



Ambassador's Activities

2012

Distributor: French Embassy in the UK
- Press and Communications Services -
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Lecture by *HE* Bernard Emié,
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom

“The Anglo-French partnership for peace and security”

Defence Academy in Shrivenham, 26 January 2012

Brigadier,

Members of the armed forces of the United Kingdom, France and our allies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure today for me to address an audience of distinguished officers of the British armed forces and students from so many other nations on the prestigious Advanced Command and Staff Course.

As you are to be entrusted with the highest positions in command when you complete this course, I thought it might be useful to give you the French Ambassador's insights on an issue which lies at the heart of French and British foreign policy: the Anglo-French partnership for peace and security.

If you will allow me, I would like to begin by quoting Professor Robert Tombs, well known in this Academy: *“Franco-British relations over the two centuries since Waterloo could be seen as a transformation from enmity to alliance, and finally to partnership. But it has not been a smooth or continuous transformation. (...) Today they are the only European states that maintain ambitions for a world role. Conceivably, both might prefer other partners. But in the real world of the 2010s they have only each other.”*

Indeed, the Anglo-French partnership in the field of defence and security that was enshrined in the Lancaster House treaties is not an accidental choice. It is more than necessary. It is central to our policy and it is meant to last.

Memories of our long-standing rivalry could have been an impediment to the development of our partnership. But with common values and interests and with

similar capabilities (I), it was natural for our two countries to work as a team and combine their efforts (II).

Most recently, the Libyan experience has proven us right, beyond all expectations (III).

I / France and the UK's situations on the world stage are so similar it is no wonder we are extremely close politically.

Our cooperation is exceptionally broad. Obviously defence has been centre-stage, with the Lancaster House treaties and our joint effort on Libya. But our relationship extends well beyond defence. It is, if I can put it this way, an existential relationship. In the scheme of things, our countries are bound to be united ever more closely. Let me elaborate on why this is so.

A / We are of similar size – population-wise, GDP-wise, defence-wise. But on the new world stage, we no longer reach the critical mass. In order to exist on the global stage, and sometimes even to safeguard our current capabilities, we need to join forces.

B / We are partners. Trade partners. Britain exports more to France than she does to China. France's main trade surplus is with the UK. Partners in security. Thanks to our intelligence and customs cooperation, this month the UK seized one of the largest shipments of cocaine in the Caribbean. Our two countries will also cooperate on security for the forthcoming Olympic Games. Partners in science and culture. Partners in consular assistance. When the British Embassy in Tehran was stormed by a bunch of hooligans controlled by the regime, staff in the besieged compound were helped by their French colleagues, who also managed to retrieve their possessions from the ransacked premises. And let me add: partners in getting to know each other better. Despite our differences, we

are actually so similar that whenever we French want to implement a new policy we send a fact-finding team to test whether it works in London. About 350,000 French nationals live in London alone and around 400,000 British nationals own a second home in France. Over 10 million Britons visit France every year.

C/ We have similar values. We are democracies. We cherish and promote human rights. We see eye to eye on Syria, North Korea, Iran and Zimbabwe. We are party to the same treaties and institutions, from the Human Rights Council to the Council of Europe and the International Criminal Court. We are founding members and key players of the G8 and G20. Although the Arab Spring and events in Burma are generating great hope, this world is not a world of democracies yet; the end of history is nowhere near; and our community of values does have a profound meaning.

D / We have similar responsibilities. Our two nations are permanent members of the UN Security Council. Two key members at that, as more than three quarters of UN Security Council resolutions are drafted by our two permanent representations in New York. We are key members of the European Union, where our joint consent is an absolute precondition for anything to happen, for instance, in the field of security. We are also two key members of NATO, where our two countries have been major contributors in Afghanistan and Libya.

Both our nations have a nuclear deterrent, which places us in a category of our own, with specific responsibilities, but also with specific expertise and a specific policy stake in the complex world of counter-proliferation.

Our complicated colonial history also bequeathed our two nations a global vision of world affairs and a special relationship – not bereft of difficulties and responsibilities – with a number of countries on other continents.

E / We face similar challenges and threats. Asia is on the rise. America's focus is increasingly shifting towards the Pacific. Threats remain. Nuclear proliferation is increasing. Iran is building a nuclear capability that risks causing a regional confrontation. Terrorism is taking hold in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and elsewhere. The Arab Spring is marvellously promising, but also a potential source of instability close to our shores. The economic crisis is hitting hard, making it ever more difficult to maintain defence budgets. Meanwhile there persists elsewhere in Europe the misguided belief that we live in a post-historical world where paying for our protection is a waste of resources.

F/ True, our choices may differ sometimes. As you know, France long ago concluded that the continent's stability and our position in a changing world make a strong, integrated European Union essential. Britain's stance has been less enthusiastic. True, there have been variations. Britain applied for EU membership on three successive occasions. After you joined, Margaret Thatcher famously asked for your "own money back".

