



Varieties of international co-operation: France's "flexilateral" policy in the context of Brexit

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to articulate conceptually the varieties of international co-operation in which states take part. In theories of international relations, international co-operation is generally analysed either through instances of multilateral collaboration (EU, UN, NATO), through bilateral alliances (Franco-German relationship), or through "minilateral" clubs (G7). Yet the literature does not offer a concept for linking these three models of international co-operation. Nevertheless, in practice, states simultaneously use varieties of international co-operation to address global public problems such as climate change, migration crises, and the fight against terrorism. To address this shortcoming, it is necessary to shift the focus from each type of international co-operation to their "interstices", in order to identify the relations between the types of international co-operation and their reciprocal effects on decisions taken by the state. It is to do this that the concept of "flexilateralism" has been developed. This neologism describes *the policy through which a state simultaneously implements varieties of international co-operation to address a public problem*. A state's "flexilateral" policy, or flexilateralism, is operationalised by revealing four varieties of international co-operation: bilateralism (co-operation between two states), minilateralism (co-operation within an exclusive group of states), multilateralism (co-operation within an inclusive group of states), and unilateralism (no co-operation). The concept of flexilateralism is applied through the case of France's defence procurement policy in the context of the Brexit negotiations. By taking seriously varieties of international co-operation, the concept of flexilateralism goes a step further to explain the policy-making and implementation of state's foreign policy.

Keywords Brexit · International co-operation · Flexilateralism · Differentiated integration · Defence procurement policy

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Some researchers believe that we are living one of the historical periods the most peaceful in our species' existence (Pinker 2011), or at least that the level of violence has not increased since 9/11 as common sense suggests (Le Gouriellec 2017). One of the observable features of this “positive peace” (Galtung 1964, p. 2) is the creation and institutionalisation of international co-operation between states for addressing global political issues, such as climate change, migration crises, and the fight against terrorism (Devin 2014). To speak as the French sociologist Émile Durkheim, international co-operation is a “social fact” (Devin 2015, p. 9). It is symptomatic that the British government wishes to continue to work closely with the European Union (EU) despite Brexit and the USA under the Trump administration continues to co-operate with countries around the world, despite protectionist rhetoric.

In international relations (IR) theories, international co-operation is generally analysed either through instances of multilateral collaboration or through bilateral alliances. Indeed, states act internationally within multilateral organisations (Devin 2009) such as the European Union (EU) (Faure 2017; Costa and Mérand 2017), the World Health Organization (WHO) (Guilbaud 2015), and the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Louis 2016). At the same time, states work on the drafting of international agreements, and even of “international public policies” (Petiteville and Smith 2006), within bilateral international associations such as Franco-German (Deschaux-Dutard 2008; Krotz 2015) or Franco-British (Faure 2018) co-operation. Beyond multilateralism and bilateralism, states also collaborate through coalitions with a limited number of participants referred to as “minilateralism” (Naim 2009; Eckersley 2012; Wuthnow 2019). The G7 summits between the heads of state and heads of government of the most industrialised countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and USA) are an example of minilateral co-operation.

In the research mentioned above, several explanatory arguments are developed to explain states' decisions in favour of *one* specific international co-operation, such as *one* instance of bilateral co-operation in Europe, *one* alliance of states at the transatlantic level, or *one* minilateral collaboration. Nevertheless, in practice, states *simultaneously* mobilise these three varieties of international co-operation to craft and to implement their actions. For example, since the end of the Second World War, German foreign policy has consisted of a set of international collaborations, summed up by the motto *sowohl europäisch als auch atlantisch*—“as Europeanist as Atlanticist”. However, the articulation of the several types of international co-operation chosen concomitantly by a state persists as a “blind spot”. There is, therefore, a conceptual challenge in articulating the different types of international co-operation mobilised simultaneously by a state to address global political issues. How should the varieties of international co-operation of which states make use be articulated conceptually?

To answer this question, this article develops the concept of “flexilateralism”. This neologism describes *the policy through which a state simultaneously implements varieties of international co-operation to address a public problem*. The concept of flexilateralism comprises four varieties of international co-operation: unilateralism (no co-operation), bilateralism (co-operation between two states), minilateralism (co-operation within an exclusive group of states), and multilateralism (co-operation within an inclusive group of states). I apply the concept



of flexilateralism through the case study of the decisional dilemma faced by European states, including France, in procuring armaments such as tanks, fighter aircraft, and military drones. Analysis of France's policy of flexilateralism, or "flexilateral" policy, allows the description of the varieties of international co-operation engaged in simultaneously by the state in order to deal with a public problem. The choice of studying France's defence procurement policy is doubly justified. On the one hand, while work on the political economy of defence has multiplied since the 2000s (Faure 2015), it is an object that remains marginal and therefore unknown in IR theories. On the other hand, France is the European state that spends the most on its defence budget in 2017, ahead of the UK and Germany (SIPRI 2018: 2).

The main contribution of this article is to develop the concept of flexilateralism, by which it is possible to overcome the dichotomies that determine the research questions in IR theories relating to global governance and international co-operation: strengthening or ending international co-operation, bilateralism or multilateralism, European collaboration or global alliance? By taking seriously varieties of international co-operation, the concept of flexilateralism goes a step further to explain the policy-making and implementation of state's foreign policy. Indeed, comparative studies have demonstrated that the processes of Europeanisation and globalisation do not lead to a single political, economic, or military model in the West. National differences persist. In IR theories and foreign policy analysis (FPA), varieties of neutrality (Beyer and Hofmann 2011) and of liberal militarism (Joana and Mérand 2014) have been shown to exist. In political economy, research has focused on varieties of capitalism (Hall and Soskice 2001; Itcaina et al. 2016), liberalism (Thelen 2014), and defence industry (deVore 2015; Ansaloni and Smith 2018). This article aims to contribute to this literature by identifying varieties of international co-operation that constitute the policy of flexilateralism.

