French Foreign and Security Policy Roles under François Hollande

– A Role Theory Foreign Policy Analysis

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Bachelor's Thesis in Political Science with a focus on Crisis Management and Security Policy

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Abstract

This bachelor's thesis in Political Science, is essentially a study of contemporary French foreign and security policy 'roles'. Drawing on a doctoral thesis by Lisbeth Aggestam (2004), it investigates French National Role Conceptions, using Foreign Policy Analysis Role Theory. It thoroughly examines the nature of foreign policy-making and, notably, it explores the notions of foreign policy 'roles', 'identity' and 'national role conceptions'.

The study encompasses over twenty key foreign and security policy centred allocutions delivered by the present French President, François Hollande, between the years 2012-16. Primarily, it aims at answering whether French National Role Conceptions, as conceived of by Aggestam at the turn of the millennium, are still relevant for the understanding of current French foreign and security policy and action. Aggestam's French national 'role-set' therefore serves as the eminent point of reference and comparison throughout the analysis. In a broader sense, the essay also aims at investigating the ideational basis to contemporary French foreign and security policy roles. More narrowly, a special consideration has been accorded the notion of 'Europe de la défense' (Europe of defence), a key idea in modern French foreign and security policy.

The principal findings of the analysis show that most of the French National Role Conceptions identified by Aggestam, continue to be relevant. On the ideational level, France's current self-image is arguably even more intimately suffused by the notion of 'Europe'. On the foreign and security policy area, this is reflected in the continued French aim of constructing 'Europe de la défense', which is central to the general understanding of the French role-set. Lastly, the investigation supports the notion that French foreign and security policy roles are nourished by a 'realistic idealism', as advanced by Aggestam.

Keywords: Role Theory, National Role Conception(s), Foreign and Security Policy, Foreign Policy Analysis, France, François Hollande

'Only the naivest, there are always a few, can believe that the world will become less dangerous, less uncertain in the years to come.' (President François Hollande, my translation)

Contents

Acronyms

CFSP   Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP   Common Security and Defence Policy
ESDP   European Security and Defence Policy
EU   European Union
FPA   Foreign Policy Analysis
IR   International Relations
NRC(s)   National Role Conception(s)
NATO   North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
UN   United Nations
US/USA   United States/United States of America

1. INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of the 2014 illegal Russian annexation of Crimea, the recent Brexit vote in the United Kingdom (UK), and the U.S. election of Donald Trump, the very underpinnings to the European security order as we know it, have come into question. If Vladimir Putin's annexation of Crimea today appears to be a fait accompli, the future U.S. trans-Atlantic security policy under President Donald Trump, is still partly shrouded in secrecy. By the time of writing of this essay, it is also uncertain as to when and even if the UK government will invoke Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, thus triggering the formal withdrawal negotiations from the European Union (EU). However, it is very probable that the three leading EU member states, France, Germany and the United Kingdom, will soon be reduced to only two.

To understand the likely future evolution of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and, notably, its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), it is necessary to realise where the different member states want to take it. Certainly, this requires a thorough investigation of the security and defence policy of every member state and cannot be reduced to the will of a single nation. Nevertheless, the opinions of some countries carry more weight than that others. France is one of them. That is why an investigation into French national foreign and security policy is relevant and potentially fruitful. Accordingly, this essay will examine the contemporary key French foreign and security policy National Role Conceptions (NRCs), as well as their identitative roots. In doing that, it will investigate if and how French NRCs have evolved significantly since the turn of the millennium.

In the author's view, it is likely that the Brexit 'vacuum', in combination with increasing Russian expansionism and burgeoning U.S. isolationism, will allow France to reposition itself as foreign and security policy actor and, in doing so, possibly, redefine its NRCs. In a rapidly changing European security environment, it is plausible that renewed energy might be instilled into France's old efforts of strengthening the EU's CFSP and, notably, its military dimension, the CSDP.

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

At the heart of this essay lie the two concepts of 'identity' and 'role'. Drawing on a doctoral thesis by Lisbeth Aggestam, this paper will thoroughly explore the meaning of these two concepts and their significance for the foreign policy-making process. By means of qualitative text analysis of over twenty key foreign and security policy allocutions delivered by the French President François Hollande over the period of 2012-16, the main purpose of this essay is to identify and empirically examine the identitative aspects of contemporary French national role conceptions (NRCs).

The role analysis, which is structured on a role typology elaborated by Aggestam at the turn of the millennium, aims at systematically comparing these role conceptions with present French foreign and security policy. In doing so, the author has two principal ambitions: first, to examine the relevance of Aggestam's role typology today, and, second, to shed light on the likely future direction of French foreign and security policy, especially with regards to its relationship with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and its military dimension, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

This brings us to the threefold research question of this essay:

1) *Is Aggestam's French role-set relevant to the understanding of French foreign and security policy under François Hollande?*

2) *Has there been any fundamental change in the ideational basis to Aggestam's French national role conceptions?*

3) *How does the concept of 'Europe de la défense' relate to contemporary French national role conception(s)?*

1.2 Role Theory, Foreign Policy Analysis & International Relations Theory

 Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) is widely considered to be a subfield of International Relations (IR), with its roots in the 1950s. FPA theory is mainly interested in questions regarding human agency in foreign policy decision-making processes on different theoretical levels. This includes individual and group psychology factors, domestic aspects of institutional decision-making processes, and elite-society relations (Hudson 2014: 185; Kaarbo 190f).

FPA research encompasses traditions with conceptually diverging understandings of the essence of foreign policy, including those stressing the importance of either domestic or systemic factors (Aggestam 2004: 10). Kaarbo conceptualises FPA as a distinct IR approach, centred around the role of the decision-maker and the subjectivity of the decision-making process (Kaarbo 2014: 191f). Carlsnaes distinguishes four principal FPA approaches to the foreign policy making process: agency-based, structural, social-institutional and interpretative actor (Carlsnaes 2004: 504f).

The aim of FPA is to provide explanations as to *why* foreign policy-makers decide the way they do. The single most valuable insight to IR that FPA has provided, concerns the determining factors behind state behavior. In most IR research, nation-states have mainly been theorised as the basis of agency in foreign policy decision-making. Lacking an elaborate conception of 'agency', traditional IR theory has mostly payed attention to the structural components of the international system, i.e. states, institutions etc., but less to the notions of variability and change in foreign policy. FPA, on the other hand, has interested itself in decision making processes and the notion of human agency, and its agency-oriented perspective can therefore provide important theoretical contributions to IR theory. Nevertheless, this focus has been criticised, notably with regards to the difficulty of tracing these explanatory variables. The standard FPA answer to this critique is that states as abstractions have no agency, only humans have (Hudson 2014: 4-9; Kaarbo 2015: 189f).

Theis & Breuning (2012: 1ff) believe that Role Theory, provided its agency-focus, is well suited for integrating FPA and IR theory, provided their different theoretical conception of the essence of IR. Other researchers point to the importance of integrating Role Theory and the notion of role learning in FPA, to fill the agency-structure gap. The argument behind this claim is mainly that previous research in Role Theory has insufficiently succeeded in examining the causes to

role formation, i.e. the agent-structure interplay. Instead, roles have implicitly been assumed to be either agent or structure driven (Harnisch 2012: 47ff).

Regardless of the presumed merits of Role Theory, it is important to emphasize that it generally does not propose scientifically stringent answers as to the exact mechanisms behind various role phenomena (Aggestam 2004: 13; Kaarbo 2015: 194). In his influential 1970 work on national role conceptions (NRCs) in foreign policy, Holsti remarked that Role Theory cannot provide explanations for every foreign policy decision, simply because it allows for the notion of human agency (Holsti 1970: 298f).

At its burgeoning stages, IR theory was heavily influenced by realism and a Hobbesian[1] conception of the international system. In the 1980s, all the major IR perspectives focused on structural or system level explanations to foreign policy decision-making. Domestic factors, such as decision-making processes, institutions and culture, were principally disregarded as possible explanatory variables of foreign policy decisions (Kaarbo 2015: 192-195). Kaarbo argues that the inability to reconcile FPA theory with the major IR approaches depended on their different aims, i.e. explaining systemic patterns or accounting for discrete behaviour (Ibid.). This in turn relates to the so-called 'agency-structure' problem (see 2.2). The relationship between FPA and the major contemporary IR theory perspectives vary. Three of the most influential IR theory schools today include variants of: liberalism, constructivism and realism.

