UK, France and Germany) that discussed primarily crisis management (Pesme 2010). After the reintegration in 2009, France was formally participating in all of NATOs committees and working groups except from the NPG.

The strengthening of the bilateral co-operation between France and Great Britain has also contributed to a greater social integration of France into the Alliance, but the most significant change is of course related to the active support by the French political leadership to NATO's 'transformation initiative' – a process that was set in motion with the Prague summit of November 2002. This has resulted in an increase in both the French participation and contribution to NATO. In the following we will show the development both in the French participation in NATO's military commands and the French military contributions to NATO.

3.2.1 French participation in the military commands

French participation in NATO commands has proceeded in a selective fashion with 110 officers under the terms of a special agreement struck in 2004 between France's chief of defence and his NATO counterpart, the supreme allied commander Europe (SACEUR) (Pesme 2010). According to Frédéric Pesme, the agreement from 2004 was interesting for France for two reasons. First, it brought France closer to the conceptual work of the Alliance. Secondly, it made it easier for France to exercise control over the deployment of its own

forces in the event of their participation in NRF engagements.[4] Obviously, France also assigned a few officers to NATO HQ and SHAPE (Pesme 2010: : 49). Between 2004 and 2009 the number of French officers in NATO had reached 131 (deRussé Anne-Henry).

While the number of French personnel assigned to the integrated military structures was approximately 131 before the French reintegration in 2009, the totals were expected to increase up to about 1120 (Perruche 2011; Tertrais 2011). However, this number was reduced to 950 when France decided to opt out from the NATO AWACS force command. This number was thought to be reached according to a 3 year process until summer 2011. The number of French filling an international military post amounts today 700 according to French MOD records (Interview with a French official in NATO HQ, February 2012), whereas the NATO Annual Manpower Plan (NAMP) from May 2011, mentions the number of 575, which represents 60% (NATO 2011: : Annexe C).[5] In comparison UK occupies 73,4 %[6] of their authorized posts. According to a French official working in NATO HQ, the NAMP's figure for France does not reflect the current situation accurately since it only takes into account the number of French filling the quota posts, whereas there are more than 120 French filling many different other categories of posts. In addition, the French implementation plan to reach the target number of 950 was interrupted because of the on-going reform of the NATO command structure that was initiated in 2010. As he argued, it is difficult to send officers with their families to serve in NATO when it is uncertain for how long and what their task would be. With a total of 700 military, France is considering keeping its presence at the current level in the years to come. This number also represents about 11% of the total number of posts, which in consistency with its financial contribution to the NATO budget [7] (Interviews with French official in NATO HQ, February 2012).

Staffing the new positions has been challenging for France for several reasons. First, it may have negative effects on the functioning of national HQs (Pesme 2010: : 52). Second, the other allies have been reluctant to give up key positions, especially in a period when the

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[4] This was more important now that the alliance's regional commands (in Brunssum, Naples and Lisbon) had been tasked with the job of developing a deployable joint task force (DJTF) for NRF missions. In fact, it was important for France to be present in these headquarters, given that it would take them at least 5 days to put together any DJTF, too short a timeframe to assign officers arriving from various French HQs to oversee the commitments of the country's forces under NATO command.

[5] According to the report published by IRSEM in The situation at present is around 920 in the integrated military structure and in addition there are about 40 working at the French representation to NATO, 75 for national cells in military staffs, and 85 in agencies and schools : 8, : 2.

[6] This comparison must take into account that the UK has been in the integrated military structure from the start.

[7] This number only reflects the French contribution to parts of the NATO budget since France is not contributing to NATO common assets, such as the Awacs.

command structure is reducing its total number of posts. Interestingly, it is the USA that has been the most willing to accord France with positions. So, while the number of officers in NATO has increased dramatically since 2009, it will still take time before France reach a number and get access to the type of positions that is in accordance with its contributions to the alliance (interviews in Paris and Brussels, February 2012).

3.2.2 French contributions

Beyond the participation in the command structure, France has been – and continues to be – active through its contributions to the operational side with national HQs being made available to NATOs High Readiness Force (HRF) and with troops to the NATO Response Force (NRF).