Moreover, this article is connected with the differentiated integration and disintegration of the EU literature (Bartolini 2005; Adler-Nissen 2014; Schimmelfennig et al. 2015; Jones 2018). More precisely, it complements the theoretical contributions that deal with logics of "horizontal" differentiation (territorial variation) of differentiated European integration (Leuffen et al. 2012). Indeed, the unit of study used is the state, and not the EU, which is not well suited to the study of defence procurement policy in Europe where the level of European integration remains limited to the end of the 2010s. That policy does not confine itself either to the EU or to instances of multilateral collaboration in Europe. When they co-operate, France, Estonia, or Austria are not only "Member States" of the EU (Bickerton 2012), because they are simultaneously members of other international organisations, and signatories to multiple international accords and treaties. In other words, this article follows Meijer and Weiss's (2019) advice for turning the mainstream angle of European defence studies "upside down" by returning the analytical priority to the national level.

In the first part of this article, the theoretical arguments that deal with one or more of the types of international co-operation chosen by European states to acquire armaments are set out. In the second part, the concept of flexilateralism is defined and then operationalised starting from an analytical grid. In the third part, the concept of flexilateralism is applied in the case of France's defence procurement policy



in the context of Brexit. The analytical contributions made by this concept and a research timetable are set out in conclusion.

The state faced with the dilemma of European defence procurement policy

Explaining the state's choice of *one* variety of international co-operation

A European state acquires armaments through *one* variety of international co-operation: *either* co-operation in Europe, *or* co-operation with the USA, *or* the absence of co-operation (autarky). This is the result put forward by deVore and Weiss (2014) as well as by Hoeffler and Mérand (2015), using the case of fighter aircraft.

The choice made by a European state in favour of or against international co-operation is explained by a neo-institutionalist argument derived from the school of the varieties of capitalism (deVore and Weiss 2014). In acquiring fighter aircraft, France preferred autarky (the Rafale), whereas the UK chose international co-operation (the Jaguar, Tornado, and Typhoon, Table 1). This difference between these two states with similar military and industrial capacity is explained by the structure of their political economy: “dirigiste” in the case of France, “liberal” in that of the UK. This explanatory model is convincing for explaining France’s decisional preference for autarky (unilateralism), and the UK’s for international co-operation. On the other hand, it cannot explain how a state, whether structured by a “liberal” or “dirigiste” political economy, could choose several types of international co-operation. In France’s case, the argument of the varieties of capitalism does not make it possible to understand the state’s decisions in favour of one type of co-operation. In the context of the 1980s, at the same time as deciding to choose the Rafale, France chose the Franco-German Tiger helicopter and imported some American C-130 transport aircraft from the USA. In the UK’s case, the argument of the varieties of capitalism does not explain the preference for autarky (T-45 destroyers, for example) and does not draw a distinction between it and the choice of bilateral co-operation (Jaguar) or co-operation within a small group of states (Tornado, Typhoon). Moreover, the case of the acquisition of the American F-35, which was at a transatlantic level, is not addressed. Furthermore, this neo-institutionalist argument does not take into account the change in a state’s political economy over time which, as a result, appears to be timeless: France represented, represents, and will continue to represent forms of economic regulation that are “liberal” and “dirigiste”, respectively.

Hoeffler and Mérand (2015) refine the argument of the varieties of capitalism by bringing into play two explanatory variables. The industrial variable, derived from political economy (liberal and neo-institutionalist arguments), is complemented by the strategic variable developed in theories of international relations (neo-realist and constructivist arguments). On the one hand, the industrial variable refers to the degree of autonomy of a country’s defence industry in relation to the international sphere. The more a state has at its disposal an autonomous national defence industry, the more likely it is to choose autarky. This was the case with France and its acquisition of the Rafale: the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by its national industry,



Table 1 Armaments programmes and international agreements or organisations quoted in the article (1940s–2010s). *Source* deVore 2012: 439; Faure 2016: 417–419

Varieties of International Co-operation				
	Unilateralism	Bilateralism	Minilateralism	Multilateralism
40 s–70 s	C-130, Crusader, F-104 Starfighter (USA)	Jaguar (France, UK)	Tomado (Germany, Italy, UK)	NATO
80 s–00 s	Leclerc, Rafale (France); Augusta (Italy); Gripen (Sweden); Apache (USA); T-45 (UK)	Tiger (France, Germany); FREMM (France, Italy)	Typhoon (Germany, Italy, Spain, UK); F-35 (Australia, Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Italy, Turkey, UK, USA); OCCAR (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, UK); A400 M (Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Spain, Turkey, UK)	EDA (EU Member States, except Denmark); “defence package” (EU Member States)
10 s	Tempest (UK)	Lancaster House treaties and FCAS (France, UK); Combat aircraft (France, Germany)	RPAS (France, Germany, Italy, Spain)	EDF (EU Member States); PESCO (EU Member States except Denmark and Malta)



as embodied by Dassault Aviation, resulted in a “technocratic capture” (Irondele 2003, p. 220) over the decisional process. On the other hand, the strategic variable is defined by the nature of the strategic relations between European states and the USA. It is expected that a state that has an “Atlanticist” strategic culture (strong links with the USA) would choose the American option. The acquisition of the F-35 by Italy, the Netherlands, and the UK illustrates this model (Vucetic and Nossal 2013). On the other hand, a state that has a neutral strategic culture (intermediate relations) should, as in the case of the Gripen, either import European armaments (like Hungary and the Czech Republic) or prefer the national option (like Sweden). Finally, a “Europeanist” strategic culture (weak links to the USA) leads European states to co-operate within Europe. The decision taken by Austria, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK in favour of the Typhoon represents this possibility.

With this research, Hoeffler and Mérand do not diminish the dilemma of defence procurement policy in Europe to the autarky/co-operation nexus. Beyond the national option, they pick out two types of co-operation within a restricted group of states: at the European level, with the acquisition of the Gripen and Typhoon, and at the transatlantic level with the acquisition of the F-35. However, the state remains “confined” within one variety of international co-operation. According to this analysis, France should produce only military goods that are made in France, which empirical reality proves not to be the case. In the fighter aircraft sector, France has co-operated at the transatlantic level (acquisition of the American Crusader during the 1960s) and the European level (production of the Jaguar with the UK during the 1970s). Furthermore, the decisional variation of the Italian and British states in favour of the European option during the 1980s (Typhoon) and then of the transatlantic alternative during the 2000s (F-35) is not explained. Finally, to place Germany in the category of states that have weak links with the USA does not fit with the doctrine the country has followed in foreign policy since the end of World War II, summed up by the motto *sowohl europäisch als auch atlantisch*—“as Europeanist as Atlanticist”. Germany’s fighter aircraft policy has confirmed this doctrine, the country having bought both from the USA (the F-104 Starfighter during the 1960s) and in Europe (the Tornado, then the Typhoon during the 1970s and 1980s).

