

## **What should be the role of the Franco-German couple within a European Federation ?**

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The current crisis has confirmed the key role which the Franco-German couple continues to play, while at the same time emphasising the imbalance between the French and German economies. This observation is also true with regard to the widening gap between the Eurozone Members. The fact remains that Germany's economic clout has a direct effect on its general influence in the EU and on its tendency to impose its views and personal interests. Is Germany becoming less European and more German in its outlook ? Which leads us to the question of how a sense of balance can be restored in the Franco-German relationship. Particularly since, in its current form, the EU's main focus is on economic integration.

Admittedly, the founding values and principles are present and have even been developed from one treaty to another. However, there are not always adequate checks to ensure that these principles are respected, Hungary being a case in point. It is clear that within the European Union there is still a divide between on the one hand the competences and common policies of the Economic Community, and on the other hand cooperation in the field of foreign, security and defence policy. The main axis is still economic integration around which networks of neighbouring sectors are formed.

In this context, Germany stands out as the leading player together with France within the European Union. However, the balance of economic power is clearly tipped in favour of Germany, which in turn has an effect on the overall balance by increasing the political clout of the economic leader. An initial conclusion can be drawn from an analysis of the situation: France is not making the most of its *political advantages*. First and foremost, it is a permanent member of the Security Council and, as such, its political influence is far greater than that of Germany. Secondly, France is the only European power along with the United Kingdom to have nuclear weapons and hence the power of deterrence. Thirdly, France has a strong military capacity and above all the political will to deploy its forces and intervene abroad, as demonstrated by its recent action in Mali.

On the other hand, Germany is still a prisoner of its burdensome past during the Second World War which forces it to keep a low profile in such sovereign matters. At the same time, its economic prowess works to its advantage particularly regarding its relations with emerging powers. Therefore we can observe that the insufficiently coherent image projected by the European Union encourages the Chinese and Russian Governments to favour their German partner. This is certainly true in respect to relations with Russia in the field of energy.

A federal Union would ensure greater unity and coherence and as a result would enable Germany to exercise its « sovereignty » to the full, sharing it with other members of the Union and, primarily, with France. In this way Germany would be regularly involved in the decisions made by the Security Council through the intermediary of a permanent member. Moreover, a political federal Union would speed up recovery from the crisis and the recession by strengthening the flagging sense of solidarity within the Eurozone and the European Union and reinvigorating the main market for German exports. Economic revival and progress towards a European Federation within the core area would enable all 28 members to experience a boost.

How can France assert its main virtues at the European level ? It is my belief that only a *common foreign policy* and a *common strategy for security and defence policy* could represent added value for France. Recently the Commission introduced some innovative proposals in the field of defence which concerned the coordination of the arms industry. This is a move in the right direction. Nevertheless, any moves towards creating a European defence must be conditional upon a global strategy, in particular regarding a common European foreign policy, by virtue of the fundamental principal of our democracies : *it is political power* which defines strategy and makes decisions about any measures and intervention. Consequently, it would appear necessary for the Union to implement a real foreign policy and strategy alongside a policy of European defence by using a community decision-making process. Without a political Union there can be no European defence. Such was the lesson learnt from the EDC<sup>1</sup>.

In order for the euro to survive and endure, the Eurozone must be equipped with a federal political structure. The euro calls for the creation of a political power. Jean Monnet's strategy

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<sup>1</sup> At that time, the plan to create a European Political Union was dependent on the signing of the EDC Treaty by six Member States. The failure of the EDC in 1954 also brought about the collapse of the plan for the EPC. Hence the need to establish first of all the European Political Union.

of integration sector by sector, leading to a sort of spillover, has reached the end of the line. The long-term survival of the euro cannot be guaranteed without the creation of a European political Union. What history has already taught us has been confirmed by the effects of the current crisis<sup>2</sup>.

Moreover, the establishment of a political power would enable a more rapid recovery from the crisis by speeding up the implementation of a banking union, of fiscal and budgetary federalism etc. The political momentum created would herald a renewed sense of European solidarity, paving the way for *eurobonds*. Their introduction on the European and international markets would allow a series of measures to be taken in favour of employment, education, professional training, research, innovations, as well as major infrastructure and communication programmes. In short, as a result the Union's performance would be considerably enhanced. For these different reasons it is in France's interest to promote without delay a *political plan* which would include the pooling of resources belonging to various sovereign competences, including economic policy, foreign affairs, security and defence. This process could be modelled on the common commercial policy.

These initiatives would have the advantage of causing a *reversal of the current perspective*. By creating a political Union based on the federal model (distribution of competences between the EU, the Member States, the regions and the metropolises), they would enable a better balance to be restored within the Franco-German couple in all of the areas where separate measures are less efficient than common policies. Moreover, this reversal of the situation would have the added advantage of recreating a real sense of European solidarity which would have immediate repercussions on the anti-crisis measures, as well as on the measures implemented to boost economic revival and development. As a result, and as mentioned by Chancellor Angela Merkel, it would be possible to have recourse to eurobonds for measures and policies in the field of research, innovation, or infrastructure related to transport and communication networks. Furthermore, the European political Union would allow a global approach as opposed to the current fragmented sequence of steps. France together with Germany at its side will regain a greater sense of balance by uniting their complementary advantages, thereby fully accepting their role as political leader of the EU.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. the dissolving of the Latin Monetary Union (1865-1927) composed of Belgium, France, Italy, Switzerland and Greece.

Shouldn't this process be undertaken as soon as possible, reminding the people and citizens of Europe that the threat formerly posed by the Soviet Union has been superseded by new challenges due to the emergence of the *great powers* and the new distribution of political and economic powers in the world ? Added to all this are energy-related and environmental questions, cultural confrontations and political competition, as well as the threat of terrorist organisations and organised crime. In order to meet these challenges, the EU has a duty to become a political federal Union, unless it is content with playing a minor role on the international stage.

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