The creation of HRF headquarters has, in effect, constituted a major element in France's contributions to NATO. These are multinational headquarters, situated in France made available for the alliance, the EU as well as national operations. These headquarters consist in an air force headquarters in Lyon, a naval headquarters in Toulon, and an army headquarters in Lille (led by a German general). Beyond this, France is also one of the principal contributors to the EURO Corps in Strasbourg (which has had HRF certification since 2002). The French contribution to NATOs HRF has also increased as a result of France becoming a lead nation for NATOs special operations through the 'Commandement des Opérations Speciales (COS). The Centre d'Analyse de Simulation et de Planification des Opérations Aériennes (CASPOA) in Taverny is now also available to NATO (Pesme 2010).

In addition to its contributions to NATO's HRF, France has also been a promoter of the NATO Response Force (NRF)[8] from the outset. At the Atlantic summit in Prague 2002, Jacques Chirac agreed that France would participate in the NATO Response Force (NRF), with several French units being certified. This means that France has taken part consistently in force-generation initiatives through successive NRF rotations. For example, in 2008, it sent some 7000 personnel to take part in NRF activities, adding some air and naval unit to the total numbers committed (Pesme 2010: : 50).

The presentation in this section shows a high level of French participation in NATO – both with personnel in the command structure and in terms of contributions of headquarters,

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[8] Joint Forces of 25.000 troops, that can be projected at five-days notice and are sustainable for at least 30 days. So far, it has only been used 6 times (The 2004 Olympic Games, the Iraqi Elections, the 2011 Libyan civil war, humanitarian relief to Afghanistan, humanitarian relief in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, and humanitarian relief in the earthquake disaster in Pakistan).

special units and troops. This means that there has been a regular exchange between the French and the other allies already for some time, but that this this exchange has intensified and become smoother after the reintegration. Given the fact that France already contributed significantly with troops and forces before 2009, the most important change is therefore the increase in the number of personnel in the command structure. While it will take some time before France fulfill all the acquired posts, it is a general perception among both the French officials and non-French officials that the reintegration actually has led to less skepticism, more understanding and trust between France and other allies (Interviews in Paris and Brussels, February 2012).

3.3   Towards convergence of behavior and common capacities

According to Olsen, integration as political institutionalization refers to: 1. Structures, rules, roles and practices specifying legitimate authority relations and codes of appropriate behavior; 2. Shared purposes, identities, traditions of interpretation and principles of legitimacy that explain and justify practices and provide a basis for activating moral and emotional allegiances and solidarity; 3. Common resources which create capability and capacity to act in a coordinated way (Olsen 2007: : 23). In this section, I will study the extent to which France has achieved a political and institutional integration into NATO since 2009, primarily by looking at the degree of common practices (appropriate behavior) and the degree of common capacities and resources. The degree of shared purposes and identities will be treated under the fourth and final dimension of integration, namely cultural integration.

3.3.1 Degree of appropriate behavior?

During my interviews I learned that there is an interesting difference in how France and the other allies work within NATO. It was in particular in relations to two specific practices that the French approach seems to differ. First, in relations to the handling of civil-military issues and secondly, in relation to the negotiation style/culture.

In relations to civil-military issues most of the allies handles issues by topic, seeing military and civilian issues as a whole. However, in France, there is a much stronger division between civilian and military issues. While the French view is that such a division makes the different issues easier to handle, the other allies find that that their approach facilitates the development of *comprehensive approach* to crisis management. While France is supportive of the idea behind this approach (in France often referred to as 'globale response'), it is skeptical towards

a development of NATO's civilian instruments (Wendling 2010). This view is in accordance with the traditional French view that NATO's role is primarily to be a military alliance. It has accepted, reluctantly, that it was necessary for NATO to take on military crisis management tasks. However, according to the French a truly comprehensive approach that involves also political and civilian instruments can only be reached by cooperating with other institutions that have this as their main task, such as the EU, the UN or different types of NGOs. When the idea of comprehensive approach was emphasized in NATO's new Strategic Concept at the Lisbon summit, the French therefore agreed to a formulation that emphasizes the need to enhance NATO's *contribution to* a comprehensive approach and not on a formulation that emphasized the development of a comprehensive approach within NATO as such – a formulation that would not have been acceptable to France. Interestingly, according to non-French officials in NATO, the French still continue to open their interventions in NATO by referring to NATO as a military alliance (Interviews in NATO HQ, February 2012).

Another French practice that seem to differ from the other allies is related to the French working method. In fact, it is interesting to note that France has developed a somewhat different approach than most of the other allies. The difference is first and foremost related to negotiation style and how closely they follow NATO issues.