To acquire armaments, the state does not choose either an exclusive co-operation—be this at the European level (as with Italy and the Typhoon) or at the transatlantic level (as with the Netherlands and the F-35)—or the alternative of autarky (as with Sweden and the Gripen). The state also chooses more inclusive co-operation. “Intergovernmental” (Thiem 2011) collaboration over armaments in Europe has been the object of quantitative analysis, as well as of qualitative studies focusing on the European Defence agency (EDA) (Batora 2009; Karampekios and Oikonomou 2015) and the “defence package” (Lavallée 2011; Hoeffler 2012; Muravska 2014). This work has completed the typology of the international models of co-operation in which states participate to acquire military equipment. Nevertheless, they do not make it possible to associate a state with several varieties of international co-operation. To arm itself, a state uses one type of international co-operation: exclusive or inclusive, European or transatlantic. Other work has addressed this limit by revealing that a state takes part in different models of international co-operation in armaments.



Explaining the state's choice of some varieties of international co-operation

The work done by Genieys and Michel on France's acquisition of the Leclerc tank, by Pannier on the Franco-British Lancaster House Treaties, and by Moravcsik on the defence industry has contributed to not reducing European states to a single model of co-operation.

The programmatic approach, developed in the analysis of public policies, has been brought into play to explain the decision taken by France in the 1980s to produce the Leclerc tank (Genieys and Michel 2004). According to this approach, the action of a small group of individual actors (about 10) having similar career paths and socio-professional profiles (education in the same establishments and a career within the state sector), despite fulfilling different functions (military, administrative, and industrial), was decisive. These actors, described as the programmatic elite, shared four characteristics (Genieys and Michel 2006). They pursued 1) a "programme of change", that is, a collection of measures that aimed to "orientate and define the content of public action" (Genieys and Hassenteufel 2012, pp. 95–96). They implemented it thanks to 2) multiple resources, which they mobilised through 3) a "dynamic of learning". Public action was also shaped by 4) the interaction they had with other programmatic actors, as well as with "intermediate" actors and "veto" actors. In the case of the Leclerc tank, the programmatic elite shared the conviction that the French tank was "the best tank in the world", creating a "path of dependence" (Pierson 2000) in favour of the national option, without other programmatic, intermediate, or veto actors being able to reorientate or even to block the formulation of this decision.

The programmatic approach provides a convincing analysis of France's decision in favour of autarky, through a rigorous methodological process. What is more, this approach is suitable for interpreting a state's choice in favour of international co-operation. Indeed, the programmatic elite is not determined to oppose collaboration in defence procurement, as are the actors that share a "technocratic engineering culture" as a consequence of the "dirigiste" structure of France's political economy (deVore and Weiss 2014, p. 507). Nevertheless, Genieys and Michel do not take seriously the international alternatives to the decision in favour of the French Leclerc tank. The decisional dilemma that pitted the national Leclerc project against the Franco-German "Char 90" is described at the beginning of the article, without it structuring the demonstration. The use of a historic neo-institutionalist argument defines a decisional "path" that of autarky. France's choice in favour of "made in France" was necessary from the start of the process. The other decisional paths, such as the Franco-German alternative, were de facto disqualified. Indeed, the coalition of state and industrial actors that opposed the Leclerc tank or supported the Franco-German project is not specified.

On the basis of the Lancaster House Treaties signed by France and the UK in 2010, Pannier (2013) reveals the autarky/co-operation decisional dilemma that is part of defence procurement policy in Europe. Linking foreign policy analysis and constructivism, Pannier picks out four explanatory variables with the aim



of interpreting both co-operation (“centrifugal effects”) and the absence of co-operation (“centripetal effects”) between France and the UK. First, the political will embodied by the commitment of heads of state and heads of government is an essential condition for co-operation. Yet this interdependence between political actors can be compromised by reasons connected to timing and to national political change. Second, at the level of national administrations, officials use the framework of co-operation strategically for reasons of internal bureaucratic conflict. However, the absence of consensus even within a national administration can have a harmful effect on the implementation of co-operation by creating confusion with the partner state. Third, actors in the armaments field are the product of socialisation processes at the national level but also at the functional level. If the national affiliations of actors (British civilian and military actors *vs.* French civilian and military actors) tend to hamper co-operation, it is likely that professional affiliations (British and French military actors *vs.* British and French civilian actors) favour it. Fourth, co-operation may be reinforced by conceptions shared by British and French actors that result from socialisation processes that are embodied in interpersonal relations between actors, and which modify their convictions and interests. For example, the Délégué général pour l’armement (DGA) [Director of the French Defence Procurement Agency] visits London 30 times a year to meet his British counterpart.

Pannier understands the state’s decisional variation in favour of both the international option (co-operation) and the national alternative (autarky). The definition of four explanatory variables (political, administrative, ideal, and relational) explains the structure of the autarky/co-operation dilemma. Nevertheless, the argument is operationalised only in a case study of international co-operation (Lancaster House treaties). The validity of the model for explaining a national decisional outcome (unilateralism) has yet to be demonstrated. What is more, in this conception, the state is reduced to using just one type of international co-operation: bilateralism. The study of Franco-British collaboration is not linked to other forms of co-operation in armaments procurement, such as the relationship between the UK and the USA at the transatlantic level, or its interconnection with other inter-state associations in Europe. These limits are made up for in part by the liberal argument put forward by Moravcsik.

According to Moravcsik (1991, 1993), the state’s decision in favour of autarky or co-operation depends on the preferences of national enterprises (see also Schilde 2017). The state chooses autarky (for example, the acquisition of the Rafale by France) if the national defence industry (Dassault Aviation) opposes the state’s participation in a project of international collaboration. On the other hand, if industry supports co-operation, the state chooses the international option. This was the case, in the 1980s, with the German company Messerschmitt-Bölkow-Blohm (MBB), which favoured the Franco-German Tiger combat helicopter. This liberal argument offers not only the opportunity to explain the state’s decisions in favour of autarky and co-operation, for which it provides proof on the basis of three case studies: the acquisition, during the 1980s, of fighter aircraft, tanks, and attack helicopters; it also does not limit the international option preferred by the state only to bilateralism. It also envisages multilateral collaboration, as in the case of the Typhoon, which



involved Germany, Italy, and the UK. However, Moravcsik confines his analysis to the European level: instances of collaboration between European states and the USA are not considered. The same applies to instances of multinational co-operation, which are not taken into account (Dyson 2010). In fact, the dilemma of defence procurement policy in Europe remains structured by the autarky/co-operation decisional dilemma and, what is more, the potential effects of a type of co-operation are not studied.

