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Old Wine On New Bottles?

In what ways have French presidents pursued strategic autonomy in European policies?
(Macron, Chirac, De Gaulle)

Bachelor's thesis in European Studies with French
Supervisor: Lise Rye
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Norwegian University of Science and Technology
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Abstract

Strategic autonomy has become more relevant in recent years in the form of cooperation and agreements within the EU and its member states. It has become more prevalent in a globalized world with constant conflicts and tensions. This analysis evaluates how the concept of strategic autonomy has evolved over the past eighty years. The paper examines why and how some of the French presidents have worked towards strategic autonomy and how it has shaped the European Union's (EU) perspective on strategic autonomy. Through the use of methods such as document analysis, comparative method, and a conceptual historical perspective on the concepts strategic autonomy and Gaullism, they will be the framework for the analysis comparing Charles de Gaulle's Fouchet Plan I, Jacques Chirac's Saint Malo declaration, and Macron's speech at Sorbonne in 2017. The initiatives of these French presidents demonstrate a continuity and motive for what they have desired for European cooperation in terms of a common strategic culture, politics, and defence. The analysis shows how strategic autonomy not only concerns defence but also other areas that can be greatly influenced by external factors.

Sammendrag

Strategisk autonomi har blitt mer relevant de siste årene i form av samarbeid og avtaler innen EU og medlemslandene. Det har blitt mer prevalent i en globalisert verden med stadige konflikter og gnisninger. Denne analysen vurderer hvordan strategisk autonomi som konsept har utviklet seg gjennom de siste åtti årene. Hvordan begrepet strategisk autonomi har blitt tatt opp i debatten de siste årene i konteksten Europeisk suverenitet og europeisk strategisk autonomi. Vi ser på hvordan initiativ fra franske presidenter har påvirket konseptet strategisk autonomi og hvordan dette konseptet ble utviklet fra andre verdenskrig og frem til i dag. Oppgaven tar for seg hvorfor og hvordan noen av de franske presidentenes har arbeidet mot strategisk autonomi og hvordan det har preget samarbeidet i Europeiske Unions (EU) syn på strategisk autonomi. Gjennom bruk av dokumentanalyse, komparativ metode og et historisk blikk på begrepene strategisk autonomi og Gaullisme vil de være rammeverket for analysen som sammenligner Charles de Gaulles Fouchet Plan I, Jacques Chiracs Saint Malo erklæring og Macron's tale ved Sorbonne i 2017. Initiativene fra disse franske presidentene viser en kontinuitet og motiv for hva de har ønsket for europeisk samarbeid i form av en felles strategisk kultur, politikk og forsvar. Analysen viser hvordan strategisk autonomi ikke bare gjelder forsvar, men også andre områder som kan påvirket i stor grad av utenforstående.

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List of Abbreviations

CFSP	Common Foreign Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence
EU	European Union
EUGS	European Union Global Strategy
EU-SA	European Union Strategic Autonomy
SA	Strategic Autonomy

1. Introduction

Strategic autonomy is an unknown term and concept for many. The term strategic autonomy is difficult to discuss for multiple reasons. One being the lack of a common or garden definition of the concept and a second understanding what it means in practice. Political debates and every day discussions are inflicted with the difficulties that comes with a lack of common knowledge about a concept that affects everyone. The need for a clearer structure of this concept is visible through the small amount of development the concept and term has been through the past seventy years. The French has proven to be one of the main trailblazers in discussion of national and European autonomy and sovereignty within the European Member States (Lefebvre, 2021, p.1). Recently, the debate has gained more attention with Macron popularizing the idea of strategic autonomy and sovereignty, as a part of the French grand strategy. Researchers are split on the debate if the need for a defined strategic autonomy is necessary to tackle the geopolitical situation.

Because of study centres and think-tanks, the term strategic autonomy has appeared more often in EU papers, articles and institutional documents in later years. The rise of actualization makes this concept even more important to discuss now than ever (Vai, 2021, p.5). The concept have repeatedly been up to discussion every decade since the 1950's when De Gaulle and Adenauer began discussing the idea of a more autonomous European defence. Journals, newspapers and think tanks have all discussed Macron's ideas towards strategic autonomy during his presidency. Both support to further European strategic autonomy and those critical to France leading EU in the areas of defence and autonomy are vocal in this discussion.

This thesis critically examines the strategic autonomy pursued by French presidents within the framework of European policies, illuminating the conceptualization, history, challenges, and strengths of strategic autonomy. Moreover, it explores the interplay between French political ideology, such as Gaullism and 'grandeur', to provide a comprehensive understanding of France's approach to strategic autonomy within the EU.

1.1 Research question

The aim of the thesis is to answer the research question '*In what ways have French presidents pursued strategic autonomy in European policies?*'. The goal of the research question is to compare different cases where French presidents have had an important role in formulating the document and see if there has been a structural influence on the concept strategic autonomy. A qualitative case study with a conceptual framework is optimal when looking at the different format documents. The purpose is to create a framework that facilitates the comparability of the three cases through answering the same analytical questions to answer the overarching research question.

2. Conceptual framework

Before discussing strategic autonomy in Europe and what it means to French presidents, it is implicit to look at the term strategic autonomy, how it has come to be and what this paper bases the discussion around. Additionally, understanding the motive behind strategic autonomy which is the common aim of French 'grandeur' with a Gaullist

ideology. The term strategic autonomy has different definitions in different contexts and points in history. In the context of French presidencies addressing strategic autonomy this paper refers to European strategic autonomy. This thesis uses Clingendael Report's definition of the term European strategic autonomy as the reference point to explain the concept and to compare other forms and definition of the term and the concept throughout the conceptual framework and the document analysis.