First, concerning negotiating style France, the French representatives in NATO are not afraid of opposing – even if their opposition blocks an important decision. According to non-French officials in NATO, France often has very strong positions (with little or no willingness to compromise) – even in less important issues and this may sometimes prolong the negotiations. If a compromise is reached it is often at the end of a very long process. It is also difficult for find examples of France having changed position without having reached an agreement that correspond with their interests (interviews in NATO HQ, February 2012). A report on this issue published in 2001, argues that "any summary of French negotiating behavior with respect to NATO must stress the importance placed on clarity of position, the emphasis on pushing for that position until it is either accepted or is no longer viable, and the effort made to ensure that France does not leave the bargaining table without gaining some thing for its trouble" (Metzgard 2001). The negotiation around the Alliance Ground Surveillance system, referred to above (page 11), seems to be an example that confirms this (interviews in NATO HQ, February 2012).

Second, France has a competent bureaucracy with a high number of people working on NATO issues both in the MOD and the MFA. These officials follow closely every documents and initiatives coming from NATO – especially the ones that originates from the USA. According to French officials in the MOD, the ministry has developed an internal rule of responding (positively and negatively) as quickly as possible to these initiatives. This practice has, according to the same French official, been developed due to a NATO practice that evolved saying that a country that does not respond to a proposition (within a certain time frame), is considered to be supporting it. The French practice has been especially important since there has been a tendency of certain allies sending out their propositions Friday in the afternoon, hoping that the initiatives will more easily pass. Interestingly, one of my interviews had to be interrupted exactly because the official I talked to had to respond to the formulations in a document issued by the US. The French reintegration into the integrated military structures has made it necessary for France to increase the number of people working on NATO issues. In the MOD, for instance, the number of people working on these issues has been multiplied with three or four since the early 1990s (interviews in Paris, February 2012).

While there might be a socialization process over time that will make France more of an ally like the others, also with respect to these issues, there are few signs of such a development three years after the reintegration. These negotiations are also taking place in foras where France never stopped being a member, so it is less likely that the reintegration will have an immediate effect on the French behavior, positions and negotiation culture. Still, there are reasons to believe that this will happen over time. France has opened up for a move away from a strict division of labor between NATO and other international institutions with accepting that NATO take on crisis management operations and there are reasons to believe that there we will see more adaptations in France over time. We will now turn to the second aspect of social integration, namely the extent to which there has been a development of common resources and capacities.

3.3.2 Degree of common resources

The first Gulf War (1990-91) was a full-scale test for France's armed forces, in a high–intensity conflict carried out jointly with its allies. It also marked the start of an ever-deeper operational and doctrinal rapprochement between French and NATO forces. As we have seen, France has experienced a transformation process of its national defence forces since the early

1990 and some of the experiences from this process are now being applied on the level of NATO, as France is now heading the Allied Commander Transformation (ACT).

One of the issues that is on the top of the agenda in NATO currently is the so-called 'smart defence', a concept that encourages allies to cooperate in developing, acquiring and maintaining military capabilities to meet current security problems in accordance with the new NATO strategic concept. That means pooling and sharing capabilities, setting priorities and coordinating efforts better. France is positive to this in the sense that such a development is necessary also in order to create 'Europe de la defence'. General Abrial, the French general and SACT, was also recently appointed 'special representative for Smart defence' by the Secretary General of NATO, Anders Fogh Rasmussen..

However, both NATOs 'smart defence' and EU's 'pooling and sharing' is challenged by conflicts of interests. On the one hand, it is seen as a perfect tool to strengthen European capabilities, but on the other hand it risk to threaten national defence industry. This means that there are serious limits to this process. These challenges have also been intensified with the economic crises that have hit most of the European countries, including France. While this should be a good solution in a financial difficult situation, increased protectionism instead complicates the issue. Still, some progress has been made and the bilateral 'Treaty on Defence and Security Cooperation' between France and the UK must be seen as a successful example of 'smart defence' – even though this term is not referred to in the treaty as such. This defence pact marks a quite radical break with previous cooperation. Firstly, it takes a systematic approach to cooperation in its entirety, providing 'an over-arching framework for defence and security cooperation.' Secondly, it sets out the functional principles for further cooperation, e.g. harmonisation of requirements, doctrine, pooling and sharing resources. Thirdly, it provides for legally binding mutual access to French and British defence industries. Finally, it sets out the principles for the deployment of a joint 10.000 strong Franco-British brigade. In addition, a number of projects are set out separately in a Letter of Intent and a second treaty sets out cooperation on joint testing and safety regimes for nuclear weapons (Jones 2011: 24).