But there was positive momentum in the defence field, such as in 1992 with the so-called Petersberg tasks assigned to the Western European Union, later incorporated into the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty of the EU. Another positive move was the Franco-British Saint-Malo Declaration, by which the leaders of the United Kingdom and France agreed on the need to give the EU a capacity for autonomous decision-making and action, backed up by credible military forces, in order to respond to international crises when the Atlantic Alliance is not involved.

And now there is a crisis of the Euro Area, whose woes are casting shadows on the whole European endeavour. But believe me, this will not last. Eventually, the upward trend will return.

II / This closeness has allowed us to prepare the legal framework of substantive and fruitful defence cooperation .

A / The process that led to the signature of the Lancaster House treaties.

Our two countries underwent a phase of intense strategic reflexion with the drafting of the French White Paper in 2008 and the British Strategic Defence and Security Review in 2010.

Looking at the conclusions of our respective strategic analyses, I was very struck by the similarity of their conclusions: the same threats, similar planning assumptions, the same recommendations on structure and capabilities.

To this day our White Paper's conclusion remains entirely relevant. We need to

- maintain full freedom of assessment by the French political authorities;
- maintain France's total nuclear independence in terms of both capability and strategy;
- keep our freedom to decide whether to commit our armed forces to operations;

So what has changed since 2008? I believe there are three main new elements :

- an unprecedented budgetary crisis leading to increasing financial constraints on our defence apparatus;

- unprecedented changes linked to the Arab Spring, leading to considerable uncertainty in a region that is of the utmost importance for our interests;
- a significant change in the foreign policy of the United States towards Europe and NATO. When possible, the United States now intends to “lead from behind” and leave it to us Europeans to deal with certain issues geographically closer to us.

In this strategic context – its changing nature confirmed by the Libyan crisis – and amid the unprecedented shrinking of our budgets, our two countries decided to move closer on defence on a bilateral level. Why France and the UK? Because we were – and are even more so now – natural partners.

B / The scope of the Lancaster House treaties signed in November 2010.

Allow me to give you a brief summary of these two treaties, whose signing has been facilitated, if not made possible by the return of France in the integrated command of NATO:

1 / The nuclear treaty is a very clear signal of our political leaders’ desire to work without taboos and rule out no options. If we were able to cooperate on such a sensitive subject, there is no reason why we cannot cooperate on conventional areas!

The move to share facilities for the testing and safety of nuclear weapons is essentially a rationalization of one part of an extremely expensive capability: *“To collaborate in the technology associated with nuclear stockpile stewardship in support of our respective independent nuclear deterrent capabilities, in full compliance with our international obligations, through unprecedented cooperation at a new joint facility at Valduc in France that will model*

performance of our nuclear warheads and materials to ensure long term viability, security and safety – this will be supported by a joint Technology Development Centre at Aldermaston in the UK.”

2 / The general defence and security treaty is based on two pillars which have now been established formally: the Joint Letter of Intent for the operational aspects and the High Level Working Group for the aspects related to capability developments and research. These two pillars are complementary and mutually supportive.

On the operational side, the engine and goal is the creation of a Joint Combined Expeditionary Force to respond to jointly identified threats, capable of intervening in operations, whether they be to support the United Nations, NATO, the EU or indeed an ad hoc coalition. Full Operational Capability (FOC) is planned in 2015. This capability will come with its own deployable headquarters – something that would have come in very useful on 19 March last year, when France and the UK decided to take the lead in Libya.

This goal presupposes a process of convergence in many fields – such as doctrine, concepts and training – and this of course requires enhanced interoperability. In Libya, we demonstrated that we were stronger together, and we’d scarcely even begun this work of convergence. Imagine what a lever we’ll have in the future, when we’ve successfully concluded this work and put this Joint Combined Expeditionary Force fully in place.

3 / In the procurement field, our cooperation was nothing new, but the treaty took us onto a whole new level, in a more systematic search for cooperation.

The challenges in the armaments field are indeed considerable. We aim to:

- have top-level armed forces, with equipment of the highest standard;
- improve our armed forces' interoperability;
- maintain in our countries a high-performance industrial capability at global level, representing a combined total of 275,000 direct jobs and a turnover of more than €40 million.

In the present economic climate, we can no longer each choose to go our own way. We must reduce the costs of procuring our materiel, use each other's strengths, avoid duplication and develop our interdependence.

For France, defence is a reliable foundation on which to develop an innovative economy in the long term. We must act together as shrewd investors to ensure our taxpayers' money is wisely spent.

Our projects are all making steady progress, despite the budgetary uncertainties and the intrinsically cumbersome nature of our procurement for surveillance systems, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and future combat aviation, integrating the French and British missiles industries, mine warfare and finally the next generation of communication satellites.

Real in-depth work between France and the UK has begun which must enable gaps in capability to be identified as early as possible and bring our doctrines and concepts closer .