Liberalism espouses the notion of individual or group based agency as the basis of foreign policy decision-making. However, other liberal assumptions correspond poorly to FPA theory, such as its doctrine of rational agency and its overly structural differentiation between democratic and non-democratic institutions (Kaarbo 2015: 196-199).

Constructivist conceptualisations of agency, identity, roles, ideas and culture generally resonate well with the basic suppositions of FPA theory, as does the notion of agent-structure interaction (Kaarbo 2015: 199ff). However, constructivism does consider the social reality to be constructed and knowledge of it to be socio-discursively contingent (Guzzini 2000: 159f). A major FPA critique against constructivism aims precisely this favouring of structure over agency. Moreover, constructivist and FPA views on the elite-society relationship diverge. For instance, constructivism assumes that national identities reside in society and that they are

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[1] The term 'Hobbesian' relates to the 17th century English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes, and denotes an anarchical international system, marked by a 'state of war' between power maximising sovereign states (www.ne.se).

shared with and constrain the elites. This leaves little room for FPA notions of identity and role contestation among the elites (Kaarbo 2015: 201ff).

Neoclassical realism claims to combine the notion of domestic factors with neorealist assumptions about the state, notions pf relative power and the anarchy of the international system. For example, Foulon argues that domestic forces modulate how policy-makers perceive of and react to the external, constraining geopolitical structure (Foulon 2015: 635ff, 648). This ontologically privileged position of the structuring system level and the assumption of an independently existing and constraining material structure, which grants state-level political factors and internal decision-making only an accessory role in explanations of foreign policy, is generally refuted by FPA (Foulon 2015: 638f.; Kaarbo 2015: 203f).

1.3 The Essence of Foreign Policy Analysis: the agency-structure problem

What *is* foreign policy-making? This question refers to the very foundations of what this essay intends to explore, namely the reasons behind foreign policy decision-making. To shed some light on this conundrum, the 'agency-structure' problem must be addressed.

At the heart of the agency-structure problem lies the understanding of social behavior and how to conceptualize the reciprocal relationship between the structure and agency. Explanations of social behavior tend to diverge and, to various degrees, advance either structure or agency (Carlsnaes 1992: 245-250). Carlsnaes argues that the agency-structure problem relates to the ontological basis of FPA theory, i.e. the basic properties of agents and structures. Sketchily, the basis to social order can, in ontological terms, either be attributed to agency or structure (Ibid.).

But *why* is the agency-structure problem relevant to FPA theory? Given the existence of different FPA approaches today, an examination of their respective theoretical foundations is relevant to evaluate their claims. The following is a brief account for three of these approaches and their ontological bases.

One important trend in FPA has been a variant of game theory, or rational choice theory, an individualist focus, stressing agents' utility maximising propensity. The problem with this approach, argues Carlsnaes (1992: 250-253), is that the positing of individuals' endogenous preferences as the basic explanatory units, provides few answers to the possible effects of exogenous, institutional constraints on agents. Another FPA approach consists of a rationalistic

and utilitarian variant of a collectivism, and considers certain social relations to be constitutive of agency, such as the state or the class. This highly deterministic and structural conception is problematic since it leaves little room for individual agency and agent-structure interaction at all (Ibid). A third FPA current has also conceived of agency as being collective, but interpretative instead of rational. Carlsnaes argues that the collectivist conceptions of agency essentially reduce human foreign policy behaviour to mere reproductions of social structures (Ibid.).

In conclusion, regarding the 'agency-structure' problem, Carlsnaes (1992: 267f) argues for an institutional FPA approach, allowing for both structure as well as human agency. Carlsnaes also argues that, ontologically speaking, human agency precedes structure. This theoretical insight informs of the contextual dependence of the empirical findings in this essay and of any claim to generalisation in others.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section the concept of 'identity' will be examined in detail, as well as its relationship to the 'role' concept. Thereafter, Role Theory and Role Analysis as theoretical and analytical tools will be addressed. In doing that, the 'role' concept will be dissected and thoroughly explained. The concept of 'National Role Conception(s)' will be accorded particular attention, notably with regards to the notion of foreign policy change. Lastly, the key aspects of French foreign and security policy, from the late 1950s until the early 2000s, will be outlined.

2.1 The 'Identity' concept

The concept of 'identity' is central in IR theory and despite the vagueness of the term and the definitional anarchy surrounding it, researchers generally consider it an essential explanatory factor of agency (Abdelal 2006: 695; Ashizawa 2008: 571ff). And, if there exists a 'a will to manifest identity', the study of 'self' conceptions is essential (Berenskoetter 2010: 3607). This will to manifest identity, corresponds to the notion that identities are twofold, consisting of an 'internal' and an 'external' dimension, corresponding to the domestic and the international spheres (Ibid. 3602ff).

There are different theoretical conceptions of the concept of 'national identity'. With the advent of constructivism in the 1990s, the identity concept saw a renaissance in IR theory. Still, the theoretical approaches are manifold and include realist approaches, e.g. coupling state interests to identity, as well as neoliberal notions of how international institutions, norms and the reciprocity of international-level actors, mould state identities (Ashizawa 2008: 572f). Bucher and Jasper oppose themselves entirely to an essentialist identity concept, built on assumptions of rational agency, and treating identity as a preceding explanatory variable to action (Bucher & Jasper 2016: 1ff).

One approach to the 'national identity' concept emphasises the importance of the systemic and structural effects, e.g. socialisation processes, on the formation of collective identities (Berenskoetter 2010: 3603f). Another way of conceptualising identity is on a group or community level. In this category, the identity formation processes are theorised in terms of 'others', and 'in-group' and 'out-group' relations. A variant of the community level approach, conceives of collective identity formation as principally a result of ongoing, often regional, state

interactions, which have beneficial effects on mutual trust and understanding, e.g. the concepts of 'security communities' and 'Europeanisation' (Ibid.). Adler & Barnett (1998: 31,195-198) conceptualise 'security communities' in terms of interconnected identity conceptions, suggesting that IR fundamentally deals with transnational social processes. Abdelal et al. conceive of collective identities in terms of social contestation processes within the groups (Abdelal et al. 2006: 699ff).

One way of conceptualising 'national identity' constructs, focuses on the relationship between domestically contested stereotypical images of 'selves' and 'others' (Berenskoetter 2010: 3605). In this category, and within the security studies subfield of IR, Campbell has extensively theorised the concept of identity, conceived of as being intimately interconnected to notions of threats. Campbell argues that a state's political identity essentially consists of reproductions of various societal practices, in which the 'identity' is constituted in relation to the 'foreign', the 'different' and the 'dangerous', thus demarcating the 'domestic' from the 'foreign' (Campbell 1998: 8ff,69). Through these continuous reconstituting processes, state identities are regarded as non-essentialistic and unstable, suggesting that foreign policy-making essentially is about the defining of 'states' and the 'international system' (Ibid. 11ff,61f).

Finally, we need to address the relationship between 'identity' and 'role'. Questions pertaining to a state's identity, such as 'who we are?' and 'how we are perceived?', indeed appear to influence actual foreign policy making (Kaarbo 2003: 159f). A key question is 'whether particular identity constructions tend to produce distinctive roles in foreign policy' (Aggestam 2004: 4). The premise of this essay is that the role concept does provide the basic sociological underpinning to concrete foreign policy-making. Aggestam proposes that whereas identity constructions 'provide the broader normative context within which roles are articulated', role conceptions refer to 'images that foreign policy-makers hold concerning the general long-term function and performance of their state in the international system', (Aggestam 2004: 71f, 77). In other word, identity conceptions could be regarded as a self-referential cultural tissue, from which policy makers distill meaningful foreign policy roles. Accordingly, roles give incitements to action, thereby providing clues to the inducements to action (ibid.). Role conceptions allow to explore the ideational and the identitative incitements to foreign policy-making (Aggestam 2004: 8).

In conclusion, this section has aimed at introducing the concept of 'identity' in IR, as well as illustrating its definitional multifariousness and its connection to FPA Role Theory. The foreign policy-making process is inseparably linked to notions of identity, and to some extent

a state's changing foreign policies also mirrors its evolving identity. A state's perceived role within the international system is a significant aspect of its identity, and as Le Prestre notes, the defining of and the recognition of having a role, is a fundamental objective of a state (cited in Aggestam 2004: 3).