2.1 Gaullism

In French political discourse, the concept of 'Grandeur' encapsulates France's historical ambition for greatness, symbolizing the national prestige, power and leadership. Gaullism came to be during the Second World War, where General Charles de Gaulle refused to accept an armistice with Germany. After successfully creating a Fifth Republic (Vth Republic) and the French people signing the referendum to affirm this republic, there were big shoes to fill after the departure of de Gaulle in 1969. Gaullism, a political ideology though never defining the concept himself, however the consensus of the idea behind the concept is to achieve unity through patriotic and independent foreign policy (Palmowski, 2016). The essence of Gaullism still has deep historical roots in French political discourse and embodies the idea of being a global power (Wilson, 1973, p.485-486). De Gaulle declared "France cannot be France without greatness". A gloss well-known to the French and to other European states. Thus, if Europe is powerful then one of the strongest nations within Europe, being France, should become more powerful as well. De Gaulle's idea was to make Europe an 'Archimedes lever' for French politics (Lefebvre, 2021, p.1). An ambition of the possible chance of vetoing in decision-making concerning fields of foreign policy and defence could possible lead to the rebirth of France's international power and 'grandeur' (Teasdale, 2016, p.7). This vision included scepticism towards giving up sovereignty which is reflected in Gaullist foreign policy's commitment to preserving French sovereignty and independence. The General saw it as a necessity to be ubiquitous on the world stage as one of the global powers and possibly mediator on the world stage to exist between the threat of Soviet and the American power (Lefebvre, 2021, p.1). This idea also creates a natural distance to the US and does also confirm the suspicions of France's intentions in regard to working towards strengthening Europe to strengthen France. In essence, Gaullism and 'grandeur' represent a cornerstone of French political ideology and continues to shape France's approach to international relations, emphasizing the pursuit of autonomy, sovereignty and influence on the global stage.

2.2 Strategic Autonomy

The modern understanding of sovereignty and autonomy that the West base its understanding of the concept on originates from the 17th to the 20th century. The Treaty of Westphalia, from 1648, marked a pivotal moment where the principle of territorial delimitations and the principle of non-intervention were formally established (Kabat-Rudnicka, 2020, p.73). The Westphalian system legitimized both the state and maintaining its sovereignty, yet it also implied negotiations and cooperation that legally binds the states (Keohane, 2002, p.748).

From these historical roots emerged the contemporary notion of strategic autonomy, which draws upon the principles of sovereignty and autonomy. The concept has evolved

over time, in matters of security and defence. Howorth argues that through transatlantic relationships the quest for strategic autonomy began in the 1950's the European Defence Community, because establishing security and defence was considered essential after two world wars. It continued in the 1990's through EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In 2013 there was an incessant calling for greater cooperation within CSDP and in 2016 the debate continued partly in the European Union Global Strategy (EUGS) discussion. This persistent development of cooperation in different areas to increase security goes to show that strategic autonomy is a concept that has continuous relevance and that it is a key concept to policymakers and stakeholders. However, the comprehensive extent of the idea is so complex it has taken years to understand what strategic autonomy entails and therefore intricate to define it (Fiott, 2021a, pp.8-10; Howorth, 2018, p.523; Shearer, 2000, p.285).

Vai argues that there are three conditions required for a full affirmation of autonomy: "i) the ability to make decisions; ii) independence from the decisions of other; iii) the ability to put one's own decisions into practice". These three points highlights what the abilities of autonomy are. There is a clear correlation between Vai's definition and the Clingendael Report's definition (Vai, 2021, p.10; Zandee et al., 2020, p.8).

The discussion around the concept goes back to the beginning of the European Communities (Lippert et al., 2019, p.6). The complexity of the European Union makes the concept of autonomy intricate considering the laws of each member state taken into consideration when creating a European strategic autonomy. Because of each state's individual systems and the interdependence between the states on economic, institutional and political areas requires great coordination in policy areas. Moreover, the complexity of what the concept holds is also everchanging with the shift in geopolitics. Therefore, a definition that can tackle the sands of time and evolvement of the concept is fundamental.

The definition is chosen based on the understanding of the concept's history, groundwork, limitations and potential. The Clingendael Report's (2020, p.8) definition of European strategic autonomy is a specific definition to the concept of strategic autonomy focusing on Europe's autonomy. It does not differ from the understandings of autonomy and sovereignty but is rather narrower in its offer as a concept. The Clingendael Report, titled "European strategic autonomy in security and defence" written by Zandee, Deen, Kruijver, and Stoetman was published in 2020. Strategic autonomy is defined by Zandee et al. (2020, p.8) as

European strategic autonomy in security and defence is the ability of Europe to make its own decisions, and to have the necessary means, capacity and capabilities available to act upon these decisions, in such a manner that it is able to properly function on its own when needed. From this definition it follows that four interrelated aspects have to be taken into account: the political, institutional, capabilities and technological-industrial dimensions.