Such a treaty has been possible due to a convergence of interests between the two countries. As members of the UN Security Council, the European Union and NATO, they have now almost identical roles in the architecture of global security: Medium-sized powers, just 30km apart, they have similar-sized economies and armed forces; they share the same locus of

economic and security interests; and finally, it is difficult to conceive of serious threats that would harm one rather than the other (Jones 2011 : 24). The only thing where they still differ is in their ambitions for the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in the EU. But even this latter difference may be less problematic now that France has returned to NATOs integrated military structure. At least, any suspicion that the British might have had concerning a potential French wish to develop a CSDP at the expense of NATO do no longer make much sense. So, while smart defence is not referred to in this treaty, a cooperation agreement between two of the main military powers in Europe that aims at precisely a pooling and sharing of capacities must be seen as one of the most important initiatives that will support NATOs ambitions in promoting smart defence. Anders Fogh Rasmussen ”this new agreement is a real turning point [and] I believe it could show the way forward for other Allies too” (Rasmussen 2011).

So, to what extent do France score high on political and institutional integration operationalized as appropriate behavior and the development of common capacities? The overall conclusion must that while it score rather low on the former it obtains a rather high score on the latter. The examples referred to above concerning the French approach to comprehensive approach and the French negotiating style shows that there are still quite substantial differences between France and its allies. However, it is still too early to say whether the French representatives in NATO will go through a socialisation process that may minimize these differences over time. Concerning the development of common capacities within NATO, France must rather be characterized as a 'good pupil', the cooperation agreement between France and Great Britain being referred to, by the Secretary General, as an example to follow by other allies.

3.4   Not yet common values and goals

In addition to studying the degree to which France is 'functionally', 'socially' and 'political institutionally' integrated into NATO, which we have done above, I will now move on to the final dimension that is necessary for being fully integrated into an institution, namely *cultural integration*. According to Olsen, this dimension implies that "the beliefs in a social group fit together and make sense" (Olsen 2007: : 23). Thus, the aim of this section will be to evaluate the extent to which France has developed common values and goals with its allies. For instance, is it so that France, after three years in the integrated military structure of NATO

also shares the values or goals of the majority of the other allies? If this is the case, it would represent a radical change in the French security identity with a long term ambition of creating an independent European defence capability.

At first glance, the French decision to reintegrate into NATO's integrated military structure - – a part of NATO that France (under general de Gaulle) had left in 1966 in protest to the development in the organization at the time, seems to represent a break with one of the fundamentals in French foreign and security policy since the end of the Second World War. As mentioned in the introduction, France has since 1945 had the explicit ambition of restoring the country's greatness (la grandeur de la France) – a foreign policy ambition that has been practiced through a 'Europeanisation strategy' (anchoring practice) based on a conviction that a French dominated European integration process would boost not only European but also French influence internationally – as well as lead to more balanced transatlantic relations. This explains why France has been a reluctant NATO-member for so long.

This approach, that was initially perceived as a Gaullist 'particularity' became soon one of the fundamentals of French foreign and security policy – supported by most political parties both at the right and the left of the political spectrum. This is why the French positions on and practices in NATO have been characterized by a high degree of continuity both during and after the end of the Cold War and that most changes are to be understood as adaptions to external factors rather than a profound change in what we may refer to as the French foreign and security policy identity or perhaps the French underlying or 'anchoring practice' in NATO. So, how can we interpret the reintegration of France in the integrated military structure? Does this represent fundamental change in the French approach to the extent that France has become culturally integrated?

3.4.1 Continuity or change?

There are a few indications of the French reintegration representing a more fundamental change in the French approach that could be interpreted as the beginning of a cultural integration or a process towards a convergence with regards to values and goals.

First, Sarkozy is often presented as an atlanticist and that his decision to bring France back into the integrated military structures was a decision that can only be understood with reference to his personal belief in the value of improving the French relationship with the US after the rather tense relationship since the Iraq war in 2003. According to a French official in Paris, there have been several disagreements between Sarkozy and his foreign minister, Alain

Juppé, who is considered to be a more convinced European [interviews in Paris and Bruxelles in February 2012]. However, once a decision is taken, he argued that the decision is unlikely to be reversed. So, as already mentioned with regard to some of the other dimensions, the reintegration of France may in time lead to a socialization of the French representatives that little by little may also change the French European strategy, referred to as her as its anchoring practice.