This desire to put our cooperation on a long-term footing was reflected in the text of the treaties: the first was signed for 50 years (that is, more than a single generation) and the second indefinitely. What's more, these historic agreements met with strong bipartisan support on both sides of the Channel. Proof of this is the speed with which our two treaties were ratified, almost unanimously, in both

our parliaments. And I would like to underline the fact that never before had France signed a treaty of this magnitude with any other nation.

C / The Anglo-French partnership is not at odds with our determination to push for a genuine European defence.

Anglo-French cooperation is at the forefront of developments in European defence, and it can trigger a positive dynamic in Europe. But our bilateral effort cannot suffice for the whole of Europe, and we also want to see our partners really play a full role in building robust European capabilities. In this context, it's in all our interests to ensure concrete progress is made in this field.

That's why France and her German, Polish, Italian and Spanish partners asked the High Representative to look more closely at ways of strengthening European defence capabilities, developing the EU's operational command and control capabilities and improving cooperation between the European Union and NATO. This effort to relaunch European defence policy must be continued, undogmatically and without excluding anyone. In this respect, I'm proud of the compromise we reached at the Foreign Affairs Council in December 2011.

We decided to activate the operations centre, which is going to allow us to coordinate our action in the Horn of Africa. We also secured a compromise to continue working on improving the European Union's permanent capability for the planning and conduct of operations. The Common Security and Defence Policy has been given a new boost.

III/ How the Libyan experience has proven us right, beyond all expectations

The Libyan episode gave a tremendous boost to Franco-British cooperation. It enabled our armed forces to work side by side and appreciate our respective capabilities and expertise. We probably cooperated more in operational terms in six months than in the previous five years.

I'd like to mention a few other lessons from Libya, and you'll understand why they are each important to Franco-British cooperation.

A / France's return to NATO's integrated command structures was the subject of doubts and criticism when the decision was taken. Clearly, those who shared those doubts were proven wrong. NATO turned out to be a crucial tool for our military operations. As the United States did not want to be too heavily involved in Libya, for the first time since 1949 NATO was placed at the service of a coalition led by two determined European nations, France and the UK. That was possible only because we joined the integrated command of NATO.

B / Another lesson of Libya – and I think this is also the United Kingdom's position – is that thanks to the initiative and the leadership of France and the UK, **we Europeans demonstrated for the first time that we were capable of intervening decisively, with our allies, in a conflict on our doorstep.** That is remarkable progress, compared with the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. It is crucial, at a time when President Obama has presented a new vision of American military involvement, whose implication is that we Europeans must shoulder more of our **responsibilities. To a certain extent, the success of this Anglo-French-led NATO operation might be characterized as making up for the Suez disaster.**

C / Finally, Libya showed the urgent nature of **plugging the gap in capability between Europe and our American allies,** on whom we were still

too dependent, particularly in strategic segments like UAVs and tanker aircraft. Hence the utmost relevance of the procurement side of the Anglo-French partnership.

Conclusion

Several months ago, when I accepted your invitation to deliver this speech before the Advanced Command and Staff Course here in Shrivenham, I couldn't have foreseen that the moves made by our two countries for nearly two years now would be so boosted by our success in Libya. Indeed, this experience shows the strong consistency of our closer cooperation. I hope I've sufficiently emphasized the context surrounding our leaders' decision to cooperate as never before on defence issues. To take a historical perspective, the Saint-Malo accords didn't outlive our differences over Iraq. Today we're in the reverse situation: the effect of our joint action in Libya will be to speed up an already very strong trend.

We're looking at the long term, and the next Franco-British summit – next month – should once again focus broadly on defence issues. We must make a success of the increased strength of these treaties; the distance we've come in a year is spectacular. It's a strategic priority for our two countries.

In order to make ever more progress, we must of course remain under positive pressure from our leaders; the initial reservations of some, in both Paris and London, have disappeared, and this really is a genuine commitment for a long-term partnership at all levels.

In conclusion, allow me to quote one of your ministers [1], who recently said of the treaties: *“This requires leadership from the top, clear direction through the*

chain of command, and above all familiarity through joint working. It is said in the Ministry of Defence that 'everyone has a friend in Washington'. We need to move to a position where everyone has 'un ami' in Paris too. Because (...) the benefits of our partnership will be felt in NATO and Europe too."

That perfectly sums up France's vision of this cooperation, too. We want ever more friends in London, lots in the great European capitals, as well, and always as many in Washington!

I'd like to take the opportunity presented by this speech today to emphasize that – with France facing a major election in less than 100 days' time – France's commitment to strengthening defence cooperation, made at the historic summit of 2010, is sustainable and its continuation will in no way be subject to the fluctuations of French political and economic life. In our view – and I know the UK agrees – this cooperation is fundamental if we want to avoid the risk of a strategic shrinkage, maintain our position as a global military power and remain a credible player in the international political arena. That's why I have full confidence in the future of our cooperation, and I'm very fortunate to represent France in the UK in such favourable circumstances.

[1] Minister of State for the Armed Forces Nick Harvey MP.