They also specifies that 'European' means EU plus non-European NATO countries (Zandee et al., 2020, p.8). The four sectors of political, institutional, industrial and technological-industrial dimensions are interdependent when it comes to strategic autonomy. The definition is recent, from 2020, and is a reflection of the geopolitical environment changes. The importance of the areas technology, industry and globalisation is considered more emphasized in the new definition. This definition is the

most suitable to describe strategic autonomy as a concept today and includes the areas in focus from earlier format of the concept. Other researchers have defined the term in other formats, however they compare adequate compared with Zandee's when looking at the term and how it encapsulates both today's understanding of the concept and previous versions. Using the Clingendael Report's definition facilitates the comparability of the concept between the units of analysis because of its specificity rather than using the European Parliament's from 2022 where the definition is rudimentary (European Parliament, 2022, p.1). In the European Parliament, the term EU (strategic) sovereignty is often used in the same way as (strategic) autonomy (European Parliament, 2022, p.5). This thesis will therefore analyse these different terms within the same analytical framework. The Chaillot Paper suggest that sovereignty appeals more positively to people because it highlights what the EU is capable of, meanwhile autonomy emphasises EU's independence from others (Fiott, 2021b, p.10). This thesis analyses the different terms and how they position compared to the European strategic autonomy definition.

3. Method

3.1 Conceptual history

The method utilized in this thesis is chosen because of the research question's nature. During the analysis, the historical context will be delineated to establish the framework to understand the prevailing circumstances and the significance of the discourse of the subject. The format of the documents being analysed indicates the importance at what level and in which areas of the intended changes reflects the situation at that time. The Fouchet Plan I, the Saint Malo declaration, and Emmanuel Macron's speech in 2017 are the documents being analysed and all have different structure and format.

3.2 Document analysis

Analysing the different attempts to form and define strategic autonomy through document analysis will allow for a direct examination of the presidents' concrete approach to strategic autonomy and allows for testing the direct reflection of the documents to see fit with the conceptual framework. Looking at documents from different decades provides context for understanding the evolution of the concept over time (Leira, 2018, p.5).

The document analysis explores the ongoing evolution of strategic autonomy through analysing how the French presidents have characterized the concept. The analysis has a framework that answers the research question and answering the analytical questions, "How does the documents argue for further autonomy", "Is the term strategic autonomy used, if so how?", and lastly "Does the document promote further autonomy, if so how does the it argue for further strengthening European autonomy?" Using these questions narrows down the selection of documents relevant to strategic autonomy and which parts of the documents that are most relevant to answer the research question and analytical questions (Johannessen et al., 2018, pp.25).

To answer the research question as nuanced, objective and complete as possible the method of systematically answering the analytical questions will aim to give the reader the ability to reflect how the French presidents have pursued strategic autonomy. The results are captured through viewing the research question in the light of the presidents' political viewpoints and the geopolitical situation at that time. Methodizing the case

analysis through answering the same analytical questions creates a framework leading to a clearer format when comparing the cases.

This method well-suited for addressing the research question as it involves direct engagement with the historical documents and a review of earlier research from academic literature. The method also enables an examination of the documents within the context of the circumstances in which they were created, rather than solely through the lens of a more recent understanding of the concept. By incorporating academic literature, a deeper comprehension of the motivations and pursuit of strategic autonomy at the time supports the thesis further. Furthermore, comparing the documents alongside the academic literature facilitates the identification of overarching trends and avoiding the attribution of non-existent connections (Grønmo, 2004, p.378).

3.2 Units of analysis

The documents selected for the analysis are because of their relevance to the research question and with the aim of systematically conducting a review of key documents central in French-European policies regarding the development of the concept strategic autonomy. There are multiple other historically relevant documents discussing the concept but lacking in significance when studying French presidents' initiatives towards strategic autonomy analysed in this thesis. Such as the EUGS, the European Defence Action Plan and the EU Council Conclusions (European Commission, 2016). The primary reason for choosing the Fouchet Plan I, the Saint Malo Declaration and Macron's speech is because of them being they initiatives from French president's and milestones for the development of the strategic autonomy concept. The second reason are the presidents that is known for a Gaullist political ideology and all of them are from the Vth Republic.

The earliest chronological documents applicable to strategic autonomy conceptual research with great significance to France are the Fouchet Plan I. Macron's speech at Sorbonne in 2017 is highly relevant because of Macron's political positioning and his description of European strategic autonomy in recent years. A sense of urgency positioned the presidents to discuss and politicize the concept, both times motivated by the need for distancing Europe from the United States. The Saint Malo Declaration in 1998 was under different circumstances. The long-lasting Cold War and nuclear weapons discussion made France concerned about Europe's autonomy yet again. The analysis of these documents will go into the extent of importance that the documents had on the development of the concept strategic autonomy (CVCE, 1961, 1998; Macron, 2017).

In the analysis the term strategic autonomy is studied through a lens where documents produced with the initiative from French presidents from three different decades with twenty to thirty years intervals to determine how the French presidents have looked at strategic autonomy in their time and how the term is used and reasoned.

When analysing the question 'in what ways have French presidents pursued strategic autonomy in European policies?' the three documents have different formats The reason for selecting one plan, one declaration and one speech is because the intention behind them are similar and therefor comparable because of the intention of the analysis being a conceptual analysis. Since the definition was not officially established by the EU until 2022 after the three units of analysis, selecting the units of analysis is based on the aims of the documents and the weight they affect the future direction of the concept (European Parliament, 2022, p.1).