Second, the traditional French Europeanization strategy is not only challenged by Sarkozy and his Atlanticist conviction, but also by developments within the EU. In fact, As a consequence of the enlargements of the EU, French relative power and influence within the EU has been reduced (Maclean and Szarka 2008; Rieker 2006). This has been particularly evident in the field of security and defence since the new members have been more atlanticist oriented and been opposing a development of a CSDP that, in their view, would weaken transatlantic relations. In addition, the French influence has also been challenged by Germany, which, due to its economic strengths, seems to replace France as the natural leader in the EU in a time characterized by a serious financial crisis. The decision to return to the integrated military structures at a time when there is no real progress in the developing of the CSDP followed by an initiative of stronger bilateral military cooperation between France and Britain outside the EU institutional framework also suggest a break in the traditional French policy.

While there are tendencies of the French reintegration into NATO's military structures representing a break with the fundamentals or anchoring practices in French NATO policy, it is also possible to understand this decision as a pragmatic adaptation. While this decision is symbolically very important, it less dramatic than it may seem, and may be understood as part of a wider effort to update and modernize French defence and security policy without abandoning the aim of creating a stronger and more autonomous European defence (Ghez and Larrabee 2009).

In fact, a closer study of the French policy discourses and practices over the past years suggests that the issue of creating an independent European capacity for strategic planning is is still very much on the French agenda. This is clearly stated in the French White Paper from 2008 in which also the plans for reintegration was announced (MinistèredelaDéfence 2008: : 90). The recent initiative of creating a new core group in the EU around Poland, Germany and France – referred to as the 'Weimar initiative', must also be seen as an attempt to relaunch 'Europe de la defence' around another grouping than the traditional French British axis.

While France and Britain has signed a comprehensive defence pact, the current Eurosceptic government in Great Britain led by David Cameron makes the prospects of a development of CSDP based on this cooperation meager. This explains why, in April 2010, the foreign ministers of these three countries launched an initiative to strengthen CSDP and the core objective of this initiative was to establish a civil-military planning and command structures for EU operations – or in other words an EU HQ – an issue that has been a hot topic between Atlanticists and Europeanists in the EU for some time (Lang and Schwarzer 2011).

A study of Sarkozy's public addresses on the issue and his actions indicates that the main ambition for France remains the development of Europe de la defence (Howorth 2010; Pawlak 2011). According to all the French officials that I have talked to, it is highly unlikely that this decision will be reversed under a different President. They also confirmed that the French ambition of creating 'Europe de la defence' remains at the core of French security and defence policy and this will be repeated in the next white book that will be published towards the end of 2012 (interviews in Paris and Brussels, February 2012).

It has been argued that it has become increasingly clear to the French that a European security and defence policy cannot be developed in opposition to the US and the Atlanticist member states in the EU. Thus, one of the main reasons behind the decision to participate fully in NATO was to eradicate a suspicion and distrust around the French political ambitions and thereby try to gain support among its European allies for its ambition of creating 'Europe de la defence' (Ghez and Larrabee 2009). This point was also confirmed in my interviews (interviews in Paris and Brussels, February 2012). In fact, recognizing that the CSDP is in difficulties for the moment, France has understood that it is necessary to work towards this goal from within NATO. In their view a strengthening of NATO will in the long run also strengthen the CSDP – in other words they see, as many of the other allies have done for some time, a complementarity between the two institutions (interviews in Paris and Brussels, February 2012). Where France differs from the other allies it is in its continued focus on making NATO an alliance between a strong and independent Europe that is not dictated by the US - a development that, according some, may be realizable in a situation where the US is increasingly oriented towards other regions of the world.

3.4.2 Prospects for a better cooperation between NATO and the EU

While there is little evidence of a cultural integration as of yet, it will be interesting to study the development in the years to come. An improvement in the cooperation between NATO

and the EU is actually dependent on a greater cultural integration of the France into NATO. In theory the problem between the two institutions should not really be affected by French reintegration since this conflict is related to Cyprus and the on-going conflict between Greece and Turkey (Græger and Haugevik 2011). Still, it has been argued that the increased pragmatism in the French approach and a willingness to reach its ambition of 'Europe de la défence' in close cooperation with NATO and in parallel to the strengthening of a European pillar in NATO indicates that the cooperation between the two institutions may be improved by French reintegration in NATOs integrated military structure. In fact, a French return to NATO has reduced the fear among the US and other allies that France will develop CSDP at the expense of NATO. This may result in a more supportive attitude by the USA – as well as some European allies - towards also increased European influence in NATO. In the end, this will do nothing but strengthen the European defence capability that is also in the interest of the US. However, while the Anglo-French defence pact by some is perceived as an important step towards a stronger European capacity in the defence field and that such a capacity will in turn also be of value for CSDP (Howorth 2010), others have interpreted it as a potential death knell for the CSDP (Irondelle and Mérand 2010). These differences in opinion are also to be found among the French officials that I interviewed. This means that it is too early to say what kind of implications French reintegration in NATOs integrated military structure will have for the EU-NATO cooperation – especially now that the CSDP, due to the financial crisis in Europe, is in difficulty.