2.2 FPA Role Theory and Role Analysis

2.2.1 The 'Role' concept

What is a foreign policy 'role'? Several possible conceptualisations of the term have been provided over the years, testifying to its relative theoretical vagueness. Aggestam (2004: 63) discerns four aspects of the 'role' concept:

(1) role *expectation*;
(2) role *conception*;
(3) role *performance*;
(4) role-*set*.

Firstly, the role *expectation* refers to the external anticipation of role behavior. Secondly, the role *conception* pertains to the role-beholder's own expectations of and requirements on appropriate and responsible role behavior. Thirdly, the role *performance* captures the state's actual foreign policy behavior. Fourthly, the role-*set* explains the role concept's inherently multipolar character, allowing for aggregated roles (Aggestam 2004: 62-67).

In his influential 1970 article, Holsti (239f) concluded that the notion of role could be conceptualised in four principal ways:

(1) *role performance*, or the actual foreign policy decision-making and actions;
(2) *national role conceptions,* or governments' self-defined roles;
(3) *role prescriptions*, addressing the external expectations of particular behaviour;
(4) in terms of *position*, i.e. how the system of role prescriptions structures action

In Holsti's version, roles are above all conceived of in terms of an interplay between the analytically distinct role *performance* and the role *prescriptions*. The role prescriptions refer to the externally projected 'norms and expectations cultures, societies, institutions, or groups attach to particular *positions'*. The role *conception* accounts for how role-beholders conceive

of their own position and the obligations and responsibilities that they attach to it, thereby rendering perceptual and ideational aspects important explanatory variables to the role performance (ibid.; Le Prestre 1997: 4).

Le Prestre (1997: 3f) argues that the foreign policy role concept refers to more than six different meanings:

(1) a *contributory* or a *functional* sense, e.g. 'Norway as a peace facilitator';

(2) an *influence* or *impact*, e.g. 'The crucial role of China in climate negotiations';

(3) *expected behaviour based on certain rules*, i.e. prescribed or achieved roles;

(4) a *part in a larger script*, a *course of action*, e.g. 'EU as a human rights protector';

(5) *policy decisions*, i.e. the role that is assumed is context specific;

(6) *rank*, i.e. the perceived or established relative position of a nation state.

To Le Prestre, the primary sources of the role content, can either be internally or externally derived, corresponding to point no. 3 above (Le Prestre 1997: 7-10). In this context, indeed again, the 'identity' concept is key to unearth the roots to role conceptions, i.e. society's basic self-images and representations (ibid.). Le Prestre points out that NRCs expose the basic incitements to foreign policy choices, including preferences, expectations and perceived obligations. Thus, roles not only transcend realist notions of 'national interests', they concur to shape them, something that may explain why states sometimes apparently act in contradiction with their national 'interests' (Le Prestre 1997: 5f).

Holsti was criticised for not accounting for the intersubjective and relational aspects of the role-*taking* process. Harnisch (Harnisch 2012: 48f) points out that roles have mainly been theorised as either agent or structure-driven and, therefore, agent-structure interactional aspects of role learning have been historically neglected. Wehner & Thies (2014: 414f) argue that roles consist of equal portions of structure and agency, considering roles to be a combination of 'self-conception and social recognition prescribed by Others' (ibid.: 415ff).

Fazendeiro argues that neither Holsti nor his proselytes have succeeded in reflecting over the role that roles may play in their own research narratives (Fazendeiro 2016: 490f). Fazendeiro argues that there is an important narrative dimension to the role concept. Specific role attributions can be conceived of as structuring elements of our conception of the outside world, thus reproducing certain patterns of understanding. Therefore, scholarly role narratives risk to simplify and overdetermine the way actors are conceived of (Fazendeiro 2016: 487ff).

2.2.2 National Role Conceptions

One serious critique of Role Theory is its propensity to consider the state as a kind of black-box. Ascribing National Role Conceptions (NRCs) to a state, without sufficiently probing into domestic political processes, equals to simplifying the foreign policy-making process (Brummer & Thies 2015: 273). Although the purpose of this essay is not to detail the domestic mechanisms behind NRCs, an explanation of the notion of NRCs is warranted.

In analogy with his 'role' conceptualisation, Holsti defined 'national roles' as the externally observed typical patterns of foreign policies, corresponding to the 'national role performance', defined in terms of governments' 'general foreign policy behaviour' (Holsti 1970: 245f). The 'national role conceptions' were defined as policymakers' own '" image" of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state toward, or in, the external environment' (Brummer & Thies 2015: 273). Thus, the principal sources of NRCs, as assumed by Holsti, consist of the declarations of key policymakers, such as secretaries of state and heads of government.

In his study, Holsti dressed a list of several possible NRCs, e.g. 'regional leaders', 'regional protectors', 'active independents', 'anti-imperialist agents', 'faithful allies, 'protectees' etc. (Holsti 1970: 260-270). Importantly, Holsti noted both a considerable overlap as well as important discrepancies between the different NRCs, in terms of how they were conceived of in the academic literature, versus the extrapolation from actual foreign policy (ibid. 272f).

A problem with Holsti's assumptions, which in part builds on the premise that the NRCs of the elites are shared by society in large, overlooks the possibility of there being multiple NRCs, and they being objects of domestic political selection and contestation. These processes principally take place in and between different political bodies, notably the parliament, the government and the opposition parties (Brummer & Thies 2015: 275-278). Domestic agency and decision-making, have traditionally been poorly researched. Kaarbo points out that the elites and the public, often have diverging conceptions of national identities and, furthermore, underlines the importance of role and identity contestation at the elite level, to the policy-making process (Kaarbo 2015: 189, 202f). Breuning conceives of NRCs as filters, allowing policy makers to situate themselves in relation to the exterior. Theorised in this way, foreign policy decision-making becomes intimately interconnected to key policy makers in 'gatekeeping positions' (Breuning 2013: 309-312).

2.2.3 Foreign policy change and conflicting NRCs

A central aspect of the role concept revolves around the notions of stability and change. To have any explanatory value, NRCs must incorporate an element of stability, satisfying the need for foreign policy consistency, presumably guiding cognisant policy-makers. Nevertheless, the role concept must also allow for and consider the conditions under which roles are subject to evolution, which, significantly, could explain foreign policy change (Aggestam 2004: 67).

In Aggestam's view, Role Theory can provide explanations to foreign policy change. For instance, the rendering of established NRCs irreconcilable can stimulate to policy modifications. Role inconstancy in terms of diverging guiding norms and objectives among policy-makers, is another (Ibid.: 68ff). But, key is the presumption of the patterned quality inherent to foreign policy behavior, allowing for the notion of NRCs and permitting projections about probable future foreign policy behavior (Ibid.: 20). Accordingly, a state's NRCs reflect its foreign policy-makers' perceptions of that state's specific prerogatives and commitments, thus structuring and prescribing them [the policy-makers] to act in particular ways on the foreign policy arena (Ibid.: 56f). Holsti concluded from his vast foreign policy-material that every state studied conceived of multiple NRCs (Holsti 1970: 277f). This could explain both policy change over time, and account for diverging role conceptions in different foreign policy areas (Breuning 2011: 32).

Le Prestre argues that changes in NRCs can take place either by consolidating new roles with the traditional ones, or simply by repudiating them. Role conflicts often correspond to a dissensus about societal norms and expectations, and can further be aggravated by unexpected system changes in the exterior environment. In this way, internal and external factors to various degrees, can affect both the content of NRCs, as well as provoking shifts in NRC role-sets. The notion of having been attributed and upholding a NRC, in many ways reflect a state's legitimacy to engage with other actors on the foreign policy arena. This is the reason why, as Le Prestre argues, foreign policy change must rest on a corresponding redefinition of role (Le Prestre 1997: 5-11).

2.3 French Foreign and Security Policy 1958-2007: Identity and NRCs

In 1958, General Charles de Gaulle founded the French Fifth Republic and became its first President. To de Gaulle, France's role on the world stage was indissolubly linked to the assertion of its special historical and cultural identity (Thumerelle & Le Prestre 1997: 132).

Arguably, France has had but one overarching foreign policy goal since 1945, the rehabilitation of *la gloire et la grandeur de la France*[2] (Rieker 2006: 515).

Grant (1985: 411f) argues that the Gaullist defence policy was marked by two key features, France's *independent* nuclear deterrent capacity and de Gaulle's decision to withdraw France from NATO's integrated military command structure in 1966. These features reflected three French key strategical objectives: international status, national independence, and autonomy from the USA (Grant 1985: 411f).