From stacking up to articulating models of international co-operation

Two contributions make it possible not only to identify several varieties of international co-operation chosen concomitantly by a state, but also to articulate them: the study of the Tiger attack helicopter programme by Krotz and that of the A400 transport aircraft programme by Joana and Smith.

Krotz (2011, pp. 28–56) explains the decision taken by Germany and France in the 1980s to build the Tiger combat helicopter together through a “constructivist-institutionalist” argument. He demonstrates the effect of the institutionalisation of Franco-German political relations, themselves defined as “organised sets of interaction, meaning, and social purpose” (Krotz 2011, p. 38; see also Krotz 2015, pp. 114–117). A first hypothesis establishes an “elective affinity” between national identity and inter-state relations: the fewer mismatches there are between a state’s identity and the effects of institutionalised inter-state relations, the more the latter shape the formation of the national interest and the formulation of foreign policy. A second hypothesis is that of a correlation between inter-state relations and the national institutional structure: the higher a state’s level of political centralisation and autonomy in relation to society, the more the effects of inter-state relations influence the formation of the national interest and the formulation of foreign policy. The author also emphasises the decisive role played by heads of state and heads of government in the formulation of the decision. Without President François Mitterrand and Chancellor Helmut Kohl, France and Germany would not have taken the decision to produce a combat helicopter together.

Krotz conceives that a state could make use of several varieties of international co-operation to acquire armaments. Both France and Germany have at their disposal not one but three decisional options: autarky, European co-operation (such as the Franco-German Tiger and the Mangusta project run by the German company MBB the Italian company Agusta), and collaboration with the USA for an “off-the-shelf purchase” of the Apache. Moreover, Krotz does not confine himself to explaining the decisional result. He demonstrates the reasons that lead states to not choose each of the decisional alternatives mentioned (Krotz 2011, p. 75). Finally, the varieties of co-operation that made up the Tiger programme are not only stacked one on top of the other, but interconnected with each other. Thus, Krotz reveals and explains the genesis of Franco-German co-operation, its institutionalisation, and then its broadening to include Spain and Australia. On the other hand, it is not clear whether there is a correlation or causality between the different formats of state collaboration in



the international sphere: does bilateralism create the political and institutional conditions to broaden co-operation to include other states, or is the entry of Spain and Australia into the Tiger programme explained by other variables?

Joana and Smith (2004a, 2006) provide an answer, demonstrating that there is a correlation between two varieties of co-operation, on the basis of the case of the A400 M transport aircraft (see also Mawdsley 2013). This decision taken in the early 2000s by seven European states (Germany, Belgium, Spain, France, Luxembourg, UK, and Turkey) is explained by an argument that combines analysis of public policies with constructivism. The actors that formulated the decision made strategic use of the polysemous idea of the “commercial approach” that was characteristic of the A400 M programme. The commercial approach is a way of procuring armaments that aims to transfer to the military sector the economic logic that operates in the commercial field: marginalise users’ expectations (the size of the aircraft’s hold) and limit the demands of industry (choice of engine) in order to standardise the product with the aim of cutting costs. The commercial approach is a “rallying call” (Joana and Smith 2004a, pp. 138–139). Some would call it “constructive ambiguity” (Jegen and Mérand 2014), which explains the implementation of inter-state collaboration despite diverging national interests: “Over several months, the vagueness surrounding the ‘commercial approach’ will ensure its success [...] thus it will bring together actors with very different motivations, each of whom gives it a specific meaning” (Joana and Smith 2004b: 121) (Joana and Smith 2004b, p. 121). Beyond this argument, Joana and Smith explain this minilateral collaboration (involving seven states) as being the result of bilateral co-operation, first between France and Germany, and then between France and the UK, starting in the mid-1990s: bilateralism produces collaboration that is more inclusive.

Joana and Smith prove that a state takes part in two varieties of international co-operation simultaneously: bilateralism and minilateralism. They articulate these two co-operation formats and reveal the effect of the first (co-operation between two states) on the second (co-operation between seven states). Nevertheless, neither Krotz nor Joana and Smith develop a concept that is able to encompass the variations of the format and of the level of the instances of international co-operation in which the state takes part in order to procure armaments. Yet it has been demonstrated by this review of the literature that this differentiated international co-operation in European armaments procurement is not an epiphenomenon, but a “social fact” (Devin 2015, p. 9). Consequently, there is a theoretical challenge in proposing a concept.

What is the state’s flexilateral policy?

Defining the state’s flexilateral policy

The literature does not offer a concept for linking these three models of international co-operation which are bilateralism, minilateralism and multilateralism. Nevertheless, in practice, states simultaneously use these varieties of international co-operation to acquire military equipment. To address this shortcoming, it is necessary to



shift the focus from each type of international co-operation to their “interstices”, in order to identify the relations between the types of international co-operation and their reciprocal effects on decisions taken by states. It is to do this that the concept of “flexilateralism” has been developed.

The concept of “flexilateralism” defines *the policy through which a state simultaneously implements varieties of international co-operation to address a public problem*. Developed from the viewpoint of international relations, flexilateral policy uses the state as its unit of analysis. A state’s flexilateral policy is not confined to the study of its foreign policy, but also involves sector-specific public policies that are shaped by international issues, such as environmental policy, policy on migration, and armaments policy. The programmes implemented within the framework of one of these public policies are constituent parts of a state’s flexilateralism policy. A state’s flexilateral policy can thus be analysed at three levels of public action: global, sector specific, and programmatic. We would add that the policy of flexilateralism is not confined to the study of European states, or to the twenty-first century. It can describe, for example, Brazil’s agricultural policy, Japan’s industrial policy, or Turkey’s foreign policy. Furthermore, a state’s flexilateral policy could be applied to different historical contexts: to the start of the twenty-first century, but also to the Cold War or to the nineteenth century.