Chronologically, the first document with great significance to France's plans for EU policies applicable to analyse the concept strategic autonomy is the first Fouchet Plan from 1961. De Gaulle established the Vth Republic and Gaullism began with him in power, making the plan a natural starting point for the conceptual comparison. The second unit of analysis is the Saint Malo declaration from 1998. A partnership with Great Britain to develop further military co-operation between Member States. It was initiated by Prime Minister Tony Blair and the French President Jacques Chirac from the party Rally of the Republic. The cooperation was based on enabling the Union to have the capacity for autonomous action backed by military forces. The initiative of autonomous abilities and Chirac having a Gaullist ideology makes a strong argument for its relevance. The third unit of analysis is President Emmanuel Macron's speech at Sorbonne from 2017, yet again portraying the aim to further sovereignty and autonomy and strategic autonomy. Macron is also known for his Gaullist political ideas and being the currently sitting president suggest how the situation is at present time. By analysing these cases, the aim is to compare their differences and similarities and see the developments of the term and concept (CVCE, 1961; Macron, 2017; Shearer, 2000, p.283).

4. Analysis

4.1 The Fouchet Plan I

4.1.1 Why

The term strategic autonomy has not always existed, however the idea of strategic autonomy during Charles de Gaulle's presidency was a direct reaction to the political position of power that France held post Second World War and has not had any large transformations since. The reason for its significance is how it clearly shows Charles de Gaulle's interest in sovereignty from the US and defence autonomy and wanting France to be a mediating power between the US and the Soviet Union.

After experiencing the devastation of two world wars, General Charles de Gaulle took upon the role of presidency of France with the mandate to establish a new republic. The creating of the Fifth Republic, characterized by a semi-presidential system granting the president significant authority, was seen as essential to rebuilding public trust and restoring stability (Teasdale, 2016, pp.10-11). France's unique position, underscored by its possession of a nuclear arsenal, carved out a distinct role on the global stage. De Gaulle's vision of France as a leading power, guided with Gaullism, emphasized national sovereignty and independence in international relations (Teasdale, 2016, p.9). The Fouchet Plan I was proposed in Bonn, on the 2nd of November 1961. As a first Draft Treaty on European Political Union, a task given to the Fouchet Committee by the Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Six (CVCE, 1961, p.1). De Gaulle and Adenauer introduced the Fouchet Plan I with the aim of enforcing EU's defence capabilities, foreign policy, economics and cultural affairs. With the resolution of finding a common culture through a common plan. Stated in the opening remarks was the primary objective of the plan, "to develop still further, protect their common spiritual heritage from any threats to which it may be exposed and, in this way, contribute to the maintenance of peaceful relations in the world" (CVCE, 1961, p.3). The impetus behind the Fouchet Plan I stemmed from de Gaulle's pursuit of greater political autonomy in a bipolar world between the global powers, the United States and the Soviet Union (Teasdale, 2016, p.11). In sum, Article 2 of the Fouchet Plan I encapsulates the

multifaceted aspirations of European Strategic Autonomy. Laying the foundation of efforts towards greater unity, security and cultural cohesion.

4.1.2 How

Focusing on Article 2 in the Fouchet Plan I, it delineates key areas of significance in advancing European autonomy and it also marks a pivotal moment in the development of the concept. The overarching theme of Article 2 is the preservation and enhancement of Europe's collective identity and interest. The Fouchet Plan I was meant to further and protect Europe's spiritual heritage from threats and maintain peaceful relations.

"[...]protect their common spiritual heritage from any threats to which it may be exposed and in this way contribute to the maintenance of peaceful relations in the world". It underscores the imperative of fostering unity among member states through adoption of a common plan.

Article 2 articulates several specific objectives aimed at consolidating European autonomy. Firstly, it advocates for the establishment of a common foreign policy, which signifies a crucial step towards bolstering Europe's autonomy and also its influence on the world stage. Moreover, the article underscores the importance of collective security against external threats. By advocating for a common defence policy Europe's capacity is reinforcing autonomy. Additionally, promoting scientific and cultural cooperation adds to the notion of broadening the strategic autonomy concept from not only military and defence capabilities.

"It shall be the aim of the Union: - to bring about the adoption of a common foreign policy in matters that are of a common interest to Member States". Showing how a common foreign policy one of the goals of the Plan is a common foreign policy. Furthermore, Article 2 also includes " - to strengthen, in co-operation with the other free nations, the security of Member States against any aggression by adopting a common defence policy". Adding a common defence plan to the strategic autonomy areas. Additionally, " - to ensure, through close co-operation between Member States in the scientific and cultural field, the continued development of their common heritage and the protection of the values on which their civilization rests;" aims to develop a common culture. Reflecting a widespread of sectors presented in the Plan. A document revealed that de Gaulle wanted Europe to become "a real entity exercising its own activity in world affairs", to be "organized by itself and for itself, in the political, economic, [and] cultural domains, and in that of defence'. The Fouchet Plan I portrays this wish to a tee, by working towards a more powerful and autonomous Europe on multiple areas such as a common foreign policy, defence policy and common culture (CVCE, 1961, p.3; Vanke, 2001, pp.95-96)

4.1.3 Answering the analytical questions

How does the document argue for further autonomy?

It becomes evident that de Gaulle's advocacy for greater autonomy is implicit, rather than explicit, because of the absence of using the term strategic autonomy. The term is absent from the document, however de Gaulle's vision for Europe to assert its independence and sovereignty is unmistakable. The plan implies on Europe becoming "a real entity exercising its own activity in world affairs" reflecting his desire for the continent to be more self-organized across political, economic, cultural, and defence domains. The Fouchet Plan I aligns closely with the vision of strategic autonomy by

prioritizing autonomy in the pursuit of a more powerful and independent Europe (CVCE, 1961).