In his speeches in the late 1950s and the 1960's, de Gaulle regularly referred to the responsibility that an independent France had to balance the two hegemonic superpowers of the Cold War (Holsti 1970: 271). Holsti concluded that France conceived of six principal NRCs in the period following upon the end of the Second World War. Interestingly, apart from a role conception as 'developer', France boasted of no less than five conflicting pairs of NRCs: 'regional leader-active independent', 'regional leader-independent', 'active independent-faithful ally', 'mediator/integrator-faithful ally' and 'faithful ally-independent' (Holsti 1970: 296-303). The following remarks by de Gaulle illustrate the intimate connection between French identity and France's perceived international role, in the 1960s.

> As you can see, our country stands out from the rest because her vocation is more than disinterested, and far more *universal* than that of any other. Whenever France is true to herself, she is *human* and universal. France's vocation is to work in the *general interest*. It is by being *fully French* that one is most *European* and most universal. France has had a *historical role* to play, one that has *always set her apart from other countries*. Whereas other countries try, as they evolve, to subjugate others to their own interests, France, on the contrary, acts for the benefit of all whenever she manages to expand her influence. France has a historical role to play, that is the reason why she enjoys such a large credit. That is why all the bells of Latin America were pealing at the Liberation of Paris. Because she pioneered American independence, the abolition of slavery and the right to self-determination. Because she now champions the *independence* of nations, against all forms of domination. Everyone in the world feels it somehow. France is *the light of the world*, her genius shines over the world. (Peyrefitte 1994, cited in Thumerelle & Le Prestre 1997: 132, my emphasis)

In the bipolar Cold War context, it was, however, difficult for France to play out its perceived uniqueness. Demonstrations of French independence were made, but only with the effect of a loss of influence and an increasingly marginalised international role (Thumerelle & Le Prestre

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[2] 'The glory and the greatness of France'.

1997: 131ff). Between the presidencies of de Gaulle in the 1960s and that of François Mitterrand in the 1980s, the French security and defence policy didn't evolve significantly (Grant 1985: 412ff). Krotz and Sperling (2011: 308ff) note that the key national elements of the French NRC were highly stable from the late 1950s until the early 2000s, comprising: 'independence', 'activism', and a '(potential) global presence'. These role elements were deeply rooted in French society and history, as were the key NRC elements that projected the French foreign policy self-image; *grandeur*, *rang* et *gloire* (greatness, rank and glory). Treacher (2001: 39f) even argues that *rang* and *grandeur* were the ultimate strategic goals of the French Fifth Republic's security policy.

Krotz and Sperling (2011: 312) argue that France pursued three key foreign policy goals throughout the Cold War: to transcend US-Soviet bipolarity; to counter US hegemony; and, to lead Europe as a third force on the international arena. Others advance that France's principal dilemma throughout the Cold War concerned the handling of a rising West Germany. In the early 1980s, several French attempts to tighten Franco-German interests and to promote an autonomous European security defence identity[3] were made, notably within the Western European Union (WEU) framework (Treacher 2001: 26ff).

Nevertheless, in the 1980s, the underpinnings of the Gaullist defence policy started to falter. An increasingly threatening Soviet Union paired with French doubts over US strategic commitment to Europe, incited François Mitterrand to reconsider France's nationalistic inclination, in favour of a more solidary approach to her allies (Grant 1985: 415-418). With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent implosions of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, France suddenly faced an identity crisis, forcing policy makers to reconceptualise the country's NRCs (Thumerelle and Le Prestre 1997: 134f).

At the turn of the 1990s, three themes seem to have structured the political debate over what role France were to assume: a global, a European, and a national theme. The global theme, underpinned by France's universalist self-image, revolved around notions of promoting multilateral cooperation and disarmament, maintaining France's overseas presence, and promoting the French language (Thumerelle & Le Prestre 1997: 134-138). The European theme focused instead on pursuing the EU project and working toward a collective European security system. In that way, France could effectively tie the newly reunited Germany to itself, thus

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[3] The European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) was the precursor to the EU's CSDP, formerly known as the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The ESDI was agreed on at a 1996 NATO meeting and aimed at structuring the NATO-WEU relations (eur-lex.europa.eu).

solving the 'German question'[4]. The national theme reflected the traditional Gaullist quests for independence and autonomy, but also for national unity. It advocated the primacy of national interests and a rejection of European integration and expansion (Ibid.: 138-142).

In their analysis of NRCs in the French foreign policy speeches and interviews given by François Mitterrand between 1989-93, Thumerelle and Le Prestre (1997: 143ff) identified nine major French NRCs: (i) 'promote world peace and stability'; (ii) 'promote freedom and justice in the world'; (iii) 'promote global prosperity and trade'; (iv) lead the European Union process'; (v) 'promote international cooperation'; (vi) 'safeguard independence and defend national interests'; (vii) 'protect culture and national identity'; (viii) 'support alliances and friends'; and, (ix) 'maintain or increase national power'.

In comparison to Holsti's 1970 role typology, Thumerelle and Le Prestre concluded that many of the NRCs had been preserved, e.g. 'regional leader', 'independent' and 'faithful ally'. Nevertheless, the authors also remarked that new roles had appeared, i.e. 'promote freedom and justice in the world', that others had lost in relevance, i.e. 'active independent', and that two central themes of the 1989-93 period had previously been unaccounted for, i.e. 'promote international cooperation', and 'support alliances and friends' (Thumerelle & Le Prestre 1997: 149f).

Despite the debate over what role France were to assume following the end of the Cold War, the key foreign and security policy goals remained essentially unchanged (Krotz and Sperling 2011: 324). In the early 1990s, France worked actively toward consolidating the security and defence dimensions of the European project. In this process, French claims for independence were downplayed in favour of the European collective. With the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the basis to EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was finally laid (Krotz & Sperling 2011: 316ff; Rieker 2006: 519).

In 1994 another important barrier was to be overcome when NATO declared its support for 'a "strengthening of the European pillar of the Alliance through the Western European Union, which is being developed as the defence component of the European Union" '(Treacher 2001: 28,39). In 1995 France declared its intention the reintegrate into NATO's military command structures, provided their reformation. However, these plans were soon abandoned as the USA signalled that they wouldn't concede to France's claim for more equal US-European relations (Rieker 2006: 519; Irondelle 2008: 162).

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[4] The 'German question' in this context loosely refers to a historical perceived threat of a unified Germany (Thumerelle & Le Prestre 1997: 138-142).

The introduction of the 'Petersberg tasks'[5] in the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, with their focus on crisis management and peacekeeping, was a partial set-back to France's ambitions of creating a EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Despite this, French policy makers continued to argue for the so-called 'Europe defence' and 'Europe puissance'[6]. Some scholars argue that the period at the turn of the millennium can be characterized in terms of a burgeoning 'Europeanisation'[7] of French security policy (Rieker 2006: 521-524).

In 1998, having gradually overcome the conflicting views on a prospective ESDP and Europe's transatlantic relationship, Prime Minister Tony Blair and President Jacques Chirac agreed on a 'Joint Declaration of European Defence' (the Saint Malo Declaration), which called for the establishment of a common ESDP (Keukeleire & Delreux 2014: 52f, 175f). In 2002, the French pursuit of a ESDP was finally to be reconciled with NATO's (read US) strategic interests through the so-called 'Berlin-plus arrangement', which assured the EU NATO member states access to the command structures and military assets of the Alliance (Krotz & Sperling 2011: 319-324; Keukeleire & Delreux 2014: 53).

In the early 2000s, French foreign policy largely revolved around the importance of multilateralism and the role of the UN and international law (Rieker 2005: 270). Regarding the EU, Irondelle argues that France's perception of the freshly unified Europe and of the CFSP/CSDP was ambivalent; as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a G8 member, France wasn't prepared to renounce from its national foreign policy-making prerogative, but at the same time it also favoured multilateral cooperation, notably within the EU (Irondelle 2008: 163ff). Despite the hesitation regarding the country's European role, the time had become ripe for finally breaking the Gaullist NATO policy. In 2007, the newly elected Nicolas Sarkozy declared his intention to 'normalise' his country's relations with NATO and, in 2009, France finally reintegrated the Alliance's military command, for the first time in over forty years (Bozo 2014: 381f).