So, to conclude; while the French reintegration has been interpreted both in France and abroad as a break with the traditional French approach of independence (anchoring practice), this seems rather unlikely. In fact, even though there is a certain change in the French approach, and that France is highly integrated according to most dimensions, it is, as we have seen, not yet possible to talk about a cultural integration of France into the goals, values and beliefs shared by the majority of the allies.

4. Conclusion

The overall conclusion of the paper is that France has become increasingly integrated into NATO since 2009. In fact, it is present in the structures and it contributes both financially and with assets, troops and capabilities. However, on the ideational level, it is still not totally integrated. In fact, the interviews undertaken both in Paris and Brussels shows that French officials is still upholding the French discourse or rhetoric of 'French grandeur' through

'l'Europe de la défence'. For instance, it is particularly noteworthy that they recognize and even 'fear' that the reintegration will lead to a cultural integration or some form of socialisation. As we have seen France is highly integrated on three of the four dimensions of integration investigated, namely the 'functional', the 'social' and the 'political institutional' integration, while there is less evidence of France being integrated when it comes to fourth dimension of 'cultural integration'.

According to the first dimension (functional integration), operationalized as degree of interdependence, we observe in fact increased interdependence between France and the other allies. In the analysis I distinguished between examples of French influence (uploading) and the inverse (downloading), or what I have referred to as, NATOization of French practices. Examples of uploading as a consequence of French presence in the military structure would be an increased influence over the drafting of military document concerning operational planning. Given the fact that it is only three years since France has reintegrated the Integrated Military Structures, the degree of influence seem rather substantial even though several of the French officials interviewed argued that the influence was limited. Examples of downloading or NATOization are, for instance, the development of a more pragmatic and flexible French approach towards the military transformation process and the fact that it has accepted that the development of 'Europe de la défence' has to be developed in close cooperation with NATO. In addition, the fact that there is an increased number of French military with firsthand knowledge about NATO doctrine, concepts and procedures it is likely to assume that this NATOization is going to continue.

Looking at the second dimension (social integration) operationalized as contacts and participation, the high level of French participation in NATO has intensified and smoothened the exchange between the French and the other allies. While it will take some time before France fulfill all the acquired posts in the integrated military structures, it is a general perception among the French officials that the reintegration actually has led to less skepticism, more understanding and trust between France and other allies.

Concerning the third dimension (political and institutional integration) operationalized as appropriate behavior and the development of common capacities, the overall conclusion is that while it score rather low on the former (exemplified here with the French view on comprehensive approach and the French negotiation style), it obtains a rather high score on the latter with as the most prominent example the cooperation agreement between France and

Great Britain being referred to, by the Secretary General, as "an example of 'smart defence' to follow by other allies" (Rasmussen 2011).

This means that France contributes to and participates in NATO to a large and increasing extent. In addition, it has also to some extent changed its working methods and day-to day practices. On the other hand, the 'anchoring practice' or the fundamentals linked to French presumed exceptionalism and Europeanisation strategy still remains largely unchanged – at least in the minds of the French officials – or at the rhetorical level. While this confirms the findings of earlier studies, what this analysis has revealed is that there is a huge difference between French self-perception and day to day practices. While the French officials seem to hold on to their 'anchoring practice', they are at the same time increasingly integrated. Thus, it is likely that the daily presence in NATOs integrated military structures will gradually – and over time – also lead to a change also in the 'anchoring practice' – or in other words a cultural integration (the final dimension of integration), which in turn also may have a positive effect on the relationship between NATO and the EU.

So, what are the theoretical and empirical implications of this study? First, concerning theory, this study has shown that insight from neo-institutionalism in order to measure integration and structure a study of practices is fruitful when studying state practices in international institutions. Second, concerning the empirical findings in this paper, we have learned that real and actual integration (practices) seem to change faster than the rhetoric (discourse).

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