Is the term strategic autonomy used, and if so, how?

Despite the absence of explicit terminology, the Plan shares striking similarities with the Clingendael Report's definition and the Plan's objectives align closely with the vision of European autonomy. Even though the term has not been articulated in the Fouchet Plan I, one could argue that the Plan's core principles and objectives laid the groundwork for the evolution of European Strategic Autonomy in later initiatives (Zandee et al., 2020, p.8). Interestingly, the introductory of the document does not advocate directly for defence and foreign policy sectors. However, the Plan states the defence policy and foreign policy areas as two out of four primary working domains. Thereby, collectively they represent fifty percent of the sectors encompassed by the plan, highlighting their significant role.

Does the document promote further autonomy, and if so, how?

The Fouchet Plan I does not explicitly promote SA, however the underlying objectives advocate for greater European independence and self-reliance and share communalities with the Clingendael Report's definition (Zandee et al., 2020, p.8). There is no evidence of stagnating the development of cooperation or limitations on the cooperation. Scholarly interpretations, such as those by Česnakas suggest that France's idea was to increase European autonomy from the US (Česnakas, 2023, pp.16-17). While the Plan may not represent solely a Gaullist idea, the Plan's emphasis on autonomy reflects the broader aspiration of European autonomy and Gaullism. Thus, while the terminology may differ, the underlying intent and trajectory of the Plan may be conceived as contributory to the development of European Strategic Autonomy as the concept is conceived today.

4.1.4 What happened after

The main reasons for the failure of the Fouchet Plan I were multifaceted. One of two main reasons was that other nations such as Britain and the Netherlands did not want to stray away from the security of American protection and the Netherlands feared that Britain and the United States would "leave" continental Europe in the case of an European Defence Policy. Others were scared that lessening the reliance on NATO and the US would destabilize Germany (Česnakas, 2023, p.17; Jones, 2003, p.114). During the 1960's the demand for defence security was much lower than it had been previously during the Second World War. The United States' military presence was satisfactory for many of the European countries (Vai, 2021, 6).

The need for security was no longer as strong as it was before the establishment of the NATO-alliance. De Gaulle's vision was to create autonomy for Europe without the strong reliance on the US and reducing British influence, this approach was not only in the favor to European autonomy but also French strategic autonomy. Originally, the idea was focused on the defence sector, both operationally and industrially. During the following years European integration through economic cooperation was the main focus and political issues concerning defence was put to the side (Vai, 2021, p.6). During the 1970's the concept of strategic autonomy came into the limelight in the discussion of

economic cooperation and European political cooperation. In the 70's the cooperation evolved from only being mainly in the defence sector, to political and diplomatic cooperation (Lefebvre, 2021, p.1).

4.2 The Saint Malo Declaration

4.2.1 Why

Thirty-seven years after the Fouchet Plan I, the St. Malo summit was a sudden display yet again of close collaboration towards a common European security (Shearer, 2000, p.283). It was a joint declaration held at a British-French Summit on the fourth of December in 1998. The joint declaration issued during the summit underscored the imperative of enhancing European autonomy through military capabilities. The tight cooperation between France and Britain had been a rarity after the Second World War. President Jacques Chirac (1995-2007) was an initiator of the Saint Malo declaration. Leading up to his presidency, France experienced challenges of economic crisis, the Cold War and the failure in Yugoslavia. In reaction to the context, Chirac used the expression "European power". Leading to France's diplomatic interest in "European multipliers", also known as the "Archimedes' lever". This political initiative aligned with the idea of 'Grandeur' and a Gaullist ideology (Lefebvre, 2021, 1; Shearer, 2000, p.283).

Moreover, the Saint Malo declaration proposed to develop a Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP), partly in response to the failures experienced in the Balkans. France, along with Britain, showed great efforts towards creating a European military forces. The Saint Malo declaration is another piece to the puzzle proving France's longstanding goal of a more autonomous Europe. A neorealist view to this action is that France did it because of the challenges to their national identity they were experiencing at the time and therefore an effort to strengthen their position in power (Shearer, 2000, p.284).

4.2.2 How

The title of the document was "Joint Declaration on European Defence – Joint Declaration issued at the British-French Summit (Saint-Malo, 4 December 1998)". The declaration consisted of five points. The first point bringing the main message of the declaration clearly by stating "The European Union needs to be in a position to play its full role on the international stage", while also advocating for the formulation of a common defence policy. The second point of the declaration was "the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed by credible forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises". This point underscores the necessity for a more autonomous Europe equipped with autonomous military capabilities. The third point of the declaration advocates for a self-reliant European defence capabilities not contingent on the Alliance alluding to the Atlantic Alliance.

The objective of the declaration was to achieve rapid implementation of the Treaty of Amsterdam provisions on CFSP to establish a framework for a common defence policy. The declaration emphasized that "the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crisis". As shown from the CFSP point 2, stated the autonomous military capabilities as imperative. In their third point, they underline that the requirements of this plan necessitate European capabilities, either pre-designated within NATO's European pillar or through national or multinational European means outside the NATO framework (CVCE, 1998).

4.2.3 Answering the analytical questions

How does the document argue for further autonomy?