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[5] Originally set out in the Petersberg Declaration by the Western European Union (WEU) in 1992. It declared the WEU member states readiness to make available to the WEU military resources for humanitarian tasks, peacekeeping and peacmaking tasks and crisis management (eur-lex.europa.eu; Keukeleire & Delreux 2014: 52).
[6] The French idea of 'Europe puissance', or 'European power', lacks a clear definition but implies the vision of Europe as a global power with its own strategic foreign policy interests. Moreover, it implies the notion that Europe must be able to provide for its own security, ultimately with nuclear deterrence. 'Europe defence' is considered as the final key element of the ongoing construction of 'Europe politique' ('Political Europe').
[7] 'Europeanisation' generally refers to several, interrelated process, including: national adaptation to the EU level; a projection of national interests onto the EU level; the increasingly importance of the EU level for pursuing foreign policy; an exportation of EU values, norms and institutions, beyond the EU (Keukeleire & Delreux 2014: 130).

3. METHOD AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In the following section the method of the study will be outlined. Key methodological concerns as well as considerations regarding the choice of empirical material, including its spatial and temporal delimitations, will be addressed and discussed. Thereafter, the Analytical Framework of the study will be explained and Aggestam's French role-set introduced.

3.1 Method, empirical material and delimitations

The analysis of NRCs in this study has principally been done inductively, however, deduction and the anchorage in theory plays a key role throughout the essay. The analysis is based on twenty-three major foreign policy allocutions and statements, delivered by the present French president, François Hollande, and spans the years 2012-2016. The key selection criterion was to identify speeches that clearly addressed the general outline of and the strategic nature of French foreign and security policy, or at least covered central aspects of it (Aggestam 2004: 23). The speeches have all been retrieved on the French President's official website, Élysée.fr.

Most of the allocutions come from the first and the most recent years of Hollande's term of office, this to reflect a tendency among decision-makers to early on wanting to inform policy, and to mirror current views. The choice of exclusively looking at the French President, and not the Prime Minister or the Minister of Foreign affairs for example, has one main reason: the French President has historically enjoyed a constitutional prerogative to articulate the country's foreign policy and this tradition remains strong (Le Prestre 1997: 13).

The essential question of this essay is really: 'What is the content of the different NRCs?' Accordingly, the methodology of the study, allowing the role analysis, can be regarded as a variant of qualitative content analysis. Content analysis as a methodological tool allows the identification of important role conceptions in the foreign policy discourse. These NRCs can be recognised by identifying the assertions that policy makers hold about the *duties* and *responsibilities* of their nation as a foreign policy actor, i.e. key words and phrases such as: 'I', 'I consider it necessary', 'France believes', 'we must', 'republic', 'our duty is', etc. (Le Prestre 1997: 11f; Thumerelle & Le Prestre 1997: 142f). The empirical analysis of French NRCs in this

essay will proceed in an analogous way and will be further explained in the section 'Analytical Framework'.

The results of a content analysis are, as are those of every qualitative method, dependent on the researcher's interpretation of data. The interpretative character of the present study, therefore, translates into a potential ambiguity of its results (Le Prestre 1997: 11f). And, provided the limited number of cases of this study, it does not intend to make any far-reaching generalisations of its findings and conclusions. Nor will it make any claims to generalise its findings to other areas of French foreign policy. However, as Aggestam notes, refraining from extensive generalisations does not, which is key, equate to not drawing conclusions at all. The notion of a patterned nature of foreign policy behaviour, still allows for the conjecturing of likely future action (Aggestam 2004: 19f).

This study has also the character of a case study and its comparative aspect gives it a temporal dimension; the units of analysis, the NRCs, are analysed and compared over time (Esaiasson et al. 2012: 108f). A comparative method can provide important insights into the conditions under which certain patterns of foreign policy behavior are likely to occur (Aggestam 2004: 15). In analysing the presence of established NRCs in the allocutions of François Hollande, the case in this essay is contemporary French foreign and security role conceptions. One obvious reason for selecting cases with a high degree of resemblance, i.e. French NRCs, is the ambition to distinguish converging and diverging trends and ideas (Aggestam 2004: 21). Given the prominent role of theory, this case study can essentially be regarded as an 'exploration of theory', i.e. as a way of investigating whether the theory is appropriate for the understanding of the case. As the role-theoretical framework does not provide any testable predications per se, it is difficult to label the analysis as 'theory testing' or 'theory developing', despite its theory centred character (Kaarbo & Beasley 1999: 374ff). This lack of 'testability' also implies that the external validity of the findings in this study might be low (Esaiasson et al. 2012: 89f).

3.2 Analytical Framework

3.2.1 Aggestam's French NRCs

The role analysis in this essay builds on Aggestam's French NRCs from the 1990s. Aggestam's French role-set will structure and serve as point of reference to the role analysis. Arguably, the pertinence of Aggestam's NRCs varies today, and it is not unlikely that elements of, or even possibly entire, NRCs have changed since the 1990s role-set. It is also important to underline that no role typology is exhaustive. This means that every role-set as well as any ascribed meaning to the NRCs, are wholly context dependent and, evidently, open to discussion.

The French NRCs in Aggestam's thesis, builds on a basic role typology that the author argues represent important strategic roles in a European foreign policy context. This basic typology was itself based on a preliminary role analysis in which policy statements expressing *commitments*, *duties*, *functions* or *responsibilities* were identified. These indicators were considered to represent the role-beholder's expectations on appropriate foreign policy behavior, i.e. the NRCs (Aggestam 2004: 77f). Aggestam does not expound on the above-mentioned indicators any further in her thesis. However, in the analysis of French foreign policy NRCs in François Mitterrand's official speeches and interviews, Thumerelle & Le Prestre (1997: 142f) explain that assertions about *duties* and *responsibilities* were identified by identifying key words and expressions such as: 'I', 'we', 'France', 'republic', 'I consider', 'our', 'I consider it necessary to', etc. The empirical analysis in this essay will proceed in an analogous way.

Aggestam (2004: 172) identified six basic *French NRCs* in her analysis of foreign policy speeches from the 1990s:

(1) *Advocate of a new European architecture*

This NRC builds on France's self-image as a beacon of political avant-garde and captures François Mitterrand idea of a 'European confederation', mirroring Charles de Gaulle's image of a 'Grande Europe' (Aggestam 2004: 173f). Key to Mitterrand's conception of a European confederation was the idea of 'concentric circles', with the EU as a peaceful and democratic gravitational centre, attracting aspiring EU member states. The NRC captures the French sense of responsibility for the political and historical imperative of an enlargement. The three French priorities regarding the post-Cold War European architecture has been: (1) to reform the NATO

cooperation; (2) to construct a strong EU security and defence identity; (3) to include Russia in the European security structure (Aggestam 174f).

(2) *Europe as a power – Europe Puissance*

The 'Europe as a power' NRC captured France's vision of a strong and relevant Europe. It implies the view that the EU must assume responsibility for its own security. Universal values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law are considered to represent a common base to a unique European foreign policy identity. The NRC entails the French perception of converging national and European interests, the aim of consolidating the CFSP/SSDP cooperation, and the aim of a EU 'mutualisation of power', i.e. the sharing of sovereignty and resources. In this purpose, 'Europe puissance' is regarded as the guarantor of Europe's independence. This NRC also implies a strategic trans-Atlantic separation, to assure a strategically autonomous EU (Aggestam 2004 175-181).

(3) *Motor of European integration – Franco-German leadership*

France's NRC as 'motor of European integration' relates to its sense of responsibility to develop a European identity and its perceived leadership role. It captures France's self-image as the 'avant-garde' of the EU project. However, this NRC also depends heavily on the France's perception of its relationship with Germany. The Franco-German axis is deemed a sine qua non to Europe's future and for the European integration process (Aggestam 2004: 181ff).

(4) *Independent ally*

The 'Independent ally' NRC mirrors the irreconcilability of the Franc's self-image and its participation in a US dominated NATO cooperation. It captures France's desire to display independence from the USA and notably US hegemony within the trans-Atlantic cooperation, eminently manifested in the safeguarding of its independent nuclear deterrent capability. The French 'Independent ally' NRC is moreover an important part for the aim of strengthening the European security and defence autonomy (Aggestam 2004: 183-186).

(5) *Promoter of peace and stability*

The 'Promoter of peace and stability' NRC reflects France's self-image as a guarantor of universal values and as an important diplomatic and military power. It draws on the profound identification with liberal democratic values, such as human rights and the rule of law. This NRC captures France's quest for international peace and stability, its respect for international

law, and its advocacy for humanitarian action and peace-making. It also denotes the French sense of responsibility for European collective security and the perception of the necessity of a European military capability (Aggestam 2004: 186ff).