As regards the literature relating to defence procurement policy in Europe, the development of the idea of flexilateralism contributes to reformulation of the dilemma of European defence procurement policy, beyond the essential but incomplete dichotomy between autarky and co-operation. This contribution is concentrated on the conceptualisation of the object of study (dependent variable). In fact, it is not a matter of proposing an independent variable for explaining flexilateralism. Indeed, the concept of flexilateralism is not part of any specific theoretical approach. Competing explanatory models (liberal theory, historical neo-institutionalist approach, foreign policy analysis, discursive analysis, etc.) operationalised on the basis of multiple survey protocols can explain the genesis, institutionalisation, or transformation of a state’s flexilateral policy.

Operationalising the state’s flexilateral policy

The state’s flexilateral policy corresponds to the structuring of the varieties of international co-operation. Describing the types of international co-operation that a state brings into play to acquire armaments, to bargain on global warming issues, or to resolve migration crises makes it possible to operationalise the concept of flexilateralism. In order to do this, an analytical grid is set out on the basis of four indicators: (1) the degree of inclusion of the variety of international co-operation in relation to the states involved (what format?); (2) the states taking part in each type of international co-operation (which actors?); (3) the degree of interconnectedness of the types of international co-operation (what varieties?); and (4) the international political space in which the varieties of international co-operation are institutionalised (at what levels?). The policy of flexilateralism refers to the concomitant use by a state of at least two types of international co-operation. If the state takes part in only one



variety of international co-operation to procure armaments, its policy is *not* flexilateral. For example, the North Korea's foreign policy is not flexilateral. If North Korea maintains a few bilateral relationships with other states, first and foremost with China, the autarky (unilateralism) of North Korea is highly dominant.

First, the varieties of international co-operation are identified according to four degrees of inclusion on the part of states, from the most exclusive to the most inclusive: unilateralism, bilateralism, minilateralism, and multilateralism. Unilateralism refers to an absence of co-operation, with the state choosing autarky. This is the case with the Rafale and Gripen fighter aircraft programmes, run by France and Sweden, respectively, during the 1980s. Bilateralism denotes collaboration between two states. The Lancaster House Treaties signed in 2010 by France and the UK fit this description. Minilateralism refers to co-operation that brings together an exclusive group of states, numbering at least three. The inclusive definition of “minilateralism” that includes bilateralism has been discarded (Pannier 2015, p. 38). The structure of a given instance of co-operation is considered a priori as different if it numbers two state actors (bilateralism) or more (minilateralism). OCCAR [the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation] and the A400M military transport aircraft programme involve minilateral collaboration. Bilateralism and minilateralism differ from multilateralism, which denotes a variety of collaboration between an inclusive group of states, such as the EDA or the Permanent Structured Co-operation (PESCO) within the EU.

Second, the actors that take part in each type of international co-operation need to be identified. Indeed, a given format, bilateralism for example, refers to different political realities. The Franco-British “Entente Cordiale” was not—historically, institutionally, or politically—structured in the same way as the Franco-German co-operation. It is therefore a matter of taking into account the allies that take part in an instance of international co-operation.

Third, the varieties of international co-operation are also characterised by their degree of interconnectedness. The higher the level of interconnectedness of types of international co-operation, the more likely it is that the decisional dilemma facing the state in procuring armaments will be difficult. In the case of the decisional process that led to the production of the Franco-German Tiger attack helicopter during the 1980s, Germany faced up to a high level of interconnectedness of the varieties of international co-operation. In fact, it was simultaneously involved in a national project (unilateralism type) and three projects involving co-operation (bilateralism type): one with France (Tiger), one with Italy (Mangusta), and the third with the USA (off-the-shelf purchase of the Apache).

Fourth, international co-operation differs as regards the level of public action at which it is institutionalised. The defence procurement policy of European states is formulated and implemented chiefly at two levels: the European level and the transatlantic level. OCCAR and the EDA, as well as the A400 M aircraft programme and the Franco-Italian FREMM frigate programme, are implemented at the European level. On the other hand, NATO and the F-35 fighter aircraft programme are situated at the transatlantic level.

Now that a definition of the policy of flexilateralism has been formulated, and an analytical grid to operationalise it has been proposed, the following section



illustrates it on the basis of the case of France's defence procurement policy in the context of Brexit.

Applying the concept of flexilateralism to France's policy

The case of France's defence procurement policy in the context of Brexit

The promise of the concept of flexilateralism is therefore twofold: 1) to articulate the varieties of international co-operation that constitute state's policy and 2) to reveal the effects of the evolution of international co-operation on the development of state's flexilateral policy. In this section, this double analytical promise is tested through the case study of France's defence procurement policy in the context of Brexit. There are two methodological interests in choosing this case study. Firstly, France is the main European military power with the UK which is its main strategic ally in Europe. Secondly, the Brexit negotiations increase the degree of decision-making contingency, making it more likely that a political change to another variety of international co-operation will take place. In other words, the political uncertainty generated by Brexit increases the probability that France will simultaneously use different types of international co-operation to acquire military goods.

Two research questions are formulated on this case study. On the one hand, does France use one or varieties of international co-operation to acquire armaments in order to supply its armed forces? Is France's defence procurement policy flexilateral or not? On the other hand, if yes, how will France's flexilateral policy be affected by the evolution of a specific variety of international co-operation which is the bilateral co-operation between France and the UK? Will Franco-British co-operation in defence procurement remain, despite Brexit, the major vehicle for structuring France's flexilateral policy, or can its effect be contained by another type of international co-operation?

An empirical analysis of the European political situation, which is detailed below, confirms that France does not use one type of but varieties of international co-operation to acquire armaments (Ministère des Armées 2017, p. 15). In other words, French armaments policy is flexilateral because it is both Franco-British and Franco-German, at the same time minilateral outside the EU and multilateral within the EU. This empirical result invalidates approaches that reduce state's choices to one specific model of international co-operation (deVore and Weiss 2014; Hoeffler and Mérand 2015) or that reveal several types without articulating them (Moravcsik 1991, 1993; Genieys and Michel 2004; Pannier 2013). The aim is to go a step further to articulate varieties of international co-operation used simultaneously by France to acquire armaments (Joana and Smith 2004a, 2006; Krotz 2011). This work involves clarifying the effect of the evolution of one international co-operation—Franco-British co-operation in the context of Brexit—on the making of France's flexilateral policy (Heisbourg 2016, pp. 15–17).