According to Howorth (2018, p.525), the term gained prominence with the Saint Malo Declaration, where it was asserted that “the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action”. Although the declaration does not explicitly outline its motives, its essence is detectable through the agreed-upon points between France and Britain. The imperative to bolster European defence capabilities, dependent from NATO and the US. A declaration deemed as necessary by Chirac and Blair to actualize the Treaty of Amsterdam.

Is the term strategic autonomy used, and if so, how?

The Saint Malo Declaration does not explicitly mention ‘strategic autonomy’. Once again, it is arguably implicit within its language, using terms such as ‘autonomous’. The term ‘autonomous’ appears in the second point of the declaration, emphasizing the need for self-reliance in military capabilities.

Does the document promote further autonomy, and if so, how does it argue for further strengthening European autonomy?

All three points of the Saint Malo Declaration and the underlying aim of the agreement advocate for advancing autonomy and sovereignty within Europe. The declaration states the necessity of the capability for independent action. By involving political bodies in the defence discussions, the declaration lays the groundwork for a more autonomous Europe.

4.2.4 What happened after

Following the Saint Malo Declaration in 1998, the EU witnessed significant development in its security and defence policies. The declaration laid the foundation for EU’s security and defence policy (CSDP), which was established in 1999 (Lefebvre, 2021, p.1). This policy marked a pivotal moment for the EU, signalling its commitment to achieving greater autonomy. Additionally, it laid the basis for the results for the Helsinki summit the same month, where the EU leaders agreed on developing an independent European military force able of deployment (Shearer, 2000, p.283).

However, efforts to strengthen Europe’s strategic autonomy faced challenges, particular in the military operation area. President Chirac and Chancellor Schröder proposed the creation of a joint command for European military operations in 2003, calling on France, Germany with Belgium and Luxembourg. This meant that EU would have greater operational autonomy. The British answered with resistance and negative responses from the US, leading the proposal to a halt. This underscores the complexities involved in achieving strategic autonomy in defence (Vai, 2021, p.6).

Years later, in 2013, the European Commission emphasized the importance of reducing dependence of third parties for security reasons once again. A sentiment shared with the European Council, calling for a more competitive defence in the technological and industrial sectors (Mauro, 2021, p.4). In 2016, the release of the EUGS further reinforced the concept of strategic autonomy. Highlighting the importance of strategic autonomy, including defence, cyberterrorism, energy and strategic communications (Mauro, 2021, p.6). The EUGS is the first official EU documents using the term strategic

autonomy in the setting where strategic autonomy as a concept is discussed. The idea of strategic autonomy re-emerged in the document of EUGS stating that an adequate level of ambition and strategic autonomy is important. The statement was a clear message of the objective of the document. In this matter the EUGS promoted security and stability both internal and foreign and encouraged cooperation on defence matters and defence industry (Vai, 2021, pp.6-7).

4.3 Emmanuel Macron's speech at Sorbonne

4.3.1 Why

One year subsequent to the implementation of EUGS, scholars continued to discuss EU-SA. The geopolitical shift including Brexit, Trump's politics of 'America First', and resurgence of nationalism and populism on the rise, Macron addressed the implications for France. He underscored the necessity for a more defined framework of sovereignty by highlighting Europe's perceived deficiencies in the existing structure and advocating for a more robust policy framework. He argued that Europe had relied on American protection since the World War II and now faced the task of rebuilding a sovereign, united, and democratic Europe. Drawing on de Gaulle's legacy, Macron underscores the importance of not merely securing autonomy in defense matters but also safeguarding European values and strategic culture. This entails yet again a broader understanding of the SA concept encompassing economic, technological, social, and cultural dimensions. He states, "Only Europe can, in a word, guarantee genuine sovereignty or our ability to exist in today's world to defend our values and interests". He further stated, "It is our responsibility to defend it and build it within the context of globalization", highlighting the importance of European states working together to strengthen the EU's position on the global stage. This illustrates how Macron's arguments and proposed actions, outlined later in the speech, are grounded in the principle of Europe relying on its own values and taking responsibility for its defence (Macron, 2017; Vai, 2021, p.7).

4.3.2 How

Macron's speech at Sorbonne in 2017 marked a pivotal moment in European discourse in regard to discussing the concept SA within the European context. One of his main points was attempting to label sovereignty in a European context as a way to address the reconfiguration of political authority that has been on the decline in France for decades (Fiott, 2021a, p.2). He explicitly includes six areas into the term 'European sovereignty' being security, borders and migration, foreign policy, the ecological transition, digital technology and monetary and economic power (Macron, 2017).

In the speech he doesn't state that strategic autonomy is the overarching aim. As previously outlined in the conceptual framework, the term strategic autonomy was not defined until 2022, nor is it a commonly known term in the vernacular (European Parliament, 2022, p.1). Assuming that Macron chose more familiar terms such as 'sovereignty' and 'autonomy' lets the observer understand his message who may not have prior knowledge about the SA concept. He therefore explains "how to build the six keys to sovereignty that are essential for success". The six keys being security, controlling borders, foreign policy, global transformations, digital technology and industrial- and monetary economic power (Macron, 2017).