(6) *Guardian of independence*

The 'Guardian of independence' NRC resembles that of the 'independent ally'. It is too largely anchored in French nuclear deterrence, assuring national strategic independence. However, the 'Guardian of independence' NRC also reflects the French policy-makers' appreciation of the inseparableness of French and European security and mirrors how national independence is subsumed in the notion of an 'independent Europe'. It reflects a preference to speak of European solidarity and mutual responsibility rather than of 'French independence', and captures the French view that the most effective way to promote both French and European independence, ultimately depends on an acceleration of the European cooperation (Aggestam 2004: 188f).

4. ANALYSIS

The analysis section will first account for the key ideational aspects of contemporary French foreign and security policy. Thereafter it will proceed by systematically situating the foreign and security policy discourse of François Hollande, within Aggestam's French role-set/NRCs.

4.1 French Identity

> Our *identity*, let us talk about it, it is our History, our culture, our values, our way of life… *Identity* is in perpetual motion, that is why France is much more than only an *identity*, it is an idea, it is a project, it is an ambition, that make France a singular country, observed, counted on in the world. It is this idea, the *idea of France*, that must mobilise us and that we should carry (President François Hollande 2016a, my translation and emphasis)

The 'idea of France', as articulated by François Hollande, fits well within a Gaullist heritage of asserting France's exceptional historical and cultural identity, and to project its *grandeur*, *rang* and *gloire* (Thumerelle & Le Prestre 1997: 132; Rieker 2006: 515; Krotz and Sperling 2011: 308ff; Treacher 2001: 39f). This profound sense of French singularity continues to nourish the contemporary French self-image, and it is remarkable how little it has evolved since de Gaulle. Key identitative concepts in the contemporary discursive incarnation of France include 'democracy' and the appurtenant markers of liberal democracy such as: 'the rule of law', 'the independence of the judiciary, 'the separation of powers', and 'human rights'. Additionally, the three emblematic values of the French Republic also constitute a key identitative role: *liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité* – liberty, equality, fraternity (Hollande 2016a, 2016f).

Especially the notion of *liberté* (liberty) occupies a key role in François Hollande's allocutions. Hollande recently alluded to it as 'the air that we breed' and 'the force that can vanquish every obstacle' (Hollande 2016a). And, to the French armed forces, the President has announced that 'you are the armed forces of a country that incarnates liberty' (Hollande 2016e).

France is a country that has had and continues to have a universal conception of its role (Thumerelle & Le Prestre 1997: 132). François Hollande has conceded that this claim for universality can, indeed, render France 'unbearable in the eyes of others' (Hollande 2016a).

Perhaps this insight can also explain the President's sober and lucid view of the difficulties of any contemporary French *mission civilisatrice*[8].

> I am part of a generation, I was born in the 1950s, that considered democracy to be destined to universal success… This is no longer the case today, that which appeared to be the deepest rooted is questioned, that which seemed self-evident becomes debatable: *democracy* (President François Hollande 2016a, my translation and emphasis)

The roots of the central role that democracy and liberal democratic values play to the French self-image, are of course to be found in the history of France, i.e. in the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen'[9] (Hollande 2016f). It is this historical and ideational legacy that continues to provide the basis to France's profound sense of *grandeur*. It continues to nourish the country's present self-image and serves as the ultima ratio for its actions. Suffice it to say the following with regards to the recent Islamic terrorist attacks on the country.

> It is because France in its History, but also in its choices today, has carried the most noble principles, that it is targeted and attacked by radical Islamism… it is because we are strong, it is because we influence the destiny of the world, it is because our actions transgress our borders, it is because our country is an example, a point of reference for many others, that we are attacked… (President François Hollande 2016a, my translation)

4.2 French Foreign & Security Policy NRCs under François Hollande, 2012-16

Advocate of a new European architecture

The notion of constituting the political avant-garde of Europe, continues to be a cornerstone of the French self-image (Holland 2012, 2014b). However, instead of invoking the old grand visions of a 'European confederation' and a 'European Power', the current French President appears to prefer to allude to the more neutral notion of 'Europe'. Indeed, the de facto identitative importance conferred to 'Europe', seems to have rendered it such an integral part

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[8] Lit. 'Civilising mission'. The term relates a historical perceived imperative among the imperial powers to introduce civilization into their colonies, esp. with regards to French colonial policy in Africa and Indo-China (www.oxforddictionaries.com).

[9] 'La Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen' was adopted by the French National Assembly in 1789 and defined the 'natural and imprescriptible rights of man', including: liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression (www.elysee.fr).

of the present French foreign policy self-image, that it is difficult to imagine 'France' devoid of it (Holland 2015a).

> … To exit Europe is to exit History … France needs Europe as Europe needs France. In the short term or in the long term, everything calls for our unification, political realism, the democratic ideal, as well as our own interests! (President François Hollande 2014b, my translation)

This profound sense of inseparability between the notions of France and Europe reflects how far the process of Europeanisation has gone (Rieker 2006: 521-524; Treacher 2001:30; Irondelle 2008: 161f). In his allocutions, the French president often alludes to the common destiny of France and Europe, in which France continues to attribute itself a decisive, even existential, role (Hollande 2014b). The old perceived imperative to work for the enlargement of the Union appears to largely have been subsumed in more existential questions, in the aftermath of the European debt crisis (Hollande 2016a). Certainly, the 2004 accession of ten new member states, of which a majority came from the former Eastern Bloc, can partly explain this. However, even though the role term of 'Advocate of a new European architecture' today appears in a partly modified rhetoric, the basic idea of the EU as a peaceful and democratic gravitational centre is certainly still relevant as a part of the French role-set Europe (Holland 2015a).

> … And not just the interests of our country, because France goes beyond itself: it carries values that not only concern its citizens, but that mobilise a spirit, the *European spirit*. For us Europe is not a series of political acts, consisting of everyone [just] wanting to cash their checks and claim the return of their contribution. If we wanted Europe it is because it carried an ideal… That's why we, France, must carry that ideal (President François Hollande 2012, my translation and emphasis)

France's continued attachment to the construction of 'Europe' is, importantly, expressed in its continued promotion of 'Europe of Defence', which President Hollande repeatedly has voiced France's resolve to realise (Hollande 2013, 2015). In this aspect, France's post-Cold War objective of constructing a strong EU security and defence identity hasn't changed (Rieker 2006: 521-524). Neither has France's long term objective of a continued reformation of the NATO cooperation (Hollande 2016d, 2015; Bozo 2014: 388f; Krotz & Sperling 2011: 327). However, following the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea in early 2014, the ambition of integrating Russia into the European security structure, appears very distant today (Hollande 2014c; 2015a; Lequesne 2016: 315).

Europe as a power – Europe Puissance

> It is France's determination that will convince Europe to defend itself, by itself… (President François Hollande 2016a, my translation)

Parts of the NRC 'Europe as a power' converge with the role elements of 'Advocate of a new European Architecture', notably regarding the perceived necessity to construct a common European foreign and security identity, the key to European strategical autonomy and power (Krotz & Sperling 2011: 323f). In this context, the notion of 'Europe of Defence' continues to provide an important identitative vision in present French policy (Hollande 2013, 2015). 'Europe of Defence' reflects the continued French perception of the basic convergence of French and European interests, and that a strong Europe can serve as security for France's sovereignty (Hollande 2015a; Treacher 2001: 27). And, it also explains the everlasting French reflex of 'aller plus loin' ('continuing further'). Indeed, France of today seems to conceive of a European self-image that is well beyond Westphalian[10] sentiments and that largely transcends the traditional French emphasis on national independence and autonomy. Hollande has even remarked that 'sovereignism is declinism' (Hollande 2015a).

France's efforts to reinforce the CSDP and thereby strengthening EU's 'strategic autonomy', continue tirelessly. France continues to perceive the CSDP as a potential and important 'motor of European integration' and as a way of 'cultivating a culture of confidence' (Hollande 2016d). In this quest of constructing a unique European foreign and security identity, the notion of 'strategic separation' from NATO continues to be important (Irondelle 2008: 156; Bozo 2014: 384).