Two hypotheses are formulated in order to answer this research question. The high degree of unpredictability of the political negotiations between the UK and the EU, in an unstable international context (Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump 2018 Italian



elections), suggests we should be cautious in forecasting the outcome (Freedman 2016, pp. 7–12; Pannier 2016; de France et al. 2017; Uttley and Wilkinson 2017; Martin and Sus 2018).

The status quo hypothesis asserts that co-operation between France and the UK will be only slightly affected by Brexit in the arms sector, for two reasons. First, the conduct of “high-intensity” military operations is not implemented by the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), but by Franco-British collaboration (Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014). Second, the UK and France are the only European states that possess nuclear weapons and are members of the United Nations Security Council (Pannier 2017). The UK’s leaving the EU will not affect its capacity and institutional resources that enable it to be the leading military power in Europe. The Franco-British bilateralism type will continue to strongly structure the formulation of France’s flexilateral policy.

This status quo hypothesis is challenged by the shift hypothesis, according to which Brexit will heighten competition between varieties of international co-operation. The Franco-British bilateralism type will see its influence on the formulation of France’s flexilateral policy limited from the start of the 2020s.¹ The Franco-German bilateralism variety, the European minilateralism variety, and the EU multilateralism variety could be strengthened. In the context of Brexit, the formation of France’s flexilateral policy depends on the interconnectedness of four varieties of international co-operation: the Franco-British type, the Franco-German type, the minilateralism type, and the multilateralism type.

France’s flexilateral policy through the Franco-British variety

The most convincing effect of the Franco-British co-operation, which was significantly strengthened from 2010 by the Lancaster House treaties, was the creation of the European company MBDA in 2015. MBDA is a joint subsidiary of Airbus (37.5%), BAE Systems (37.5%), and Leonardo (25%) and is an industry leader in the missile sector. The future of MBDA is especially difficult to predict because the company embodies a minilateral partnership that straddles the channel (Germany, UK, France, and Italy). Subsequently, the Future Combat Air System (FCAS) unmanned air combat vehicle (UCAV) project was begun in 2014 (Table 2). In 2016, the UK and France decided to allocate a budget of EUR 2 billions to the construction of a joint demonstrator (Huberdeau 2016). At the governmental level, the project is run by Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), part of the British Defence Ministry, and the French Defence Procurement Agency (DGA). On the industrial level, BAE Systems and Dassault Aviation are designated as the leading partners. The bilateral governance seen in the FCAS project is replicated in the area of engines (Rolls-Royce and Safran) and electrical components (Selex UK and Thales).

¹ In the counterfactual situation in which the UK would obtain a “soft Brexit”, i.e. obtain strategic concessions from the EU, such as an access to the EU defence fund for British companies, it is plausible that this hypothesis would be refuted (Black et al. 2017).



Table 2 The four main European armaments projects under way

Product	Project	Start	Varieties of international co-operation	States	Companies (leading partners)
Combat drone	FCAS	2014	Bilateral (Lancaster House treaties)	France, UK	BAE Systems, Dassault Aviation
MALE drone	RPAS	2016	Mimilateral (OCCAR)	France, Germany, Italy, Spain	Airbus Defence and Space, Dassault Aviation, Leonardo
Combat aircraft	Franco-German	2018	Bilateral (ad hoc)	France, Germany	Airbus Defence and Space and Dassault Aviation
Combat aircraft	Tempest	2018	Unilateral	UK	“Team Tempest” (BAE Systems, MBDA, Leonardo, Rolls-Royce)

For an exhaustive table, see Marrone et al. 2016, pp. 35–37



Table 3 Companies involved in building the Taranis and Neuron UCAV demonstrators

Companies	Taranis (UK)	Neuron (France)
American	GE Aviation	
British	BAE Systems, Qinetiq, Rolls-Royce	
Spanish		Airbus Defence and Space
French		Dassault Aviation
Greek		HAI
Italian		Leonardo
Swedish		Saab
Swiss		Ruag

However, the momentum of the FCAS project may be vulnerable because of its genesis. In the early 2010s, BAE Systems and Dassault Aviation simultaneously built two competing demonstrators: the British Taranis and the French Neuron.² The Taranis programme brought together British and US companies, whereas the Neuron programme involved exclusively European companies (Table 3). This intuition is confirmed by the decision taken in July 2018 by the UK through its Minister of Defence, Gavin Williamson, to launch a “Made in Britain” combat aircraft called Tempest (Stevenson 2018).³ Interviewed on this issue, the FCAS is “now in a really complicated position” for a MoD’s official and is “dead” for another MoD’s official.⁴

Aside from the projects that were born of the Lancaster House treaties, the case of the Thales group’s industrial strategy involves competition between the Franco-British co-operation and the multilateral co-operation shared by the French industrial actors. Since 2000, Thales, a French company, has pursued a strategy of internationalisation, building up its industrial activities in a “multinational” manner. In Europe, its international presence is strongest in the UK. However, Thales has a presence in six other European countries (Norway, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Portugal, and Spain), and its shareholder structure is French majority-owned: 26.4% of the share capital is held by the French state and 25.3% by Dassault Aviation.

To sum up, if the UK leaves the single market (“hard Brexit”) or if the UK and the EU are not able to sign a deal at all, the bilateral co-operation with Britain would not be France’s industrial priority anymore, especially after the launch of Tempest project in July 2018. This assumption finds an echo in the trajectory of Franco-German, minilateral, and multilateral collaborations.

² This competition recalls the genesis of the Eurofighter Typhoon and Rafale programmes in the early 1980s (deVore and Weiss 2014).

³ <http://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/25279/eurofighter-consortium-2-0-takes-shape-as-spain-set-to-join-franco-german-stealth-jet-program> [accessed 10 December 2018].

⁴ I conducted a fieldwork in July 2018 in Britain on the British defence procurement policy. See the forthcoming Research Paper [Étude du CERi, SciencesPo]: <https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/fr/papier/etude>.



France's flexilateral policy through the Franco-German variety

Since the end of the 1990s, the Franco-German co-operation has been the main vehicle for France's flexilateral politics in the defence industry.⁵ This bilateral co-operation has shaped the creation of Eurocopter, then EADS, and finally Airbus, the leading European company in the civil and military aeronautics field. Although three states have a stake (France 11.11%, Germany 11.09%, and Spain 4.18%), the French and Germans hold all management posts. More recently, there has been a rapprochement in the land-based defence systems segment between the French company Nexter and the German company Krauss-Maffei Wegmann, which had previously been competitors. The result has been the creation in 2015 of the Franco-German group KNDS, the leading European company in land-based weapons systems, in which France has a 50% stake and the German Bode-Wegmann family 50%.