During Macron's speech he emphasized that only Europe can guarantee sovereignty to European values, echoing the principles of Gaullism (Wilson, 1973, p.487). Macron further argues de Gaulle's point, asserting European strategic autonomy not only grants

decision-making power in defence matter but also safeguards the will protect member state's values and their common strategic culture. This common strategic culture could foster a conceptual scope for further cooperation on defence matters, both operationally and industry. In addition to the similarity to de Gaulle's and Chirac's defence focus, Macron also included economy, technology, social issues and culture to this strategic autonomy conceptual scope (Vai, 2021, pp.6-8). This holistic approach reflects the dynamic nature of SA, evolving in response to contemporary challenges. For instance, Macron's emphasis on the development of digital autonomy as a security imperative further stresses the multifaceted nature of strategic autonomy. Seeking out Europe's lack of digital spaces and promoting more development in the area to not fall of the track with other nations' technological developments and keeping digital autonomy is also a security aspect (Macron, 2017). Once again reflecting the evolving nature of SA and its potential.

4.3.3 Answering the analytical questions

How does the president argue for further autonomy?

The point of his rhetorical expressions is to persuade the observers of the changes and working towards these key sectors are necessary for European sovereignty. Looking at this situation both in an ethnographic and anthropological approach, the narrow rhetorical situation and the broader sense both indicate Macrons political agenda as the French president and portraying strong Gaullist ideas. The idea of strengthening European autonomy by not being explicitly reliant on the US and also the broader perspective where co-operation between Member States on multiple planes will strengthen France's position on the world stage through strengthening Europe's (Johannessen, 2018, pp.188).

Is the term strategic autonomy used, and if so, how?

Although Macron did not explicitly articulate "strategic autonomy" as the overarching theme of his speech, his emphasis on sovereignty underscores a broader strategic vision encompassing the concept, by delineating the six key dimensions essential for sovereignty. Even though Macron distinguishes between the term "sovereignty" and "autonomy", looking at the definition from the Clingendael Report the areas of importance for strategic autonomy correlates with five areas with Macron's six keys to sovereignty. Looking at the term sovereignty and what is has in common with the newly defined 'strategic autonomy' in the context of the speech, the similarities are clear. Arguably, the key elements Macron highlights in his speech have strong similarities to how strategic autonomy is defined. He uses the term strategic autonomy in the context of Europe's autonomous operating capabilities. "In the area of defence, our aim needs to be ensuring Europe's autonomous operating capabilities, in compliment to NATO." He then describes how in the past months they have laid the foundations of Defence Europe to better coordinate and progress together as member states. In addition to creating an essential framework content to the European Defence Fund.

Does the document promote further autonomy, and if so, how does it argue for further strengthening European autonomy?

In Macron's speech the overarching themes in focus he talks about a shared strategic culture, a shared defence plan, a shared security plan, a shared climate plan, a shared immigration plan, a common economy plan, food security and technology. These areas are reflecting the six key steps to sovereignty. Macrons reasons the need for more European sovereignty with the lack of defence capabilities that are currently in the possession of the United States. Through arguing for further cooperation through these plans it suggests that Macron promotes further autonomy in these sectors.

4.3.4 What happened after

In 2021 the discussion around strategic autonomy is about interests, rather than values. This suggest that Fiott's proposal of joining of not focusing on the concept SA, but rather focusing on which areas one can cooperate and how (Fiott, 2021a, p.11). After Macron's speech the discussion has continued. We see especially an initiative from the European Parliament which have published a definition of the concept. Additionally, the discussion continues in think-tanks and in other groups. Moreover, in 2022, the European Council endorsed the Strategic Compass to increase EU's security and defence policy. The Strategic Compass assesses threat perception and is considered a tool to increase EU-SA in defence matters (European Parliament, 2022, p.6).

5. Discussion

Now having analysed the geopolitical situation during the time that the documents were written/performed, how they were formatted, what they included and what it resulted in afterwards the concept strategic autonomy has gotten a clearer picture. In the Fouchet Plan I, the term strategic autonomy was not used. However, the concept was arguably present through the aim which were the idea of having autonomy over its own political, economic, cultural and defence domains. How the term has developed as a whole and may continue to develop. The Fouchet Plan I also argues their aim is to protect the Member State's common spiritual heritage. To answer the analytical question of whether the term strategic autonomy is used, it is not. However, de Gaulle's aim was to create an entity exercising its own activity which is close to today's definition of strategic autonomy.

The Saint Malo Declaration shows a clear aim of creating capacity for autonomous action and autonomous military capabilities is imperative. Additionally, the EU needs capabilities outside the NATO framework. The term strategic autonomy is not used in the declaration, but the correlation between the declaration's description of autonomous action and capabilities are similar to the strategic autonomy definition. The concept of autonomy is also including the political sector and thereby broadening the term from solely the defence sector.

President Macron's speech was an attempt to connect the concept strategic autonomy to European strategic autonomy and an attempt to label sovereignty in a European context. He, like de Gaulle, repeatedly mentions the idea of a community, represented through culture, unity and growth. He portrays six keys to sovereignty which arrays from the defence sector but includes border control, security as a whole, foreign policy and industrial and economic power. Zandee's definition correlates with five out of six keys to sovereignty. The aim of guaranteeing sovereignty to European values reflects the Gaullist view researchers see in Macron's politics (Wilson, 1973, p.486). He also argues

de Gaulle's point, how EU-SA gives autonomy in the defence sector, protects member states' values and the common European strategic culture.