> Even though NATO remains the cornerstone of the collective defence, the EU must increase its *role* as guarantor of security and defence, within as well as outside of Europe, notably by means of a more strategic approach to its relations with NATO. (President François Hollande 2016d, my translation and emphasis)

France's continued ambitions to create a strategically autonomous and powerful Europe are reflected in the country's 'White Paper on Defence and National Security', updated in 2013. One of the three strategical priorities for the ensuing fifteen to twenty years, was fixed to assure

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[10] The notion of 'Westphalian' refers to the principle of nation state sovereignty in international law, as enshrined in the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. The doctrine assures state sovereignty over national territory and domestic affairs, and entails the principle of 'non-interference' (www.britannica.com).

the credibility of France's nuclear deterrent, which is key to the very idea of French and European strategical autonomy from NATO (Hollande 2013a, 2014; Irondelle 2008: 156; Lasconjarias 2014: 425; Ratti 2014: 324).

Motor of European integration – Franco-German leadership

The notion of a Franco-German axis continues to be highly present in present French foreign and security policy and the exceptional role of the Franco-German partnership continues to be key (Hollande 2012d; 2012e; Présidence de la République 2016; Treacher 2001: 39; Irondelle 2008: 156). In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the 1963 Élysée Treaty, President Hollande had the opportunity to reflect on contemporary Franco-German relations, in the aftermath of the Euro debt crisis.

> We too are faced with History… We have no other choices, no other obligations but to continue forward and to march towards our destiny, that of a united Europe… In this undertaking, *Germany* and *France* have an exceptional responsibility. We form the heart of Europe. We are not destined to decide in the place of the other countries, but we must, if they accept, lead them. (President François Hollande 2012d, my translation and emphasis)

And, at the 25th Franco-German meetings at Evian-les-Bains, in September of 2016, President Hollande had the opportunity, together with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, to reaffirm the continued centrality of the Franco-German 'motor' role.

> These meetings, which the Chancellor and myself have decided to attend, arrive at a particularly crucial time for Europe, with Brexit, as well as with the surges of populism and the questionings of the very idea of Europe. Therefor it is necessary to give new momentum the Union. And, to that, *France* and *Germany* want to participate fully, to shoulder their responsibilities (Présidence de la République 2016, authors translation and emphasis)

As already mentioned above, France regards the CSDP as a potential 'motor' of European integration and as a way of strengthening mutual understanding between the EU member states (Hollande 2016d). Even though French enthusiasm for the European strategic project rhetoric clearly faded in the wake of the European debt crisis, the theme of a 'union politique' (a political union) is still present in Hollande's early speeches (Bozo 2014: 388). In 2012, the then newly elected President evoked the necessity of an 'integration of solidarity' within the framework of a 'political union'. In that ambition, again, the Franco-German friendship was depicted as key,

thus reaffirming France's perception of itself and the Franco-German relationship as the 'avant-garde' of Europe (Hollande 2012e).

Independent ally

> Thus, as head of state, it is my imperative duty to take into consideration these threats, because nothing must challenge our *independence*. The international context does not allow any weakness. And, that is why the days of the *nuclear deterrence* are not numbered… The deterrent is also that which permits us to preserve our freedom of action and decision under any circumstances, because it is it that permits me to ward off any state derived threat of extortion, aiming at paralysing us. (President François Hollande 2015, my translation and emphasis)

The notion of 'national independence' continues to be an essential part of the French self-image (Hollande 2015, 2016b). In that respect, the notion of France as an 'Independent ally' is still relevant, and doesn't appear to have evolved significantly since de Gaulle's days (Holsti 1970: 271; Thumerelle & Le Prestre 1997: 146; Aggestam 2004: 183-186; Grant 1985: 412ff). Intimately linked to France's assertion of its national independence is its autonomous nuclear deterrent capability, which continues to be the cornerstone of the national foreign and security policy and of the country's military defence doctrine. The nuclear deterrent capability reassures the French self-image of being an exceptional country, and it is recurrently proclaimed to guarantee the freedom of the country and allow France to 'face any threat' (Hollande 2013, 2014).

France's military strength is clearly a crucial aspect of the country's self-image. Today, still, for France to remain France, it must be 'respected military' (Hollande 2016e). Strong French military capabilities continue to be perceived as the sine que non for France's conception of being a 'grand pays' (a grand country) (Hollande 2014). The notion of being a grand country goes hand in hand with France's universal claims and responsibilities.

> France is one of the few countries in the world whose influence and responsibilities have global reach. Because France can fulfil its responsibilities. Because everyone knows that when France speaks, it can also act. (President François Hollande 2015, my translation)

Despite the continued importance attributed to the country's independent nuclear deterrent capability, France's relationship with NATO doesn't appear to impede on its self-image as an 'independent ally'. The rapprochement is pragmatic (Bozo 2014: 384; Krotz & Sperling 2011:

325). The conclusions that were drawn from the work on the 2013 White Paper, led President Hollande to comment that France needed to further strengthen its influence within NATO (Hollande 2013a). Notably, in 2015, he voiced France's will to contribute to the definition of the Alliance's nuclear policy. Still, President Hollande has also repeatedly confirmed the French principle of not participating in NATOs nuclear planning structures, arguably, to preserve some degree of 'national independence' (Hollande 2015). Nevertheless, Franco-American relations have improved significantly over the past decades, which is repeatedly reaffirmed by the French President (Hollande 2012c; 2015).

> We have such a lot in common, the United States and France, regarding our views on today's key international policy issues! That has not always been the case, but it is today. (President François Hollande 2012c, my translation)

Promoter of peace and stability

France as a guarantor of universal, liberal democratic values is highly present in contemporary foreign policy. Given that the very fabric of France's self-image rests in much on its pioneering role in terms of human and civil rights, it is not unexpected that this theme continues to nourish the national self-image (Hollande 2012, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; Aggestam 2004: 186ff; Thumerelle and Le Prestre (1997: 143ff).

> France wants to be exemplary, not to give lessons but because it is its history, it is its message. Exemplary when it comes to carrying the fundamental freedoms, that's its combat, that's its honour too. (President François Hollande 2012b, my translation)

For obvious reasons the role conception of 'Promoter of peace and stability' conveys legitimacy to France, especially as a permanent member of the Security Council. In its perennial pledging of allegiance to the international community and to the UN, France can perpetuate its ancient civilization mission, despite relatively limited 'hard power'. And, importantly, France's self-image as a promoter of peace and stability is not in any way equal to pacifism, quite the opposite (Irondelle 2008: 163; Treacher 2001: 33). France's perception of serving a greater cause, i.e. the upholding of world peace, obliges it act, and to act military if necessary (Hollande 2013). Accordingly, French military interventions, e.g. in the Central African Republic in 2013, were justified in terms of a perceived moral imperative to take humanitarian action: 'Should we have stood by and watched and waited for others to act in our place? No.' (Hollande 2014, 2014a).

And, in similar words President Hollande only recently justified the French military missions against Daesh[11] 'it's a moral imperative, it's a responsibility that, in the name of our ideals, commands us, France' (Hollande 2016c).

Nevertheless, which is also key, France's preference of multilateral cooperation leaves it little room for unilateral action, because France needs the UN to be at the heart of global governance (Hollande 2012b).

> France does it because it is a permanent member of the Security Council and because its *role* is to *act*, not to obstruct. France does it because it has an idea, a grand idea of the world, one that it has always carried throughout history, freedom, democracy, justice. Because France has but one goal for its policies: peace. And, because France speaks to all stakeholders. Because France is an independent nation that respects the law… That is why I believe in the United Nations and that is also why I, with France, carry a universal message (President François Hollande **2016b**, my translation and emphasis)

As François Hollande has pointed out, it was in French that the revolutionaries in 1789 proclaimed and wrote the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, and it was in French that, in 1948, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted. France's perception of the significance of the French language and culture, arguably, serves as a categorically separate motivator to French foreign and security behaviour. Thus, to promote and spread the French language and culture, amounts to combatting cultural hegemony in the world (Hollande 2012, 2012a, 2012c).

France's universal message is also channelled into its conception of Europe. The French vision of Europe is one of an example to the world, of a Union that holds out its hands to the poorest countries, suffering from hunger, poverty and health related scourges, of a Europe that combats fanaticism, intolerance and dictatorship (Hollande 2012d). This image resonates perfectly with France's self-image as the nation that, par excellence, incarnates the universal, liberal democratic values. Perhaps this is also why France ultimately reserves itself the right to 'play its role', to 'assume its place in the world', and to 'act whenever its interests are threatened' (Hollande 2014, 2014a, 2016e).