The main programmes in the military aeronautic sector in Europe since the 1990s, such as the A400 M transport aircraft, the NH90 transport helicopter, and the Tiger attack helicopter, have been the result of the interplay between the Franco-German co-operation and the minilateralism. Germany has taken part in all these European programmes, and Airbus has taken the role of leading partner. As for France, it does not figure on one programme—the Eurofighter Typhoon. Moreover, Spain has taken part in all the programmes mentioned, as has Italy, with the exception of the Tiger. Both these states are mentioned in the 2017 “Revue stratégique”, which deals with the interplay between the bilateral and the minilateral co-operations: “These two major bilateral relations in the defence sphere [Franco-British and Franco-German] must be complemented by France paying increased attention to its other European partners [...] France also co-operates with these two countries [Spain and Italy], which have significant military capability, industrial and defence industry co-operation (drones, frigates, the NH90, ground-to-air missiles, space, etc.) that is structurally important for us and for Europe” (Ministère des Armées 2017, p. 62, points 199 and 200). For all that, we cannot overestimate the political effect of these industrial projects that are born of the Franco-German and minilateral co-operations. In this regard, it would be remembered that the UK took part in the A400 M and Eurofighter Typhoon programmes. On the other hand, 80% of European armaments programmes result of the unilateralism (lack of international co-operation) (de La Brosse 2017, p. 2). This figure reinforces the need to take into account the varieties of international co-operation that constitute flexilateralism, including unilateralism (when state is in favour of “made in France” armaments).

Beyond the industrial projects of the 1990s and 2000s, the 2010s saw the emergence of, besides the above-mentioned FCAS project, two large armaments procurement projects from which the UK was absent (Table 2). First, the MALE RPAS (Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft System) drone programme, aimed at intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance

⁵ In the 2017 Strategic Review, it is significant to note that the footnote to point 196 which details “all areas” of Franco-German co-operation refers exclusively to industrial projects (Ministère des Armées 2017, p. 61–62).



(ISTAR) missions, brought together Germany, Spain, France, and Italy within the framework of OCCAR (minilateralism type). Second, the project for a future fighter aircraft, bringing together Germany and France (Merchet 2017).⁶ The project for a Franco-German fighter aircraft (SCAF) was announced, to general surprise, by President Macron and Chancellor Merkel on 13 July 2017, during a bilateral meeting in Paris.⁷

There are three potential problems that could compromise this project, about which few details have been released. The first is military: the combat aircraft is a vehicle for France's nuclear deterrent, but this does not apply to Germany. The French armed forces therefore have an operational need that is not shared by their German counterparts. The second problem is industrial: there is the prospect of a conflict between Dassault Aviation and Airbus Defence and Space over leadership of the project. Dassault Aviation showcases the technical expertise of its research department, gained through long experience in the field of combat aircraft. Meanwhile, the CEO of Airbus Defence and Space, Dirk Hoke, reminds the German government that most of the factories of the Airbus defence division are in Germany (Lagneau 2017). If an agreement has been reached between Airbus and Dassault Aviation in April 2018, the difficulty of its implementation must not be underestimated.⁸ Finally, there is a political problem: Germany has an urgent capability need to replace its Tornado aircraft (by around 2025), which is not the case with France. This mismatch in political timescales led Chancellor Merkel, before the declaration of intent in July 2017, to contact the US companies Lockheed-Martin (which produces the F-35) and Boeing (which manufactures the F-18) (Angrand 2017; Lagneau 2017).

Against this background, two assumptions could be put forward. On the one hand, if Germany decides, for military, industrial, or political reasons, to buy "off-the-shelf" combat aircraft from the USA, this is likely to trigger a defiant reaction by France, which could abandon this project in favour of its partnership with the UK via the Franco-British drone project (FCAS). On the other hand, if Germany stays with the project in partnership with France, this decision would probably contribute to marginalising the UK's industrial role. The cases of the Rafale combat aircraft and Tiger attack helicopter demonstrated that the support or lack of it on the part of the head of state or the government for a given option carries considerable weight (Cohen 1994; Krotz 2011).

These co-operative European industrial projects should not be seen as isolated actions, but rather the result of varieties of European co-operation, which determines France's flexilateral politics. The dynamic at work is an interplay between the

⁶ Italy, through a statement by its Chief of Air Staff on 11 November 2017, expressed its interest in this project.

⁷ In December 2018, Spain announced that it was joining the Franco-German SCAF project: <http://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/25279/eurofighter-consortium-2-0-takes-shape-as-spain-set-to-join-franco-german-stealth-jet-program> [accessed 10 December 2018].

⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-43895648> [accessed 15 May 2018].



Franco-German and minilateral co-operations on the one hand, and on the other the multilateral co-operation that takes shape within the EU.

France's flexilateral policy through the multilateralism variety

The risk for the UK—more the British state than British companies which are strongly turned towards the American market—is that it would suffer the effects of the multilateral co-operation, which has produced three instruments for action in the public sphere since the end of the 2000s: the “defence package”, the European Defence Fund (EDF), and PESCO. Their goal is to consolidate what is commonly known as the “European Defence Technological and Industrial Base” (EDTIB) (Uttley and Wilkinson 2016, pp. 571–574).

The “defence package” is the result of two directives that regulate the defence industry: the directive on intra-EU transfers of defence-related products and the EU defence and security procurement directive (Blauberger and Weiss 2013). The aim of the “defence package”, which came into force in 2011, is to create an internal defence market by means of a “market-making” (Scharpf 1999) mechanism, that is, the liberalisation of national regulations.