One can see the necessity to discuss SA because the concept SA is a legitimate aspiration according to the French and because it goes along with the concept of sovereignty and autonomy. Every state needs allies to exceed the limit of the state's autonomy (Zandee et al., 2020, p.8). The pooling of sovereignty is also what creates reluctance within the Member States because it automatically means to give up sovereignty of the state. This is a paradoxical challenge of the concept that some researchers argue is one of the reasons to the slow development of the concept (Zandee et al., 2020, p.8).

One of the main causes to why SA is not developing at a faster pace currently is because of national constraints and international constraints. EU member states are hesitant to further SA if it's at the expense of the nation's sovereignty. The EU are also aware of the possible vulnerabilities that comes with further EU-SA, such as a possible limitation on access to raw materials from Asian countries (European Parliament, 2022, p.9).

6. Conclusion

The Gaullist idea of France's grandeur has been a motivator for de Gaulle, Chirac and Macron to initiate plans, declarations and programs to strengthen European autonomy. Even though the term European Strategic Autonomy is recently established, the discussion surrounding the concept and the aim towards a stronger European autonomy is present throughout the Vth Republic, through initiatives from the three presidents.

The concept has been evolving progressively with the change in geopolitical environment, where it has become more complex and multifaceted with time. The debate around the concept, whether it is labelled as strategic autonomy or European sovereignty it is a challenging element for many Member States. One of the challenges being how to handle the concept without a clear definition of what it entails. The second challenge is how people and politicians should recognize themselves as both European and national, the distinguishment between sovereignty and autonomy is complex and remains difficult to understand in the context of national and federal sovereignty. Third challenge is how other countries could regard the situation as a bigger part of French grand strategy (Fiott, 2021a, p.8-11).

The debates around European sovereignty and strategic autonomy are also problematic. The distinction between autonomy and sovereignty in the context of member states and European Union. The many challenging areas of this discussion does not have a simple solution. Critics argue that when French presidents works for European sovereignty and strategic autonomy, they have France as an underlying motivation (Fiott, 2021a, p.11). The EU defined the term strategic autonomy in 2022, after several decades of discussing the concept without having a term for it. The discussion around the definition increased after Macron's speech and led to multiple think-tanks and academic debates discussing how and what the term should be (Fiott, 2021b, p.8).

The challenges surrounding the concept strategic autonomy today is not having defined the term within the EU institutions prohibits the possibility of discussing the different topics are pertinent. Without having a clear framework and an understanding of what

concept and definition entails causes inefficient debates. Mauro (2021, p.6) portrays the possibility of while one actor talks about co-operating on strictly defence capabilities as a form of SA, the other actor may talk about co-operation on multiple areas such as economic, technological and foreign policies. This will in many cases lead to an inefficient discussion creating ripple effects for future debates and policy creations based on misunderstanding and talking across each other. The EU's definition of SA is overarching and lacking in detail, therefore it is with great possibility that similar discussions can occur again. Because of this the discussion of the subject is still relevant. Moreover, as this thesis presents strategic autonomy as a concept evolving with the geopolitical changes and therefore everchanging.

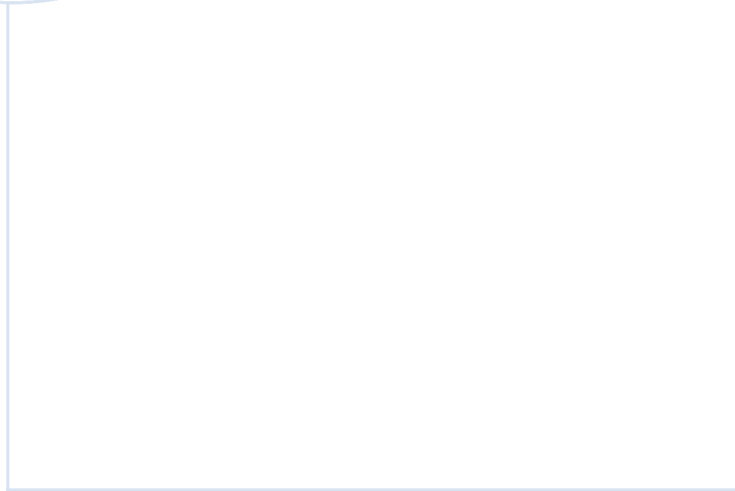
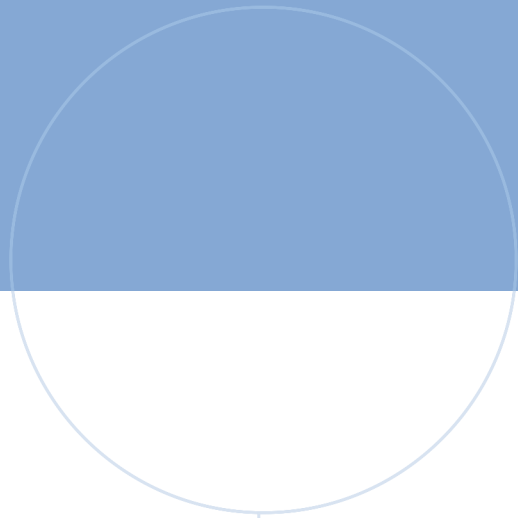
Given the persistent discourse surrounding the concept of strategic autonomy and its consequences for Europe, it emerges a compelling argument for the establishment for a coherent framework and shared definition. Such an initiative would ensure that subsequent debates occur from a standardized platform, fostering greater efficiency and productivity in discourse. Moreover, considering the active engagement of both France and the European Union with this subject, it is imperative to further research becomes essential and highly desirable to advance the trajectory of this evolving discourse.

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