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[11] 'Daesh' is the Arabic acronym for ISIL (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), a Salafi jihadist terrorist organisation (www.britannica.com).

Guardian of independence

Even though France continues to protect its independent foreign policy prerogative, the notion of an 'independent' France has changed and is, at least, rhetorically downplayed in favour of the image of European strategic autonomy (Hollande 2016b, 2015K; Aggestam 2004: 188f; Irondelle 2008: 155; Bozo 2014: 388). As previously mentioned, France's nuclear deterrent capability continues to underpin a sense of national independence (Hollande 2015). Nevertheless, the perceived inseparability of French national security and European security, is striking today. In his exceptional address to the French Congress'[12] only days after the November 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, President Hollande declared that 'the enemy is not an enemy of France, but an enemy of Europe' (Hollande 2015b).

The sublimation of French national independence into the notion of an 'independent Europe', is an important aspect of the European security and identity construct, of which 'Europe of Defence' constitutes a key element (Krotz & Sperling 2011: 318-25). In that, French vital interests are no longer confined to the borders of l'Hexagone[13], but encompass the whole of Europe.

> We are part of the European project, together with our partners we have constructed a community of destiny, the existence of a French nuclear deterrent offers a strong and essential contribution to Europe. Moreover, by word and deed, France is solidary with its European partners. Thus, who might believe that an aggression that threatened the very survival of Europe, would not have any consequences? That is why our deterrent goes hand in hand with the continuous reinforcement of *l'Europe de la Défense*. (President François Hollande 2015, my translation and emphasis)

Indeed, the vision of 'Europe of Defence' is key to the understanding of France as a 'Guardian of Independence'. France's determination to strengthen EU's collective defence capability and to link the EU member states security and defence policies together, runs like a red thread through French foreign and security policy. At a recent press conference following the European Council's meeting of 15 December 2016, President Hollande brought up the subject of a European defence once again.

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[12] 'Le Congrès' (the Congress) is the exceptional reunion of the two bodies of the French Parliament, 'L'Assemblée nationale' (the National Assembly) and 'Le Sénat' (the Senat) (www.assemblee-nationale.fr).
[13] 'L'Hexagone' refers to France, denoting the country's hexagonal shape (www.larousse.fr).

The key point of the agenda of the European Council meeting with regards to the decisions to take, was to finally show its will, the will of the European continent, to organise its own defence, of course in a complementarity and coherent way in relation to NATO… the decision is that Europe put together its own defence, can deploy permanent capabilities that allow operations, military or civil, with a clear chain of command… and lastly, to have a real European defence industry, so that the equipment is the same in all of Europe, the moment we together will have to assure our own security. (President François Hollande 2016, my translation)

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of this essay has been to shed light on contemporary French foreign and security policy role conceptions. In applying a Role Theory framework developed by Lisbeth Aggestam, over twenty foreign and security policy allocutions delivered by President François Hollande over the period of 2012-16, have been comprehensively analysed and compared to conventional French National Role Conceptions (NRCs). Key concepts such as 'role', 'identity' and 'agency' have been thoroughly examined, to provide the theoretical basis of Role Theory as a Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) instrument.

As to the research questions of the study, whether Aggestam's French role-set is applicable to the contemporary French foreign and security policy and their relationship with the concept 'Europe of defence', the analysis shows that most of the National Role Conceptions (NRCs) identified by Aggestam, continue to be relevant and that the notion of 'Europe of defence' is key to the overall understanding of the present French role-set.

The NRC that Aggestam referred to as 'Advocate of a new European Architecture' is still present today, partly represented by the continued French aim of constructing a common European security and defence identity, incarnated by the notion of 'Europe de la Défense'. And, even though the rhetoric appears to have changed some, the fundamental French will to press on with the integration of European security and defence cooperation, is unchanged. Therefore, reading between the lines, a more appropriate NRC label today would be, arguably, 'Advocate of a European Confederation'.

The NRC 'Europe as a power' converges with that of 'Advocate of a new Europe' with regards to the key concept of 'Europe de la Défense'. Although the notion of 'Europe Puissance' is absent in the empirical material of this study, its essence is largely subsumed in 'Europe of Defence', reflecting France's continued will to strengthen EU's CFSP/CSDP cooperation. In this ambition, France clearly conceives of converging national and European interests and, whether the CFSP/CSDP is regarded instrumentally as leverage for French national interests, or because of a genuine Europeanisation of French foreign and security policy, it is certain that the current presidency is pro-European.

The 'Motor of European integration' NRC captures France's perception of the CSDP as an important potential motor of European integration. A key component of this NRC continues to be the French relationship with Germany, together forming a Franco-German 'motor', or a

political 'avant-garde'. The overarching strategic goal, which continues to nourish this NRC, still appears to be a 'political union' and a 'united Europe'.

The NRC 'Independent ally' has historically been intimately linked to the autonomous French nuclear deterrent capability, which has been estimated to guarantee French 'national independence' and assure France's position as a 'grand country'. The notion of 'national independence' is still regularly referred to in contemporary French foreign and security policy and especially in the context of the country's nuclear deterrence doctrine. The importance attributed to the notion of 'national independence' clearly continues to structure the French self-image, despite evidence of less conflictual trans-Atlantic relations.

The 'Promoter of peace and stability' NRC is strong in the present French foreign and security policy discourse. The important historical contribution of France in terms of human and civil rights, continue to guide French policy, not the least its willingness to act military. And, moreover, the French self-image as a carrier of a universal message, also appears to be an important source of influence to its conception of Europe and of its role. Overall, the 'Promoter of peace and stability' role seems very stable.

Finally, the NRC 'Guardian of independence' bears a strong resemblance to that of 'Independent ally' and today, not the least in view of the less problematic French relationship with NATO and the USA, it encompasses the same aspect of the French self-image, i.e. the importance attributed to the notions of 'independence' and 'liberty'. However, an interesting finding in the empirical material is that despite the references to 'national independence', the French perceived convergence between French and European security interests, largely surmounts any meaningful separation of French and European independence. Therefore, the contemporary version of the 'Guardian of independence' NRC takes on a different meaning than that conceived of by Aggestam.

To summarise, Aggestam concluded that the French 1990s foreign policy NRCs were marked by an 'idealistic realism'. This 'idealistic realism', Aggestam argued, served as the background to a French foreign policy reconceptualisation in the 1990s. In this process, French national independence was downplayed in favour of a supranational idea of Europe and French policy-makers came to regard a strengthened Europe as the best way to reassure and amplify French national interests (Aggestam 2004: 189-193).

The overall impression of current French foreign and security policy is that the notion of a French 'realistic idealism' continues to be pertinent. The French 'idealism' runs like a red thread through France's conception of its role(s) in the world and continues to nourish key part

of the French role-set, including the NRCs 'promoter of peace and stability' and 'advocate of a new European architecture'. Still, which also appears constant in French foreign and security policy, is the 'realist' component as reflected in the NRCs 'Europe as a power' and 'independent ally'. France's self-image today is arguably even more intimately interconnected to the idea of 'Europe'. On the foreign and security policy area, this appears to be reflected in the continued determination to construct 'Europe de la défense'.

Lastly, an interesting remark by Rieker supports the notion of a French 'idealistic realism'. France profoundly conceives of itself as being indispensable to the world, similarly to the USA. French universalism resembles that of the USA, in the sense that both states regard their national interests to be fully compatible with the goal of making the world better (Rieker 2005: 271ff).

6. FUTURE RESEARCH

Role Theory and Role Analysis as theoretical and analytical instruments for the study of Foreign policy-making and action, is potentially fruitful. As demonstrated, diverging conceptions the foreign policy-making process and its ontological underpinnings, can lead to very different explanations. Therefore, to assess the likely future direction of French and EU common foreign and security policy, it is necessary to use complementary scientific perspectives. The principal merit of a Role theory approach, arguably, lies in its incorporation of 'identity' into the concept of NRCs, as a key explanatory variable for foreign policy behaviour. However, it alone cannot provide theoretically satisfactory answers as to why some historical events occurred and others did not, let alone predict future action. Indeed, in that respect, no IR approach is good enough.

Supporting the notion that 'agency precedes structure', key for the development of the FPA research area, is a better understanding and theorising of human agency. The momentously difficult task of theoretically modelling human behaviour makes that task difficult. Nevertheless, a continued interest in the identitative incitements to state level agency and to the fundamentally social psychological aspects of the notions of 'role' and 'identity', appear to be essential for future research.

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