Moreover, the EDF, ratified in June 2017, aims to encourage Member States to conduct armaments programmes through European co-operation, by financing research and development (R&D) (Camporini et al. 2017). To this end, the European Commission has allocated EUR 25 million in 2017, EUR 90 million in 2018, and the same sum again in 2019 to finance research. The EU's plan is to bring its annual research budget up to EUR 500 million from 2020, making it the fourth largest in Europe after those of France, the UK, and Germany (Béraud-Sudreau 2017). This annual budget of EUR 500 million for research should be complemented by a budget of EUR 1 billion from 2020 (EUR 500 million from 2019) devoted to the industrial development of armaments programmes (Koenig and Walter-Franke 2017, pp. 13–14). This fund would be used to co-finance, to the tune of 20%, the development phase of a co-operative European project comprising at least three companies from two different Member States. A total of EUR 1.5 billion could therefore be allocated to the defence R&D budget—or almost 1% of the total EU budget (Gros-Verheyde 2017). If this increase in the European defence budget were to be confirmed, it would be a radical change that could have major effects. Within the MALE RPAS drone project, Germany, Spain, France, and Italy want to be able to take advantage of the EDF (Bocquet 2017). It is likely that the UK and British companies would not be able to take advantage of this fund (de France et al. 2017, p. 4). If this decision were to be confirmed, it would limit the effect of the variety of Franco-British bilateralism on the definition of France's flexilateral policy. The question regarding the UK's status is, therefore: would it be considered a “third country”, in the same way as Canada, Japan or Norway, or would it secure special status in the future trade treaty it hopes to agree with the EU?

Nevertheless, the effect of PESCO (variety of multilateralism) on the establishment of France's flexilateral policy should not be overestimated. PESCO was introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 (article 42.6 of the EU treaty, TEU). Article



1 of protocol 10 attached to the treaties explains that PESCO “shall be open to any Member State which undertakes [...] proceed more intensively to develop its defence capacities through the development of its national contributions and participation, where appropriate, in multinational forces, in the main European equipment programmes, and in the activity of the Agency in the field of defence capabilities development, research, acquisition and armaments (European Defence Agency)”. On November 2017, PESCO was adopted by a joint notification signed by 23 EU Member States in Brussels.⁹ These included Poland but not the UK (which is leaving the EU and will therefore no longer be bound by PESCO), Denmark (which opted out of CSDP), Malta, Portugal, or Ireland.¹⁰ This notification is endorsed by a decision of the Foreign Affairs Council in December 2017. Ireland and Portugal join PESCO, which finally counts twenty-five states.

However, two observations could be made about this decision. First, there has been a wait of almost a decade for this mechanism to be activated, even though the Lisbon Treaty provided for its immediate implementation. Second, almost all EU Member States take part in PESCO (meaning this is multilateralism)—far from the “hard core” of a few states (which would have been minilateralism) as envisaged by the French president (Witney 2017). From a French perspective, this inclusive format for PESCO, backed by Germany, is not considered very effective at taking decisions, because certain states, such as Poland, could act as a “veto actor” (Janning et al. 2017, pp. 27–28; Mauro and Santopinto 2017, pp. 24–26). Indeed, PESCO decisions, taken within the council, must be unanimous (article 46.6 TUE), with the exception of the decision taken by qualified majority voting to allow a state to rejoin PESCO (article 46.3 TUE), to allow it to leave (article 46.5 TUE), or to be suspended (article 46.4 TUE). In all cases, qualified majority voting is not automatic within an institution (in the EU and in the council in particular) that is characterised by a strong culture of consensus. Seen from Paris, it is difficult therefore to see this decision as a “historic achievement”—the description given by Federica Mogherini, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: the multilateral co-operation has prevailed over the minilateral co-operation.

Conclusion

Several explanatory arguments are developed to explain states’ decisions in favour of *one* specific international co-operation, such as *one* instance of bilateral collaboration, *one* minilateral co-operation, or *one* multilateral alliance of states. Nevertheless, in practice, states *simultaneously* mobilise these three varieties of international co-operation to craft and to implement their actions, when they do

⁹ Two years to the day after the terrorist attacks in Bataclan and on several restaurant terraces in Paris which caused the death of 130 people, on 15 November 2015, the mutual assistance clause was activated for the first time at France’s request (Article 42(7) TEU).

¹⁰ The day after the signing of the joint notification, on 14 November 2017, Poland informs EU Member States that it requests that PESCO does not lead to the creation of an integrated military command and an EU military headquarters.



not prefer autarky (unilateralism). However, the articulation of the several types of international co-operation chosen concomitantly by a state persists as a conceptual gap in IR theories and FPA. There is, therefore, a challenge in articulating the different types of international co-operation mobilised simultaneously by a state to address global political issues. How should the varieties of international co-operation of which states make use be articulated conceptually?

This article has developed the concept of a flexilateral policy, in order to articulate the types of international co-operation used by France to acquire military equipment. Thus, it has contributed to the literature dealing with European defence procurement policy, referred to in the first part of the article. The second part of the article is devoted to the definition, and then the operationalisation, of the policy of flexilateralism. In order to do this, an analytical grid explains in detail the four varieties of international co-operation that constitute the state's flexilateral policy in Europe (unilateralism, bilateralism, minilateralism, and multilateralism), which are implemented at two levels of public action: European and transatlantic. It also engages with the literature dealing with varieties of liberal militarism and of the industrial capitalism of defence. In the third part, the formulation of France's flexilateral policy has been analysed on the basis of the case of its defence procurement policy in the context of Brexit. The structuring of the types of international co-operation, and its hypothetical evolution, has been suggested.

This article is an attempt to understand better how the decisional dilemma of defence procurement policy in Europe, which France faces, is structured. In order to do this, two lines of inquiry can be suggested. First, this article has confined itself to defining and illustrating the policy of flexilateralism. It could be complemented by research that formulates multiple explanatory arguments for the policy of flexilateralism, on the basis of different survey protocols. In order to do this, the policy of flexilateralism could be examined on the basis of its genesis, its institutionalisation, and its transformation. This work could be carried out within a comparative perspective. What conditions explain a state undertaking several types of international co-operation to address a public problem within a given historical context? How is the policy of flexilateralism institutionalised in a sector of public action, and why is this institutionalisation not observed in another sector of public action? Why, and how, are the types of international co-operation implemented by the state transformed? What are the consequences of a state's flexilateral policy on the regional or global governance (i.e. decisions taken by Germany, France or the UK and the future of Europe and especially the transformation of the EU)? On the other hand, the policy of flexilateralism is not seen as a characteristic specific to defence procurement policy in Europe. Research work on defence procurement policy in other regions of the world than Europe, or on other public policies, such as environmental policy, migration policy, or foreign policy, would make contributions useful for evaluating the heuristic value of the concept of the policy of flexilateralism.

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